

Jazz-Consciousness

THE WAYS OF WHITE FOLKS. By Langston Hughes. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1934. \$2.50.

Reviewed by VERNON LOGGINS

NEGRO literature in this country has been flowing in an uninterrupted stream since it had its beginning with the much written about Phillis Wheatley just before the American Revolution. For most of its long course it has been calm, turning up little that could interest any one except the historian or the sociologist. But there have been flood periods.

One came during the twenty years preceding the Civil War; another between the years 1895 and 1905. And about 1920 a third was ushered in that is upon us still, and which has corresponded with the so-called jazz age. The Negro indeed—whether rightly or wrongly does not matter—was pointed out as the creator of jazz. Naturally he was filled with pride and the spirit of self-assertion. Jazz-consciousness was for him another Emancipation Proclamation. As an artist he was no longer obliged to speak haltingly in the idiom of the whites. They themselves were aping the idiom which he had created.

Among the Negro authors of the present no one has been more jazz-conscious than Langston Hughes. A little less than ten years ago he began publishing poems. Right from the start his aim was to put into English words the pulse and verve of jazz. Imagery and idea were of minor importance; the meaning of the poem depended upon the jazz overtones. Often—especially in his numerous specimens of the blues, which he regards as a distinct pattern, as binding in its laws as the sonnet—he has been astoundingly successful. In 1930 he published his one novel, "Not Without Laughter." The tempo is again that of jazz; but, because of the large proportions, the effect is to a great extent lost.

Now he gives us what seems to us his strongest work—"The Ways of White Folks," a collection of fourteen stories, each an intense drama projected before the reader with the suavity and gliding grace of Cab Calloway conducting the Cotton Club orchestra. Each of the stories deals primarily with a white person—the mother who prefers her daughter's death to an illegitimate grandchild, the rich *roué* who goes insane over his thwarted love for a Harlem high-yellow, the old maid who unconsciously falls in love with her Negro janitor, the Southerner who is defied by his mulatto son, and ten other



LANGSTON HUGHES

varying types. But while the force of the white person is felt, the drama of each story belongs to the Negro.

Perhaps the most satisfying tale in the volume is "The Blues I'm Playing," the chronicle of a wealthy patron of the arts who takes under her wing a black girl with extraordinary physical strength and a great talent for the piano. Mrs. Ellsworth installs the girl in a luxurious flat in Paris, engages Philippe to teach her, and makes her an interpreter of Beethoven and Brahms whom the European critics rush

to praise. But to Oeola life means something else besides glory on the concert stage. Life means Pete, the Negro boy whom she has kept in her four-room apartment back in Harlem, whom she has lain in bed with planning a formal engagement and a wedding, whom she will join again when he is through with medical school. To the starved, rich Mrs. Ellsworth art lies in looking at the stars; to Oeola it lies in sitting at the piano and letting her fingers wander from Beethoven and Brahms to the blues—laughing and crying . . . white like you and black like me . . . like a man . . . like a woman . . . warm as Pete's kiss.

The story is ideal for Mr. Hughes's jazz touch. He has given it a superb telling. His cynicism, his sarcasm, his radicalism, and his urbane humor tumble and cavort throughout the volume. And there is scarcely a line in which his sophisticated jazziness is not felt. Reading the fourteen stories one after another is like listening with eyes closed to a Paul Whiteman concert of fourteen numbers.

Tonic or Purgative?

SHORT STORY HITS, 1933: An Interpretative Anthology. Edited by Thomas H. Uzzell. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1934. \$2.

Reviewed by H. W. BOYNTON

IN avoiding the "Best" label of Mr. O'Brien and others, the anthologist adopts one that isn't much better, for a "hit" ought surely to mean wide acceptance and actual popularity is by no means a requisite for inclusion in this assembly. If the items have hit Mr. Uzzell hard enough, they are elected. Some of them appeared in his first two classes, the "all fiction" and the "big circulation" magazines, and were automatically read if not raved over by millions. Others from the "literary" magazines had a chance of hitting relatively few readers. As for the tales from the "experimental" magazines, like *Contempo*, *Blast*, and *Frontier and Midland*, the potential hittees would have to be reckoned in the small hundreds. All our title means, in short, is that these are stories of the year which one intelligent reader thinks ought to have been hits; and this brings us out at about the starting-point of the "best" story guessers.

