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Interrogating the Imperial Conscience: Waugh and Greene's Anti-Colonial Dispositions

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ABSTRACT

Western imperialism emerges as one of the central discourses within the broad thematic designs of Evelyn Waugh's *Black Mischief* and Graham Greene's *The Heart of the Matter*. This paper reviews the colonial contexts of the two novels, by interrogating the representations of Western imperialism, its ethical ramifications on the one hand, and the predicament of the African people and their cultures subjugated by imperialism, on the other hand. From the increasingly secular condition of the English society, which Waugh and Greene associate with decay and disintegration resulting from the non-adherence to the dogmatic nooses of civilisation, it could be discerned that Waugh and Greene are hesitant to subscribe to the furtherance of Western imperialist agenda. Though important differences characterise their thinking as novelists, there is a significant affiliation in their points of view with regard to

imperialism. In other words, there is perceptible evidence that both novelists consider Western Civilisation as much barbaric as the African context to which all imaginable transgressions are ascribed. Theoretically, the essay exploits aspects of New Historicism, the Psychoanalytic Criticism and the Postcolonial Theory in its analysis in order to avoid the vested theoretical approach that spurred imperialism. It concludes that even in the height of modernism, Waugh and Greene saw something positive in the primitive culture. They do not really affirm the metropolis as the source of universal and plausible values to which every other place should aspire. It is in this regard that their anti-colonial dispositions find expression in the novels studied here.

Keywords: *Anti-Colonial, Civilisation, Colonialism Greene, Imperialism, Interrogating, Waugh.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Imperialism has become a household term in critical discourses today to the extent that we almost assume that it does not require even a contextual definition in relating it to contemporary debates. The caution here is necessary because even vague associations with the term may be as problematic as they can be enabling, in revealing the manner in which ideologies and texts, for instance, reinvent themselves in redefinitions of the obvious. In this case, we are stressing the revisionist nuances of imperialism in contemporary discussions of Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh, and how these further enhance our appreciation of erstwhile colonial texts into postcolonial and postindependence spheres of influence. It should be noted that the typical “English” literature student in the Department of English, at least in Cameroon universities, generally reads these authors as specifically *English* and more generally as *British*. The intersections in analysing them in terms of colonial tropes has to be foregrounded today as an imperative that continues to renegotiate the boundaries of identity representation. Two of the writers who interrogated the colonial metropolis by depicting alternative realities of the Self, Waugh and Greene queue up from a previous iconoclast like D. H. Lawrence to map out antiestablishment spaces on the social and

imperial maps of English/British national history. Their convenience or inconvenience, as the case may be, continues to animate debates about colonial-into-independence understanding of what it takes for the Self to be dethroned from its assumptive high moral status, just as the *Other* engages introspective vicissitudes of how not to be othered.

Located in literary critical discourse, therefore, we use representative definitions of the terms to acknowledge imperialism's affirmative forte from a centrist standpoint, on the one hand, and its disabling impetus from a decolonial perspective of the "imagined" and even reimaged community in both Andersonian usage and its post-attributes. Even the term "decolonial" has to be applied here with caution because internal frictions that destabilised and are still destabilising the independence ideal of the 1960s vindicate the colonial master's highhandedness in many ways. Still, to read Greene and Waugh today from a postindependence Africanist lens, it will be interesting to note that the juxtaposition of British colonial mores in Mexico and West Africa (for Greene) with their inter-wars anxieties in Britain (for Waugh) represents the canvass of imperialism as a continuation of what Barbara Fuchs describes as "the complexity of intercultural performance on early modern imperial stages" (*Mimesis and Empire* 1). This sense of continuity is also vital to how African scholarship engages the debate not just as a conciliatory retrospect of performance as celebrated by Hardt and Negri (*Empire* 2000) and cautioned by Barbara Bush in *Imperialism and Postcolonialism*; but also as an eye opener to how we participate in the continuously more futuristic phases of empire. This also explains why, theoretically, we will exploit aspects of New Historicism, the Psychoanalytic Criticism and the Postcolonial Theory in the analysis in order to avoid the vested theoretical approach that spurred imperialism.

If we endorse Loomba's position, it will be, again representatively, to underscore a basic definition that helps us to delimit the imperial and colonial binaries with which we will be concerned here. According to Loomba (2000:6-7),

Imperialism or neo-imperialism is the phenomenon that originates in the metropolis, the process which leads to

domination and control. Its results or what happens in the colonies as a consequence of imperial domination is colonialism or neo-colonialism. Thus the imperial country is the 'metropole' from which power flows, and the colony or neo-colony is the place which it penetrates and controls.

