

**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, sciences social sciences, reference, travel, 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.

## Literature

### General Anthologies

#### 18-3-0235

Sadiqi, Fatima; Nowaira, Amira; El-Kholy, Azza; and Ennaji, Moha, eds. *Women Writing Africa: The Northern Region*. New York: Feminist Press of the City Univ. of New York, 2009. 430 pp. ISBN 978-1-55861-588-5, \$75.00 (cl); 978-1-56881-589-2, \$29.95 (pb).

The final volume of the monumental project Women Writing Africa has been completed. Initiated by the Feminist Press in 1990, the series opened with a collection of writings from Southern Africa, then continued with West Africa and the Sahel and East Africa. All are important, fascinating, and informative contributions to the study of writing by women.

*The Northern Region* volume began nine years ago. Painstaking collecting, sorting, translating, and annotating of thousands of pieces has resulted in a unique volume representing women and cultures often unknown in the Western world.

The book comprises remarkable breadth, beginning with "The

Ancients" of fifteenth-century BCE to fourth century CE. It extends from Pharaonic Egypt through the Greco-Roman civilization and the introduction of Islam in the seventh century, carrying into the eighteenth century and then to colonization in the nineteenth. The majority of selections are from the twentieth century, once literacy became widespread, but the writings continue into the twenty-first (or "The New") century. Multiple genres are represented, beginning with fragments from hieroglyphics, songs, letters, and anonymous documents regarding women's lives. Gradually, "creative" writing enters, with fiction, essays, personal reflections, and poetry.

An extensive introduction is a textbook in itself. Topics regarding North Africa include history, politics, culture, and religion, and a multitude of issues relevant to women's lives, such as the veil, literacy, female genital mutilation, prostitution, and trafficking. Especially noteworthy is the importance of names to a woman's personal identity (50). While most selections are short—from a partial page to a few pages—a few are longer, particularly in the later sections, such as pieces by Assia Djebar of Algeria and several Egyptian women, including the well-known activist Nawal el Saadawi.

This book is an invaluable resource for everyone.

Anne Serafin  
Newtonville, Mass.

#### 18-3-0236

Sweeney, Chad, ed. *Days I Moved Through Ordinary Sounds: The Teachers of WritersCorps in Poetry and Prose*. San Francisco: City Lights, 2009. 240 pp. Foreword by Martin Espada. ISBN 978-1-931404-10-5, \$17.95 (pb).

WriterCorps, an offshoot of Americorps, brings teachers to students who are silent at the margins: recent immigrants, troubled youth, prisoners, low-income seniors, children in poverty. Beginning in the mid-1990s, accomplished writers of many American hues and orientations actually got paid to run workshops; most say they gained as much as their students. "Watching their confidence grow, I became inspired to start tearing the cloaks off my own writing," noted Livia Kent. While students and teachers had distinct roles, they often had experiences in common. "Like many of my students, I went to school with stories that I didn't know how to tell," commented Uchechi Kalu. "The process by which creativity transforms pain compels me," says Kim Nelson, who helped incarcerated youth glimpse their potential.

Some 50 writers in the San Francisco, Washington, D.C., and Bronx WriterCorps programs reflect on teaching and its effect on their writing, then offer a sample of their own poetry or prose. Reconciling dual identities, honoring ancestors, shouting out, coming out, or just learning to listen are treated with vibrancy,

wisdom, and style. The final entry is that of Chad Sweeney, the anthology's editor. His poem "The Piano Teacher" advises that a music box can explode if over-wound: "playing its song all at once./ The practice is to unwind the song slowly./Think of this when you touch the key of C."

Gail Hall Howard  
Norwalk (Conn.) Community College

### 18-3-0237

Yang, Jeff; Shen, Parry; Chow, Keith; and Ma, Jerry, eds. *Secret Identities: The Asian American Superhero Anthology*. New York: The New Press, 2009. 192 pp. Illus. ISBN 978-1-59558-398-7, \$21.95 (pb).

Asian superheroes—an oxymoron? That's the premise of *Secret Identities*. Very few characters are Asian American even though some of the top artists and writers in comics are, and a recurring theme of this anthology is Asians as superheroes in disguise. They are seen as Clark Kents, never as Superman. Although there have been a few exceptions, such as Bruce Lee or Dean Cain (TV *Superman*), a common perception is that Asian Americans—especially males—are nerds. Even when they got some recognition, it was as Kato and not the Green Hornet.

Editors and contributors negate old stereotypes. Some of the comics deal deliberately with the secret identity theme. "Heroes without a Country," based on the real 100 Battalion/442 Regiment, an army unit that produced 21 Medal of Honor recipients, is about Japanese Americans with superpowers battling Nazi superheroes. "9066," referring to the executive order that led to the wartime incarceration of Japanese and Japanese Americans, is about a Japanese-American superhero who is rejected by his colleagues after the Pearl Harbor attack and is reduced to being another of the 120,000 incarcerated.

Comics range from historical (John Henry and Chinese laborers building the transcontinental railroad) to the contemporary (one even featuring President Obama). An online teacher's guide is available for historical and cultural background, making this an interesting addition to high school interdisciplinary studies.

Al Hikida  
Seattle Central Community College

## Fiction

### 18-3-0238

Abdullah, Shaila. *Saffron Dreams*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: Modern History Press, 2009. 248 pp. ISBN 978-1-932690-72-9, \$32.95 (cl); 978-1-932690-73-6, \$19.95

How often are we reminded of 9/11, and of America's pain and loss? What of Muslim Americans and their loss in those attacks? This novel centers on Arissa, a Pakistani woman who moved to New York City as a newlywed. Her husband is a victim of the World Trade Center attacks, and she is a victim of the hate crimes

that occur in the aftermath. In the opening chapter, she is standing at the edge of a pier on the Hudson River debating whether to throw herself in, pregnant and newly widowed, or just her *hijab* (scarf), which brings her unwanted attention. With the help of the wind, she unties the scarf and lets it go.

Arissa's journey from soul-numbing grief to health and wholeness is engaging and emotional. The quiet strength offered by her in-laws brings Arissa back from the edge of despair. They encourage her to complete her late husband's unfinished book, which, though difficult, becomes the path to healing.

This story is flecked with the orange-red color of its namesake. From the crimson hue of sunrise to the wedding flowers and henna designs twirling around her arm and wrist, to the fire that consumes her beloved husband, saffron is a theme that brings it all together.

Dena El-Saffar  
Bloomington, Ind.

### 18-3-0239

Arellano, Robert. *Havana Lunar*. New York: Akashic Books, 2009. 200 pp. ISBN 978-1-933354-68-2, \$14.95 (pb).

In this Cuban noir mystery, Arellano engages the reader immediately by quickly developing his characters into unique individuals, both good and bad. Arellano unfolds a mystery between Dr. Mano Rodriguez, a caring and devoted physician, and Julia, a prostitute who lands in legal trouble while implicating a somewhat naïve Mano into her crazy life. *Havana Lunar* is not bashful in its presentation of Cuba and its seamy side. Arellano is savvy and able to show caring families living in the country welcoming others for dinner while also introducing the reader to the grittier side of city life. The detail that the reader experiences throughout the ordeal is impressive, and the journey becomes even more twisted as Mano becomes the prime suspect. Readers will be captivated by how the mystery unravels and who comes to Mano's rescue, and many will be surprised, but not disappointed, in the story's resolution.

Readers come to understand the turmoil and basic neediness of daily life for citizens of Cuba along with the impact of government regulations and control on society. Not only are people starving and trying to have occupations that are legitimate, but they are also in need of human connections. Arellano is masterful in weaving both the physical and the emotional into a story that everyone can relate to in some way, regardless of geography and politics.

Brenda Yates Habich  
Ball State Univ.

### 18-3-0240

Chang, Henry. *Year of the Dog*. New York: Soho Press, 2008. 240 pp. ISBN 978-1-56947-515-7, \$24.00.

A sequel to *Chinatown Beat* (2006), *Year of the Dog* finds New York Police Detective Jack Yu on the job a precinct north of his former beat, now covering the East Village and Alphabet City,

though much of the action (set during the 1994 holiday season) does take us back to Chinatown. The subtitle, *A Detective Jack Yu Investigation*, may imply a mystery novel, but Jack's investigations are mainly of unconnected, mundane though still exceedingly grim crimes, ranging from murder-suicide in a fancy Astor Place condo to the wanton slaying of a delivery boy in a derelict tenement. Much of the novel follows not Jack but various underworld types, giving us the viewpoints of a local gangster chief (Jack's boyhood friend), various other thugs, a dying bookie, and a Hong Kong triad boss checking on local operations, as well as a desperate young woman immigrant. A number of these characters do come together in a shootout that forms the climax of the novel and is the occasion for Jack to do his sharpest detecting.

Chang is best in his evocations of the Chinatown milieu during a time when Fukienese immigrants were crowding the older Cantonese residents, and all, from cops to crooks, are sneered at by racist Whites and Blacks. The tenements, warehouses, steamy tofu shops, take-out food stands, slushy street corners, and other crumbling structures during a gray, grimy New York winter are vividly rendered. But the characters are pretty standard: the world-weary (though still young) detective, the sleazy criminal minds. Chang does seem to know his territory well and peppers his text with Chinese slang and information on scams and gang hierarchies, though his translations and explanations position the reader as non-Chinese tourists in this realm, almost slumming in a relentlessly noirish world.

Joseph Milicia  
Univ. of Wisconsin—Sheboygan

### 18-3-0241

Cleave, Chris. *Little Bee*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009. 271 pp. ISBN 978-1-4165-8963-1, \$24.00.

Moele, Kgebetli. *Room 207*. Cape Town, South Africa: Kwela Books, 2006. 238 pp. ISBN 10-0-7957-0234-5, \$21.95 (pb).

Two new novels dramatize a range of lifestyles and issues present on the African continent.

*Room 207* is a first novel by South African Kgebetli Moele. It creates a profile of Hillbrow, a section of contemporary Johannesburg, which has become legendary for dissolute lives, poverty, and drugs. This novel, however, like the earlier *Welcome to Hillbrow* by Phaswane Mpe, depicts a place of intense energy and fierce loyalties among friends and family members.

*Room 207* is episodic but includes memorable vignettes, focusing on a group of six young men sharing space in one of Hillbrow's countless rooming houses. Though they are often penniless and seem to lack direction, the narrator characterizes them as continually "hoping and dreaming" (34). The writing is lively and appealing, written in a conversational tone but still tight and controlled. Humor redeems the often-grim reality of their lives, and the author has particular fun with verbs: people go "Johannesburging about" or "Hillbrowing."

*Little Bee* is a wholly different type of novel. Set primarily in England, it is written by an English journalist who spent his early childhood in West Africa and later visited a British retention camp

for illegal immigrants. After much research, he has written a novel focused on a young Nigerian woman who escaped attacks, torture, and probable death in her home country.

Important political and historical background emerges gradually regarding the lust for oil in Nigeria in the latter part of the twentieth century. Villages were destroyed, families devastated, people harassed, hounded, and killed to prevent them from reporting the atrocities. This was one of the many hushed-up scars on the African continent, with information only leaked out periodically by journalists or local activists, such as Ken Saro-Wiwa—all of whom risked reprisals or often death.

Little Bee is the chosen name of the primary narrator of the story. She has spent two years in a British immigration detention center—commonly referred to as a "concentration camp"—before being released more or less accidentally into the country. Without papers, she seeks out a White British family whom she had met, also quite accidentally, on a beach in Nigeria.

The narration then alternates between Little Bee and Sarah, the wife of a well-known journalist who had just committed suicide. The story intertwines the lives of these people, plus Sarah's four-year-old son, Charlie, who dresses in a Batman costume and channels all the tales he has learned about the Batman story.

While many of the situations and connections between the characters can seem improbable or forced, the novel clips along at a compelling pace. The writing is effective with vivid geographical descriptions and trenchant observations about the characters' thoughts and emotions. Details regarding life in the culture of West Africa, past and present, are fascinating. When juxtaposed against contemporary life in England among the professional middle-class, important questions are raised, ones that always need to be considered.

Although very different, both books provide material for serious thought. Just what good literature should do.

Anne Serafin  
Newtonville, Mass.

### 18-3-0242

Espinosa, Maria. *Dying Unfinished*. San Antonio, Tex.: Wings Press, 2008. 188 pp. ISBN 978-0-916727-45-1, \$16.95 (pb).

Espinosa's fictionalized biography of her mother aims for much more than it delivers. Structured as alternating sequences between mother and daughter, it touches on many themes: alienation, artistic longings, the condition of educated women in post-World War II America, the role of sexuality in artistic creation, husband-wife relations, and the tangled bonds between mother and daughter, each caught up in her own needs and unable to meet the needs of the other.

The focus of the novel is on the mother, Eleanor, as both she and her daughter Rosa trace the curve of Eleanor's life, her aspirations and frustrations, and the ways in which these have affected her daughter's life. The daughter of an upper class German-Jewish family that has essentially severed all ties with its origins, Eleanor sheds her conventional upbringing when she marries a sculptor from a similar background. She feels shackled, however, by her life in the suburbs and the demands of three children, and she finds

release only in sexual relationships. Her own unfulfilled ambitions blind her to the needs of her children, especially those of Rosa who, as she grows up, imitates her mother's sexual promiscuity while acting out her mother's repressed artistic longings. While both Rosa and Eleanor attribute Eleanor's failure to accomplish her goal of being a writer to her upbringing and to family constraints, it is never clear if Eleanor, or indeed Rosa, has any literary talent. At death Eleanor remains "unfinished." But what human being is ever "finished," except by death?

Eva M. Sartori  
Univ. of Nebraska—Lincoln

### 18-3-0243

Everett, Percival. *I Am Not Sidney Poitier*. St. Paul, Minn.: Graywolf Press, 2009. 272 pp. ISBN 978-1-55597-527-2, \$15.00 (pb).

Everett's novel dances from tragedy to farce and back again lightly and skillfully, as if it were easy. There are cold nightmares of staring down the barrel of a gun, but there are also fine send-ups of the upwardly mobile within the twisted world of American racism. A large family car is the "luxury coffin of silence" and Ted Turner "a pale, mustachioed, talking tornado." Everett's "completely fictitious" portrayals of real people, including himself, play out absurd mini-versions of Poitier's best known films while echoing *Six Degrees of Separation*, a play whose protagonist pretends to be Poitier's son.

Allusions aside, the plot works, the characters are funny and the dialog is extraordinarily funny. As Walter Mosley uses mystery writing to take on larger social themes, Everett draws our sympathies to a comic protagonist who struggles to fit in. When the world in which he is making halting progress drops him into a black hole of isolation, the fear isn't funny at all. Viewing American race relations as an enormous farce best illustrated by our obsession with Sidney Poitier's perfection could unleash some lively classroom debate—college level only, however, due to graphic but ridiculous sex scenes.

Gail Hall Howard  
Norwalk (Conn.) Community College

### 18-3-0244

Folman, Ari, and Polonsky, David. *Waltz with Bashir: A Lebanon War Story*. New York: Holt/Metropolitan Books, 2009. 120 pp. Illus. by David Polonsky. ISBN 978-0-8050-8892-2, \$18.00 (pb).

This graphic novelization of the 2008 Israeli film of the same title tells the autobiographical story of author Ari Folman, a veteran of the 1982 Lebanon War. Folman has suppressed his experiences in the war until he is visited by an army comrade, who tells of his nightmares of combat. That jars Folman's memory. Folman then visits other war buddies hoping to recover gaps in his memory. The process results in Folman's detailed eyewitness account of the massacres of Palestinians at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps by Phalangist militia forces allied with Israel as revenge for the assassination of Bashir Gemayel.

This novel, like the film, vividly depicts the horrors and terror of combat and the ways in which veterans still are affected by what they saw and what they did decades earlier. Folman confronts issues of Israeli responsibility head on. The novel's illustrations are merely reproductions of frames from the film, which were drawn to take advantage of the large format and motion of a movie screen. When crammed onto the printed page, they lose much of their emotional power, although the actual photos of massacred Palestinians, which end both the book and film, are gut-wrenching and will prompt much thought on the part of readers.

Richard Lachmann  
State Univ. of New York, Univ. at Albany

### 18-3-0245

Henríquez, Cristina. *The World in Half*. New York: Putnam/Riverhead, 2009. 320 pp. ISBN 978-1-59448-855-9, \$25.95.

Sadly, Henríquez's novel about Miraflores, a young woman searching for the father she never knew, which takes place in Panama City, is so full of inaccuracies about that country that it is hard to take it seriously. For example, a key element of her story involves using the recipient's address as the "return address" in letters sent by her father in Panama to her mother in the United States. Not to be picky, but it so happens that there is mail delivery to homes by the postal service there. I grew up in Panama and visit the country frequently, so I was surprised by some of the comments Miraflores makes about the time it takes for movies to be shown there, the city, and other things of that nature.

However, the major stumbling block for me was how unbelievable the character of Danilo was. This young Panamanian makes his living selling flowers on street corners, yet amazingly he has sufficient funds to pay for a two-bedroom apartment in the city, to leave his job to help Miraflores search for her father, and eventually even to visit her in the United States. Farfetched? You bet. Interesting? Not at all.

Bessy Reyna  
Latin Arte News, Hartford, Conn.

### 18-3-0246

Isbell, Billie Jean. *Finding Cholita*. Champaign: Univ. of Illinois Press, 2009. 224 pp. ISBN 978-0-252-03412-1, \$60.00 (cl); 978-0-252-07606-0, \$20.00 (pb).

Dr. Alice Woodsley, like any good anthropologist, collects stories. But as an anthropologist who has worked for decades in the Peruvian highlands amid the atrocities committed by Shining Path guerillas and government forces, the stories she carries literally eat her alive. Emotionally torn by her need to testify about the abuses and her fear of further endangering the victims, Alice discovers lesions developing on her tongue ... as did Billie Jean Isbell, the creator of the fictional Alice.

*Finding Cholita* is Isbell's fictionalized account of her own decades working as an anthropologist in Peru. Like Alice, she's still unsure whether it's safe to publish accounts of atrocity, so she has

chosen to tell the stories as a novel. In an unusual and captivating prologue, Isbell explains at length why she made this decision although it may not have been the best choice. Isbell could instead have extensively changed personal information about the victims while still telling their composite stories in her own voice, a voice which is stronger than the fictional Alice Woodsley's. Nevertheless, Isbell's accomplishment is to be applauded. If you want to understand Shining Path's reign of terror in Peru, *Finding Cholita* is the book to read.

Lisa Rubilar  
Niskayuna, N.Y.

### 18-3-0247

Jacques, Paula. *Light of My Eye*. Teaneck, N.J.: Holmes & Meier, 2009. 270 pp. Trans. from French by Susan Cohen-Nicole. ISBN 978-0-8419-1447-6, \$24.00.

