

Reviews

GUIDELINES FOR REVIEWS: Reviews are arranged under broad subject categories, with subcategories where appropriate (for example, age-group categories for children's books). The categories are arranged roughly by field in the following order: humanities, biography, history, religion, education, social sciences, reference, juvenile works, and nonprint materials. Within each subject category, reviews are arranged in alphabetical order by author surname. Each review is prefaced by a three-part numbering system: a two digit volume number, with the first year of publication designated as 01; a one-digit issue number; and a four-digit review number that runs consecutively within each individual volume year. For example, 04-1-0024 refers to review number 24 in volume 4, issue 1. Individual review entries begin with a headnote, which indicates the review number and a full bibliographic citation. Audio materials, videocassettes, and computer software are reviewed in separate categories. The review section is followed by author, title, and subject indexes keyed to the review numbers described above. Thesaurus citations in the author index indicate relevant ethnic groups, races, religions, and, where appropriate, geographic regions. The review section concludes with a directory of the publishers cited in a particular issue. The cumulative index for each volume year appears in the December issue of that year.

Literature

General Anthologies

16-1-0001

Gutkind, Lee and Herman, Joanna Clapps, eds. *Our Roots Are Deep with Passion: Creative Nonfiction Collects New Essays by Italian American Writers*. New York: Other Press, 2006. 286 pp. ISBN 1-59051-242-1, \$15.95 (pb).

In a collection of 21 nonfiction narratives, well-known (Sandra M. Gilbert) and emerging (Mary Beth Caschetta) writers reflect on their Italian-American heritage and tell stories—funny, sad, moving, complex, and challenging—that invite readers to the family table to listen, laugh, cry, and learn. For example, in “My Father’s Music,” Ned Balbo remembers the “dissonance of dueling accordions” that filled his parents’ Long Island kitchen, as he tells a story about his relationship with his father, his dad’s mediocre musical ability, and his limited repertoire of popular songs played on an old diatonic accor-

dion. Balbo offers a history of accordion music against a backdrop of the popular music industry, as he remembers rejecting the accordion for a guitar and turning his back “on [his] father and an era.”

“Mbriago,” Louise deSalvo’s recollected history, is set “in the fields of Puglio,” Italy, where her grandfather worked on the railroad. Reflecting on his “Last Supper” and final rites, the author emphasizes both Salvatore Calabrese’s destructive alcoholism and how he and his coworkers drank to assuage the pain of their hard and endless labor.

Sandra Gilbert’s taste shapes “Bitter Herbs?” Savoring the “Spices of Life,” she writes a “culinary memoir” of the alienating loss that “accompanies cultural displacement.” Gilbert uses “Tarragon,” “Oregano,” “Basil,” and “Rosemary” as titles for sections and metaphors about how the foods we inherit from our families, “the scents,” as well as the tastes, enhance our knowledge of our ethnicity.

Throughout the collection, authors express surprise at the magic of “mal’occhio, the evil eye,” that Aunt Peppi works, the “stoonad” (stupidity) of the men who forget that they are not kings, and the sometimes rejection of a heritage they now wish they could claim. These writings remind readers to remember and be grateful for their ethnic roots.

—Elaine R. Ognibene
Siena College

16-1-0002

Trenka, Jane Jeong; Oparah, Julia Chinyere; and Shin, Sun Yung, eds. *(Outsiders) Within: Writing on Transracial Adoption*. Cambridge, Mass.: South End Press, 2006. 336 pp. ISBN 0-89608-764-6, \$20.00 (pb).

Caveat: I am a white adoptive parent of a child of both another race and culture, and I found this book very challenging and emotional reading but ultimately a worthwhile endeavor. The essays do not paint a very hopeful picture of transracial adoption, to be sure. Until quite recently, most of the literature on transracial adoption has been written from the perspective of white parents as well as that of others directly involved in the “industry of transnational adoption.” This book was conceived as “corrective action.” Many of the first wave of transracial adoptees have now reached adulthood and found their voices in this collection of 30 essays, poems, works of art, and research-based articles by a diverse group of adoptees from Asia and Latin America, as well as Native Americans and African Americans.

These adoptees seem largely to have grown up with well-intentioned but culturally and racially naive parents and in communities with few minority role models. It perhaps comes as no surprise then that many of them have struggled and continue to struggle with identity issues. Their parents desperately wanted them to “fit in,” an impossibility that often caused great stress and psychic pain, as those children felt forced to deny or subjugate vital parts of themselves. The good news is that the

experiences of many of these first adoptees have fueled huge changes in the way that adoption agencies now prepare families to adopt transracially.

The book also has several essays challenging the very practice of international and transracial adoption on philosophical, moral, and economic grounds. While the writers here rebel against the perceived bias and uncritical approach of much adoption literature, their perspective here is likewise skewed in a particular way. Valid points are made about the inherent inequality of the practice (e.g., adoptees from poor countries, parents from rich nations), but it seems a stretch to conclude that the whole process encourages the “treatment of children as merchandise.” Still, this book makes a valuable contribution to adoption literature and will pave the way for more transracially adopted persons to reflect on experiences for the benefit of those yet to come and for those adoptive parents, like myself, striving to raise an emotionally healthy adopted child.

—Susan Poisson-Dollar
Albany, N.Y.

Fiction

16-1-0003

Blea, Juan. *Butterfly Warrior*. Santa Fe, N.M.: Sherman Asher Publishing, 2006. 135 pp. ISBN 1-890932-31-0, \$14.95 (pb).

Córdova, G. Benito. *Big Dreams and Dark Secrets in Chimayó*. Albuquerque: Univ. of New Mexico Press, 2006. 304 pp. ISBN 0-8263-4075-X, \$26.95.

Mythology, alcohol, and the lives of the Hispanic residents of New Mexico are the themes of these novels. *Butterfly Warrior* is on one hand a techno-thriller; on the other, the story of four friends whose lives change forever when one of them, Manny, commits suicide. Most of the story is from the point of view of Whitey, who found the gifted musician Manny a job at his biotech research firm when money ran tight. Whitey also found a job for another musician friend in their small circle, Cuate, whose twin sister, Anna, is a poet and another teller of the story. In alternating chapters, Whitey and Anna describe how the four of them explored music, local legends, and mind-altering substances and how Manny, consumed by alcoholism, depression, and a mysterious illness that paralyzed his fingers, became unrecognizable to them. As they debate the whys of Manny's death, the two come to realize that Cuate is traveling the same path—and the biotech firm where they and Whitey work may be the culprit.

Strong characters and an original plot distinguish this novel, which works on a number of levels and raises questions about corporate ethics and the role of technology in our lives as well as about our responsibility to family, friends, and community. Blea weaves the traditional stories of the elders into the present-day thriller,

to thought-provoking effect. Where does the “magic” within us lie?

The stories of the elders are central to *Big Dreams and Dark Secrets in Chimayó*. As a young boy, Sal heard from his grandfather the traditional myths of his people—a combination of indigenous beliefs and Catholicism imported from the Spanish conquistadores. These myths intermingle with the teachings of the Church in his current life, where he is known as Flaco Salvador Cascabel Natividad, the town drunk of Chimayó. Like Manny and Cuate, he works at an unskilled job in the high tech field—in his case, as a custodian at Los Alamos National Laboratory—until his obscene drunken tirades get him fired. Accidentally married to his best friend's fiancée, he has been abandoned by his wife and children, and off and on by his friends because of his out-of-control drinking and embarrassing behavior. On a walk through the woods to collect firewood, he is pinned by a tree. He observes his death and burial in light of the stories and values he has absorbed and the choices he has made.

Flaco Salvador is a marginal character, the mythical fool—a person who observes the rich culture of the past and is buffeted by circumstances in the present. One laughs at him, but it is also hard to read about him as he staggers from one painful and degrading situation to another. In his person one sees the effects of colonialism, technology, and modern life—the loss of culture and the loss of control over one's fate.

—Lyn Miller-Lachmann

16-1-0004

Daniels, Angie. *In the Company of My Sistahs*. New York: Dafina Books, 2006, 355 pp. ISBN 0-7582-0743-3, \$14.00 (pb).

Daniels's novel has potential that is never developed. It is heavily laden with profanity, Ebonics, and sexually explicit scenes. The novel begins with four ladies preparing to take a trip to Jamaica. The main character, Renee, is vulgar, promiscuous, violent, and often drunk. Throughout the novel, she is sleeping with different men and cursing. Kayla, the second character, is mild-mannered but rather stupid. She is madly in love with a promiscuous married minister. The third character, Nadine, is an attorney who is a lesbian. Lisa, the fourth character, is Renee's sister and the most rational person in the group. She is going on the trip to Jamaica to tell her friends and sister about the reoccurrence of her ovarian cancer. Daniels could have used this character to develop an interesting novel but failed to do so.

The few worthwhile segments include brief descriptions of the beauty and poverty of Jamaica. In one scene, a Jamaican gentleman takes Renee to the less affluent section of Jamaica to meet his grandmother. No meaningful dialogue takes place, but the novel again focuses on Renee's sexual encounters.

This novel does not have any type of plot, and the profanity is obnoxious and extremely distasteful. Near

the end, the novel takes on some action when one of Renee's rejected lovers tries to kill her. Renee's sister and her friends come to the rescue, and bonding begins.

—Maxine M. Agazie
Albany State (Ga.) Univ.

16-1-0005

Ford, Wallace. *What You Sow*. New York: Dafina Books, 2006. 260 pp. ISBN 0-7582-0954-1, \$14.00 (pb).

What happens when you are in partnership with a person who is the son of the devil? You watch your back at every turn.

Gordon Perkins, an unscrupulous but brilliant financier, is the thorn in his business partners' side. Nothing is beneath Gordon. He has no regard for others. He is a wife abuser along with all his other amoral characteristics. He is only concerned about being at the top of his profession regardless of who he has to step on to get there. Even after embarrassing himself and his colleagues, Gordon does not make any changes to improve his behavior.

After a night of partying, a cocaine overdose leaves Gordon in the hospital in a coma. It's time for payback, but wait—Gordon is still aware of what's going on.

This is an interesting book. It holds your attention. You can't wait to read the next chapter because Gordon has so infuriated you that you are waiting for him to get his just deserts. It is light reading, but very entertaining.

—Charlie Spencer Lackey
Duke Univ. Medical School Library

16-1-0006

Gaus, P. L. *A Prayer for the Night: An Ohio Amish Mystery*. Athens: Ohio Univ. Press, 2006. 210 pp. ISBN 0-8214-1672-3, \$24.95 (cl); 0-8214-1673-1, \$12.95 (pb).

This is the fifth novel in the author's mystery series, which features plots involving the local Amish population of Holmes County, Ohio. Throughout the series, Amish culture is realistically and respectfully portrayed, with Amish characters having prominent roles. However, Gaus has wisely chosen non-Amish characters as his detectives: Michael Branden, a professor of history at fictional Millersburg College; Holmes County Sheriff Bruce Robertson; and Cal Troyer, the pastor of a local church. The three men are lifelong friends and residents of the area. The series has characteristics of both police procedurals and traditional mysteries featuring amateur detectives. However, in this novel and *Cast a Blue Shadow*, the previous book in the series, it is obvious that Branden has too much police authority for someone whose official standing is that of auxiliary sheriff's deputy.

The novel begins with the discovery of a murdered Amish teenager and the abduction of another. Both

were in their Rumspringa years, the year or two after leaving school at 16 when Amish teenagers are allowed to run a bit wild, to experiment with the "English" lifestyle. ("English" is anyone who is not Amish.) The purpose of this time is so they may make an informed decision to join the church as adults. The murdered teen had become involved with drug dealers. In his preface, Gaus acknowledges that the tradition of Rumspringa "is rarely carried to the extremes depicted here."

I recommend this novel, but suggest that readers will benefit from reading the earlier novels in the series first.

—Catherine Crohan
Siena College Library

16-1-0007

Halaby, Laila. *Once in a Promised Land*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2007. 338 pp. ISBN 0-8070-8390-9, \$24.95.

Halaby's second novel is primarily the story of a marriage disintegrating through lack of communication. After the 2001 terrorist attacks, Jassim, a Jordanian hydrologist, suffers a fatal blow to his career in Arizona through an unfounded terrorist "witch hunt" and FBI investigation—as well as delivering an accidental fatal blow to an Arab-hating teenager who jumps into the path of his car. Meanwhile, Jassim's Palestinian wife, Salwa, struggles through a miscarriage and an extramarital affair as her longing for her family in Jordan deepens. Neither is able to tell the other about the impact of these events, which gradually destroys the relationship as the figurative dam breaks.

Like its author (born in Lebanon to Jordanian and American parents), this book is a *mélange* of cultures and stories, and it works hard to demonstrate the interconnectedness of (seemingly) everything. Sometimes this works, as in the complicated mesh of characters (Salwa's lover is the drug dealer of Jassim's accident victim). Sometimes it doesn't; the episodic appearance of Salwa's rejected boyfriend from Jordan seems unnecessary, and the framing of the overall story within traditional Middle Eastern folklore is awkward. In a book in which many (maybe too many?) big things happen, the smaller things—Jassim's morning swims, misguided racial profiling at the local mall, Jassim's encounter with the accident victim's mother—are often more significant and memorable. Overall, however, as characters do elicit sympathy and the writing can be jewel-like and striking, the novel remains absorbing.

—Laura Martineau
Willimantic, Conn.

16-1-0008

Henriquez, Cristina. *Come Together, Fall Apart: A Novella and Stories*. New York: Riverhead, 2006. 306 pp. ISBN 1-59448-915-7, \$24.95.

Henriquez's moving debut collection centers on contemporary Panama, where Noriega's shadow offers a disconcerting backdrop as ordinary people struggle for

love and meaning. With eight short stories and a novel, Henríquez demonstrates that such struggle doesn't always translate to defeat, though sometimes it comes perilously close.

In "Beautiful," one of the more disquieting and powerful pieces in this collection, the young protagonist begins her story mid-sentence: "And then that summer when the heart felt like wading through molasses and the streets hummed in a desperate sadness all day and all night, God came down from heaven and paid a visit to our family in two ways: My father returned home and my uncle got rich." A divine visit, however, does not guarantee happiness: The prodigal father eventually preys on his daughter. But ultimately, she imposes her own kind of justice on the abuser.

"Chasing Birds" brings us tourists (a married couple) struggling with their relationship as they visit Panama. The husband is more interested in bird-watching than romancing his disaffected wife. The result is not surprising but nonetheless heartbreaking on many levels.

The title novella weaves together two strands of narrative: the U.S. invasion of Panama and a young boy's unrequited love for a girl who is more interested in his best friend. Henríquez's storytelling is at its most potent in this longer story, where she seamlessly blends the political with the personal.

Taken together, these stories from the young Henríquez demonstrate a fully matured and well-honed artistic vision of the human condition.

—Daniel A. Olivas
West Hills, Calif.

16-1-0009

Mitgutsch, Anna. *House of Childhood*. New York: Other Press, 2006. 304 pp. Trans. from German by David Dollenmeyer. ISBN 1-59051-188-3, \$24.95.

Is it possible to develop meaningful relationships when one's connections to family and ancestral land are severed? In this affecting novel, Mitgutsch, a prize-winning novelist, would seem to argue that it is not. To Max Berman, objects and landscapes are more real than human connections. Max is the youngest child of Mira, a Jewish woman forced by anti-Semitism to leave her native town, referred to only as "H" ("Heim"? "Heimat?") in Austria as well as her beloved father and sister in 1928. Shortly after their arrival in the United States, her husband leaves her. Mira's father, sister, and brother-in-law disappear in the Holocaust. The family unit of single mother and three children is left with no support.

Although Max finds his vocation significantly as an architectural restorer and a writer of the history of the Jews of H, he remains rootless. The ancestral house remains his only connection with his family's history. During an early visit to H, Max is attracted to a young woman, Nadja, who believes, though she is not certain, that she is Jewish. Max and Nadja have an affair when she comes to New York, but Max is unable to commit

himself to her. During a one-year postretirement stay in H he renews his ties to the ancestral house and to the Jewish community but, unlike his friend Arthur Spitzer, who devotes his life to rebuilding the Jewish community in H, Max eventually abandons the town to return to his rootless life in New York.

—Eva Martin Sartori
Granby, Mass.

16-1-0010

Monroe, Mary and McGlothlin, Victor. *Borrow Trouble*. New York: Dafina Books, 2006. 297 pp. ISBN 0-7582-1223-2, \$24.95.

Monroe and McGlothlin offer a unique product—two stories for the price of one. In fact, the two are novellas. Monroe's is entitled "Nightmare in Paradise." McGlothlin's is "Bad Luck Shadow."

In Monroe's novella, Renee has an average life. She is engaged to be married to an average guy named Robbie. Average isn't good enough for her. She has to continue to look for someone more exciting than Robbie, with whom she can't imagine spending the rest of her life even though he's a good person.

When she meets Leon in a club, she is taken with him, a smooth talker and sharp dresser. While Robbie just works at a service station, Leon works for the IRS. Even though her girlfriend Inez warns her not to get involved with Leon, Renee doesn't listen. When she finds out the real truth about Leon, it is too late. She awakens and finds herself in a jail in a small Caribbean country. She cannot imagine how she got herself into such a mess. And more important than how she got into the mess is how does she get out of it? Monroe's story deals with love, deception, and hardships—light reading, but interesting and enjoyable.

McGlothlin's novella is quite different in terms of style and characters—a noir tale of hustler Baltimore Floyd set in 1946. Baltimore has fled Harlem to escape his gambling losses, and his troubles deepen when a white businessman turns up dead. An old flame and a big card game in Kansas City lead to the hustle of Baltimore's life. Exciting situations will keep readers riveted to this story.

—Charlie Spencer Lackey
Duke Univ. Medical School Library

16-1-0011

Okuda, Hideo. *In the Pool*. Berkeley, Calif.: IDC Press; dist. by Stone Bridge Press, 2006. 224 pp. Trans. from Japanese by Giles Murray. ISBN 4-925080-94-6, \$24.95.

This satiric collection of stories skewers Japan's pressure-cooker society and image fixation. Okuda, an award-winning author, examines different facets of social dysfunction as the characters in each of the five stories venture into the neurology department deep in



the bowels of the Irabu General Hospital to encounter Dr. Irabu. Their first impression isn't favorable: He appears crazier than they are. Is he a quack or just an unorthodox therapist?

In the title story, a middle-aged "salary-man" seeks medical help for general malaise, and Dr. Irabu attributes the symptoms to stress and recommends exercise. Omori, the patient, at first rejects the prescription but decides to return to swimming,

his high school sport. To his surprise, he not only enjoys it but finds he's addicted to it. Soon he's not just swimming daily, but leaving work early to get to the pool. Unbelievably, the tubby, out-of-shape doctor starts to accompany him. When Omori complains that no pools are open in the middle of the night, Irabu suggests breaking in. Omori finds himself gradually accepting the suggestion. Of course, it ends in a humorous fiasco.

The patients of the other stories include a narcissistic trade show model and a man suffering from priapism—yes, the possible side effect of Viagra—well, you get the idea. In each case, the eccentric doctor leads the patient to an unlikely cure through immersion into excess.

The author claims that his first concern is to "give readers a good time." He delivers on this (although by the fourth or fifth story, we can pretty much anticipate the course of treatment). Okuda's eccentric doctor is a prescription for a stress-filled society.

—Al Hikida

Seattle Central Community College

16-1-0012

Orths, Markus. *Catalina: A True Story*. New Milford, Conn.: The Toby Press, 2006. 260 pp. Trans. from German by Helen Atkins. ISBN 1-59264-165-2, \$24.95.

History is rife with stories both true and apocryphal of women living as men to circumvent the oppression of misogynistic, heterosexist society. Some have become legendary, like Hannah Snell, heroine of popular eighteenth-century British ballads, or Loreta Velazques, who fought in the Confederate army at the Battle of Bull Run. In 1782, African-American Deborah Sampson disguised herself as a male to fight in the American Revolution. And, of course, there was the famous woman pope. Pope Joan served for two years in the ninth century, although, to be sure, the Vatican dismisses the story of the male-identified *papisa* as mere fiction.

