Clarion Review

General

The Girl from Over There
Go O'Connor
Xlibris
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Four Stars (out of Five)

Yvette O'Leary, the self-assured heroine of *The Girl from Over There* is driven by a focus and desire for just one thing: freedom. For Yvette, freedom in the early 1960s means financial independence, and fortunately for her, she's got a natural ability for business. On top of that, she's pretty, young, and hails from New Caledonia, a small island about 1,000 miles from Australia, which is a French colony. (The author, who has also written a novel published in France, called *Fidelity on Trial*, shares this background with her main character.) Yvette uses her French and Irish background to charm the socks off almost everyone she meets in her adopted home of Los Angeles.

After divorcing her husband, an American GI she met in New Caledonia, Yvette begins a relationship with Russ, an earnest Francophile. She is apprehensive about being tied down, but the romance brings her much happiness. As a broker for a new upscale condominium building, the Wilshire Manor, she hopes to save enough money to reach her goal of freedom. Along her journey, she makes connections with people in power—bankers, movie directors, writers—and their families. She makes enemies too, including her supervisor at work, Morse. Yet as he spreads vicious rumors among their coworkers and clients about Yvette's ways of doing business, readers won't worry that Yvette is in danger because she never takes his bait. She stands her ground, always keeping her ambitions in mind.

Set in the late 1950s and early 1960s, *The Girl from Over There* will appeal to fans of the TV show *Mad Men*. O'Connor sets up the atmosphere of this swanky time period with evocative descriptions of Los Angeles and those who shape its changing landscape. Peppered throughout the narrative are informative asides about the history of the area, from the Chumash Indians who once lived along the shores of Malibu to the changes at Los Angeles International Airport necessary to accommodate jet propulsion airplanes. At times, these mini history lessons are

delivered by the characters and seem forced into the dialogue. Sometimes, the action drifts jarringly from past tense to present tense, although it's mainly told in the present, which lends immediacy to the characters' thoughts and actions.

O'Connor's writing possesses a strong, original voice, as when she describes the camphor trees along the street where Yvette lives: "Bushy, silky, they place a precious eiderdown around each of her nights." Recognition of life's beauty is evident in all that Yvette experiences and observes. "The Girl from Over There" is certainly someone readers will want to get to know.