All lives are full of changes. There are comings and goings of the people in our lives and our own growing and maturing. Then there are the changes in which an entire way of life is altered by radical circumstances. For these and most especially the latter, it is both joyful and sad to look through snapshots of the way things used to be.

This beautiful book is made up of verbal snapshots about the rich life of a Jewish family in Egypt. One meets the relatives and neighbors who touch the lives of the Castro family. We then see the deterioration of that life due to the politics of the area in the 1950s. Finally there is the complete break, when the Egyptian Jews must leave for France, Israel, and other places. The beautiful, cosmopolitan life in Cairo is now a vanished thing.

Mona, the daughter of the family, relives all these things plus the relationships with her parents and a friendship with a strange man, which is promptly misinterpreted by the family. Or is it? We can never be sure. The Egyptian persons in the lives of this family are also beautifully and touchingly drawn.

This book might be marketed only to Jewish readers. However, I think general readers will enjoy it. It was a bestseller in the original French.

Ruth Becker  
Forest Hills, N.Y.

### 18-3-0248

Kerr, Philip. *A Quiet Flame*. New York: Putnam, 2009. 400 pp. ISBN 978-0-399-15530-7, \$26.95.

The novel begins in 1950 when Bernie Gunther, Berliner and anti-Nazi policeman, arrives in Buenos Aires with a group of Nazis in the hope of finding a new identity during Perón's government. Surprisingly, he becomes involved with Colonel Montalbán, of Perón's secret police, to solve the case of an adolescent gruesomely mutilated and the disappearance of a wealthy banker's daughter. Both cases are linked to Bernie's unsolved investigation in 1932. Now the local authorities believe the same German criminal is among them. During his investigation, Bernie's life is in danger,

as are the people he wants to help. The novel's structure, with its historical and geographical backdrop, parallels the decadent Weimar time and the Peronist government, intermingling characters and historical figures such as Joseph Mengele, Adolf Eichmann, Juan and Evita Perón. Its style is dynamic, with flashbacks, surrounded with intrigue, suspense and enhanced by a love story. This historical novel is an interesting thriller.

However, the novel loses its crisp and forceful purpose to tell the truth and promote justice against the atrocities of people who did not respect others when referring to Argentina, and especially to Tucumán. The narrator's attitude is prejudicial. When in Tucumán, he describes the city capital "as a horseshit town" and the town of la Cocha as "its poorpig-shit cousin" (185). Not content with these derogative expressions, the narrator is condescending to its people and describes them as wild "half-naked children chewing lengths of sugarcane like dogs gnawing bones" (329). Also, the narration is plagued with gross errors. The author asserts that the Guarany people are from Tucumán, and describes geographical and historical facts incorrectly; the text is further marred by misspelled words in Spanish. Finally, to affirm that Argentina was just like Nazi Germany is also a grave mistake. Sadly, the author's insensitivity falls on real people and places in a country that deserves respect. In fact, this attitude contradicts the purpose and message of the novel.

Rosita Chazarreta-Rourke  
Duquesne Univ.

### 18-3-0249

Limón, Graciela. *The River Flows North*. Houston: Arte Público Press, 2009. 160 pp. ISBN 978-1-55885-585-4, \$24.95.

The closing of easier routes through California has driven migrants to the United States from Mexico and Central America to make a dangerous crossing through the Arizona desert. One wrong turn can lead to dying of thirst; one false step can lead to a deadly snake or scorpion bite.

Limón, the author of several other novels set in Mexico or along the border, narrates the story of a group of travelers—almost all complete strangers—who cast their lot with the experienced smuggler Leonardo Cerda. Among them are Julio and his son, Manuelito, who only want to go halfway, and the elderly Lacandona woman Encarnación Padilla, who seeks the spirits of those previously lost on the crossing. Menda Fuentes, a Salvadoran woman, has survived both her country's civil war and an abusive husband. Nicanor and Borrego Osuna are teenage Mexican brothers seeking a better life in the United States. Finally, there is the well-dressed stranger, Armando Guerrero, of whom everyone is afraid.

Each of the characters tells his or her story, past and present. Each plays a critical role at some point in the journey, so the shifting points of view add to the suspense. This short, fast-paced novel is rooted in real experiences and will be of interest to readers, high school and up.

Lyn Miller-Lachmann

**18-3-0250**

López, Josefina. *Hungry Woman in Paris*. New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2009. 272 pp. ISBN 978-0-446-69941-9, \$12.99 (pb).

It's hard to imagine that the same writer who penned the script for *Real Women Have Curves* wrote this interesting, fast-moving, and complex novel about a woman's search for purpose and the true meaning of joy. It's not that *Real Women* was lacking in substance; it is simply that *Hungry Woman* is the work of an author in full bloom, one whose grasp is much broader and deeper in this attempt at the novel genre.

In this easy-read work of fiction, the main character is as endearing and human as she is strong. And there is a literary conceit that dovetails just au point with the story—mainly, the use of great French culinary tips, and even recipes, interwoven in the story.

The main character, Carmela, is endowed with a contagious passion and curiosity for life, coupled with a hilarious sense of humor and a jaundiced, while not entirely cynical, take on human relations. Carmela is a Los Angeles journalist in dire need of a life overhaul. She feels constrained by censorship in her work and is unhappy in a relationship with a controlling “macho” man who is more keen on monitoring her every move than on accepting her or celebrating all she has to give. In a seemingly spur-of-the-moment leap of faith, Carmela decides to chuck it all, sublet her apartment, and leave for Paris. There, she enrolls in culinary school in the hopes of adding some spice to her life and figuring out what she really wants.

Carmela's decision is the reader's gain, for through her, we embark on a delicious and insightful journey through the City of Lights, one that is liable to evoke nostalgia even in those who have never visited. This reviewer, for one, can't wait to book her flight.

Himilce Novas  
<http://supernovas.org>

**18-3-0251**

Mascarenhas, Margaret. *The Disappearance of Irene Dos Santos*. New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2009. 370 pp. ISBN 978-0-446-54110-7, \$13.95 (pb).

Who is Irene dos Santos, and where did she mysteriously disappear to while on a trip to the jungle with her teenage friend, Lily? The reader confronts these questions and others in this novel that explores the disappearance of this precocious and unconventional adolescent, and delves into the mythology and superstitions of Venezuelan society—the poor who earn their living selling hand-made items to tourists, the middle class who follow the soap-opera adventures written by Lily's husband, and the powerful, influential members of the upper class. Through the eyes of these characters, we learn about the strange young girl who defies societal mores during a period of civil unrest.

Quirky, iconoclastic, definitely off-beat, and full of magical realism, the novel pokes fun at Venezuelan popular culture and superstitions through such unique characters as midwives, fortune-tellers, and revolutionaries, who, in the tradition of Scheherazade, recount tales to amuse and beguile each other and, especially, the

reader. This confusion of characters and multitude of narrative voices, along with a variety of subplots, provides a lively way to explore the history and contemporary society of Venezuela. With a list of discussion questions at the end, the novel is a great choice for book groups.

Roberta Gordenstein  
Elms College, Chicopee, Mass.

**18-3-0252**

Mayo, C. M. *The Last Prince of the Mexican Empire*. Denver: Unbridled Books, 2009. 448 pp. ISBN 978-1-932961-64-5, \$26.95.

*The Last Prince of the Mexican Empire* packs a wallop. It is a fascinating historical account delivered in such sweeping, compelling prose as to ring more like literature than fact—and, fundamentally, one could say that it's both; it proves false that old Dorothy Parker adage about historical novels being neither novels nor history. This is an extensively researched and brilliantly organized book, combining geopolitics, international finance, military strategy, and, alas, the eternal struggle of a family, a child, and the human heart in the midst of it all.

The story revolves around Emperor Maximilian's court in mid-nineteenth-century Mexico—a time when not only Mexican history but the future of the Americas hung in the balance. Maximilian had arrived in Mexico with his consort, Carlotta, supported by the Hapsburgs and backed by French troops. The couple was childless and, in 1865, took custody of two-year-old prince Agustín de Iturbide, grandson of Mexico's first emperor and leader of Mexico's independence from Spain, who had been executed. The boy's biological father was a Mexican diplomat, and his mother an American socialite from Washington, D.C. The couple soon regretted giving Maximilian their child so he could have an heir apparent to his throne and asked to have him returned, but Maximilian refused them and sparked an international incident around a little boy who became the last Mexican prince.

Mayo, who has lived in Mexico for many years and has written extensively about its history and culture, is the author of a travel memoir about Baja California, among other works. Her literary style is seasoned, intelligent, and wonderfully informed.

Himilce Novas  
<http://supernovas.org>

**18-3-0253**

*One World: A Global Anthology of Short Stories*. Oxford, U.K.: New Internationalist, 2009. 192 pp. ISBN 978-1-906523-13-8, \$16.95 (pb).

*One World: A Global Anthology of Short Stories* includes a variety of inspiring stories and can serve as a reminder that people across the globe are alike in many ways. Throughout, women often act as main characters and endure heartache while simply trying to make a life for their children in the poorest of circumstances. “Leng Lui Is for Pretty Lady” shows the importance of the ties between mother and daughter when Leng Lui must work as a do-

mestic to send money to her own mother and daughter. "Homeless" is a moving story that demonstrates the importance of the loss of a father and its impact on the family.

Children play important roles in many of the stories. In "Way of the Machete," Juanito must carry on the tradition of cutting sugar cane after his father has been killed. "The Kettle on the Boat" is a heart-wrenching story of a family left without resources, except for their child who is given to another as a laborer. Adjusting to life within the United States is explored in "My Mother, the Crazy African" and "The Third and Final Continent." Each examines the life of immigrants and their striving to blend cultures in the United States.

Brenda Yates Habich  
Ball State Univ.

### 18-3-0254

Rodríguez Milanés, Cecilia. *Marielitos, Balseiros and Other Exiles*. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Ig Publishing, 2009. 196 pp. ISBN 978-0-9815040-2-5, \$14.95 (pb).

Fourteen stories depict the plight of the Cubans called the "Marielitos," who came to the United States in the 1980 Mariel Boatlift, and afterward, when the "special period" following the collapse of the Soviet Union drove the island and its inhabitants into dire poverty. Many of the stories are interrelated. Mima, the last of her family to leave Cuba, struggles to bring joy to her fractured extended family in the Miami area while hiding the severity of her own health situation. We see her efforts through the eyes of her daughter Damarys in "A Fraction of Always," her son Fito in "Beast of Burden," and her brother Eduardo (who also fled hardship in Cuba only to die shortly after coming to the United States) in "Forged Lives." Other interlocking stories include those of the hardworking but unlucky Marielito Juan in "La Buena Vida" and the drifter who stabs him to death in "El Loco."

The author, whose parents immigrated to the United States from Cuba, conveys through vivid detail and snappy dialogue the mores, culture, and language (including frequent code-switching) of the exiles. Some readers might find her depiction of the discrimination faced by the Marielitos to be heavy-handed, but this occurs in only a few of the stories. The best of the stories, such as the trilogy of Mima's family and especially the powerful "A Fraction of Always," portray complicated family relationships that don't become less troubled once liberty is attained.

Lyn Miller-Lachmann

### 18-3-0255

Ryan, Shawna Yang. *Water Ghosts*. New York: The Penguin Press, 2009, © 2007. 259 pp. Originally published as *Locke 1928* by El Leon Literary Arts. ISBN 978-1-59420-207-0, \$22.95.

Locke, California, is a small town on a small tributary of the Sacramento River. It is a Chinese town. It has one brief main street, and even today retains its wooden sidewalks and old-West look. In 1928 the small community consisted of a boarding house, a gambling hall, and a general store. The brothel and its cast of

characters are the main actors.

The nine main characters eke out their sordid lives in small vignettes, told in a combination of past and present tenses; they speak without the benefit of quotation marks.

Handsome and available, Richard Fong manages the gambling hall and is loved by at least two women who are startled when his wife from China shows up unannounced. She is accompanied by two other Chinese women, all three sporting "golden lilies," the bound feet popular and said to be alluring to men, of a century ago. There is something odd and mysterious about all three of these women, something that makes the title come clear at the end of the book.

A small Peyton Place is Locke. Fractured sentences, segmented thoughts, and a train of vignettes offer peep-show views of the personages, the place, the passions, the happenings. Haughty and barely comprehensible, fears and fantasies, dreams and realities, past and present are so thoroughly mixed that it is sometimes difficult to tell the one from the other. Nonetheless, put together like a mosaic bit by bit, the crazy quilt pattern is made colorful and comprehensible, and by the end we can stand back and admire it.

Time hops back and forth, giving a foreshadowing of events that have already happened. Although sometimes confusing, the picture of Chinese immigrant life of a century ago in California is worth looking at, remembering, and even honoring, for the sake of the descendants of those trodden souls who did their best to find life and happiness in a new world.

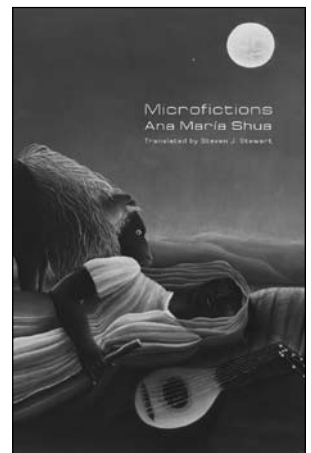
Ginny Lee  
Syracuse, N.Y.

### 18-3-0256

Shua, Ana María. *Microfictions*. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2009. 210 pp. Trans. from Spanish by Steven J. Stewart. ISBN 978-0-8032-2090-4, \$19.95 (pb).

*Microfictions* is a collection of brief and peculiar stories, in which traditional concepts become satirical messages or change reality into fantasy by redefining their meaning. These stories, apparently illogical, offer images and metaphors that operate through emotional and visual impact. The Argentine author writes about women, their bodies, and their sensuousness in order to destroy false images conveyed by society.

In "Afterward," reflecting on her own nudity, she expects her bathtub to opine about her body, but this object with its "toothless mouth" looks at her ironically. In "Voracious Baby," she juxtaposes the images of a mother breast-feeding her baby with that of an erotic baby, a night visitor, who leaves in the morning after the sexual pleasure. In "Virgins," she rejects men's control over women, by contrasting the subjugated virgins in paradise for good Muslim males with that of a woman's freedom in a women's harem. In "Advisors," she criticizes wars



and the inhumane way of killing with advanced technological devices.

Humorously, in “Message,” a medium tries to connect with a spirit, but instead gets a recorded message. Moreover, she questions society’s lawlessness, violence, and the absurdity of the mass media. In “Taking a Liking,” people are killed by young hooligans and by a vicious train that transgresses its place, destroying lives. Employing the absurd and the grotesque, she underlines the loss of faith and morality among the authorities as well as the manipulations of a sensationalist media. She takes on popular fairy tales and fables such as “Cinderella,” “Little Red Riding-Hood,” “Hare,” and the “Wolf” and creatively changes their meaning to inject a different view. Shua’s very brief stories are humorous, sarcastic, ironic, and written in the style of a riddle. Despite their brevity, they consistently make the reader pause to reflect, not least for her witty language. Stewart’s translation is excellent.

Rosita Chazarreta-Rourke  
Duquesne Univ.

### 18-3-0257

Vizenor, Gerald, ed. *Native Storiers: Five Selections*. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2009. 206 pp. ISBN 978-0-8032-1717-1, \$25.00 (pb)

*Native Storiers: Five Selections* is a collection of stories by Native American authors Stephen Graham Jones, Eric Gansworth, Frances Washburn, Gerald Vizenor, and Diane Glancy. While these selections are technically Native stories, this should not limit their appeal, as they deal with subjects of universal interest.

Jones’s contribution, “Bleed Into Me,” is a series of vignettes depicting contemporary Native American life. These unusual stories can be unsettling in their shifting viewpoints and meanings. For example, “Captivity Narrative 109” tells the story of an imaginary kidnapping, and “Discovering America” relates how being Indian shapes and distorts everyday interactions between the Native narrator and the dominant society.

Gansworth’s “Mending Skins” begins with a satirical look at an academic conference on Native images and blends into the following two stories of a reservation funeral and an accident seen through the eyes of several different characters.

Washburn’s “Elsie’s Business” is the most conventional in form of any of the stories, a novella in seven parts telling of a murder, its prologue and aftermath, while at the same time illuminating life in a Native American community.

Very different from the other works in this collection is “Hiroshima Bugi: Atomu 57,” Vizenor’s elegy to the victims of the bombing of Hiroshima. Through impressionistic prose and poetry, Vizenor gives voice to the sufferers, and skillfully blends Native American elements into this story of pain and inhumanity.

Glancy’s “Designs of the Night Sky” brings a lyrical and poetic

blending of the past and the present to Native experience.

*Native Storiers: Five Selections* is an excellent sampler of contemporary Native American fiction and is well worth reading. Recommended.

Andy J. Deering  
Central Wyoming College

### 18-3-0258

Wang Gang. *English*. New York: Viking, 2009. 314 pp. Trans. from Chinese by Martin Merz and Jane Weizhen Pan. ISBN 978-0-670-02059-1, \$24.95.

*English*, translated from Chinese, is a powerful coming-of-age story of Love Liu, a young boy during the Cultural Revolution. He lives in Urumchi in Xinjiang, a small town in China, a place of mixed dialects. Love Liu is a precocious, outspoken youth who provides the reader with insights gleaned from living in a repressive culture. Executions, food lines, propaganda, denunciations, public insults, and an adoration of his teacher are the bases of his daily life. His parents, both architects, are mandated to serve the Party—designing air raid shelters and painting posters of Chairman Mao. Through Love’s eyes, their commitment to the Party supersedes their love for him.

What impresses and guides Love is his respect for his English teacher, Second Prize Wang. Love’s burgeoning interest in sex and his antagonism towards his parents form a natural part of growing up, and he and his teacher become “generational friends.” Discussing life’s ambiguities becomes a bridge between Love, lost in the confusion that accompanies adolescence, and Wang who tries to ease the gap between childhood and maturity. Love takes risks: when he encourages Sunrise Huang to confess that she has lied about the English teacher touching her; when he confronts his mother’s lover, the principal; when he spies on the bathhouse; when he attempts to steal the coveted English dictionary from his teacher’s room. Nicknamed “the gentleman,” complete with the affectations of cologne and non-prescription glasses, Love displays fearless, yet manipulative behavior, always aware of his own strict moral compass. Only his study of English brings him joy: “If I rearranged the words in the dictionary, the entire world would open up before me.”

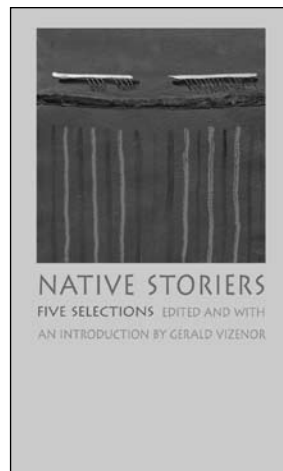
Patricia Goldblatt  
Toronto, Ont.