While this definition reflects the tensions between colonial and anti-colonial literatures, it is also obvious that such a position is already being overwritten in a southerly rereading of the imperialistic map as it adjusts at every twist and turn of our still Darwinian world. Consequently, writers like Greene and Waugh become significant in locating the inconstant zones of the imperialistic imaginary, since both the metropolis and its periphery are implicated in the ever-changing dialogue. If Loomba's contention hints at the metropolis as a space in constant opposition to the colony in a binary of interest or disinterest, we should bear in mind that the metropolis—which significantly wields unchecked power over the colony through a conceit of rationalism and “civilization”—is no longer a constant zone in whose periphery we find an irrational, barbaric, sensual, lazy, humanity. It emerges from here that if in its quest for self-definition, Europe considered oriental people as inferior, it remains a subjective perception that leaves much to be desired. Europe sought to be the model to which every other civilisation aspired. This feeling finds expression in *Black Mischief* through Emperor Seth, an Oxford graduate who unsuccessfully puts up a spirited attempt to transform Azania into a Western civilisation hub. His failure articulates Waugh's belief that Western civilisation with its blemishes could not be the model it claimed to be.

Loomba's conception of imperialism/colonialism is complemented by Boehmer's. Boehmer (2005:2) makes a distinction between “the authority assumed by a state over another territory – authority expressed in pageantry and symbolism, as well as in military and economic power,” on the one hand, and “the consolidation of imperial power, and is manifested in the settlement territory, the exploitation or development of resources, and the attempt to govern the indigenous inhabitants of the occupied land, often by force,” on the other. But in elaborating on “the

consolidation of imperial power,” Boehmer’s temporal boundary of imperialism stretches as far back as 1492 with Columbus’ imperial gaze through which imperialism stages the axis on which European hegemony over other territories rotates. In other to subjugate the people, their culture and value system must be systematically subverted and eroded. Through such an imperial lens, Europe saw other peoples as bereft of a history, religion and civilisation; and explains why Europe maintained moribund stereotypical representations of its relationship with the territories under its dominance. This analysis therefore takes interest in the effects which civilisation produces on the African in Waugh’s *Black Mischief* and Greene’s *The Heart of the Matter*, gauging how the characters in the novels under discussion betray civilising ideals, as vectors of both Waugh and Greene’s critical stance towards imperialism.

As already pointed out, Waugh and Greene denounce the excesses of modern secular civilization by identifying the English society of their time with decadence and deterioration. In this light, they are both struck by the corrosive influence of European settlers on the African continent as attested to by their novels *Black Mischief* and *The Heart of the Matter* respectively. According to Darby (1998:53),

[q]uestions about dominance lie at the heart of the meaning of imperialism and the nature of the contemporary North/South relationship ... During the imperial era, the metropolises took title to and tribute from their colonial ‘possessions’. The flow of ideas and values was largely outward from Europe. Within Asia and African significant changes took place in the distribution of power and the balance of social forces. The processes thus set in motion brought Afro-Asia into the global economy and the international political system on terms which were indisputably disadvantageous or dependent. In many respects these processes have continued beyond formal decolonization; in ways which have been traced by dependency, globalization and postcolonial theorists.

Darby’s remark depicts the centrality and superiority of the metropolis in the ethos of imperialist self-definition. The metropolis referees and radiates the ideas and values, which, henceforth, should regulate the conscience of the colonised, deracinating, (since “it took title to and

tribute from its colonial possessions”) the indigenous value system, posing an infernal sense of menace. Darby also evokes the post-colonial spirit which continues to lurk over the colonised; a situation that undermines the colonised’s right to enjoy a full existence and its attendant benefits. Having thus far attempted a review of the notion of imperialism in the sense this paper explores, it is propitious at this stage to delve into textual analysis.

2. WAUGH’S *BLACK MISCHIEF*

Waugh’s *Black Mischief* rallies characters from different cultural European and American backgrounds, pitted against the native Azanians. Azania is a fictional African country where, exploring the interaction between these settler characters and the aboriginal Azanians, it is evident that Waugh ridicules European savagery much more than he does Azanian (African) barbarism/primitivism. The Azanians are victims of an alien imperial cultural package being imposed on them. This may be why they derive from their own cultural background to inadvertently misperceive some of colonial norms which Emperor Seth seeks to ‘civilise’ Azania with. The Birth Control Pageant readily comes to mind as an example of this misperception.

