

CRONIN, Archibald Joseph (1896-1981), Schottland

Beyond This Place (1950, auch: *To Live Again*)

Dt: Keine Übersetzung nachgewiesen

Der Mord, für den ein Unschuldiger viele Jahre im Gefängnis verbracht hat, wurde in Wirklichkeit von einem Epilepsiekranken im postiktalen Ausnahmezustand verübt. Er hat sein Leben und Vermögen wohlthätigen Aktivitäten gewidmet, um sein Gewissen zu beruhigen.

Ein taubstummtes Baby, Frucht einer Vergewaltigung, stirbt an „fits“.

Zum Autor (Wiki 22.11.24):

„**Archibald Joseph Cronin** (19 July 1896 – 6 January 1981), known as **A. J. Cronin**, was a Scottish physician and novelist. His best-known novel is *The Citadel* (1937), about a Scottish physician who serves in a Welsh mining village before achieving success in London, where he becomes disillusioned about the venality and incompetence of some doctors. Cronin knew both areas, as a medical inspector of mines and as a physician in Harley Street. The book exposed unfairness and malpractice in British medicine and helped to inspire the National Health Service.



The Stars Look Down, set in the North East of England, is another of his best-selling novels inspired by his work among miners. Both novels have been filmed, as have *Hatter's Castle*, *The Keys of the Kingdom* and *The Green Years*. His 1935 novella *Country Doctor* inspired a long-running BBC radio and TV series, *Dr. Finlay's Casebook* (1962–1971), set in the 1920s. There was a follow-up series in 1993–1996.

Early life

Cronin was born in Cardross, Dunbartonshire, Scotland, the only child of a Presbyterian mother, Jessie Cronin (née Montgomerie), and a Catholic father, Patrick Cronin. Cronin often wrote of young men from similarly mixed backgrounds. His paternal grandparents had emigrated from County Armagh, Ireland, and become glass and china merchants in Alexandria. Owen Cronin, his grandfather, had had his surname changed from Cronogue in 1870. His maternal grandfather, Archibald Montgomerie, was a hatter who owned a shop in Dumbarton. After their marriage Cronin's parents moved to Helensburgh, where he attended Grant Street School. When he was seven years old, his father, an insurance agent and commercial traveller, died of tuberculosis. He and his mother moved to her parents' home in Dumbarton, and she soon became a public health inspector in Glasgow.

Cronin was not only a precocious student at Dumbarton Academy, who won prizes in writing competitions, but an excellent athlete and association footballer. From an early age he was an avid golfer, and he enjoyed the sport throughout his life. He also loved salmon fishing.

The family later moved to Yorkhill, Glasgow, where Cronin attended St Aloysius' College in the Garnethill area of the city. He played football for the First XI there, an experience he included in one of his last novels, *The Minstrel Boy*. A family decision that he should study either to join the church or to practise medicine was settled by Cronin himself when he chose "the lesser of two evils". He won a Carnegie scholarship to study medicine at the University of Glasgow in 1914. Having been absent in 1916–1917 for naval service, he graduated in 1919 with highest honours in the degree of MBChB. Later that year he visited India as ship's surgeon on a liner. Cronin went on to earn additional qualifications, including a Diploma in Public Health (1923) and Membership of the Royal College of Physicians (1924). In 1925 he gained an MD at the University of Glasgow with a dissertation entitled "The History of Aneurysm".

Medical career

During the First World War, Cronin served as a surgeon sub-lieutenant in the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve before graduating from medical school. After the war he trained at hospitals that included Bellahouston Hospital and Lightburn Hospital in Glasgow and the Rotunda Hospital in Dublin. He undertook general practice at Garelochhead, a village on the River Clyde, and in Tredegar, a mining town in South Wales. In 1924 he was appointed Medical Inspector of Mines for Great Britain. His survey of medical regulations in collieries and his reports on the correlation between coal-dust inhalation and pulmonary disease were published over the next few years. Cronin drew on his medical experience and research into the occupational hazards of the mining industry for his later novels – *The Citadel*, set in Wales, and *The Stars Look Down*, set in Northumberland. He subsequently moved to London, where he practised in Harley Street before opening a busy medical practice of his own in Notting Hill. Cronin was also the medical officer for the Whiteleys department store at the time and had an increasing interest in ophthalmology.

