

all wholly black, or entirely white. True, as Mr. Deutsch says, not a single state hospital meets *all* (italics supplied by the reviewer) the minimum standards of the American Psychiatric Association, but many are doing good work under handicaps. True, also, it isn't good enough, and in many instances not anywhere near good enough.

This would have been a better book if it had been written with a better balance between the good and the bad conditions in mental hospitals, and if there had been more emphasis on the problems of the hospitals and their administrators. Note might have been taken of the failures of the community in one way of preventing state hospital cases and the undue burdens thereby imposed. Also, of the variety of administrative systems under which the mental hospitals are operated in different states, in some of which the hope of rapid or radical improvement in the hospitals is vain until the system is so changed as to provide for professional non-political administration, with due authority.

The book contains thirty-two pages of photographs, pleasant and unpleasant, usually the latter.

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FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT: No. 287

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 287 will be found in the next issue.

YNFFNV KJF I UVVHCO ENCAN

'VHJCR FBN FHK HE FBN

AQGEE, FBIC IC ILYJQICAN

RHSC GC FBN XIQQNZ.—

PHUNKB LIQGCU.

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 286
Enamored architect of airy rhyme,
Build as thou wilt, heed not what
each man says.

—THOMAS ALDRICH.

A Homesickness and a Long Wandering

BLACK ODYSSEY: The Story of the Negro in America. By Roi Ottley. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1948. 340 pp. \$3.50.

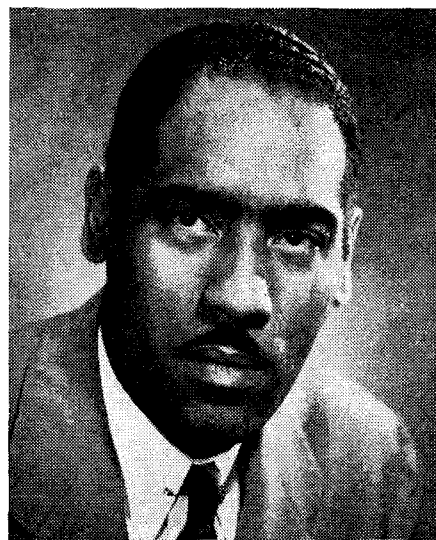
Reviewed by H. A. OVERSTREET

This is the story of a homesickness and a long wandering—a homesickness and a wandering not yet ended, but, we hope, nearing its end. It is heartening to see the whole story in perspective, for it tells of the white man as well as of the black. Here is the story of a black race that, through all the generations of white brutality, kept the core of its humanhood sound—a race that, in spite of cruelties and disappointments, has doggedly plodded along toward the homeland of the spirit. But here, too, is the story of a white race that, avid of profit, equipped with power, and forgetful of its pieties, turned its own humanhood into an ugly thing; a white race, however, that has been moving out of its perversion into a new soundness of spirit. Because this book describes an Odyssey—of whites as well as of blacks—it has the hopefulness that attaches to life wherever it is going somewhere. The black man is moving on; the white man is moving on. Some day they will be moving abreast.

This is the kind of material that does not get into the history textbooks, mostly because history textbooks are written about broad sweeps of history. They tell us about the Civil War, about the emancipation of the slaves, about the carpetbagging period, and so on; but, in the brevity of their telling, they keep these great movements of life impersonal. Young people, therefore, who read history in the schools, are not brought to a deep understanding of what has happened in their culture. They do not learn to feel the passionate struggle of life to free itself into life; nor do they see their own culture, as in this peculiar part, an effort to keep life from finding its way into life.

Someday we shall write this whole misbegotten episode of white supremacy frankly and unashamedly into our textbooks so that our children may look upon this perverted thing with a complete astonishment. The day when that can be done is surely approaching. The whole tenor of Roi Ottley's book is that "the strong men"—black and white—"keep coming on," and that the cherished time of man's humanity to man is nearer.

The strength of this book lies in its complete absence of passionate pleading. It is a straight, factual account of what has been happening in



—Glidden.

Roi Ottley: "The strong men keep coming on."

our American world, to Negroes and to whites, for well-nigh 300 years—ever since 1664, when Maryland became the first colony to legalize slavery. The factual data are packed with interest because invariably they involve the fate of particular human beings. But these reports are always more than mere recitals of events. The book, in fact might be called a study in the maturing of a culture. Negroes were forced by their American white oppressors to remain immature. These oppressors, in turn, by the very exercise of their oppressive powers, became fixated in their own peculiar moral and spiritual infantilisms. The history of the last 300 years—and particularly of the years since the beginning of World War II—has been the history of the slow maturing of the American whites to a sense of their moral responsibilities; and of the American blacks to a releasing of their human powers.