The fresh feature here is an uncommonly catholic taste or, if you like, strong stomach. The collector has a trace of the "good sailor's" attitude among a shipload of queasy ones. He enjoys his cigar and never misses a meal and can't help being a little complacent about it. But he doesn't dote on foul weather for its own sake. His editorial policy or philosophy is sound: His "basic purpose is to print good stories and relate them constructively to the current stream of creative writing." His main test of a good story is whether it is entertaining. Finally, the editor is of this age and finds its writing good and various; he has "a lively sense of things moving in the short story world."

These are excellent credentials for such an undertaking. There is no use fumbling among the actual utterances of our time for pleasant echoes of day before yesterday. Mr. Uzzell happily believes our affairs are not only moving but moving in the right direction. It is well that we have abandoned the inhibitions: even the big circulation magazines, he rejoices, are gradually giving up their "tricks of conventional orchestration," including the obligatory major chord at the end. "The stubborn, long corrupting influence of O. Henry has at last in the big books given way to the tonic in the pages of Sherwood Anderson and Ernest Hemingway." Tonic or purgative? one asks a bit ruefully, wondering how long the treatment must go on. But something was there that was good for us, and something doubtless is offered in the experimental "little magazines" from which Mr. Uzzell picks four of his twenty tales.

They are good tales in their different fashions, but the virtue of the book lies in the editor's commentary on the collection as a whole, and in his analyses of the separate pieces. This second annual culling compares well with its predecessor, and the experiment may well go on.

Jack Cade's Men on London Bridge

LONDON BRIDGE IS FALLING. By Philip Lindsay. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1934. \$2.50.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

THE character of London Bridge in the fifteenth century has probably never received so exhaustive a description, as to historical and antiquarian particulars, since the days when Sir Walter Scott used to pack his novels with precise detail. Mr. Lindsay says that he scarcely dares call his book a novel. He would rather have it taken as a sort of "Street Scene" of the mid-fifteenth century. Prefaced to it is a list of the characters, the greater part of whom live on London Bridge, by houses from the Southwark end.

The novel opens with the coming home of Andrew Picard who has run away in



PHILIP LINDSAY

his youth from his hated father's house, and has now returned to the bridge. Meanwhile his father has prospered greatly as a grocer. Andrew finds his old friend, Nicholas Jordan, and soon enough we are aware that they are both plotting something political. Reinstated in his father's house, at least as a lodger because of his gold pieces, Andrew becomes aware of Jane Piel, daughter of the draper in the fifth house on the left of the bridge. But Nicholas is engaged to her, and Arthur of Norfolk, one apprentice of the Jordans, is in love with her. There are descriptions of all the folk of the bridge, at night, on half-holidays, of a Sunday, and so on. We learn what a strange lodger was that of the household of Chigwell, the apothecary; of pale Petronilla married to the old Giles Chark, when she had once been Andrew's betrothed, before he ran away; of William Furby the scrivener; of the wicked Widow Stikeney, the girdler; and her pitiful apprentice Hilda who is in love with and secretly engaged to Dionysius of Kilburn, the other apprentice to Henry Jordan. We find Andrew Picard meeting Jack Cade at Ashford-on-the-Stow, and know that this Mortimer, John Amend-All, or Captain Kent is to set London aflame with Cade's Rebellion. And eventually we see Andrew swept up in the desperate fight between Jack Cade's men and the London merchants on London Bridge.

There is plenty more to the story. The intertwined threads of many lives are drawn through it. There are incidents of bitter cruelty, of shameful evidence of man's inhumanity to man, and episodes of beauty and wonder in the youth of the world. It was a dark, desperate age, shot with violent passions, drenched in blood and wild colors. Some of Mr. Lindsay's more meticulous descriptions are quite extraordinary in his assembling of detail. Take, for example, his description of the appareling of Jane Piel for her holiday on the river. This novelist's research has been indefatigable. Nothing is presented to us vaguely. Yet the larger values of the book are brought out with masterly dramatic sense, and the detail never—or very seldom—overloads the story. A variety of characters is presented to us with sharp

differentiation, and the intermingling of their lives has constant fascination, while the views of London Bridge in perspective, as it were, and the sense of crowded life seething with its many complications give this novel a peculiar and distinct quality.