It should be noticed that the native Azanians misconceive the idea behind the birth control posters, and so, for wrong reasons, they accept to be a part of the birth control gala. They miss out on the disadvantages of a large family as opposed to the benefits of a small one, as they hope the pageant would enhance their knowledge on virility and fecundity. Birth control is a European concept which is outlandish to the African cultural milieu where marriage is perceived largely as an instrument of procreation. A man must propagate as much as possible, their family lineage, and so there would be no need to bar children, freely given by God from coming. Generally, Azanians like most Africans, privilege large over small families for reasons that are genuine. They hold that a man should have as many children as possible because one is never sure of how many of those children death would spare. Besides this, the African man’s status is measured by the number of wives, children, the property and fiscal strength which he possesses. While the West values

depopulation, the African values population. This is what certainly lures the Azanians to “like the good man with eleven children.” Maybe it would have been more feasible for Seth to begin with family planning, a less radical concept than birth control. If the opposition to the Birth Control Pageant was “firm and widespread,” (203) then it invokes the New Historicist canon that there is a history of resistance to every history of oppression. The people are opposed to a thing they feel touches their very essence and threatens to deracinate them from a value that would seem to constitute a second nature to them, that is, the extended or large family system.

Besides the abortive Birth Control Pageant, is the boots saga. Boots are supplied by the Ministry of Modernisation to the soldiers. The essentially native soldiers see the boots as an additional ration of food, and so, they eat the boots. This is bizarre and we may fault Waugh for projecting a view that makes the African wanting in the face of “civilisation.bb” However, we should see beneath this representation, Waugh’s opposition to the feeling that the Western idea of development can easily be transplanted to Azania, which from all indications is resistant to such an unwelcome intrusion. Both the Birth Control and boots scheme as agencies of imperialism fail because the native people have no relevant frame of cultural reference to back up their understanding of the situations.

Emperor Seth, an Oxford graduate returns home as heir to the throne of Azania. Together with white settlers in Azania, Seth becomes the principal agency through which Western culture, cum, civilisation is appreciated in the text. In virtually all his attempts to modernise Azania, Emperor Seth keeps initiating ideas that only hold him up to ridicule. Besides the Birth Control pageant, he considers introducing communal sports. Interestingly, Seth has never pondered on the feasibility of the new orientations to which he wants to subject Azanians. Foolishly credulous he sticks to his half-understood Western culture, and this makes him an object of scathing ridicule. Mimicry becomes his stock in trade consequently. Basil Seal, as head of newly established Ministry of Modernisation, is tasked with translating Seth’s vision into reality. It should however be pointed out that Seth is unaware that Basil Seal has

only accepted the offer as an opportunity to rid himself of the boredom and decadence of London, the purportedly civilised world. Boehmer's assertion which this work shares, is relevant here.

Boehmer (2005:157-158) holds that:

In Black Mischief Basil Seal goes to Azania out of dilettantish curiosity, because he has nothing better to do. The familiar colonial scene has an outmoded, ramshackle look. Empire no longer means authority, efficiency, national faith.... The keynote in Waugh's novels is once again canniness and disaffection. Their subject, colonial endeavour, has lost its gloss of idealism, but in the absence of compelling alternatives has not been relinquished. The guiding imperial notions of mission, purpose, modernization and racial solidarity occur as quotations, or solecisms; are shown up for being anachronistic, illusory, ridiculously out of place. To Seth, the self-proclaimed Emperor of Azania in Black Mischief, progress is a question of appearance and orotund assertion.

One should add here that glaring symptoms to indicate that colonial idealism has lost its gloss range from Seth's inability, to perceive reality, the absence of racial solidarity given the class consciousness, which animates the unofficial British population in Debra Dowa, to the visible decadence that has inextricably gripped the society. These are indications of a disintegrating civilisation. This disintegration spews from the metropolis – London.

Basil Seal, had, before his departure to Azania branded London as "hell". To an elderly Old Man in their club, Basil had inquired "Isn't London hell?" (164), "Don't you hate London?" (165). Basil's query here is not a piddling remark but a downright rejection of the metropolis. It is not an accidental feeling but one deeply rooted to his marrow. Let us again consider some salient evidence which militates for his anti-London narrative. When Basil and Lady Metroland converse over the former's political life he articulates the real reason for giving up his constituency and deciding to travel abroad, that is, his having been in England for too long. The emphasis on "too long" reverberates with boredom, frustration, claustrophobia and the need to seek new regions for adventure and meaning in life. He is unable to pick up a job of his choice in England.

This is one of the reasons that motivate him to go to Azania that holds a promise of a job for him. Apparently, this is a reversal of fortunes by which Basil would tame the frustrations of the metropolis by the offer of a job in the colony. So while his sky darkens in London, Azania becomes an emblem of hope for him; the same hope that had always been associated with the West. Africans have had the tendency to generally see the West as the magic wand with regard to job seeking and ascribing meaning to one's life. So they generally would want to go to Europe, America where milk and honey is dripping in generous quantities. Here, the reverse is true as Basil Seal leaves London for Azania (Africa) for a job. London in this context is bleak. When Basil externalises his hatred for London, it insinuates a crucial problem with modern metropolitan life. Basil Seal's hatred for London and its asphyxiating character is by extension, Waugh's disapproval of the metropolis.