A new addition to the gender-bending swashbuckling women of yore is Catalina, the title heroine of this book, originally published in German and now released in an accomplished English translation by Atkins. *Catalina* is the story of Catalina d'Erauso, born in the Basque region of Spain in the seventeenth century. When her

beloved brother is sent to the silver mines of Bolivia, she gets herself to a nunnery but then resolves to join him and takes on the identity of a man named Francisco. Eventually she convinces the whole world—and even herself—that she is, indeed, that man.

Catalina is based on historical accounts and written as a chronicle. And as such, its style and attempts at literary heights fall short of compelling fiction. However, the book will interest historians for its intrinsic content and for the fact that yet another underground woman has been unearthed, even if not brilliantly revealed.

—Himilce Novas

16-1-0013

Piñero, Caridad. *Sex and the South Beach Chicas*. New York: Simon & Schuster/Downtown Press, 2006. 300 pp. ISBN 1-4165-1488-0, \$13.00 (pb).

The South Beach chicas are Adriana, Tori, Juli, and Sylvia. They're 30, they've known each other since high school, and they have sworn that they will always be there for each other. Every Monday night they meet at the gym and then gather at Juli's and Adriana's restaurant and toast to life, love, and always being friends. Adriana is all brains, class, and elegance; Sylvia, the journalist, makes heads turn; Juli, the chef, is a goddess of the kitchen; Tori is ready to make the big leap into marriage, but concerned about how her *amigas* might react. In fact, they react very poorly, and now this friendship is in jeopardy.

But there is yet another protagonist in this novel. No, it is not Gil, Tori's Mr. Perfect Papi Chulo who has eyes as blue as the waters of Biscayne Bay and whose moves on the dance floor are nothing like Ricky Martin's, but whose moves in bed . . . The other protagonist is Miami Beach, where this story takes place. A fast, easy read, the South beach chicas will take you past the Mediterranean Revival structures of Ocean Drive, past the Versace mansion, and make you feel the warm ocean breeze as they deal with the happily-ever-after syndrome and re-evaluate their lives.

—Beatriz Rivera-Barnes
Penn State Univ.

16-1-0014

Rivera, Beatriz. *Do Not Pass Go*. Houston, Tex.: Arte Público Press, 2006. 294 pp. ISBN 1-55885-464-9, \$14.95 (pb).

The Latino Diaspora, in life as in literature, is rife with stories about the search for roots, as well as the search for sense and sanity, by characters who have lost their moorings, living life on the hyphen against the great Anglo-Saxon context in the sky. Cuban-American novelist Rivera's new fiction is part of that tradition but goes one further with *sui generis*, quirky, memorable characters that manage to transcend ethnicity and a love story that is universal in its intensity and unreason. Themes

that mark much of the author's earlier work, such as identity struggle and the weight of Latino family tradition, reappear here, cast in a new and intriguing light.

The story unfolds as Mateo Irigaray, an erstwhile child prodigy born in Hudson County, New Jersey, to a Colombian mother who died in childbirth, has decided to kill himself. Unbeknownst to him, his only hope of recovery seems to lie in trading in his despondency and obsession with suicide for yet another obsession—a craving and fixation involving a local journalist (Melody More), who first haunts him in the pursuit of a “good get” story and then unwittingly hands him the key to his (and her) family secrets and betrayals.

Rivera teaches at Penn State University. Her other novels are *Playing with Light* (2000), *Midnight Sandwiches at the Mariposa Express* (1997), and *African Passions and Other Stories* (1995).

—Himilce Novas

16-1-0015

Stavans, Ilan. *The Disappearance: A Novella and Stories*. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern Univ. Press, 2006. 131 pp. ISBN 0-8101-2374-6, \$22.95.

This intriguing and original collection of three short works by Amherst College professor Stavans focuses on Mexican Jews and their acceptance (or not) by the larger community, the tenuousness of their position, and latent or blatant anti-Semitism. In the title story, the disappearance of an actor who arranges for his own kidnapping makes a powerful statement about anti-Semitism. Its mystery and tone recall Jorge Luis Borges's “Emma Zunz,” another story with a Jewish theme and ironic twist.

In the novella, “Morirse está en hebreo,” Stavans portrays the lives of a prototypically Mexican Jewish family as they gather to sit shiva for their father and grandfather, a successful businessman. Family dynamics come to the forefront as they pay their last respects to this enigmatic figure. Each mourner represents a different type of Mexican Jew—the nonbeliever, the ultra-orthodox, the assimilated, the traditional. Through the words of his non-Jewish mistress, his alienated son, and his grandson who makes aliyah, we come to know the different sides of Moises's personality. The final story, “Xerox Man,” deals with the creation of the world and the role man plays. Again there is an element of mystery and a surprise ending.

These pieces are not simple to read, as Stavans is very much the intellectual, utilizing words and phrases in Spanish, Yiddish, and Hebrew that will be familiar and comfortable to some but problematic for monolingual readers. On the other hand, his portrayal of Jewish mourning rituals and essential Jewish literary works will greatly enlighten readers unfamiliar with the culture.

—Roberta Gordenstein
Elms College, Chicopee, Mass.

16-1-0016

Steimberg, Alicia. *The Rainforest*. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2006. 142 pp. Trans. from Spanish by Andrea G. Labinger. ISBN 0-8032-4315-4, \$45.00 (cl); 0-8032-9329-1, \$20.00 (cl).

This first-person narrative of a Latin American woman on the far side of middle age takes the reader on a journey into the past, exploring her first marriage, which ended in divorce and an abusive relationship with her manipulative, drug-addicted son, and the second—which ended in her husband's lingering death from cancer. Steimberg's eloquent and engrossing tale flows smoothly, capturing Cecilia's memories of the experiences that inform her past and present as she attempts to overcome her fears about the future. Poetic descriptions of the Brazilian rain forest where Cecilia is recovering from physical and psychological damage alternate with the depiction of various homes and hotels in Buenos Aires that reflect the episodic nature of her life.

Cecilia is a finely drawn and authentic character whose flaws result from a lifetime of living, raising children, and exploring relationships with men. For her, the rain forest is a type of Eden where change is possible and nature serves as therapy for a new beginning.

Like her protagonist, Steimberg is an Argentine Jewish woman, a writer, and a teacher. We can only speculate how much of this painful and yet hopeful narrative is based on reality. In any case, Steimberg has created an unforgettable protagonist who captures the sympathies of the reader as she attempts to overcome the tragedies of her life. Although the setting of the novel may be somewhat exotic to the North American reader, Cecilia's struggles are, unfortunately, more universal than specific to Latin American culture.

—Roberta Gordenstein
Elms College, Chicopee, Mass.



16-1-0017

Taibo, Paco Ignacio II and Subcomandante Marcos. *The Uncomfortable Dead: A Novel by Four Hands*. New York: Akashic Books, 2006. 268 pp. Trans. from Spanish by Carlos López. ISBN 1-933354-07-0, \$15.95 (pb).

Renowned Mexican novelist Taibo has teamed up with the Zapatista insurgent strategist Marcos to create an unusual detective story. In odd-numbered chapters,

Marcos narrates mostly in the voice of Elías Contreras, a peasant who has joined the Zapatista movement and volunteered for an investigative assignment in Mexico City, a place the insurgents nickname “the Monster.” In even-numbered chapters, Taibo's series detective, Héctor Belascoarán Shayne, has been hired to get to the bottom

of some curious phone messages from a man known to be dead. Both Elías and Héctor are looking for a treacherous bad guy by the name of Morales.

Elías's wide-eyed journey to the Monster brings him into contact with a colorful cast of characters and with Taibo's wily, though now battered and aging, detective. The encounters between Elías and Héctor are told from both points of view, with different voices that, effectively translated by Carlos López, ring true and add interest. The story converges and then diverges as the two investigators search for the nature of Evil and their "Morales." Taibo's tightly plotted narrative, peppered with fast-paced dialogue, contrasts with Marcos's sprawling first-person storytelling, which weaves folktales, jokes, communiqués from El Sup (Marcos himself), and multiple point-of-view characters, including the transgendered Juli@, one of a group of internationals in Chiapas in solidarity with the Zapatistas.

As evidenced in this novel, Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos is not your typical revolutionary—nor your typical author. The inspiration behind the Indymedia collectives around the world as well as an insurgency in his own country, he embodies a revolutionary spirit that is as much sexual and cultural as it is political. Taibo, who teaches history at the Metropolitan University of Mexico City, has long been a critic of the one-party political and economic status quo in Mexico. Working together, the two have created an expansive and entertaining tale that defies genre boundaries.

—Lyn Miller-Lachmann

Poetry

16-1-0018

Agosin, Marjorie. *Mother, Speak to Us of War/Madre, háblanos de la guerra*. Santa Fe, N.M.: Sherman Asher Publishing, 2006. 136 pp. Trans. from Spanish by Betty Jean Craig. ISBN 1-890932-32-9, \$14.95 (pb).

Poet and human rights activist Agosin puts pen to paper once again to decry the tragedy of innocent lives lost in war and genocide, focusing on war in all times and places, tracing the horror and pain of those who fight and die and those left behind to mourn. Remembering those who perished in the Holocaust, she sees "twelve million hands/that did not caress children and grandchildren." "The Vietnam Memorial" recalls the immigrants who came to America for a better life and died fighting in the war. In "Hiroshima" Agosin criticizes our consigning to oblivion all those who perished when the atomic bomb was dropped on the city. In her own homeland of Chile, she remembers the military coup that led to thousands of tortured and disappeared, and the indifference of the remainder of the country. The war in Afghanistan is seen through the eyes of children being bombed. Agosin focuses on the innocents, children bereft of parents, mothers who lose sons, friends and family of all those who, willingly or not, die in battle: "War wears the face

of a naked widow/With black wings."

Agosin criticizes not only war but also racism and the Mexican border conflict, mourning the desperate migrants seeking a new life and dying in the process: "Maria has crossed the border/She will not return home." These are bitter, angry poems, condemning dictatorships, unjust wars, exile and torture, lamenting unknown victims of roadside bombs and suicide bombers. The translator has done a marvelous job of conveying Agosin's powerful imagery, savage like war itself, like the genocide in Africa that never stops, into English so that a greater audience can experience Agosin's moving and profound work.

—Roberta Gordenstein
Elms College, Chicopee, Mass.

16-1-0019

Bradley, John. *Terrestrial Music*. Willimantic, Conn.: Curbstone Press, 2006. 80 pp. ISBN 1-931896-28-3, \$13.95 (pb).

In a strong narrative voice suffused with intelligence and insight, compassion and indignation, humor and poignancy—and more than the occasional sarcasm—Bradley begins with reflections on nature and nurture, sex and birth, death and destruction. Some poems are about dreams, nightmares, and the imagination; others are direct and frank protests against injustice. From Hitler's Germany to Pinochet's Chile to Pol Pot's Cambodia to Herzegovina-Bosnia to our own "America," they examine the genesis of terrorism and the surreality of politics in this atomic age.

The second section contains stories about the atomic bomb, radium poisoning, and uranium pollution informed by various sources of historical research, testimony, and documentation. The last section consists of love poems and elegies infused with the author's personal feelings for his fellow humans, including poems about and/or for Walt Whitman, Malcolm X, Muriel Rukeyser, Federico García Lorca, and the author's father, brother, and wife. That many of the poems are dedicated to specific individuals reinforces the book's reflection of the author as an engaged and engaging inhabitant of the Earth with a cosmic yet personal perspective grounded in care and concern for the planet and its denizens.

—Lori Tsang
Washington, D.C.

16-1-0020

Bridges, Constance Quarterman. *Lions Don't Eat Us*. St. Paul, Minn.: Graywolf Press, 2006. 80 pp. ISBN 1-55597-454-6, \$19.00 (pb).

Collins, Martha. *Blue Front*. St. Paul, Minn.: Graywolf Press, 2006. 95 pp. ISBN 1-55597-449-X, \$14.00 (pb).

Graywolf Press has published two profoundly different explorations of race, family heritage, and American

history. Collins's book-length poem, *Blue Front*, centered around the witnessing of a lynching by a five-year-old boy, the author's father, is a jury-rigged construction of disjointed narratives comprised of fragments of historical documents, newspaper articles, postcards, photographs, speculation, and census data—a tapestry of broken narrative threads of personal histories of Collins's father, the alleged rape/murder victim, and the lynching victims patched together with ethnographic, geographic, and demographic details, literary references, and statistics that provide the contexts of racial segregation and violence.

While the author's creative uses of punctuation, enjambment, and repetition at times suggest the hauntingly lyrical effects of a villanelle or pantoun, this unsparingly graphic work effectively captures a sense of Collins's anguished struggle to comprehend the human capacity for perversity as it contemplates the significance of social constructions of race—how they delineate, implicate, and define “whiteness,” white consciousness, white culpability: What is a five-year-old boy taught about his heritage, “his people,” himself, his “race,” as he's hoisted onto the shoulders of an uncle or father and forced to witness acts of horrifying brutality that should never be witnessed (or committed) by humans of any age—what does it mean to be “white” in “America”?

Sonia Sanchez's introduction, a poem in itself, describes Bridges's *Lions Don't Eat Us* as a book that celebrates ancestors in a search for answers to the question: What does it mean to be human? The poems in the first section tell stories of the author's great-grandparents: the courtship of Albert and Rhoda and the marriage of James and Ellen. The second section introduces other relatives: Aunt Vinnie, whose daughter “passed”; Uncle Charles, the ladies' man; Aunt Bea, who went mad with grief; Grand-Mom Elenor, who loved with her hands; Grandfather Austin, who plowed the earth; Alice, the mother with secret desires and a grandmother who spoke her mind; Charles, the father who built roads, told stories, and carried his dreams in crumpled paper bags; and the Grand-Pop who loved Jackie Robinson and died of cancer. The third section tells the story of Charles's migration from Georgia to New England, Detroit, and Philadelphia. The last section contains poems that invoke the chain-scarred floors of Cape Coast Castle, Elimina, and Goree Island and the bloodstained Trail of Tears, but it is the poems about the family homestead in Stony Point, Virginia, that bring the cycle to its culmination.

The best of Bridges's passionately lyrical poems—the great-grandparents' stories and Charles's “letters”—most effectively use the smells, tastes, and feels of life to reveal the dreams, hopes, and fears of those individuals; they use specifics to convey the universalities of human experience, as well as the particularities of African-American history. And like *Blue Front*, *Lions Don't Eat Us* concludes with language that uses merging river imagery to evoke the coming together of a common humanity.

—Lori Tsang
Washington, D.C.

16-1-0021

Darwish, Mahmoud. *Why Did You Leave the Horse Alone?* Brooklyn, N.Y.: Archipelago Books, 2006. 200 pp. Trans. from Arabic by Jeffrey Sacks. Bilingual (English-Arabic) ed. ISBN 0-9763950-1-0, \$18.00 (pb).

Darwish is a celebrated Arab poet who has enjoyed decades of fame and popularity throughout the Arabic-speaking world. Darwish's Palestinian village was razed by Israel when he was seven years old, and he has spent his life yearning to return to a home and way of life erased from the Earth. His poetry appeals to people from all walks of life, and many feel he is a spokesperson for the Arab people. Indeed, some scholars have credited him with “saving Arabic poetry.”

This collection of poems, published in 1994, has been translated into English by Jeffrey Sacks, though he reserves the facing page of each translated poem for the printing of the original poem in Arabic. This is helpful, for those who read Arabic, to see Sacks's line-by-line translation. In comparing the two versions, one can see the sacrifices of alliteration and rhythm that the translation demanded. Some of the already elusive poems lose too much meaning upon arriving on our English-speaking shores. The musicality of Darwish's poems is one of the things he is known for; musicians throughout the Arab world, including Marcel Khalife, have been inspired to put his poetry to music. The music, though muted, has survived translation, traveling over desert and ocean like short-wave radio, giving us the opportunity to peer into the works of a truly beloved, highly respected poet of the Middle East.

—Dena El-Saffar
Bloomington, Ind.

16-1-0022

Espada, Martín. *The Republic of Poetry*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2006. 63 pp. ISBN 0-393-06250-2, \$23.95.

Espada continues to dazzle us with his command of social and political issues, and his ability to weave them into poems that are filled with emotional representations of the struggles and the experiences of people caught in the vortex of dictatorial regimes and social injustices.

In this book, divided into three sections, Espada builds a shrine to the suffering of the people of Chile, to the beloved poet Pablo Neruda, to singer Victor Jara, and those who were murdered by the military regime of general Pinochet, or disappeared “like thousands dead but not dead.”

In the second section, “The Poet's Coat,” Espada reminds us of the importance of other poets like Julia de Burgos, Robert Creeley, Yusef Komunyakaa (whose wife committed suicide), and others. The poems in the third part, entitled “The Weather-Beaten Face,” have a different kind of intimacy and tone, from “Why My Bones

Hate the Ice,” about an accident that now forces him to use a cane, to a poem for his wife, Katherine, during surgery: “deep in a well where anesthesia dropped you like a bucket . . .” Always the teacher, Espada includes a series of notes placing many of the poems in their historical context.

In the poem “The Republic of Poetry” (dedicated to Chile), a guard at the airport will let you through but only if you can recite a poem for her. What a wonderful place that would be, no metal detectors, no suspicions, just the beauty of poetry, which as written by Espada is a gift that enhances our humanity.

—Bessy Reyna
Latin Arte News, Bolton, Conn.

16-1-0023

Littlecrow-Russell, Sara. *The Secret Powers of Naming*. Tucson: Univ. of Arizona Press, 2006. 96 pp. Introduction by Joy Harjo. ISBN 0-8165-2535-8, \$16.95 (pb).

The cover of *The Secret Power of Naming* offers a glimpse of the poems within. Depicted are idealized Native American images—corn maidens, kneeling Indian princesses, and others—all arrayed as targets in a shooting gallery. The poetry inside reflects this view of Native Americans as victims, but with less idealized iconography.

The poems are frequently brief stories, but without the romantic overtones often associated with ballads; instead, most of these images are stark, often bitter, as in this stanza from “Indian Tears”:

Your voice lashed like coat hangers
In your mission school childhood,
Words firing wildly
Like a cavalry pistol at the Last Stand.

While the poems are effective in highlighting injustices to Native Americans and other minority groups, they tend to overshadow some of Littlecrow-Russell’s lighter poems such as “The Worst Fry Bread,” in which she describes her lumpy and undercooked fry bread as “flopping into a paper towel/Like a loon rescued from a tanker spill.”

Even her more lyrical poems tend to draw the reader in with their evocative images, then end with sharp irony or dark allusion, as in “English Only,” which begins:

In a wrinkled voice,
Delicate as antique deerskin,
He names things into the ear
Of his dark-eyed granddaughter

and ends:

His sudden silence
Wraps around them
Like a diseased trade blanket.

This is not necessarily a bad thing, but sometimes her

treatment of American Indian as martyr becomes a little heavy-handed. Also, some of her poems seem to express a sense of guilt about her own success (in addition to being a writer, Littlecrow-Russell is an attorney and academic).

A number of her poems hark back to an earlier time and old injustices, so the included glossary of both Native terms and historical events is a useful addition.

The Secret Powers of Naming is a worthwhile addition to Native American collections and the poetry of protest. Recommended, but school librarians should know that the book contains frank language and deals with adult topics.

—Andy J. Deering
Central Wyoming College

16-1-0024

Schneberg, Willa. *Storytelling in Cambodia*. Corvallis, Ore.: CALYX Books, 2006. 124 pp. Introduction by U Sam Oeur and Ken McCullough. ISBN 0-934971-90-0, \$13.95 (pb).

A strong narrative voice and authorial presence merge with the subjects of poems employing detailed sensory imagery to tell stories about Haing Ngor, the sensual and violent Ramayana, and the Jewish author’s lack of firsthand knowledge of holocaust—as well as stories of colonialism, like the “discovery” of Angkor Wat and André Malraux’s theft of artifacts. Next are wartime stories—spanning time and space from Nixon’s bombings to Pol Pot’s security prison and forced evacuation of Phnom Penh—about a painter, a reporter, a torture survivor, a refugee, a prison photographer, a torturer, a librarian, Prince Sihanouk, and Pol Pot’s wife.