## Poetry

### 18-3-0259

Alexie, Sherman. *Face*. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Hanging Loose Press, 2009. 160 pp. ISBN 978-1-931236-70-6, \$18.00 (pb).

Here, in Alexie’s first new collection of poetry in nine years, are the mourning songs of starlings and the resurrection of mos-



quitos; the reuniting of the pieces of a dead snake in the road; the small ceremony of a spider's web destroyed and recreated each day; praise for the holiness of food and a psalm to Granny Smith apples; the sacredness of ants; the scream of a deer crushed by the wheels of a logging truck; and the stubbornness of a robin relentlessly crashing into a window.

Here are free verse, semi-formal sonnets, word plays, multiple meanings, and a couple of villanelles—of which each verse is connected to at least one long, personal footnote. Much of Alexie's work is evidence of his finely honed craft; some of it appears to have been written in a hotel room just before or after a public appearance. There are references to some of the great thinkers and writers, and to some famed for other things—Emily Dickinson and Terri Hatcher, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henny Youngman, Immanuel Kant and Richard Pryor, Alexander Pope and Albert Einstein, and Crazy Horse. Alexie's father is almost always present. And there are references, of course, to fire, which a reviewer once egregiously called "metaphor." There is hurt and rage and loneliness and grief and shame and hate and lust and cruelty—and ego involvement—and the sweetness and wonder of Alexie's love for his children. It's all part of the enormous talent of one of the finest poets of his generation.

Beverly Slapin  
Oyate, Berkeley, Calif.

### 18-3-0260

Dameron, DeLana R. A. *How God Ends Us: Poems*. Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 2009. 96 pp. ISBN 978-1-57003-832-7, \$14.95 (pb).

Van Clief-Stefanon, Lyrae. *Open Interval*. Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 2009. 96 pp. ISBN 978-0-8229-6036-2, \$14.95 (pb).

Named for a type of pulsing star, Lyrae Van Clief-Stefanon feels deeply the emptiness of galaxies and atoms alike, while "spinning" in perpetual motion:—"the ground and I are/shedding ourselves/toward/atmosphere:" Helpless before not just the size of the universe but also how quickly our small lives end half-realized, the poet structures and punctuates lines as if they were an unending chain. Each colon is both an equal sign and an arrow of anticipation. "Like yanking up office blinds/like the sound that makes: accord-/ioned: a ripple..." The time/space continuum is entirely personal in these poems, along with other human concerns. Violence against women, and the power inequities that institutionalize it, are challenged repeatedly: "a black-barred peep show called/consent:—/a form has been/filled out/but in whose hand?" A lost marriage is mourned, both as a concept ("the idea/that's dissipated") and as longed-for physical closeness. But since "his body" is "what matter's mostly made of—: space," the speaker comes to believe that "the space in everything is God: that force/of present absence..." But neither faith nor insight erases pain: "I grieve—/... I'm loose/as love is—: nebulous—:"

Dameron, winner of the South Carolina Poetry Book Prize, also writes about sacred absences, but her poems move at a gentler pace. Scripture sets the tone for her book, so the best poems are

about sin. Preparing to leave after a one-night stand, the speaker in "How Quickly the Sun Comes" imagines her lover pulling her back into bed. But it doesn't happen. Later she "finger(s) the empty space" made by the rings she left behind. As happens for all women, the call to self-definition wars with longing for love. Cowardice, longings, and the lies we use to cover them are God's reasons for how he "ends us." "Lament," a marvelous, free-form villanelle, intertwines the silences hiding in every home with "spirits from inhabitable spaces" that God will send forth to "unearth the underbelly of all lies." A dying uncle who years before couldn't face the physicality of caring for his dying mother receives "rosebud salve/(rubbed) into the ashened, cross-hatched epidermis" of his hands. As one after another organ fails, his niece, whose caretaking is an unspoken link to the mother she fought with, observes that "the eyes, they refuse." Our spirits can resist death, but the body "turns to lie down/as it pleases..." Poems that are basically blues lyrics add a quiet chorus: "if the salt-cured ham glazed/with honey is no longer/my sweet sweat on your/tongue...then, come back./Come back home."

Two fine Black female poets, one technically sophisticated and established, the other vibrant but just beginning, view human experience through the lens of American Southern culture, a highly religious and sweetly musical universe.

Gail Hall Howard  
Norwalk (Conn.) Community College

### 18-3-0261

Dove, Rita. *Sonata Mulattica: Poems*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2009. 232 pp. ISBN 978-0-393-07008-8, \$24.95.

Dove's latest volume of poetry narrates the story of violin prodigy George Polgreen Bridgetower through the voices of a panoply of colorful characters against the backdrop of the French Revolution. Son of a Polish serving woman and a self-proclaimed "African Prince," Bridgetower was "discovered" by Haydn, abandoned by his father, taken in by the Prince of Wales, and mentored by Beethoven. He gave a debut performance in Paris when he was nine, and toured Europe, performing in venues from London to Vienna.

The culmination of this five movement work (plus a prologue and epilogue) is a play depicting Beethoven's repudiation of his dedication of a difficult sonata to Bridgetower after the young violinist made a move on a barmaid also admired by the aging composer. The sonata was subsequently dedicated to another violinist who couldn't even play it.

Dove's imaginings are recounted in language that reflects a finely tuned ear and an impeccable sense of lyric, rhythm, diction, tone, and voice, resulting in a fresh, irreverent, and lively evocation of the raucous exuberance of eighteenth/nineteenth-century life rendered through witty characterizations (including appearances by Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings) and detailed descriptions of costumes and architecture, from streets to palaces.

Lori Tsang  
Washington, D.C.

**18-3-0262**

Goings, Russell. *The Children of Children Keep Coming: An Epic Griot Song*. New York: Pocket Books/Karen Hunter Publishing, 2009. 300 pp. Illus. with images by Romare Bearden. Introduction by Kim Bridgford. ISBN 978-1-4165-6646-5, \$19.99.

This “epic griot song” is accompanied by black-and-white ink drawings by Romare Bearden from the author’s collection, as well as an introduction by poet Kim Bridgford and a glossary. The form and feel of the work is reminiscent of a Greek drama, with its inclusion of a narrator, individual parts (fictional as well as historical characters), choruses of field hands, soldiers, children, and so on, and Sistas (sisters) Awareness, Insight, and Understanding sitting in for the Muses.

Written in dialect as well as rhetoric, the poem/play is a didactic interweaving of narratives of African-American history: Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad; Robert Gould Shaw, the 54th Regiment, and the Civil War battles at Fort Wagner and Fort Pillow; Frederick Douglass, John Brown, and the abolitionist movement; Rosa Parks and the civil rights movement; the assassinations of Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King, Jr.

The poetry of Sterling Brown is a clear influence, and the voices of Ma Rainey, Mahalia Jackson, and other blues artists are written into it. There are also tributes to Black women as well as to blues and jazz musicians interwoven into this multi-linear narrative, which uses repetition to powerful cumulative effect and benefits greatly from being read aloud.

Lori Tsang  
Washington, D.C.

**18-3-0263**

Gould, Maria; Sagastegui, Anita; and Simon, John Oliver, eds. *A Pocketful of Voices/Un bolsillo de voces*. Seattle: Center for the Art of Translation; dist. by Univ. of Washington Press, 2009. 200 pp. Bilingual (English-Spanish) ed. ISBN 978-1-931883-31-3, \$10.95 (pb).

*A Pocketful of Voices/Un bolsillo de voces* is a bilingual collection of creative visual and written art. A group of writers from second through ninth grade create artistic images in poems, drawings, and translations. These young voices from a bilingual background show their creativity through literature and develop their own original poems celebrating the richness of cultural diversity. The poems in Spanish and in English are presented next to each other. These young poets’ voices and images are inspirational in their views on society, culture, identity, and human rights. Mixed throughout are bilingual versions of short works by well-known adult writers like Federico Garcia Lorca, William Shakespeare, and Octavio Paz.

The book is divided into three main parts: The Poetry Inside Out Curriculum (Figurative Language, Poetic Form and Structure, Identity and Expression, The Practice of Translation), Beyond the Spanish Bilingual Classroom (The World Poetry Curriculum), and Student Voices (Original Student Poems, Dictionary of the Imagination). Editors’ notes, indexes of authors, and acknowledgments are included. In the translation of selected adult authors’

poems, there is a short biographical dictionary to acquaint readers with some unfamiliar writers.

This collection of poems, presented in a unique form and style, invites the reader to a better understanding of young voices in their creative process and to an appreciation of language, images, creativity, and daily life topics in the minds of these gifted young people. Also one can appreciate their skills in translation and in bilingual literary composition.

A book to be enjoyed, especially by young people and writers, this can be a great educational resource for language development and creative writing in a bilingual classroom for children and young adults. It belongs in all libraries.

Alva V. Cellini  
St. Bonaventure Univ.

**18-3-0264**

Hinton, David, ed. *Classical Chinese Poetry: An Anthology*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2008. 480 pp. Trans. from Chinese by the editor. ISBN 978-0-374-10536-5, \$45.00.

Chinese poetry is notoriously difficult to translate, even disregarding the pictographic nature of Chinese writing. In his introduction Hinton offers a literal translation of a line by Meng Haojan—“stairs below clump grass see dew radiance”—which he later renders as “At the bottom stair, in bunchgrass, lit dew shimmers,” though there could have been many other choices. What Arthur Waley once translated as “Heigh, not so hasty, not so rough” (from *The Book of Songs*) Hinton renders as “Slowly—oh yes, slip it off slowly”!

Hinton, an award-winning translator of the Tao Te Ching and many volumes of Chinese poetry, has achieved an ambitious project; “Classical” in his definition covers from about 1500 BCE to 1200 CE, with two-thirds of his book devoted to poets of the T’ang and Sung Dynasties (c. 700—1200). Besides the poems themselves—roughly 12 to 20 pages of each major poet or ancient collection—he provides thoughtful introductions to each artist or anthology, plus historical and philosophical overviews, definitions of “Key Terms,” maps, a book list for “Further Reading,” and special attention to poetry written by women in a culture that made such achievement exceedingly difficult. A poem by a fourth-century woman, Su Hui, is graphically so complex, with colored inks and readability sideways and diagonally, that we must look up Hinton’s virtuoso translation on the publisher’s web site. There may be disadvantages to having one poet translate the writings of many centuries and utterly different sensibilities, but Hinton’s erudition and sensitivity to nuance are astonishing, and he has an invaluable awareness of the entire tradition as well as each poet’s indebtedness to it and departures from it.

Joseph Milicia  
Univ. of Wisconsin–Sheboygan

**18-3-0265**

Kilwein Guevara, Maurice. *Poema*. Tucson: Univ. of Arizona Press, 2009. 96 pp. ISBN 978-0-8165-2725-0, \$15.95 (pb).

Valadez, Luis Humberto. *What I'm On*. Tucson: Univ. of Arizona Press, 2009. 64 pp. ISBN 978-0-8165-2740-3, \$15.95 (pb).

Of the few literary venues devoted solely to Latino/a writing, the University of Arizona's Camino Del Sol series has quickly risen to the forefront as the home to some of the finest contemporary Latinos/as writing in the United States. Two of Camino Del Sol's most recent poetry collections—Maurice Kilwein Guevara's *Poema* and Luis Humberto Valadez's *What I'm On*—further cement their reputation as a harbinger of Latino/a letters. Both books are unique in their perspective, and yet they share the common roots of Latino culture at large that justifies their inclusion in Arizona's prestigious series (though, admittedly, the voices and worldviews of these two poets couldn't be more disparate). While Valadez's collection tends to focus on the more gritty aspects of street life and culture, moving at a frantic pace from topic to topic and submerging us in a bouillabaisse of mash-up poems dissecting language, Kilwein Guevara's book is patient, subdued, immense, and ultimately requires the reader to give it his full attention if he is to appreciate the eloquent language and images woven throughout the text. Read together, these two collections complement each other well.

Valadez's lyrics come storming off the page, capturing the reader in a whirlwind of violence, rage, and even—on occasion—a vitality that borders on seductive. To read Valadez is akin to returning to a rough neighborhood of one's childhood: we feel at once familiar with the graffiti and the gangs, but can't help feeling vulnerable, as though at any moment an attack can come from any direction. And this is a good thing. It seems to be Valadez's desire to put the reader on guard. To that end, Valadez ponders violence with a refreshingly astute gaze, with language that is at turns playful and deadly serious: "Yain't no: gettin' slapped for hidin' mom's cigarettes/raped cuz ya yelled 'run, girl, run' to/sum twelve-year-old wen you wuz six." Still, Valadez is at his best in his poems written to Christ, wherein he directly addresses Jesus as a man whose own "pops/took off when things got hard/according to the book," thereby situating modern masculinity alongside the mythology of Christ. Perhaps, we realize, modern men raised without fathers have more in common with Jesus than they might think. Overall, *What I'm On* is a strong debut. It ushers a surprisingly frank and much-needed new voice into the dialogue of contemporary Latino writers. However, the collection becomes bogged down with a few too many poems that dissect language and toy with it, with little to offer readers who are not lovers of wordplay for wordplay's sake. That the collection has so many of these poems might leave a bad taste in some readers' mouths.

Kilwein Guevara's *Poema* evokes an entirely different reaction. Here is a body of work at once troublingly beautiful and haunting. It is rare to see contemporary writing so passionately crafted and so hyper-aware of the conventions of poetry, which is precisely what gives the poet license to stray from these very conventions. Lovers of language will surely swoon if encountering Kilwein Guevara for the first time—and especially so if they have read any of his previous collections (of which there are three). The sheer quantity of eloquent vocabulary employed in these poems should be enough to please readers who sometimes lament modern poetry's lack of sophistication. Kilwein Guevara dredges up long-forgotten words, or words whose meanings we can't quite pin down, or words we

have yet to encounter, and the reader finds herself reaching for her long-lost dictionary time and time again. Which is a great feeling. But the real joy in reading *Poema* is how Kilwein Guevara continuously upends our expectations. Here is a poem that is brazenly political, heartbreaking, and rife with anger. Yet that same poem will leave us marveling at how breathtaking and tender the poet's descriptions are. We find ourselves wondering how something as horrific as herbicides turning village people into grotesques can possibly be rendered with the same adoration and patience as his poems of love. ("Let's" is easily the paramount love poem in the lot.) Consider the following image: "And this one is María Teresa. Use that stethoscope to listen to the/damaged iambs in her chest." It is at once sterile and romantic. At once detached and intimate. This is the essence of the vast majority of pieces in *Poema*. This is what readers will struggle to reconcile, and, upon reconciliation, they will return to these poems again and again, and fall in love with each one anew.

Aaron Michael Morales  
Indiana State Univ.

### 18-3-0266

Mikhail, Dunya. *Diary of a Wave Outside the Sea*. New York: New Directions, 2009. 240 pp. Trans. from Arabic by Elizabeth Winslow and Dunya Mikhail. Bilingual (English-Arabic) ed. ISBN 978-0-8112-1831-3, \$16.95 (pb).

Part One of *Diary of a Wave Outside the Sea* consists of lyrical poetry written in Baghdad during and after the 1991 war and published in Iraq in 1995. Mikhail left her country that same year, largely due to circumstances caused by the book's publication. The second part, a lyrical memoir, was written after she left her homeland.

Mikhail's expressions have a unique intoxicating mixture of power and subtlety. Whatever she describes, whether it is war, dreams, friends, her feelings about Iraq and America, or how she met her husband, she uses words that subdue the senses, cradling the soul with much depth until it—the soul—is replenished.

Reading *Diary of a Wave Outside the Sea* is one great way to become familiar with the heart of an Iraqi—although as one flips the pages, the nationality of the author melts into the simple yet complex label of a human being.

Weam Namou  
President, Iraqi Artists Assn.

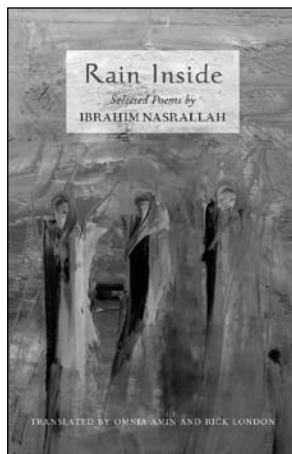
### 18-3-0267

Nasrallah, Ibrahim. *Rain Inside*. Willimantic, Conn.: Curbstone Press, 2009. 122 pp. Trans. from Arabic by Omnia Amin and Rick London. ISBN 978-1-931896-52-8, \$14.95 (pb).

*Rain Inside* is Nasrallah's first collection of poems to be published in the United States. Selected by the author—who is also a painter, photographer, and novelist—from several previous collections, the poems are prefaced by an introduction by translator Dr. Omnia Amin that provides an historical background of the

Palestinian resistance to colonial rule, Zionist occupation, and resulting exile, as well as a biographical context. Born to illiterate parents in a refugee camp in Jordan, Nasrallah attended school at the United Nations Relief Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees. Throughout his career, his travel has been restricted, and publication and public reading of his works have been suppressed.

These works are clearly profound reflections of the Palestinian Diaspora, although they eschew any specific references in their contemplations of the human condition. Vibrant, lyrical, and exuberant, they celebrate the possibilities of beauty in the natural and human-made world while also mourning its failings, violence, and warfare. They are poems of resistance, survival, hope, strength, faith, joy, and desire, even as they evoke the experience of departure, exile, and loss. Taking the forms of allegory, fable, or dream, they probe beneath the surface of everyday life using fresh, innovative, and surprising imagery.



Lori Tsang  
Washington, D.C.

### 18-3-0268

Oliver, Akilah. *A Toast in the House of Friends*. Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 2009. 98 pp. ISBN 978-1-56689-222-3, \$16.00 (pb).

From within the stupefying pain of losing a child, Oliver reconsiders the puzzles of time, selfhood, and sanctity. In the opening poem, “I his body,” is a near comic figure who speaks rudely to death: “Tell me something different about torture/dear Trickster,” complaining of grief’s deadly monotony. “I can’t get out/this fucking room.” A tender memory of her son asleep in her arms makes her long to understand death, an exercise “as exasperating” as trying to see meaning in “cutting out lace snowflakes...” The poem ends by compressing rage to a delicate irony, admiring the human race, “their frilly, ordered intellects” as if from a great distance: “The use they’ve made of cardamom/radiation as well.” The poems that follow construct a house from what the poet newly sees. Words chant, “fib,” create “disjuncture,” then switch back through the unexpected. The poet’s voice proceeds steadily, like a tightrope walker over the mouth of hell. Oliver’s eye has been scalded clear, and it is not only grief that she treats, at one point observing the young with “that bored, overly exposed to a trivial world american look.”

