

who do their thinking with a view to action." Scholars, he added, are "men who do their thinking for the sake of teaching or knowing." But to call a conference "next year" in which both "types" of men will be represented is to evade the problem and to perpetuate illusion. Thinking too is action, and thinking which is not grounded in the practice of actual people or which fails to strengthen and enlighten the practice of actual people is bound to result in an unending series of confessions of confusion.

THE result of such a separation is not only confusion, but an absence of urgency, directness, sharpness. The final statement of the conference is an anti-fascist declaration which is not deeply and richly imbued with an anti-fascist consciousness. It is all very well to formulate a "pluralistic universe of ideas," but to those for whom thinking is action and action thought, the real universe we inhabit today is divided by two essential ideas. It is

all very well to "encourage differences of view," but the crucial problem is to sharpen the edge of our fundamental view, our anti-fascist view. It is not in a benign spirit of philosophical compromise that we can smash the enemies of philosophy. In our polite proclamations of mutual tolerance, let us not blunt our unyielding intolerance of the enemy.

It is only because we live in a twilight area before the full scale military offensive, that our intellectual processes can retain features of sluggishness. Up-to-the-hilt participation in a military sense will arouse our intellectual participation in this war. It is the urgent responsibility of those scholars and men of letters who want to insure "next year" to recast their thinking, their action-conditioned and action-producing thinking, in the framework of this year's necessity. In this "secret theater of the war" too, we must give everything we have.

SAMUEL SILLEN.

BOOKS IN REVIEW

Stories of Latin America

FIESTA IN NOVEMBER; Stories from Latin America, Selected and Edited by Angel Flores and Dudley Poore, with an Introduction by Katherine Anne Porter. Houghton Mifflin. \$3.

THIS anthology of eighteen Latin American novelettes and short stories, with its sensitive introduction by Katherine Anne Porter and its exceptionally high standard in the matter of translations, is a rather curiously disappointing volume, even though a titillating one. An attempt to discover the reasons why may be instructive.

In setting about the compilation of a work like this an editor may have in mind a number of alternative objectives. Shall he give his readers merely a collection of "well made" stories they are pretty apt to like, and which happen to come from Latin America? Shall he bring them tales which will give them back that picture of Latin American life which they themselves may have conceived—bejeweled ladies and castanets, tangos and sambas, gauchos and sombreros—the "Latin American way" as pictured in the past by Hollywood, much to the disgust of our southern neighbors? Or, finally, shall he do his best to capture for them that "realidad americana," that real-life essence, which is the anguished object of every serious writer's quest in Latin America today?

That third choice may not be an overly attractive one to the North American who would avoid what one of the leading native authorities on the Latin American novel, Dr. Arturo Torres-Rioseco, describes as "novels of clash and struggle (*novelas de choque y de lucha*). The "realidad americana" includes the tale of the pampas and the jungle, of country and city, of mountain, plain, and littoral, of red man, white man, and black man, and now the fusion, now the clash of all these elements. This is that vast and overwhelming "realidad" with which all worthwhile Latin

American writers have been striving to come to grips, from Latin America's first great novel, the *Facundo* of Sarmiento down to the *Don Segundo Sombra* of Guiraldes and the novels of the Ecuadorian Jorge Icaza, the greatest living exponent of the art of fiction in the Spanish-speaking countries.

The editors of *Fiesta in November* have shunned that third and only vital alternative. I think their choice has been the first one mentioned: the well made or striking and unusual-seeming story which merely happens to come from Latin America. In the Spanish-speaking countries today there are perhaps half a dozen truly outstanding realists: Icaza; the Peruvian Cesar Vallejo (who died a year or two ago); the Mexican Gregorio Lopez y Fuentes; the Puerto Rican Pedro Juan Labarthe; the Cuban Enrique Serpa; and the Ecuadorian Demetrio Aguilera Malta. On these I believe most social-minded critics would agree. Of this half dozen, it is significant that only one, Demetrio Aguilera Malta, appears in this collection, with a story, "Don Goyo," which is commonly looked upon as a masterpiece, and which is by far the best in the volume.

