

Southwest Underdog

NORTH FROM MEXICO. By Carey McWilliams. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co. 1949. 324 pp. \$4.

Reviewed by BEATRICE GRIFFITH

CAREY McWILLIAMS, who has long made articulate the cry of minority groups in America, here presents a vitally important and superbly documented history of the Spanish-speaking people in America.

The title "North from Mexico" (it is explained in the foreword) was selected to avoid the anti-semantic pitfalls of such compounds as Indian-Spanish, Spanish-American, Mexican-American, and Latin-American, terms which either tell a partial story or admit of unconscious condescension. This title characterizes the flux and the directional focus of that great body of immigrants who, from varied and conflicting backgrounds, have become fused, since the seventeenth century, in the Southwest, and have come to represent an important, though often overlooked and traditionally persecuted, American minority group.

Beginning with a dramatic account of early Spanish explorations and exploitations in America—when a "Hispanic minority superposed its political structure, religion, and language on the natives"—Mr. McWilliams takes his reader through the long and little-known years of Southwest history up to the present day.

Through his incisive and scholarly interpretation of this history—sometimes too carefully laced with quotations from other writers to give life and imagination to the facts so contained—Americans can for the first time know the Spanish-speaking people of this great area. As the book unfolds, so does the shameful record of what we, as the conquering *Yanquis*, have done to these people and their descendants who, even today, bear the status of second-class foreigners in our country—their country.

Our discrimination of this group has been particularly illogical. We imported the Negroes as slave labor, and have exploited and rejected them ever since, body and soul. We welcomed the Slavs, Italians, Irish, Germans, and Hungarians from Europe—used their labor and ideas, and in a generation or two their children became lost in the melting pot of our democracy. However, in the case of the Spanish and Mexicans, we not only took their labor for the development of our country, but also their lands, their culture, and techni-

cal knowledge. But their children, like the Orientals, have for the most part not melted because of prejudice.

We in the Southwest have accepted the cultural gifts of this disparaged people as part of our heritage, without knowing or giving recognition to the sources. Mr. McWilliams does a beautiful job of reducing the romantic contributions to scale, and in a scope of historical perspective not yet found in any book on the Spanish-speaking Americans enlarges and gives body and strength to their truly valuable contributions.

The author has not neglected the contemporary scene, and provides a significant amount of space for enumerating and charting "case histories." In view of the vast amount of research and the scholarly ardor that went into the making of "North from Mexico," it is to be hoped that the book will find readers among that segment of the American populace whose a priori assumptions about the Spanish-speaking people of the United States are woefully wanting and often criminally inaccurate.

Beatrice Griffith is author of "American Me," a book about Americans from Mexico published last autumn.

Minorities

AMERICA DIVIDED. By Arnold and Caroline Ross. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1949. 342 pp. \$4.

Reviewed by HENRY PRATT FAIRCHILD

RECOGNIZING the vital importance of minority problems in the domestic life of the United States, and, through it, in the whole adjustment of world affairs, Arnold and Caroline Ross here present a comprehensive survey of the situation in the United States today, with helpful suggestions for its more constructive handling. After a brief section dealing with the theoretical and historical background of the subject, there are chapters setting forth the position of minorities in their economic, legal, political, and social relationships. Then follows a discussion of minority characteristics and the volume closes with two chapters on psychological attitudes and a look into the future.

This is a good book. Adopting what may be called the "orthodox liberal" approach, it is thorough, conscientious, and constructive, and it is packed with significant facts and figures. It is infused with an admirable spirit, and a wide reading of it and a sincere ac-



"That reminds me—I must get my income tax filed."

ceptance of its central message would help to make a better world. But it has certain basic flaws which seriously mar its scientific character.

The first of these is the authors' complete disregard of the nature of the "in-group" and the "out-group," which is considered by most sociologists to lie at the very core of organized social life. This permits them to identify all shades of contra-group sentiment as simple "hate." This leads to a definition of "minority" in terms of "hate." "The mere fact of being generally hated because of religious, racial, or nationality background is what defines a minority group."

This, in turn, leads to some extraordinary confusions and contradictions. For example, in their discussions of religious cleavage, which are among their best, the authors make it clear that more hate, or at least more discrimination, flows from Roman Catholics toward Protestants than in the reverse direction. Does this mean that Protestants, in spite of their numerical superiority, are a minority? Again they assert, "Almost all Negroes hate whites." Does this make whites a minority?

Furthermore, since the pattern of hatred in the United States is an intricate crisscross—Jews hate Negroes, Negroes hate Jews, and Italians hate

them both—it would seem to indicate that a given group is constantly shifting from minority to majority and back again.

The second major flaw is the reluctance of the authors, which they share with many well-intentioned



writers, to face up to the realities of race. Because of the confusion and harm associated with the concept of "race" they say "it would be best to abolish the term from our vocabulary completely." Yet they continually use the words "race" and "race problems" without any special qualification and devote a whole chapter to "Physical and Psychological Differences among Races and Nationalities" which is an interesting combination of good anthropology and undiscriminating "liberalism." They continually speak of "low-class Negroes," and they rightly point out that only about one-fourth

of the technical "Negroes" in the United States are of pure-blooded African stock. But they miss the implication that since gradation in the Negro class hierarchy is based primarily on lightness of skin, attainment of upper-class status is correlated with an admixture of white stock which *might possibly* carry with it differences (not necessarily superiorities) of mental and emotional equipment.

Lastly, the authors' treatment of the immigration question displays superficialities and confusions, i.e., the statement that "our immigration legislation has been the result of agitation on the part of small pressure groups on the one hand, and of concealed prejudice on the other" will be recognized as a grave misinterpretation by anyone who was intimately associated with the restriction movement. Several passages reveal an unawareness that in the first two decades of this century there was intense animosity against immigrants *as such*.

