

Books

The First Time Out Was Vintage Cary

AISSA SAVED. By Joyce Cary. Harper & Row. \$3.95. 219 Pages.

By W. H. SCARBOROUGH

The first novels of many fine writers are memorable for being either extremely good or abysmally bad; but the majority of them tend to be a bit indifferent—indicative of a talent still trapped in a verbal cocoon.

This republication of Joyce Cary's first novel flatly declines to rest comfortably in its pigeon-hole. It is not characteristic Cary, nor is it really an indifferently written book. First published in 1932, it has had to wait thirty years for the remainder of the world to catch up to it in its attentive scrutiny of a continent in transition. The cataclysms of the fifties and this fragment of the sixties have largely changed the terms in which we think of African upheavals, not to mention the manner in which Africans are wont to upheave.

Cary was himself an administrative officer in Nigeria, and his tenure there gave him a superb chance to focus the novelist's eye on his subject. In his time the coming of the white man asserted itself in theological terms foremost, in political terms secondarily; Africa was still largely a theocracy in Cary's time. Cary wrote of this upheaval in terms of the impact of imported ideas and what can happen to them in native hands. His novel is ample proof that fundamentalist Christianity in the hands of a native can be just as deadly as a submachine gun.

Since Cary chose to write in a frame of reference that borders on being anthropological, and underscored the emphasis in a prefatory note to a later edition, it is necessary to give some attention to his thesis. The Nigeria of Post World War I was still the face of chaos on which British Colonialism had sketched a few casual designs, in the form of colonial administrators who attempted to work with native councils

in a semblance of government. In effect the administrator became a sort of Godhead in his own right, a figure to be circumvented or feared and obeyed as the need arose. Practical anarchy never had a better opportunity to assert itself. The administrator on one hand had the colonial bureaucracy to which he could not avoid playing the mendicant fool, on the other a native theory of public responsibility in which graft and nepotism were the essence of democracy. Missionaries were there at the pleasure of the administration but not without their means. Their sense of responsibility mattered little; they dealt in a commodity as readily convertible to native ends as coca-cola and cotton cloth. God and Jesus could become in the hands of parishioners an instrument of violence or an inconvenience that could be as easily shucked as a loin cloth. Omnipotence to a native was just that: an incautious missionary could be swept away in the flood of religious fervor turned to riot before he was aware of what was afoot. The parishioners of the Rev. and Mrs. Carr were proof of the pudding. Most of them had been derelicts from their own people, patched back together again and imbued with a good dose of evangelical fervor which bore a disquieting resemblance to an old fashioned head hunt.

At the worst possible time—a dry season when crops were failing and local Gods were in Coventry for not producing rain, the mission—missionaries and all—found themselves carrying the Word across the Niger in a crusade that wasn't planned for all the right reasons. The mission's native concept of conversion was by the sword and the fire, even though the Rev. Carr tried manfully to preach.

It was not his message that came across. The pagan mind quickly surmised that the White Man's god was playing hod with the rain situation, and the converts didn't discourage the notion—after all, what's the use of a God who isn't going to punish heathens? Aissa, a statuesque tribeswoman who'd seen the light could have cared less. Her casual husband was across the river, and he could cast a shadow even in divine light. In the ensuing riot she didn't manage to get back across the river; she was quickly branded a witch, thoroughly beaten and jailed, losing a foot in the process. After escaping and returning, she and the mission's prize convert led another assault that all but consumed the province in revolution. Aissa, of course, is a superb vehicle for Cary's concept of the primitive mentality in the grip of a foreign idea, and her agonies in his hands are as intricate and exquisite as the mating dance of a flamingo.

The Message, however important it may be to the structure of the novel, is not the source of its excellence. Cary's almost whimsical, understated style of narrative events produces a sort of vertigo that leaves the reader disquietingly disoriented in a landscape barren of fixed points. Its coarse texture, colored liberally with blood, with the juxtaposition of humor and stark terror, perhaps draw closer to the subject than any simple account of tribal behavior.

The later Cary would have done it differently to be sure, but for what it is, his first is a little gem.

All About Frederick II

Fine Research, But...

THE GREAT INFIDEL. By Joseph Jay Deiss. Random House. \$5.95. 431 Pages.

The art of the historical novel is a sometime thing. Rare examples approach really top-notch quality (Robert Graves' "I Claudius"), but the bulk are in the grand old tradition of Alexandre Dumas the Elder, who employed a hefty staff of ghosts to take his skeletal plots and flesh them out with an appropriate

amount of verbiage. A heavy tide of historical backburners during the late forties pretty well saturated the market and led to one memorable parody of the genre, plus general abatement of the market.