Stories of the aftermath—about minefields, toxic waste, and the reconstruction of civil society, lives, bodies, relationships, family, culture, and colonialism—precede other survival stories, many about Burma. The last section reveals the indelible imprints of Cambodian culture, history, and people on the author through her meditations on everyday life and her parents back in Oregon. Notable for the breadth, depth, and structure of the volume as a whole as well as for the grace of writing in the individual poems, the book respects the specificity of Cambodian culture and history while capturing the universality of the human capacity for cruelty and violence, love and transformation.

—Lori Tsang
Washington, D.C.

Folklore

16-1-0025

Green, Thomas A., ed. *The Greenwood Library of American Folktales*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 2006. 4 vols., 1,592 pp. ISBN 0-313-33772-1, \$299.95.

A wide range of American folklore is represented in this multivolume collection designed for students, teachers,

storytellers, and anyone else interested in this aspect of U.S. history and culture. The four volumes correspond to regions, reflecting the concerns of anthropologists from the late nineteenth century on. These regions are: the Northeast, the Midwest, and the Mid-Atlantic in Volume 1; the South and the Caribbean in Volume 2; the Southwest, the Plains and Plateau, and the West in Volume 3; and the Northwest and Cyberspace in Volume 4. Within the volumes, each region has its own introduction, followed by the tales, classified thematically in the categories of "Origins," "Heroes, Heroines, Tricksters, and Fools," and "The Powers That Be: Sacred Tales." For each tale, there is a note on its tradition bearer or author, a scholarly source note (the editor relies heavily on the *Journal of American Folklore*, though a few of the stories hail from WPA projects, regionally based scholarly journals, or specific individuals' papers or archives), the date the tale originally came to light, the original source (tribal group or geographical location of its first telling or written recording), and the ethnic or national origin. Stories are generally one to two pages long, although some are quite lengthy and complex. In some cases the editor has simplified the dialect but provides the original tale in an appendix. Each volume contains the cumulative index, which makes it easy for readers to locate tales by cultural group or theme across several regions.

While Native American tales dominate and are identified by tribe, the collection is well balanced, with a significant presence of African-American, Latino, and European-American tales. The editor's decision to incorporate tales from the Caribbean into the volume on the American South is a wise choice to acknowledge the cross-fertilization of African traditions in the two regions. Most of the tales were collected between the late 1880s (the *Journal of American Folklore* debuted in 1888) and the 1950s, after which interest in this genre waned. However, the emergence of jokes, urban legends, and conspiracy theories in cyberspace has spawned a new interest in this literary genre. One of this collection's most significant contributions is its section on folktales in cyberspace, where one can see that despite technological changes, there is remarkable consistency in the structure and themes of folk stories. This collection is recommended for academic and large public library collections, regional and state libraries, and smaller libraries with a special interest in American folklore.

—Lyn Miller-Lachmann

Criticism

16-1-0026

Cowart, David. *Trailing Clouds: Immigrant Fiction in Contemporary America*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 2006. 250 pp. ISBN 0-8014-4469-1, \$55.00 (c); 0-8014-7287-3, \$19.95 (pb).

Cowart's book opens with a quote by Bharati Mukherjee about "the face of America changing" in which she raises a question: "Who . . . speaks . . . for the new Americans from nontraditional immigrant countries?" Responding to that question, Cowart speaks about those new Americans, among them contemporary writers such as Chang-rae Lee, Edwidge Danticat, Julia Alvarez, Mukherjee, and others whose writings offer a "bracing corrective to narrowly politicized theories of ethnic identity and literary production." Cowart is disinclined to group authors by "ethnicity or national origin." His examination of particular texts reveals some similar approaches taken by other critics (such as notions of double-consciousness and hybrid demands), but mainly he offers a new look at immigrant fictions.

Two of the most valuable sections are those about Chang-rae Lee's *Native Speaker* (1995), whose protagonist is Henry Park, a man who models the exilic self, and Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy* (1990), a woman Cowart associates with Persephone, queen of the underworld. Cowart argues that Henry is yearning for "psychological integrity" and longs to be "truly Korean or truly American," and because he cannot see himself as either, he despises a "self perceived as mongrelized." Similarly, when writing about assimilation, adolescence, and Kincaid's "Rebel Angel," Cowart compares Lucy to Caliban, whose only language is the "language of the criminal who committed the crime." Lucy Porter would have to separate the "Carib, African, and perhaps European streams" to find her language. Because she cannot, her rage takes control as the author tries to deconstruct imperialist ideology.

The above comments offer a brief look at a text rich in classical and contemporary references, multiple critical perspectives, and diverse literary works. Cowart concludes that the authors about whom he writes "identify themselves as artists first and immigrants second" who seldom "disparage their new country, but neither do they simply sing its praises." Coming full circle, Cowart closes with Mukherjee's words, associating her with Dorothy in Oz, as she reminds readers of the unstable categories of "we" and "they" for the new immigrants. Scholars and graduate students can mitigate their curiosity and enrich their knowledge with Cowart's multileveled commentary and the connections he builds among primary works.

—Elaine R. Ognibene
Siena College

16-1-0027

Mezu, Rose Ure. *Chinua Achebe: The Man and His Works*. London, U.K.: Adonis & Abbey, 2006. 274 pp. ISBN 1-905068-21-2, \$35.50 (pb).

Chinua Achebe has become an icon and is arguably the best-known writer of African literatures. His novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) is a benchmark for modern African writing in English. Rose Ure Mezu, a Nigerian

scholar currently teaching in the United States, undertakes a critical analysis of Achebe's works and succeeds in offering fresh viewpoints regarding the author and his writing.

Mezu chooses a thematic approach for her discussions of Achebe's books. She writes in an accessible manner free of jargon, yet she demonstrates a broad knowledge of world literature and literary theory. Her text is rich in intellectual and personal analysis. Mezu analyzes the women in Achebe's novels, which others have done, often with opposing views. Mezu emphasizes Achebe's own position that he has evolved in his depiction of women in his writing, as women's roles have evolved on the African continent.

Most strikingly, Mezu "inaugurates a new tradition, juxtaposing Achebe's thoughts and concepts and those of diasporan literary and cultural groundbreakers." A lengthy chapter compares *Things Fall Apart* and Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), while another connects the Igbo culture in Achebe's writings with Olaudah Equiano's eighteenth-century *Narrative*. Such intertextual explorations provide stimulating and important insights.

Mezu includes "Conversations with Chinua Achebe" from 1996, which validates and expands her salient points. Then she details a visit she and her husband made to the Achebes' home for a second interview in 1999. The warmth, humor, and intelligent conversation that flowed between the families create a profile of Achebe as a complex and wonderfully human spirit.

—Anne Serafin
Newtonville, Mass.

Visual and Performing Arts

16-1-0028

George, Hardy S., ed. *Mexican Masters: Rivera, Orozco, and Siquieros, Selections from the Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil*. Seattle: Oklahoma City Museum of Art; dist. by Univ. of Washington Press, 2006. 122 pp. Illus. ISBN 0-911919-03-5, \$35.00 (pb).

By their nature, private collections of art tend towards the idiosyncratic. Whether by taste, chance, or lack of sufficient resources, such a collection may well consist of an odd assortment of a limited selection of strong works by significant artists, strewn uneasily amongst a larger number of weaker ones.

This is the unfortunate case in the selections from the collection assembled by Carrillo Gil and published here in *Mexican Masters*. Any library that does not already contain a number of larger and more important volumes on these masters of twentieth-century art should invest their resources in a book that more accurately represents the power and breadth of these painters. I am speaking here of the number and quality of illustrated works, which this volume simply lacks.

That said, there is genuine merit in the text, particularly from a multicultural point of view. A wonderful balance is provided by the inclusion of articles from the disciplines of curator, art history professor, and critic. With three of the four contributors being rooted in the culture of Mexico, their insights and perspective give pertinent context to issues generated from the internal direction of these artists, as opposed to their international dissemination. This fact alone warrants consideration of this book in libraries wishing to break away from the mold of earlier scholarship published in English regarding these legendary figures.

—John Caputo
Siena College

16-1-0029

Gianturco, Paola and Hill, David. *¡Viva Colores! A Salute to the Indomitable People of Guatemala/Un saludo a la indomable gente de Guatemala*. Brooklyn, N.Y.: powerHouse Books, 2006. 144 pp. Illus. with photos by Paola Gianturco. Bilingual (English-Spanish) ed. ISBN 1-57687-335-8, \$39.95.

This is a very enjoyable book, composed of text about the numerous different peoples of Guatemala by Hill, and terrific, colorful photos of the people and the environment by Gianturco. The stories provide brief insights into peoples' lives and how they are trying to make things better for themselves and others. Many are, potentially, true leaders who may someday make a difference. Most are ordinary citizens whose life stories are worth hearing about.

The concept of *machismo* is used several times, with the suggestion that it refers, in part, to male dominance and thus is a problem for many women in Guatemala. However, some of the women featured are trying to overcome this barrier and make things better for women.

The beautiful, colorful photographs give us a feeling for Guatemala and help the stories come alive. Most of the people featured are regular, ordinary people, except that they are attempting to change things for the better, and thus they may have a very positive influence on their culture. The book is not only an aesthetic delight but also an inspirational book about how one can make a difference, despite limitations of income, history, culture, or family obligations. It is well worth reading.

—Russell Eisenman
Univ. of Texas–Pan American

16-1-0030

Hansen, Marsha. *My Soul Is a Witness: The Message of the Spirituals in Word and Song*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006. 104 pp. Includes CD. ISBN 0-8066-5285-3, \$19.99.

This wonderful book explains how African Americans used songs to connect with Christianity and God. The CD accompanying the book allows the reader to hear

the songs that are referenced in the work.

In each chapter a story is told regarding slavery. The book ties the story and a song to God and explains how the song helped the slaves to endure their situation and circumstances. Many of the stories compare the enslaved person's plight to events that occurred in the Bible. The author was intriguing in the way in which she was able to tie all the stories to biblical events.

I found this book to be very touching. It is a short work, yet it is packed with wonderful information. The accompanying CD is a great bonus. I recommend this book for high school through adult readers.

—Charlie Spencer Lackey
Duke Univ. Medical School Library

16-1-0031

Leonard, David J. *Screens Fade to Black: Contemporary African American Cinema*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood/Praeger, 2006. 232 pp. ISBN 0-275-98361-7, \$49.95.

Leonard castigates the negative influences of black cinema on both black and white audiences. In light of the harsh realities of stark racism and poverty made apparent by Hurricane Katrina, Leonard offers close readings of contemporary, popular black films: *Antwone Fisher*, *Training Day*, *Brown Sugar*, *Love & Basketball*, *Drumline*, *Baby Boy*, *Prison Song*, and *Good Fences*. Contemporary black cinema is "ostensibly a continuation of Hollywood's efforts to legitimize and sanction white racism." Leonard strives to educate presumptuous, complacent black folk on the continued necessity to fight racism in whatever forms it may take. According to Leonard, black cinematic production is no exception.

In tracing black cinematography from classics such as *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* and *Carmen Jones* to their trendier updates, Leonard discusses the significant shifts in the messages conveyed in black films. In working to dismantle the stereotypical Aunt Jemima, lewd vixen, and Sambo characters, producers, directors, scriptwriters, and cast members have successfully taken one step forward, two steps backward.

While Leonard's contentions are striking and much-needed to be said, many of his comments regarding particular black films are redundant, lack sufficient validity, and can assuredly be contested as matters of personal taste. One might even argue that Leonard's choice of films to critique is not a viable pool with respect to more deserving popular black films that, without doubt, challenge negative stereotypes of black men and women. Nonetheless—in spite of the glaring error regarding the author of *The Color Purple* (Alice Walker instead of his Morrison claim)—Leonard does bring to the forefront critical thought that needs stating in academic critical studies of American cinema and among popular film audiences.

—Marsha I. Walker
Indiana Univ. of Pennsylvania

16-1-0032

Levine, Gregory P. A. *Daitokuji: The Visual Cultures of a Zen Monastery*. Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 2006. 448 pp. Illus. ISBN 0-295-98540-2, \$60.00.

Daitokuji is a Zen Buddhist monastery situated in Kyoto, Japan. In addition to being one of the principal Japanese centers of Zen practice, it houses one of the largest and most significant collections of Buddhist devotional, ritual, and artistic objects in Japan. Levine's groundbreaking study discusses these objects as Buddhist icons that inhabit many worlds, often simultaneously. They can be objects of religious veneration and meditation. They might be artifacts in the transactions of political power, prestige collectibles, commercial commodities, and/or the subjects of artistic and esthetic analysis. They serve various audiences including the monks of the monastery, political patrons, local worshipers, tourists, collectors, and art historians. They represent a past, although one interpreted and encountered through present conditions and interests. They can be objects of sacred power, Japanese national prestige, commercial interest, and international museum collecting. Levine examines all of these dimensions as a critique of the traditional art historical approach to them as solely art treasures reflecting a cultural and religious past. They are, in his terms, "objects in motion."

This book is intended as a scholarly study of multiple and multivalent objects and would be tough going for the ordinary reader. However, the profuse and excellent illustrations alone make it worth the purchase price. For the more dedicated reader the subjects include portraits of Zen abbots, including one that was ritually "crucified," scroll paintings and calligraphy, the public "airing" of the stored works, their migrations outside of Daitokuji to museums and private collections, and even the travels of Daitokuji's *Five Hundred Luohan* to Victorian Boston and Philadelphia. The journey is worth the price of admission!

—James S. Dalton
Siena College

16-1-0033

Littleton, Darryl. *Black Comedians on Black Comedy: How African-Americans Taught Us to Laugh*. New York: Applause, 2006. 360 pp. Introduction by Dick Gregory. ISBN 1-55783-680-9, \$27.95.

It is often said that "black history is synonymous with American history." There are a number of scenarios that bring credence to this statement. One of them that has been seldom explored is the historical thread between black comedy and black history. Littleton offers a unique perspective on the parallel worlds of laughter and entertainment from a cultural and historical viewpoint.

The author, a stand-up comic, has assembled a text utilizing the narrative of black social change and has skillfully combined it with the inclusion of more than

120 interviews from today's leading comedians. The encyclopedic roster includes Eddie Murphy, Chris Rock, Bernie Mac, and many more unsung comedic heroes and heroines. Pioneers and icons of comedy such as Bill Cosby, Richard Pryor, Redd Foxx, and Jackie 'Moms' Mabley are included via brief biographical sketches, followed by excerpts of contemporary comics paying homage to their idols.

Approximately 400 years of Afro-American history is succinctly intertwined with the genres of comedy and entertainment. The early significance of vaudeville and performing in blackface have evolved to the period of black comedy flourishing on Broadway and television, and culminating with the multimedia talents of Academy Award-winning comedian/actor Jamie Foxx.

The text is informative and educational. It represents a compendium of the art forms of comedy and humor, juxtaposed with the struggles of black Americans. Recommended for general readers, public libraries, and all interested in a unique segment of African-American studies.

—Anthony Todman
St. John's Univ. (N.Y.) Library

Biography/Autobiography

16-1-0034

Brooks, Thomas. *A Wealth of Family: An Adopted Son's International Quest for Heritage, Reunion, and Enrichment*. Houston, Tex.: Alpha Multimedia, 2006. 250 pp. ISBN 0-9774629-3-5, \$17.95.

Brooks is an excellent storyteller. In this autobiography, he tells of growing up in a rough, working-class, black neighborhood near Pittsburgh, being raised by his mother, a single parent. He learns at age 11 that he was adopted and eventually goes to Kenya in search of his biological father. The reader learns a lot about the greater Pittsburgh neighborhood and about culture in Kenya. There is less about the Lithuanian Jewish culture of his biological mother, a white woman whom Brooks finds living in England.

Brooks is a biracial person, seen as black by most, who puts great emphasis on academic achievement. He does well in school despite his neighborhood and eventually gets an MBA degree and good jobs working with corporations in Houston, Dallas, and Atlanta. Thus, it is very much a success story showing how a youth can overcome obstacles, provided he values academic achievement.

The book is also about what happens when a child learns he is adopted and how Brooks desires to find both his biological mother and father. The information about the people in Kenya that his father comes from is interesting, especially how collectively and family oriented

they are. A valuable aspect of the black college fraternity that Brooks joined is people to associate with throughout his life, no matter what city or nation he finds himself in. Overall, this is a terrific book about a successful man who tells excellent stories, values achievement, and has done well in life. It could serve as an inspiration for black, biracial, or adopted youths.

—Russell Eisenman
Univ. of Texas–Pan American

16-1-0035

Guilbault, Rose Castillo. *Farmworker's Daughter: Growing Up Mexican in America*. Berkeley, Calif.: Heyday Books, 2006. 190 pp. ISBN 1-59714-034-1, \$11.95 (pb).

Guilbault's moving and wonderfully detailed memoir grew out of a series of essays first published in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. She recounts her cultural, emotional and intellectual journey from her youth in the border town of Nogales, Mexico, to growing up in King City nestled in California's Salinas Valley. Many know Guilbault as an award-winning broadcast and print journalist. Today she is vice president of corporate affairs at AAA of Northern California. Her memoir helps us understand how a child can fight her way through racism, difficult economic circumstances, and a sometimes broken family to obtain the American Dream.

María Luisa, Guilbault's mother, marries a charming traveling salesman, Tito. Tito shows little interest in raising his daughter, leaving that to his wife. Eventually, the small Mexican community buzzes with rumors of Tito's philandering and the existence of second family. With the emotional and economic support of a distant female cousin from California, María Luisa decides to escape her abusive marriage. One morning, she and Guilbault board a Greyhound bus in the hope of finding personal and economic freedom in the United States.

Guilbault's mother eventually marries José García, a moody fieldworker who ultimately proves to be a good husband and father. But all three must work either in the fields or canneries. It is also difficult for this intelligent, college-bound girl to fit in with her mostly white classmates who do not see higher education as a goal. In the end, this is a poignant tribute to one young woman's unshakeable belief in her own self-worth and potential.

—Daniel A. Olivás
West Hills, Calif.

16-1-0036

Noiville, Florence. *Isaac B. Singer: A Life*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2006. 192 pp. Trans. from French by Catherine Temerson. ISBN 0-374-17800-3, \$23.00.

An English translation from the original French, this biography by a journalist and literary critic at the prestigious daily French newspaper *Le Monde* is solid, although far from comprehensive. Even so, it can serve

as a good introduction to the life and work of the 1978 Nobel laureate in literature. In addition to the text, the book includes a selected bibliography of English-language primary and secondary works, a list of films about Singer or based on his work, and a few photographs.

Noiville's travels to Poland, Israel, and New York, and interviews with writers, publishers, and translators in the United States and Europe who knew Singer well, enable her to provide vivid details about the life of a public figure widely admired for his story-telling abilities, his vivid recreations of a vanished world, and his creation of complex characters. Not generally known is the manner in which the Yiddish works were translated into English. Much of the translation work was done by Singer himself and then polished by his "translators," thus allowing him to edit his work to make it more accessible to a non-Yiddish-speaking public. Admirable in his devotion to his work, Singer was far less so in his relationships. His friends, associates, and publishers speak of a man as conflicted as his characters. Although Saul Bellow gave him his big break with the translation into English of "Gimpel the Fool," Singer never allowed him to do another translation. He abandoned his companion and small son in prewar Warsaw and later betrayed his wife with a "harem" of female helpmeets who acted as his "translators." His focus was entirely on his art, and he expected those around him to serve it with the same devotion.

—Eva Martin Sartori
Granby, Mass.

16-1-0037

Wilkin, Binnie Tate, ed. *African American Librarians in the Far West: Pioneers and Trailblazers*. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2006. 360 pp. ISBN 0-8108-5156-3, \$55.00 (pb).

As a longtime librarian and library science professor, a co-author of the American Library Association's early diversity policy, and a renowned storyteller, Wilkin is aptly suited to tell the rich stories of African-American librarians who eliminated barriers, celebrated diversity, and transformed the field of librarianship over the last half century. This work provides 22 full profiles of African-American librarians who lived and worked in the states of Washington, Oregon, Nevada, Arizona, and California, of which 80 percent are female and almost 50 percent are from California. There is a supplement of short biographies of 20 additional Californians.

