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transparent than now in our own day." Yet this Spenserian evolution in art—from the simple to the complex form—seems to me to be naive in its own way. An art like that of Joyce may be essentially incapable of portraying significant action and certainty, the thought traces of a confident generation, since its very method is that of the Hamlet in words who can no more isolate a meaning than a course of action.

What is best in this book comes from Margaret Schlauch's keen sense of the social role of language—the role played by Cockney English and the jargon of the upper classes as well as the subtle social arrangement reflected in the use of pronouns in Malay—wherein a speaker must decide into which of ten levels the persons referred to belongs. It is really impossible to do justice to the active sense of social values that lifts and enlivens this book at every turn. There is, for example, the charming discourse on the speech of butlers represented by P. G. Wodehouse's Jeeves. The ruling classes, Professor Schlauch suggests, relegated to their servants the task of maintaining fancy dress speech as well as fancy dress. Jeeves' master can afford to be careless of both, since he maintains, by conspicuous consumption, the style of the eighteenth century in the speech of his butler.

With great learning and wit Professor Schlauch has demonstrated that linguistic analysis cannot ultimately be divorced from social analysis. This stimulating introduction to the science of language provides not only the basic facts of speech, but even more important a scientific method which will give these facts their deepest and richest meaning.

MARIAN ANDREWS.

Philippine Poets

CHORUS FOR AMERICA. Edited by Carlos Bulosan.
Wagon and Star Publishers.

AMONG the many myths being destroyed by this war is the myth of racial superiority. Now a myth may be destroyed in two ways: either by truth or by a counter-myth. The Japanese, for example, with their deceptive slogan of "Asia for the Asiatics" are simply turning Kipling upside down; the "white man's burden" becomes the "yellow man's burden"; the slave's appeal for freedom is met with an exchange of masters. When this challenge is not met forthrightly—as it is not being met in regard to India today—the result is chaos. But when even the first tentative steps in the right direction have been taken, then we get the epic of Bataan—Filipino and American riveted in one purpose, comrades in one war. In the fires of those foxholes was forged the key to the colonial (and Negro) question: when a people fights for itself it fights for us.

The appearance of these six Philippine poets is like gleaming in the rocks—a small outcropping of a culture most of us know very little about. But as the editor points out, although Philippine literature has a long tradition of struggle against tyranny, it has be-

come most resurgent in recent years with the growing industrialism of the islands. "The vision of a free and independent Philippines will surely bring forward a new and richer literature. . . ."

Seeds must not be judged as final growths. There are awkwardnesses here one might expect to find among writers grappling with the difficulties of a tri-lingual culture. There are the archaisms of young poets still groping for their own expression and borrowing meanwhile from the classics. But with all that, each of these poets in his own way has vitality and pulse, the life-given language when it communicates deeply felt experience.

Villa weaves adroit love lyrics reminiscent of the songs of Solomon. He seems the least socially conscious of the group. Da Costa's "Like the Molave" is a crude but powerful affirmation of Philippine nationalism and was (before the Japanese occupation) required reading in the Philippine schools. Feria finds "New hopes behind mask-faces. . . ." Rigor's "Memorial to America" is an exotic blossom of the cross-breeding of cultures: "my Malay mother's bosoms" and the "obelisk skyscraper," "Andalusian airs" and "the pragmatic wisdom of your gigantic proportions." Baroga's dramatic pieces are like tiny plays fashioned by a Chinese craftsman. The final group by Carlos Bulosan records simply and movingly the impact of the war.

One closes a collection of this sort with a sense of obligation. For these Philippine writers have not taken refuge in a shell of bitterness, although they have all experienced "the exalted word" and "the intolerable deed." Yet they have faith in the American dream of democracy and their brothers died for that faith on Bataan. It is up to us to see that for them—as for all colonial peoples—the word becomes flesh, the dream reality.

SIDNEY ALEXANDER.

Cultural Origins

THE ROOTS OF AMERICAN CULTURE AND OTHER ESSAYS,
by Constance Rourke. Edited with a preface by Van Wyck Brooks. Harcourt, Brace. \$3.

CONSTANCE ROURKE did some good pioneer work in *American Humor* and *Trumpets of Jubilee*. This book, edited by Van Wyck Brooks from the papers left unfinished at the time of her death, is about one-third of a projected history of American culture. Like her other books, it is full of good things; it is useful in teaching and it supplements Parrington at certain points. But finally I think we must conclude that even at its best this book (and Miss Rourke's others) lacks illumination. As it is it will have a moderate reading public of gray-haired thoughtful people and their students. If it had been written by Miss Rourke with a grasp of certain essentials I think such a book could have found a much wider audience and could have spoken in the language of our culture to diverse types of Americans over an extended time.

What's in this book? My notes say about the first essay, which entitles the volume—excellent in unexpected places, compact at points.

But even this ambitious essay is curiously thin. Miss Rourke comes near enough contemporary reality to mention Veblen's theory of the leisure class, but no further. And she fails to say the trenchant thing with even Veblen to help. So we find her walking around and around the interesting spot, nearer and nearer the key to discovery and not even aware that she is missing what we all see. Culture—what is it? Are the arts necessarily luxuries? Miss Rourke gives partial answers to these and other questions, but she is unable to penetrate into the heart of the matter.

For me the bafflement grew until I reached this passage: "As for the long course of argument advanced frequently by Marxist critics and others, that our culture has been destroyed or diminished by a persistent materialism. . . ." Then I began to understand Miss Rourke's misconceptions. We must promptly ask: what Marxist critic ever said anything of the sort? For this lapse indicates that Miss Rourke had never taken time to think, much less read, along the lines of her comment. A trained writer of any sort would certainly ask himself in the interests of simple logic how materialists could possibly claim that materialism had destroyed or diminished culture.

The other essays in the book are equally uneven. "The Rise of Theatricals," with its six sub-headings, is pleasant research. "Early American Music,"—very valuable, to my mind. "The Shakers"—excellent material, thrillingly written. "A Note on Folklore"—a mere note; others have done better who have not Miss Rourke's reputation. "Voltaire Coombe"—minor but nice. "Traditions for a Negro Literature"—extremely thin stuff if you have read the new writers of the *Negro Quarterly*. "American Art, a Possible Future"—so, so.

If Miss Rourke knew, as she seemed to know, that the characteristic of culture in the true sense is that it is shared by the whole group, why is the tie-up to our time so vague? If she knew that culture is essential to communication and, like light and air, something that resists being boxed up, sold, or cornered how can she lack the power to get her fingers on the story of the battle to box it up, sell and corner it?

The items Miss Rourke brings forth to prove her point with the best will in the world, take on a set and sorry complexion; the only colors that will do, of course, are human colors and those—those have been sold down the river. Background, no doubt we have plenty of that—but what about the foreground?

The formula of the old Seven Arts is hidden at the core of this thinking: find a tradition, prove its existence to the right people, and they will produce art. We catch an odd glimpse of the middle class mind which lost its culture on its way to power in the last half of the nineteenth century, and projected its loss on the periods before that time. But it is only a glimpse. When we have finished the book we carry away many useful small articles after we have unwrapped and thrown away the theory.

GENEVIEVE TAGGARD.

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