In the end, her work is connection. This is a house of friends, and a toast is an intimate tribute. Included are color reproductions of, and poetic responses to, the work of graffiti artists she connects to her son. While grief has “double face days,” “murdering days,” “hyena days,” Oliver asks for “time, just a little time/to get love right.”

Gail Hall Howard  
Norwalk (Conn.) Community College

### 18-3-0269

Villanueva, Alma Luz. *Soft Chaos*. Tempe, Ariz.: Bilingual Review Press, 2009. 229 pp. Bilingual (English-Spanish) ed. ISBN 978-1-931010-37-3, \$18.00 (pb).

The poems in *Soft Chaos* are funny, sweet, and anecdotal accounts of dreams and random encounters derived from personal history and memories and are infused with references to food, family, and womanly experience. They may be songs of protest, reflections on history, or simple meditations on existence. They are grounded in particular times and places, yet exude a sense of timelessness and universality, especially in their evocations of daily rhythms of life, seasonal cycles, and rites of passage.

The acute sense of rhythm achieved through artful use of repetition reflects a consciousness of body and movement like the relationship between dance and ritual. Feelings of sacredness, beauty, and wonder are present in the references to nature and the connections with plants, animals, birds, trees, flowers, sun, moon, earth, sea, and sky. Indeed, the power of connection and movement is a compelling force that runs through these poems and the book as a whole.

Villanueva’s ability to find the spiritual undercurrents of everyday occurrences and transmit them through language is a blessing and a revelation. These are poems of invocation, healing, and benediction; prayers for peace for humankind and the planet; and celebrations of life, love, and survival.

Lori Tsang  
Washington, D.C.

## Folklore

### 18-3-0270

Garcia, Nasario. *The Naked Rainbow and Other Stories/El arco iris desnudo y otros cuentos*. Albuquerque: Univ. of New Mexico Press, 2009. 242 pp. Bilingual (English-Spanish) ed. ISBN 978-0-8263-4599-8, \$18.95 (pb).

This is a collection of bilingual stories, each presented first in English and then in Spanish, highlighting the author’s familiarity with the northern New Mexico region as a setting for his stories. The tales weave folkloric, cultural, and religious elements from the life of characters from small towns in the region. Their life experiences are interwoven within fictional and realistic accounts, plus surreal events that capture and go beyond the understanding of life and the human condition for these common and humble people.

The stories are interlaced with laughter, humor, and spiritual strength. Some stories have proverbs as subtitles, relating the moral of the tale. The translation is enriched with regional Spanish that sometimes is untranslated, but even the reader who is unfamiliar with Spanish can easily understand the word through

its context. Also the stories in Spanish bring to life the linguistic nuances and archaic Spanish expressions in the common people's speech. These stories are a cultural collage and portrait of northern New Mexico's rich heritage, with traditional folk legends that are alive and inspirational for everyone. The stories maintain the reader's interest throughout the collection.

The collection includes a very helpful bilingual glossary of idioms to acquaint readers with the regional lexicon and vocabulary of northern New Mexico Spanish. It is a fascinating and valuable book to be enjoyed by everyone interested in folktales and Hispanic literature. It is also a fine resource text for Chicano and cultural studies and belongs in the collection of public and academic libraries.

Alva V. Cellini  
St. Bonaventure Univ.

## Criticism

### 18-3-0271

Spanos, William V. *The Legacy of Edward A. Said*. Champaign: Univ. of Illinois Press, 2009. 288 pp. ISBN 978-0-252-03388-9, \$70.00 (cl); 978-0-252-07572-8, \$25.00 (cl).

Author Spanos states that the first of his two main objectives is to argue that, "Said situates his inquiry at the site of ontology—the question of being ... as do the structuralists and the poststructuralists from whom he would eventually distance himself [because he] was engaged in the revolutionary task of finding an alternative to the idea of being (the Origin)..." (11). Spanos's second goal is to clarify the connection that he sees between Said's work and the work of French structuralist/poststructuralist, Michel Foucault. This connection, Spanos argues, has been overlooked by Said and "his late followers [and] ... results from the failure of both ... to fully break out of the deeply inscribed disciplinary framework they were symptomatically challenging [which is an] inevitable consequence of a beginning that necessarily compelled the rebels to rely on the very disciplinary problematic against which they were struggling" (15).

This argument requires Spanos to take the reader on an in-depth tour of post-enlightenment structuralist and poststructuralist argument that is both laborious and exhilarating. Such a consideration can only deepen our understanding of Said's work.

Leslie Antonette  
East Stroudsburg Univ. of Pennsylvania

### 18-3-0272

Alinder, Jasmine. *Moving Images: Photography and the Japanese American Incarceration*. Champaign: Univ. of Illinois Press, 2009. 232 pp. ISBN 978-0-252-03398-8, \$40.00.

*Moving Images* is a far more fascinating book than a reader might expect. During the incarceration of nearly 120,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans, photography of the event became a battleground. The government hired prominent photographers to present one view while declaring cameras contraband and preventing Japanese Americans from recording their own images of the incarceration.

Chapters are devoted to Dorothea Lange, whose work for the Farm Security Administration in the 1930s produced the iconic "Migrant Mother," and Ansel Adams, whose landscape photos of Yosemite are also icons, and their battles with the WRA (War Relocation Authority). Readers will come away with new respect for them not just as skilled photographers but as people of integrity.

Another chapter is on Toyo Miyatake, who had a photo studio in Los Angeles before the war. He smuggled camera parts and took clandestine photos of the Manzanar Camp and later also took "official" photos for the high school yearbook and camp newspaper when the WRA allowed an in-camp photo studio.

Other chapters deal with Adams's battle to get the Museum of Modern Art to exhibit photos from his book, *Born Free and Equal*, of inmates at Manzanar. But for all the attention to the photographic record of the incarceration, this book also provides an excellent history of the incarceration itself, which makes it worth its rather high price. Its appeal goes beyond to art historians or photojournalists; this is valuable for anyone interested in Japanese-American history.

Al Hikida  
Seattle Central Community College

### 18-3-0273

Ostrowitz, Judith. *Interventions: Native American Art for Far-Flung Territories*. Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 2009. 240 pp. ISBN 978-0-295-98851-1, \$45.00.

Ostrowitz explores the role of identity at both local/tribal levels and larger geographical regions in the creation of various types of Native American art. Much of her text focuses on the art of the Northwest Coast of the United States and Canada, as she presents and analyzes works by Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian artists. Interestingly, this work also addresses the impact of globalization on identity and the creation of art. Ostrowitz presents art as a product of multiple identities. Throughout this work she explores the numerous forms of Native art, ranging from traditional objects to modern Native architecture. Recent developments in Native art and cultural preservation are also addressed, specifically in regard to the newly established National Museum of the American Indian.

Color and black-and-white photographs are integrated well with the text and provide numerous examples illustrating trends in Native art. This work includes notes, works cited, and an index.

## Visual and Performing Arts

*Interventions* is recommended for academic libraries.

Kristin Whitehair  
Univ. of Kansas Medical Center Library

**18-3-0274**

Sobel, Mechal. *Painting a Hidden Life: The Art of Bill Traylor*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 2009. 200 pp. ISBN 978-0-8071-3401-6, \$34.95.

Sobel discusses the life and art of African-American painter Bill Traylor. Between being born a slave on a cotton plantation in Benton, Alabama, in 1853 and dying in a terrible old folks' home in Montgomery in 1949, Traylor lived a life that was defined by the experience of violence against Blacks in the twentieth century. Sobel argues that Traylor's paintings are filled with hidden symbolism related to the lynching of his son and other violence suffered by Blacks in the South. But Traylor, like his paintings, was also influenced by his large family (blood and fictive kin), wives and children, the possibility that he murdered his wife's lover, his inner rage, slavery, the American South, the Jim Crow period, the blues, conjure power, sexual rivalry, Africa and the African Diaspora, the Baptist Church, and Catholicism.

A complex man who used his paintings in a subversive way to discuss ideas and messages of protest that were not recognized by the White population, Traylor "created a visual language that had great power and also, in his hands, great beauty" (4). Black-and-white and color images and photos are included. The book offers a new glimpse into the life and art of an important American artist and is recommended for colleges and universities.

Melissa Aho  
Univ. of Minnesota

## Biography/Autobiography

**18-3-0275**

Agosin, Marjorie. *Of Earth and Sea: A Chilean Memoir*. Tucson: Univ. of Arizona Press, 2009. 162 pp. Trans. from Spanish by Roberta Gordenstein. ISBN 978-0-8165-2666-6, \$16.95 (pb).

Through short personal essays that read like poetry, Agosin describes the process of growing up in Chile, exile, and return that has been the story of her life. The essays are divided into three parts. The first describes her childhood in a South American Eden—her grandmother's house in Osorno in southern Chile and the house where she lived with her parents in Santiago. Readers are treated to the sights, the sounds, the smells, the stories of her beloved Mapuche nanny, Carmen, and the rituals of a German Jewish home. But even in this gorgeous, rain-swept land among the lakes, be-

tween the mountains and the sea, there are ill omens—notably the anti-Semitic Germans who would later become the Pinochet dictatorship's fervent supporters.

Agosin left Chile as a teenager, along with her parents, in 1971. In the second part of the book, she describes the 1973 coup and its aftermath as if she had been there. One realizes that she has inhabited the bodies of those who endured the violence—those who were tortured in secret prisons as well as the loved ones of the disappeared. The third part narrates her return to her beautiful but now scarred country, as she mourns what has been lost, assesses how much has changed, and finds in the landscape the comfort of her memories and a source of healing. Her cello is a symbol of her voice as she carries it, plays it, loses it, and finds it again.

Gordenstein's translation captures perfectly the imagery, rhythm, and emotion of Agosin's writing. Those who love Chile as the author does will cherish this memoir, which should attract new fans for Agosin's work. It belongs in high school and college libraries and is a good choice for classes in world history, literature, Latin American studies, Jewish studies, and women's studies.

Lyn Miller-Lachmann

**18-3-0276**

Bay, Mia. *To Tell the Truth Freely: The Life of Ida B. Wells*. New York: Hill & Wang, 2009. 374 pp. ISBN 978-0-8090-9529-2, \$35.00.

Bay, an associate professor of history at Rutgers University, does a fine job of placing anti-lynching pioneer and journalist Ida B. Wells-Barnett within her milieu, tracing the problems faced by a strong-minded individual faced with the double handicap (for the time) of being Black and female. The portrait here of Wells is three-dimensional—she is neither fully saint nor sinner—and Bay wisely demonstrates that part of the cause of her fading from the national picture was her hot temper rather than efforts by anyone to hold her down.

An extremely readable resource based primarily on secondary sources, Bay's monograph is a useful introduction for students not only to the anti-lynching movement but to the rise of a Black leadership class in the United States. Academic and public libraries will also, however, want to purchase Schechter's *Ida B. Wells-Barnett and American Reform, 1880-1930* (Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2000), which covers the same territory.

Anthony J. Adam  
Prairie View A&M Univ

**18-3-0277**

Christgau, John. *Kokomo Joe: The Story of the First Japanese American Jockey in the United States*. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2009. 216 pp. ISBN 978-0-8032-1897-0, \$17.95 (pb).

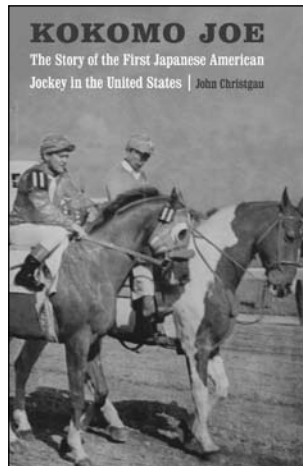
More than just a footnote to American sports history, *Kokomo Joe* is about U.S. history. Yoshio Kobuki had a life of bad breaks, beginning with his being born premature and tiny, having his mother and most of his siblings die of the Spanish flu, being sent

while still young to live with relatives in Japan, and returning to the Seattle area as a teen who could barely speak English. He was driven to excel at something, but between his small size and his language problems, it was hard to find the thing that suited him—until he decided to become a jockey.

After a year of frustration, he finally began to taste success at a string of small racetracks across the Southwest and Mexico. Getting horses at the major tracks seemed inevitable—except that his bad luck continued. The breakout year was 1941, but before the start of the racing season of 1942, Joe was incarcerated as a Japanese American for the duration of the war.

A big part of the book is about forces that kept Joe from the big time. Christgau intersperses his narrative with details of growing anti-Japanese feelings and how those combined with Imperial Japanese aggression in the Pacific to result in the wartime incarceration that affected Joe and nearly 120,000 others.

A small complaint: Christgau's habit of reporting growing pre-war hysteria may lead casual readers to accept stories—such as a Japanese diplomat traveling along the West Coast from Canada to Mexico contacting Japanese Americans in his spy ring—as true. He later clarifies that such rumors, which served as a justification for the mass incarceration, were unfounded.



Al Hikida  
Seattle Central Community College

### 18-3-0278

Feld, Marjorie N. *Lillian Wald: A Biography*. Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2009. 320 pp. ISBN 978-0-8078-3236-3, \$35.00.

A nurse and social welfare activist, Lillian Wald was known as the “Angel of Henry Street.” Feld leads us on the chronological journey that was Wald’s life.

One early and significant aspect was Wald’s Reform German-Jewish upbringing in upstate Rochester, New York. It remains fascinating how for positive historic figures, religion is often integral to their life story. Yet for negative historic figures, their religious or lack of religious training is either never mentioned or is a mere afterthought, swept under the proverbial rug.

Wald’s Reform Jewish beliefs set her apart from her fellow, though more traditional Jews at the Henry Street Settlement on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Wald was a trailblazer for a Reform Jewish/Protestant/Social Gospel approach to nursing, as well as home health care. Her knowledge and beliefs gave her the tools to be part of, yet at the same time separate from both the Jewish and the Christian worlds.

Also significant, though glossed over in other biographies, was Wald’s status as a lesbian. Her middle class status allowed her to live this lifestyle discreetly and without controversy. This was

something the poor people she was helping could only dream of.

Feld guides readers to reconsider labels and categories, such as ethnicity, nationality, citizenship, race, religion, and sexual orientation, as Wald herself did. Some of these terms contain very subtle differences. All are significant in understanding ourselves as well as others.

*Lillian Wald: A Biography* is well worth reading. Lillian Wald remains a person we should all learn about and can all learn from.

Richard Levik  
Los Angeles Unified School Dist.  
Founder, [www.theleviteline.com](http://www.theleviteline.com)

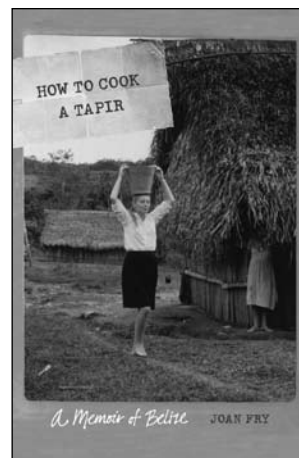
### 18-3-0279

Fry, Joan. *How to Cook a Tapir: A Memoir of Belize*. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2009. 294 pp. ISBN 978-0-8032-1903-8, \$24.95.

This book has wide appeal for readers who enjoy a coming-of-age story, a transforming journey involving travel, and a glimpse at another culture.

Fry writes a vividly refreshing tale of her youthful first marriage and her “working honeymoon” in Belize (then British Honduras). Included in the tale is the author’s struggle not only to cook but to cook completely outside of her own cultural experience. Included in the story are 22 recipes; some are not for the squeamish. Fry relates how she learned to make her own way among the Kekchi and Mopan Maya without much help from her anthropologist husband. Eventually the author, through teaching the villagers and their children English, respecting their culture, and learning to live and cook as they did, earned the respect of her neighbors.

Sprinkled throughout are recipes and photos, which make the memoir honest and lively. The story at times is gripping because Joan found herself alone among people who knew nothing about the idea of respecting one’s personal space. Particularly touching was a glimpse at the indigenous women who changed emotionally and socially while Joan was among them. At least two women confided in her, and that was a big step in their culture. Through cooking, teaching, and being an open spirit, Joan began to recognize the weaknesses in her own marriage. This is quite a tale, worthy of reading by a very broad audience.



Francine M. Apollo  
SUNY Cobleskill

### 18-3-0280

George, Nelson. *City Kid: A Writer's Memoir of Ghetto Life and Post Soul Success*. New York: Viking, 2009. 248 pp. ISBN 978-0-670-02036-2, \$25.95

George is a man of many talents—author of six novels and nine non-fiction books on African-American culture, recipient of two ASCAP-Deems Taylor awards and a Grammy, television writer and director, producer, and travel-show host. It is an impressive resume for a self-described nerd raised by a single mother in drug-infested New York City in the 1960s and '70s. His breakout years while writing for *Billboard* and *The Village Voice* make for great reading, as do his anecdotes about the early days of Spike Lee's film career and working with the likes of Queen Latifah, Bryant Gumbel, and Quincy Jones.

But the cultural salad bowl that influenced and inspired George is what makes *City Kid* a great read. How often does the reader find a memoir that can easily blend discussions of Hemingway and Kurosawa with Reggie Jackson and The Beastie Boys? Not just another "raised in the ghetto and made it big" autobiography, George's latest work, it is hoped, will find a wide audience. Recommended for all public and academic libraries.

Anthony J. Adam  
Prairie View A&M Univ

### 18-3-0281

Green, Tara T. *A Fatherless Child: Autobiographical Perspectives of African American Men*. Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 2009. 200 pp. ISBN 978-0-8262-1821-6, \$34.95.

The subject of absentee fathers has been studied, documented, and thoroughly debated in this country. Psychologists, economists, social anthropologists, and a host of social scientists have disseminated theories via the examination and study of secondary information about African-American fatherhood.

*A Fatherless Child* takes this debate to another level. The author reviews the subject matter through the examination of four autobiographical works of African-American literature. Richard Wright's *Black Boy*, Langston Hughes's *The Big Sea* and *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, and Barack Obama's *Dreams of My Father* give a multigenerational and historical perspective to the construct of fatherless homes. Each of the protagonists in those biographies was separated from his father by the time he was five years old.

Rather than focus on the effects of abandonment by a father, this text reveals four cases of a young man's search for identity and the process of building a positive self-image in spite of that loss. It is no coincidence that all of the subjects, seeking further understanding of themselves, their cultures, and their respective fathers, made sojourns to Africa at some point in their adult lives.

Above all this text shows that with the assistance of a caring and proactive community, a fatherless child can overcome a variety of obstacles and become a strong and successful individual. Recommended for college and university library collections.

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

### 18-3-0282

Greenspan, Ezra, ed. *William Wells Brown: A Reader*. Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 2008. 448 pp. ISBN 978-0-8203-3223-9,

\$64.95 (cl); 978-0-8203-3224-6, \$24.95 (pb).