Writing career

In 1930 Cronin was diagnosed with a chronic duodenal ulcer and told to take six months' complete rest in the country on a milk diet. At Dalchenna Farm by Loch Fyne he was finally able to indulge a lifelong desire to write a novel, having previously "written nothing but prescriptions and scientific papers." From Dalchenna Farm he travelled to Dumbarton to research the background of his first novel, using files from Dumbarton Library, which still has a letter from him requesting advice. He composed *Hatter's Castle* in the span of three months and quickly had it accepted by Gollancz, the only publisher to which he submitted it, apparently after his wife had randomly stuck a pin in a list of publishers. It was an immediate success and launched Cronin's career as a prolific author. He never returned to medicine.

Many of Cronin's books were bestsellers in their day and translated into many languages. Some of his stories draw on his medical career, dramatically mixing realism, romance and social criticism. Cronin's works examine moral conflicts between the individual and society, as his idealistic heroes pursue justice for the common man. One

of his early novels, *The Stars Look Down* (1935), chronicles transgressions in a mining community in north-east England and an ambitious miner's rise to be a Member of Parliament (MP).

A prodigiously fast writer, Cronin liked to average 5,000 words a day, meticulously planning the details of his plots in advance. He was known to be tough in business dealings, although in private life he was a person whose "pawky humour... peppered his conversations," according to one of his editors, Peter Haining.

Cronin also contributed stories and essays to various international publications. During the Second World War he worked for the British Ministry of Information, writing articles as well as participating in radio broadcasts to foreign countries.

Influence of *The Citadel*

The Citadel (1937), a tale of a doctor's struggle to balance scientific integrity with social obligations, helped to promote the establishment of the National Health Service (NHS) in the United Kingdom by exposing the inequity and incompetence of medical practice at the time. In the novel, Cronin advocated a free public health service to defeat the wiles of doctors who "raised guinea-snatching and the bamboozling of patients to an art form." Cronin and Aneurin Bevan had both worked at the Tredegar Cottage Hospital in Wales, which served as one of the bases for the NHS. The author quickly made enemies in the medical profession, and there was a concerted effort by one group of specialists to get *The Citadel* banned. Cronin's novel, which became the highest-selling book ever published by Gollancz, informed the public about corruption in the medical system, which eventually led to reform. Not only were the author's pioneering ideas instrumental in creating the NHS, but according to the historian Raphael Samuel, the popularity of Cronin's novels played a major role in the Labour Party's landslide victory in 1945.

By contrast, one of Cronin's biographers, Alan Davies, called the book's reception mixed. A few of the more vociferous medical practitioners of the day took exception to one of its many messages: that a few well-heeled doctors in fashionable practices were unethically extracting large amounts of money from their equally well-off patients. Some pointed to a lack of balance between criticism and praise for hard-working doctors. The majority accepted it for what it was, a topical novel. The press tried to incite passions within the profession in an attempt to sell copy, while Victor Gollancz followed suit in an attempt to promote the book – both overlooking that it was a work of fiction, not a scientific piece of research, and not autobiographical.

In the United States *The Citadel* won the National Book Award, Favorite Fiction of 1937, voted by members of the American Booksellers Association. According to a Gallup poll taken in 1939, *The Citadel* was voted the most interesting book readers had ever read.

Religion

Some of Cronin's novels also deal with religion, which he had grown away from during his medical training and career, but with which he became reacquainted in the 1930s. At medical school, as he recounts in his autobiography, he had become an agnostic: "When I thought of God it was with a superior smile, indicative of biological scorn for

such an outworn myth." During his practice in Wales, however, the deep religious faith of the people he worked among made him start to wonder whether "the compass of existence held more than my text-books had revealed, more than I had ever dreamed of. In short I lost my superiority, and this, though I was not then aware of it, is the first step towards finding God."

