

## FICTION

# A Bumper Crop of Novels

*Autumn is the season of the year when the book publishers bring forth one of their most plentiful harvests of novels. This week's crop, which is reviewed below, contains a comedy of manners by Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Paul Horgan; a gay and witty tale by one of the best known novelists of our time, Graham Greene; a potential best seller by Thomas Costain; and a new tale of Africa by Stuart Cloete, a man highly praised for his previous fiction and non-fiction writings about that continent.*

## OF MANNERS, MAMMON, AND THE GOLDEN

**GATE:** America, more specifically the New Byzantium on our West Coast, has spawned a new breed. In his new novel "Give Me Possession" (Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, \$3.50), Paul Horgan examines the racial credo of this "race of the golden Californians"—young San Franciscans who are healthy, wealthy, though not flamboyant, a little like characters out of F. Scott Fitzgerald but with built-in security features.

David Bonbright and Agatha Winlake are both members of the new species. Although they came from different social classes (he was born wealthy, she *very* wealthy) they prospered, married each other, and prospered some more in the two decades following World War I. But—and this is the heart of Mr. Horgan's matter—they didn't really grow up until long after they were old enough to vote, and it took the emotional cauldron of World War II to make them do it.

The war was the first real challenge that David and Agatha had ever come up against. It brought David into contact with death and its counterpart, life. He fell in love with a French girl and learned that life was a fuller sensation than mere well-being. He discovered that he had responsibilities and that he himself could be haunted by the meaning of his wartime experience until he plumbed its meaning and laid the foundation for a truly responsive marriage with Agatha.

In this penetrating twentieth-century comedy of modern manners and Mammon, Mr. Horgan has written a graceful, witty, and lyrical book.

—GERALD WALKER.

**EXULTANT IRISHMAN:** Walter Macken's new novel "Sullivan" (Macmillan, \$3.95) is concerned with the problem of the artist's struggles in an indifferent or hostile bourgeois society. A likable, volatile, and talented Irishman with a penchant for disaster and

a ravenous desire for success, Sullivan yearns to be an actor. Acting is a fever in his blood which must run its course or destroy him. But, too, he must get away from Duke Street, the shabby section of the Irish city of his youth, with all its painful memories of poverty and misery and death. Sullivan's ambition inevitably leads him from Duke Street. Like the picares of old he is accompanied by a Duke Street companion, the amiable and long-suffering Pi, who throughout the novel effectively plays Sancho Panza to Sullivan's own role as Don Quixote.

"Sullivan," like its hero, has a tendency to deteriorate as it progresses. The sharp detail and the admirable clarity of the Duke Street sequences become somewhat blurred in the later sections. Even Pi and Sullivan's patient wife at times taxed this reader's credibility, although Sullivan—handsome, impetuous, erratic, and confused but essentially a good human being even when most corrupted by the bitch-goddess Success—throughout seems believable and sympathetic.

Mr. Macken is a writer with a robust sense of humor and drama, and a keen ear and eye. His "Sullivan" is an exciting book.

—WILLIAM PEDEN.

## SENATOR O'RAWN AND THE MAGNA

**CHARTA:** Thomas Costain's newest historical novel "Below the Salt" (Doubleday, \$3.95), is essentially of his own "The Black Rose" class, which means that it is a thoroughly well-wrought, skilfully plotted and developed romance against a background that he has studied well. He has introduced a somewhat surprising and unnecessarily elaborate framework for his main story—a contemporary opening and closing, with a super-flashback to the thirteenth-century world of Magna Charta.

The device employed for this is reincarnation. The story is narrated from memory by Senator Richard

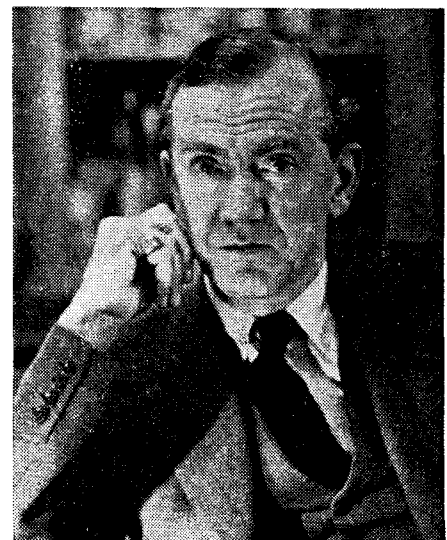
O'Rawn, shortly before his death, to young John Foraday. The Senator had been present at the signing of the Great Charter, on the meadow of Runnymede, and an odd chance has rolled back the veil so that he recalls his experiences in his earlier persona. The reason for all this is apparently Mr. Costain's alarm that our world is tempted toward various forms of collectivism, which he rightly sees as destructive of freedom. His desire, in retelling the story of Magna Charta, is to remind us of how dearly liberties are bought and how terrible it is to live without them.

The main tale relates the chivalrous adventures of the disinherited young Saxon knight, Richard of Rawen, and his faithful squire, the freedman Tostig. Because of his distaste for King John, Richard is exiled to the Continent, where he and Tostig have encounters with Pope Innocent III and with the great churchman Stephen Langton, who, as Archbishop of Canterbury, was a prime mover in bringing the Charter to reality. There are, of course, beautiful princesses, including a golden Eleanor, who must be rescued from imprisonment at the hands of John.