There are three leading stories in all, from the point of view of space accorded them: the "Don Goyo"; the title story, "Fiesta in November," by the young Argentine writer Eduardo Mallea; and a long tale, famous in Chile, the "Brother Ass" of Eduardo Barrios. As for the featured "Fiesta," one can only say that, dealing as it does with the putrefaction of "upper class" society in the Argentine against a background of fascist brutality, it is interesting, tantalizing, and worth including; although one has a feeling of unsureness as to just which way the author, who himself is from the "upper class," is going to jump in either a literary or a political direction. Mallea's writing is distinctly in the European rather than the Latin American tradition; but this is true of Argentine

bourgeois culture (that of the *porteno*, or resident of Buenos Aires) as a whole.

The "Don Goyo" deserves its reputation. Aguilera Malta is one of those young writers who came up with Ecuador's marvelous literary renaissance of the 1930's, along with Icaza, Enrique Gil Gilbert, Alfredo Pareja Diez-Canseco, Humberto Salvador, and others. He is widely known not only for this tale, but for his novel, *Canal Zone*. "Don Goyo" is a good example (although there are better to be found) of the "novel of clash and struggle" of which Dr. Torres-Rioseco speaks. And it does show in a mild but artistically impressive way the impingement of a city-harbored *gringo* imperialism upon the lives of the backwoods aborigines.

I cannot be enthusiastic about the "Brother Ass." The story of a lovelorn nitwit poseur who has taken refuge in a monastery, it is supposed to be a powerful psychological study, but its plot, its "psychology," and the complications that ensue, characteristic of the clerical-dominated bourgeoisie in a Hispanic country, are in reality as hoary as the sempiternal hills. Eduardo Barrios, the truth is, finds himself the favorite author of that class in Latin America which does not dare look reality in the face. As a writer, he is wholly—more, even, than Mallea—in the European tradition. Yet this tale gets more than 100 of the book's 600 pages.

Another story to which considerable space is accorded is one from Mexico: "The Futile Life of Pito Perez," by Jose Ruben Romero. This is pure picaresque, in the direct line of *Gil Blas*, and is, moreover, stilted in style, with a vague hint of anarchistic social revolt.

OUTSIDE of "Fiesta" and "Don Goyo," the most interesting of the lot is Jose Diez-Canseco's "Gaviota." This is a well done story with a strong, and real, psychologic punch. It provides a vivid picture of the life of Negro and Mulatto workers along the Peruvian coast, but the author is careful not to scrape beneath the surface of the social conditions he portrays. This appears to be the sort of thing which the editors are after in this collection: a picture of manners very different from our own that will make stimulating reading, but which will not probe too deeply—will not probe at all. Hence the quite disproportionate emphasis in their selections that is laid upon the life of the coastal towns, from Callao in Peru to Bahia in Brazil. This affords sex, "color," and violence. This it is which leads them to include a flashy but perfectly inane story like "The Sloop 'Isabel' Arrived This Evening," by the Venezuelan Guillermo Meneses.

In the meanwhile, the editors overlook the literature of the sierras, which is, along the cordillera of the Andes, essentially a literature of social revolt—the powerful Icaza is the greatest of them all here. They are likewise overlooking that literature of social revolt in the jungle which has been growing up ever since Jose Eustacio Rivera published his *La Voragine* ("The Vortex," available in Eng-

ish) more than fifteen years ago, an amazing story of rubber workers in the tropical wilds of Colombia. The nearest the present editors come to this important type of contemporary Latin American fiction is with the Uruguayan Horacio Quiroga's story, "The Fugitives," which is weak in plot and characterization, while the tale is marred by the author's contemptuous attitude toward the peons whom he depicts.

For the literature of the southern pampas we have "Dangerous Men," by Hector I. Eandi (Argentina), a story with a not too impressive psychological twist which barely saves it from being a Wild West thriller. This tale of the frontier, along with "The White Wind," by Juan Carlos Davalos, another Argentine writer, may be taken as offering a contrast to Mallea's story of the decadent Buenos Aires aristocracy. But where, one may ask, is the typical Argentinian, not the frontier bad man and not the cattleman with his faithful servitors—but the hunger-ridden *paisano* or share-cropper farmer of today, who slaves for the fascist-minded "elite" whom Castillo represents, and who has superseded the picturesque *gaucho* of a former day? Both he and the proletarian city dweller—who fights alongside the *paisano* for his electoral and civil rights, in order that he may be able to fight for bread—are strangely absent from these pages, although there is an ever-growing short story literature built around the social and political struggle.