The librarians profiled submitted written materials about their personal journeys as "pioneers and trailblazers" as well as writings that represent their work and/or professional philosophies. All of these individuals made significant contributions to their public, academic, and school libraries, as well as to the communities they served, and to the library profession. The personal narratives tell the story of the civil rights movement, social change, and the maturation of the library profession. A chronology showing the placement of these lives in

historical context would have been useful. The book succeeds in its purpose to inspire and instruct African-American youth to pursue librarianship and younger African-American and other ethnic librarians to follow their dreams and continue the struggle for social justice and inclusion.

—Gary B. Thompson
Siena College Library

16-1-0038

Wood, John. *Leaving Microsoft to Change the World: An Entrepreneur's Odyssey to Educate the World's Children*. New York: HarperCollins, 2006. 272 pp. ISBN 0-06-113107-X, \$25.95.

Educators are increasingly recognizing that universal education is an essential component of education reform. Wood's personal story builds support for universal education. What do authentic grassroots efforts to support it look like? How can genuine passion and engagement serve this goal? Wood's Room to Read project and role to educate the world's children provide the answers to the aforementioned questions.

Wood admires what Andrew Carnegie did, but the weakness of his model is that he thought about only one country. Wood provides a multinational model to build an educational infrastructure—schools, libraries, computer labs, and long-term scholarships for girls—for rural and disenfranchised people in the world's poorest communities. His efforts have already helped people in Nepal, Vietnam, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Laos, and India.

This personal narrative is presented in three parts. The first part describes how he left Microsoft to build the foundation of his Room to Read project. The second part continues the story with his account of the start-up years and expansion of his project into other countries. Part Three focuses on the education of girls, the deadly 2004 tsunami, and the Millionth Book Celebration. Kudos to Wood. Let's all follow Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's lead and play Beethoven's Fifth Symphony for universal education to knock the planet off its axis.

—Anthony Edwards
Univ. of South Carolina

History

16-1-0039

Blake, Michael. *Indian Yell*. Flagstaff, Ariz.: Northland Publishing, 2006. 170 pp. ISBN 0-87358-907-6, \$21.95.

Since Dee Brown's *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* was published in 1970, it has entered the realm of classic studies of the continual struggle between the Native people of the United States and the pressures of westward expansion. Similar issues have been raised by journalist Michael Blake, who authored the acclaimed novel

Dances with Wolves (1988). The movie of the same title also received great accolades. Blake has used his journalist talents to examine the engagements between Indians and the military forces of the United States.

Indian Yell is Blake's first nonfiction book. He skillfully intertwines years of historic research with his ability to tell a good story. His fast-paced writing style engages the reader in his re-creation as he chronicles 12 dramatic events that took place from 1854 to 1890. Blake relates the complex passions and divisive issues of the period as he profiles the individuals involved in each struggle.

As related on the dust jacket, the problems faced today by forces in Iraq, such as overextended supply lines, cultural barriers, not enough soldiers to complete the task, and confused objectives, were all present in the nineteenth-century Indian wars. Thus, the reading of this book has great meaning for twenty-first-century America.

Indian Yell presents an honest yet sympathetic approach to the plight of the American Indian, revealing the tragic consequences of what has been termed Manifest Destiny, and should be required reading for all Americans.

—Mike Russert
Cambridge, N.Y.

16-1-0040

Doyle, Don H. and Pamplona, Marco Antonio, eds.
Nationalism in the New World. Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 2006. 320 pp. ISBN 0-8203-2654-2, \$59.95 (cl); 0-8203-2820-0, \$22.95 (pb).

Historical studies of nationalism generally concentrate on the expression of this phenomenon among European nation-states. This work analyzes nationalism in relation to its development among countries of the Western Hemisphere, some of the most multiethnic in the world. In 14 essays, it examines, both individually and in comparison, nationalism in the United States, Canada, Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, Brazil, Bolivia, and Cuba. Most of the contributors are historians at American universities, with a few from Canadian, Brazilian, and British institutions. The editors are an American and a Brazilian.

The essays vary in their scope. The broadest approach appears in the editors' introductory article, which concerns the "Americanizing" of the historical debate on nationalism. Two further essays concentrate on the relevance of nationalism and the distinction of such in the New World. For the United States, the essays focus on the periods of independence and the last half of the nineteenth century. Nationalism in Canada is reviewed as primarily an English Canadian phenomenon around a French minority identity. Race becomes a key defining factor for nationalism in Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, Brazil, and Cuba, while the *caudillo* factor emerges as a formative agent in Bolivia. Nationalism is examined comparatively for the United States, Mexico, and Brazil.

Throughout the work the meaning of nationalism varies according to the viewpoints of the contributors. The volume has two sets of maps and a list of dates for the independence of each country in the Americas. Articles are amply footnoted.

—Edward A. Riedinger
Ohio State Univ. Libraries

16-1-0041

Ifill, Sherrilyn. *On the Courthouse Lawn: Confronting the Legacy of Lynching in the Twenty-First Century*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2007. 256 pp. ISBN 0-8070-0987-3, \$25.95.

How should a community deal with a history of racism? This is the loaded question raised in *On the Courthouse Lawn*. Some people maintain that unsavory events from the past should be ignored. Calling these atrocities to public attention, they argue, will only reopen old wounds and exacerbate racial divisions. Ifill maintains that honestly confronting past injustices can promote reconciliation that is essential for building a more positive future.

The author investigates two lynchings on Maryland's Eastern Shore during the 1930s. She demonstrates that many in the white community either participated in or witnessed these murders. In the days following both lynchings, influential whites joined in a conspiracy of silence to protect those responsible for the killings. Ifill examines the roles of crucial institutions including the church, the press, and the criminal justice system, showing how each contributed to the lynchings and their cover-up.

Ifill cites the South African Truth and Justice Commission as a model communities can follow to expose past injustices and acknowledge responsibility for their lasting effects. In recent years, several cities in the United States, including Homewood, Florida and Tulsa, Oklahoma have conducted official inquiries into violent incidents and compensated the survivors or their descendants. Ifill concludes, "The time is ripe in America to confront our history of racial violence."

—Paul T. Murray
Siena College

16-1-0042

Iliffe, John. *The African AIDS Epidemic: A History*. Athens: Ohio Univ. Press, 2006. 214 pp. ISBN 0-8214-1688-X, \$55.00 (cl); 0-8214-1689-8, \$24.95 (pb).

Iliffe demonstrates the importance of history as he meticulously takes the reader through the origins and development of AIDS in the African continent. The author does not preach but rather provides us with the facts and context within which this epidemic swept through the countries of Africa. In the process he details the range of attitudes and practices found in the various countries as they addressed the difficulty of coping with the epidemic. Iliffe suggests that the book offers a num-

ber of valuable perspectives regarding our knowledge of HIV/AIDS. These perspectives include: the origins of HIV in the Western region of the continent; the unique character of the virus; locating the epidemic in African history; and finally, that the epidemic has changed over time.

Iliffe begins in Western Equatorial Africa and transitions to the east and south before ending in West Africa. In the chapter "Responses from Above," he illustrates the complexity of the epidemic, not only in African countries, but internationally. He argues that the extent of the epidemic could have been lessened if measures taken by national and international authorities had been more adequately designed. More importantly, in the chapter "Views from Below," he argues that the international response was insufficient because the approach from the medical community "conflicted with the ways in which most Africans perceived the crisis." It is within this conflicting framework that the book provides the reader with the insight to fully grasp the socio-cultural implications of the epidemic in Africa.

—Duane A. Matcha
Siena College

16-1-0043

Rappleye, Charles. *Sons of Providence: The Brown Brothers, the Slave Trade, and the American Revolution*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006. 400 pp. ISBN 0-7432-6887-0, \$27.00.

This interesting and revealing saga of an American family is built around the lives of two highly competitive brothers, whose outlook on life in terms of human freedom and material gain locked them in an ideological struggle at polar opposites. The reader gets a more in-depth view of American history at the micro level, which inevitably impacted major historical events of that history at the macro level.

Rappleye has not only written a history about one of Providence, Rhode Island's most noted families, he has as well written the American story of slavery, the slave trade, the revolutionary struggle, independence, and the unfolding of the New Republic. The book is about ships that came to Providence or Newport laden with an array of commerce that included African captives to be sold and enslaved. It is about the Brown clan building a fortune on shipping and manufacturing.

Moses and John Brown were acquisitive in their own fashion, and both, like most business-minded Rhode Islanders, got involved in the trade in African captives. Yet along the way Moses broke with his brother over the slave trade, and in the wake of the loss of his first wife and conversion to Quakerism, he became a staunch abolitionist and author of some early antislavery broadsides. John, on the other hand, as both a private businessman and elected representative to Congress, stood in defense of the shipping trade in African captives and waffled on the issue of freedom for enslaved Africans.

The book is suitable for both high school and college level students and the general reading public.

—A. J. Williams-Myers
State Univ. of New York, College at New Paltz

16-1-0044

Weiner, Deborah R. *Coalfield Jews: An Appalachian History*. Champaign: Univ. of Illinois Press, 2006. 264 pp. ISBN 0-252-03094-X, \$60.00 (cl); 0-252-07335-5, \$25.00 (pb).

When most people think of Appalachia they probably think of poor whites. They definitely do not think of Jews living in the Appalachian coalfield regions. Yet, as this book points out, many Jews came from Europe to the United States due to religious persecution or for economic opportunity, and set up shop in the coalfield areas of Virginia, West Virginia, and Kentucky during the coal boom of 1880–1920. Often working as merchants, these Jewish people typically attained middle-class status and interacted not only in their own Jewish culture but with their coal miner clientele and the surrounding non-Jewish community. Thus, the Jews had to fit in with divergent cultures in order to be successful in the new world. And, while some reacted negatively toward the coal miners, seeing them as uneducated, violent types, the Jews typically respected their hard work and their desire to pay their bills on time.

The synagogue was a center of Jewish life in the coalfield regions. Attendance and affiliation was higher than in large cities, since the synagogue helped establish Jewish identity and culture where Jews were sparse. In fact, various branches of Jews often shared a single synagogue, which never would have occurred in larger cities.

The author, a research historian and family history coordinator at the Jewish Museum of Maryland in Baltimore, covers clearly and thoroughly the myriad aspects of Jewish life in the Appalachian coalfields. This is an important contribution to scholarship and historical understanding of aspects of both Appalachian history and Jewish culture.

—Russell Eisenman
Univ. of Texas–Pan American

Religion

16-1-0045

Gilbreath, Edward. *Reconciliation Blues: A Black Evangelist's Inside View of White Christianity*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2006. 192 pp. ISBN 0-8308-3367-6, \$20.00 (pb).

Readers will enjoy this clear and concise, easy-to-read and up-to-date perspective on the subject of evangelical Christians from a black man's viewpoint. Gilbreath has explored and examined every aspect of this movement,

which is more usually associated with white Christians, one of the most famous being President George W. Bush. Gilbreath covers the many pastors who head both small churches and the megachurches that have tripled in numbers in the last decade. The author's timely interviews with pastors, black evangelical leaders, scholars, and educators bolster his insight into this controversial, often misunderstood religion.

An editor-at-large for *Christianity Today*, Gilbreath uses his extensive knowledge on evangelicalism to detail its prominent role in many areas of the United States, including race and politics. *Reconciliation Blues* provides a thorough explanation of how evangelicals have grown beyond predominantly white parishioners to the many African Americans that have joined them. (Some have joined them and decided it was not a good fit.) Historical examples are given of "what real reconciliation really is," such as the civil rights movement with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks. The author interjects numerous biblical verses to justify his allegiance to evangelicalism. With the many recent drug and sex scandals of infamous evangelicals, this is an indispensable purchase for all libraries, and it even includes an excellent discussion guide. Highly recommended for anyone considering joining evangelicalism or who would like a better understanding of this fast-growing and progressive religion. An excellent source on the black evangelical experience!

—Ida D. McGhee
Univ. of Rhode Island

16-1-0046

Montilla, R. Esteban and Medina, Ferney. *Pastoral Care and Counseling with Latino/as*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006. 146 pp. Series: Creative Pastoral Care and Counseling. ISBN 0-8006-3820-4, \$16.00 (pb).

This informative book for the professional pastoral counselor and for those who are in training will also help therapists, social workers, doctors, and teachers understand the deep religious and familial roots when working with Latino/as.

The definitions of the seemingly familiar terms of "family," "respect," "authority," "faith," "suffering," "loyalty," "intimacy," and "racism" from a Latino/a perspective are helpful for those not familiar with the culture. The reader is reminded of the diversity found within the culture and across generational lines. The authors underscore the importance of getting to know each individual to avoid cultural stereotyping while working with the leaders in the family in order to help clients effect change.

Montilla and Medina take us inside the experience of many Latino/as and illustrate the tension this creates as they encounter the norms and values of a new culture. In the chapters on education and discrimination and racism, the authors call for systemic change that seems to go beyond the scope of the pastoral counseling situation. While it is good to be aware of these conflicts, it

is hard to agree that assimilation and intermarriage is a form of cultural racism, as these authors suggest.

The authors' use of the familiar Scripture stories of creation, Job, the raising of Lazarus, and the walk to Emmaus illustrate how deeply and personally Latino/as experience the presence of God. The pastoral counselor has the opportunity to help the Latino/a client draw on this rich tradition to move toward healing and wholeness.

—Phyllis Cardona
Albany, N.Y.

Education

16-1-0047

Banks, James A. *Race, Culture, and Education*. New York: Routledge, 2006. 235 pp. ISBN 0-415-39819-3, \$130.00 (cl); 0-415-39820-7, \$39.95 (pb).

This collection is very timely for longitudinally examining the work of James Banks, the internationally recognized premier scholar of multicultural education. In recent years Banks has revealed a bit of his early life in a couple of journal articles which, for this reviewer, has piqued a desire to learn how his scholarship developed and evolved over his distinguished career. *Race, Culture, and Education* is excellent for meeting this need.

The introduction is wonderful for its accessible voice in the way that Banks locates his life history within his scholarship. From Banks the scholar, the reader gets a glimpse into his social-political world, which helped to shape his perspective and academic, steadfast focus on providing theoretical frameworks and practical applications that help us to understand, analyze, and assess racial and cultural intersections with the schooling process.

As a professor who addresses multicultural issues with preservice and inservice teachers, I find that his work holds contemporary relevance. Banks's multicultural dimensions and various typologies bring together very relevant approaches to grasp the complexities of multicultural education. Writings are organized into conceptually coherent sections that span from a 1971 *Social Education* article on teaching black history to his 2005 address on "Democracy, Diversity, and Social Justice" as the annual faculty lecturer at his University of Washington campus. This book makes a valuable addition to contemporary debates on "race, culture, and education," an appropriately chosen title for his collection.

—Michael Vavrus
Evergreen State College

16-1-0048

Clarke, Susan E.; Hero, Rodney E.; Sidney, Mara S.; Fraga, Luis R.; and Erlichson, Bari A. *Multiethnic Moments: The Politics of Urban Education Reform*. Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 2006. 232 pp. ISBN 1-59213-537-4, \$23.95.

The authors of this timely and provocative work have thoroughly examined the politics of race and education reform in four highly multiracial/multiethnic cities. They uncover the facts that have worked for and against ethnically representative school change. They also make it clear that long-lasting effective reform screams for policy solutions that are politically sustainable at both the macro and micro level. The book considers the dynamic that confounds the traditional black/white paradigm in public school—that is, where there is a large population of Latinos or Asian Americans. These authors point out that the history of race relations in black/white cities is different and sometimes longer than in cities where Latinos and Asians are concentrated. Moreover, the multiethnic cities where Latinos and Asians figure prominently—often in the West and shaped by Western political traditions but now emerging across the United States—present unique social and political settings and unique education issues.

Multiethnic Moments is intended to offer the reader a close look at the special challenge of bringing together “rainbow” coalitions behind a sustained reform effort. This work encourages readers to rethink analytical and theoretical approaches to the study of race and ethnicity. It is essential reading for reformers of the future who are willing to read it carefully and learn its lessons well.

—Linda Rhone
Shepherd Univ.

Social and Political Sciences

16-1-0049

Abdo, Geneive. *Mecca and Main Street: Muslim Life in America After 9/11*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2006. 210 pp. ISBN 0-19-531171-X, \$26.00.

Muslim readers will be reassured by this well-researched book by a Christian Arab-American journalist with solid credentials in the Islamic world. Decidedly sympathetic but neither defensive nor polemical in tone, the book deals with the “real Islam” of its American followers, as opposed to the sensationalist, biased interpretation of Islam that reaches most Americans. It will be welcome in homes as well as school and public libraries.

The chapter on the coming of Islam to America—starting with African slaves—should be part of any history of immigration. The focus on women examines their changing role in the mosque and “veiling” as a statement of identity and symbol of the all-pervasive effect of Islam in their lives. Drawing largely from Chicago’s Muslim community, Abdo profiles several individuals who represent different forms of Muslim expression. For instance, social activist and doctoral student Rami Nashashibi tries to reach directionless youth with the help of Muslim rap star Napoleon. Abdul Malik Mujahid, director of Radio Islam, exemplifies Muslims speaking in their own voices. Ingrid Mattson, a convert and professor of Islamic studies, works for women’s rights,

through persuasion more than confrontation. The appeal of Islam for Latino converts offers an intriguing study of comparative religion and social change.

The effect of suspicion and persecution of American Muslims after 9/11 enters the discussion to some degree; but on the whole the book is forward-looking, describing a community that, while hardly homogeneous or monolithic, is steadily growing as a significant part of the American population.

—Elsa Marston
Bloomington, Ind.

16-1-0050

Costa Vargas, João H. *Catching Hell in the City of Angels: Life and Meanings of Blackness in South Central Los Angeles*. Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2006. 310 pp. Foreword by Robin D. G. Kelley. ISBN 0-8166-4168-4, \$60.00 (c); 0-8166-4169-2, \$19.95 (pb).

University of Texas anthropologist Costa Vargas spent two years living with the residents of the South Central District of Los Angeles, examining the ways in which last century’s economic and social changes have affected the area’s African-American community. The ultimate picture is of a community at odds with itself and the changing world—fighting the police, negotiating the welfare system, dealing with crime and poverty. The community is not as homogenous as some would think, with definitions of black identity and “blackness” altering individual perceptions. On the other hand, the author argues, blackness can be intolerant of difference and change, but “when blackness emanates from political programs and calls for new identities, its emancipatory power is revealed.”

These political programs often gain strength from the vibrant leadership of community women, and the men of South Central must re-examine their own conceptions of “blackness” in order for the programs to flourish. This study is best read in conjunction with more general studies of the nature of “blackness” in contemporary America, including Robin D. G. Kelley’s excellent *Yo Mama’s Disfunktional* (1997) and is recommended for all urban studies collections.

—Anthony Adam
Library, Prairie View A & M Univ.



16-1-0051

Lusane, Clarence. *Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice: Foreign Policy, Race, and the New American Century*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood/Praeger, 2006. 264 pp. ISBN 0-275-98309-9, \$49.95.

Lusane is a scholar of race relations in political contexts, and he makes a major contribution with this analysis of a tectonic shift in

U.S. history. The successive appointments of Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice as Secretary of State placed race and gender firmly within the contexts of foreign policy and international relations. Lusane makes a strong case that neither Powell nor Rice have denied or distanced themselves from their racial heritage and America's racial past.

At the same time, they have not understood racial issues as central to their approaches to policy. Instead Lusane presents their respective developments and transformations in the context of historical and political developments within the Republican Party, and within the specific administration Rice and Powell have served. His analysis is conventionally academic. He interprets Powell and Rice as adherents of the "realist" school of foreign policy, co-opted and constricted by a neoconservative ideology whose assertion of "U.S. exceptionalism" has left the country increasingly isolated. Powell, the black moderate Republican, has been marginalized not only by the Republican Right but also by Rice's increasingly hard-line approach. Lusane concludes, however, that Powell and Rice insist at all levels that they are Americans above all. This clarity escapes or disturbs observers who seek racial considerations in the construction of U.S. policy. At least for the foreseeable future, however, not only blacks but other individuals from marginalized groups who rise to appointive, as opposed to elected, power are likely to identify with and serve the interests of the system that recognizes them.

