

dition of the first water. There are many passages of the most illuminating kind of critical analysis. He has a gift for entertaining obiter dicta and a nice turn of phrase. His only defect as a critic is the same which is noticeable in his earlier writings on the French novel, a sudden failure of insight on account of personal prejudices against certain well established modern writers and modern points of view. A discursive quality leads also to tedium from time to time and to repetition. No student of French literature and no admirer of Stendhal could fail to find information and stimulation here, nor will he fail to receive a strong impression of Beyle's personal presence in these pages. But if he has read Stendhal's own writings he will come away with an unsatisfied feeling. The time is ripe for a brilliant biography of Stendhal. With all it has to offer, Mr. Green's is not it.

The Road to Crime

DESIGNS IN SCARLET. By Courtney Ryley Cooper. Boston: Little, Brown Co. 1939. \$2.75.

Reviewed by ROBERT STRUNSKY

FEW pictures of moral degeneration have been more graphic than this painstaking analysis by Courtney Ryley Cooper. What makes it doubly shocking is the fact that it centers around the younger generation. A year of intensive investigation revealed that crime and corruption are rampant among American youth, without regard, in many instances, to environment, geography, or education. It revealed that the trend toward criminality, far from being checked, is actually on the increase. But above all, it is the author's thesis that the moral conscience of public opinion is rapidly disintegrating.

"Designs in Scarlet" is a red signal of warning. Mr. Cooper calls upon the public conscience to get a grip on itself; to stamp out the ever-increasing breeding places of crime—the taxi-dance halls, the tourist cabins, the dine-and-dance taverns scattered along every mile of country road throughout the nation. He writes not alone from police files, but from personal experience.

For a year Mr. Cooper traveled by car across the continent vertically and horizontally, working "sixteen hours" a day. He learned how easy it is to pick up a waitress in a roadside tavern; borrow a "marihuana" cigarette from a high-school girl or boy; locate a small-town bagnio; embark upon, pursue, and conclude a career of prostitution. He discovered the ubiquitous haunts of degeneracy and the appalling degree to which it is practised. In his relentless search for case histories (he includes more than 200 in his narrative) he found a nation nowhere free of the festering sore of crime.

T. S. Eliot's New Play

THE FAMILY REUNION. By T. S. Eliot. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1939. \$1.50.

Reviewed by SHERMAN CONRAD

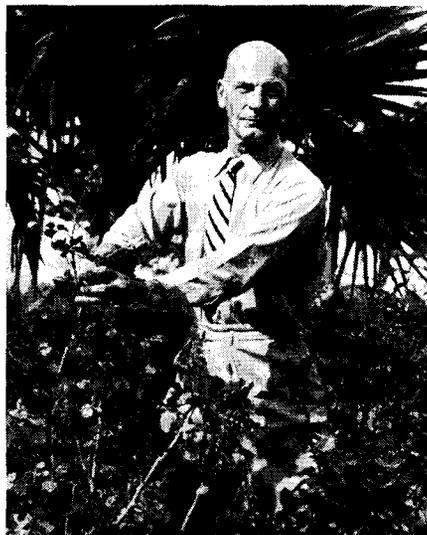
WITH this play it becomes substantially apparent what Eliot's theater-poetry has been coming toward and is to be. "Sweeney Agonistes" was fragmentary experiment; "The Rock" was pageant with a ready-given scenario; "Murder in the Cathedral" was a history worked into verse drama for a Church occasion. But granted their merits (particularly of the last-named), these pieces were finally only indicative, Eliot's necessary divagations

while moving toward a new form. With "The Family Reunion," a play completely "of his own devising," he appears as an accomplished poet-dramatist; the work bears the same direct, personal impact that his non-dramatic poetry does. In fact, this play carries on, in theme, from the last poem in his collected poetry, "Burnt Norton." "Murder in the Cathedral" naturally was related to that poem, but only in a sidelong way. This play is "Burnt Norton," in modern and personal terms, in the true dramatist's way, with the material personified and made explicit.

