



Henri Duchemin and His Shadows (New York Review Books Classics)

Emmanuel Bove

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An NYRB Classics Original

Emmanuel Bove was one of the most original writers to come out of twentieth-century France and a popular success in his day. Discovered by Colette, who arranged for the publication of his first novel, *My Friends*, Bove enjoyed a busy literary career, until the German occupation silenced him. During his lifetime, his novels and stories were admired by Rilke, the surrealists, Camus, and Beckett, who said of him that “more than anyone else he has an instinct for the essential detail.”

Henry Duchemin and His Shadows is the ideal introduction to Bove’s world, with its cast of stubborn isolatoes who call to mind Melville’s Bartleby, Walser’s “little men,” and Rhys’s lost women. Henri Duchemin, the protagonist of the collection’s first story, “Night Crime,” is ambivalent, afraid of appearing ridiculous, desperate for money: in other words, the perfect prey. Criminals, beautiful women, and profiteers threaten the sad young men of Bove’s stories, but worse yet are the interior voices and paranoia that propel them to their fates. The poet of the flophouse and the dive, the park bench and the pigeon’s crumb, Bove is also a deeply empathetic writer for whom no defeat is so great as to silence desire.

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