—Dennis E. Showalter
Colorado College

16-1-0052

Macias, Thomas. *Mestizo in America: Generations of Mexican Identity in the Suburban Southwest*. Tucson: Univ. of Arizona Press, 2006. 200 pp. ISBN 0-8165-2504-8, \$45.00 (c); 0-8165-2505-6, \$19.95 (pb).

This book includes both data and interesting discussions about what it is like to be of Mexican background and living in the United States. The author's approach works out very well, making for a readable text with good insights into the problems and prospects for people of Mexican heritage.

Most of the people the author interviewed are third- and fourth-generation Mexican Americans. What I found most interesting were the interpretations by Macias of what the data means. Being of Mexican background means all kinds of opportunities, especially financial ones, but also some conflict between the two cultures. An individual may feel conflict due to bicultural identification. Or there may be problems associated with what others think of you. One example is that some of the subjects interviewed felt that their American colleagues looked down on them for being Mexicans, despite their high achievement. It would be interesting to determine how much of this is the case, and how much of it is perceived slights that do not really exist. I suspect that often

both are prevalent, with real prejudice leading to heightened perceptions of rejection, both real and imagined.

As the Hispanic population has grown in the United States, there are increased attempts by advertisers to reach them. However, the author warns against using stereotypes of Hispanics or thinking that what is true in general for a group applies to every individual in that group. This book has many insights and does a good job of integrating data (10 tables and two figures) with good discussion of the issues.

—Russell Eisenman
Univ. of Texas–Pan American

16-1-0053

Moghaddam, Fathali M. *From the Terrorists' Point of View: What They Experience and Why They Come to Destroy*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood/Praeger, 2006. 180 pp. ISBN 0-275-98825-2, \$39.95.

Moghaddam, professor of psychology at Georgetown, challenges both the religious and the socioeconomic paradigms of understanding terrorism in this compelling analysis. He focuses instead on societal factors: the cultural conditions giving rise to a morality that supports terrorism and considers it a rational problem-solving strategy.

He begins by describing the complex identity crises generated by globalization. The rapid, continuing disruption of identity with local groups, places, and ideas creates enormous tensions and conflicts. These in turn create what Moghaddam calls a "staircase" to terrorism. He might also have described it as a cattle chute: a path that gets narrower and narrower until the only way forward is into the boxcar. In either case it begins with a growing sense of dissatisfaction. From there some people ask how this unfair system can be fought. That requires a target, and America offers a spectrum of real and constructed reasons for making it the target of hostility. The next phase involves developing an ethic of ends justifying means: the strong against the weak, the righteous versus the evildoers. Then the prospective terrorist moves to a binary worldview of "us against them," with no possible external intervention. Finally comes a conviction that the "heroic" act of terrorism will improve the world not as part of a program or campaign, but in its own right.

Moghaddam is more successful describing this social-psychological process than in developing responses to it. His call for a "contextualized democracy" taking account of particular cultural features is reasonable—convincing, indeed—as he presents it in the context of Shi'a Islam. The problems of establishing the matrices for such a comprehensive reformation remain, however, unaddressed.

—Dennis E. Showalter
Colorado College

16-1-0054

Neslen, Arthur. *Occupied Minds: A Journey Through*

the Israeli Psyche. Ann Arbor: Pluto Press; dist. by Univ. of Michigan Press, 2006. 292 pp. ISBN 0-7453-2366-9, \$80.00 (c); 0-7453-2365-0, \$26.95 (pb).

Raised in Britain in the traditions of secular, anti-Zionist Jewish socialism, Neslen was formerly London correspondent for Al Jazeera.net and the only Jew on its staff. His book is made up of interesting, albeit very brief, interviews he conducted between 2003 and 2005 with 49 Israeli Jews, who represent a broad cross-section of Israeli Jewish society. Neslen admits he expected his subjects would confirm his view of Israel as "monochromatically racist and nihilistic," but what emerged was considerably more complex. The sheer breadth of his subject matter meant sacrificing depth, and some remarkable individuals who could have provided considerable insight into the background and complexities of their society are given short shrift. This also begs the question as to how much of these interviews was edited out.

Although Neslen makes no pretense of writing a scholarly work, he might at least have done his homework. For example, he writes that Sephardic Jews spoke Ladino—"a mix of Latin, Arabic, Greek and Hebrew." In fact Ladino (called Judezmo, Judeo-Espanol or Spanyol by its speakers) is primarily derived from old Castilian Spanish with Hebrew elements. (Greek and Arabic elements are used by speakers in Greece and Morocco.) Some Hebrew and Yiddish words are used incorrectly and/or are poorly transliterated, in both the text and the glossary. As none of the interviewees are Israeli Arabs (who account for 20 percent of Israel's citizens), a more accurate subtitle would have been "Israeli-Jewish Psyche." *Occupied Minds* certainly has potential, but is still a work in progress.

—Elka R. Frankel
Princeton, N.J.

16-1-0055

Prothero, Stephen, ed. *A Nation of Religions: The Politics of Pluralism in Multireligious America*. Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2006. 304 pp. ISBN 0-8078-3052-6, \$49.95 (c); 0-8078-5770-X, \$19.95 (pb).

This well-written book documents a change in the American religious landscape of which many are unaware: the presence of practitioners of Mideastern and Far Eastern religions within the American mainstream as co-workers, neighbors, and even friends. What had been, until little more than 40 years ago, a (self-styled) Christian country (or, at most, Judeo-Christian) is now a land of many religions.

The authors speak for Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, and Sikh traditions, and document the challenges and difficulties faced by each as they strive to be American while avoiding the threat of assimilation and the attendant loss of religious substance.

The Muslim authors note the split personality that re-

sults, but one of them, Omid Safi, suggests that what he calls "progressive Islam" may become the emerging ideal, one made possible by the very size of the Muslim community in the United States and its growing self-confidence.

Buddhism, Hinduism, and Sikhism face other problems, some of them due to the fact that they are more confined to specific ethnic groups—Japanese and Vietnamese for Buddhism, and South Asians for Hinduism and Sikhism. The two latter groups represent smaller though growing minorities and suffer from nonrecognition as religious groups that ask to be taken seriously. Here, too, the lack of links with Abrahamic faiths gives them a foreign flavor that has two sides: It avoids religious assimilation, but makes it difficult to pass on the tradition to increasingly Americanized offspring.

The book documents the mutual influence of American culture and the various religious traditions, and regards the future of American religion as unpredictable.

—John C. Dwyer
St. Bernard's Institute, Albany, N.Y.

16-1-0056

Riverbend. *Baghdad Burning II: More Girl Blog from Iraq*. New York: Feminist Press of the City Univ. of New York, 2006. 240 pp. Introduction by James Ridgeway and Jean Casella. ISBN 1-55861-529-6, \$14.95 (pb).

After reviewing the first book in 2005, I had hoped that this second book by Riverbend would focus on reconstruction. Instead Riverbend again eloquently and disturbingly describes life in the war zone, adding the dimension about which everyone outside Iraq should be informed. It seems that there is not much hope left among ordinary Iraqis about their country's future. What's left is anger, frustration, and a deep disappointment about the outside world. Riverbend explains why Iraqis cannot trust the allied forces or their own government and its police force. The blog entries show the ongoing deterioration of the security situation for civilians and especially highlights the limitations women experience in their daily lives.

Riverbend gives an insightful critique of the 2004 American presidential elections and the Iraq elections in 2005. She takes on the task of understanding and explaining the new Iraqi constitution and its outcomes for Iraqis. While reading her account of house raids and car bombs, one cannot help but ask how many more lives have to be lost before this nightmare will end. And then there is the question of the next generations who have to live with the aftermath of the war in Iraq and abroad. How will they overcome the injustice that has been done? Riverbend gives a voice to Iraqi civilians that one does not hear about in our "sanitized" news. Highly recommended for high school, undergraduate, and graduate students in social sciences.

—Astrid Eich-Krohm
State Univ. of New York, Univ. at Albany

16-1-0057

Salaita, Steven. *Anti-Arab Racism in the USA: Where It Comes from and How It Shapes Politics Today*. Ann Arbor: Pluto Press; dist. by Univ. of Michigan Press, 2006. 232 pp. ISBN 0-7453-2517-3, \$65.00 (cl); 0-7453-2516-5, \$19.50 (pb).

The author (Arab American, Univ. of Wisconsin–White-water) attempts to demonstrate that America, from the days of the Founding Fathers until today, has been a white supremacist, racist, anti-Arab, and Islamophobic establishment. There has been a systematic effort to dehumanize Arabs with insulting epithets, denigrating them in both the media and politics (both Republicans and Democrats) before, and especially after, 9/11, unjustly holding responsible the world's 300 million Arabs for the deeds of a few hundred terrorists, yet supporting Israel's Zionist expansionism and terrorism against the Palestinians.

The book is strongly contradicted by other sources stressing that Arab immigrants and their descendants, as a group, achieved important economic, social, educational, and political progress. Casey Kasem views his coethnics as "grocers and governors, physicians and farmers, Indy 500 champs and taxi drivers, financiers and factory workers, bankers and bakers, senators and salesmen, TV stars and TV repairmen, teachers and preachers, Heisman trophy winning quarterbacks and neighborhood sandlot heroes" (*Arab Americans Making a Difference*, 2004). Arab Americans also gave us two Nobel Prize winners in chemistry, and Dr. Michael de Bakey, inventor of the heart pump (*The Arab American Almanac*, 2004). Other relevant books are *Arab Detroit: From Margin to Mainstream* (2000), and *100 Questions & Answers about the Arab Americans: A Journalist's Guide*, which states, "The differences that separate Arab Americans from non-Arabs can be much smaller than the variations that at times differentiate them from one another." Conclusion: a selectively argued, overpriced book.

—Vladimir F. Wertsman
Rego Park, N.Y.

16-1-0058

Smith, Ted; Sonnenfeld, David; and Pellow, David Na-guib, eds. *Challenging the Chip: Labor Rights and Environmental Justice in the Global Electronics Industry*. Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 2006. 368 pp. Foreword by Jim Hightower. ISBN 1-59213-329-0, \$77.50 (cl); 1-59213-330-4, \$25.95 (pb).

The editors have assembled an impressive collection of articles from leading academics and activists who have a vision of a future where the production, consumption, and final demise of electronic devices will be sustainable for the world community. The subtitle of the book suggests the nature of the vision.

One set of articles discusses the history and the structure of the electronics industry, starting in California's Central Valley and eventually dispersing specialized

manufacturing tasks around the globe. The business priority of highly profitable specialized production of components led manufacturers to seek low-wage workers in settings where worker rights and environmental laws were either weak, weakly enforced, or both.

Another set of articles chronicles the production processes and the impact of worker exposure to toxic chemicals used in the production and cleaning processes, ironically to insure that the product stays clean. One learns that the specialized meaning of electronics as a "clean" industry did not apply to production workers or nearby communities until labor and grassroots organizations demonstrated, pressured, and embarrassed top management to reform their production practices.

Other articles portray the impact of toxic waste and electronic junk on communities around the world, especially poor countries with the weakest environmental laws. The rapid growth in the use of computers, hand-held devices, TVs, and other electronic products in the last 20 years has given rise to massive amounts of electronic junk with its attendant toxic waste.

Challenging the Chip judiciously uses photos, tables, charts, and diagrams with detailed explanations. In addition, the book is well documented with useful appendices.

—Richard Shirey
Siena College

16-1-0059

Tiongson, Antonio T.; Gutierrez, Edgardo V.; and Gutierrez, Ricardo V. *Positively No Filipinos Allowed: Building Communities and Discourse*. Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 2006. 272 pp. Series: Asian American History and Culture. ISBN 1-59213-122-0, \$26.95 (pb).

Attempts by Filipino-American scholars to define themselves in light of the group's history have been going on for 30 years. Research has tried to build a theoretical and critical approach to understanding the Filipino experience in America. Despite the decades of research, published material in Filipino-American studies is still relatively slight. This collection of essays and interviews adds to the corpus of existing works.

The book seeks to "provide an alternative reading of Filipino history in the United States . . . [and] to signify the ways Filipinos endure the burdens and legacies of empire past and present." The 12 pieces are divided into areas addressing imperial legacy of the United States and Filipinos, public policy and law, Filipino-American politics, and Filipino-American identity. Subject matter is fairly diverse: Filipino neighborhoods, youth culture, Filipinos in Hawai'i, the Philippine-American War as genocide, and Filipino Americans in popular music. There are several well-known writers in the book, such as Oscar Campomanes and Rick Bonus, but the bulk of the work is by emerging scholars. The inclusion of these young scholars illustrates new trajectories appearing in Filipino-American studies—issues of identity in the

context of colonialism, assimilation, ethnic studies, and global concerns. Perhaps the most interesting topic is the position, even validity, of Filipino-American studies within Asian-American scholarship.

At times the prose is heavy and hyperbolic, but on the whole this is a thoughtful approach to charting Filipino-American research for the future.

—Joseph McCallus
Columbus State (Ga.) Univ.

Reference

16-1-0060

Hammer, Jill. *The Jewish Book of Days: A Companion for All Seasons*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2006. 440 pp. ISBN 0-8276-0831-4, \$30.00.

Through a theme of seasons and significant signs, the author tries to connect each day of the Jewish calendar to a thought from the Torah, comments from our sages, and various other references. She refers to the climate, the elements of nature, direction of the wind, different angels of G-d, and the divine face or aspect of G-d. Sometimes the chapters are by months and other times by a six-week segment representing the mood of the time period.

Hammer is sincere in her efforts to find significance and relationships among seasons, holidays, and days on the calendar. Unfortunately, the ideas and thoughts are often unclear. The entries for the individual dates often don't directly relate to those dates, but rather to other dates in the same season. The book is heavy and clumsy. In my opinion, it could easily have been condensed into seasons without delineating each day where it doesn't have direct connection. The quotations on the side are good references, but the way they are laid out is often distracting.

From this book, one can gain interesting knowledge and details about characters from the Bible, or the significance of some of the Jewish customs, traditions and rituals. The author also deals with the origins of the names of some of the characters of the Bible. However, the organization is confusing and it would be hard to find a lot of detailed information on any one character. Yet it can be used as a light reference tool or an opportunity to open a page and find an interesting thought that relates Judaism to the elements of nature and seasons of the year.

—Hannah M. Heller
Baltimore, Md.

16-1-0061

Smith, Jessie Carney. *Encyclopedia of African American Business*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 2006. 2 vols., 936 pp. ISBN 0-313-33109-X, \$199.95.

Like a census report, this encyclopedia provides wide and in-depth coverage of African-American businesses, both those currently in existence and those that existed historically. The introduction presents a chronology of events that harks back to pre-slavery days and highlights key factors that led to the current form of business ownership by blacks in America. These key factors include: the important role played by and ultimate demise of the Freedman's Savings and Trust Company, which served the needs of African Americans in the 1800s; Booker T. Washington's 1907 book, *The Negro in Business*, which served as a catalyst for more African-American business owners to start businesses; the role of historically black colleges in educating and serving as a place to nurture future business owners; and the role that modern technology, such as the Internet, is playing in providing blacks with necessary resources and spreading the information needed for business ownership.

The two volumes cast a wide net, covering comprehensive lists of businesses and business owners, ranging from music moguls to computer graphics experts to sororities. Lists at the beginning of Volume I catalog the businesses and/or business owners presented in the volumes in alphabetical order, by occupation, and by the type of business. To determine the format and focus of the book, the editors conferred with African-American business educators, business leaders, corporate executives, researchers, students, librarians, and information specialists. This was an impressive and smart move, since it led to coverage of a variety of topics and product that can be used from multiple perspectives, each one providing its own unique viewpoint. At the end of each article are references to additional information.

The volumes make two key contributions to the field of entrepreneurship in general and African-American business ownership in particular. First, they show that blacks have long embraced business ownership as a means of earning income, beginning with their pre-slavery days in Africa, where they were traders. Later, they enhanced and developed the businesses of their white owners and, once they were free, they started their own businesses as barbers, dressmakers, restaurant and hotel owners, and pottery, furniture, or brick manufacturers. Second, the work looks at information of the business owners from an autobiographical perspective and delves into what propelled them into the arena of business ownership.

The volumes are also dotted with pictorial references, such as a copy of a bank's balance sheet from 1911 and a picture of a black-owned store from 1933, as well as statistical information related to African-American business ownership. All of these contributions allow readers to be catapulted back to that era and give them an opportunity to experience what it was like for black business owners during those times. For those who have long searched for a comprehensive source on African-American business ownership, this is it.

—Andrea Smith-Hunter
Siena College

16-1-0062

Zurick, David and Pacheco, Julsun. *Illustrated Atlas of the Himalaya*. Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 2006. 228 pp. Illus. ISBN 0-8131-2388-4, \$50.00.

This atlas gives a comprehensive look at the entire region encompassing the Himalaya mountain range, not merely the famous areas, and not merely the geographical features.

Zurick's photographs are stunning, but they manage to avoid romanticizing their subjects. They accurately capture not only the breathtaking mountain views but also the wide variety of terrain and cultures contained within the mountain range. People, their daily activities, their animals, and their buildings are just as important to Zurick as the natural landscape. Pacheco's clean, easy-to-decipher cartography shows even more clearly how the mountains themselves create different cultural, as well as physical, boundaries.

Unusual for an atlas, the text reads like a narrative. It gives comprehensive detailed descriptions of each area, illuminating cultural, agricultural, geographic, and climatic elements unique to each area. It is highly informative, and temptingly pleasant to read straight through from beginning to end. The well-written text is divided up into five topical sections: Regional Setting, Natural Environment, Society, Resources and Conservation, and Exploration and Travel.

This atlas, in addition to being a beautiful "coffee table" book, is a superb gateway to getting to know the Himalaya region in depth, as Zurick's 25 years of research on the region will please even academic readers. The book will be enjoyed equally by those familiar with the region and those for whom the book is a first introduction. It is also a fabulous resource for anyone planning to journey to the Himalaya themselves. And for those of us who have already journeyed there, Zurick has taken the photos we can only wish we had.

—Elizabeth Redkey
Siena College

Juvenile

Primary (Gr. P-3)

16-1-0063

Adler, David. *Satchel Paige: Don't Look Back*. San Diego, Calif.: Harcourt, 2006. 32 pp. Illus. by Terry Widener. ISBN 0-15-205585-1, \$16.00.

Leroy Paige was born in Mobile, Alabama, in the year 1906, the seventh of eleven children. As a child of poverty, Satchel basically eschewed formal schooling, concentrating instead on odd jobs to help his family make ends meet. As legend would have it, carrying satchels at the train station led to his famous moniker.

Satchel showed an early proclivity for baseball. His athletic talents bloomed during the years he spent in ju-

venile detention. While still in his teens, Paige became an outstanding pitcher. Unfortunately, he was unable to use his amazing abilities in major league baseball because of racial segregation. Paige was one of the stars, if not the premier star, of the Negro Leagues during the 1930s and 1940s. He frequently moved from team to team and country to country, playing for whoever offered him the most money. In 1948 a year after Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier in baseball, Paige was signed by the Cleveland Indians. At the age of 46 he became the first African American to pitch in a World Series. He was also named the Rookie of the Year. He finished his baseball career in 1965 and was elected to the Hall of Fame in 1971.

This is a marvelous historical biography. Through the eyes of one special person, the book covers how the Jim Crow era thwarted the capabilities of so many African Americans. It's filled with wonderful anecdotes and gives a great feeling for the so-called golden age of baseball.

—Reeves Smith

Madison (Wisc.) Metropolitan School District

16-1-0064

Balouch, Kristen. *Mystery Bottle*. New York: Hyperion, 2006. 32 pp. Illus. by the author. ISBN 0-7868-0999-X, \$15.99.

