

noises, and he goes on hopefully searching for the perfect burrow. In a strange country—this bewildering, wonderful, erratic, unpredictable America—he is painfully on the alert for pitfalls. He guards his health, his nerves, his lecture notes; and on Tuesday afternoons he happily steals away to the library for a long session on his “Petite Histoire” that will combine Russian history, folklore, and literature. He understands that the world is based on a compromise with logic, and he makes all the allowances he can.

Old-fashioned, gentle, learned, humorless, forgetful, Professor Pnin likes his colleagues and very much wants to belong to them. He cannot understand American humor, nor tell the reading matter from the advertisement in American magazines; yet he loves to do things “po amerikanski,” the American way. He has learned to use glibly terms like “wishful thinking” and “okey-dokey,” but false teeth give him new trouble with his English. He is fascinated by zippers, electric clocks, washing machines. He even buys an old car, “po amerikanski,” and the last we see of him he is driving away from Vandal College between two trucks.

No, not driving away—he is driven away. Despite his wariness he has been overtaken by the worst disaster: He has lost his job—this little man who is completely unworldly and completely himself, who is so much better than his betters. Vandal College has got rid of him, but all the Pnin mimics on the faculty will go on giving Pnin impersonations at their parties. Pnin himself said, “The history of man is the history of pain.” That is the history of Pnin.

The novel is episodic, a series of sketches, really, and not all of them equally deft. But the best ones make you sore with laughter, and then they make you sorry. No one can read this book without becoming a Pnin man.

## Innocents Abroad

**“Fifth Daughter,” by Hal C. Gurney** (Doubleday. 422 pp. \$4.50), is the story of an Army entertainment director and his efforts—successful in at least one case—to bring the Americans and Okinawans together.

By Preston Schoyer

THE large-scale stationing of Americans in the Far East since World War II has inevitably resulted in a clash of cultures and attitudes which often affects adversely the very principles which inspire our overseas operations. There is already a considerable literature of this condition, and if it is as effective as Hal C. Gurney's novel, “Fifth Daughter,” it ought to be made required reading for those in charge of dumping semieducated Americans into antique Oriental lands as occupation forces and/or missionaries for democracy. On behalf of the Americans it can be said that few of them wanted to go overseas in the first place, let alone be conquerors or missionaries. Still, one might hope that most of them would have that kind of pride in their country which would make them want to inspire respect. Perhaps this is too much to expect of the rank and file, but it shouldn't be too much to expect of the officers and administrators. Yet all too often they are among the most indifferent and intolerant and therefore most abusive of Oriental sensibilities.

Mr. Gurney's perceptive novel, his first, sheds sharp and welcome light on such problems. His locale is Okinawa, where our military hold sway.

The story is a simple one, based largely on the author's own experiences, one supposes, for like his hero he was an entertainment director in Okinawa. Steven Ryan is anxious to start a local theatre which will bring Okinawans and Americans together. He hopes this effort will contribute toward greater understanding between conqueror and conquered. It appears doomed, however, by official indifference until accidentally rescued by his pretty servant girl, Sumico Hayashi. She is the “fifth daughter” of the title and of the Hayashi family, which has suffered more than most during the war. Like Ryan, she is looking for understanding, but with a different motive. She longs for release from the destructive hate, distrust, and futility which characterize her peoples' attitude toward the Americans. In due course she finds this understanding and in the process wins the love of her employer.

If the plot is a slim one, the story is still absorbing, primarily because of the author's superb re-creation of life at a local army base where the generally insensitive Americans are thrown together with their chattering Okinawan servant girls. By and large the Americans have little interest in the girls except as bodies to be purchased with “presentos.” It is into this tawdry, confused world that the dreaming, innocent Sumico comes on her quest for enlightenment.

The author is on less interesting ground in his portrait of Okinawan life away from the military camps. In his enthusiasm for the islanders he may have romanticized them. To this

## Now Side by Side

By Donald Hall

Now side by side they stand,  
Ignorant of each other,  
While Alpha sings, “O Death,  
You are my brother!

“The yellow birds of morning,  
Those orchestras are dead,  
Who played at the beginning  
Around my head.

“The sun I see is painted,

No warmth in all that air.  
Now let me die and vermin  
Strip the bone bare.”

Beside him in this country,  
Omega sings a song,  
“O brother Earth, my brother,  
To us belong

“The sun charging the grasses,  
The birds in talk all day,

The hot sea rushing to bed  
In disarray.

“At morning, the crude mountains,  
Still cracking from the sea,  
Loom raw beyond the mountains  
Which nourish me.”

These mutual trespassers  
Stand side by side alone,  
The neighbors of a country  
Each makes his own.

reviewer it seems doubtful that so many ordinary Okinawans would spend so much time in obscure, mystical philosophizing. But whether this is true or not, "Fifth Daughter" remains vivid and competent writing. Not many first novelists do as well.