Mr. Lindsay has already written other novels and a chronicle of Richard III, and is preparing a biography of Henry V. He is a true antiquarian, far from Dr. Dry-as-dust, and possesses a vivid imagination. His is a fiction I was loath to lay down, concerned as it is with one of the most stirring risings of the people in English history.

Fatal but Not Serious

OUR MASTER'S VOICE, ADVERTISING. By James Rorty. New York: John Day Company. 1934. \$3.

Reviewed by SUZANNE LA FOLLETTE

ACCORDING to Mr. Rorty, advertising is the raucous voice of our acquisitive economy, crying in the wilderness it has created. As a sometime advertising man and all-time skeptic about what is euphemistically called civilization, he is able to develop his thesis with a good deal of conviction. By his own definition,

Advertising has to do with the shaping of the economic, social, moral, and ethical patterns of the community into serviceable conformity with the profit-making interests of advertisers and of the advertising business.

This is to say, of course, that advertising is an instrument of rule. But Mr. Rorty does not stop at implication; he is explicit and emphatic:

Contemporary liberal criticism tends to regard [advertising, propaganda, and education] as separate categories, to be separately studied and evaluated. But in the realm of contemporary fact, no such separation exists. All three are instruments of rule. Our ruling class, representing the vested interests of business and finance, has primary access to and control over all these instruments. One supplements the other, and they are all used coordinately.

By the time he gets through, he has shown them to be not only supplementary and coordinate, but interchangeable and almost identical. Propaganda is advertising; advertising is propaganda; and education is in large degree the product and tool of both. The reader of Dr. Flexner on American universities might very well use Mr. Rorty's book as exegesis. It is also to be highly recommended to all those disgruntled intellectuals who refuse to admit that the progressive cheapness of our spiritual activity has any relation to our material existence.

Mr. Rorty is a savage and slashing critic of what he calls the pseudoculture which our ruling class inculcates upon the underlying population through its control of the means of communication. The highest ideal of this culture is embodied in the derisive phrase, "keeping up with the Joneses"; its sole object is the creation and exploitation of customers through misrepresentation, flattery, exhortation, persuasion, and admonition. By its nature it is empty and degrading. And by its nature it is even more destructive of its own priesthood than of the victims they are hired to exploit.

No man [says Mr. Rorty] can give his days to barbarous frivolity and live. And ad-men don't live. They become dull, resigned, hopeless. Or they become demonic fantasists and sadists. . . . Some "unlearn hope" and jump out of high windows. Others become extreme political and social radicals, either secretly while they are in the business, or openly, after they have left it.

The picture is not edifying, but thanks to the author's robust sense of humor it is at times very funny. Mr. Rorty goes after the high priests of advertising with a red-hot poker and impish laughter. He is without reverence and without fear. Moreover, he knows that advertising is on the spot along with the whole acquisitive economy whose mouthpiece it is, and as one of those ad-men who have become "extreme political and social radicals," he regards its dilemma in the spirit of the Viennese saying, as "fatal but not serious."

The book could be firmer in outline, one feels, and better written. Mr. Rorty in-

dulges too much in the jargon of the social scientists to suit the taste of this reviewer; and also in too much of that modern habit of using substantives as adjectives, which produces such nerve-racking combinations of words as "consumer behavior," "sophistication element," "survival necessities." And this is perhaps as good a place as any to express the hope that publishers may soon feel rich enough to employ proofreaders once more.

So much by way of complaint. Mr. Rorty has written a readable and enlightening book which should be read by all victims of the advertising racket—that is to say, by all Americans.

Hitler—and After

(Continued from first page)

is the financial one. There has always been a mystery in the history of the Nazi Party. The unanswered question is this: how did Hitler raise the money for the two big election campaigns that preceded his accession to power? How, above all, did he raise the money for the second, when at the first he lost two million votes? For it is not easy for a man who is beaten in a political campaign to raise an enormous fund. Many of those who had supported him will too be busy greeting the rising sun to be very willing contributors. Ernst Henri sets out the only hypothesis that explains the facts.

For the presidential election of 1932 alone Thyssen provided the Nazis with more than three million marks within a few days. In order to pay for big industry's contributions to Hitler the price of coal was raised in Germany.