After the excesses of that era, historical novels have settled down to a diet of less blood and gore, more careful research into historical fact. Still, historical novels are in that grey area—

neither real fiction nor good history.

Texas author Joseph Jay Deiss has almost raised the business to a calling; his thick, careful biography of Frederick II took five years to research and write. In the course of the work he found it necessary to learn modern Italian, brush up on his Latin and French, then worked back into the 13th century to study the Italian of his hero. As a final hedge against artificiality he started the novel in an abandoned goat hut in the Aeolian Islands, later moved to a Medieval tower which served as a refuge from Saracen raiders. His on-site research was minute and exhaustive. If anyone knows anything about Frederick II, it must be Mr. Deiss.

And he does. Compared to his time, Frederick was a beam of light piercing the darkness of a crypt. His Grandfather, the fierce and barbaric Frederick Barbarossa, had almost succeeded in putting the Holy Roman Empire back together in the 12th century. His death was the signal for the glue to come unstuck, with the help of Popes, warring princes, pretenders to the throne and such like. Frederick's father had contrived to hold on to the Kingdom of Sicily and little more. Frederick was raised as a ward of Pope Innocent III in the remnants of his kingdom, but largely he was little more than a waif in the streets of Palermo, free to wander among Saracen and Christian alike, absorbing the knowledge of the streets. Attaining his majority in the Sicilian fashion at the age of 14, he began at once to put things aright, first by marrying Costanza of Aragon, widow of the King of Hungary. She was a number of years his senior, but in her dowry were 500 knights—the nucleus of an army he did not have. Our modern experience of children give us ample knowledge of the guile of children, but Frederick set something of an all-time mark. Through careful manipulation and duplicity, he paralyzed Pope Innocent's plans for using him to subjugate Europe to the Papacy to regain his power. Once crowned Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, he was able to regain armed might; once armed might, a deadly battle to confine the Church to realms of the spirit. Frederick was excommunicated three times, married three times. Although German by ancestry he was a Sicilian by preference, and his court became one of the truly magnificent seats of learning for all time. Poets and scientists found him a ready patron who could match them in intellect; he spoke nine languages, but preferred Arabic. He brought peace and prosperity and stability to his realm for decades.

The Papist penchant for intrigue never abated. After a serious defeat at Parma while attempting to go to the aid of his son on the German throne, he took ill, appeared to suffer from megalomania, and retired to Sicily to die. It was Europe's last fling at unity for centuries to come.

As fascinating as his subject is, as thorough as his research, Mr. Deiss's novel is badly flawed. Too often, his Frederick tells a tale all too reminiscent of the memoirs of a latter-day industrial baron. The initial fallacy of assuming that fictionalization of this particular bit of history would bring it alive was fatal. Mr. Deiss had the materials of a superb and comprehensive biography. His predilection for the novel form is regrettable.—WHS

In The Margin

By W. H. SCARBOROUGH

Choosing The Heir Apparent

Hemingway and Faulkner are safely cold, and it is now polite, not to mention necessary, to select a new crown prince of American letters. Time Magazine, in its characteristic straightforward style, scattergunned predictions all over the place in a recent issue, dropping names and falling all over itself trying to lay the ground rules by which the new ruler would be chosen.

It would appear from Time's article the world will have to wait a couple of decades until the current crop is ready for harvest. An earlier Time judgment in which J. D. Salinger appeared to have won the show even before the death of Faulkner, had to be reversed; Time's critics have tired of Glasses who live in stone houses. Most other critics have maintained a discreet silence and a commendable reluctance to name anyone as pre-eminent, perhaps realizing such behavior to be little better than handicapping horses.

In the midst of all this we remembered a book by Malcolm Cowley, whose Viking Portable edition of William Faulkner rescued him from oblivion.

The book, a collection of articles Cowley had written for various publications over a period of years, appeared as "The Literary Situation." After reading it, one could readily believe that the cause of serious letters in America has all the vitality of yesterday morning's kippered herring. The book appeared in 1955, and things, of course, have changed since then. However a disturbing number of Cowley's observations have proved correct: the shrinking market for short fiction, the increasing attention publishers must give to the balance sheet. The most interesting and perhaps significant portions of the book consist of four chapters under the general heading, "A Natural History of the American Writer," and a final chapter, "The Next Fifty Years in American Literature." If Cowley's history is within hailing distance of accuracy, the appointed few have been described and little more than a search to find the best embodiment of Cowley's modern man of letters should be necessary to see them among the modern crop. Most writers, Cowley says, are prey to a number of things which set them apart—an overdose of isolation, a penchant for reading, a singular search for the right words to describe a precise situation or set of circumstances—language makers as it were, stylists in extreme cases. The impulse to write is not a neurosis, a sublimation for something omitted from the realm of experience.

