

life and in memory, with full realization of its emotional importance but with no hint of sentimentality or distortion.

A biography that is all and only a biography will, of course, be disappointing to many readers, and Mr. Rusk will doubtless be charged with avoiding the philosophical and literary problems that any critic of Emerson must face. For example, the conflict between the Pyrrhonism of his college literary society and the longing for dogmatic certainty that lay so deeply in his mental inheritance is not examined, even though it is probably the first recognizable source of the dichotomy in his ultimate philosophical position. And we are given no analysis of the principles of literary structure in the characteristic Emersonian lecture-essay, so obviously an adaptation of the homiletic technique of repetition and expansion for emphasis to the traditions of Miltonic and Addisonian prose. There is no answer to this charge except to say that good philosophical and literary interpretations may still be written, and that they will be better for being built upon this book, but the book itself is a biography—that and nothing more.

It may also be said—as Mr. Rusk himself so disarmingly confesses—that his is not quite a perfect sympathy. He is primarily interested in his subject “as an individualist struggling, though never with entire success, to keep his area of personal freedom safe from encroachment.” This aspect of Emerson may be major for Mr. Rusk; it was minor for Emerson. But we can allow this discrepancy even though it occasionally makes for an emphasis on those actions which seem self-interested, and for something less than a full understanding of the higher motivation involved. Remember, Emerson is speaking for himself, but of necessity through Mr. Rusk, and the Riverside scholar can be but a partially transcendental naturalist. Yet he makes us realize after all that the Concord sage was an authority on pears.

We should be thankful for this book, especially in these times. Emerson's transcendental faith may not be wholly transferable to our day, but an understanding of an integrated, sweet, and compelling personality is tonic for our confusions. Mr. Rusk's complete and living portrait of Ralph Waldo Emerson helps us also to remember what “purer” critics are so prone to forget: that a philosophical position or a work of art is always—whatever else it may be—the product of a personality, a time, and a place.



—From the book.

## Oh, to Be in Fougayrolles!

A HOUSE IN THE CÉVENNES. By Jeanne Saleil. New York: The Macmillan Co. 208 pp. \$2.75.

Reviewed by ROSEMARY CARR BENÉT

**M**ORE than current exhortations on the radio or in magazines to travel abroad, this book made me homesick for France. Oh, to be in Fougayrolles now that June is here, and to drop in at the Café de la Paix (radical) or the Café du Commerce (conservative). The real flavor of life in a little French town is distilled in this book. Anyone who knows that life will read with pleasure and recognition about the Saleil family and Fougayrolles in the Cévennes. Fougayrolles had “1,011 registered constituents,” a number which now must be 1,010, since the author, who was born in the south of France and educated at the Sorbonne, is at present residing in Northampton, Mass., where she is associate professor of French at Smith College. Her recollections are marked by humor, fidelity, gaiety, and quite probably nostalgia, since Northampton is so far removed from the Cévennes. At least she wakes nostalgia in her readers. Julian Green compares her book to the work of Daudet, saying, “Not since Alphonse Daudet has any writer given us such an accurate and colorful picture of Southern France. Here is the Midi with its laughter, its worries and its inimitable accent.” It reminded me also of a young, humorous Colette, thinking fondly of her similar *pays*. (Saint-Sauveur is just five miles across the brook from Fougayrolles.) The mood is warm here; the laughter appreciative and affectionate.

The Saleil family, who had almost as much trouble with their house as Mr. Blandings, first went to Fougayrolles under the onus of being summer people. “From off island,” as they say in Nantucket. They were foreigners, outlanders, though Madame Saleil's birthplace was only five hours away by train. Little by little, they were accepted, made part of the inner life of the town, until finally that most flattering of all tributes was paid them, “*Ils sont du pays*.” They were truly *Fougayrollais* at last, integrated into the life of the community. “What wonderful human treasure a village small enough to be encompassed in a fifteen-minute walk holds,” says the author, and that is our whole background. The sights, sounds, smells, and small passionate interests of the place are all here, the village gossip, local rivalries, weddings, funerals, scandals. No town ever had more individualists and we meet them all, the stingy mayor, the love-lorn sewing woman, the titled family and their offspring known locally with humorous disrespect as “*le Countillou*.” Details about daily tasks and growing things are accurate. Proverbs run all through the book and a sense of the colorful local speech is one of the things that delighted me most: “An odd pot finds an odd lid,” or “That marriage won't make the moon turn over,” “The empty sack is hung in the rain; the full one where it is dry.” Miss Saleil, who seems to have many strings to her bow, has done the spirited sketches too.

Francophiles are sure to find reading this a delightful, rewarding, heartwarming experience.

## Sybarite, 32 B. C.

EPICURUS MY MASTER. By Max Radin. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. 142 pp. \$2.75.

