

him. Having lived in America as well as in England, he attempts to write with reference to the experience of readers on both sides of the water, with the result that he describes a sort of composite Anglo-American experience that has no real existence.

The essays are full of echoes and platitudes. The one called *The American Political System* is, as far as I can tell, compounded in various proportions of Walter Bagehot's "The English Constitution," Woodrow Wilson's "Congressional Government," Lindsay Rogers's "The American Senate," and Walter Lippmann's "The Phantom Public." One comes across cleverly worded paraphrases of "eternal vigilance is the price of liberty," and "government by the consent of the governed." In another essay, *A Plea for Equality*, we are solemnly told that "where there are rich and poor, educated and uneducated, we find always masters and servants. To be rich is to be powerful, to be educated is to have authority," and "what we call embezzlement in a junior clerk becomes high finance in a millionaire"; and there are many more remarks of the same character. At that it turns out that the plea for equality is really one for social justice. It is hard to see any reason for the avoidance of this idea except the desire to sound paradoxical. The opening essay, *The Dangers of Obedience*, which is a justification of the right of revolution and a call to revolt, has a theme which will be familiar to every Jeffersonian Democrat. Somehow I am not moved to go out and hit a policeman in Union Square; in fact, I am only left good and mad with its obvious parlor terrorism; I am somehow not comforted by the assurance that there have been revolutions that have succeeded.

I think that the essay *The Recovery of Citizenship* may especially be taken as the measure of Professor Laski's depth as a political thinker, since it preaches the gospel of pluralism with which his name is particularly associated. The meaning of democratic citizenship is to be recovered by the participation of the citizen in the activity of self-governing associations to which the state will concede various present functions of government. The association will be governed by councils, and in the work of general legislation the state will seek the benefit of their experience through advisory committees. Now, I will not argue about English experience, but as far as the American scene is concerned there is something very queer about this. It seems to me that Professor Laski is somewhat in the absurd position of an idealist who has dreamed so long of Utopia that he is unable to perceive that it has come to exist. In these United States political pluralism is practically an accomplished fact. There is in the first place no real conception of the state in American constitutional theory in any terms that would be familiar to a European political thinker. The people organized in their voluntary associations are the decisive factors in government. This fact was immediately perceived by another foreigner, Professor Siegfried, a realistic Frenchman and a more acute observer than Professor Laski, and the situation was admirably expounded in "America Comes of Age." Geographical political organization exists in the United States only upon a formal basis. The real power is exercised by scores of great associations of which the Anti-Saloon League, the American Federation of Labor, and the United States Chamber of Commerce are only a few of the greatest. The voluntary advisory committees which Professor Laski urges as aids to the legislatures puzzle me even more. Has Professor Laski never attended a hearing on a bill in Congress or a State legislature? The poor legislators are already besieged by advisory committees a plenty. The real problems of American pluralism that might have been considered are such ones as the viciousness of many of the associations and the absence of democratic control by the rank and file—in other words, it might have been perceived that even under pluralism the problems of political government often remain.

The place of business in the "future" pluralistic state apparently troubles Professor Laski particularly, for he considers the problem in a separate essay entitled *Can Business Be Civilized?* I pass over the fact that the issue might have been better stated *Can Industry Be Socialized?* But it is less easy to let rest the proffered idea that business be made into a "profession," presumably with ideals of service. The analogy is derived obviously from the existence of bar associations and medical associations, but it can hardly be considered as more than quaint in an age and country that has seen the professions degenerating into businesses to all intents and purposes. Professor Laski does not say very much of big business, but if he did he might discover perhaps the most powerful of all established forms of pluralism. In this he shares the blindness of all the exponents of political pluralism, who are always perplexed if not terrified by the threat of labor unions to the state but practically ignore the fully established power of the great corporations in the state. Yet the existence of this corporate pluralism is the decisive factor in the futility and sterility of political theory.

WILLIAM SEAGLE

This Negro

Not Without Laughter. By Langston Hughes. Alfred A. Knopf. \$2.50.