Basil Seal would have to transform Azania into a Western civilisation haven. However, coming from the colonial metropolis, London, which he himself spites, already hints at the impending doom lurking over his assignment. Basil would hardly be able to enhance Seth's attempt to clone Western civilisation as model for Azania. It appears that Basil's interest in adventure, profit and recuperation from the boredom and humdrum existence which London orchestrates, would be more than his dedication to his herculean task. As such, he would not respect his terms of reference given that his interest in secular gains would sweep him off his feet. It should be noticed that when on one occasion he discusses oil business with the American commercial attaché, it highlights the bigger interest of imperialism; one that shelves the civilising mission pretensions, rooted in imperial agencies like religion and orthodox morality. Observe that it is two white men discussing their shared interest in committing Azanian resources. It is a business deal that even the Emperor's word may count little or not count at all. Notice Basil's emphatic "I'm prepared to give them a ten – years' monopoly," meaning Seth would endorse any deal he strikes. This hint at wanton exploitation of the Azanian (African) resources by imperialists is one of the indices of the fallen world, in which, according to Lodge, (2002:113) "people act with appalling disregard for fidelity, honesty and all other

forms of virtues. Therefore more than just on a trip to civilise Africa, Europeans had their inspiration rooted in trade and adventure. Africa would seem to hold an Edenised appeal to the European imperialists. Therefore, the religious strand of this civilising mission was only an item on the arsenal of strategies to subdue and exploit Africa. Their secular inclinations grossly blurred the significance of religion or Christianity.

It is evident that religion or issues of spirituality are not even a distant consideration in the day to day lives of the expatriates in Azania. They are thus ensnared in the web of secular glamour and opulence. This may well explain why in Azania, the expatriates, engage themselves in mostly activities that are self-gratifying and fail to sustain the defining ethos of imperialism; what Boehmer (2005:125) calls “an unambiguously heroic image of themselves as conquerors and citizens of the world” which the British imperialists cherished. It is intriguing to note that after his unsuccessful career, Courteney is sent to Azania on relegation. Much then cannot be expected of a man who remains in service due to his family influence. Waugh uses this to indict the corrupt practice of privileging nepotism over meritocracy, even in the imperialist world that propagates morality as a defining trait of its self-conception. Religion and orthodox morality as part of the imperial package were only a ruse employed in demonising the African heritage as a measure to perpetrate wanton exploitation.

Lane (2013:102) posits that in the pages of “*Black Mischief*”, Waugh’s “real venom is reserved for the English community”. If Waugh’s “real venom” is reserved for the English community in *Black Mischief*, then it shows that he declines to align with the affectations that define their being in Azania. His savage attack on Western civilisation takes a new relevance in *Black Mischief* because it is pitted, in comparison, against Azania which Western imperialism considers as uncivilised. Waugh’s anti-colonial spirit is not informed by his depiction of Azania as being better than the West. In fact he simply does not see the difference between Azania and the West; a difference that should justify the latter’s claim to civilisation. Thus the aspersions he casts on both Azanian primitivism and Western civilisation as bereft of moral strictures, point to Waugh’s submission in the novel that Azania is not worse than the West.

If one were to go by the fact that Emperor Seth's dream of transforming Azania with orientations gleaned from Western civilisation fails, then it vitiates the fact of Western civilisation being the universal norm. Waugh's position is therefore clear that there is something good about the Azanian primitive culture. This write-up understands the concept 'primitive' not in its derogatory sense, but as an apt description of a society that was, by its own estimation and standards, morally tame, and principled before its touch with the corrupting influences of a marauding decadent Western civilisation.

It could be postulated that one of the good things which Waugh finds in the primitive Azanian culture is its sense of collective consciousness and communal integration, which is a foil to the depraved individualism and class consciousness that characterise the British population in Debra Dowa. Two situations in the text would make this point clearer. The narrative voice recounts that the communal opposition to the Birth Control pageant is led by the Earl of Ngumo who extols some values of the Azanian people. In the true spirit of the African world view, they attach a high premium to a huge or extended family system. This is what the Earl of Ngumo has always boasted about with regard to his self-perception as an African. He would therefore be stiffly opposed to anything that threatens to uproot this aspect of their being. The narrator says, the Earl of Ngumo expresses "the general feeling of the landed gentry", a hint at the African collective consciousness and communal integration. This finds expression in the "loud grunts of approval" of the Earl's stance from the people, against the birth control saga.

