

be disobedient and capable of translating their intentions into significant actions have by then been retired or transferred to less sensitive positions, where their consciences will not be in their way.

In spite of these shortcomings the book is extremely important, particularly for those among us to whom the tales of horror identified with Belsen, Buchenwald, Auschwitz, and other infernos of the Nazi era are but historical incidents, vaguely recollected. It is regrettable, however, that the focus of Mr. Crankshaw's account was left so narrow, for the problem implicit in the *Gestapo* is a problem shared by all nations, not merely by the Germans.

NAZIS VS. THE JEWS: Joseph Tenenbaum's *"Race and Reich: The Story of an Epoch"* (Twayne Publishers, \$7.50) is a scholarly account of the annihilation of European Jewry, told with compassion and restraint. The Nazis began their anti-Semitic campaign modestly enough, with economic boycott and political suppression, careful not to destroy the outward appearance of normality. In the early years of the regime the Nazis thought of moderate anti-Semitism as their best ideological export, and it was not until January 1939 that Hitler warned that a war would bring about "the destruction of the Jewish race in Europe" and it was not until 1942 that he resolved on total annihilation.

But between Hitler's threat and its execution there were many tantalizing opportunities, hitherto not adequately treated, for rescuing the threatened Jews: recurrent negotiations to "buy" their release, German plans to convert Madagascar into a Jewish colony under Nazi control, and the half-hearted actions of several foreign nations. All these efforts failed and, while hundreds, even thousands were snatched to safety by the quiet heroism of isolated individuals, over 70 per cent of European Jewry perished.

Mr. Tenenbaum's book points to the basic dilemma of our efforts to comprehend Nazi totalitarianism: we know so much about it and understand so little. Despite his impressive command of the vast material on the Third Reich which has come to light during the last decade, he fails to get beyond unsatisfactory generalizations, such as "the arch-symbol of the Nazis was race." This very imbalance between knowledge of detail and understanding of the whole mars most books on Nazism and attests the extraordinary difficulty of analyzing the catastrophe of our own world.

—FRITZ STERN.

FICTION

Professor Among the Savages



The author and Grand Chief Vutha.

"Nuni," by John Howard Griffin (Houghton Mifflin. 310 pp. \$3.75), tells of the physical and spiritual adventures experienced by an aging assistant professor of English at a boys' school when he is abruptly dropped into a world of savages on an uncharted Pacific island.

By Ben Ray Redman

JOHN HOWARD GRIFFIN's first novel, *"The Devil Rides Outside,"* published in 1952, displayed a vigorous, original talent; but it wallowed in emotional and verbal excesses. Now, his second novel, *"Nuni,"* is marked by a more restrained exploitation of the emotional elements and by a less heady indulgence in self-conscious rhetoric. Although there is still enough infelicitous writing in *"Nuni"* to make some sensitive readers thrust the book aside it would be a pity if many persons were put off in this way, for Mr. Griffin's touch becomes surer as he proceeds, his grip on his story and his reader grows firmer, and he commands increasing respect as what he has set out to say becomes increasingly clear.

The moral of his fable, to put it as simply as possible, is that no life is

meaningful or valuable which is not made up of free acts, of "acts of love" which are at once a response to and an acknowledgment of the wonder of all living. The fable through which he makes this moral concrete records the physical and spiritual adventures of *"John W. Harper, age fifty-seven . . . assistant professor of English at St. Thomas Academy"* when, as the result of a plane crash, he is abruptly translated from his humdrum, middle-class, civilized existence into a world peopled by savages on an uncharted Pacific island.

ON THIS island Professor Harper finds himself in a society that knows neither love nor time, that lives, by the compulsion of its cruel taboos, in a state of perpetual slavery to what it conceives to be the forces of Elemental Nature. Deep within the members of this society there may stir "the ox's vague memory of the pasture or the slave's vague memory of freedom. . . . But viewing Elemental Nature as the guide and controlling force of all life, all fate, their movements have become movements of submission to it, until their living is the living of leaves curled in the sun or of coconuts pulled by gravity to the earth."

Professor Harper's realization of the true ethos of the savage group that accepts him, rejects him, and then accepts him again is followed by his realization of the true ethos of the society he has left. There is, he reflects, more than one kind of slavery—"In civilization the new man became so completely absorbed in Mechanized Nature that it has equally contrived to make him forget the forever hungering gods of his spiritual being." The story of *"Nuni"* is the story of how Professor Harper escapes from slavery by an act of love that makes him free.

Several of Mr. Griffin's savage characters take on a convincing and affecting semblance of reality as the story goes forward. Whether or not the author was wise to remain always within the professor's stream of consciousness and use no tense but the present, instead of assuming the God's-eye point of view so useful to the novelist, is a question. As for the soundness of his anthropology, that may be left to the anthropologists.