Cronin also came to feel, "If we consider the physical universe... we cannot escape the notion of a primary Creator.... Accept evolution with its fossils and elementary species, its scientific doctrine of natural causes. And still you are confronted with the same mystery, primary and profound. *Ex nihilo nihil*, as the Latin tag of our schooldays has it: nothing can come of nothing." This was brought home to him in London, where in his spare time he had organised a working boys' club. One day he invited a distinguished zoologist to deliver a lecture to the members. The speaker, adopting "a frankly atheistic approach", described the sequence of events leading to the emergence, "though he did not say how," of the first primitive life-form from lifeless matter. When he concluded, there was polite applause. Then, "a mild and very average youngster rose nervously to his feet," and with a slight stammer asked how there came to be anything in the first place. The naïve question took everyone by surprise. The lecturer "looked annoyed, hesitated, slowly turned red. Then, before he could answer, the whole club burst into a howl of laughter. The elaborate structure of logic offered by the test-tube realist had been crumpled by one word of challenge from a simple-minded boy."

Family

It was at university that Cronin met his future wife, Agnes Mary Gibson (May, 1898–1981), who was also a medical student. She was the daughter of Robert Gibson, a master baker, and Agnes Thomson Gibson (née Gilchrist) of Hamilton, Lanarkshire. The couple married on 31 August 1921. As a physician, Mary worked with her husband briefly in the dispensary while he was employed by the Tredegar Medical Aid Society. She also assisted him with his practice in London. When he became an author, she would proofread his manuscripts. Their first son, Vincent, was born in Tredegar in 1924. Their second, Patrick, was born in London in 1926, and Andrew, their youngest, in London in 1937.

With his stories being adapted for Hollywood films, Cronin and his family moved to the United States in 1939, living in Bel Air, California, Nantucket, Massachusetts, Greenwich, Connecticut, and Blue Hill, Maine. In 1945, the Cronins sailed back to England aboard the RMS *Queen Mary*, staying briefly in Hove and then in Raheny, Ireland, before returning to the US the following year. They took up residence at the Carlyle Hotel in New York City and then in Deerfield, Massachusetts, before settling in New Canaan, Connecticut, in 1947. Cronin also travelled frequently to summer homes in Bermuda and Cap-d'Ail, France.

Later years

Ultimately Cronin returned to Europe, to reside in Lucerne and Montreux, Switzerland, for the last 25 years of his life. He continued to write into his eighties. He included among his friends Laurence Olivier, Charlie Chaplin and Audrey Hepburn, to whose first son he was a godfather. Richard E. Berlin was the godfather of his son Andrew.

Although the latter part of his life was spent entirely abroad, Cronin retained great affection for the district of his childhood, writing in 1972 to a local teacher: "Although I have travelled the world over I must say in all sincerity that my heart belongs to Dumbarton.... In my study there is a beautiful 17th-century coloured print of the Rock.... I even follow with great fervour the fortunes of the Dumbarton football team." Further evidence of Cronin's lifelong support of Dumbarton F.C. comes from a framed typewritten letter hanging in the foyer of the club's stadium. The letter, written in 1972 and addressed to the club's then secretary, congratulates the team on its return to the top division after a gap of 50 years. He recalls his childhood support for it, and on occasion being "lifted over" the turnstiles (a common practice in times past so that children did not have to pay).

Cronin died on 6 January 1981 in Montreux and is interred at La Tour-de-Peilz. Many of Cronin's writings, including published and unpublished literary manuscripts, drafts, letters, school exercise books and essays, laboratory books and his M.D. thesis, are held at the National Library of Scotland and at the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas.

Cronin's widow Agnes died five months later on 10 June 1981, and after cremation, her ashes were buried next to him."

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