

but the author, following the cumulative pattern of "The House That Jack Built," weaves into "The Other End of the Bridge" (Dutton, \$3.50) a series of complications in a swelling crescendo.

The feud, which forms the dream-play of the rival communities, is kept in constant tension by a number of eccentric individuals, with the towns' respective mayors in the van. It reaches its apex when the brand-new Mercedes-Benz belonging to the son of the mayor of Corkbeg and the dilapidated Jaguar driven by the son of the mayor of Waterville crash in the center of the bridge, followed by a glorious free-for-all between the partisans of both sides. And by next evening the Corkbeg mayor's thirteen-year-old daughter, an Irish Juliet, has fallen in love with the driver of the battered Jaguar. As in the development of a fugue, Miss Troy builds up her climax, showing how the feud invaded every family and affected young and old alike.

Underlying the action, she has set in counterpoint the deeper theme of genuine rebellion against a partitioned Ireland, an attitude personified in the character of the postal clerk, Dennis, a Nationalist revolutionary. The voice for the author's philosophy is Mr. Blaney, a madman known as the "Apostle," who, like a *genius loci*, haunts the bridge of discord, dressed in black, bowler-hatted, and waving a red umbrella. In the end Mr. Blaney becomes, if not the *deus ex machina*, the expiatory victim; the moral of the tale is summed up in his words: "The dream is vanished forever, Dennis. Those who dreamt it died for it, and those that were left to win had no dream to help them. Is it not strange that so few realize that dreams are essential for realities?"

This artfully constructed fantasy, with its rich overtones of pathos and

humor, evokes out of the Ireland of today an Ireland that has all but vanished.

—WALTER STARKIE.

SOUTH AFRICAN GANGSTER: A Cape Colored man who was fathered by a white Boer predikant (priest) of the Dutch Reformed Church is the protagonist of David Lytton's "The Goddam White Man" (Simon & Schuster, \$3.50). The Boer preacher sowed his seed and went his way, leaving the black woman and her bastard child, Johannes, on that arid stretch of semi-desert coastal land known as the Cape Flats. These people (mainly of mixed bloods) live in animal conditions that stunt everything. There Johannes's mother dies of snakebite, and he drifts like a little stray dog from one stunted family to another until he ends up in Cape Town's slum area with a slightly better-off Colored family, who give him a chance at a smattering of schooling.

His schooling is just enough to make him decide that the scheme of things in South Africa is all wrong and that the only way a Colored man can get ahead there is by going in for crime. At the story's end he has apparently proved his point that the whites are so stupid that all any smart Colored man has to do is organize a successful criminal gang in order to escape the economic and social consequences of the South African racial horror.

As someone who grew up in the kind of setting Mr. Lytton writes about, I frankly found nothing to admire in his novel. As a piece of social reporting it is superficial in the extreme. The ugliness is a surface ugliness that neither shocks nor horrifies in the way good social reportage does. Instead, one is left with a feeling of depression that so much time and energy have been devoted to an almost pointless depiction of ugliness for its own sake.

And as a piece of creative fiction

the book is even more unsatisfactory. Johannes is flat and unreal, compelling no sense of involvement. It is possible that an Alan Paton or a Laurens van der Post or even one of the younger South African Negro novelists like Ezekiel Mphahlele could have developed the story so as to shed a meaningful light on the human tragedy inherent in the South African situation; in the hands of Mr. Lytton the story itself is the tragedy. A pointless compendium of hate, violence, sordid sex, it is utterly lacking in that tender and creative compassion which has been the hallmark of the best writing out of South Africa in recent years.

—PETER ABRAHAM.

INDIAN HOST: Once I met a Hindi writer, who was struggling to translate a story by William Faulkner. "His people," he sadly complained, "vital in English, are wooden in Hindi." By this simple sentence he had penetrated the problem of all writers who have to translate the feelings of one culture with words of another.

R. K. Narayan has no equal among the Indian novelists writing in English. While his sense of this language is not particularly refined, he nevertheless manages by a miracle of perception and choice of detail to convey the Indian without a single false feeling or gesture. It is true Rudyard Kipling in "Kim" and in his scores of stories, and E. M. Forster in two of his books, have managed to catch the essence of India, but then they were both Englishmen whose major focus was Anglo-India, a twilight zone that enclosed both the natives and the masters. The India Mr. Narayan deals with is of ages and sages. It breaks the bounds of a cultural experience—the contact with the British. It overflows until all her people, in whatever occupation, are engulfed in the novelist's ink.

"The Man-Eater of Malgudi" (Viking,



From Ireland: Una Troy.



From India: R. K. Narayan.



From Israel: Yoram Kaniuk.

\$3.95) is a tale about a printer, Nataraj, whose goodness is a legend. It brings to his door an ungainly taxidermist who ends up filling the printer's house, and his legend, with his hyenas and pythons and his crass animal morality. Nataraj's goodness is used, abused, trespassed upon, and finally almost destroyed by the mysterious death of the jungle man, which implicates the printer in a direct way. But the novel never departs from the whimsical, playful tone. The voice of the narrator, Nataraj, is always delicately keyed to the right pitch. His

humor is sometimes heavy-footed, but this never intrudes upon our affection for him. Even when he's being preyed upon most, he's never spineless, and his troubles at every turn are those of a good and pure man who is more puzzled by evil than invaded by it.