What if the postman brings you a package containing . . . an empty bottle? Ah, but the bottle that seven-year-old Bailey Balouch receives one day is *not* empty! It contains a magic wind that whisks the boy over seas and mountains, from his home in Brooklyn to his grandfather in far-off Iran. After they've had a good visit, and it's time for Bailey to return home, Baba Bozorg again fills the bottle with wind and love, to bring Bailey back someday.

The author's charming illustrations consist of simple cutout forms superimposed on faint backgrounds of maps: of New York, the world, and Iran, even what look like official records of property ownership in an Iranian village. How often do we think of maps as symbols of what connects us, rather than what separates? Older children can be encouraged to look closely and notice details about these varying ways of depicting spatial relationships.

Inspired by the author's Iranian husband's own story, *Mystery Bottle* is a tribute to the power of love and imagination to conquer time and distance. A similar book is *The Stars in My Geddoh's Sky* (1999) by Claire Sidhom Matze, about an Egyptian-American child's love for his grandfather visiting from Egypt. Both are excellent examples of attractive and sympathetic portrayals of American children of Middle Eastern descent.

—Elsa Marston
Bloomington, Ind.

16-1-0065

Brewster, Hugh. *The Other Mozart: The Life of the Famous Chevalier de Saint-George*. New York:

Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2006. 48 pp. Illus. by Eric Velasquez. ISBN 0-8109-5720-5, \$18.95.

Better known over the past two centuries as the “Black Mozart,” Chevalier de Saint-George (1745–1799) was born of a slave and a French plantation owner in the West Indies, moved to Paris with his parents as a child, and became in succession a renowned fencer, a talented violinist/composer, conductor of the largest French orchestra of the time, and commander of troops in the French Republic’s war with Austria. After these and other gigs, he died in a relative obscurity that has lasted until the recent release of some of his music and the publication of several adult biographies.

Here, Brewster and Velasquez invite younger readers to appreciate his amazing achievements, in a handsomely designed profile that combines a lucid historical narrative and numerous sidebar glimpses of notable contemporaries with illustrations that are either from the eighteenth century, or new paintings featuring a graceful, commanding Chevalier de Saint-George posing with violin, baton, and sword. There is a small amount of invention in the text, for which careful endnotes and a multimedia resource list at least help to compensate. This outstanding tale merits, and should attract, a wide audience.

—John Peters
New York Public Library

16-1-0066

Charles, Veronika Martenova. *The Birdman*. Toronto: Tundra Books, 2006. 32 pp. Illus. by Annouchka Gravel Galouchko and Stephan Daigle. ISBN 0-88776-740-0, \$17.95.

The healing power of a good deed is the theme of *Birdman*, a picture book dedicated to Nabi, a poor tailor of Calcutta, India. After reading about Nabi in the *Toronto Star*, the author traveled to Calcutta to get authentic data for the story.

For seven days Nabi sews baby dresses to shelter and feed his three children. One day, an accident takes his children’s lives. Filled with grief, Nabi wanders in the streets, until he sees for sale cages of illegally trapped birds. Suddenly he has an insight that no magic can bring his children alive, but he can help these creatures. With his last money, Nabi buys a bird, comes to a banyan tree, and sets it free. Watching the free bird, he thinks of his children and feels satisfaction and empowerment. This event begins his return journey to a life of hope and purpose.

Nabi works daily, but on Mondays he is the birdman who goes under a banyan tree and sets birds free. Many witness this strange event. Some call him crazy; others respect him, or momentarily forget their problems. Readers may wonder about the accident’s cause, the wild-bird trade, and the author photo.

Gouache illustrations, colors, symbolism, patterns,

poster cover-jacket, and designs complement the text. The afterword consists of Nabi’s photographs, a half-page author diary, and an author childhood photo. Children can learn through *Birdman* how good deeds can help one feel charitable.

—Parsa Choudhury
Evanston, Ill.

16-1-0067

De La Hoya, Oscar, with Mark Shulman. *Super Oscar*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006. 32 pp. Illus. by Lisa Kopelke. Bilingual (English-Spanish) ed. Spanish translation by Andrea Montejo. ISBN 1-4169-0611-8, \$15.95.

This fictionalized chronicle of a week in the childhood of future professional boxing champion Oscar De La Hoya is written in both Spanish and English.

Whether he’s eating, playing, or sitting in a classroom, Oscar spends his time daydreaming. His dreams are infinitely more interesting than his daily life. In his musings he envisions himself as a dinosaur rider, pilot of a flying saucer, a ballroom singer, and a speedy superhero. When he looks up into the sky he sees cloud formations of a battling turtle and rabbit. Once, while daydreaming, he forgets to give out the lists of food his neighbors need to bring to the community’s picnic. Taking on mythical qualities, Oscar, with the help of some little furry friends, shops, prepares the foodstuffs, provides the entertainment, and saves the day!

I read this book to a group of fourth and fifth graders and asked for their reactions. They liked the detail in the illustrations. At times the pictures are a combination of paintings and photographs. They found the text to be tepid at best. The students said that the best audience for the book would be found in the early primary grades. My take on the book is about the same as the students. However, I’m wondering if the main text is intended to be pedestrian as a contrast to De La Hoya’s Olympian daydreams.

All told, this is a pleasant endeavor. It provides very good examples of contemporary urban Latino culture. In this case I’d say the pictures are worth a thousand words.

—Reeves Smith
Madison (Wis.) Metropolitan School District

16-1-0068

Demi. *Su Dongpo*. New York: Lee & Low, 2006. 48 pp. Illus. by the author. ISBN 1-58430-256-9, \$24.00.

The delightful jacket by Michael Nelson and the flowing and elegant calligraphy by Jeanyee Wong lure us into the life of Su Shih, later styled Su Dongpo, a poet of the Sung Dynasty (eleventh century), beloved by Chinese of all times.

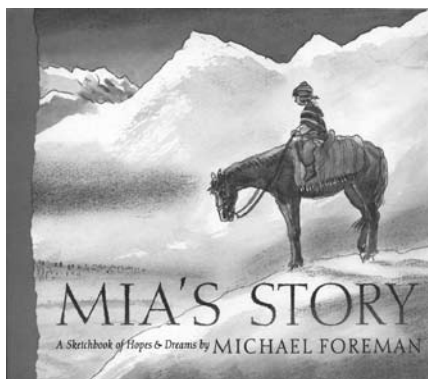
In ancient China, the way to a position in the government, and thus to honor and prestige, lay through a sys-

tem of exams based primarily on the Confucian classics of poetry and history and the writing of essays.

From an early age, Su Shih had a flair for poetry and writing. At twenty, he took the exams and took top place in the country. His life as an official in Sung China brought him both admirers and enemies. Known as a great humanitarian, he was appointed to higher and higher positions, but when corruption appeared, he wrote poems of protest, comparing corrupt officials to “croaking frogs, chirping cicadas, hooting owls, black crows feeding on rotten mice, and monkeys dressed up in coats and hats.” Jealous adversaries contrived to have him exiled to a small island. Several times in his life, following the ups and downs of government, he was exiled and then pardoned, but always continued to write his essays and poetry.

Demi’s illustrations, although beautiful—not exactly abstract, but fanciful and stylized rather than representative—are not always quite in relation to the subject. Detached and indistinct figures float around in an atmosphere of Chinese landscape painting. However, the story of this beloved and well-known classical Chinese poet will be well received.

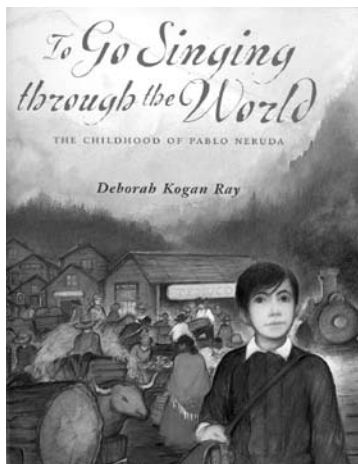
—Ginny Lee
Syracuse, N.Y.



16-1-0069

Foreman, Michael. *Mia's Story: A Sketchbook of Hopes and Dreams*. Cambridge, Mass.: Candlewick Press, 2006. 32 pp. Illus. by the author. ISBN 0-7636-3063-2, \$15.99.

Ray, Deborah Kogan. *To Go Singing Through the World: The Childhood of Pablo Neruda*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2006. 32 pp. Illus. by the author. ISBN 0-374-37627-1, \$17.00.



Two recognized author-illustrators have produced attractive picture books

with South American settings. One is a contemporary story, the other a biography of Nobel laureate Pablo Neruda, drawn from his own writings.

The inspiration for *Mia's Story* occurred when Foreman's bus broke down on a road in the Andes Mountains near Santiago, Chile. A family took in the stranded artist; he observed their poverty and listened to their hopes for a better life. Like the real family on which the book is based, Mia lives in a shantytown “between the big city and the snowy mountains.” Her father searches for treasure—clothing, machine parts, broken toys, and electronics—in the city dump; repairs them, and sells them on the street. When Mia's dog runs away, she goes into the snowy mountains and finds another treasure—flowers that she can grow and sell with her father in the city.

The strength of this book lies in the characters of Mia and her father and the relationship between them, depicted far more powerfully in the watercolor illustrations than in the text. Even without words, Foreman conveys the spirit of people who live in what appear to be rather bleak circumstances. The writing is pedestrian and the plot doesn't hold together as well as it should, but handwritten sidebars, which look as if torn from a scrapbook, do convey social and cultural context in a clever way. The author doesn't identify the location of the story in the text, though details in the illustrations set it in Chile.

As a biography of the great Chilean poet, Ray's book is far more effective in capturing the history, culture, and natural beauty of the remote South American nation sandwiched between the Andes Mountains and the Pacific Ocean. She begins with the sentence, “Pablo Neruda grew up in the Wild West of his country,” and juxtaposes the line from Neruda's memoir, “*Temuco is a pioneer town, one of those towns that have no past.*” These first pages capture the frontier character of southern Chile in the early twentieth century and portray visually the indigenous Mapuche and the immigrants from throughout Europe who made this harsh land their home. Seamlessly integrating her text with the poet's own writings (both poetry and prose, all in italics in the text), Ray conveys young Pablo's extreme shyness and loneliness, the long hours he spent in the vast temperate rain forest, and his empathy with the displaced Mapuche. The reader cheers when a new principal is sent to his town—the poet Gabriela Mistral, who takes an interest in the teenager and opens up the world of literature to him. Following the main text are additional selections from Neruda's poetry, a brief biography of him and of Gabriela Mistral, a time line, and source notes. Maps of Chile and of the town of Temuco, circa 1906, adorn the endpapers.

Children are naturally attracted to childhood biographies of famous people. This one is outstanding.

—Lyn Miller-Lachmann

16-1-0070

Greenfield, Eloise. *When the Horses Ride By: Children in the Times of War*. New York: Lee & Low, 2006. 32 pp. Illus. by Jan Spivey Gilchrist. ISBN 1-58430-249-6, \$17.95.

Greenfield's beautiful new picture book is a poetic recollection of children's experiences in wartime. Each of her simple, understandable, and haunting poems corresponds to a different war. Greenfield starts with ancient China and moves all the way through history to the second Gulf War. On her way, she stops to hit on subjects that may be foreign to elementary school students, such as apartheid, struggles for economic and political justice in Central America, and ethnic and religious conflicts in the former Yugoslavia.

Younger students might get lost in the unfamiliar content of Greenfield's poems were it not for Gilchrist's insightful illustrations. Gilchrist uses mixed media—from heavy paint to newspaper clippings to photographs to pen-and-ink drawings—to portray Greenfield's message. The children she portrays are at once smiling and stoic, on edge and afraid. It is Gilchrist's ability to put life into her art that makes her work masterful; each of her subjects has a personality that jumps off of the page and into the mind of the reader.

Greenfield and Gilchrist are a brilliant team, making difficult content understandable to its intended audience. *When the Horses Ride By* is recommended wholeheartedly for both children and adults. Overall, it is an evocative and poignant book, perfect for use inside the classroom and at home.

—Lily Ann Ringler

Shenendehowa High School, Clifton Park, N.Y.

16-1-0071

Kessler, Cristina. *The Best Beekeeper of Lalibela: A Tale from Africa*. New York: Holiday House, 2006. 32 pp. Illus. by Leonard Jenkins. ISBN 0-8234-1858-8, \$16.95.

Kessler has written several award-winning books about children in one of several African countries as a result of living 19 years on the continent. As a result of her two years in Ethiopia, she has created this story set in an Ethiopian Orthodox Christian community. Honey is a very valued commodity in this country. Almaz, a young girl with dreams, seeks to become the best beekeeper in the area. Although men are typically the beekeepers, the local priest encourages her to try. After three months of perfecting her hives, her persistence leads her to attain her goal of being the best beekeeper. The story raises universal issues such as sex-specific jobs, religious commitment, and setting goals.

To familiarize readers with the importance of this community, Kessler supplements the text. She includes a note about the legend of the founding of Lalibela. In addition, she provides a glossary of Amharic and Tigrinya words, two languages spoken in this area of

Ethiopia. The illustrator complements the text with vibrant colors. Jenkins uses acrylic, pastel, and spray paint to create double-page illustrations. The figures suggest Ethiopian dress and the landscape, a rural community.

Teachers and readers need to be cautioned that this story is not "a tale from Africa" but rather one about a minority population in one country—Ethiopia in north-eastern Africa.

—Patricia S. Kuntz
Madison, Wis.

16-1-0072

Kimmel, Eric A. *The Lady in the Blue Cloak: Legends from the Texas Missions*. New York: Holiday House, 2006. 32 pp. Illus. by Susan Guevara. ISBN 0-8234-1738-7, \$16.95.

I am a native of San Antonio, Texas, home of the Mission Trail, and the stories contained in this collection bring back to me so much of what gives the Southwest its own unique flavor marinated over the last two centuries.

San Antonio is home to a few of the missions mentioned in *The Lady in the Blue Cloak*. These tales take readers back to a time when everything was new and changing—a land where the Native Americans and the new arrivals, the Spaniards, were first beginning to co-exist. They tell of the visits of the Virgin, a robed man of God, and lost loves that inspired the most timelessly gorgeous architectural artifacts. For example, the Rose Window at Misión de San José was built to commemorate the late love of one who thought he was dedicating only a few years to New Spain before his wedding. He would never marry his beloved Rosa, but her memory would live on. It is still a favorite spot of brides and grooms today.

This book would be best suited for children in the upper elementary grades as they begin to discover such topics as spirituality, history, and legend.

—Kena Sosa
Dallas, Tex.

16-1-0073

Krishnaswami, Uma. *Bringing Asha Home*. New York: Lee & Low, 2006. 32 pp. Illus. by Jamel Akib. ISBN 1-58430-259-3, \$16.95.

Kroll, Virginia. *Selvakumar Knew Better*. Fremont, Calif.: Shen's Books, 2006. 32 pp. Illus. by Xiaojun Li. ISBN 1-885008-29-5, \$17.95.

Whitaker, Zai. *Kali and the Rat Snake*. La Jolla, Calif.: Kane/Miller, 2006. 32 pp. Illus. by Srividya Nataraajan. ISBN 1-933605-10-3, \$15.95.

Three picture books written by Asians/Asian Americans about India and Indian Americans invite readers into a cultural journey about Indian customs and offer timeless lessons for readers of all ages, especially ages

four through nine. The first and the last begin with glossaries of Indian words.

Bringing Asha Home, set in the United States, revolves around Arun, an eight-year-old Indian American, and Rakhi Day, a Hindu holiday that celebrates the brother-sister bond. Sisters tie shiny bracelets on their brothers' wrists. Arun's dad's birthplace is India. Now they're eagerly awaiting the arrival of Asha, a baby girl they're adopting from India.

This book and the author notes provide powerful lessons for children about the universal theme of adoption, the brother-sister bond, and the joys of being a family. The story captures Arun's feelings: Rakhi Day; the swing scene when Arun shares with dad his hopes about the newborn baby's riding the backyard swing; Arun's flying paper airplanes from upstairs and downstairs imagining flights from America to India; a telephone call and family conversations about the baby's delayed arrival; family celebration of Asha's birthday in her absence; Arun's dad's travel to India to get Asha; Dad's arrival; and Arun's happy feelings of having Asha at home. The vivid details, lush colors, and authenticity of the illustrations in chalk pastel complement the text.

Kali and the Rat Snake, set in India, revolves around Kali, a snake charmer's son from the Irula people of Chennai, India, and his feelings about being different from others in class. Kali has mixed feelings of pride and embarrassment at his heritage because of his father's reputation and skills. We see his long walk to school through the thorny forests, his mixed feelings of pride and shame during his turn for introductions on the first day of the school, trouble making friends at school, fear of embarrassment while eating fried termites during break time. The highlight of the story focuses on the sudden, scary visit of a snake that breaks through the ceiling during English period. All of Kali's friends run hastily from one side of the room to the other in panicked efforts to escape. Kali shows his bravery. He catches the snake with one hand and puts it in a bag, while the children applaud him. Then some children want him to sit beside him. The book reflects an authenticity that comes with an insider's familiarity with cultural details of the characters, the snake, and the scenario.

Selvakumar Knew Better is a true survival story of a seven-year-old boy, Dinakaran, and his courageous dog, Selvakumar, set when the December 2004 tsunami struck the shores of a southern Indian village. The book also presents tsunami disaster facts. Dinakaran misunderstands his mother's safety instructions and accidentally separates from his family, running back into the house instead of to high ground. Selvakumar's instinct helps him nudge, then drag Dinakaran by his shirt, and flee the house toward the hill where his parents are anxiously waiting for their eldest son. The illustrations, the setting, and author notes teach young readers lessons about human hope in disasters, animal-human bonding, and special animal instincts that can save lives.

All three books are recommended because they portray cultural details in text and pictures with great depth

and authenticity, which comes only from authors and illustrators who have a strong knowledge base and inside perspective.

—Parsa Choudhury
Evanston, Ill.

16-1-0074

Mochizuki, Ken. *Be Water, My Friend: The Early Years of Bruce Lee*. New York: Lee & Low, 2006. 32 pp. Illus. by Dom Lee. ISBN 1-58430-265-8, \$16.95.

Photographically exact drawings in sepia by the sensitive and masterful artist Dom Lee illustrate the early life of Bruce Lee. Accurate to a degree seldom seen in picture books, these superbly catch the flavor of life in old Hong Kong.

"Like flowing water, Bruce Lee could never be still." His parents toured with Hong Kong's Cantonese Opera Company and brought him into films as a baby, later teaching him acrobatics, which came easily for him. In school he was challenged by boys who wanted to fight him. Too many times, his temper got the better of him.

Studying under Yip Man, the best martial arts instructor in Hong Kong, Bruce discovered that gentleness, harmony, and yielding, like water, are the keys to martial arts. His master told him, "You are really being taught the discipline of NOT having to fight." This was a hard lesson for him to learn, because it also involved controlling his temper.

A brief synopsis of the rest of Bruce Lee's life is found on the last page, divided into three short paragraphs: his interracial marriage, his role in the TV series *The Green Hornet*, and his filmmaking and sudden death in 1973. It is hoped that each of these three sections will be turned into companion picture books, making a complete set of four for the life of Bruce Lee, the hero who always fought for the oppressed.

—Ginny Lee
Syracuse, N.Y.

16-1-0075

Nakagawa, Hirotaka. *Sumo Boy*. New York: Hyperion, 2006. 32 pp. Illus. by Yoshifumi Hasegawa. ISBN 0-7868-3635-0, \$15.99.

Here is an action-packed picture book about Sumo Boy, a hero trained as a sumo wrestler. Sumo Boy fights for justice. The story tells of a single event as Sumo Boy rescues a little girl from a bully. After the rescue, they go to the dojo (a place where sumo wrestlers train) for sumo hot pot (traditional Japanese meal that sumo wrestlers eat). Sparse in words (only about 100), but abundant in action, this book will prompt participation and follow-up creative dramatics.

The colorful, stylized illustrations help to tell the story. In addition to the adventure, this book is rich in experiences with Japanese words, foods, and martial arts.

An explanation of terms and four pages of sumo moves appear at the end of the book. Originally published in Japan, this U.S. edition provides a story of derring-do with appeal to young children.