Saint, Chandler B., and Krinsky, George A. *Making Freedom: The Extraordinary Life of Venture Smith*. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 2009. 200 pp. ISBN 978-0-8105-6879-3, \$22.95

These are two well-written and highly researched, annotated "sketches" of formerly enslaved individuals whose lives at one point paralleled each other, then diverged as one sought simply "to live the American dream" (98), while the other sought to fathom and describe American racism through an array of literary genres. All three writers have so personalized and given and/or allowed voice to their characters that the reader is enthralled and energized while being swept along on a literary carpet of sheer historical enlightenment.

Saint and Krinsky have put together a beginners' introduction to the slave narrative through their annotated, interpretive examination of the *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Venture, A Native of Africa* (1798). Captured and sold to Westerners in Africa, brought to British North America and enslaved in the North, Venture Smith's depiction grips the reader from beginning to end. The reader is left mesmerized by Smith's fortitude and perseverance in overcoming American racism, not only to purchase his own freedom and that of his family members and others, but to accumulate property, both on pre-revolutionary Long Island, New York, and in Haddam, Connecticut.

In spite of racism, Venture Smith sought and lived the American dream. In the words of James O. Horton who wrote the foreword to the book, "Venture Smith's story then is an important reminder of the power of slavery and race in the formation of the American story in all parts of the nation..." (xi). Venture Smith's tale, as Horton further states, "is a gift to all those who seek to understand the complex racial beginnings of America: It helps to connect the broad American story with the stories of many Americans whose lives illustrate the national struggle to live out the national ideals. The life of Venture Smith is the American story..." (xii-xiii). And as the authors stated so well, "Venture, who came to this country as a traded commodity, another man's property and investment, achieved success by becoming a trader in commodities with the very people and system that had subjugated him" (102).

*William Wells Brown: A Reader* is as captivatingly illuminating and energizing as *Making Freedom*. But unlike Venture Smith, William Wells Brown was a child of mixed Black and White parentage, literate, and a fugitive from his southern enslavement. Unlike Smith who is described as "A lifelong loner" (99), Brown sought the limelight, and rather than turn from the peculiar institution (slavery) and racism, he sought to decipher them through such literary genres as history, fiction, autobiography, drama, and memoir.

William Wells Brown was a literary genius, and despite his enslavement came out of it physically and mentally stronger, and with a fire that only his literary accomplishments could douse. In the compilation of his literary achievements, Brown was a first in many of the genres. For example, his own slave *Narrative of William W. Brown, a Fugitive Slave. Written by Himself* (1853); the play *The Escape* (1858); and his novel, *Clotel; or The President's Daughter: A Narrative of Slave Life in the United States* (1853) "demonstrate

his singularity among nineteenth-century African American writers" (x).

The power of Brown as an early African-American writer and the literary style used to explain the race question in nineteenth-century America is cogently summed up: "Brown bore knowingly in his own person and identity the Gordian knot of mixed black-white ancestry and used that knowledge as a basis of his writing. In his best work, such as *Narrative of William W. Brown* and *Clo-tel*, he unraveled its intricacies and complexities for all the reading public to see, transforming his personal agony into a compelling national drama containing within its folds the darkest psychosexual, genealogical secrets of American life" (xix).

Both books are suitable for readers at the high school and college levels, as well as the general reading public.

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

### 18-3-0283

Hollander, Inez. *Silenced Voices: Uncovering a Family's Colonial History in Indonesia*. Athens: Ohio Univ. Press, 2009. 278 pp. ISBN 978-0-89680-269-8, \$28.00 (pb).

In uncovering her family's hidden heritage in the East Indies, literary historian and biographer Hollander treads into territory largely uncharted in the Dutch school curriculum and media: the Dutch colonial past in that region—not an easy task, considering the restricted access and bureaucratic procedures she encountered in trying to obtain information from the war-related archives of Dutch governmental institutions. Nevertheless, Hollander succeeds in unraveling the secrets surrounding her family's past with the help of living relatives' accounts and through clever use of narratives from novelists, journalists, and biographers who were contemporaries of her grandparents and great-grandparents.

Beginning her story in Surabaya, Java, 1863, where her great-grandmother was born and raised, Hollander takes us on an arduous journey into the trials and triumphs of her family's colonial past, placed against the backdrop of the Great Depression, the Japanese invasion, the horrors of the Japanese internment camps, and the police actions, ultimately leading us to the harrowing truth surrounding the deaths of her great-uncle and his two daughters.

Hollander's inquisitive style, detailed documentation, and diligent research turn *Silenced Voices* into much more than just a family memoir—in breaking the code of silence, this book serves as a work of healing for all those who suffered directly or indirectly in the Indonesian war of independence. Her groundbreaking treatment of a subject that still remains something of a taboo in the Netherlands paves the way for a much broader, thought-provoking discussion about why the Dutch never fully acknowledged their colonial past in the East Indies.

Jantje Tielken  
East Hampton, Conn.

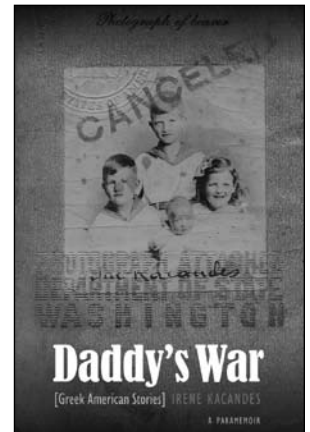
### 18-3-0284

Kacandes, Irene. *Daddy's War: Greek American Stories*. Lincoln: Univ.

of Nebraska Press, 2009. 408 pp. ISBN 978-0-8032-1933-5, \$29.95.

*Daddy's War* is an interesting hybrid of a book in which the perspective shifts several times. It is at once a primer on how to uncover historical facts, a personal memoir about family dynamics, and a meditation on the interconnection between historical events, cultural myths, and the effects of one generation's trauma on the next.

In uncovering and evaluating the stories she heard about her father's war experiences in Greece as a young boy during World War II, Kacandes, a professor of German and comparative literature at Dartmouth, is clearly influenced by her professional interest in the Holocaust. But while her investigation into her father's past begins with a tenuous connection to the Holocaust, it is his travails as a young boy trying to survive and to help his mother and siblings survive that she focuses on in her interviews with him and with other family members and friends. Kacandes is a skilled storyteller, and her style is warm and intimate. As her investigation unfolds, she allows the reader to accompany her in her search for truth by including transcripts of her interviews, accounts of her scrupulous fact checking, and her interpretations of her findings. Most interesting and perhaps most valuable is the insight she provides into the difficult and frustrating process of recovering the past.



Eva M. Sartori  
Univ. of Nebraska-Lincoln

### 18-3-0285

Kamata, Suzanne, ed. *Call Me Okaasan: Adventures in Multicultural Mothering*. Deadwood, Ore.: Wyatt-MacKenzie Publishing, 2009. 204 pp. ISBN 978-1-932279-33-7, \$16.00 (pb).

Most of us know some biracial children or parents. Usually we don't give them much thought unless we happen to be prejudiced. But how many of us know a multicultural family on a first name basis?

As parents we try to protect our children from the hurts of the world. Multicultural children face many of the same problems as biracial children. Sometimes they too are treated as different. Not quite fitting in, looking totally different from the rest of their family, can pose a hardship for a child.

The mothers in *Call Me Okaasan* tell of their experiences in raising multicultural children. In some families there was a need to learn a different language and a different culture. Food was an issue for some of the mothers. They wanted to make sure their children were familiar with their native food as well the food of their mothers' culture.

One tells of her two multicultural children. Although the children were from the same cultural background, they viewed life completely differently. While one child wanted to have a foot in his culture of origin, his sister had no interest in her birth culture

at all. In most cases, the mothers worried more about the cross-cultural experiences than the children did.

Kamata has produced an interesting book. I would suggest this book for young adults and older, to help understand culturally blended families and avoid awkward situations.

Charlie Spencer Lackey  
Duke Univ. Medical Center Library

### 18-3-0286

Martinez, David. *Dakota Philosopher: Charles Eastman and American Indian Thought*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2009. 224 pp. ISBN 978-0-87351-629-7, \$19.95 (pb).

Martinez has written a thoughtful and sympathetic biography of Eastman, an important Native American scholar, lecturer, and writer whose life and work spanned the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His work influenced both Indian and White leaders and politicians.

Eastman has been subject to recent revisionist criticism by some Native writers who believe that he was too willing to encourage compromise with the dominant American culture of the time. Martinez, however, refutes this claim through his in-depth analysis of Eastman's life and times.

Martinez believes that Eastman was perhaps ahead of his time in setting forth a Pan-Indian philosophy advocating that Native cultures become a part of American society but rejecting assimilation. He supports this view by presenting details of Eastman's life, including his interactions with White society and his unique position as a first-hand observer of the Wounded Knee Massacre (Eastman served as a government doctor on the Pine Ridge Reservation at the time of the attack).

Eastman's own writings illustrate his internal conflict and the complex ideas that led him to his conclusion that Native cultures could demand a place of significance in America. Martinez shows how Eastman's resolve to express his ideas took a toll on his (Eastman's) personal life and happiness.

*Dakota Philosopher* is an important addition to studies of this notable Native American. Recommended for academic and larger public libraries.

Andy J. Deering  
Central Wyoming College

### 18-3-0287

Orfalea, Gregory. *Angeleno Days: An Arab American Writer on Family, Place, and Politics*. Tucson: Univ. of Arizona Press, 2009. 224 pp. ISBN 978-0-8165-2773-1, \$17.95 (pb).

*Angeleno Days* is a collection of essays in which, as an Arab American, Orfalea explores his community and its political and social concerns. At a more personal level, Orfalea deals with the shocking tragedy that took the lives of his father and sister, a subject that leads him to also explore the issue of gun control. And, there's also his love for and his inner struggle with Los Angeles, the city of his childhood where he returns to teach.

"We are at a war with ourselves. We very much need—with the economy now collapsing—a second American revolution." Statements like this, courageously addressing such issues as the war in Iraq, Hezbollah, and Zionism, fill the pages of *Angeleno Days*, putting our thoughts and feelings—basically, our consciousness—to work.

Orfalea is a responsible author, making each word he puts on paper count so that neither he nor the reader is wasting their time. Instead, they are both confronting truths that need to be looked at.

Dena El-Saffar  
Bloomington, Ind.

### 18-3-0288

Pham, Andrew X. *The Eaves of Heaven: A Life in Three Wars*. New York: Crown/Harmony Books, 2008. 302 pp. ISBN 978-0-307-38120-0, \$24.95.

Andrew Pham adds "on behalf of my father, Thong Van Pham," after his own name on the title pages of this book, and in fact, *The Eaves of Heaven* is written as a memoir from Thong's first-person viewpoint. The three wars are presumably the Japanese invasion of Vietnam, the resistance to French occupation, and the U.S.-led war between North and South Vietnam, but this is really a story of almost continuous war, including the murderous rivalries between Vietnamese factions, communist and other, even during the Japanese occupation. Thong (through his son) reports idyllic memories of boyhood as the son of a wealthy Northern landowner, until the aftershocks of the Japanese invasion and the resistance against the French drive the remaining family first to Hanoi and then south as refugees in Saigon, where Thong gets enough education to become a schoolteacher, with love and marriage following. But conscription into the army leads to harrowing combat experiences and, following the American withdrawal from Saigon, imprisonment by the new government.

The author has chosen to go back and forth, chapter by chapter, between Thong's early life in the North and his later experiences in the South, rather than giving us a straightforward chronicle; thus each chapter contains a burst of intense impressions, whether fond memories or traumas, not just of war but of betrayal by certain friends and family members, not to mention government and army corruption. The style is novelistic, with passages of dialogue, historical data, and description surely not taken verbatim from the father; for example, a mid-autumn festival on Thong's uncle's estate is reported in lavish detail, from food to the subtleties of social rankings, though Thong was just a small boy at the time. The author excels in description, from a romantic meal of Vietnamese crepes and "milk-coffee" that the reader longs to savor (Andrew Pham has been a restaurant reviewer) to the most brutal depictions of starvation and battlefield carnage.

Joseph Milicia  
Univ. of Wisconsin-Sheboygan

### 18-3-0289

Price, Joann F. *Barack Obama: The Voice of an American Leader*.

Santa Barbara, Calif.: Greenwood, 2009. 224 pp. ISBN 978-0-313-36236-1, \$35.00.

The election of Barack Obama as the 44th president of the United States has spurred a plethora of publishing and educational opportunities. The unprecedented enthusiasm and interest in the political process continues as the Obama presidency moves forward.

*Barack Obama: The Voice of an American Leader* is uniquely written and arranged. The 2008 campaign is reviewed in the text through eight chapters covering themes related to the campaign. Each chapter includes detailed quotations of candidate Obama on a variety of salient subjects, such as community activism, youth voting, heritage, and state of Illinois and national political issues. This is essentially a book of quotations, combined with current political events. The chapters have an introduction, followed by text interspersed with quotes by then Senator Obama, and conclude with bibliographic notes from books, journals, and web sites.

Recommended for community colleges, schools, and general audiences. This is a strong secondary choice in a flurry of publications about President Obama.

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

#### 18-3-0290

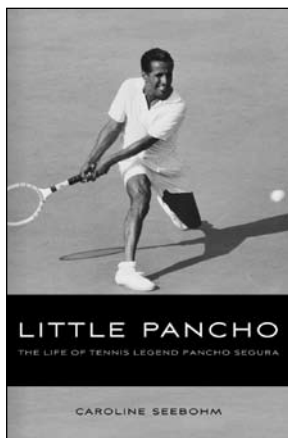
Seebohm, Caroline. *Little Pancho: The Life of Tennis Legend Pancho Segura*. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2009. 264 pp. ISBN 978-0-8032-2041-6, \$26.95.

Pancho Segura was an elite tennis player. Growing up in poverty in Ecuador, this short man—but excellent athlete—came to the United States, where he won three tennis championships at the University of Miami. Later, he became a successful professional tennis player.

I remember him as an outstanding professional who hit his forehand with two hands. However, many people have probably never heard of him. Instead, they have heard of Jimmy Connors, whom Segura coached. This book, with its many black-and-white photographs, gives us insights into this neglected tennis star.

Seebohm does a fine job of telling Segura's life story, especially his life in tennis, and lets us see how professional tennis was years ago, before it achieved general acceptance. The professional tennis players are described as essentially barnstormers, traveling frequently, going from city to city, and country to country, sometimes using a portable tennis court that they transported for use in places that had no acceptable court.

Life was not easy for Segura, but his love of tennis and his high skill level made him pursue tennis as his life's work. He was a very successful player, both as an amateur and as a professional. The book provides us not only with a good story of how a determined immigrant succeeded in his new country, but a darn good sports



story as well.

Russell Eisenman  
Univ. of Texas—Pan American

#### 18-3-0291

van Voorst van Beest, Jan Pieter, and Nyhan, Pat. *New Mainers: Portraits of Our Immigrant Neighbors*. Gardiner, Me.: Tilbury House, 2009. 154 pp. Illus. with photos by Jan Pieter van Voorst van Beest. Foreword by Reza Jalali. ISBN 978-0-88448-312-0, \$20.00 (pb).

A recent hostage-taking and a shooting involving a Vietnamese immigrant may make some people wary of others with similar ancestry, or give fodder to immigration opponents. So may a tough economy in which immigrants are believed to be taking jobs away from U.S.-born workers.

The reality is far more complex. Perpetrators of mass shootings come from all backgrounds, and immigrants are as likely to bring jobs to others in a community as take them away. *New Mainers* explores how immigrants, particularly ones from Asia, have contributed to the vibrancy of the state and its economic growth.

The mostly Southeast Asian immigrants portrayed in *New Mainers* are hardworking and industrious. They earn enough to support their families in the United States and share with relatives back home. Their home life and work ethic have made their neighbors proud.

The author also doesn't shy away from the negative. The new citizens profiled speak of having been addressed with racist epithets and shunned in the classroom and in civic organizations at first. But the families persevered, and the result is some 25 twenty-first-century "rags to riches" stories that involve not only material success but also turning prejudice into acceptance and isolation into becoming an integral part of schools and communities. This exceptional book, complete with photos of its subjects, is highly recommended for all readers, high school and up.

Renee Rude  
St. Cloud State Univ.

#### 18-3-0292

Zamora, Gloria. *Sweet Nata: Growing Up in Rural New Mexico*. Albuquerque: Univ. of New Mexico Press, 2009. 230 pp. ISBN 978-0-8263-4634-6, \$24.95.

This is a charming book written in the voice of a very young woman. It could have been written from the author's own diary pages. The short stories cover Zamora's life into her early teen years.

Zamora was left with her maternal grandparents for about four years, from the time she was a toddler until she was six. Very probably this was a financial decision made by her parents; Zamora comes from a large family. Instead of feeling abandoned, Zamora tells the story of beloved grandparents who taught her much about country living. Readers who cherish the memory of their own immigrant grandparents will enjoy reading about this lovely rela-

tionship. At age six, Zamora is returned to her parents to attend school. She tells of how she was thrust into a family she hardly knew, a neighborhood that was not familiar, and a town society that was very different from her country upbringing. By all accounts in the essays, Zamora adjusted very well. Children are resilient and flourish with care and love, and the reader will sense it.

The teen years are always full of great joy, pitfalls, and confusion. Events in Zamora's life during those years were even more serious. She lost those cherished grandparents; first her grandmother, "Gramma," died, as she recounts in "Crumbling Ground." Just a few short months later, her grandfather, "Grampa," passed.

This collection of essays is about family, both nuclear and extended; the lines blur in ethnic communities. It is also about Mexican-American culture, remembering heritage, and coming of age in the 1960s. There is something here for many readers.

Francine M. Apollo  
SUNY Cobleskill

## History

### 18-3-0293

Berry, Mary Frances. *And Justice for All: The United States Commission on Civil Rights and the Continuing Struggle for Freedom in America*. New York: Knopf, 2009. 425 pp. ISBN 978-0-307-26320-9, \$30.00.

Berry has written a comprehensive history of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights from its inception in 1957 through 2006. Because she was a member of the commission for nearly 25 years and its chair during the Clinton administration, she writes from an insider's perspective. She is intimately familiar with many of the issues covered in this work, but this involvement also makes her objectivity suspect. Most readers will not be interested in her account of the ideological battles and partisan squabbles that dominated the commission's agenda since President Ronald Reagan loaded the body with conservative appointees.

During the Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson administrations, however, the commission functioned as an independent watchdog and national conscience on civil rights. Berry's account of these early years, when its hearings and impartial reports influenced federal policy and shaped legislation, is much more interesting. Since those heady days, although its mandate has expanded, its impact and significance have diminished.

*And Justice for All* describes some riveting moments when the commissioners heard directly from victims of discrimination in public hearings, but far too much of the book is devoted to a tedious recitation of political infighting of interest to few people other than the author.

