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Alexandrian society woman), Nes-sim (a businessman who is Justine's wealthy protector), Melissa (who is a cabaret dancer), and an Irish schoolmaster and writer (who lives with Melissa and serves as the story's narrator). These characters make libertine excursions into modern Alexandria's lower depths and, in the midst of hothouse pleasures, reach peaks of unbearable pain. Their capacity for unhappiness is infinite as they whiplash their senses into utter exhaustion.

Mr. Durrell shapes his prose to his will in order to evoke languorous moods, barbaric realism, hashish dreams, and relentless self-questionings for these characters. There are flashes of tender insight into the meaning of love and there are moments of extreme cynicism that see "at the centre of the city's life—its genito-urinary system." Each of his characters indulges in shadow play with a private neurosis; and once this secret source of dramatic torment is ruthlessly removed the characters are reduced to commonplace ciphers who retain washed-out memories. By frankly narcissistic means, the writer carries sense experience as far as it can be reproduced in the novel.

Mr. Durrell's writing exhibits the kind of strong individualism that breeds artistic decadence, not in the moral sense but in the esthetic. "Justine" shows the same ego-squeezing exoticism as the poetic novel "A Rebours" by the Frenchman Huysmans (who caused literary excitement some seventy years ago), the personalized anguish of Rimbaud,

and a veneer that Baudelaire called "the phosphorescence of putrescence." Yet, whether its poetically tortured and emotionally intricate exposures attract or repel readers, his book shows Mr. Durrell a novelist of extraordinary force.

**DULY NOTED:** "The Bixby Girls," by Rosamond Marshall (Doubleday, \$3.95), introduces two strong-willed sisters, Salome and Kathy. The twice-married, bewitching Salome parks the offspring of one of her extra-curricular affairs with Kathy, who herself is involved with an unhappily-married tycoon. The setting is Texas some thirty years ago and Miss Marshall ("Kitty," "The Duchess Hotspur") flamboyantly brings alive the rousting Bixby clan, including a boozing father and a guitar-strumming brother. Heady melodrama and continual entertainment.

"Mrs. Daffodil," by Gladys Taber (Lippincott, \$3.75), centers its attention on the New England home of a philosophically folksy writer who sympathetically portrays her neighbors: a nostalgic ex-naval officer who hoists and lowers the flag daily, a patriarchal old-fashioned farmer, and other species. Amusing, warmhearted.

"The Butterfly Net," by Alethia Sheldon (Coward-McCann, \$3.75), is an excursion to the Westchester estate of the Stantons to attend a party where the drink-diluted conversations revolve around who is to go to bed with whom. After a good deal of catty palaver the question is resolved (without benefit of Emily Post). Naughty, suggestive, smoothly narrated tomfoolery. —S. P. MANSTEN.

## Crusoe

By Robert Boylan

WHERE the antipodes' palmy Tuamotu are,  
South of Hawaii, to the west of high Peru,  
There lay a derelict on the unknown shore  
Thinking of rescue vessels ever out of view.  
Robinson Crusoe, alone in a coral land,  
Dreamed of his home and found footprints in sand.  
He walked where the past was powdered finely down  
And discovered a friend, whose chiaroscuro skin  
Gleamed amiably in the cannibals' town.  
Across two seas were his safe foreign kin.  
Kamehameha's parrots shone chartreuse  
In Crusoe's paradise of all the tropic's hues.  
Sails and Armadas fled across his eyes.  
His was a life of desperate goodbyes.  
His morrows dawned monotonous and dull.  
His circlings of his isle grew mad with hope.  
He envied the minute departing gull  
And remote whales. He kept his lonely slope,  
Praying a ship with archaeologists  
Would fetch him from the map's Pacific mists.

## Eugene O'Neill

Continued from page 21

down and sobs.) But why should I cry, Mother? Why do I mourn for him?

Nora: Don't, darlin', don't . . . Shame on you to cry when you have love. What would the young lad think of you?

By O'Neill's standards a happy ending? There are no happy endings for the half-born.

The discovery that people have—and live by—illusions about themselves came early to O'Neill. There's a glimpse of it as early as "The Hairy Ape." Then, at a moment I cannot specify, it became his mastering idea and he became its propagandist, often giving us the feeling that no one else had ever thought this sublime thought before, that he had to prove it to us with masks for the actors or interior dialogue until it comes to the point that he throws the idea at us, as if all by itself, it is enough to absorb

our interest. The profound filial and anti-filial feelings of "Long Day's Journey" embody the idea far better than the intellectual gropings of "The Iceman Cometh." The embodiment of the same idea in the characters of nineteenth-century melodrama in the new play is ineffective.

I make the guess that O'Neill lacked conviction about this play and I have emphasized one technical device which seems to me to prove this: the prevalence of off-stage action. The play begins (in a saloon, you may be sure) with two minor characters repeating what they had said the night before—O'Neill's version of the butler and French maid giving us a run-down of the more important figures. And again and again the decisive confrontations are avoided, the big scenes are only reported to us in two languages not exceptionally persuasive: the typical O'Neill rhapsody and what I must accept as Irish-American but know only as vaudeville Irish. And I feel at the end under no compulsion to believe in the play any more than O'Neill seems to have believed in it.



### Pick of the Paperbacks



**ROGUE HERRIES.** By Hugh Walpole. *St. Martin's Library*. \$1.25. The first novel in a tetralogy chronicling the doings of the Herries family in eighteenth-century Cumberland.

**THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF ART.** By Arnold Hauser. Translated by Stanley Goodman. *Vintage*. 2 vols. \$1.25 each. The first half of a standard work that traces the history of art, from the prehistoric period to the era of Baroque, setting it against the intellectual climate of its time.

**MALLARMÉ.** Translated by C. F. MacIntyre. *University of California Press*. \$1.50. Poems by the French symbolist, including "L'Après-midi d'un Faune," in a handsome edition with both the French verse and the English translation.

**THE BALLAD OF TRADITION.** By Gordon Hall Gerould. *Galaxy*. \$2.95. A comprehensive history of the ballad and its development in England, Europe, and America. Somewhat overpriced.

**THE SEVEN ISLANDS.** By Jon Godden. *Pocket Books*. 25¢. A modern-day fable about an ingenuous holy man on an island in the Ganges who wanted only to be left alone.

**THE USES OF THE PAST.** By Herbert J. Muller. *Galaxy*. \$2.25. An intellectual history of the world's golden civilizations (the Byzantine Empire, Greece, and "Holy Russia") through which is suffused the spirit of tragedy.

**VIRGIN LAND.** By Henry Nash Smith. *Vintage*. \$1.25. An interpretation of the American West which examines the distinct qualities of myth and symbol in frontier days.

**LUCY CROWN.** By Irwin Shaw. *Signet*. 50¢. The author of "The Young Lions" turns to infidelity as his theme in this story of a summer interlude and its shattering consequences to an erring woman and her unforgiving son.

**THE OLD SANTA FE TRAIL.** By Stanley Vestal. *Bantam*. 50¢. The story of the rough trail from Missouri and the rugged pioneers who followed it to Santa Fe.

**FORM AND FUNCTION.** By Horatio Greenough. *University of California Press*. \$1.25. Theories of art, design, and architecture expounded by a Boston sculptor that remain as valid now as when they were written in the days of Emerson.

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