

small and specialized, and a fair number are probably marginal; but even so they extract a share of the business. One club executive estimates that, aside from the public drawn on by the very large firms, the potential club membership in this country is about 200,000. New entries in the field have simply meant fewer members per club.

This is borne out by a look at membership figures. In the late 1940s, when the Book Find Club virtually had the intelligentsia to itself, membership was 90,000 with an acceptance rate of 50 to 60 per cent on each book. Today, Book Find is down to 45,000 members and shows a lower acceptance rate. Even so, it is larger than The Seven Arts Society, Mid-Century, Readers' Subscription, or the Hudson Book Club, all of which work the same general vineyard and share many of the same members.

For some reason, this membership "pool" has remained stationary. Even the large clubs have found during the past three years that their public has leveled off and that members are buying fewer books. Significantly, this has occurred in the face of a sharp increase in the sale of books in general. A report issued by the American Book Publishers Council, based on the sales of 182 publishers, points up this trend. In 1961 book club sales exceeded those of 1960 by about \$1,000,000, compared with previous increases of anywhere from \$3 to \$8 million a year. In 1962, sales went down by \$560,000. The trend becomes even more negative when one takes into account the fact that some of the dollar sales volume is absorbed by the increase in prices. On the basis of copies sold alone, sales in 1962 were down from the previous year by 12 per cent.

An even more disturbing figure (from the clubs' point of view) is their declining share of the market. Six years ago, book club sales just about equalled those of all adult trade books, both hardbound and paperback. In 1962 the clubs were doing only about 75 per cent as well as adult trade books sold by other means. Taking *all* book sales into account, a 20 per cent share of market in 1957 had shrunk to 15.6 per cent in 1962.

One of the major criticisms of the book clubs, one made by reviewers and educators over the years, is that they dominate the reading habits of a large section of the book-buying public. Today, the situation is being reversed. Buying habits now dominate the clubs' choices. A new kind of Galatea has been brought to life, and, ironically, she is beginning to exert her freedom. Who knows but what the time may come when the Plabbs will go it alone?

—DAVID DEMPSEY.

BOOKS IN THE NEWS

The Goal: Economic Freedom

An Introduction to Brazil, by Charles Wagley (Columbia University Press. 322 pp. \$5.95), *Brazil on the Move*, by John Dos Passos (Doubleday. 205 pp. \$3.95), and *Bandeirantes and Pioneers*, by Vianna Moog, translated from the Portuguese by L. L. Barrett (Braziller. 320 pp. \$6.95), in their different ways explain why the United States must take the explosive South American nation more seriously. Claude L. Hulet is an associate editor of the magazine *Hispania*. In 1960 he was an Organization of American States Scholar to Brazil, where he has lived for a great many years.

By CLAUDE L. HULET

BRASIL, probably the most important country in South America—certainly the largest and most populous—is also the least known to us. Most Americans are even unaware that the seventy millions of Brazilians speak Portuguese rather than Spanish. Our efforts to date to gain intimate knowledge

and sympathetic understanding of Brazil and its multiple problems have been uncomfortably small, half-hearted, and superficial. Continued ignorance is dangerous, for time is running out. In its present developmental stage Brazil is clearly explosive in every sense of the word. Many Brazilians believe the United States fumbled the ball following World War II: they are frankly amazed that this country has not eagerly taken up and dauntlessly worn the mantle of leadership that its unique position in the Western world thrust upon it at the end of that conflict. The United States must take Brazil much more seriously—a warning underscored by the three books under review. Each has different aims and perspectives, yet each completes and complements the others. All should be required reading for Americans today.

Professor Charles Wagley's perceptive analysis, *An Invitation to Brazil*, offers a sensitive, scholarly insight into the complexities of that country. Brazil, the author notes, has growing pains. Already a racial and political democracy, although not yet a social one, she is in a crucial period of transition from adolescence to maturity. Among her gigan-



"He told you to do *what*?"

tic problems are a runaway inflation, the urban trend, class realignments, the exaggerated value given to literary and gentlemanly pursuits, family and kin group interference with the development of true political parties, an inefficient civil service, public participation in business enterprises, the dilemma of providing up-to-date financing and objectives for education, and a tax structure that stifles local initiative, responsibility, and civic pride. The difficulties are complicated and heightened by burgeoning individual, class, and national expectations. Because of Brazil's striking diversities and contradictions, the unwary are easily led to dangerous generalities. But there are no easy solutions. No amount of knowledge of Spanish or of the Spanish American countries will suffice to understand Brazil, for it has a different cultural, economic, linguistic, political, and social background.

Brazil, which won political freedom from Portugal in the middle 1800s, boasts statesmen, musicians, writers, architects, painters—and, lately, athletes—of international renown; she can look with pride on an exceptional unity of culture. Now there is a growing nationalism, a strong desire on the part of Brazilians to be important, which they will surely and increasingly become. The national effort today is aimed at gaining economic freedom. Although its extractive products will continue to find ready outlets in the U.S., Brazil fears the European Common Market will curtail future sales in that sphere. And as Brazil becomes more industrialized, it needs more overseas markets for its manufactured goods. It finds little alternative but to seek such new markets in the Soviet bloc or in Southeast Asia.

