

has been satirised by Evelyn Waugh, sentimentalised by Alistair Cooke, analysed by D. W. Brogan, panned by Priestley and imitated by Iddon. Journalists, philosophers, politicians, novelists, editors, essayists and poets have ground their well-worn axes to powder on his hapless head.

What a blessed relief it was, then, to turn to James Morris, who set out from England two years ago in search of that forgotten man, the American individualist. The measure of his success is the freshest, sanest and most illuminating book on the United States which has come my way in many a day.

Coast to Coast is the fruit of a 70,000-mile tour, embracing every one of the 48 States, which Mr. Morris undertook with the assistance of the Commonwealth Fund of New York and *The Times* of London. It is not so much a travel book as a series of profiles of people and places; and there, in each picture, is the author, an ideal projection of ourselves, friendly, urbane and curious, but never obtrusive. Here he is, slipping quietly into the back of the tent at a hellfire-and-damnation Holy Roller meeting; there he is in the stands on Kentucky Derby Day, not far from the prominent New Orleans businessman in the ermine suit studded with pearls and rhinestones.

There is no "padding" in this book and not a trace of malice; Mr. Morris makes every paragraph count. He drops in on a Maryland oyster catcher, a Mississippi towboat pilot, a rural muralist, Mary Pickford and Harry Truman; Indians, Amishers, Mormons, millionaires and uranium miners; a desiccated New England whaling community, a small New Jersey town, a wealthy Chicago suburb, a Wisconsin farm, an Oregon lumber camp and, of course, the big cities.

And yet the book has an essential unity, supplied by the friendliness and generosity of Americans everywhere, together with a constant undercurrent of sadness. The American individualist, Mr. Morris makes only too clear, is living on little more than sentiment and borrowed time. The creeping tide of commercialism, the relentless drive of the internal combustion engine, the omnipotent new all-Americanism, cannot much longer be denied.

This book could only have been written by an Englishman and probably only by a journalist. There can be few writers in either category with James Morris's perception and gift for lucid expression. You may have been fortunate enough to visit America or you may never get there, but if the candid commentators and expert interpreters have left you an ounce of curiosity or a shred of doubt, then do read *Coast to Coast*.

—Henry Walter

Parking Metres

JAY JUMPER

Two drivers in the round-Australian car reliability trial were hurt when their car ran into a kangaroo. The car was badly damaged.—Press item.

'Twas stifling, and the dusty grime
Did swirl and eddy round the car,
And it was after closing time,
And Darwin was a-fear.

"Beware the kangaroo, my boy,
Or heed my warning, you will suffer.
On motor-cars he jumps for joy,
Pedestrians come no tougher."

One two, one two—what a to-do!
For once the motorist takes a tossing.
No self-respecting kangaroo
Would use a zebra crossing. —R.G.P.

BOOK SHOP

IN the Book Shop session on Wednesday, September 19, a librarian will talk about "Some Other Bookshops," and R. T. Robertson, of Dunedin, will review three novels: "Aspects of Love," by David Garnett; "Faithful are the Wounds," by May Sarton; and "The Threshold," by Dorothea Rutherford.

THREE STYLES

POINT OF ORDER, by Gwyn Thomas; Victor Gollancz, English price 12/6; *A MALE CHILD*, by Paul Scott; Eyre and Spottiswoode, English price 15/-; *THE DINNER PARTY*, by Gretchen Finletter; Victor Gollancz, English price 12/6.

GWYN THOMAS, a kind of comic cousin to Dylan, is one of the funniest, most exuberant writers alive. His outrageous style, blending resounding metaphors, sizzling Welsh oratory and tongue-in-the-cheek sententiousness sweeps the reader along like flood-water, as up and down on the surface bob hilarious anecdotes and "voters" with names like Rollo Vaughan the Hastening Dawn. *Point of Order's* sketchy plot concerns the misadventures of Councillor Eryl Pym, an ambitious chiseling mugwump, inordinately given to public speeches. Such episodes as Pym's courting, a football match and a singing contest in a hospital ward are ebullient farce. But the portion describing the last stand of a "voter" on a slowly subsiding mine-sapped hill strikes a deeper note, showing that Thomas, like all good comic writers, is keenly aware of basic human values.