It would be relevant at this point, to place the Earl of Ngumo, as an Azanian leader, in juxtaposition to Sir Samson Courteney, the head of the British legation in Debra Dowa, Azania. While the Earl of Ngumo is people-oriented, backed by the people in his opposition to the birth control pageant, Sir Courteney is individualistic and narcissistic. It is this individualism and class consciousness that belie Sir Courteney's link with the other members of the British Community in Debra Dowa. Driven by individualism, Sir Courteney abhors the prospect of Mildred Porch and Sarah Tin, two British crusaders for the prevention of cruelty against animals who have just arrived Debra Dowa visiting him. Sir Courteney

also externalises his individualism when again the narrator observes that he is ill-at-ease with the people taking refuge in his house following a threatening rebellion going on in Azania. That Sir Courteney is ill-at-ease with the people taking refuge in his house sounds ironical because that is just what should happen when they people are exposed to a life threatening situation like the one that currently obtains in Azania. His individualism defeats the purpose of his service. When he decides that they people would have to quit his residence, he does not care whether they get to harm after that. All he needs is his private convenience. Sir Courteney's individualistic inclinations are consistent with the colonial ideology of the "us" and "them" binary. One also sees in psychoanalytic terms, the clash of his id and ego when in a "mood of high displeasure" in his bathroom, he ruminates over the people's unwanted presence in his home. With these negative attributes exhibited by Sir Courteney and the other white settlers in Debra Dowa, Azania, Western civilisation defeats its own purpose.

As Greenberg (2010:125) posits, "the novel *Black Mischief* ... revolves around the comedy of modernisation, the absurd failures that result from the willful, directed imposition of Modern technologies and social practices onto a pre-modern, or not yet fully modern society". However, there is need to be cautious about the implications of Greenberg's use of "modern", since it still evokes contemporary discrepancies. Though Azanians are considered in imperialist Western perception as primitive, opposed to being civilised, there are interesting deconstructions of western bias against the term as highlighted say in Michael Bell's *Primitivism* and Marianna Torgovnick's seminal works *Gone Primitive* and *Primitive Passions*. Indeed, primitivism itself is a civilisation in its own right with its own choice and set of values which today seduce western consciousness in many ways. As Western perspectives of civilisation before, and in the 1930s when *Black Mischief* was published must have been altering in response to changing times, so too would Azanian civilisation (primitivism) have evolved. Every place and its people, depending on the times, enjoy a civilisation with which they could be defined. The commonality between all civilisations is that they are subject to the forces of evolution. Consequently, Waugh's anti-

colonial disdain significantly jolts the imperial ideology and as such, he rises above being a colonial apologist.

3. GREENE'S *THE HEART OF THE MATTER*

Graham Greene's *The Heart of the Matter* is a riposte to Catholic Doctrines and transgressions. Here, Africa is an exotic location and imperialism, a theme which constitutes a part of the central consciousness that pre-occupied Greene. Set in Free Town, Sierra Leone in West Africa, the novel features Henry Scobie as its principal character. Though Scobie is blemished, imperial discourse would still see him as better than the African, the "Other". Yet the question that arises is whether Scobie, steeped in the mean acts of corruption, adultery and suicide which soil his integrity and the imperial culture could still hold a civilising mantle that would appeal to Africans.

Scobie is an assistant police commissioner in the British colonial force in Sierra Leone. He has served for fifteen years in the West African colony. Harris, a character in the novel sneeringly describes the colony as "the original Tower of Babel... West Indians, Africans, real Indians, Syrians, Englishmen, Scotsmen in the Office of Works, Irish priests, French priest, Alsatian priests" (14). When Wilson questions him on what the Syrians do, Harris quips: "Make money. They run all the stores up country and most of the stores here. Run diamonds too" (14). Greene's interest here, it is significant to note, is not so much with projecting the colony as a disquieting place, as it is with depicting the moral implications of imperial presence and pursuits in the colony. Of nine named nationals, Africans are a negligible, infinitesimal lot. Their role in the imperial drama is almost difficult to perceive given that they are assigned to menial duties, like Ali, Scobie's servant. Drawing from Ali's role, it is evident that the African performs his duties with devotion and loyalty. There are important hints at the capitalist driven minds of the whites, and the multiplicity of white priests whose presence is not a panacea for the moral decadence that seethes through the colony, orchestrated by imperial agents. When Scobie posits that kindness and lies are worth a thousand truths in human relations, one's temptation to see this as an unambiguous acknowledgement of the spirit that defines

the imperial presence in the colony becomes stronger. It is a mission rooted in calculated falsity and hypocritical kindness, despite the powerful presence of Western religion, its related instruments and institutions as guarantors of universal morality.

When Louise returns from South Africa, she implores Scobie to attend church service with her and partake in the sacrament of the Holy Communion. The call by Louise for Scobie to go and receive communion is a disturbing request that shatters his inner being given that he had not had forethought about it. If Scobie had consistently missed Sunday Mass, and got involved in a dismal adulterous relationship with Helen Rolt, it indicates that even the imperialist who introduced the Judeo-Christian faith in Africa is grossly incapable of keeping to the rules of the establishment. When eventually Scobie would receive communion, it would constitute a perfunctory parodying of the church and Christianity. So, the uncivilised, primitive, ungodly, sexually untamed "Other" – the African in this context, would not have derived much in terms of respecting religious norms, from the imperialist as a source of inspiration and emulation. Scobie ends up in the snares of corruption and this would seem to inform the motivation for the scramble, by imperial powers, to own portions of Africa.