**LOEB-LEOPOLD REVISITED:** One must feel a certain sense of sympathy for James Yaffe's unhappy position as the writer of "Nothing But the Night" (Little, Brown, \$3.95), a novel which covers substantially the same material as that exploited by Meyer Levin in his best-selling "Compulsion." Both writers have chosen the tragic Loeb-Leopold case as the source-book for their works. Mr. Yaffe has updated the situation and denatured the material somewhat: i.e., although Mr. Yaffe has had some critical success with his pictures of middle-class American Jewish life, the milieu he describes in his book is oddly without national or religious background—the Morrisises and the Kings, families of the two murderers, are neither Jew nor Gentile—not fish nor fowl.

It is sometimes unfair to compare books on the same general theme but the comparison, in this case, is bound to be inescapable for both writers have drawn the elements of their works from the same historical bucket. What they have done with them constitutes the difference between the two books. This reviewer feels that the question of quality (always a difficult one to pin down) ought to be disposed of by saying this: that while Mr. Levin's book is not quite the towering literary achievement it is advertised to be, it is powerful enough and honest enough to throw a very deep shadow on "Nothing But the Night."

The Loeb-Leopold case is well-known enough not to need detailing here, and Mr. Yaffe has used much of it to tell the story of Barry Morris and Paul King, two brilliant high-school seniors who conspired to commit that mystical murder of a twelve-year-old boy. We have seen the tragic procession before—even to the smaller details—the planning, the fantasy of the master and the slave between the two adolescent boys, the clue of the dropped eyeglasses, the trial, the public fever, the defense. It is a hideous experience, even when it is poorly told and we bring to Mr. Yaffe's sketchy and superficial account the mass of our own emotions, our own unhappiness, our own cruel knowledge of what the final outcome must be.

We know the power of the material and we have a right to expect from the novelist that he will either render



—Elliott Erwitt.

Pamela H. Johnson—"unerring."



—Thomas Channing Woodbury.

James Yaffe—"tragic procession."

the experience more vividly or provide us with new insights of pity or hatred, of understanding or anger. Mr. Yaffe does neither. It is hard to determine just why he has failed but the evidence of his failure is very plain in the reading. This is a story which Mr. Yaffe has handled gingerly, uncertainly. It is a tragedy which demands a good deal of the reader, but even more of the writer. Mr. Yaffe either could not, or would not meet the great demands it made of him.

—DAVID KARP.

**LOVE AND FRUSTRATION:** Pamela Hansford Johnson is one of the few English novelists who have been able through a succession of books to write of love and marriage without sentimentality or any tinge of eroticism. Her first novel, written when she was twenty-two, was aptly titled "This Bed Thy Center" and, metaphorically at least, it remains the core of the fifteen books which have followed it.

The setting for "The Sea and the Wedding" (Harcourt, Brace, \$3.95) is a typical, expensive, seaside resort hotel, the Moray, not far from London, inhabited by the usual collection of wealthy old couples and elderly ladies. The narrator of this tale of love and frustration is Christine Hall, a novelist. When she meets a gruff old doctor, his contentious, possessive wife, and their daughter, Celia Baird, she is soon involved in a complex and fascinating romance.

To escape from her mother, Celia had bought a small secretarial agency in London, where she met and fell in love with Eric Aveling, a handsome and successful architect whose partner, Junius Evans, is a mildly homosexual designer of exotic inte-

riors. The Moray is a perfect setting for a love affair. After her parents have retired for the night Celia has only to run upstairs and rap on Eric's door. Marriage was impossible since Eric's wife was slowly dying of an incurable disease in a hospital a few miles from the hotel. A brilliant and beautiful woman, Lois was now a pitiful wreck whose malady unfortunately made her believe that she was on the verge of recovery.

The novel then turns to London, where Christine Hall discovers that Celia adores dingy night clubs inhabited by dubious young men and women seeking the profits of their nefarious trade. Another character, Nancy Sherriff, appears, a charming young woman whose relatives are wealthy, though her father is a frenetic man with just enough money to keep up appearances.

The gruesome visits to the bedside of poor Lois, her features reduced to the grim spectacle of a withered skull, are finally ended by her death. At this point in Pamela Johnson's novel chaos is twice confounded. Who is going to marry whom? The author offers a couple of surprises.

The heart of this extraordinary novel lies in the ability of Miss Johnson to comprehend the complexities of human relationships and the dilemma of modern woman torn between love and conscience. Moreover, her skill in portraying all the characters who surround the central theme of her story is unerring and brilliant.

—HARRISON SMITH.

**HOME VS. WANDERLUST:** The inexplicable vitality of Southern fiction is again startlingly demonstrated by a newcomer. South-Carolinian Vinnie Williams's first novel, "The Fruit Tramp"