—Mary J. Lickteig
Univ. of Nebraska at Omaha

16-1-0076

Pinkney, Andrea Davis. *Peggony-Po: A Whale of a Tale*. New York: Hyperion/Jump at the Sun, 2006. 32 pp. Illus. by Brian Pinkney. ISBN 0-7868-1958-8, \$16.99.

This is an adventurous romp about a young boy's ambitious quest to capture Cetus, a 60-ton whale. Peggony-Po's father, Galleon Keene, attempted several times to catch the whale until Cetus bit off one his legs. After the attack, Galleon used a hunk of driftwood to carry him to safety. Using the driftwood, Galleon carves out a boy to fulfill his wish for a son to carry on the family trade of whaling.

Feisty and brave, but small, Peggony-Po demonstrates his bravery at the age of four when he captures his first whale. Yet Cetus poses the greatest challenge and fascination for him. One day Peggony-Po bids his father good-bye as he begins the Great Whale Bet of 1847 to chase and capture Cetus. The race is on as the boy and the whale became a "traveling spectacle."

During the great chase Peggony-Po latches onto Cetus and doesn't let go despite multiple challenges along the way. This engaging tall tale is another winning collaboration between the Pinkneys, whose previous works have included *Duke Ellington* (1998) and *Alvin Ailey* (1993).

Brian's striking and dark paintings effectively capture Andrea's engaging tale. The whaling industry was the world's most lucrative industry in 1847 and one of the few industries during that time where both blacks and whites worked side by side, writes Pinkney. This is a fun read.

—Valerie A. Canady
Johnston, R.I.

16-1-0077

Rodríguez, Artemio. *The King of Things/El rey de las cosas*. El Paso, Tex.: Cinco Puntos Press, 2006. 32 pp. Illus. by the author. Bilingual (English-Spanish) ed. ISBN 0-938317-97-0, \$14.95.

Born in the city of Tacámbaro in the state of Michoacán, Mexico, Rodríguez came to the United States at the age of 20 and settled in Los Angeles to begin his life making art. He now runs his own studio and gallery, La Mano, and has become an internationally recognized artist. Rodríguez is probably best known for his highly detailed and evocative prints (woodcuts and linocuts), 12 of which graced Dagoberto Gilb's short story collection, *Woodcuts of Women* (2000).

Rodríguez now brings us this bilingual picture book

inspired by the famous Mexican game of *lotería*, which is similar to the game of bingo but with one major difference: Instead of numbers and letters, the Mexican game uses colorful drawings of various characters.

Riffing on some of the more popular *lotería* images, Rodríguez's book is about a little boy named Lalo, who tells us: "I am three years old. I am so strong, I am so smart, look at what I own!" Lalo then recounts the various items in his kingdom: characters from *lotería* such as the sleepy moon, smiling sun, beautiful mermaid, strutting horse, and others. In each, Lalo plays a part in Rodríguez's version of Mexico's beloved images.

In the end, the elegant simplicity of this book encourages children to be masters of their imagination, the reigning kings and queens of their playtime.

—Daniel A. Olivas
West Hills, Calif.

16-1-0078

Rubin, Susan Goldman, with Ela Weissberger. *The Cat with the Yellow Star: Coming of Age in Terezin*. New York: Holiday House, 2006. 32 pp. Illus. ISBN 0-8234-1831-6, \$16.95.

Ela Weissberger, a Holocaust survivor who spent her youth in Terezin, is the subject of this inspirational narrative. With great detail, the author describes Ela's experiences as she deals with the conflicting feelings of adolescence complicated by an attempt to survive Nazi persecution.

Together with detailed text, the reader can view drawings from children who were in the ghetto of Terezin in Czechoslovakia. Ela describes her relationships with other girls her age who were housed with her in the ghetto. Amid starvation and suffering, the girls made their best efforts to study, write, and develop creative, artistic talents. When the Nazis prohibited electricity at night, the girls helped one another through the darkness by singing songs and sharing stories.

Since the Nazis used Terezin as a model camp to hide their evil acts, the prisoners were allowed some musical instruments. The girls were able to perform an opera called *Brundibar*. The Nazis had planned the opera performance to impress the Red Cross and show that Hitler had given the Jews their own prosperous town. Ela played the role of the cat in *Brundibar*. What the Nazis did not realize was that working on this production would bring the Jewish youth closer together.

While the number of survivors of Terezin is small (only 4,096 of the 10,632 children made it out alive), the youth who lived through it knew that their story would live forever. Ela often speaks to young students, and *Brundibar* is often performed by various groups.

A true testimony to human strength and courage, Ela's story is one that can bring joy and hope to future generations.

—Hannah M. Heller
Baltimore, Md.

16-1-0079

Waldman, Debby. *A Sack Full of Feathers*. Vancouver, B.C.: Orca Books, 2006. 32 pp. Illus. by Cindy Revell. ISBN 1-55143-332-X, \$17.95.

This delightful children's picture book teaches people of all ages the valuable lesson of avoiding gossip and tale bearing. A story that has been passed down through the generations, it is beautifully written and illustrated, with both humor and wisdom.

Yankel, a boy who loves to tell stories about other people, takes advantage of the opportunity to hear gossip as he works in his father's village store. He misconstrues what he hears and repeats parts of conversations to his friends at school. When the rabbi realizes that Yankel is about to leave his duties at the shop to tell more gossip, he assigns the boy a special job. He gives Yankel a sack of feathers and tells him to place one on every person's doorstep. When Yankel returns, the rabbi tells him now to gather these feathers and return them to the sack. As it is a windy day and it's getting dark, Yankel must hurry to find the feathers.

Of course, Yankel cannot find a single feather. When he explains this to the rabbi, the rabbi tells him that this is what happens when he gossips. The stories go wherever they go and cannot be taken back. Yankel understands the true meaning of stories and is ready to repeat this special lesson to his friends.

Although written for young children, this book is also valuable for adults. A great deal of conflict in our society often comes from gossip and tales, words and events being misunderstood and false conclusions being drawn. A valuable addition to any library, this book is highly recommended to people of all ages and walks of life.

—Hannah M. Heller
Baltimore, Md.

16-1-0080

Weatherford, Carole Boston. *Dear Mr. Rosenwald*. New York: Scholastic, 2006. 32 pp. Illus. by R. Gregory Christie. ISBN 0-439-49522-9, \$16.99.

In a collection of free-verse poems, Weatherford's historical fiction picture book extends the children's narrative of African-American education to include the collaboration between Julius Rosenwald, the president of Sears, Roebuck and Co., and one of many African-American communities to build a school. This may have been one of many schools that Rosenwald, in conjunction with various African-American communities, built between 1917 and 1932.

Weatherford's story begins in the class the young female protagonist attends in the local church, discusses Rosenwald's grant, and continues with how her family, church, and the larger community raise funds for their share of the money to build the school on land donated by the church. The entire story is imbued with community-based pride and the belief that education would make a difference in the lives of the community mem-

bers. Christie's signature illustrations, done in gouache and pencil, complement the story splendidly. Used individually or collectively, this collection of poems would be suitable for an early elementary through high school audience.

—Laretta Henderson
Univ. of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

16-1-0081

Weatherford, Carole Boston. *Moses: When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom*. New York: Hyperion/Jump at the Sun, 2006. 32 pp. Illus. by Kadir Nelson. ISBN 0-7868-5175-9, \$15.99.

Prayer is the dominant theme in Weatherford's inspiring story, which chronicles Tubman's first escape from slavery. In an effort to avoid being sent South by her master in chains to work cotton, Harriet prays to God. The very next day, leaving her husband and son, she escapes in the night and treks across swamps and woods. Tubman constantly listens for a sign from God, and, during one conversation prays, "Lord, don't let nobody turn me 'round; I'd rather die than be a slave."

At one point, hearing that patrollers are nabbing runaways, she crouches for several days in a potato hole where she dreams she is buried alive. She also hides in haystacks, attics, and barns. Along the way, she meets up with a farmer's wife who feeds her, and a boatman who rows her upriver. She eventually makes her way to the "Promised Land" in Philadelphia and becomes free. Tubman hears the call from God that she "be the Moses" of her people. She returns South to free her family and others, knowing she is risking her life. To help other enslaved people escape, she memorizes secret routes.

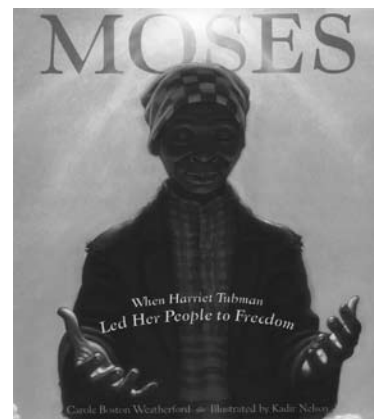
The book, which features a brief foreword about slavery, notes that between 40,000 and 100,000 African Americans escaped to freedom through the Underground Railroad. The author's note reveals more about Tubman's life. Altogether, she went South 19 times to free about 300 slaves. Nelson's striking watercolor paintings successfully capture the mood and tone of Tubman's courageous journey.

—Valerie A. Canady
Johnston, R.I.

Intermediate (Gr. 4-6)

16-1-0082

Bruchac, Joseph. *Jim Thorpe: Original All-American*. New York: Dial, 2006. 276 pp. ISBN 0-8037-3118-3, \$16.99.



Bruchac, one of America's foremost Native American authors, has a gift for popularizing American Indian culture and history without trivializing it. Jim Thorpe was one of America's greatest athletes, excelling in baseball, football, and track, winning gold medals in the 1912 Olympics. Bruchac's *Jim Thorpe* can, in a sense, be said to be a collaboration between the author and Thorpe, as Bruchac attempts to create a sense of intimacy and empathy by writing in Thorpe's own voice.

The book begins with Thorpe looking back from the vantage point of 1912, shortly after he lost his Olympic medals because of an earlier unwitting stint playing for a semi-professional baseball team. This traumatic event has come to define Thorpe's life for many—a tragic story of a fallen hero. This, however, is not the Jim Thorpe revealed in Bruchac's work. Instead, Thorpe is seen to be a modest but determined man who triumphed over adversity many times. Bruchac's Thorpe speaks in a straightforward manner of his early years in Indian Territory (now Oklahoma), his forced attendance at Indian boarding schools, including Pennsylvania's Carlisle School, and his collaboration with his mentor and (according to Bruchac) eventual betrayer, Pop Warner, who saw in Thorpe a great athlete.

Jim Thorpe is intended for middle and high school age readers, but it can be read profitably by anyone interested in Thorpe's life or in the history of sports in the early twentieth century. Included are an afterword by Bruchac that briefly recounts Thorpe's later life, black-and-white photos, and a short bibliography.

—Andy J. Deering
Central Wyoming College

16-1-0083

Campoy, F. Isabel and Ada, Alma Flor. *Tales Our Abuelitas Told: A Hispanic Folktale Collection*. New York: Simon & Schuster/Atheneum, 2006. 116 pp. Illus. by Felipe Davalos, Viví Escrivá, Susan Guevara, and Leyla Torres. ISBN 0-689-82583-8, \$19.95.

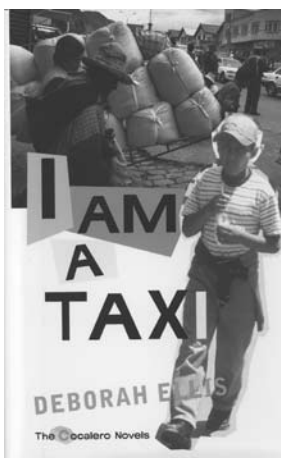
In the introduction to this delightful and informative anthology of Hispanic folktales, the authors remind us that “[w]hen we open our minds and hearts to the words of a story, we enter a world of wonders.” So true. But this is more than a simple recounting of beloved tales handed down one generation to the next. The authors include a generous dose of historical and conceptual context that is, on many levels, as engrossing as the stories themselves.

Right up front, they inform us in the introduction that while most of the folktales in this collection have Spanish roots, many other cultures helped these stories evolve because Spain has been a “cultural crossroads throughout history.” Thus, there are influences from the Greeks, Phoenicians, Basques, Celts, Jews, and on and on.

The authors also include sections on how to begin a

story (“In Grandmother's time . . .”), and how to end it (“ . . . this story entered in a silver trail; it came out a golden one”). At the conclusion of each tale, the authors give a little context, explaining how the story evolved throughout the years and where a version of it first appeared in print. The tales themselves are such fun. There's poor Juan Bobo, who cannot obey simple requests from his mother, which leads to several hilarious results. And there are lessons to be learned from the shenanigans of all sorts of talking animals that seem to be as competitive and vain as humans. This is an entertaining and educational addition to the folktale tradition.

—Daniel A. Olivas
West Hills, Calif.



16-1-0084

Ellis, Deborah. *I Am a Taxi*. Toronto: Groundwood Books, 2006. 176 pp. ISBN 0-88899-735-3, \$16.95.

Ellis, known for her middle-grade novels set in Afghanistan and in the refugee camps of Pakistan (*The Breadwinner*, *Parvana's Journey*, and *Mud City*), has turned her attention to Bolivia. *I Am a Taxi* is the first of what she envisions as a two-book series; *Sacred Leaf* is due out in fall 2007.

Twelve-year-old Diego is a “prison boy.” He and his sister live with their mother in the women's prison, and he visits his father in the men's prison from time to time. His best friend, Mando, lives in the men's prison because his mother is no longer alive. All are incarcerated for drug smuggling, though in the case of Diego's parents, it was a case of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. (Producing the medicinal and to the indigenous people sacred coca leaf is permitted, but manufacturing, transporting, and selling coca paste is not.) The children are valuable to their parents and other inmates because they can leave the prison and work as “taxis,” running errands for the prisoners. After failing to control his little sister, Diego is banned from working as a taxi and his mother is fined. To earn money fast, he runs away with Mando to work in a secret cocaine manufacturing operation.

Ellis depicts in accurate and gripping detail the horrific conditions faced by child workers in the drug trade. Diego is a sympathetic character who draws the reader into his world. The setting is well drawn—from the prison compound to the pits where drugged children stomp coca leaf into paste. The thrilling plot leaves readers wanting more, and hoping this series will last beyond two books.

—Lyn Miller-Lachmann

16-1-0085

Govenar, Alan. *Extraordinary Ordinary People: Five American Masters of Traditional Arts*. Cambridge, Mass.: Candlewick Press, 2006. 80 pp. Illus. with photos. ISBN 0-7636-2047-5, \$22.99.

Govenar's tributes to five elder NEA National Heritage Fellowship winners is more successful at opening windows to diverse American ways of life than in portraying artists at work. Most of the five practice "traditional" (as the title notes) but decidedly unconventional crafts: Qi Shu Fang leads a Beijing-style opera company in New York; Ralph W. Stanley builds small boats in Maine; Eva Castellanoz creates *coronas*, ornate bouquets and tiaras of paper and wax flowers; Dorothy Trumpold is an Amana colony weaver; and before his death as this book was going to press, Allison "Tootie" Montana designed stunning Mardi Gras "Indian" costumes.

Though largely transcriptions of personal interviews, and accompanied by numerous color photos, these profiles seldom impart clear information about the works these artists create; Qi Shu Fang describes her career in China at some length, for instance, but despite her remarks and several pictures of her applying theatrical makeup and costumes, there is no sense of what this style of opera is actually *like*. Similarly, Eva Castellanoz speaks in detail of her family, but only briefly of how she makes *azahares* (orange blossom buds) and other flowers. On the other hand, Tootie Montana's colorful recollections of the Mardi Gras in its violent old days makes compelling reading, as does, in a very different way, Dorothy Trumpold's childhood memories of the Amana Colonies' final years as true communes. Despite the book's weaknesses, readers will come away with new insights into the enduring appeal of vernacular arts and culture.

—John Peters
New York Public Library

16-1-0086

Jones, Traci L. *Standing Against the Wind*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2006. 184 pp. ISBN 0-374-37174-1, \$16.00.

Sent to live with her aunt in inner city Chicago after her mother's imprisonment, shy, bookish Patrice misses the home she shared with her aging grandmother in Georgia. Hope sparks when 13-year-old Patrice learns of a scholarship for African-American children to attend a boarding school in Mississippi. With the encouragement of her principal, Patrice works through each step of the application but agonizes over getting her mother's signature in time. Meanwhile, Patrice agrees to tutor her neighbor Michael, younger brother of her popular classmate Monty, with whom a relationship develops.

The narrative feels too formal for tween readers, and some explanatory statements or characterizations feel unnecessary or overused. (For most of the book, Monty

is described as smiling, smirking, or staring.) The characters lack depth: Patrice is the smart girl; Monty is the bad boy who's been hiding his intelligent, sensitive side; and the families' adults are absent, irresponsible, or imprisoned. The plot advances slowly, and the answers to conflicts are predictable. Perhaps the saving grace is Patrice's likeability and the way she changes through the book, becoming more independent, less emotional, and better able to stand up for herself, thanks in part to a plausible subplot involving two of Monty's old friends who assault Patrice in the stairwell of their building.

—Julie Ranelli
Kent Island Branch Library

16-1-0087

Tchana, Katrin Hyman. *Changing Woman and Her Sisters: Stories of Goddesses from Around the World*. New York: Holiday House, 2006. 80 pp. Illus. by Trina Schart Hyman. ISBN 0-8234-1999-1, \$18.95.

"We forgot the message of Changing Woman, who taught us that all must live together in peace and harmony," writes Tchana, explaining why she chose to collect and re-tell "authentic myths" about goddesses from different cultures. "Changing Woman: A Navajo Deity" is one of ten dynamic goddesses represented. Others are: "Macha, Goddess of Horses" (Celtic); "Sedna, Woman of the Sea" (Inuit); "Kuan Yin" (Buddhist); "Isis" (Egyptian); "Ix Chel" (Mayan); "Amaterasu" (Shinto); "Inanna" (Sumerian); "Durga" (Egyptian); and "Mawu" (Fon people of Dahomey). Each story is prefaced with a paragraph telling about the powers attributed to the goddess. Tchana retells her stories in elegant prose appropriate for the telling of myths, and her extensive sources and notes provide useful background material.

A full-page, vibrant full-color illustration, "created with collage, inks and acrylic paints," is provided for each goddess by the late Trina Schart Hyman. Hyman provides insights into how she chose to represent each goddess and provides details for her choice of collage used—the first time she has used this technique, she explains in her artist's notes. For example, she writes that the goddess Durga, one of her "favorite goddesses in this collection," wears a skirt made from "handmade paper and hippie ribbon" and that her "belt and bodice are from William Morris Wallpaper Reproductions."

The result of this special mother-daughter collaboration is a handsome book that will be of value for school and public library collections.

—Hilary S. Crew
Kean Univ.

16-1-0088

Wulf, Linda Press. *The Night of the Burning: Devorah's Story*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2006. 210 pp. ISBN 0-374-36419-2, \$16.00.

Devorah, an eleven-year-old Jewish girl in Poland in 1920, grows up quickly when she and her family are victims of Cossacks, who, together with the Polish Christians, stage massacres of the Jewish population. As several family members are killed, Devorah and her younger sister, Nechama, are left to survive on their own.

In this narrative, Devorah shares her experiences in the orphanage and the help she receives from philanthropist Isaac Ochberg, who takes a group of 200 orphans to settle in South Africa. Unlike her younger sister, Devorah is shy and unsure of herself. As she grieves the loss of her family, she knows that she must take care of Nechama. While the journey is difficult, the children learn to work together and help one another to cope with the situation.

After they move to the orphanage in South Africa, the two sisters are eventually adopted by two different families. Through the pain of adjusting to her circumstances, Devorah eventually learns to find happiness within herself without the accompanying guilt of having lived while so many of her close family members and friends died.

A work of historical fiction, this story is based on the childhood of the author's mother-in-law. Both educational and enriching, this book is a fascinating testimony to the strength of our youth to live up to the challenges they face. It is also a reminder to the world that no matter how many nations want to destroy the Jewish nation, the Jews will survive oppression and become stronger from their experiences.

—Hannah M. Heller
Baltimore, Md.