Again Harris who had earlier described the colony as the original Tower of Babel, in a letter to the Secretary of the old Dowhamian Association, describes the colony as "the white man's grave" (147). That Scobie decides to take away his life through suicide exonerates the African from any responsibility for his death. If Africa is the white man's grave or the Tower of Babel, then it is the white man who has transformed a hitherto pristine Africa into the negations they now ascribe to her. Scobie's death does not accrue from any engagement he undertakes in the interest of the African. He bows to the pressures of corruption and his instinctual sexual urges, and thus, would cease to be a man of integrity, a flag-bearer of the imperialist civilising mission in Africa. Scobie, could, if he had chosen to, rise above the garishness of the world. By subscribing to corruption and sustained adultery, Scobie subverts Western civilising and morality ideals. Greene therefore sees, as Waugh does, the colonial mission to Africa as a mere fortune hunt than a

civilisation crusade. The rivalry between Yusuf and Tallit; a rivalry that borders on mercantilism enhances the argument. They are the capitalists who run the stores and the diamonds too. This discussion finds Boehmer's postulation on Sierra Leone handy at this point. Boehmer (2005:156) argues that:

In The Heart of the Matter Sierra Leone is developed into a metaphor for human seediness, a place of moral degradation and spiritual dereliction, where even the (white man) of integrity is corrupted. Greene's self-consciousness therefore does not dilute the conventional symbolism through which the alien is represented.

It must be remarked that the Sierra Leone of "moral degradation" and "spiritual dereliction" is the Sierra Leone run by imperial intrusion. Its pristine values are eroded consequently by the unbridled quest to gratify imperial appetites. What Boehmer, however, would seem to ignore with the claim that Greene's "self-consciousness does not dilute the conventional symbolism through which the alien is represented" is that Greene does not seem to see any difference between the white man of supposed integrity who falls so irretrievably low, and the "barbaric" African, prone to corruption and sexual misdemeanours, as perceived by Western assessment.

It is of capital importance to note that attempting to draw inferences from Scobie's portrayal, to postulate on Greene's anti-colonial stance, one must not miss the stress placed on Scobie's freewill. If Scobie scouts and accepts a bribe to sponsor Louise's trip to South Africa, it defeats the moral character of the civilising mission. The white man had come to rescue the African from the pangs of moral decadence and spiritual dereliction. But if he fails as in Scobie's case where he messes himself up in a bribery scandal for which Yusuf would continually taunt and blackmail him, then he had placed his private interests above the expectations of the establishment. In this regard, Greene does dilute the stereotypical representation of the alien in that he depicts Western civilisation as corrupt and barbaric as the African purported primitivism. The African is not primitive like Ali's case, just because he is not proficient in English, a communication tool that is foreign to him. It must

be agreed that the African has his own frames of moral reference. This may well explain why Scobie goes crashing without having been shoved by the African. His corruption scandal is initiated by the Syrian Ali, a fellow white man. Being at par, Western civilisation cannot claim superiority over African primitivism. Both, by Greene's estimation, yearn for proper overhauling.

By ascribing corruption, in every sense of the word, to Western civilisation, Greene makes the point that in its current character, Western Civilisation cannot be the universal norm. Indeed it is the white man's presence that has morally unsettled the colony. By this, Greene interrogates the claim the imperialist makes of himself as a moral colossus, from whom the African, wallowing in moral rot, should draw lessons. Even when Greene does not present the colony as an alternative to the European, his, in *The Heart of the Matter*, is not less as anti-colonial diatribe. It could be argued that like Waugh, Greene still upholds the imperial establishment. He however challenges that establishment to work its character to a morally acceptable one. Greene thus posits a contesting formulation; an apparent break from the imperialist paradigm. He interpolates imperialism on the grounds of its deviant policies and business. By questioning the moral canvass on which imperial dominance hinges, he jolts the imperialist to re-consider his self-conception vis-à-vis the African, the "other".