By comparison with Thomas's exuberance, Paul Scott's style seems drably ordinary. Yet in this novel of everyday life, the direct, uncluttered prose gives an impression, not of mere reportage, but of the illumination of the familiar. The ex-serviceman hero, ill and low in spiritual energy, gains true maturity and new courage from his friendship with a young reconciled couple and the birth of their son. Nothing much happens, but Scott's ability to give a significant order to ordinary experience lends the novel a quietly convincing air and a feeling of depth.

Mrs. Finletter's style is one made familiar by feminine writers of fictional diaries—a kind of jerky garrulousness. She acknowledges her debt to E. M. Delafeld; and *The Dinner Party*, in fact, transports the Provincial Lady to America, as the diarist struggles through a dinner party, visits an Army camp, talks politics with Washington types and redecorates her house. All quite amusing and shrewdly witty, but fundamentally pretty trivial and exhausting to read as a whole.

—J.C.R.

CRITICS AND POETS

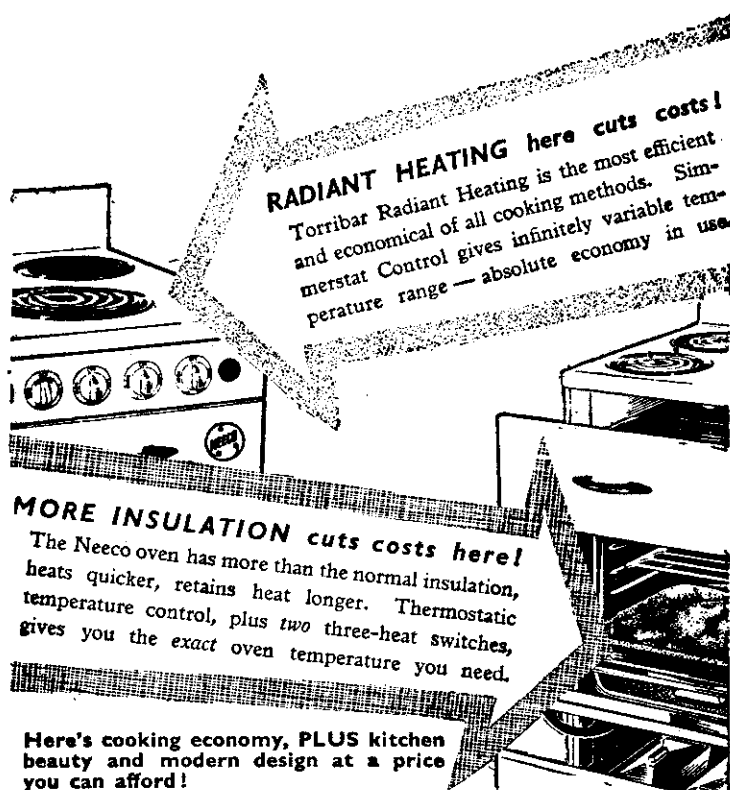
THE EDINBURGH REVIEW AND ROMANTIC POETRY (1802-29), by Thomas Crawford, Auckland University College, Bulletin No. 47, English series No. 8, 4/-.

"Who killed John Keats?"
"I," said the Quarterly
So savage and tartly—
"I killed John Keats."

POSTERITY is often harsher in its judgment on critics than on poets. A bad poet remains unread; a bad critic is dragged from his tomb, to answer the charge of malicious, pontificating ignorance, or even (as in Byron's quatrain above) the charge of homicide. Such

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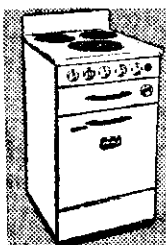
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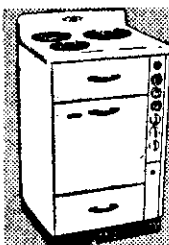
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