

next appears the effect is that of Venus arising from the sea. This is Gabriela. Not only is she young, beautiful, merry, sweet, but such a cook and, very soon, such a bedfellow as Nacib has never encountered. Word of her presence quickly spreads, and business at the Vesuvius booms.

But, alas, Nacib falls head over heels in love with her, and nothing will do but he must marry her, against the advice of his friends and of Gabriela, who sees no need to change their completely satisfactory relationship. Subsequent events more than justify her misgivings. Nacib has become a man of substance, and his wife has to be a lady. No longer can she serve in the bar and revel in the compliments to her cooking and her beauty. She has to wear shoes that pinch her feet, go to lectures instead of the circus, and to the Christmas Eve dance at the Progress Club instead of joining the street revelers. Amado's solution to this and the many other problems the new order in Ilhéus gives rise to is wise, witty, and profoundly Brazilian.



How complete the revolution has been can be seen from the "Postscript":

Some time afterwards Colonel Jesuino Mendonça stood before a jury, accused of having shot to death his wife . . . and the dental surgeon. The lawyers talked, all in all, for twenty-eight hours. Dr. Mauricio Caires quoted the Bible and referred to scandalous black stockings, morality, and depravity. Dr. Ezequiel Prado said that Ilhéus was no longer a land of bandits, a paradise of assassins; his theme was civilization and progress. . . . For the first time in the history of Ilhéus a cacao colonel found himself sentenced to prison for having murdered his adulterous wife and her lover.

The translators have done full justice to the novel's rollicking, nimble style—no easy task. Amado's earlier writings have been translated into all the Iron Curtain languages, including Chinese. In 1951 "Seára Vermelha" received the Stalin Award for Literature. "Gabriela," which has sold more than a quarter of a million copies in Brazil, has received five literary awards there, and is being adapted for the cinema, will soon appear not only in all the Common Market languages, but also in Russian, Bulgarian, Rumanian, *et al.* What the comrades will make of it is difficult to imagine, for it has as much Party line as the Uncle Wiggly stories. Perhaps they will guiltily just enjoy it.

## Violence Unexplained

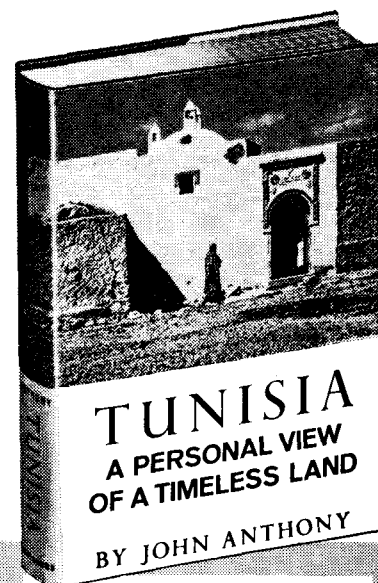
**"The Thin Red Line," by James Jones** (Scribners. 496 pp. \$5.95), the account of an infantry company at Guadalcanal, conveys a sense that the meaning of war is its lack of meaning. David Dempsey served as a correspondent with the Marine Corps during the Second World War.

By DAVID DEMPSEY

THAT "thin red line of heroes" that Kipling celebrated, rather concisely, in his poem "Tommy" is the inspiration for James Jones's new novel about the last few weeks of fighting on Guadalcanal. It is a somewhat dated book in many ways, one that could just as well have been written fifteen years ago and, to be sure, frequently was, although not always so skilfully as it is done here. In choosing such well-worked subject matter, with its now-familiar details of jungle combat, its typical "cross-section" of infantrymen acting out the *non sequiturs* of human behavior that pass for bravery or cowardice, Jones has handicapped himself so severely that only his extraordinary narrative sense saves the novel from banality. In writing, too, the line that separates the superior from the ordinary is sometimes very thin.