IN this precarious period of speedy maturation, Brazil needs a helping hand to assure the realization of her potential for the Western world, and to strengthen her stand as a willing friend and powerful ally. Patience and sympathy, as well as knowledge, will be required to understand why at once Brazilians like and dislike the United States, why they look to this country for leadership and distrust our motives, why they imitate America in countless ways and vociferously seek to disavow anything and everything American. When they hate us, it is usually because they realize that they must depend on us, at least for the present, for this country has and represents many of the ideals and material benefits that Brazilians very much want to possess and with which they long to be identified.

Social anthropologist Wagley's analysis is based on more than twenty years' study of Brazilian small communities

and is enriched by long years of residence in the country, as well as by his genuine liking for the Brazilian people. In the unique final chapter, "If I Were a Brazilian," he reviews current hopes, yearnings and goals, along with stumblings, deficiencies, and flaws Brazilians find in themselves. He also outlines the Brazilian's view of his country's foreign policy and relations with the U.S.

In *Brazil on the Move* John Dos Passos plays the role of the curious, good-natured tourist who eagerly wants to learn and explain all about Brazil. And even though he lacks the support of solid studies on Brazilian culture and is handicapped by a less than optimum command of Portuguese, he must be congratulated for his welcome effort to bring Brazil to the attention of the American public. The novelist is adept at descriptions, at grasping the color, movement, and other externals of the Brazilian scene. Especially interesting are his syntheses of political history (see SR, Oct. 12, 1963, and the chapter "The Most Dangerous Man").

Brazil on the Move is primarily the account of three trips the author took to Brazil in 1948, 1958, and 1962. The early trips highlight the fresh, post-World War II world, the apogee of U.S.-Brazilian successful cooperation under such programs as Public Health and Point Four, which were aimed at creating healthful, self-sufficient "islands" back in the hinterland. In the interior Dos Passos became acquainted with the great Brazilian road builder and latter-day pioneer Bernardo Sayao. There, too, he came to know city-builder Israel Pinheiro and the wind-swept, highland Brasilia site long before the city began to take its dramatic, ultra-modern shape. Such figures give texture and substance to the book, as does the lengthy discussion of the role played by the present governor of the State of Guanabara, Carlos Lacerda, vis-à-vis former dictator Getúlio Vargas and today's President Joao Goulart. The novelist-traveler sees as Brazil's greatest problems geographic determinism, disease, bureaucracy, poverty, the high cost of money, and demagoguery.

Bandeirantes and Pioneers differs radically from the other books under review, for it is mainly interpretive and deals for the most part with the U.S. The Brazilian novelist, essayist, member of the Brazilian Academy of Letters, and diplomat Vianna Moog published the Brazilian edition of this dense, thought-provoking, and controversial study in 1954. Why, in its rapid development from the nineteenth century forward, has the U.S. followed a pattern of geometrical progression, while Brazil, with an apparently comparable background, has only attained

an arithmetical developmental rate? The author claims the answer can be found in the past, specifically in the initial, formative moments of a nation and its culture. However, in addition to tracing basic contrasts implied in the book's title, the author seeks principally to interpret the U.S. to his countrymen.

Vianna Moog is passionate in his views and ever ready to take a stand. Alongside his vigor, there is intuition and a vaguely mystical air. But underlying everything is a clear, patriotic concern, an evident resentment against the U.S. for this nation's success, and a strong antagonism against Protestantism for having broken Christian unity and for having made it possible for the U.S. under its aegis to make such material progress. As a feedback, he comes to the indirect defense of present characteristics of Brazilian culture, which, although they have not succeeded in making Brazil prosper, he conceives as special values still worthy of cultivation.

AFTER contrasting the United States and Brazil with respect to race, orography, geography, hydrology, climate, ecology, waterways, economic resources, latitude and altitude, land values and historical antecedents, and after dismissing the theories of Gobineau, Ratzel, Spencer, Comte, Hegel, and Marx as inadequate, Senhor Moog concludes that the great disparity in the development of the two countries is due to the difference in religious heritage. He bases this, his principal thesis, on the greater doctrinal compatibility he finds between Protestantism and nationalism and capitalism than between Catholicism and the two modern "isms." Protestants, he asserts, create commerce, while Catholics prepare for heroism and faith. In his opinion, the Bible and Puritanism, the break with the past, capitalist orthodoxy, and the cult of labor are the factors responsible for America's phenomenal development. Nevertheless, Senhor Moog argues that the two great crises of our time are precisely capitalism and Protestantism. The social, political, and economic peace of the Middle Ages is the goal he yearns for. As a corrective to the defects of our respective cultures, Vianna Moog recommends a new mystique, a return to the spiritual values he finds in two heroes, the contemplative, meditating, re-possessive, and mystical Abraham Lincoln, and the dogged, resourceful, and self-sacrificing mulatto sculptor from Minas Gerais known as "The Cripple" (O Alejadinho).