The northern plains, or *llanos*, also have a literature of their own, but the only example in this collection is "Rain," by Arturo Uslar Pietri. Uslar Pietri is probably the outstanding representative of that literature of escape which has grown up in Venezuela during the past fifteen years or so ("generation of 1928"), during the closing years of the long dictatorship of the tyrant Gomez and under the present Lopez Contreras regime, which is barely if at all different from its predecessor in matters affecting free expression, including artistic expression. What Uslar Pietri and his fellows are striving for is a kind of "poetic neo-realism" as they see it, which amounts to a prudent avoidance of all social realities and results in the inevitable shallowness of content revealed by "Rain." This story, incidentally, is not one of the author's best; and there are, even in present day Venezuela, fiction writers with considerably more depth. I think in particular of the new and promising left-wing novelist, Miguel Otero Silva, author of *Fiebre* ("Fever"), published some three years ago.

The remaining stories are painfully conventional, for the most part insignificant, and in that tradition of "*criollismo literario*" ("white man's literature," i.e., a literature of the ruling class). It is a tradition which has nothing to do with the vital Latin American product of today, a product essentially indigenous in character, primarily concerned with the *mestizo*, the *cholo*, etc.—with the socially oppressed groups and their problems. A number of these selections belong to the

once again . . .

NEW MASSES

INVITES YOU TO A DELIGHTFUL

THREE DAY HOLIDAY WEEKEND

Make Your Reservations Now

(Choicest accommodations go to first reservations)

New Masses weekends are famous for their fine spirit, congenial companionship, and unexcelled programs. A few of the features that make these weekends the byword of the summer include:

An original Saturday Night Review including—

- Adele Jerome, from "Of V We Sing," "Pins and Needles," etc.
- Virginia Blake, from "It's About Time," radio and night clubs
- Bill Korf . . . dancer
- Ira Stadlin . . . leading comic of the ASU revues, "Pens and Pencils," etc.
- Stanley Praeger . . . top-notch MC, N.B.C. radio actor, comic.

AND OTHERS

- A Recital by a leading concert artist
- A campfire with skits, songs and stories
- A sports program from A to T (archery to tennis)
- Leading authorities who will speak on political, literary, and historical subjects

CHESTERS' ZUNBARG

Woodbourne, N. Y.

SEPTEMBER 18—SEPTEMBER 21

THREE FULL DAYS
for only.....\$16.50

Optional—September 18—September 20 (Two Full Days) \$11.50

Special transportation rates for this weekend

Fill in coupon below and mail to New Masses, 461 4th Ave., N. Y.
or call CAledonia 5-3076

☐ I wish to make reservations for people at \$16.50 per person for the three-day week-end of Sept. 18-21.

☐ I wish to make reservations for people at \$11.50 per person for the two-day week-end of Sept. 18-20.

Remittance enclosed Deposit enclosed

I will need transportation.....

Name

Address

Telephone

KEYNOTE RECORDINGS

is privileged to present

"FIGHTING MEN OF NORWAY"

Norwegian Songs of Freedom

with chorus and orchestra

Now Being Sung in Norway

3 records in decorative album, with translation and explanatory text . . . \$2.92



133 W. 44th St., N. Y. C.

LO 3-4420

Open Evenings

Mail Orders Filled Promptly

YOU CAN BUY NM's QUIZ BOOK FOR ONLY \$1

OR

**SUBSCRIBE TO
NEW MASSES FOR A YEAR
AND GET IT**

OR

**SEND IN TWO NEW SUBS
AND GET IT FREE**

NEW MASSES, 461 Fourth Ave., New York, N. Y.

Please send me a copy of the NEW MASSES QUIZ BOOK, "What Do You Know?"

- ☐ Enclosed find \$1 in payment for the QUIZ BOOK.
- ☐ Enclosed find \$5.50 for which enter my sub to NM for a full year, and send me as a premium the QUIZ BOOK.
- ☐ Enclosed find 2 new subscriptions for NM and send me absolutely free of charge the QUIZ BOOK.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY..... STATE.....