### 18-3-0294

Buffington, Robert, and Piccato, Pablo, eds. *True Stories of Crime in Modern Mexico*. Albuquerque: Univ. of New Mexico Press, 2009. 276 pp. ISBN 978-0-8263-4529-5, \$27.95 (pb).

Very rarely does one read a history book that is well written, intellectually stimulating, thought-provoking, and so fascinating that it is difficult to put down.

Eight essays cover six famous murder cases, a seventh involves infanticide, and another focuses on definitions of insanity. These remarkable cases reflected cultural clashes in Mexican society from 1897 to 1937, the period of the "Porfiriato" leading up to the great revolution and subsequent conflicts of the post-revolutionary era.

Cases of female murderers are particularly interesting in that they deal with changing gender roles and the issue of honor killings: a 14-year-old girl kills a politician to avenge her father, a prostitute murders a rival over love, a beauty queen, Miss Mexico, shoots her husband, a Mexican revolutionary general. These cases are as intriguing as anything on *Law and Order* and *Criminal Minds*. Conflict between church and state is reflected in the tale of the kidnapping and murder of a wealthy landowner's ten-year-old son.

Essays examine the nature of criminal narratives, the portrayal of crimes in popular presses and broadsheets, legal techniques, and shifting alliances within Mexican society.

What is incredible about this book is that it not only provided insights into Mexican history, but it also made me reflect about other areas: How Mexico during the 1920s and '30s compared to pre-Civil War Spain, the nature of crime reporting on American television, and the superficial explanations of drug wars along the U.S./Mexican border, devoid of social, economic, and cultural contexts.

If you want to learn about an overlooked aspect of Mexican history or just enjoy reading about crime, this is an interesting and enlightening book, recommended with enthusiasm!

Rick Sirvint  
West Hartford, Conn.

### 18-3-0295

Doniger, Wendy. *The Hindus: An Alternative History*. New York: The Penguin Press, 2009. 780 pp. ISBN 978-1-59420-205-6, \$35.00.

Doniger offers an important new history of Hinduism beyond the standard survey of the religion or of Indian history. Her book looks at the ways that those who were not among the religious elite contributed to the development of this diverse, ancient, and living religion.

She particularly focuses on how women, members of the lower

castes, and animals affected the growth of Hinduism. She does this by looking at sources beyond what most English-speaking scholars consider the standard canon of Hindu sources, which is important when studying Hinduism in particular since Hinduism's scripture resists canonization more than many other religions. And she does this without trying to force a Western paradigm onto an ancient Eastern religion, a common pitfall of scholars examining non-canonical texts of religions.

This book is written by an erudite expert in Hinduism, but Doniger's writing is so accessible and enjoyable that general readers with an interest in India or Hinduism will enjoy the book and be able to glean much valuable information. For those studying Hinduism, the book should be right at the top of their reading list. Rarely is such an important book so enjoyable a read.

Elizabeth Redkey  
Siena College, Loudonville, N.Y.

### 18-3-0296

Egerton, Douglas R. *Death or Liberty: African Americans and Revolutionary America*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009. 342 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-530669-9, \$29.95.

In 1939 opera singer Marian Anderson was not allowed to perform in Constitution Hall in the nation's capital because of her African ancestry. Apparently the leadership of the Daughters of the American Revolution, which sponsored the event, was under the misimpression that African Americans played no role in the American Revolution other than as the enslaved. In response to the Daughters' decision, Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of the president, resigned her membership and used her influence to get permission for Anderson to perform on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. *Death or Liberty* is a succinct though sweeping narrative of the true participatory role of African descendants in the Revolutionary era.

Edgerton opens eight of his ten chapters with snapshots of significant African Americans who mirrored that quest for true freedom. Among them are Quok Walker and Mum Bett, who sued for freedom in a court of law in Massachusetts; William Lee, manservant to George Washington; Olaudah Equiano, an allegedly African-born Atlantic Creole illuminator of his time; freeman Felix Holbrook of Boston, Massachusetts, who petitioned the governor and state legislature for the manumission of the enslaved; and Colonel Tye (Titus of Monmouth, New Jersey), Lamuel Haynes (Massachusetts), and other African-American combatants who fought either as Loyalists or Patriots. Then, there were the armed resisters to slavery—Denmark Vesey and Gabriel Prosser.

Perhaps it is one of the book's final chapters that accounts for the mind-set that gripped the Daughters back in 1939. The ninth chapter addresses the rampant nature of "Racism in the Early Republic" and its effect in fashioning the 1787 Constitution that left White Americans more equal than their revolutionary Black compatriots who fought and died for that very equality soon denied them. Although African descendants in their quest for freedom "had shaped political policies [during the Revolutionary period] as much as they had been shaped by them..." the author concludes, "[the] American Revolution ... in the end proved to be far from

radical, and ... failed to fulfill its promise of freedom to one-fifth of the Republic's population" (pp. 275, 281).

The book is suitable for readers at both the high school and college levels as well as the general public.

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

### 18-3-0297

Evans, William McKee. *Open Wound: The Long View of Race in America*. Champaign: Univ. of Illinois Press, 2009. 344 pp. ISBN 978-0-252-03427-5, \$34.95.

Evans takes the long view of American history to narrate three historic periods that provided an opening for idealists to challenge the racial system that was and still is evolving in the United States today. His book chronicles the time of slavery before the introduction of Africans when Native people were enslaved by the Spanish, Portuguese, and English. Evans suggests that the importation of Africans as lifetime slaves was a critical beginning of the racial system in America.

The three historic periods when the developing racial system was challenged, according to Evans, were during the American Revolution, during the "irrepressible conflict" that ended in the Civil War, and during the liberation movements of the mid-twentieth century. While there was a degree of change at each of these times, it was not enough to bring significant and lasting change in the racial system. He indicates that in this growing class-based society, African Americans remain in poverty and in the bottom stratum of society. Evans predicts a new crisis on the horizon that may provide yet another opportunity in which African Americans may be central.

This is a well-written, thoroughly researched, and well-documented work that demonstrates the author's broad expertise. It is an excellent text for use in any history class covering the span of events in American history as well as in any African-American history course.

Diana Budhai  
Excelsior College, Albany, N.Y.

### 18-3-0298

Johnson, James W. *The Dandy Dons: Bill Russell, K.C. Jones, Phil Woolpert, and One of College Basketball's Greatest and Most Innovative Teams*. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2009. 284 pp. ISBN 978-0-8032-1877-2, \$19.95 (pb).

Yep, Kathleen S. *Outside the Paint: When Basketball Ruled at the Chinese Playground*. Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 2009. 224 pp. ISBN 978-1-59213-942-2, \$25.00.

These two books are excellent for basketball fans and also for anyone who wants to understand some previous United States history regarding racial issues: African Americans in the Johnson book and Chinese in the Yep book. Both books discuss basketball teams and players, with the Johnson book telling about the University of San Francisco and how it won national championships in

1955 and 1956 with some African-American players, most notably Bill Russell and K.C. Jones, who both went on to fame as professional basketball players.

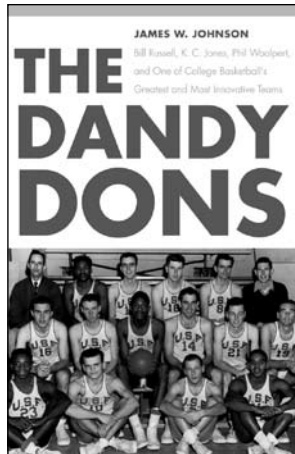
In 1966, Texas Western won the national basketball championship over Kentucky using a starting lineup of all African-American players. This received a lot of publicity in recent times, including a movie. However, the private Catholic school of the University of San Francisco had used African-American players to help win a basketball championship two years in a row, a decade before the Texas Western success. The Johnson book tells a very good, readable story about Phil Woolpert, an excellent coach most people have never heard of, and how his Dons played great basketball, even though they had to practice in a high school gym. The book points out that many people felt he should not have recruited African-American players, and certainly that he should not start more than two at a time. Also of interest is the conflict he and Bill Russell had. Woolpert didn't want Russell to jump to block shots ("don't jump on offense or defense" was the prevailing teaching at that time), and Russell disagreed. Russell obeyed his coach to some extent, but also disobeyed him in order to be an effective shot-blocker.

The Yep book shows that the Chinese in San Francisco were segregated and confined to Chinatown. But playing basketball gave them opportunities typically not available to the Chinese of that time, including traveling to places they would normally not have been able to visit. Many working-class Chinese, both female (on women's teams) and male, played on teams that allowed them to show that Chinese could play quality basketball, with—according to the book—their excellent dribbling and fast ball movement, both of which most White teams did not use. Although many of the Chinese teams were composed mostly of working-class boys or girls, there were also nonworking-class Chinese basketball players too, who then had opportunities to see the world beyond their segregated communities.

Both of these books show how basketball served as a means of opening up the world to minorities in the United States. They are excellent stories of sports and the success that sports allowed. In the case of the University of San Francisco, a small Jesuit school (not to be confused with the public college, San Francisco State University), national prominence came to the school as it won two national college basketball championships. For the Chinese in the Yep volume, success was more of a personal than a national triumph, but it was also quite valuable to the players involved. Both books show the effects of discrimination and how basketball helped some to overcome it, at least in part.

These two books are recommended as excellent sports stories and for providing information about lesser-known moments in U.S. history.

Russell Eisenman  
Univ. of Texas–Pan American



### 18-3-0299

Josephson, Barney, with Terry Trilling-Josephson. *Cafe Society: The Wrong Place for the Right People*. Champaign: Univ. of Illinois Press, 2009. 456 pp. ISBN 978-0-252-03413-8, \$32.95.

This is the story of Barney Josephson, the founder of Cafe Society – Downtown, Cafe Society – Uptown, and The Cookery. It gives a realistic picture of the New York nightclub scene of the 1930s and '40s. One learns about Josephson's life and how he got into this business in the first place. He draws a vivid picture of social and racial conditions of that era when Black and White performers couldn't appear on stage together and when Black audiences were restricted, if not totally forbidden, from attending these performances. Josephson's clubs would not abide these rules. The McCarthy era and the Blacklist brought his clubs to an ugly end, both for Josephson and many of his artists. From there, we follow the rise and fall of The Cookery.

There are interesting glimpses of the artists who performed in these clubs as seen through the eyes of the author. The list goes from Billie Holiday through Alberta Hunter.

This book will be of particular interest to jazz fans for whom the performing artists are of special interest. Still, it is lacking in a well-rounded view of the people involved. For the most part, it reads like a chronological list of attractions without much depth or insight. We also learn that Josephson is a well-liked, kind person, but we never learn why many people, especially his own family, turned on him.

Ruth Becker  
Forest Hills, N.Y.

### 18-3-0300

Litwack, Leon F. *How Free Is Free?* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2009. 187 pp. ISBN 978-0-674-03152-4, \$18.95.

*How Free Is Free?* consists of three essays originally delivered as lectures at Harvard University. In them historian Litwack explores the meaning of freedom in post-emancipation America. The first, "High Water Everywhere," analyzes the social and emotional impact of "the indignities, humiliation, and violence" Blacks endured during the Jim Crow era. He documents both their accommodation to these repressive conditions and the "extraordinary resilience" they displayed. The second, "Never Turn Back," examines the African-American experience during World War II. Litwack contends that these years were a critical turning point, "motivating blacks to take charge of their own lives and destinies." He describes the war years as "the first shot in ... the Civil Rights Revolution." The final essay, "Fight the Power," focuses on the civil rights movement and its consequences. Despite sweeping changes in race relations wrought by the movement, Litwack charges that the United States never experienced the fundamental transformation needed to root out racial inequality. Forty-five years after Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech, African Americans still contend with concentrated urban poverty, segregated schools, extreme rates of incarceration, and pervasive anger and despair. The book's final sentence quotes an unnamed Black activist who says, "Everything has changed, but nothin' has changed."

Litwack writes with grace, eloquence, and restrained indignation. These essays are thoroughly researched and capture a variety of Black voices in letters, interviews, news articles, poems, and, most poignantly, blues lyrics. This little book is well worth reading.

Paul T. Murray  
Siena College, Loudonville, N.Y.

### 18-3-0301

Newkirk, Pamela, ed. *Letters from Black America*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2009. 374 pp. ISBN 978-0-374-10109-1, \$30.00.

Letter writing has become all but a lost art, along with cursive handwriting. Newkirk, a journalism professor at New York University, returns us to a lost era with this collection of approximately 200 letters on such topics as education, war, and literature written by Black Americans over the past two centuries. Many of the writers are well-known, with relatively few ordinary people featured. Considering the histories of letter writing and Black America, it is not surprising that most of the pieces here were written between 1900 and 1940, with few before the Civil War.

Some explanatory material is included, but for the most part the letters speak for themselves. *Letters from Black America* is designed more for a casual browse—pick out a page at random and just enjoy the art of letter writing. Although not scholarly or deep by any means, Newkirk's collection is worth purchasing by academic and public libraries for its ability to show the breadth of the nation's heritage, as library collections are too often top-heavy with letters by White Americans.

Anthony J. Adam  
Prairie View A&M Univ.

### 18-3-0302

Sugrue, Thomas J. *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North*. New York: Random House, 2008. 688 pp. ISBN 978-0-679-64303-6, \$35.00.

Most works about the civil rights movement focus on the South. Images of the Montgomery bus boycott, the Little Rock Nine, the sit-ins, the Freedom Rides, and fire hoses blasting Birmingham demonstrators are justly famous. Sugrue reminds the reader that the African-American struggle for civil rights was not confined to the southern states. In virtually every northern community with a sizeable Black population, African-American citizens encountered hostility and discrimination. Faced with blocked opportunities, they responded with organized protest movements, sometimes working with White allies, many times working alone.

*Sweet Land of Liberty* presents a sweeping chronicle of northern civil rights activism, starting with the proletarian protests of the Depression era and extending to battles over affirmative action in the 1980s. Sugrue's scope is broad—he covers employment discrimination, segregated schooling, police brutality, open housing, welfare rights, and electoral politics. He calls attention to the work

of forgotten activists such as Paul Zuber who sued to desegregate schools, Clarence Funnye who demanded that General Motors open up more jobs to Blacks, and “Queen Mother” Audley Moore who challenged Whites to pay reparations for centuries of slavery and discrimination.

Northern civil rights activism brought mixed results. Despite a growing Black middle class, racial inequality remains deeply entrenched in northern cities and African Americans are heavily concentrated in desperately poor ghettos. Integrated education is an unattainable dream for most Black students, and stable integrated neighborhoods are rare. Black politicians have gained control of several major cities, but the governments they head are plagued with unsolvable economic problems.

*Sweet Land of Liberty* is based on massive research. This is not a work for the casual reader, but one that will stand for decades as the definitive study of civil rights in the North.

Paul T. Murray  
Siena College, Loudonville, N.Y.

### 18-3-0303

West, Elliott. *The Last Indian War: The Nez Perce Story*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009. 432 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-513675-3, \$27.95.

There are many compelling stories in America's long history of conflict with Native Peoples, and one of the most heroic and poignant is that of Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce. West offers a capable retelling of this tale.

A history professor at the University of Arkansas, West has written a thorough and very readable account of the Nez Perce from the pre-contact era to the 1920s, focusing on missionary and settler encroachment on Nez Perce land and the inevitable clash that resulted. Though the story of the brave but doomed struggle has been told many times, West brings new vibrancy to the account by bringing to life the characters on both sides of the conflict. In doing so he reveals the complexity of the participants and avoids simple characterization. For example, he suggests that General Oliver Howard, long seen as a reluctant conqueror with great admiration for his antagonist, may have had his own reasons for portraying Joseph as a fierce and noble warrior. In fact, Joseph was a brilliant tactician, but other leaders, such as Looking Glass and Yellow Wolf, may have been the greater warriors. By praising Joseph, Howard was also aggrandizing himself.

*The Last Indian War* is also notable for including often-overlooked points of view on the conflict. Useful additions to the work are a time line of Nez Perce history, illustrations, and copious notes. This is an important addition to the history of the Plateau Tribes and a useful contribution to works on westward expansion. Recommended for all academic and larger public libraries.

Andy J. Deering  
Central Wyoming College

*Religion*

### 18-3-0304

Burrow, Rufus, Jr. *Martin Luther King Jr. for Armchair Theologians*. Nashville, Tenn.: Presbyterian Publishing Corp., 2009. 194 pp. Illus. by Ron Hill. ISBN 978-0-664-23284-9, \$16.95 (pb).

The newest title in the Armchair Series is a fresh translation of the life of Dr. King. Burrow's research is thorough as he depicts King's life, from growing up as a child whose mother shaped and instilled his sense of morality to the many racist regimes he confronted during the civil rights movement. Chapters describe the numerous boycotts and activists that King worked with and profile those who inspired his principles and theologies. Burrow recounts the stories of several children that King met during his protests and marches. Drawing on a number of scholarly works, as is evident from the copious endnotes, the book offers dialogue taken from other sources analyzing King's nonviolent approach to what the author believes would be his views today on women's rights, capital punishment, and homosexuality.

Enhanced with black-and-white illustrations that flow throughout the chapters, the text is easy to read, making this book appealing to a broad audience, especially students and adults seeking a basic introduction to the life and works of Dr. King. Burrow is Indiana professor of Christian Thought and professor of Theological Social Ethics at Christian Theological Seminary. He is the author of numerous other books on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Purchase where needed.

Ida D. McGhee  
Univ. of Rhode Island

## Education

### 18-3-0305

Kohl, Herbert. *The Herb Kohl Reader: Awakening the Heart of Teaching*. New York: The New Press, 2009. 336 pp. ISBN 978-1-59556-420-5, \$19.95 (pb).

*The Herb Kohl Reader* is a powerful volume of writing that includes "36 Children, Growing Minds," "I Won't Learn from You," and many other selections taken from several of Kohl's over 40 books and fueled by his four decades of teaching experiences in various contexts. The essence of Kohl's work—he is a National Book Award-winning author and seasoned social justice educator—is to use education as a part of the struggle for social justice. Moreover, Kohl's commitment to justice is not separate from the classroom.

*The Herb Kohl Reader* is divided into four sections. The first explains Kohl's journey to becoming an effective teacher, beginning with some spectacular failures. The second includes strategies for planning and developing curriculum content, and teaching cultural and print literacy. In the third, Kohl discusses how to educate your own children in the context of a life devoted to social

justice and the complex and often difficult task of finding balance between raising one's own children and teaching other people's children. And in the fourth and last section, Kohl shares his speculations on the sociology of education, learning, and politics—his latest thinking about pressing pedagogical issues today. Since his first teaching job as a fifth-grade public school teacher in 1962 on the West Side of Manhattan, Kohl has had "faith that every student has a core of creativity and decency that can be elicited through education." *The Herb Kohl Reader* offers wisdom and practical guidance for parents, teachers, and other school officials, especially those who are committed to parenting and teaching that nurtures creativity, intellectual sophistication, and democratic citizenship.