This reading of past events is important now because in its light it seems reasonable to read certain things into what is happening now. For example, we may see the present situation as paralleling one in which an employer (Heavy Industry,) is dissatisfied with the work of a contractor (Hitler). The contractor, in promising him better service in the future, tells him that there has been trouble within the firm, but that now he will have a clean-up. He will dismiss this foreman and the other (Roehm, for example) and, in short, reorganize everything. In future service will be perfect. But such a parallel cannot be pushed too far. There is also the tale of Frankenstein to be borne in mind, together with that of Friars Bungay and Vandermaster. These celebrated enchanters—the student of medieval tales may remember—challenged each other to a counter-conjuring match, and at last in their rivalry called up spirits so strong as to be uncontrollable. Whereupon both enchanters perished miserably from the art by which they had lived.

One of the principal dragons in the present tale is of course the international situation, another the immense productivity of the Ruhr. Herr Thyssen, says the author of the present volume, has more coal than he knows what to do with, but on the other hand must (since the treaty of Versailles) import the ore iron which he needs for his steel.

Before the great enlargement which followed on the demands of the German army for munitions, the German boundaries of 1914 were more or less satisfactory. But the great Ruhr concerns of today have outgrown them, and tariff barriers and difficulties about foreign exchanges are becoming increasingly hampering. Here Hitler, and still more one of Hitler's assistants, Herr Alfred Rosenberg, can help. Why not revive the idea of the old German empire?

The present writer was taken aback to see almost the identical map, which is published as the end papers in "Hitler Over Europe" hung immense on a prominent wall, two months ago, in the big exhibition in Berlin. This new "Racial Empire" which, according to both Mr. Henri and the map prepared for the German public by the Nazi Ministry of Propaganda, is to include Holland, the Flemish part of Belgium, Norway and Sweden, the Baltic States, Hungary, German speaking Switzerland and, as all the world now knows, was above all to have taken in Austria. These countries were to have been brought into the fold, not by means of direct conflict of arms, but by the methods which, but for Italy, would have

succeeded in Austria. Strong Nazi parties financed and directed from Berlin were to have been the moving forces. In any country where "The Brown International" was too weak or geographically too unpropitious actually to attempt union or federation, there its work under Rosenberg would have been to influence public opinion so as to prevent any interference.

All this about a "Brown International" certainly sounded to many people like moonshine when Ernst Henri first propounded it in England. But then came the Austrian affair, and almost in every particular—except in fact with regard to the roles played by a few named individuals—Ernst Henri was proved right. The "Pure Race," the "Germanic solidarity" theory began to work. Hitler's hatred of the Jews, his contempt for Slavs and people of Latin race, are of course perfectly genuine and respectable obsessions; as pretty examples of persecution-mania as you could wish to see on a summer's day. What is interesting is the harmony with which



FRITZ THYSSEN (Keystone photo)

they enable him to work with Thyssen, who, not mad in the least, knows just whose little peculiarities will help him.

Hatred of Jews and a low estimation of women have of course been convenient in other ways. They have helped to reduce the number of unemployed. The present writer interviewed one Fräulein Dr. Unger, an official in the Propaganda Ministry in Berlin. Dr. Unger volunteered the information that the attitude of the Third Reich to women was a necessary and inevitable consequence of the continuance of such severe unemployment. The key to that part of the situation being that if a Jew or a woman is thrown out and a Nordic male gets the job, then that is yet another unit off the unemployment figures. For women and Jews rank among the "invisible unemployed," and need, conveniently, not be counted.

Add then these things,—the relations of the Nazis with Thyssen, their attitude towards a Germanic Empire and the unemployed, and the way in which fact and fiction in each field debate a blood-spattered boundary, see a Germany whose foreign trade is shrinking, and add to what Mr. Henri has to say what Dr. Göbbels is from time to time obliging enough to tell you over the radio, bring the whole sharply to boiling point, and the result will, as before suggested, set you up in a very nice way of business as a prophet. As these words are being written the advent of the *Saturday Review* office boy is eagerly awaited. He bears the up-to-date Foreword which Henri has cabled for addition to his book. It seems as if it might well consist of not more than four sweet words, "I told you so." . . . No, it is better than that. Once more: Henri knows what has been happening. Hitler was at Essen on the day before the murders began. To the question, "What next?" Henri answers:

Either the death of Hitler and a socialist revolution or war—a new European conflagration.