We should point out that religion which is one of the mainstays of imperialism does not have a smooth ride in *The Heart of the Matter*. This is corroborated by the picture Scobie paints of God lodged in his body as a seed but ironically, his moral degradation is attributable to that seed. Helen Rolt, on her part, when asked whether she believes in God, bluntly states "I gave that up when I left school, if you are a clergyman's daughter there are a lot of things you will pretend about..." (170). Two important clues are embedded in Rolt's apparent scoff of religion: (1) religion is a matter for the school, and one could add, the church. It is therefore an institutional thing which may not exact compliance to its values. (2) Clergymen and their families may not be as trustworthy as one might imagine, with issues of religious content. Father Rank who is seduced by drink to denounce God corroborates Rolt's divulgence. Helen

Rolt becomes the force that complicates and quickens Scobie's pace towards destruction. Of Scobie, the narrator remarks that "thinking of what he had done and was going to do, he thought even God is a failure" (254). These are all clues to the effect that religion as an agency of imperialist civilising mission to Africa has lost its significance. Like Sarah Miles of *The End of the Affair* who implores God to keep Maurice Bendrix out of harm's way with the bombings that are going on, Scobie, for the sake of other people, tells God: "'O God,' ... if instead I should abandon you, punish me but let the others get some happiness" (220).

Notice that by the time Scobie contemplates suicide, his religious inclinations are not sufficient to dissuade him. He says his heart had hardened and "...it seemed to him that he had rotted so far that it was useless to make effort. God was lodged in him and his body was corrupting outwards from that seed" (244). He recalls his first night in the Nissen hut with Helen Rolt, the letter which he had written to Helen claiming that he loved Helen more than he loved his wife Louise. It is this letter which Yusuf intercepts and uses it to blackmail and crush Scobie morally. It is the same Yusuf that Scobie had helped to smuggle diamond. Scobie had also taken communion to put Louise's mind at ease. Yusuf had, about the letter threatened Scobie that "I hear from the clerk in the cable company that your wife is on her way back. I will have the letter handed to her as soon as she lands" (200).

As earlier indicated, Scobie's religious principles are not strong enough to tame him from committing suicide. Even when he rather uses an analogy deriving from Christ's death to justify his decision, arguing that by offering Himself for humanity, Christ committed suicide, so if he Scobie dies as sacrifice for the happiness of others, it would just be as fitting, it is easier to see a secular than a spiritual bearing here on Scobie. We would agree with Gordon (1997:26) who draws from this to observe that Scobie's moral character has eroded slowly, often through minor cowardly decisions in seamy matters." On one occasion, Wilson arrogantly tells Scobie that he (Wilson) kissed Scobie's wife. A revelation like this one would normally stir up every man who cares for their wife. In reaction, Scobie merely says "it's the colonial sport" (133). If adultery is colonial sports, then the white settlers in Africa who are harbingers of

Christian religion, are caught up in the snares of corporeal gratification that beats the purpose of Christianity. The disinclined manner in which Scobie responds to Wilson on the latter's confession that he had kissed his (Scobie's) wife, probably derives from the guilt that is scarifying Scobie's conscience about his consummate adultery with Helen Rolt. Scobie therefore lacks the moral authority to sanction Wilson. Scobie's cowardly affirmation of sexual misconduct as colonial sports indicts the decadence that animates the life of Western settlers on the African continent. This is where Greene steps in, raising an objection to the moral choices of Westerners on the African continent; putrid choices that unleash reeking immorality, a furtherance of secular consciousness.

Note must be taken that Scobie's decision to commit suicide is not instinctual; it springs from a rational conscious thought, arguably informed by secular insights. It is coloured with pride; the same pride that had led him on the path of sin. The parallel between Scobie and the imperialist apologist should not be missed. The colonial master decides he would civilise Africa. In like manner, Scobie decides he would make those who are dependent on him happy: "He would sacrifice his own happiness, his own position, even his state of grace if that were necessary, to give succor to unjustly suffering humanity" (43). It is ridiculous that Scobie considers his own death by suicide as an option in that quest to provide happiness. It is, in like manner, ridiculous for the imperialist to privilege corruption and moral dereliction as options in his civilising mission to Africa; a mission that projected Christianity as one of its foundational pillars.

It is ridiculous for the imperialist not confronted by any other reason, but the greed to expand his territorial acquisition and the economic, political benefits that come with it, to brand Africa, as Harris does, as the white man's grave. That Scobie, a colonial police officer ends up taking away his own life in the colony, is not a narrative accident but a deliberate design by Greene to bring imperialism in *The Heart of the Matter* to its anti-climax. To note that all the pressures exerted on Scobie, are in the main, initiated by white folk like Yusuf, Wilson, Rolt, Louise, exonerates the colonised (the "Other") from blame relating to his demise. Adulteries, corruption, murder, the spiting of religious dogma,

trafficking, organised crime are echoes of imperialist misconduct in the colony. This is a major subversion of Western civilisation as a moral paradise which the colonised would have to hold in awe, and emulate. It is in this regard that Greene's anti-colonial conviction in *The Heart of the Matter* emerges. It articulates Greene's pessimism about the mission, accomplishments and prospects of imperialism in Africa. When Scobie commits suicide with no regard for imperialist sentiments it amounts to Greene's contempt for the bankruptcy of the civilising mission. Greene thus stings the imperialist establishment on the grounds of hypocrisy.

