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**THE UNIVERSITY  
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Chapel Hill

carpeted with creeping-vines bearing flowers like the purple morning-glory. A flowering hibiscus-bush shaded the stone. My native guide had told me that the rumor in Hiva Oa for years was that the Society had missed Gauguin's grave by several meters, and that the present headstone was placed over the skeleton of a Swiss by the name of Vernier.

I had stood in the tropical drizzle, staring, deeply moved. In death Paul Gauguin was as lonely as in life. There was no sound save the distant murmuring of the restless sea at the base of the promontory and the weird cries of circling tropical birds. I fled the cemetery.

**E**MILE rose, yawned, and stretched. Night was closing down swiftly over Tahiti. The southeast trade-winds had started to blow strongly, and the South Pacific combers were now smashing loudly over the coral reefs. The fronds of the coconut palms stirred restlessly with rhythmic motion; somewhere in the grove a coconut thudded solidly to ground. A native fisherman chanted barbarically as he propelled his outrigger-canoe across the darkening lagoon.

Moorea Island was receding into the shadows of the night, and I thought of Gauguin's description as he sat on this same beach smoking a cigarette. "The sun, rapidly sinking on the horizon, is already half-concealed behind the Island of Moorea, which lay to my right. The conflict of light made the mountains stand out sharply and strangely in black against the violet glow of the sky. They were like ancient battlemented castles.

"Is it any wonder that before this natural architecture visions of feudal magnificence pursue me? The summit, over there, has the form of a gigantic helmet-crest. The billows around it, which sound like the noise of an immense crowd, will never reach it. Amid the splendor of the ruins the crest stands alone, a protector of witness, a neighbor of the heavens. I felt a secret look plunge from the head up there into the waters which had once engulfed the sinful race of the living, and in the vast fissure which might have been the mouth I felt the hovering of a smile of irony or pity over the waters where the past sleep.

"Night falls quickly. Moorea sleeps."

I heard Emile draw in his breath slowly, appreciatively, as he considered the identical island scene that Gauguin had studied so long ago from this same strand, and he spoke quietly, more to himself:

"I would have liked to have known my father."

## Fiction

Continued from page 20

charming, shrewd, practical, and vain, and never as foolish as they may appear to be. In other words he makes them human. They are not at all like the poor substitutes for women who drink, who domineer, who go to the analyst and die in American fiction.

As for the Ireland that O'Connor presents in his stories, the extremes of poverty have disappeared and the great houses of the gentry have faded into a distant past; his Ireland is of the lower middle class, the Ireland of the small shopkeeper, the clerk, and the schoolteacher, and behind them the presence of the Irish Catholic Church. O'Connor's true concern is of human comedy with the darker and more unpleasant shades of melodrama, and even of tragic losses, swept away. All-too-human frailty and its errors are his themes; and the reader is, of course, to be entertained; in the present selection "The Custom of the Country" and "The Little Mother," two comedies in the arts of young women getting married, are his masterpieces. If any living writer wishes to compete with Frank O'Connor in his chosen field he is welcome to take a mortal risk, but it is extremely unlikely that he will succeed.

## Notes

**HECTIC HAPPENINGS IN HONG KONG:** Last year Ernest K. Gann wrote a harrowing tale about a plane ride which he called "The High and the Mighty" and which, among other things, became a Book-of-the-Month, a movie, and a paperback best seller. This year he has shifted his mode of transportation to sampans and patrol boats, but this has in no way decreased his narrative speed. For, in "Soldier of Fortune" (William Sloane Assoc., \$3.50), Mr. Gann has produced an exotic derring-do, a swashbuckling love story, and a vivid picture of Communist China, all rolled into one. His heroine this time is a woman named Jane Hoyt who arrives in the superficial security of British-administered Hong Kong—where Mr. Gann makes the most of the sounds of the abacus and the smells of animal intestines—in the hope of saving her husband from Communists who hold him captive somewhere on the Chinese mainland. In no time at all, Jane becomes involved with a piggish fellow named Stoker, a small-time operator named Marty Gates, and a former Chicago truck driver who, by reason of fists and brains, has

become an important person to know. From a number of hectic happenings Mr. Gann squeezes the proper amount of dash and drama, though a little less than the proper amount of depth. Only one character rises to any distinction: a Chinese general named Po-Lin who, one hopes, may some day lead Mr. Gann to bigger—and better—novels.