Eliot's maturest conclusion in his essays on dramatic poetry was: "If you want form you must go deeper than dramatic technique," into some sub-stratum of values, sociological, moral, or religious. The form of this play, what it is as theater-poetry, derives from just that fact: it is identical with the values it elucidates. These values have to do with the different planes of spiritual blindness and insight where human beings live. The characters are a contemporary family of the English peerage: the dowager mother, her sisters and brothers, her sons and a cousin, assembled in the ancestral house for a reunion. Most of them are unaware of anything beyond their immediate concerns; in Eliot's phrase, they see nothing. Aunt Agatha and Mary see a little; Harry, the son and heir, sees most. His vision is "of the unredeemable degradation," the corruption of life. The Eumenides which pursue him become literally apparent to him at home. Through Agatha, he learns that his Furies have a reality in the sins of his family. In his acceptance he is able to see through to a final expiation, and thus released he leaves to work out the curse. Immediate though the comparison is to the Orestes myth, it must not be overemphasized, for Eliot has discovered it all in his own terms. This world "of always more to understand" is like Henry James's; in its vision "of the horror of the night time—the nether world" it is like Djuna Barnes's; but since Harry learns "there is always more to suffer," it is finally that part of the Christian world which is Eliot's own.

The play's unique quality as theater-poetry corresponds exactly to this sliding scale of values. When the "blind" members of the family have the scene, the play is as prosaic in language, as realistic in stage-picture, as Maugham or Wilde. With Harry and Agatha the play intensifies into poetry as maturely beautiful as any Eliot has written; the stage directions suggest movement and gesture that are rightly unrealistic and choreographic.

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Woods Photo Service

Courtney Ryley Cooper

The reviewer is in no position to dispute his figures, yet cannot escape the feeling that Mr. Cooper launched upon his investigation in the spirit of a crusader—in a worthy cause, to be sure—yet eager to support his convictions with evidence. His final chapter is called "So What?" He blames the conditions he found on three factors: parents, prohibition, and the depression. He writes:

One of the great dangers of parental laxity is that it offers an alibi. It gives the youth, straining instinctively at the leash, an excuse for doing things which tempt him. It aids the crook; and any tavern keeper . . . prostitute, bartender or anyone else who profits at the possible expense of a youth's morals, is a cheap, miserable, slimy crook, whether he possesses a criminal record or not . . . It condones inefficiency in such public offices as are charged with the guarding or rehabilitation of the young. Most of all, it gives politics a chance to do as it pleases and place the blame somewhere else.

BOOK PREVIEW

No Riders

BY

JOHN STEINBECK

This week *The Saturday Review* presents a chapter, slightly abridged, from John Steinbeck's novel, "The Grapes of Wrath." An early chapter in the novel, it is a complete story in itself. "The Grapes of Wrath" will be published April 14 by the Viking Press.



Resettlement Administration, Dorothea Lange
Western Road

A HUGE red transport truck stood in front of the little roadside restaurant. The vertical exhaust pipe muttered softly, and an almost invisible haze of steel-blue smoke hovered over its end. It was a new truck, shining red, and in twelve-inch letters on its side, OKLAHOMA CITY TRANSPORT COMPANY. Its double tires were new, and a brass padlock stood straight out from the hasp on the big back doors. Inside the screened restaurant a radio played, quiet dance music turned low the way it is when no one is listening. A small outlet fan turned silently in its circular hole over the entrance, and flies buzzed excitedly about the doors and windows, butting the screens. Inside, one man, the truck driver, sat on a stool and leaned his elbows on the counter and looked over his coffee at the lean and lonely waitress. He talked the smart listless language of the road-sides to her. "I seen him about three months ago. He had a operation. Cut somepin out. I forget what." And she—"Doesn't seem no longer than a week I seen him myself. Looked fine then. He's a nice sort of a guy when he ain't stinko." Now and then the flies roared softly at the screen door. The coffee machine spurted steam and the waitress, without looking, reached behind her and shut it off.