When Scobie dies, the question of the church and God comes into sharp focus. To Wilson's insinuation that Scobie could possibly have taken away his own life, Louise, in a response that borders on hysteria, quips: "...Oh no, he couldn't have done that. After all, in spite of everything, he was a Catholic" (269). This is evidently a mockery of the church and Christianity. As a Catholic, Scobie had known the implication of taking away life. It is a mortal sin with impending hellish consequences for the sinner. Scobie however chooses to breach his doctrine because, as he calculates, his death would provide relief to both man – Louise, Helen Rolt and God. So if he is damned because he achieves this goal that means just a lot to him, he would not regret it. Thus, he offends church dogma expressly. If one were to see religion from the imperialist standpoint, then it enunciates Greene's anti-colonial disposition. What would the "Other" copy from "Us" when "We" are incapable of respecting the rules of our own game? If Christianity and the church are an agency of the imperialist establishment, then Greene questions Christian rhetoric, and this, by extension, is an externalisation of his mistrust for imperialist civilising mission blighted by moral degradation and spiritual dereliction.

Thus, Greene would like the church, just like he would like imperialism to practise what it preaches. There should not be any deviations and approximations, unless perhaps one subscribes to moral relativism according to which there is not a single true morality. As Harman (nd:1) argues:

There are a variety of possible moralities or moral frame of reference, and whether something is morally right or wrong, good

or bad, just or unjust, etc is a relative matter – relative to one or another morality or moral frame of reference. Something can be morally right relative to one moral frame of reference and morally wrong relative to another.

If one were to go by this strand of reasoning, then there are no absolutes. No morality can claim superiority over the other because it is the context that determines its perception and relevance. By the same stretch of argument, no civilisation then can be superior to another given that it is informed by “the spatio-temporal frame of reference.” Therefore whether it is Western civilisation or African primitivism, each one serves the intents and purposes for which it is meant.

This may account for something good which Scobie sees about the indigenous people during an investigation he is making to establish the facts of a case of petty larceny:

From eight-thirty in the morning until eleven he dealt with a case of petty larceny: there were six witnesses to examine, and he didn't believe a word that any of them said. In European cases there are words one believes and words one distrusts: it is possible to draw a speculative line between the truth and lies: at least the cui bono principle to some extent operates, and it is usually safe to assume if the accusation is theft and there is no question of insurance, that something has at least been stolen. But here one could make no such assumption: one could draw no lines. He had known police officers whose nerves broke down in the effort to separate a single grain of incontestable truth; they ended, some of them, by striking a witness, they were pilloried in the local Creole papers and were invalided home or transferred. It woke in some men a virulent hatred of the black skin, but Scobie had long ago, during his fifteen years, passed through the dangerous stages: now lost in the tangle of lies he felt an extraordinary affection for these people who paralysed an alien form of justice by so simple a method (140-141)

An epistemic affection, kindred safety, and communal dissent animate the people's response to an alien form of justice. When the narrator says

“he (Scobie) felt an extraordinary affection for these people who paralysed an alien form of justice by so simple a method,” it celebrates the African communal fellow feeling as opposed to Western individualism. It is undeniably a powerful statement that legitimises an African cultural sensibility and the need to reconceptualise the alien justice system in a way that would reflect the African mind and reality. Through Scobie, Greene thus sees something good in the primitive culture; their psychological heritage that resonates with the need to keep each other protected from the fangs of an intruder.

4. CONCLUSION

Waugh and Greene, as posited in the foregoing discussion, ingeniously weave perceptible evidence in *Black Mischief* and *The Heart of the Matter* respectively, to the effect that Western civilisation is as much barbaric as African primitivism. The barbarism of the imperialist, issues from his penchant for secular proclivities which spite his religion and morality. The inglorious fates of Basil Seal who at the end of *Black Mischief*, eats the stewed body of his girlfriend, Prudence Courteney; and Scobie, who scuttles away in suicide, attest to this. Though, as would be expected, important differences characterise Waugh and Greene’s visions as novelists, there is a significant point of intersection in their fiction with regard to imperialism. Given that their novels draw attention to the immorality and injustices of Western imperialism in Africa, Waugh and Greene thus engage the establishment from the perspective of jolting it to overhaul itself. Their anti-colonial dispositions are pegged on this. It is therefore evident that they are hesitant to be apologists for Western imperialism. In their disaffirmation of the metropolis and its corroding influence on the colony, they see something positive in the “primitive” culture, which elevates the sense of collective consciousness, communal integration, genuine affection, fellow-feeling, communal vigilance, kindred safety and hospitality as opposed to Western individualism, moral mimicry, class consciousness and epistemic hypocrisy.

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