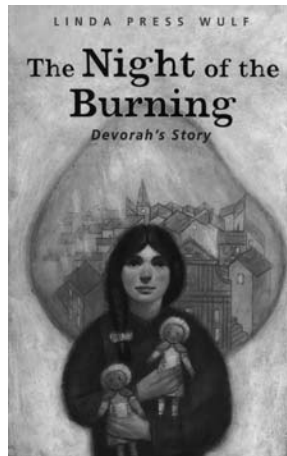
Young Adult (Gr. 7 and up)

16-1-0089

Booth, Coe. *Tyrell*. New York: Scholastic/Push, 2006. 320 pp. ISBN 0-439-83879-7, \$16.99.

Tyrell is an intimate diary of a fifteen-year-old African American youth trapped in the social services network in New York City. His father is in prison; his mother, who lives in denial, expects Tyrell to be the head of the household and breadwinner by himself. Tyrell has a little brother, Troy, whom he protects and cares for more than his mother does.

Tyrell is written in Ebonics, the language of the streets, sometimes referred to as Black English. It takes getting used to. In Tyrell's world, violence is the only way to



settle problems or disagreements with peers, yet he never strikes out at his mother or brother, but rather uses verbal abuse.

Tyrell's sexual mores are exemplary in comparison to those of his peers. He has an African-American girlfriend, Novisha, but his Puerto Rican girlfriend, Jasmine, lives down the hall in the hotel where homeless New Yorkers in the system are waiting for future homes. Although fellatio is not considered sex by Tyrell and his peers, intercourse is considered a very special act, reserved for steady and longer lasting relationships.

Tyrell has only one way to make money—a fraudulent scheme to circumvent the transportation system of New York. Many of his friends are drug dealers; in fact, his mother wishes he were a dealer so he could bring in more money to help his family. Calling on his father's friends and using his father's sophisticated sound system, Tyrell plans a party to earn money to get his family out of the welfare system and into a real apartment. It is not enough, and Troy is taken into the foster care system. The saving grace is that Tyrell, who is a high school dropout, decides that the only way to refocus and reclaim his life is to go back to school.

In addition to its primary audience of teenagers, *Tyrell* should be required reading for social workers in large cities where the system is often divorced from the real needs of the people it seeks to help.

—Plummer Alston "Al" Jones
East Carolina Univ.

16-1-0090

Broach, Elise. *Desert Crossing*. New York: Henry Holt, 2006. 288 pp. ISBN 0-8050-7762-0, \$16.95.

Fifteen-year-old Lucy Martinez is anxious to begin her spring break. She is accompanied by her older brother Jamie and his best friend Kit, a pair of typical mischievous teenage boys. As they embark by car from Kansas to Arizona, something frightening happens along the way. The story, told through the eyes of Lucy, details the life they knew back in Kansas, including the importance of family and friends. As the teens reach New Mexico, Jamie, the driver, hits something and the security of Kansas suddenly seems like a thing of the past. Lucy and the boys are faced with a variety of challenges including decision-making, responsibility, and honesty. Not knowing what it was that they hit on the road that night in the middle of the desert involved the teens in a serious dilemma. On turning around to be certain, the teens discover the body of a teenage girl. Lucy and the boys alert the authorities and soon are in for the scare of their lives.

Desert Crossing is a very well written young adult novel that touches on important themes for this particular age group. Lucy and the boys are faced with adult decisions and the importance of making the right choices. Lessons are learned regarding responsibility and the lethal combination of alcohol and the operation of a motor

vehicle. Other themes are also incorporated, including young adult relationships with family, friends, and boy-friends/girlfriends. In all, *Desert Crossing* offers valuable advice, which makes it a great addition to any young adult collection.

—Will Takach
Albany (N.Y.) Public Library

16-1-0091

Darrow, Sharon. *Trash*. Cambridge, Mass.: Candlewick Press, 2006. 148 pp. ISBN 0-7636-2624-4, \$16.99.

Who would think that rummaging through mounds of smelly trash would one day pull a teen out of depression? Yet this is precisely what happens. *Trash* is a dark story set to poetry about two siblings who are shuffled between foster parents and the older sister with whom they want to live, but the system will not allow it. At one foster home, Sissy and Boy are forced to look through trash for items that can be sold by the host family at the local flea market. Boy's gift of art is the one high point that brings him joy in a life that is otherwise pretty horrific. Art keeps him in school when he would rather drop out. Art leads him to graffiti and he becomes a tagger. It is during an attempt to tag a water tower that he falls and dies. This leaves Sissy grief-stricken without anyone in her life to love. Coincidentally, it is art that helps her heal and the medium is . . . trash.

Trash has a strong resiliency message that communicates this "self-righting" tendency of humans to overcome even the most challenging situations. Teens will love this book full of hope. Teens who are foster children or grief-stricken will find *Trash* especially uplifting.

—Jami Jones
East Carolina Univ.

16-1-0092

Divine, L. *Drama High: The Fight*. New York: Dafina Books, 2006. 200 pp. ISBN 0-7582-1633-5, \$14.95 (pb).

In this new series, Divine, a former high school English teacher, hopes to fill a literary void for African-American teens that *Sweet Valley High*, the *Babysitters Club*, and *Gossip Girls* fills for whites, and the *Roosevelt High* series fills for Latinos. *The Fight*, the first book in the series, is about the bickering that can occur when two girls fight over the same guy. Jayd, the ex-girlfriend, is a sassy and smart teen who comes woefully close to being drawn into a spat by two female students who aren't half as accomplished as she is. Besides being smart, what Jayd has going for her is a thoughtful storytelling grandmother who helps the teen put her life into perspective.

Library collections wishing to emphasize diversity should consider this series. An additional two books in the series—*Second Chance* and *Jayd's Legacy*—will be published by winter 2007.

—Jami Jones
East Carolina Univ.

16-1-0093

Gratz, Alan. *Samurai Shortstop*. New York: Dial, 2006. 280 pp. ISBN 0-8037-3075-6, \$17.99.

The year is 1890 when sixteen-year-old Toyo begins his first term at Ichiko, a prestigious boarding school in Tokyo, Japan. The witnessing of his uncle's recent *seppuku* (ritualized suicide) troubles his thoughts. Life is not easy for first-year students. Upperclassmen conduct cruel initiation ceremonies called storms where they invade the dormitory rooms at night. The older students also carry out the clenched fist ceremony (cruel beatings) to those caught breaking the school rules.

This is a time of cultural transition from the ways of the samurai to the period known as the Meiji Restoration. Toyo seems willing to embrace new ideas of the equality of all and the opening of Japan to the West, but his father resists.

One aspect of the Western world that Toyo loves is *besuboro* (baseball). Toyo's father considers baseball a waste of time and is intent on training Toyo in *bushido*, the way of the warrior. In the end, Toyo comes to discover how samurai values affect and improve his baseball skills, and Toyo's father develops an appreciation for baseball.

Here is a young adult novel that explores both the conflicts of transitions in culture and generational conflicts between father and son. It provides lots of baseball action as well. As you read it, you have a chance to walk for a time in Japanese culture and history.

Helpful historical information is provided in the epilogue and the author's notes, and a bibliography is also included.

—Mary J. Lickteig
Univ. of Nebraska at Omaha

16-1-0094

Laird, Elizabeth, with Sonia Nimr. *A Little Piece of Ground*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2006. 224 pp. ISBN 1-931859-38-8, \$9.95 (pb).

Karim, like many 12-year-olds, plays computer games, spars with his siblings, and above all, adores soccer. His relatively well-off family sounds pretty "typical"—except that they are prisoners in their own home. That home is in a Palestinian city under Israeli military occupation for nearly 40 years. Curfews, when a kid can get shot just by standing at a window, are imposed by the Israeli army at any time.

Laird's story is simple in outline. Karim, with an equally soccer-crazy refugee kid and another friend, clears rubble from an abandoned patch of ground, to make a playing field. Life looks brighter—until the army again imposes curfew. Unable to reach home in time, Karim has to hide in an abandoned car that the boys have made into a hideout, virtually under the soldiers' noses. The theme of the "little piece of ground" runs throughout: not only the boys' longed-for soccer field, but the homeland that Palestinians are determined to

hold on to, despite every effort to drive them out.

When first published in Britain, in 2003, this book aroused some objection on the grounds that it does not portray Israelis in a favorable light: It is “one-sided.” Laird replied that it’s the story of a boy who sees Israelis only as military oppressors. There are indeed horrifying scenes that fuel his anger—his father is brutally humiliated in public, militant settlers shoot at Palestinian villagers and destroy their olive groves. Leading British writers vigorously defended the book and the author’s right to tell a story from the viewpoint of one who suffers mistreatment. Despite the book’s fine reviews and awards, however, U.S. mainstream publishers steered clear of it.

This very welcome edition is by a nonprofit, progressive publisher, who plans to promote it widely to schools. It will be appreciated by students from middle through high school, both for the perspective it provides on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and because it’s a gripping, lively, suspenseful, very “human” story.

—Elsa Marston
Bloomington, Ind.

16-1-0095

Na, An. *Wait for Me*. New York: Putnam, 2006. 170 pp. ISBN 0-399-24275-9, \$15.99.

Children of a Korean-American family are pushed so hard to bring to fruition their parents’ dreams that they turn to lying and cheating on exams to ensure good grades. Mina works the cash register at her family’s laundry business and steals small amounts of money to squirrel away for a future nest egg. She dreams of escaping the oppression of home life of violent yelling and the persistent demands of an overprotective mother who loves by grasping too tightly.

Mina has also compromised herself with Jonathan, a family friend, in return for his fixing a phony transcript for her. Her life seems to be a series of lies. She hates it, but doesn’t know how to turn herself around and bare the truth to her domineering mother. When Ysrael, a young Mexican migrant worker, is hired to help in the laundry, he is accused of stealing. Mina must decide whether to confess her part.

Some of the problems of this novel are common to Asian-American families. Out of love and a desire for a better life, parents push and the children perform like show dogs. Resenting the parental thumb, they attempt to coordinate the American side of their lives outside the home with the still Asian traditions and expectations within.

This is a novel for teens, told with a very teenage voice. In alternate chapters, Mina, the teenage sister with another year of high school to go, speaks in the first person, past tense, and Suna, the younger, hearing-impaired sister, is spoken of in the third person, present

tense. It is unclear whether this device lends any understanding, insight, or beauty of writing.

—Ginny Lee
Syracuse, N.Y.

16-1-0096

Ruby, Lois. *Shanghai Shadows*. New York: Holiday House, 2006. 284 pp. ISBN 0-8234-1960-6, \$16.95.

Shanghai Shadows allows the reader to explore China early in the period of Japan’s takeover of the country and when Austrian Jews were still able to escape Austria. Ilse’s family must move from a somewhat comfortable apartment into a crowded ghetto in Shanghai, where everyone suffers under Japanese occupation. When Ilse’s brother joins an underground movement, the family finds itself in further danger—from both political repression and the parents’ own secrets.

Although this book explores some important history of World War II that few people know about, some aspects of the book make it one that I cannot recommend for younger than high school. Ruby explores adolescent feelings in frank language, including the discomfort of finding out that her mom was married previously and never divorced. One thinks of this as a contemporary phenomenon; young readers may be surprised at its occurrence in a middle-class European Jewish family of the early twentieth century. Ruby’s coverage of this topic, and the stigma such a situation would place on children in those days, makes the book more suitable for older readers who are ready to address this subject matter.

Despite this caveat, the author has researched her topic well. She allows readers to experience the difficulties of life in China during this time in addition to covering a little-known aspect of the European Holocaust.

—Miriam Guttman
Mt. Mary College, Milwaukee, Wis.

16-1-0097

Serros, Michele. *Honey Blonde Chica*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006. 280 pp. ISBN 1-4169-2164-8, \$14.95.

The young adult genre is new to Serros, who has been a writer for the George Lopez show and also written adult fiction before undertaking *Honey Blonde Chica*. Her previous novels, *Chicana Falsa: And Other Stories of Death, Identity and Oxnard* and *How to Be a Chicana Role Model* have portrayed the many facets of Latina life and coming of age in a clipped, breezy style that is perhaps deceptively simple. Her new novel goes further and wider by contrasting two sides of the Latino identity—the native Mexican versus the homogenized Californian—and, in the process, manages to debunk some myths about what Latinas are all about by proving that stereotypes are usually just that; that they fall short of

the complexity and reality of people's lives.

Honey Blonde Chica is a crossover novel about a group of teenage girls in conflict with some girls who have just moved to California from Mexico City. The main character is Evie Gomez, an upper-middle-class Oxnard girl. The story informs us that not all Latinos are poor laborers, undocumented and struggling, and that there is a real thriving upwardly mobile Latino middle class with its own set of daily challenges and identity crises. Serros also ventures into the potentially dangerous waters of exposing the animosity and discord that has long existed between new Latino immigrants and Latino natives. She does it with clarity and compassion, without taking sides, and in the end transcends ethnicity and place and leaves us to reflect on the human condition.

—Himilce Novas

16-1-0098

Sheth, Kashmira. *Koyal Dark, Mango Sweet*. New York: Hyperion, 2006. 248 pp. ISBN 0-7868-3857-4, \$15.99.

Koyal Dark, Mango Sweet should be obtained by libraries because of the unavailability of other books in the genre. This book is one of the few in the slim selection of books about growing up female in India for the American market. It is a story told by Jeeta, a 16-year-old girl, who lives in current-day Mumbai (formally Bombay). Jeeta, through her adventures, introduces many aspects of Indian culture, including a mother who would like to find Jeeta and her two older sisters suitable husbands sooner rather than later.

When the book arrived on our doorstep it looked delicious, like freshly made mango lassi on a hot day. An identifiable Indian influence graces this very pretty book inside and out. The author has true storytelling ability and is able to transmit on the written page evocative pictures of a distant land; unfortunately this is well past the labored place-and-character-setting chapters. The eighth word, "thaga-thiya," in the first chapter required a trip to the glossary, which stopped our nine-year-old daughter and a bit of bribery ensued to get her to finish the book. My Indian husband felt that even though the book is set in current-day Mumbai, the writing gives an uncomfortable impression that it is really about growing up in Bombay in the not-so-recent past. I was disturbed that this romantic coming-of-age novel had to include domestic abuse. Although this household had some issues with the book, overall it is felt that Jeeta, the likable young Indian protagonist, should be allowed to tell her distinctly Indian story to the young women of America.

—Kate Kohli
Bloomfield College Library

16-1-0099

Smelcer, John. *The Trap*. New York: Henry Holt, 2006. 176 pp. ISBN 0-8050-7939-4, \$15.95.

In this densely crafted, award-winning book there are four stories for the price of one. The stories create a Northwest coast weave of a perpetual present where myth and reality, the past and the future, blend and merge into a creation that represents indigenous experience across time in place. The site is the Northern territorial home of the Athabaskan People, where moose and sea lion hunting stories provide cultural scripts for old and young, where courageous deeds transcend gender and specie. Themes of grand proportion match the vastness of the land, the treacherousness of life alone in the snow.

Johnny Least Weasel, orphaned in family relationships fractured by booze and other cultural disjunctions, lives alone in the village. Johnny embraces the old ways but also contemporary realities as he looks to education for a future. Johnny's grandfather has given him grounding. Johnny is respectful, loving, and caring. The old man has gone on a hunting trip and does not return because he is caught in a grizzly trap. After much anguish Johnny sets out to find the old man, reversing the relationship. On the way, a grizzly bear crosses his path. His dog sacrifices himself to save Johnny. In the meantime the old man comes to terms with his entrapment and waits for someone to come as the wolves circle. It becomes a race between Johnny and the wolves that sense the opportunity. The story is a portion of life, not pretty, but real and valuable.

—Marlene Atleo
Univ. of Manitoba

Audio

16-1-0100

Nuru Kane. *Sigil*. London, U.K.: Riverboat, 2006. CD. 62 minutes. \$16.98.

How do you capture ecstasy in the recording studio, and then blend it with utter coolness? How can an album sound so clean yet still deliver spontaneous, unrestrained, raw feeling? How does one make the Malian n'goni, Arabic 'oud, Moroccan gimbri-bassline and bluesy electric guitar sound like they were always meant to play together?

All this is achieved on this uplifting and deep album, the result of a truly successful world music fusion project. Nuru Kane, the Senegalese-born musician now living in Paris, has played and sung with many groups ranging in style from Mbalax to Afro-funk, reggae, jazz, the blues, and beyond. His fresh sound is bolstered by several talented musicians enlisted for the recording project, creating unusual combinations of traditional instruments and sounds. Everything is given a twenty-first-century shine by studio-savvy recording engineer and producer Martin Swan, who also adds some beautiful and very creative violin lines to a few of the tracks.

Perhaps it's the fact that all the vocals are first takes,

not overdubs. Perhaps it's the tremendous musical talent, or the great sound engineering, or a little magic, or all of the above. Whatever the formula, this album is enjoyable on all levels, and I hope we will see more music and concerts from Nuru Kane in the future.

—Dena El Saffar
Bloomington, Ind.

Video

16-1-0101

Lyon, Raphael and Ingoglia, Andrés. *i: Argentina, Indymedia, and the Questions of Communication*. Buenos Aires, Argentina: i Films (www.ithefilm.com), 2006. DVD. 83 minutes. Color. Available in English, Spanish, German, and Italian. \$20.00.

In the mid-1990s, Zapatista insurgent strategist Subcomandante Marcos issued a statement calling on revolutionaries around the world to establish independent media collectives to challenge the version of the truth promulgated by the global corporate media. As made apparent in the 1999 uprising at the meeting of the World Trade Organization in Seattle, these Independent Media Centers were on the front lines of opposition to neoliberal economic policies and political structures.

Lyon and Ingoglia chronicle the establishment of the Independent Media Center in Argentina in 2000—the first in South America—and place it in a larger context of media activism and Argentina's own turbulent history. The video is divided into four parts: microscope, telescope, mirror, and “i,” reflecting the multiple goals of the Indymedias. These are to document local events (such as bringing perpetrators of the Dirty War to justice and getting banks reopened following the 2001 financial crisis), to link those events to a broader movement against globalization (such as peasant struggles in Brazil and the 2001 antiglobalization protests in Genoa), to allow ordinary people to see themselves reflected in the media, and to give ordinary people tools to create media—in other words, to “be the media.”

While they sometimes run on too long, discussions within Buenos Aires's Indymedia collective offer valuable (and sometimes contradictory) theoretical perspectives. The footage in the streets of Buenos Aires is vibrant and funny, the high point of the film, as demonstrators smash ATM screens to get at their money, nail dead chickens to signs, expose a torturer to his neighbors, and break into a shuttered bank to set up their underground media center. All in all, this is a clearly presented and important introduction not only to the purposes and goals of the Indymedia movement but also to the challenges of creating grassroots media collectives in the global south.

—Lyn Miller-Lachmann

16-1-0102

Tsutsumi, Rachel. *Far from Home*. New York: Women Make Movies, 2005. DVD/VHS. 40 minutes. Color. \$195.00; \$89.00 (public libraries).

This is a documentary film about Kandice Sumner, a black high school student from Boston who dreams of going to college. Kandice participates in the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO), a voluntary school integration program in Boston, and attends school in Weston, a Boston suburb. Overall, the documentary focuses on school segregation and how individuals' preconceived notions of race have prevented the creation of a truly integrated public school system. The documentary offers glimpses of Kandice while she negotiates between the predominately black inner-city neighborhood she lives in, and the predominantly white upper-class school she attends. In shadowing Kandice, the documentary challenges racial stereotypes and the preconceived notion that blacks will fail academically. Throughout, viewers are confronted with a Kandice who feels more comfortable sitting with those who look like her, because they know where she comes from and where she is trying to go, than her white classmates who tend to hold stereotypical views of blacks. By the end of the school year, Kandice is accepted at Spelman College, and in choosing to go to Spelman, she feels that she is going home and hopes to discover her black roots.

The audio and video quality of the documentary is good, though there are a few instances where dialogue is lost and the picture is grainy. Additionally, viewers unfamiliar with the acronym METCO will have to wait until the documentary is half over before they finally learn what METCO is. This documentary is recommended for all current and prospective teachers, particularly those who work with black students, as well as teachers interested in race relations.

—Andrew Krakat
Siena College