For those who have not read the author's truly excellent novel "The Financial Expert," this slight book, despite its sugariness, can serve as an introduction to the imaginary town of Malgudi, celebrated in a half dozen of Narayan's titles. If the novel is vital at

all, it lives in such places, whether in India, Africa, or the West Indies.

—VED MEHTA.

FRENCH PHILANDERER: First introduced to English readers three years ago through his prize-winning "The Law," Roger Vailland comes back to us with "Fête" (Knopf, \$3.95), an unsavory trifle about a novelist living in the country who openly pursues the seduction of a young poet's wife while the two are his house guests and subsequently sets off for a week-end with her—both his own wife and Lucie's husband being too urbane to interfere.

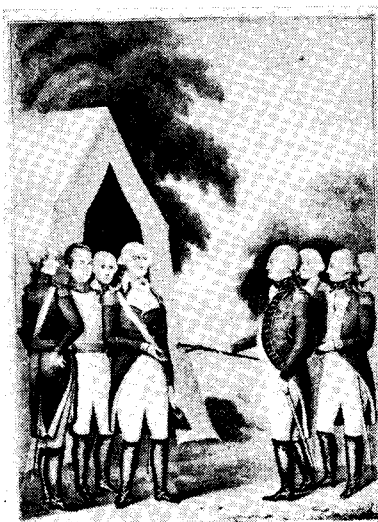
"If you decide to stay on another few days, phone me," the writer's good wife says affably as she hands him the suitcase she has packed, and Duc drives off to his rendezvous in the Citroën DS he habitually races around the countryside, as much a menace on the road as he is in the boudoir. As soon as Lucie's train arrives they proceed to the hotel, which was once a private chateau, and march briskly up the great stone stairs into the suite reserved for them. Then with adorable directness Lucie inquires, "Am I to undress? That's what I came for." Conversation and situation throughout this novel are never less preposterous nor less distasteful than here at its climax.

We should like to think the whole novel a parody—a burlesque on eighteenth-century erotic literature with Duc aping the "grand seigneur" who cultivates his ego exquisitely and ever seeks for new shivers—or at least an ironic depiction of emancipated moderns who prefer whisky to native French drinks and refer to American jazz singers by their first names. But we gather that the author fervently admires the great libertines of Sade and Choderlos de Laclos and has no use for lovers who behave like bourgeois. It would seem, therefore, that he approves of Duc in spite of the caricature he has made of him—a man of middle years with short limbs and the face of a bird of prey, a petulant husband, a lover who is never much good the first night, an "amateur de sensations fortes" who races cars like a high school boy and seduces tiresome young women.

This writer, who achieved notoriety for preaching Marxism and the rehabilitation of the senses in almost the same breath, seemed once on the point of creating the great Marxist novel. He failed to do so, however, and has recently abandoned his political theme. It is unlikely that he will be any more successful in creating an exemplum of love for our times, for however urgent is the need to redefine love today it cannot be met by such an inane resuscitation as "Fête" tries to accomplish.

—LAURENT LESAGE.

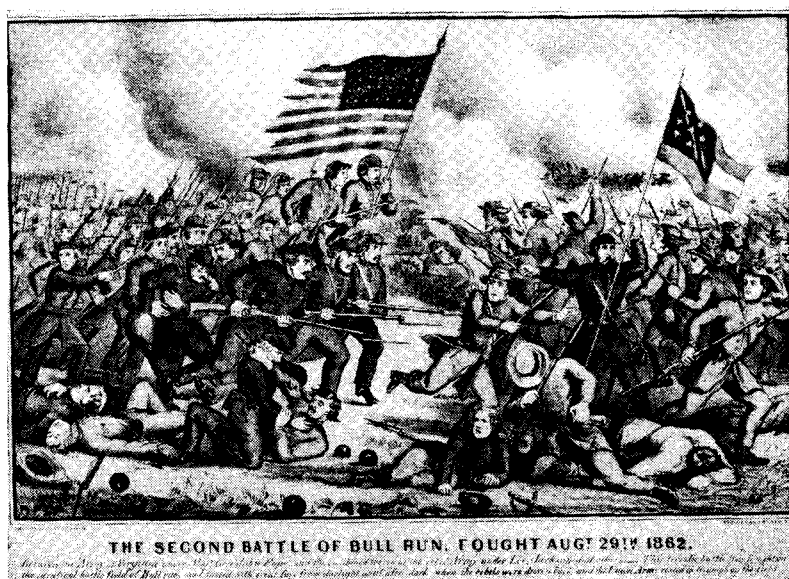
IN THE DAYS when news photographers (to say nothing of television cameramen) were unknown, lithographic portrayals of current happenings found an avid public. "Currier & Ives American Battle Scenes" (Century House, \$12.50) is a collection of more than fifty prints by the famous pair, who are better known for their cheerful pictures of the U.S. at peace. These prints provide a dramatic record of this country's armed conflicts from 1775 through the Civil War.



"Surrender of Cornwallis."



General Andrew Jackson.



THE SECOND BATTLE OF BULL RUN, FOUGHT AUG. 29, 1862.

"Second Battle of Bull Run."