Make no mistake about it, "Below the Salt" will be a popular book.

—EDMUND FULLER.

**LET THE CHIPS FALL:** Properly ticketed "an entertainment," Graham Greene's "Loser Takes All" (Viking; paperbound, 95¢) makes its first American book appearance (following serialization in *Harper's*) as an attractive stiff paperback. Its 23,000 words tell the story of a London accountant—beg pardon, assistant accountant—who is about to honeymoon with his bride at Bournemouth, but a summons from



—Lida Moser.

Graham Greene—"gaiety and wit."

the Gom (equals Grand Old Man, equals top boss) offers him instead the opportunity to honeymoon in Monte Carlo. The loving couple accept the offer, but when they reach the Riviera things begin to happen, or rather not to happen. They do get married; the Gom's yacht fails to appear; then, to while away the hours and also to earn the money for his board bill, the bridegroom starts playing the tables, using his own system (details not given). Any hint of what follows would anticipate the involvements of a tale that is told with the deftness, gaiety, and wit that one customarily associates with the lighter-hearted Graham Greene. —JOHN T. WINTERICH.

**SPRITELY WESTERN:** There are all kinds of Westerns, but "*Unholy Uproar*" (Lippincott, \$3.50) is the first that this reviewer has seen in which the *deus ex machina* hails from the spirit world. The spritely spook in Clyde Brion Davis's entertaining horse opera is one Pablo Ninguno, who materialized sometime during Maximilian's reign and has since been making mischievous use of his ectoplasmic influence. Pablo's principal base of operations is a sun-baked Gomorrah named Montoro City, which has been enveloped in a sinister miasma since the time of the cliff dwellers. This history of uninterrupted depravity, muses Mr. Davis, tongue firmly in cheek, may possibly have a geophysical origin. Suppose, says a character (who has read extensively in science fiction), that a geological deposit out Montoro City way is causing a "short circuit" in the earth's magnetic field; and suppose that this throws a cosmic whammy into the nervous system of everyone for miles around. Well, sir, this kind of malevolent irradiation would make Montoro City into a trigger-happy, slot-machine-ridden sink—which is just exactly what it turns out to be.

On the material level, Mr. Davis's story involves the pickle of a young ranch manager named Boone McClure who is unjustly accused of murder. The fact that Boone's destiny is entirely in the hands of a sombreroed poltergeist is almost fatal to the novel's suspensefulness, but "*Unholy Uproar*" is an entertaining charade nevertheless, and one which the author must have had considerable fun in writing.

—MARTIN LEVIN.

**GILDED PILLS:** In Jay Deiss's novel about the pharmaceutical industry, "*The Blue Chips*" (Simon & Schuster, \$4.50), the old adage that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely

seems to be the touchstone of Dr. James Howell Winslow's life. At first Winslow belongs to the lonely world of scientific researchers passionately devoted to his microbes, but slowly he wanders over the bridge into the executive camp of the cash register boys who are less interested in scientific methods than results. In a complex world where researchers need time to verify products while the sales department strains at the leash, Winslow compromises his way to the top by outmaneuvering his associates and staging a public relations show that saves the company from the consequences of a premature release of a new wonder drug.

Mr. Deiss is obviously aiming for a popular market, so his characters have more flash than depth, but his material is fresh enough to cause readers to sit up and take note.

—SIEGFRIED MANDEL.

**OF FATE AND ADOLESCENCE:** "*Kokoro*," by Natsume Soseki (Regnery, \$3.95), is often called "the first modern Japanese novel." It has won this distinction because its author—who lived from 1867 to 1916, roughly the era of

the birth of modern Japan—broke with the stylistically brilliant but emotionally and intellectually shallow feudal fiction. The lack of names, professions, and specified actions renders plot summary impossible. But this much can be said: three parallel lives go through adolescence, and there are eight deaths, three by suicide. The theme, crudely put, is that modern Japanese are caught in a struggle of emotion and will, or emotion and intellect. This civil war of the consciousness ends in disaster because "fate" intervenes. The nameless characters are Everymen, individuals by virtue of highly conscious experience, but doomed because emotional values are useless to the modern world. They are not unlike the "superfluous men" of Russian fiction in the last century. At its best, "*Kokoro*" conveys this theme through scenes of lonely agony and a too infrequent romantic irony that raises a character to hope on too slender evidence and then dashes him to despair.

Edwin McClellan's translation is adequate, sometimes rising to the rightness of the inevitable phrase,

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—From the book.



**THE 1920s**—the years of bootleg gin, Charlie Chaplin, Clara Bow—have been called many things. Paul Sann called them "*The Lawless Decade*" in a picture-and-text book (Crown, \$5.95) that will evoke wry nostalgia for the middle-aged and romantic dreams for those who are younger (and who firmly believe such times must have been far more fun than the PTA- and Bomb-perplexed present). Mr. Sann's book is a scrapbook rather than history, the very thing for guest rooms and going-away presents. —BRENDA KING.