Two from the Continent



—Marc Foucault.

PIERRE GASCAR'S volume of short stories "Beasts and Men" (reviewed below) arrives in the United States with an impressive record—France's Prix Goncourt and Prix des Critiques, critical acclaim when published in England, Germany, Sweden, Italy, and Japan. M. Gascar served with the French Army on the Maginot Line and in Norway, and from 1940 to 1945 was a prisoner of war. Now he lives in Paris with his family.

ILSE AICHINGER has won recognition as one of the most important newer German writers since the publication of her first novel a decade ago. A thirty-six-year-old native of Vienna, she was refused admittance to the University there because of her "mixed" parentage. After the war she studied medicine, later joined the editorial staff of a Frankfurt publisher. "The Bound Man," her first U.S.-published book, is reviewed on this page.



1. France

"Beasts and Men," by Pierre Gascar (translated by Jean Stewart. Little, Brown. 249 pp. \$3.50), is a collection of six short stories and a short novel by a gifted French writer, all with unusual and haunting themes.

By William Peden

FOR VARIOUS reasons, hard-cover editions of short stories seldom sell well in America. Were it not for this, Pierre Gascar's "Beasts and Men," a collection of six short stories and a short novel, might well turn out to be the surprise best-seller of the season. M. Gascar, winner of two of France's highest literary awards, the Prix Goncourt and the Prix des Critiques, is a richly endowed writer; his unusual and haunting stories are, to put the matter simply, unforgettable.

M. Gascar's people are like sleepwalkers in some blood-drenched frontier of unreasoning and unceasing warfare. Behind them, in the words of one of the characters, "lies all the stealthy horror of our time, the nameless struggles, the anonymous sufferings, the everyday oppression, and . . . the state of being an enemy." Peer, the soldier-protagonist of "The Horses," is enmeshed in the web of the war which has just been declared. He destroys himself by inflicting savage cruelty upon the animals he is forced to tend. He does not reason the why; he knows only that "each of his blows plunged him a little deeper into a hideously grimacing universe where the horses were all ferocity, the men all hate. He was forging his own demons."

The exiled prisoner-of-war of "The

Dogs," protected by a padded suit from the onslaughts of hounds trained to be military killers, reflects in spiritual agony that "there's a certain stage, in cruelty, where all flesh smells alike." Like Peer, his actions grow out of neither reason nor hatred; they are dictated by circumstances over which the individual has no control: "I'm quite ready to love the dogs. . . . Believe me, I'd give anything if this cruel business could stop." Similarly, the young French boy apprenticed to a butcher in "The House of Blood." His final prayer is in effect implicit in all of M. Gascar's work: "O God, O God, don't let them kill any more."

The reader with a delicate stomach may find that M. Gascar frequently communicates the look and the smell and the feel of death and corruption so intensely as to be almost unendurable. For the most part, however, he uses such elements as means to an end rather than as ends in themselves. Indeed, perhaps the greatest



—From jacket of "Beasts and Men."

source of M. Gascar's strength is his ability to transmute horror, violence, and the machinery of Gothicism into a vital kind of parable involving man's fate in the world of today. Nowhere is this more movingly illustrated than in "The Season of the Dead." This short novel of a few weeks in the lives of some French prisoners-of-war is a powerful symphony of death and life centering around the act of interment and the massacre of Jewish civilians. It seems painfully apparent that here M. Gascar, who served with the French Army and was a prisoner-of-war from 1940 to 1945, is writing from personal experience: "There can't be any true life afterwards for us, who have endured these sights. . . . Death can never appease this pain; this stream of black grief will flow on for ever."

These eloquent and horrifying stories deserve a wider reading audience than they will probably receive.

2. Germany

"The Bound Man," by Ilse Aichinger (translated by Eric Mosbacher. Noonday Press. 100 pp. \$2.75), a collection of stories by an Austrian-born writer, combines some of the qualities of Tennessee Williams and Franz Kafka.

By Richard Plant

THE publication of Ilse Aichinger's slim volume of short stories, "The Bound Man," marks the arrival of an astonishing new talent. Miss Aichinger, a Viennese in her thirties, displays not only those qualities which have always distinguished great European writing, but she excels in a form usually considered the domain of Anglo-Americans: the tale of the supernatural, of chilling poetry, of horrors not quite grasped. The light playing over her world is both bright and impenetrable, and wherever it appears to unveil the outlines of a face, a character, a destiny, it conceals the truths it pretends to disclose.

It may very well be that the fusion of these two traditions, of (to use historical shorthand) Kafka and Tennessee Williams, has definite significance. The Central European artists of the years since World War II, particularly those in German-speaking countries, have learned to know and appreciate the sinister brilliance which characterizes the work of such writers as Saki, Aiken, and Capote. This does not mean that Miss Aichinger is attempting to emulate their patterns. On

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