Reviewed by MILTON K. MUNITZ

IN THE year 32 B.C. in Rome a man was slowly starving himself to death rather than continue to suffer the pains of what he took to be an incurable illness. Titus Pomponius Atticus, then seventy-seven years old, had lived a full and rich life. The history of Latin literature and Roman affairs accords him a relatively minor role and his name is unlikely to evoke, except in the minds of specialists, any mark of recognition. Such few brief things that he wrote are no longer extant, yet here was a man who in his own day achieved a special kind of prominence and, under the revivifying pen of Professor Radin, illustrates a career that continues to exhibit a special kind of interest. Atticus (so nicknamed because of his long sojourn in Athens, where he assimilated the best that was then available of Greek genius in its literature, philosophy, and art) enjoyed a unique combination of human gifts, partly the result of chance and family background, partly the outcome of his own single-minded devotion to a mode of life which he practised with consistency and mastery.

As a wealthy banker, his support was sought for by many of the politically great of his day. For Atticus, however, his wealth was essentially a means of accumulating such treasures of art and physical comfort that make for refinement in living. Among his friends and intimates were to be found the great and the near great in the world of affairs and letters. Cicero had been a lifelong friend of his and they carried on a long correspondence. Political rivals like Octavian Caesar, Marc Antony, Julius his intimates.

Suppose such a man were to write his autobiography. What might it be like? Professor Radin has asked him-

### *We Are the Music Makers*

By Ben Ray Redman

WRITING by light so black it blinds us.

We seek to shape the chaos of a time  
That has the soul of an exploding star;  
And every working moment finds us  
Busy reducing galaxies to rhyme—  
But still uncertain who and what we  
are.



self this provocative question and the work before us provides his answer. What we find is the fruit of a variety of interests and an opportunity for appreciation on several levels. Professor Radin is a learned classicist but his scholarship is made to serve the ulterior purpose of imaginative and sympathetic reconstruction of a life that expressed a dominant mode of thought. To the historian, interested in the turbulent years of the first century B.C. in Roman affairs, a century also fateful for world history, this book offers a way of seeing those events as focused through the eyes of a man who lived with and among those who were to shape its character. At the same time and on another level, however, what we have are the reflections and sentiments of a mind for which the philosophy of Epicureanism guides its estimates and choices. Such a philosophy had in ancient times a long history, and has had throughout subsequent ages its many adherents. With systematic thoroughness, but at the same time with an unforced naturalness, Professor Radin explores the philosophy of Epicureanism through the eyes of the reminiscing and meditative Atticus as it touches on such themes as the uses of wealth, the institution of slavery, the practice of war, the values of a possible world dominion under a single power, friendship, art, love, the nature of the gods, death, the pursuit of pleasure.

The outcome is a work which can assume its own distinctive place in the literature of Epicureanism. Its special value is not that it offers any profound statement or critical estimate of that philosophy. What it does offer is a simple and effective restatement of what such a philosophy meant in the life of a disciple.

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## Poetess, 1860's

THE WORLD OF EMMA LAZURUS. By H. E. Jacob. New York: Schocken Books. 222 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by NATHAN L. ROTHMAN

EMMA LAZURUS was sensitive, Romantic, a daughter of wealth, and, beyond that, daughter to every romantic impulse that stirred the intellectual world of her times, in the 1860's and onward. At the age of seventeen she met Emerson at Sam Ward's house; a year later she was sending off a copy of her first book of verse to Concord and beginning a correspondence and a friendship that was to last many years. I think an examination of his letters to her and of her poems (from both of which Mr. Jacob quotes widely) will show that the aging philosopher erred on the side of generosity, addressing her as though she were a young poet inspired with the divine fire. It would be truer to say that she lived in its reflected glow. (Certainly Emerson's failure to include her finally in "Parnassus," his anthology of English and American poetry, came as a terrible and incomprehensible blow to her.) Emma was deeply responsive to the emotional impulses that shaped the great romantic poetry of the century. Heine, Byron, Shelley, Whitman—she absorbed them into her blood stream and spoke with their tongues. It is curious that she wrote, of Longfellow, at a later date: "One could almost guess from any volume of his poems, what great poet he was reading at the time, and by what foreign influence he was dominated"—for this was so closely true of her own writing.

She was not, then, a great creative personality, but she was a person of fine and prophetic perceptions. She vibrated to the best thoughts and feelings of her age, and on at least one occasion gave voice to them with a power all her own. This was of course her famous sonnet "The New Colossus," the most notable line of which is engraved at the base of the Statue of Liberty. For the rest, her poetry must of necessity remain shadowed in the obscurity that settled about it after her death. Yet she may survive, in those dovetailed histories of literary friendships, the close friend of Rose Hawthorne and Marian Evans, the correspondent of so many of her great contemporaries. Mr. Jacob's book is not in any sense critical but it is an honest and lucid statement. It gives us more detail and shading than we have had before, in the portrait of a poet who, if not great, was nevertheless noble and heroic in the Emersonian sense.