The story begins with the debarkation of "C" Company, the typical line outfit that is found in almost all war novels. Theirs is a mopping-up assignment, for the First Marine Division has already done most of the dirty work, although as an Army man Jones cannot be expected to go too far beyond the call of duty in drawing attention to this. At any rate, within a few weeks C-for-Charlie Company, as it is called throughout, has reduced the last strongholds of resistance. To accomplish this, two major assaults are launched, a seemingly endless number of hills are climbed and fought over, numerous soldiers lose their lives, dozens of others are evacuated to aid stations, officers are relieved of their command, field promotions are handed out like prizes at a Sunday-school picnic, and great quantities of homemade jungle juice are consumed. In short, what happens in this battle is very similar, give or take a hill or two, to all battles everywhere. The final impression is not that fictitious warfare has been made real, as most of our war novelists have tried to make it, but that actual war has been shown to have a frighteningly fictitious quality.

About half of the 496 pages are devoted to the capture of one position, Hill 209, which is part of a terrain com-



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CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

plex called "The Dancing Elephant." Once the Japanese are killed or driven off, the bone-weary soldiers press forward to another group of hills known as "The Giant Boiled Shrimp." This reviewer would like to state that no soldier anywhere, ever, under any circumstances, used such fanciful names as the Dancing Elephant or the Giant Boiled Shrimp for a bunch of hills. Hills were known by number, or, if the action on

one was especially tough, it was called The Meatgrinder. It is the novelist, and not the G.I.s, who has named the hills in "The Thin Red Line."

But to press on with the book. Jones deploys over this terrain an infantry company of seventy-one men, plus thirteen others. Fully half of this number receive considerably more than passing mention, and perhaps a dozen play major parts. One of the great merits of this novel is that we are able to keep the men in this oversized cast clearly in mind, so sharply individualized are their roles. There is no plot, nor even a story line, aside from the progress of the fighting which becomes the testing block for the men's characters; the fighting itself, along with the command decisions that support it, is largely random and adventitious. Jones has deliberately avoided playing heroes and

villains with his characters; in each man good and bad are mixed. War is presented as a state of flux, unified by its own confusion.

The book's achievement, it seems to me, is that of patiently fitting together an elaborate picture puzzle of men in combat; the enjoyment comes from watching the author bring the puzzle to completion.

However, when the reader looks for some design in the finished work, it is missing, and what emerges is a sense that the meaning of war is its absence of meaning. No doubt such is the novel's intention; but this kind of naturalism can be a negative virtue, and in the end "The Thin Red Line" leaves us impressed with Jones's ability to report and document rather than to create in the very highest sense that art—and his own material—demand.

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## Catcher in the Corn



Pati Hill—"beHolden to someone."

"One Thing I Know—," by Pati Hill (Houghton, Mifflin. 93 pp. \$3), has for heroine an unsaccharine sixteen-year-old who, soured on society, gets scorched by amour. Joan Bostwick is a free-lance writer.

By JOAN BOSTWICK

ONE THING I want to say right now is that this Francesca Hollins, who is the heroine of this book called "One Thing I Know—," is not exactly what you might call an original. Being sixteen and disillusioned with Adults and Love and the Phony World, she sort of stepped out of this other book I read. If you really want to hear what I think, I think that old Pati Hill, who wrote the book, is beHolden to some-

one for this Francesca character because she is an awful lot like old Jane Gallagher who was aces with "Mad-man" Caulfield. I also think that being strictly for the girls it might outsell false eyelashes. Even though I'm around a thousand years old, I can understand that girls aren't too crazy about Amy, Beth, and Jo any more. I'm not exactly Granville Hicks or anything but I think I can draw a Literary Conclusion once in a while.

To get back to Francesca, she lives in Washington, D.C., and she has this lazy old stepfather who takes naked sunbaths and gripes about American women, he being Italian and all. He also sort of propositioned Francesca once, which was a crummy idea even for a pea-brain, so nothing came of that.

Anyway, I wouldn't want you to get sick or anything, so I'll skip over the vomity parts like how she fell in love with this Graham von Liddle, for Lord's sake, the minute she laid eyes on him. He called her *Ninotchka* or something equally pukey and was always delivering these monotonous sermons about Honor and Loyalty and Fighting the Good Fight. He was clever as hell.

So old Francesca was doing about as well as you can do if you happen to be in love with a clown, until Gloria attached herself to them. Gloria was this modest plump girl who blushed, for God's sake, and wore a brave little smile and mittens, and she was always improving them by hauling them to things like lectures on The Life History of the Water Rat. Pretty soon Graham