He may share something in common with the alcoholic in that he experiences extremes of emotion. At the same time he is politically liberal or apolitically anarchic; he tends to prefer a mode of life akin to that of the patricians, the aristocrats. Cowley pulls up way short of labeling him a "superior being."

The real determinants of excellence in the next literary generation have little to do with literary models: social, technological, political, economic upheaval and change. Writers in the nineteenth century often began as ministers; later the emphasis switched to newspapers, finally to the universities, and the change in origin is perceivable in the nature of the literature. Today's young writer more often than not teaches in creative writing classes, may often become a teacher of creative writing without ever having written for publication himself.

None of the young group has yet begun articulating the myths and archetypes of his own time, a prerequisite in which Cowley firmly believes; hence, they are doomed to failure until they do. He might be challenged on this latter point by Salinger, and the peculiar pattern his family of Glasses make, and by a goodly number of others who have put forth an image of man. The man thus advanced may be unattractive, lonely, insecure, frightened and hollow. It could be an accurate reflection after all, of mankind as young novelists must experience it.

The criterion by which Cowley would judge the greatness to come will be the extent to which new forms of literature are created. The novel of Hemingway and Faulkner cannot express what is happening now. The subjectivity of the age past must be supplanted by a new objectivity, a new attention to what happens between people rather than what takes place inside each.

We have now become a little suspicious of critics who tell us that such and such a new work breathes new life into the atrophied form of the novel. Few of them in this generation have, and it often seems none of them will. Perhaps Cowley is correct; when a novelist turns the conventions set by the Hemingways, the Faulkners and the Fitzgeralds inside out and makes it sing in a new voice, we'll have excellence once more. Certainly that sort of revolution is what made the last generation so memorable. They would probably be the first to rail against their conventions as models for anyone else.



AUTHOR IN CLASS — Professor Loren MacKinney, who is finishing a book on "Medical Practices in Manuscript Miniatures and Texts," is shown above as he lectures in a class in Medieval History at the University. He has devoted extensive research to the evolution of medicine.

Medical History: From Peony To The Mystical 'Caladrius'

By DOUGLAS EISELE

Ever hear of an out-patient clinic or a medical hospital in the thirteenth century, A. D.?

Or see a mystically-empowered "Caladrius" bird that could save a man's life just by looking at him—or let the patient die by failing to turn his head?

Chances are you haven't, because these and other practices and institutions identified with medical history are little known to the general public. But they'll soon gain in popularity, if a local scholar has his way.

The scholar is Loren MacKinney, a Kenan Professor of Medieval History whose knowledge of early medicine could probably qualify him as reputable practitioner in the years 500 to 1500.

He might need some stars to gaze upon, several sprigs of peony, a jar of leeches to suck blood from particular patients and an array of herbs—and someone to help hold his more unruly clients.

And, of course, he'd have to know of the scores of spots on the human body from which blood should be drained in order to bring relief from a specific disease.

These and other practices viewed through the 20th century eye as medical oddities are only a few among numerous findings which Dr. MacKinney is incorporating into a detailed volume nearing completion for publication.

His research deals with "Medical Practices in Manuscript Miniatures and Texts"—another way of saying he's studying early medical practices by examination of extant small paintings depicting them.

The job has taken Professor MacKinney to the best libraries in almost every European country, including nations behind the Iron Curtain where much of the data for his research exists.

Now, in a comfortable study at his home here, the University professor is recording the medical evolution into a two-part vol-

ume with reference as far back as 510 A. D.

The heart of his research are the "miniatures," or small paintings, themselves. He has found them from Leningrad to London, from Istanbul to Stockholm, from the 6th to the 16th century.

He has chosen them not as satires upon the methods of early medicine, but rather as pictorial evidences of the various stages through which medicine has passed and the tools it has used in progressing to its more modern stage.

Maybe, he says, the historians of the future will look with similar interest at methods of the 20th Century and smile inside at the crude and mystical approaches used.

The first part of Dr. MacKinney's book deals directly with photo reproductions and miniatures depicting medical practices from the year 510 to over 10 centuries later, about the year 1550.

For the unscrupulously layman interested primarily in what he can see and read for himself, this is the more interesting part of the book.