The analytical Wagley, the descriptive Dos Passos, and the interpretive Vianna Moog all agree that one of the Western world's greatest problems is the lack of firm U.S. leadership.

Guys and Dolls and Gangsters

A Frieze of Girls: Memoirs as Fiction, by Allan Seager (McGraw-Hill, 245 pp. \$4.95), recreates a period between two world wars that already seems to us romantic and remote. Cecil Hemley's novel "Young Crankshaw" was set in the 1930s.

By CECIL HEMLEY

THIS book contains thirteen autobiographical sketches, eight of which first appeared in well-known magazines. None of them is what one would call important, but all are entertaining and worth reading. From them emerges a sketchy, reportorial vision of an era.

Seager, who is both novelist and teacher, tells of his boyhood in Memphis, his college days at Michigan, his sojourn at Oxford as a Rhodes scholar. His narrative begins in the middle Twenties and ends in the early Thirties. Bootleggers are everywhere, selling their near-poisonous beverages. People dance to the music of Paul Whiteman. Bing Crosby is still one of the Rhythm Boys. When Seager returns from England he travels on the *Olympic*. The period is already so remote from us that it has acquired a romantic aura.

But Seager does not depend on mere background for his effects. He is both a persuasive writer and a shrewd observer of people; when he wishes to, he can delineate character with great skill. He tells us of Sarah Egan, the sister of a notorious Chicago gangster, and of Marta van der Puyl, the only girl on campus who understood Marx and Freud. Sarah, known as "the nicest girl in Cook County," attended Northwestern, read the novels of André Gide, and knew who was "hot" in the underworld. Marta was capable of marrying a rich young man simply to get carfare to New York, but she was also an idealist: she became the wife of a Negro and sailed off to Russia. Seager is too wise a man to attempt to explain either woman. It is enough for him to exhibit them. "Sociologists sweat to teach us that we are faceless conformists," he notes in his preface, "but I don't believe it. I think Americans, one by one, are a strange people."

To him the Englishman is not so much of an individual as the Ameri-



Allan Seager: "Americans . . . are a strange people."

can. Most of the English he knew "seemed to be types"—perhaps because he knew them less well than his own countrymen. His English pieces tend to

have more exposition than do the American ones. I don't mean that they are less interesting; but inevitably Seager utilizes a good deal of space to explain customs and attitudes that are not generally known to the average American. I, at least, had no idea how boat races were conducted at Oxford, nor how English swimmers trained in the early 1930s, and I'm not sure that it was important for me to find out; but I enjoyed learning.

Oddly enough, when Seager deals with himself he tends to be rather reticent (perhaps this is due to his English heritage), and consequently the central "I" of the book never quite emerges as a character. Although the author has plenty to say about how fumbling and foolish he was as an adolescent, the situations in which he chooses to show himself are so conventional that he is scarcely distinguishable from any other young man. However, the incidents are amusing, and there is no reason why Seager should be as candid as Jean-Jacques Rousseau if he does not want to be. After all, Rousseau was not writing his memoirs for *The New Yorker*. Nor has Seager attempted a full-scale autobiography. If he decided to write one, I suspect it would be very good indeed.

A Box Within a Box Within a Void

The Golden Fruits, by Nathalie Sarraute, translated from the French by Maria Jolas (Braziller, 177 pp. \$4), a novel about a novel, exemplifies the modern literary impulse toward self-repudiation. Ihab Hassan, chairman of the English Department at Wesleyan University, wrote "Radical Innocence: Studies in the Contemporary American Novel."

By IHAB HASSAN

NATHALIE SARRAUTE's first novel, *Tropismes*, appeared in 1957. Her second book, *Portrait of a Man Unknown*, carried an introduction by Jean-Paul Sartre, who coined for it the term "anti-novel." The term now drops easily from the lips of critics and housewives alike; it is used, somewhat recklessly, to describe a group of talented French writers, including Butor, Robbe-Grillet, and Claude Simon. What it stands for, however, is a serious impulse of contemporary letters: self-repudiation.

The impulse is not entirely sterile.

Mme. Sarraute, like others of that persuasion, has continued to deny the novel with some prolificness; she has published three other works of fiction, and an artistic credo aptly called *The Age of Suspicion*.

Suspecting that literature may theorize about itself at the risk of sophisticated madness, I vowed to read *The Golden Fruits* with innocent eyes. But innocence is quickly corrupted by an art so beautifully bent on burlesquing its mystery at the source. Let each reader judge the case for himself.

The Golden Fruits is a book about a book called *The Golden Fruits*. (The contemporary novel, let us note in passing, is now forced to choose itself as subject.) There are, of course, no plot, no characters to follow or recognize; there is only a movement, images on the wing, flickering fragments, voices trailing into silence. We begin with a casual reference to the painter Courbet which leads us mysteriously to the labyrinthine "discussion" of Brehier's *Golden Fruits*. We overhear authors, critics, lovers, enemies, friends comment on that "masterpiece," which worms itself in and out of their exist-