Linda Rhone  
Newman Univ.

### 18-3-0306

Neuman, Susan B. *Changing the Odds for Children at Risk: Seven Essential Principles of Educational Programs That Break the Cycle of Poverty*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Greenwood/Praeger, 2009. 228 pp. ISBN 978-0-313-36222-4, \$44.95.

Almost from the start of this book, Neuman gets the reader's attention with some rather startling data: 6.7 percent of the U.S. population lives in desperately poor areas of the country, therefore affecting a rather significant number of children. However, even with that known, all of the educational reforms over the past 40 years—even the recently vaunted No Child Left Behind—have failed to close the achievement gap affecting these impoverished children who enter our schools every year. In Neuman's words, "more platitudes than solutions" have been offered in helping these children. The author also reminds us that when children are born into poverty in this country, they are likely to stay there for the rest of their lives. Reading such things isn't easy, when we all know that America is a nation of plenty, with a resolve to accomplish anything. So that is the startling beginning of the book. Rather dire I must say. Then the author rolls up her writing sleeves and gives us solutions to the problems in what turns out to be an awe-inspiring read.

Neuman writes a practical book of solutions, as offered through her "seven essentials" for changing the odds for at-risk kids and their families. These aren't theories. These are principles of educational programs that are proving themselves to work in several different places around the country. That is what I liked so much about reading this book. It is filled with telling the reader what can happen if the author's seven principles are followed. The reader is actually given real places to contact to see if these things are actually happening. More importantly, her work is backed up by data that proves these principles do work. The only question I have is, why hasn't this made it into the hands of those in Washington, D.C., who make all the decisions? This is even more surprising since Neuman formerly served as U.S. Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education. Her ideas are the type of educational stimulus plan needed to save the futures of millions of young Americans who otherwise may perish.

Henry C. Griffith, Sr.  
Powell, Ohio

State Univ. of New York Press, 2009. 248 pp. ISBN 978-0-7914-7673-4, \$89.50 (cl); 978-0-7914-7674-1, \$24.95 (pb).

### 18-3-0307

Smrekar, Claire E., and Goldring, Ellen B., eds. *From the Courtroom to the Classroom: This Shifting Landscape of School Desegregation*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Education Press, 2009. 370 pp. Foreword by Ronald F. Ferguson. ISBN 978-1-934742-21-1, \$54.95 (cl); 978-1-934742-20-4, \$26.95 (pb).

The common theme in this collection of articles is “unitary status.” Readers should get an understanding of what the term means, as its impact on the twenty-first-century American educational landscape has already been quite significant, and it may continue to be so.

Contributor Jerome E. Morris uses the compelling phrase, “the symbolic power of Brown,” in reference to the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision. This book of essays allows the reader to learn how the American public school system has progressed and regressed through court decisions over five decades, with the *Brown* decision being the measure of progress and “unitary status” the measure of regression.

To decide that a district should be granted “unitary status” is difficult when, according to a *Yale Law Journal* article, “Unclear Standards Create an Unclear Future: Developing a Better Definition of Unitary Status” [Monika L. Moore, Nov, 2002]: “The Supreme Court has clearly stated that “from the very first, federal supervision of local school systems was intended as a temporary measure to remedy past discrimination ... The Court has given little guidance, however, as to when lower courts should release schools from the court orders requiring them to execute desegregation plans” (7).

As the contributors here argue, the problem occurs when the courts disassociate themselves from districts that have shown discriminatory practices in the past, and grant them this subjective “unitary status,” at which point those districts return to the pre-Brown segregated ways of doing business. As such, the education of children academically and socially is suffering.

The tentative changing faces at the Supreme Court with President Obama’s selections may have an impact on these matters as described in this book, as surely more of these cases will come before the court over the next few years. It is well worth our while, therefore, not only to familiarize ourselves with the older cases, but also to become court watchers.

Henry C. Griffith, Sr.  
Powell, Ohio

In the introduction, Everett declares that “The focus of this project is on early instances of African diasporic engagements with cyberspace.” She expands her thesis through chapters such as: “Toward a Theory of the Egalitarian Technosphere: How Wide Is the Digital Divide?” and “The Revolution Will Be Digitized: Reimagining Africinity in Cyberspace.” Throughout, Everett aims to explain why she is both hopeful and discouraged by the level of engagement either enjoyed by or denied to African Americans in the digital sphere.

While the thesis is compelling, I found the book written in a style that is difficult to comprehend. Here is one sentence from the “Serious Play: Playing with Race in Contemporary Gaming Culture” chapter, on p. 123: “Even taking into account poststructuralist deconstructions of the signifier-signified meaning loop, cinema studies theories of excess that destabilizes certitude in image construction, and cultural studies’ advancement of resistant spectatorship and reception, these recognitions of the polysemous nature of signs and signification do little to dislodge the fact that privileged cultural ideologies are the ‘transcendent signifiers’ or points of reference from which they all depart.”

Clearly well-researched, with copious end notes and list of references, this book may be of use to advanced students who are examining the African-American experience with cyberspace, but I would not recommend it for a general audience.

Sue Ann Gardner  
Univ. of Nebraska–Lincoln

## Social And Political Sciences

### 18-3-0309

Bird, Stephanie Rose. *Light, Bright, and Damned Near White: Biracial and Triracial Culture in America*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Greenwood/Praeger, 2009. 150 pp. ISBN 978-0-275-98954-5, \$27.95.

Have you ever met someone and from looking at them or listening to them you could not tell their ethnic background? This work tells of various biracial and triracial people in this country who have been on the receiving end of this confusion or curiosity.

There are those who were African American and passed for White, and those who were Caucasian and passed for African American. Many of the people featured in this book are a mixture of African American, Caucasian, and Indian. People of mixed ethnic groups have often been referred to by ugly names. In many cases families have been divided by color, some passing for Caucasian, others considering themselves African American.

Those who are caught in the color web often experience hard-

## Science And Technology

### 18-3-0308

Everett, Anna. *Digital Diaspora: A Race for Cyberspace*. Albany:

ships. Some live in fear of being discovered. Others find it difficult to relate well to either ethnic group of which they are a part.

This work contains some interesting information regarding race and multiracial identity. For example, there is the story of a set of twins born to an African-American mother and a German father. One twin looked like the father with blue eyes and pale skin, while the other looked exactly like the mother, with chocolate skin and dark eyes. There is only a one in a million chance that this can happen.

Based on interviews and case studies, this book presents much information that is new, insightful, and fascinating. It is easy reading and could be appreciated by anyone from high school and on.

Charlie Spencer Lackey  
Duke Univ. Medical Center Library

### 18-3-0310

Bullard, Robert D., and Wright, Beverly, eds. *Race, Place, and Environmental Justice After Hurricane Katrina: Struggles to Reclaim, Rebuild, and Revitalize New Orleans and the Gulf Coast*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2009. 312 pp. Foreword by Marc H. Morial. ISBN 978-0-8133-4424-9, \$32.00 (pb).

Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans almost four years ago. This collection of essays edited by two leaders of the environmental justice movement examines problems related to the attempts to rebuild, particularly in the poorer neighborhoods, those hit hardest by the storm. These 12 essays, plus an afterword by the editors, approach post-hurricane New Orleans from a standpoint of race relations, asking why some communities get left behind in the recovery efforts and what steps can be taken to improve such situations in the future.

The essays are uniformly excellent and scholarly, citing a wide variety of sources, and are thus aimed toward an audience of policymakers and scholars rather than the general public. However, for the wealth of data amassed here, this work is a fine addition to urban studies and environmental collections, along with Levitt and Whitaker's collection *Hurricane Katrina: America's Unnatural Disaster* (Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2009).

Anthony J. Adam  
Prairie View A&M Univ.

### 18-3-0311

Grant-Thomas, Andrew, and Orfield, Gary, eds. *Twenty-First Century Color Lines: Multiracial Change in Contemporary America*. Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 2009. 336 pp. ISBN 978-1-59213-692-6, \$24.95 (pb).

Promoting recognition of diversity means more than smiling sweetly to people of other ethnicities or physical appearance. A commitment to multiculturalism means knowing the realities of American life and something of the process for moving forward to a more just and equitable society. The gains in civil rights during the second half of the twentieth century were real but have to be reviewed and understood anew in the changed atmosphere of the

twenty-first. This is what Grant-Thomas, Orfield, and their collaborators do in their important and revealing papers growing out of the Harvard Civil Rights Project. The resulting book is based on extensive research but looks to practical programs and solutions.

*Twenty-First Century Color Lines* is a combination of thoughtful and wide-ranging essays on the United States and insightful chapters on particular situations. Throughout, the emphasis is on racial and ethnic communities but could be easily expanded to include other groups such as the disabled. All the papers share an interest in promoting a progressive culture yet also rely on detailed real-life research. The extensive and up-to-date bibliographies provide informed entry into a wide spectrum of materials and publications.

Grant-Thomas, Nancy McArdle, Nilanjana Dasgupta, and John a. powell [sic] open with illuminating and detailed assessments of American multiracialism. Maria Rosario Jackson is representative of the other writers on specific racial situations in pointing out that public involvement of disadvantaged groups in multicultural activities provide "a means not only for commemorating their history but [also] for repairing and rebuilding their roots in the United States" while "strengthening or re-establishing" historic ties to their origins (230).

The United States has greatly benefited over the last 50 years by promoting integration and by allowing minorities of whatever stripe—based on color, physical ability, language status, geographic location, and so on—to participate more fully in the national dream. Removing the remaining barriers of prejudice and structural disparities can only help America and its people to prosper. This book is highly recommended for all professional collections.

Patrick M. Valentine  
East Carolina Univ.

### 18-3-0312

Riley, Jason L. *Let Them In: The Case for Open Borders*. New York: Gotham Books, 2008. 244 pp. ISBN 978-1-592-40349-3, \$22.50.

Riley's study is a welcome addition to our understanding of the role of the immigrant at a time when politicians and radio commentators bombard audiences with shrill denunciations of unauthorized immigrants. The author, a member of the *New York Times* editorial board presents a libertarian argument in favor of allowing the unauthorized to stay. The work begins with a historical examination of the anti-immigrant movement going as far back as the 1890s, linking it to the anti-population and eugenics movements which sought to preserve the supremacy of the dominant ethnic groups. Riley also examines the insidious and highly sophisticated attempt by the anti-immigrant lobby to take over the contemporary environmental movement, citing efforts by the racist Pioneer Fund to take over the board of the Sierra Club with anti-immigrant candidates in the hope of steering the political left and center against the Hispanic immigrant.

Riley ably tackles the major issues surrounding the contemporary immigration debate as it relates primarily to the Hispanic population, which has come under attack in the ethnic cleansing program of the extreme right. He convincingly refutes critics such

as Samuel Huntington and V.D. Hanson claiming, “assimilation is less about immigrants adopting our culture than about immigrants adopting our values.” Riley observes that Hispanic experiences most closely resemble those of Italian and Irish immigrants more than other groups, because they were required to emphasize employment obligations rather than education in the formative years of their American stay. The study also dispels the notion that immigrants drain the welfare system. “Suggesting a person’s worth to society is nothing more than the sum of his tax payments” does an injustice to all. The author emphasizes that both legal and unauthorized immigrants are assets to American society and that efforts to harass newcomers with draconian laws and threats of deportation are self-defeating and illogical propositions.

Salvador Rivera  
SUNY Cobleskill

### 18-3-0313

Wise, Tim. *Between Barack and a Hard Place: Racism and White Denial in the Age of Obama*. San Francisco: City Lights Publishers, 2009. 160 pp. ISBN 978-0-87286-500-6, \$13.95 (pb).

Wise’s little book has a big message. Barack Obama’s victory in the 2008 presidential election has been lauded as signaling the end of racism in America and the fulfillment of Martin Luther King’s dream. Wise firmly cautions, “Not so fast!” Race, as a construct for defining difference and as a determinant for inequality, has not disappeared with Obama’s election. In fact, Wise explains, Obama’s ascension to the presidency reflects a more complex and insidious form of racism.

Wise provides just enough evidence to defend convincingly his claim that racial inequalities are very real and persistent in American society. Obama was able to overcome the racial barrier partly because he skillfully avoided directly addressing the racism inherent in the culture. Wise also charges that Obama’s popularity is due in great part to his lack of resemblance to negative stereotypical imagery that is often associated with African Americans. Wise contends that racism is not dead but that it is now less direct. Whites will obviously vote for a Black candidate, but Wise worries that the majority of Whites would only do so if the African American fits an acceptable image.

This book makes an intriguing argument and is packed with insight. Wise clearly explains the complexity of institutional racism in contemporary society. He continuously reminds the reader that Obama’s victory *may* signal the entrenchment of a more complicated, subtle, and insidious form of racism. The jury is still out. Wise makes a compelling case, however, that racism is not simply a thing of the past. Celebration for reaching this milestone may be warranted, but we are reminded not to give up the struggle against racial injustice yet.

Jeff Torlina  
Utah Valley State College

### 18-3-0314

Zhou, Min. *Contemporary Chinese America: Immigration, Eth-*

*nicity, and Community Transformation*. Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 2009. 312 pp. ISBN 978-1-59213-858-6, \$27.95 (pb).

This is a comprehensive and well-written analysis of the current status of the Chinese-American community. The focus of the study is on recent immigrants since 1965 and not on the established pre-1965 Chinese-American community. Although there is a chapter on the Chinese Ethnoburbs in the San Gabriel Valley of California, much of the analysis deals with Chinese communities in New York City: Chinatown, Flushing, and Sunset Park. Zhou documents the creation of concentrations of Chinese immigrants outside of traditional Chinatown and elegantly explains the nuances of region, language, and economic status that led to specific settlement patterns, and the increasing trend of better-educated and more affluent Chinese immigrants creating suburban or outside-of-Manhattan Chinese communities. Since Zhou is a sociologist, there is considerable discussion of sociological theories about ethnicity and immigration that form part of her study and how her work compares to themes in sociological literature. She is at her best in chapters on the enclave economy and what appeals to Chinese immigrants. However, she is short on historical analysis, since what worked for Chinese immigrants in the 1980s did the same for Jewish immigrants in the 1890s. The main area of weakness in this study is the failure to compare the experiences of Chinese immigrants to those of other immigrants, since much of what the author is saying is not unique to Chinese immigrants.

A major asset of this work is the chapter on Chinese women and their aspirations. The author does an excellent job of explaining how immigrants interpret the American dream in their terms, for example, working minimum wage jobs to support their families, to save for purchasing a home, and to provide education for their children. The author’s study would have benefited from more comparative analysis. Just as Chinese immigrants preferred to work for Chinese employers in the garment industry, Yiddish-speaking Jews preferred to work in Jewish-owned garment factories at the turn of the twentieth century, also on the Lower East Side of New York, for exactly the same reasons. Again, her chapter on immigrant women is a major contribution to our understanding of the immigrant experience. This work is recommended for anyone interested in ethnicity and immigration.

Harvey J. Strum  
Sage Colleges of Albany

### 18-3-0315

Bascom, Lionel C., ed. *Voices of the African American Experience*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Greenwood, 2009. 3 vols., 1,200 pp. ISBN 978-0-313-34347-6, \$275.00.

African-American history reveals a rich and multifaceted story which is inexorably related to, and intertwined with, the history of the United States. *Voices of the African American Experience* pays tribute to the legacy of African-American history with the compilation of primary documents, speeches, interviews, slave narratives, and excerpts from 1760 to the present.

Three volumes of text provide an exhaustive review of history through the inclusion of 145 documents that are presented in date

order. Each entry includes a brief expository statement that provides framing and context for the reader. A substantial chronology precedes the entries, and a selected bibliography supplements the text.

Some of the legacy documents include the works of Nat Turner, Frederick Douglass, Abraham Lincoln, Marcus Garvey, James Baldwin, and then-candidate Barack Obama. Recommended for large public libraries, and smaller academic collections.

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

### 18-3-0316

Moerman, Daniel E. *Native American Medicinal Plants: An Ethnobotanical Dictionary*. Portland, Ore.: Timber Press, 2009. 808 pp. ISBN 978-1-60469-035-4, \$39.95 (cl); 978-1-88192-987-4, \$29.95 (pb).

Those interested in alternative medicine generally, or in medicinal plants, as well as those studying Native American culture will appreciate this comprehensive listing of Native North American plant use for medication. This compendium is an abridged edition of Moerman's *Native American Ethnobotany* in a new format, including only medicinal uses of plants, not the various other uses detailed in the original, far larger volume, but with the same coverage of plant usage and species. There are indexes by tribe, by usage, and by common name, as well as introductory materials, including information about the tribes and his sources of information.

Moerman notes that "North America" here refers to North America north of Mexico, and it includes Hawaii and Greenland. Plants covered range from very early periods, perhaps as far back as pre-Columbian times, to recent plant introductions. The introduction provides a sensitive and nuanced reply to cultural questions, such as whether these drugs "work," and why there are so few treatments for cancer. There is also an interesting discussion of how and why the plants work, with examples of sometimes-paradoxical usages.

The catalog of plants (the actual dictionary) works well with the various indexes and provides an extensive amount of fascinating information, which can be approached easily from various directions for different purposes—and can even be fun to read.

Carol B. Gartner  
Purdue Univ. Calumet

### 18-3-0317

Schon, Isabel. *Recommended Books in Spanish for Children and Young Adults: 2004–2008*. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2009. 414 pp. ISBN 978-0-8108-6386-6, \$55.00.

Schon, founder and director of the Isabel Schon International Center for Spanish Books for Youth at the San Diego Public Library, provides annotations for more than 1,200 children's and young adult books published in Spanish in Spain, the United States, and throughout the Americas between 2004 and 2008. All

of the books are recommended—sometimes with caveats ranging from missing definite articles in Spanish to preachy adult voices in books for teens.

Entries are organized by genre—reference books, nonfiction, publishers' series, and fiction. Within the nonfiction category, they are further classified by discipline, with a large share of the titles covering science, technology, and health and medicine. The fiction titles are divided by easy books (including but not limited to picture books), general fiction (combining middle grade, young adult, and adult/young adult crossover titles), and the ever-popular graphic novels. Readers of Schon's regular columns in *MultiCultural Review* will note that books are not categorized by age; however, age designations are provided in the bibliographic entry.

This is an essential resource for those seeking to acquire children's books in Spanish, even more so for those who are not themselves fluent in the language. Extensive author/title/subject indexes and a list of dealers of books in Spanish are useful supplements to the text.

Lyn Miller-Lachmann

### 18-3-0318

Sepehri, Sandy, and Lundgren, Julie K., eds. *Rourke's Native American History & Culture Encyclopedia*. Vero Beach, Fla.: Rourke Publishing, 2009. 10 vols., 640 pp. Illus. ISBN 978-1-60472-421-9, \$471.36 (list), \$350.00 (school/library).