But then comes part two, which is a detailed list of all known "miniatures" in the world and where they can be found. They include those incorporated in Dr. MacKinney's book, and several thousand others scattered elsewhere about the world.

Dr. MacKinney says the book will be of interest to doctors, librarians, medical historians and "the general intelligent lay public interested in history."

No doubt there is reason for interest in the evolution displayed. It begins with early out-patient clinics or hospitals, pictured clearly in brilliant colors and in blacks and whites of miniatures, dating over a thousand years.

Next comes the diagnostic clinic, wherein the doctor has turned to analysis to identify the illness for which relief is being sought.

The forerunner to today's urinalysis, star gazing, the mystical Caladrius bird, the taking of a patient's pulse or the listening to a heart beat—all were seen in diagnostic clinics in the second stage of development.

A third section of the presentation involves "materia medica," or the materials of which medicines are made. It was a sort of primitive approach to modern botanical pharmacy.

With the sources and uses of medicines established, the next step in the presentation deals with the application—both external and internal—of the medication required.

One interesting miniature illustrates the belief that the cure for lunacy was to place a sprig of peony around the patient's neck.

Or, if you thought of it in time, a piece of peony worn during a long trip would protect the traveler from all sorts of danger—that growing out of organic difficulties or the worst kind of external attack.

Mechanical treatment of infirmities by surgery finally comes into play.

In this stage, the doctor may prescribe bleeding from the arm at the elbow joint for one disease, or the same practice from the left ear lobe for another. Cutting and burning could cause the bleeding, but leeches were also effective.

As early as the 13th century, miniatures were drawn that established the practice of suturing—or stitching—to close external wounds.

Obstetrics is yet another field of interest in the extensive study, as is the use of baths in water thought to be effective in the treatment of varied diseases.

Over 100 paintings, copied from originals held in libraries around the world, will be included in the book. The book is expected to be on the market within another year, Dr. MacKinney said.

It is being published by the Wellcome Medical Historical Library of London, England.



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Pack 828 Holds Blue-Gold Dinner

Cub Scouts of Pack 828, one of the largest and most active Cub Packs in the Orange District, joined their families in their annual Blue and Gold dinner Tuesday night at the Community Church.

Special guests at the dinner were Bob Booker, Orange District's new Scout executive; and Gene McJunkin, chairman of the Commission on Education at the Aldersgate Methodist Church, Pack 828's sponsor.

Cubmaster Fred Hawkins recognized each den and the den mothers: Mrs. Homer Webb, Mrs. George Scheer, Mrs. C. A. Kirkpatrick, Mrs. Stuart Vandiviere, and Mrs. P. D. Midgett.

The Rev. P. D. Midgett and Mrs. Midgett led the group in singing.

Stuart Vandiviere presented awards: Gary Price and Mike Bawden received the Wolf Badge. John Campbell and Gary Price received the Wolf Arrow Points. John Campbell, Steve Bawden, Jim Kirkpatrick and Jim Vernon received the Bear Badge. Steve Bawden and Jim Vernon received the Bear Arrow Points. John Eason and George Scheer received the Lion Badge and Arrow Points. Bob Ritchie received the Assistant Denner Badge.

Chamber Music Tuesday Evening

"An Evening of Chamber Music," sponsored by the Tuesday Evening Series of the UNC Department of Music, will be heard on Feb. 26 at 8 p.m. in Hill Music Hall.

Performing a program of Corelli, Mendelssohn, Martinu, and Mozart will be Edgar Alden, Mary Gray Clarke, and Wilton Mason of the UNC Music faculty, and Dorothy Alden, director of the Chapel Hill Youth Orchestra. Mr. Alden, Miss Clarke, and Mrs. Alden are also members of the North Carolina String Quartet. Mr. Mason has just returned from a Kenan Leave of Absence.

Corelli's Sonata da camera a tre, Opus 4, No. 4, to be performed by Mr. and Mrs. Alden, violin, Miss Clarke, cello, and Mr. Mason, harpsichord, dates from 1694. Musicologist Homer Ulrich writes that in this opus one feels that "there is a successful attempt to write dignified, melodious pieces of music, free of formal restrictions and free of pomp and empty display."

The Mendelssohn Trio in D minor, Opus 49, will be performed by Mr. Alden and Miss Clarke, and Mr. Mason, piano.

In a change from the instruments local audiences have come to expect, Mr. Alden (violinist) will play the viola and Mrs. Alden (violinist) the violin in the Three Madrigals for violin and viola by the contemporary composer Martinu.

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