Add \$1 for Canadian Postage

9-15-42

genre which Latin Americans themselves would describe as a "*costumbrismo chabacano*" (a crude portrayal of manners) which dates back to the last century. Luis Tablanca's "Country Girl" in particular is so quaint, it really ought to go in hoop-skirts.

It is an understatement to say that Brazil is woefully under-represented in this volume; it is virtually not represented at all. The only Brazilian selection is Jorge Amado's "Sea of the Dead"—some fourteen pages out of 600! Jorge Amado is one of Brazil's best young writers, at present living in exile in the Argentine; but "Sea of the Dead" is one of his weakest stories, trite and conventional in theme and handling, written during a period when Amado was palpably endeavoring to avoid the government censorship. There is a rich and socially significant short story literature in Brazil, of both an older and a more recent date. In particular, one cannot overlook a writer like Graciliano Ramos, who has been compared with such Russian masters as Gorky and Gogol.

Another astonishing thing about this anthology is the fact that Cuba is omitted entirely. Chile, on the other hand, is represented by four stories of very inferior merit.

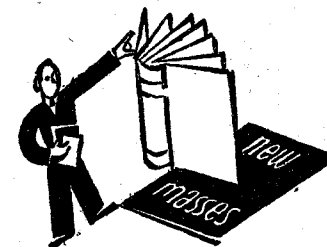
All in all, it is a strange job of editing that we meet with here. In her Introduction, speaking of these stories, Miss Porter says: "Of social consciousness . . . there is almost none in the explicit sense. The wrongs committed by one class of society upon another are touched upon obliquely, by inference. . . ." But isn't this "oblique" touch the result of the editing, rather than inherent in the material? And anyone familiar with the vital, passionate, throbbing literature of the oppressed masses which has been coming to fruition in Latin America for the past quarter of a century, will ask: is it not this careful avoidance of the deep-going social theme which accounts for the unsatisfying, and in the end unrepresentative, character of this anthology? SAMUEL PUTNAM.

Soulful Surrender

THE SEED BENEATH THE SNOW, by Ignazio Silone. Harper & Bros. \$2.75.

IGNAZIO SILONE is of all people probably the man most "wanted" by Mussolini's government. So the blurb says. And one can't help wondering for what he is wanted. Certainly there is nothing in *The Seed Beneath the Snow*, which begs all questions and evades all issues, to make the author a danger to Hitler's blustering subaltern. How simple the task of the Axis would be if all those fighting for a better world were to heed Silone's call to break up all organized opposition to fascism and probe deep into their "souls."

By probing deep into his own "soul" Silone discovers that books, i.e. anti-fascist theory, are a handicap in combating barbarism. His mouthpiece, Pietro Spina, comes upon this revelation as he lies in a cave gazing deep into the soulful eyes of a soulful donkey. Spina



one Year of NEW MASSES

(Reg. annual sub. rate—\$5.00)

plus

TELEGRAM FROM HEAVEN

by

ARNOLD MANOFF

List Price \$2.50

Combination Offer \$6.50

or

	Our Gift Combination Price	You Save
VILLAGE IN AUGUST by Tien Chun list price \$2.50	6.50	1.00
RUSSIA'S FIGHTING FORCES By Sergei N. Kournakoff	5.00	.50
ONLY THE STARS ARE NEUTRAL by Quentin Reynolds list price \$2.50	6.50	1.00
TIME AND THE TOWN by Mary Heaton Vorse list price \$3.00	6.75	1.25
RUSSIANS DON'T SURRENDER by Alexander Poliakov list price \$2.50	6.50	1.00
THE GIFT OF TONGUES by Margaret Schlauch list price \$3.50	7.25	1.25
MISSION TO MOSCOW by Joseph E. Davies list price \$3.00	6.75	1.25
SOVIET ASIA by R. A. Davies and Andrew J. Steiger list price \$3.00	6.75	1.25
THE COPPERHEADS by William Blake list price \$3.00	6.00	2.00
HOW MAN BECAME A GIANT by M. Ilin list price \$2.00	6.25	.75

NEW MASSES, 461 Fourth Ave., New York, N. Y.

Gentlemen:

I wish to take advantage of your combination offer.

Enclosed find \$

The book I desire is

Please send it to:

Name

Address

City

State

The one-year subscription (or renewal) to NEW MASSES you may send to:

Name

Address

City

State

Add \$1 for Canadian postage

9-15-42