HERE is the Negro in his most picturesque form—the blues-loving Negro, the spiritual-singing Negro, the exuberant, the impassioned, the irresponsible Negro, the Negro of ancient folk-lore and romantic legend. "Good-natured, guitar-playing Jim Boy"; Angee Rogers loving Jim Boy no matter where he goes or whom he lives with; Aunt Hager, the old mammy of a dead generation, "whirling around in front of the altar at revival meetings . . . her face shining with light, arms outstretched as though all the cares of the world had been cast away"; Harriet, "beautiful as a jungle princess," singing and jazzing her life away, sneering at sin as a white man's bogey, and burying beneath peals of laughter "a white man's war for democracy"; and Sandy, seeing his people as a "band of black dancers captured in a white world," and resolving to free them from themselves as well as from their white dictators—these are the Negroes of this novel, these the people who make it live with that quick and intimate reality which is seldom seen in American fiction.

"Not Without Laughter" continues the healthy note begun in Negro fiction by Claude McKay and Rudolph Fisher. Instead of picturing the Negro of the upper classes, the Negro who in too many instances has been converted to white norms, who even apes white manners and white morality and condemns the Negroes found in this novel as "niggers," McKay, Fisher, and Hughes have depicted the Negro in his more natural and more fascinating form. There can be no doubt that the Negro who has made great contributions to American culture is this type of Negro, the Negro who has brought us his blues, his labor songs, his spirituals, his folk-lore—and his jazz. And yet this very type of Negro is the one that has been the least exploited by contemporary Negro novelists and short-story writers. It has been white writers such as DuBose Heyward, Julia Peterkin, Howard W. Odum, and Paul Green who have turned to this Negro for the rich material of their novels, dramas, and stories. These writers, however, have known this Negro only as an exterior reality, as something they could see, listen to, sympathize with, even love; they could never know him as an inner reality, as something they could live with as with themselves, their brothers, their sweethearts—something as real as flesh, as tense as pain. Langston Hughes does. As a Negro he has grown up with these realities as part of himself, as part of

the very air he has breathed. Few blurs are there in these pages, and no fumbling projections, and no anxious searching for what is not. Here is this Negro, or at least one vital aspect of him, as he really is, without ornament, without pretense.

All this praise, however, must not be misconstrued. "Not Without Laughter" is not without defects of style and weaknesses of structure. The first third of the novel, in fact, arrives at its points of interest with a pedestrian slowness; after that it picks up tempo and plunges ahead. Unfortunately, there are no great situations in the novel, no high points of intensity to grip and overpower the reader. Nor is there vigor of style—that kind of vigor which could have made of Sandy's ambition to emancipate his race, for example, a more stirring motif. But "Not Without Laughter" is significant despite these weaknesses. It is significant because even where it fails, it fails beautifully, and where it succeeds—namely, in its intimate characterizations and in its local color and charm—it succeeds where almost all others have failed.

V. F. CALVERTON

Augustine of Tagaste

St. Augustine. By Giovanni Papini. Translated from the Italian by Dorothy Emmerich. Harcourt, Brace and Company. \$3.

THE aim of the creative biographer is more simple of statement than accomplishment, but Signor Papini in his life of one great Christian apologist has avoided most of the difficulties by remaining apologist himself. He prefaces his book, in the main an abridgment of the "Confessions," by a necessarily strained comparison between the redemption of Papini and that of a saint "who had also been a man of letters and a lover of words, but at the same time a restless seeker after philosophies and truths even to the point of being tempted by occultism." And whatever its later conclusions, the same basic chord is struck again and again through the book.

The most sympathetic reviewer might be hard put to it to determine the specific value of such a volume aside from its importance as an addition to the literature of apologetics. Since Signor Papini has no additional light to shed on Augustine the man, on the fond woman, his mother, who doted on him, wept over him, and persecuted him in the manner of many mothers since whose sons have become saints or worse, on the irascible father who birched and cuffed him, and on the various teachers who misled him on the whole no more flagrantly than youth is misled today, we are further put to it to share in Signor Papini's rather introverted agitation. There is not the slightest doubt after reading the "Confessions" that Augustine of Tagaste was a good deal of a prig. But Signor Papini's apologetic leaves us in some confusion as to why he was a saint.