But the book nevertheless is well worth reading.

Henry Pratt Fairchild, professor emeritus of sociology at New York University, is author of "The Melting-Pot Mistake" and editor of "Immigrant Backgrounds."

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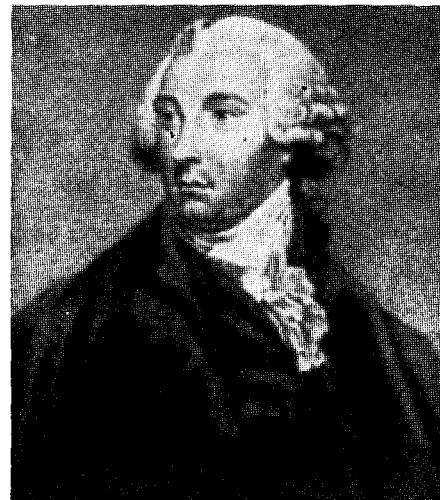
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19 Stories

Personal History. This week's brace of biographical volumes tempts one to speculate why certain human adventures have been so successfully recaptured on the printed page, while other lives, equally exciting and glamorous, elude satisfactory recording. Wilbert McLeod Chapman's "Fishing in Troubled Waters," the second of the books reviewed below, is a slight but pleasing book in the tradition of Charles Darwin's "Voyage of the Beagle" and other classic accounts of the naturalist at work. Margaret Barton's competent life of the actor-producer David Garrick has no comparable tradition to follow. Many of the great of the magic world of the theatre have tried their hand, with and without assistance, at autobiography. Portraits of thespians have been undertaken by innumerable able biographers. Yet, oddly, it is difficult to name one deserving a place on the shelf of lasting literature.



David Garrick's "brief strutting hour on the stage is a fascinating success story."

The Greatest Actor of His Time

GARRICK. By Margaret Barton. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1949. 312 pp. \$5.

Reviewed by ROBERT HALSBAND

THE present revival of interest in eighteenth-century English literature and arts makes a new biography of David Garrick welcome. As the greatest actor between Burbage and Henry Irving, his brief strutting hour on the stage is a fascinating success story. When he left Litchfield to travel to London with Samuel Johnson, whose pupil he had been for a short time, he had a few pence in his pocket; but when he died, his coffin was accompanied to Westminster Abbey by Peers of the Realm, thirty-five empty coaches from his stables, and his wealthy widow. His death, remarked Dr. Johnson, had "eclipsed the gaiety of nations."

Yet Garrick, for all his achievements, was primarily a popularizer rather than an innovator. In tragedy he was the great exemplar of "naturalistic" acting as against the declamatory delivery of set rhetorical speeches. His emotional vitality as Richard III, the part that brought him fame when he was only twenty-four, was simply the inspired rendering of a style which Macklin had revived.

In stage costuming Macklin also led the way, for after he had donned kilts for the role of Macbeth, Garrick still played it dressed as a general in George II's army. Although he is sometimes credited with restoring the popularity of Shakespeare, that trend was well under way before he stepped out on the stage. Besides, he was content, like his fellow actors and managers, to use mutilated, "improved" versions of the plays. His "King Lear" ended happily, for that was what his audience wanted; and he was, after all, a successful actor-manager because he pleased those who showered applause and shillings upon him.

Perhaps his greatest achievement as an actor was a role he played entirely off-stage. He made his profession respectable. The vagabond status of the actor in Elizabethan times was definitely altered when Garrick was able to amass a fortune, consort with the aristocracy, and achieve membership in the Literary Club. His long, happy marriage and his solid middle-class virtues kept only the most stubborn from acknowledging the dignity of his profession. Among the stubborn was Dr. Johnson, who roared his famous reply when Boswell expressed admiration for the actor: "What, sir, a fellow who claps a hump on his back, and a lump on his leg, and cries, 'I am Richard the Third'? The player only recites." Davy, whom Johnson allowed no one to abuse except himself, was much more than a mere reciter. His energetically convincing characterizations in comedy and tragedy were as phenomenally popular with his countrymen as with the French whom he impressed on his two visits to Paris. From their stage he borrowed a better system of stage lighting and more realistic stage settings.

Garrick's great talent, one which permeates every aspect of his varied career, was his clear, if superficial, intelligence. A foreign visitor wrote that his intelligence was "ubiquitous throughout every muscle of his body." Since acting was (until the motion picture) the most impermanent of arts, we cannot judge the eloquence of his miming. But we still have his literary remains, and in these his clear intelligence is visible. He altered, wrote, and collaborated in theatrical pieces of all kinds except, fortunately, the barren tragedies that less wise contemporaries were inspired to write. (He produced them.) He scribbled couplets with great facility, in the form of prologues, epilogues, squibs, and epigrams. His lines on Goldsmith show his knack at its best:

Here lies Nolly Goldsmith, for
shortness call'd Noll,
Who wrote like an angel, but talk'd
like poor Poll.

The biographer of such a versatile and influential figure must deal with a great mass of materials. In general Miss Barton threads her way with neat competence, digressing when necessary to describe the stage background of her actor. It is inexplicable, though, that while giving a fairly detailed bibliography, appendices, and an index, she disregards Professor Elizabeth P. Stein's scholarly study, "David Garrick, Dramatist." A persistent weakness of her book is her use of tasteless slang and cliché; and although her style is not so kittenish as her predecessor's in Garrick biography, Mrs. Clement Parson's (1906), she does state once that the actor "purred with contentment." Her portrait lacks the creative, supra-factual perception necessary to bring it to life, but we can still see, behind her patient marshaling of facts, the dim outlines of the greatest actor of his time.

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