The Negro's eyes are lifted to the hills [writes Ottley] . . . the removal of the "For Whites Only" sign from many jobs, places of amusement, schools, and public institutions, is beginning to choke off his loudest quarrel—at least in many sections of the North. His new freedom has given him personal dignity and opportunities for creative expression beyond the slum corrals, and indeed opened a new world to him. . . .

The signs of the times have made the Negro hopeful, more so than at any period in history. This is not to say that he is not distressed by the forty-odd lynchings in the three years following World War II. But for one thing, the legend of the Negro's "place" is swiftly tumbling into the limbo of legends, shattering the traditional outlook of white and black alike.

The Saturday Review

Mexican Bundle of Myths

AMERICAN ME. By Beatrice Griffith.
Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1948.
341 pp. \$3.50.

Reviewed by CAREY MCWILLIAMS

AMERICAN public opinion has become aware of certain large minority elements in the population—the true facts about them and their place in the general scheme of things—through a process of gradual recognition. This process resembles that by which novel objects and scenes are photographed, with each successive “shot” sharpening the image and bringing out details previously ignored. As layer after layer of unparadonable ignorance and purposeful confusion is removed, the various minority elements come to be seen or recognized for the first time. Today the Negro minority may be said to have finally broken through this mist of ignorance and superstition. With other groups, however, the process of recognition has been slower, perhaps because most of the investigating has been done by “outsiders.” Our Spanish-speaking minority, numbering around 3,000,000, can be placed in this category. One of the largest ethnic minorities in America, it is the furthest removed from a general recognition, an informed awareness.

But, even with this group, the

process of recognition has been at work for some years. It began, one might say, with the unexcelled investigations of Dr. Paul S. Taylor of the University of California. Since Dr. Taylor's monographs of the Twenties, other chapters have been written, notably “Forgotten People,” by Dr. George I. Sanchez, and “Not With the Fist,” by Dr. Ruth D. Tuck. To this list of clarifying and myth-dispelling investigations, Beatrice Griffith has now added an important chapter with her “stories and studies” of Mexican-American youngsters in Los Angeles, more particularly the much maligned *pachucos* and *pachucas* of Chavez Ravine and The Hollow, of Happy Valley and Belvedere.

In making this investigation, Miss Griffith has used a method which, by combining fact and fiction, is both interesting and effective. The book contains thirteen stories about *pachucos*. These stories are very good indeed and constitute an excellent collection of “photographs” of Mexican-American youth. Each of the stories is followed up with a factual statement, in general descriptive terms, of the background from which the story stems. The heart of the book, however, is to be found in the stories which dramatize the conflicts and tensions in the emotional life of the American-born generation. These

stories are told from the inside out, as the youngsters would tell them, with their emphasis and in their words. For any outsider to have gotten so close to these youngsters, to have been able to see and hear and feel their world as Miss Griffith has done, is indeed a remarkable achievement. Since we have yet to receive an autobiography or novel written by a member of the American-born generation, these stories probably come as close to conveying the reality of the experience of this generation as anything in print today. In this sense, therefore, Miss Griffith's “photographs” and “recordings” can be said to represent an important contribution to the process by which Mexican-Americans are winning a recognition, an awareness of their existence, of the fact that they, too, are Americans.

What this particular “photograph” lacks is a sense of time and place, of history and geography. Here Mexican-American youngsters are seen as actors on a stage from which all the props and stage settings have been removed. The experience of the second-generation is related to a long history apart from which such events as the zoot-suit riots of 1943 cannot be fully understood. The geographical setting is, also, of major importance. The zoot-suit riots did not occur in Kalamazoo; they took place in one of the oldest settlements of the old Spanish borderlands. The absence of this sense of time and place, however, is largely offset by the vividness with which Miss Griffith projects the subjects of her stories upon the screen of Anglo-American consciousness.

From this process of recognition we are gradually acquiring a composite portrait or photograph of the Mexican-American minority. Since there are still many gaps in the available information, the completion of the portrait will be deferred for some years and certainly until we begin to get some direct expression from the group itself. With the publication of “American Me” and the publication of Dr. Ruth Landes's non-fiction study of the same subject matter, now scheduled for 1949, one of the largest gaps in the available factual material will have been closed. Long existing in an unexplored, peripheral segment of American life, Mexican-Americans are now being seen for the first time. As this process of recognition is extended, they will gradually come into the full focus of national attention. Once this has happened the “Mexican Problem”—that strange bundle of myths, ignorance, and folklore—will cease to agitate Anglo-Americans in the Southwest.



“... another report card, another scene at home.”