Outside, a man walking along the edge of the highway crossed over and approached the truck. He walked slowly to the front of it, put his hand on the shiny fender, and looked at the *No Riders* sticker on the windshield. For a moment he was about to walk on down the road, but instead he sat on the running board on the side away from the restaurant. He was not over thirty. His eyes were very dark brown and there was a hint of brown pigment in his eyeballs. His cheek bones were high and wide, and strong deep lines cut down his cheeks, in curves beside his mouth. His upper lip was long, and since his teeth protruded, the lips stretched to cover them, for this man kept his lips closed. His hands were hard, with broad fingers and nails as thick and ridged as little clam shells. The space between

thumb and forefinger and the hams of his hands were shiny with callus.

The man's clothes were new—all of them, cheap and new. His gray cap was so new that the visor was still stiff and the button still on, not shapeless and bulged as it would be when it had served for a while all the various purposes of a cap—carrying sack, towel, handkerchief. His suit was of cheap gray hardcloth and so new that there were creases in the trousers. His blue chambray shirt was stiff and smooth with filler. The coat was too big, the trousers too short, for this was a tall man. The coat shoulder peaks hung down on his arms, and even then the sleeves were too short and the front of the coat flapped loosely over his stomach. He wore a pair of new tan shoes of the kind called "army last," hob-nailed and with half circles like horse-shoes to protect the edges of the heels from wear. This man sat on the running board and took off his cap and mopped his face with it. Then he put on the cap, and by pulling started the future ruin of the visor. His feet caught his attention. He leaned down and loosened the shoelaces, and did not tie the ends again. Over his head the exhaust of the Diesel engine whispered in quick puffs of blue smoke.

. . .

In the restaurant the truck driver paid his bill and put his two nickels change in a slot machine. The whirling cylinders gave him no score. "They fix 'em so you can't win nothing," he said to the waitress.

And she replied, "Guy took the jackpot not two hours ago. Three-eighty he got. How soon you gonna be back by?"

He held the screen door a little open. "Week-ten days," he said. "Got to make a run to Tulsa an' I never get back soon as I think."

She said crossly, "Don't let the flies in. Either go out or come in."

"So long," he said, and pushed his way out. The screen door banged behind him. He stood in the sun peeling the wrapper from a piece of gum. He was a heavy man, wide in the shoulders, thick in the stomach. His face was red and his blue eyes long and slitted from having squinted

always at sharp light. He wore army trousers and high laced boots. Holding the stick of gum in front of his lips he called through the screen, "Well, don't do nothing you don't want me to hear about." The waitress was turned toward a mirror on the back wall. She grunted a reply. The truck driver gnawed down the stick of gum slowly, opening his jaws and lips wide with each bite. He shaped the gum in his mouth, rolled it under his tongue while he walked to the big red truck.

The hitch-hiker stood up and looked across through the windows. "Could ya give me a lift, mister?"

The driver looked quickly back at the restaurant for a second. "Didn' you see the *No Riders* sticker on the win'shield?"

"Sure—I seen it. But sometimes a guy'll be a good guy even if some rich bastard makes him carry a sticker."

The driver, getting slowly into the truck, considered the parts of this answer. If he refused now, not only was he not a good guy, but he was forced to carry a sticker, was not allowed to have company. If he took in the hitch-hiker he was automatically a good guy and also he was not one whom any rich bastard could kick around. He knew he was being trapped, but he couldn't see a way out. And he wanted to be a good guy. He glanced again at the restaurant. "Scrunch down on the running board till we get around the bend," he said.

The hitch-hiker flopped down out of sight and clung to the door handle. The motor roared up for a moment, the gears clicked in, and the great truck moved away, first gear, second gear, third gear, and then a high whining pick-up and fourth gear. Under the clinging man the highway blurred dizzily by. It was a mile to the first turn in the road, then the truck slowed down. The hitch-hiker stood up, eased the door open, and slipped into the seat. The driver looked over at him, slitting his eyes, and he chewed as though thoughts and impressions were being sorted and arranged by his jaws before they were finally filed away in his brain. His eyes started at the new cap, moved down

(Continued on next page)