Such statements as that "Augustine did not wait for Freud to discover that the child from its mother's womb is less pure than most people believe" is not only pointless but, by inference, misleading. The doctrine of original sin preceded Augustine and was borrowed piecemeal from a cult some centuries at least older than Christianity. Nor is there any very apparent connection between categorical sin and the Freudian terminology.

By such triumphs of logic it is naturally possible to prove that the lily is white because the dandelion is yellow, but the results are no more informative than the answer to the riddle of the number of angels on the point of a pin. The normal reaction of the reader to such extended excursions into bafflement is one of mild disgust. If anything else were needed, it might be pointed out to Signor Papini that St. Augustine has written his own apologia.

EUGENE LÖHRKE

Female Decorum

Years of Grace. By Margaret Ayer Barnes. Houghton Mifflin Company. \$2.50.

THIS is a woman's novel about a woman's loves. And its limitations lie in the fact that it is so unmistakably, so exclusively feminine. We see Jane Ward, in the course of her pilgrimage from fourteen to fifty, in love three times—or rather in love twice and married once. When she is seventeen she loves the nineteen-year-old sculptor son of a French consul and an Englishwoman; when she is twenty she is married to a rising young banker whom her family looks on with a kindly eye; when she is thirty-six she falls in love again, with an agreeable vagabond who happens to be married to her best friend. And in each case she behaves with seamliness, with decorum, as her family expects her to, a little against the wishes of her own heart—except that she thinks her heart so unreliable a guide. She allows herself to be separated from the young sculptor and promises not to write him; she puts away resolutely the temptation to elope with the vagabond, although for the second time in her life she really loves and wants what love offers her. When her children, less bound by "conduct," by "grace," by what is fitting and orderly in human behavior, marry young and divorce without hesitation she is not shaken in her course. There are values, there are things one must do. In the end everything comes out at the same place anyway; meanwhile, one must not start things without finishing them.

This, of course, is an old theme and an always interesting one—the conflict between desire and duty—only Miss Barnes would not call it duty. She calls it "grace." It is an argument that not only each age but each individual in an age must settle for himself. To Jane Ward, the heroine of this book, love and individual desire did not matter so much as not making her parents unhappy, not doing foolish things, not hurting her husband's feelings although she no longer loved him, not endangering her children's status in the world by a divorce. To her daughter the only thing that mattered was that she wished to live with a man she loved instead of one she did not. Each man and woman must make his or her own choice in the matter. There are no rules. To do Miss Barnes justice, I do not think she intended to indicate any. She sets the problem: grace versus a kind of honesty and frankness; you follow your nature when you decide.

The excessively feminine character of the novel, however, does not lie in the theme, which is universal enough. It lies in the minute attention to details of dress, deportment, and house furnishing for the last fifty years in the United States, and especially in Chicago, where Jane Ward grew up, married, and brought up her children. There is, I should say, too much quaint costuming, too many rooms described too carefully, too much *mise en scène*, in short. The characters are smothered in a cloud of ruffles. Thus, much of the power of a family chronicle is lost. And the parallels between the generations are too apt. Exactly the same scene should not take place between Jane and Jimmy as took place between Lily Furness and Bert Lancaster twenty years before. History repeats itself, no doubt; but it should, in a fine novel, show some subtlety at the same time.

And there is no doubt that in many ways Miss Barnes's is a fine novel—thoughtful, impartial, wise. It wants cutting, perhaps, cutting out of some of the black-walnut furniture and the cotillions. Then her characters would stand out as they should have stood out—men and women beset by a harsh world. A novelist must play upon the heart; when she is sure of her skill at that she may turn her attention very expertly and discriminatingly to the eye.

DOROTHY VAN DOREN

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