Amabel Williams-Ellis, the daughter of Lt.-Col. Strachey, like her brother, John Strachey, is an active worker and writer in political fields. She is at present in America as the delegate of the British committee for relief of German victims.

American Parable

By WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

Poem read before the Delta Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa, Columbia University, June 4, 1934.

CITY of arrogant towers,
Metropolis fabulous, port of the world
Along whose clanging hours
Lives as leaves on a mill-race are whirled,
In your bright mediterranean light
Where news of nations, flashed overseas, is cried aloud
And caught in a glance
By an incessantly hastening crowd—
Streets all speed, buildings all height,
Speech a babel; the goddess of chance
Whirls—your emblem—aloft in a golden cloud.

But what of the land that lies behind your gate,
Where other thousand teeming cities wait,
Where a giant spider of steel has spun
Intricate webs that gleam in the sun,
Northward and southward by valley and mountain-crest
Spreading ever west?

Here on our crowded island
Forest is gone,
Long since our restless spirit journeyed on
By river and highland
With that strange unending dream of the pioneer
That now as the song of a phantom host I hear:

"We are west of ranges that seemed far and blue,
Of mighty waters that our first days knew,
Of rocky heights where a vague trail goes,
(Snorting oxen plunging under tall ox-bows!)
We are west of the Pass there seemed no way through,
West of the summits and the snows.

"Yes, and we are done with the desert and its parching,
That brassy glare forever overarching,
The rattler on the rock, the buffalo skull
Bleached in the sand, the giddy flicker
Of heat on acres of alkali,
Till the eye went dull, the throat cracked dry—
And no spring nigh, and madness in the liquor.

"We have crossed into verdure, into far-spread green;
But our brains are mazed with all our eyes have seen;
So wheels roll slowly through grass for mowing
But the gaze stares forward that is glued on going,
The arm crooks the rifle, the eye doubts the stranger,
The jaw muscles tighten, being tensed to danger,
The gaunt limbs stride in a slouching daze
From the dazzle of the peaks, the long heat-haze,
Leagues that wind behind, starred nights that craze. . . .
We have come far ways.

"And here is orchard-land—land of the farm;
A river holds a home in the bend of its arm,
A lazy river, long white roofs gleaming,
Smoke curling upward, gentle as dreaming,
Made-roads curving and pastures teeming—
Ripe land for toil, happy land for rest. . . .
Yet beyond, under cloud, lies a far blue crest
That is further west. . . .

"When we trod the sand, a mirage would follow,
Hover close at hand over hill and hollow,
Loom along the prairie, glimmer up the pass,
White and many-towered, with walls like glass,
With smoke like banners, speed on all its levels,
And a sound like the hammers of a thousand mighty devils—
Till our lifted eyes saw cities in the sun
Like the hanging gardens of Babylon;
Till the rolling prairie seemed ruled with steel,
And a slamming wind of flight shook the creaking wagon-wheel,
Till the sky was drumming, the earth was stirring
With enginery, furnaces, huge belts whirling. . . .
And we saw the desert greening where the dust hung dry,
And we shook to the meaning of shadows on the sky,
Wings—droning, dwindling, fading in the day,
(Every eye was kindling that gazed that way!)
For no palms in cluster, no phantom waters blue
Were like to the lustre of the portents we knew. . . .
Have you seen them, too?

"Now we mark around us all the dim foundation,
In this happy valley, of a building nation.
The plough is in the furrow, the axe is in the tree,
First courses are laid for walls that are to be—
For that splendor, that speed, that plenitude, that power—
And the growing of its greed, and its darkest hour
When famine, a spectre, hovers seas of grain,
When steel and iron gods deal death and pain,
When rifleman, axe-man, ploughman, lie
Entombed under towers we saw massing in the sky—
Roaring cities in an empty sky!

"Too real was that seeing—though the eyesight cheats—
Engines, dungeons, blank stone streets,
The roar of forges, the growling hum
Of a land in labor with the time to come!"

It fades, the song with the vision, for the land is won,
And that which a dream foresaw has come to pass.
Generations like small bright clouds across the sun

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