—CHARLES LEE.

**THREE GENERATIONS OF WOMEN:** The heroine of Gladys Hasty Carroll's latest novel, "*One White Star*" (Macmillan, \$3.50), is a woman named Laura, whose story is a family story, full of the smells of fresh milk, hay, and wild meat stewing. It is nonetheless a skilful novel, well told in fluent dialogue and realistic detail. For Laura has her troubles. Child of a crude, rough-spoken father and a schoolteacher mother, Laura has married a minister and, as the story begins, she returns to her mother's farm with her own child, Marty. How Laura then is caught in mother-daughter-grandmother relationships is the burden of Mrs. Carroll's tale until, in the final chapters, Marty brings home to supper the man *she* is going to marry and, somehow, through her love for him, is able for the first time to understand her mother. There is another phase to the ending, a surprise one that is almost too much of a surprise, but Mrs. Carroll is an old hand at telling a story and, despite the fact that she offers neither complexity nor obscurity nor symbolism nor profound sociological and psychological meaning, readers who enjoyed her "*The Earth Turns*" and "*Dunnybrook*" will probably not be disappointed in this one.

—CID RICKETTS SUMNER.

**APPRENTICE IN BOHEMIA:** "*Peter Domanig in America: Brass*" (Bobbs-Merrill, \$3.95) is the second in Victor White's trilogy of novels (the first was "*Steel*") about the career in American industry of Peter Domanig, an immigrant boy from Austria who knows where he wants to go, if not precisely why.

The time of "*Brass*" is 1925 and Peter, now a partner in a thriving radio manufactory, discovers debutante Sibby, the girl of his youthful dreams, in nearby Greenwich Village, toying cozily with the more romantic aspects of *la vie Bohème*. She quickly accepts him as her worshipful suitor and under her tutelage he serves his apprenticeship in the play-world of speakeasies and Connecticut house parties as conscientiously as he had that of the work-world of the Pittsburgh steel mills in the previous volume. Both Peter and Mr. White seem less at home in this frivolous milieu, and the documentation of its minutiae

is less authoritative than in "*Steel*." On the other hand, the relationship between Peter and Sibby, beset with all the exacerbated symptoms of first love, is more poignantly compelling than anything in the earlier novel. Peter, however, is unready to commit himself to anything more substantial than an ideal, and as the book ends, he renounces Sibby and sails to Europe to confront his unknown past.

Mr. White's prose style is quite unlike anything I am familiar with in contemporary fiction. Peculiarly dated, filled with the mannered flourishes of a more leisurely era than we imagine our own to be, it expresses a kind of earnest and humorless naivete which is alternately irritating and charming. Also, it is so conscientious in its effort to render with meticulous exactitude the quality of each scene that it often smothers itself in qualifications. But what begins to be apparent is that the characteristics of the style are also the characteristics of the trilogy's hero, and perhaps more suitable for the telling of his story than we had at first thought. And Peter begins to emerge, in "*Brass*," as someone more complex

and interesting than the dogged Boy Scout who plowed his way through "*Steel*."

—JEROME STONE.

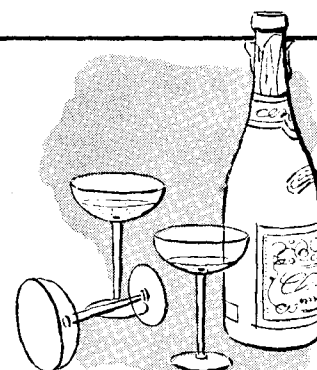
**CRIME OF PASSION:** Recipient of France's Prix Femina, "*The Woman with No Past*," by Serge Groussard (Dutton, \$3), is a novel involving a *crime passionnel*, a subject which the French always manage to treat with more verve and sympathetic insight than we Anglo-Saxons.

The story opens with Mada, the woman in the case, fleeing the provincial town where she has just murdered her wealthy husband, who had discovered her with a casual lover. She meets Malard, a strong, silent barge captain who, sensing her distress, offers to take her to Paris via a leisurely canal route, and who asks no questions. His mate, a toadlike, despicable chap, asks no questions, either, but he gets answers, and soon pieces together the reason for Mada's flight. The rest of the book builds up the suspense of what he will do with his information, and develops the love affair between Mada and Malard, colored with the irony that only after it is too late to begin again has the in-

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