Despite the economic downturn and because of the dilemmas of harried librarians trying to accommodate report-driven children, the relentless and mindless production-line manufacturing of these kinds of encyclopedia-like commodities continues unabated. With a total page count for the ten volumes at 640, including lots of recycled powwow and Curtis photos, 12-point type, identical covers, back matter, and introductions (in which the first two words are, no kidding, "In 1492..."), this overpriced cookie-cutter production is typical of the problem.

The last ten pages of each volume are nearly identical, containing the same quote from Luther Standing Bear, a map of the "culture areas" of North America, a list of tribes organized by these areas, and an index and pronunciation guide for the volume. There is no bibliography or list of references, so students and their teachers will be unable to check the source of any research that may have gone into this series. Each volume also contains an "adapted legend" (read: stolen and mutilated beyond recognition) from a particular Indian nation. There is no author cited for any of these "legends," and they are all illustrated by Charles Reasoner, whose work appeared in the atrocious Native American Legend series, also from Rourke.

The final volume is reserved for a seven-page time line, a ten-page alphabetical listing of tribes and tribal groups, a 12-page glossary, a 16-page index, and projects such as constructing an igloo out of frozen dough and finding one's "animal totem." Although Mark J. Johnston and Scott Lyons are cited as project consultants for volumes 6, 7, and 9; and Lyons for volumes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 8; there is no consultant cited for volume 10.

Here and there, one can find a smattering of relatively accurate entries describing historical and contemporary artists, politi-

cal individuals and organizations, and issues such as water rights and the Trail of Broken Treaties. Some of the entries, particularly those about Ojibwe people and events, are informative and well written. One suspects that Lyons, who is Leech Lake Ojibwe, had something to do with these. But even here, Roberta Hill Whitman's name is spelled "Whitman," Sarah Winnemucca's nation is spelled "Pauite," Black Hawk, the nineteenth-century Sauk and Fox leader, is described as a "Sioux war chief," and Vi Hilbert, who passed away in 2004, is written about in the present tense: "Now that she is an elder herself..."

Although the series lists only two authors, the entries are apparently written by many different individuals, which might explain opposing accounts of the same persons or events. For instance, "Meet Geronimo" is relatively accurate, ending with this: "Geronimo remains a hero, and his deep responsibility to protect his people has become legendary." Yet, the entry about "tiswin," a traditional fermented beverage, describes Geronimo's leading his band back to their homeland as motivated solely by his fondness for this alcoholic drink.

Similarly, the purpose of the General Allotment Act of 1887 (also known as the Dawes Severalty Act) is described in one entry as beneficent, "to encourage Native Americans to become farmers," yet its result, as described in another entry, was "to strip Native Americans of much of their land and ruin them financially." In fact, the purpose of the Dawes Act was to break up Native lands held in common and open those lands up for resettlement. The result of this massive government land grab was the further impoverishment of the tribes and Native individuals as well.

As in many children's encyclopedias, important information is omitted. In the entry for the "Minnesota Uprising," for instance, in which Little Crow's Dakota band rose up against a myriad of injustices perpetrated by Whites in the Minnesota River Valley, the final sentence says: "Though a military court sentenced more than 300 Dakota Sioux to death, President Lincoln reviewed the trials and pardoned all but 38." What is left out is that the hanging of the 38 young Lakota men in 1862, memorialized every year in Mankato, Minnesota, is recorded in the *Guinness Book of World Records* as the largest mass execution in U.S. history.

The entry about "Bosque Redondo" says that "[o]ver 200 people died on the difficult march, known as the Long Walk of the Navajo." On this death march of hundreds of miles, more than 3,000 died of cold and starvation—or were killed by soldiers who shot pregnant women, elders, and all others who couldn't keep up. All of this is documented, in both oral and written history.

About the "Carlisle Indian School," there is this caption: "In the Carlisle School's tin shop, students learned practical skills." The assumption here (which was the assumption of the school's founder) is that the Indian children did not learn, or were incapable of learning, practical skills at home in their own communities. And tinsmithing was not a "practical skill" for the students to take back to their peoples; rather, it was one of many industrial wage labor skills taught to Carlisle students. The entries on "Carlisle School," "Hampton Institute," and "Indian boarding schools" are, for the most part, positive descriptions of a theory and practice that devastated—and whose repercussions continue to devastate—Indian communities throughout North America.

The entry for "Rosebud Reservation" says, "Rosebud Reservation is in south-central Dakota and is home to the Sicangu Oyate,

the Upper Brule Sioux Nations, and the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. As of 2005, their population is about 25,000." The implication here is that the 25,000 persons are citizens of three separate Native nations occupying Rosebud. Actually, these are different names for the same people.

Full of dreary writing, sloppy scholarship, disjointed "facts," pejorative terminology, and language that condescends to children and euphemizes, sensationalizes, and trivializes Indian peoples, this series is to be seriously avoided.

Beverly Slapin  
Oyate, Berkeley, Calif

## Travel

### 18-3-0319

Osborne, Lawrence. *Bangkok Days*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux/North Point Press, 2009. 272 pp. ISBN 978-0-86547-732-2, \$25.00.

Travel books are a great escape. Foreign colors, flavors of cultures, and atmosphere all make for a vivid escapist read. And now the sex industry can be found in the recently published travel book *Bangkok Days*. Subtitled "a sojourn in the capital of pleasure," *Bangkok Days* is less a travel book than a memoir of a period in Osborne's life on the "lam" as a *fagang* (foreigner) in Bangkok. Along the way, he introduces the reader to a colorful cast of characters, expats who live in Bangkok and immerse themselves in the not all hedonistic environment of the world's sex tourism trade.

Yet, the book is not prurient; instead it is a sociological study with many backstreets of Thai cultural background, history, architecture, new and old, interspersed with titillating tidbits about the sex tourism trade. (Who could have thought that middle-aged Japanese women have their own sex tours? Or that a restaurant called Happy Hands feeds the customers while their hands are tied?) However, all is not sensational. Detours are freely taken through hospitals and the health care industry for foreigners, as well as the work of missionaries dealing with HIV. This is an informative and fascinating book, written for discriminating readers who prize good prose.

Rosemary Aud Franklin  
Univ. of Cincinnati

## Juvenile

### Primary (Gr. P-3)

**18-3-0320**

Addasi, Maha. *The White Nights of Ramadan*. Honesdale, Pa.: Boyds Mills Press, 2008. 32 pp. Illus. by Ned Gannon. ISBN 978-2-59078-523-2, \$16.95.

Mobin-Uddin, Asma. *A Party in Ramadan*. Honesdale, Pa.: Boyds Mills Press, 2009. 32 pp. Illus. by Laura Jacobsen. ISBN 978-1-59078-604-8, \$16.95.

Two colorful, charming picture books about Ramadan, the Islamic month of fasting, add to the growing literature about the modern Arab/Muslim world. Each book includes author's notes, useful for elementary grades.

Addasi's book focuses on a festival observed in Arabian Gulf states such as Kuwait, Oman, and Saudi Arabia. Called *Girgian*, it comes with the full moon—the “white nights”—in the middle of Ramadan (a lunar month, according to the Islamic calendar). We join a young girl and her little brothers as they and their grandfather go out from house to house, singing and collecting sweets. The illustrations convey the children's excitement as they watch the moon rise, and they enhance information about dress, family relations, and customs such as the pretty bags for holding sweets and the preparation of nuts in hardened syrup to be given to those children who come visiting.

The book jacket and author's notes place the story in a Gulf state, but this information might well have been incorporated into the text. It would help counter misunderstandings prevalent in the United States by demonstrating that distinctive customs and behaviors differ over the vast region of the Arab/Muslim world. (Among Christian communities in Lebanon and Syria there is a similar custom, of young people going out to sing and ask for sweets, called “Saint Barbara's Day,” but “*Girgian*” seems to be particular to the Gulf state societies.)

In contrast, Mobin-Uddin's story shows how a Muslim-American family might observe Ramadan. Leena, the only Muslim among her friends at school, has been invited to a birthday party that happens to fall on the first day of Ramadan. She longs to go to the party (there'll be a real pony!) and at the same time observe fasting so she can join her family in the important evening meal. With her mother's permission she does do both—only to get carried away by excitement at the party and have a real struggle with thirst and a headache. Thanks to an understanding hostess and a nap, however, she recovers and manages to resist the birthday cake and lemonade.

Both stories make the point that Ramadan is not just about fasting for its own sake, but about teaching discipline through denial. Self-control is important, but equally so is the idea that fasting makes the privileged more aware of the poor and encourages kind deeds toward others. These books highlight the undeniably festive air that's perhaps the most conspicuous aspect of Ramadan, yet it is emphatically a religious obligation. For many Muslims the most important meaning of Ramadan is the sense of “being closer to God.” Another “Ramadan book,” about a young boy determined to fast secretly against his parents' wishes, is *Magid Fasts for Ramadan* by Mary Matthews (Clarion, 1996), well recommended for its good plot and appealing picture of a middle-class Egyptian family.

Elsa Marston  
Bloomington, Ind.

**18-3-0321**

Blue, Rose, and Naden, Corinne J. *Ron's Big Mission*. New York: Dutton, 2009. 32 pp. Illus. by Don Tate. ISBN 978-0-525-47849-2, \$16.99.

The captivating illustrations on the beginning pages of the story immediately draw the reader into the hopes and dreams of a nine-year-old African-American boy. He looks longingly into a starry night sky dreaming of airplanes, flying, and what he may become. The boy is Ron McNair, who will grow up to be the only African American aboard the tragic space shuttle Challenger.

This charming and bittersweet story depicts a pivotal episode in Ron's childhood that changes the course of his life and affects the lives of everyone involved. On a bright and sunny day full of promise Ron sets off on a simple yet oh so complex adventure to check out a book in his beloved library during a time when, depending on what state you lived in, African Americans were not always allowed to pursue this most pure and sacred of rights.

Each page of text is attention grabbing in a pleasant way. The children will want to know or predict what happens to Ron next and how his story ends, whether it is being read to them or they are reading it. The accompanying illustrations are bright and vibrant and perfectly complement the words. Traveling along with Ron on his journey allows the reader to experience a range of emotions, from sadness, determination, and resignation to optimism, hope, and the authentic joy of a child. The history of racism and discrimination is often difficult to explain to children; however, this story manages to convey it to them in a realistic but non-threatening manner, and would be excellent for a read-aloud and to encourage discussion. This book would be a wonderful addition to any elementary library.

Margaret Auguste  
Franklin Middle School, Somerset, N.J.

**18-3-0322**

*Every Human Has Rights: A Photographic Declaration for Kids*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Books, 2009. 32 pp. Illus. with photos. Foreword by Mary Robinson. ISBN 978-1-4263-0510-8, \$17.95.

The 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has led to the publication of several books for children and young adults. National Geographic's entry into the field features the magazine/publisher's signature photographic images of people around the world, past and present. A black-and-white photo of concentration camp survivors at the end of World War II illustrates Article Six of the Declaration, “Every human in the world



must be treated as a person.” A caption below is geared to older readers; it explains how the Holocaust inspired the Declaration and describes how inmates “were starved and forced to be guinea pigs in scientific experiments.” On the facing page, the article against torture is interpreted to include domestic violence. Along with each article and photo, a value is highlighted, among them equality, life, freedom, safety, respect, privacy, movement, nationality, property, assembly, democracy, health, peace, and “a future.” Other features include poems written by children, the text of the Declaration, and brief biographies of the contributors, including the prize-winning young poets.

Although the text of *Every Human Has Rights* is similar to the recently published *We Are All Born Free: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Pictures* (Frances Lincoln, 2008), *We Are All Born Free* offers a more whimsical, kid-focused approach to the subject. *Every Human Has Rights* would make a better choice for teachers at the older elementary and middle school level, due to the captioned photos representing children and adults around the world (as well as in the United States), the poems, and the highlighted values.

Lyn Miller-Lachmann

### 18-3-0323

Kajikawa, Kimiko. *Tsunami!* New York: Putnam/Philomel, 2009. 32 pp. Illus. by Ed Young. ISBN 978-0-399-25006-4, \$16.99.

Natural disasters sometimes bring out the best in people as they display their concern for others with generosity and kindness. Such is the theme of this tale set in long-ago Japan.

Ojiisan, who lives high on the mountain, is the wealthiest man in the village. On an autumn day, the members of the village gather at the base of the mountain to celebrate the rice harvest. Ojiisan remains in his mountain home and is the first to feel an earthquake begin. Then, he notices the strange way the sea is behaving and he knows what this predicts. Tsunami! He realizes the danger for those celebrating on the beach, but knows there is not enough time to go down the mountain to warn them. As a result, Ojiisan does a courageous and generous thing. He sets fire to his rice fields and sacrifices his earthly possessions to alert the villagers. The people rush up the mountain to help put out the fire. When they look down, they see the tsunami destroy everything that was on the beach below.

Information on the dedication page tells that the story is adapted from Lafcadio Hearn's story, “A Living God” (*Gleanings in Buddha-Fields*, 1897). A good companion book is *The Day the Stones Walked* by T. A. Barron, illustrated by William Low (Philomel, 2007), a tsunami tale set on Easter Island.

Illustrations, setting, language, and surroundings reflect the Asian setting. The theme of sacrifice to help others is universal.

Mary J. Lickteig  
Univ. of Nebraska–Omaha

### 18-3-0324

Mortenson, Greg, and Roth, Susan L. *Listen to the Wind: The*

*Story of Dr. Greg & Three Cups of Tea*. New York: Dial, 2009. 32 pp. Illus. by Susan L. Roth. ISBN 978-0-8037-3058-8, \$16.99.

Mortenson's picture book, illustrated by Susan Roth, invites young readers to hear a compassionate story about his own adventures among and love for a group of villagers at Korphe, Balistan, a part of Pakistan. He accidentally met these people when he lost his way climbing the world's second tallest mountain in the Himalayas, and fell sick in their village. The villagers provided him with shelter, food, and tea and helped him to recover. He learned about the dire circumstances of their lives and the children of Korphe who wrote with sticks on the ground in order to learn. When he recovered, he wanted to do something special for them, and he asked for advice from Haji Ali, a wise man who counseled him, “Listen to the wind.” He promised to return after a year and build a school for the villagers.

The story is a wonderful account of how Dr. Greg participated with the villagers in the process of building the school by contributing his manual labor and emotional support. Artist Susan Roth's magnificent collages with all their colors add to the beauty. In an artist's note, she explains her purpose for including scraps of fabric, bits of paper, and other fibers to express the artistic sense of the people. “A Korphe Scrapbook” displays photos of events combined with text, inviting readers of all ages to explore important lessons of empathy and caring for others who are less fortunate in a global community. Although the author did not specify any age group, educators, librarians, and parents can use this book in creative ways for any age group, especially middle grades and above, to convey the essential humane message that anyone can contribute pennies to make a difference in impoverished countries.

Parsa Choudhury  
Evanston, Ill.

### 18-3-0325

Pennypacker, Sara. *Sparrow Girl*. New York: Hyperion, 2009. 32 pp. Illus. by Yoko Tanaka. ISBN 978-1-4231-1187-0, \$16.99.

There is nothing wrong with this story. It is a worthy story to tell, politically, socially, environmentally, and multiculturally. The story is based on the actual declaration of war on sparrows in China by Mao Tse Tung in 1958. It was thought that the elimination of sparrows would result in more grain from the farmers. The powers did not realize that tampering with the balance of the ecosystem could lead to a disruption in the balance of life in a way that might be more devastating than they had intended.

There was a similar war on flies and mosquitoes earlier in the 1950s, and there is presently a war on wolves in Mongolia, led by the Chinese government and protested by Mongolia, which is resulting in turning the Mongolian grasslands into deserts. In the same way, Mao's war on sparrows did in fact lead to an infestation of locusts, worms, and caterpillars, which ate all the crops and led to a three-year famine in China in which millions died.

The little girl in this story, Ming Li, is appalled at the notion of trying to kill all the sparrows. She tries to imagine the sky empty of those birds and their song. The diabolical notion of the attack was that everyone would go out with firecrackers and noisemak-

ers to scare the birds and prevent them from landing and eating. Indeed, it worked, and birds died. Ming Li sets about to rescue some of these birds, keeps them safe in a barn, and when the officials finally realize their mistake, she offers them her birds. She is proclaimed a miracle worker.

This was a time in China of great idealism. Mao had been in power a mere eight years and was just coming into his own as a god, worshipped by his people with a fanatic fervor. He was going to save China and bring her into a bright future. It was considered traitorous to think against anything he said. This is hinted at, but not really made explicit.

The telling of the story is somewhat pedestrian, emotionally. It has the feel of a translation, not quite laying hold of our emotions, though we are told about Ming Li's feelings and her concern for the birds. However, the story will be a worthy vehicle for initiating conversation with children about the dangers of tampering with the balance of the ecosystem.

The illustrations are delicately constructed computer graphic art with pleasant earth tone colors. One bird form (anatomically odd) in various sizes and positions and one face with a line changed here and there to represent happiness or anger does not evoke our appreciation for emotion or beauty the way individually drawn birds and people would. But children and adults will like the book without realizing what is missing.

Ginny Lee  
Syracuse, N.Y.

### 18-3-0326

Reynolds, Jan. *Cycle of Life: A Story of Sustainable Farming*. New York: Lee & Low, 2009. 48 pp. Illus. with photos by the author. ISBN 978-1-60060-254-2, \$19.95.

Reynolds, an award-winning creator of several photo essays, brings a fresh perspective to readers by exploring her firsthand experience of the environmental and cultural aspects of traditional Balinese rice farming. An island in Southeast Asia that is part of Indonesia, Bali is a leading producer of rice and provides an example of sustainable agriculture to the industrialized modern world. Rice farming offers an intricate, sustainable system of water sharing and crop rotation that has been used for more than a thousand years. Rice, a major staple food for many in the world, embodies the plain, natural, rhythmic way Balinese farmers make their connections with the soil and each other.

Although the author did not specify any age group, captivating color, photographs, a map of Bali, and an author's note make it an attractive read for children second grade and above. Readers gain an enriched knowledge about rice farming and how life is sustained by the creative farming process of the Balinese rice growers.

Parsa Choudhury  
Evanston, Ill.

### 18-3-0327

Schotter, Roni. *Doo-Wop Pop*. New York: HarperCollins, 2008. 32 pp. Illus. by Bryan Collier. ISBN 978-0-06-057968-5, \$16.99.

Elijah Earl is shy. "While other kids are talking," he slips away, preferring to remain in the shadows. However, he is not alone in his shyness. There are other talented kids in the school who also have not found their voice: Jacob who hides in a book, Alishah, "Who hides more than her hair," and Pam Pam who is shyest of all. Mr. Searle, a clever and caring custodian, affectionately known as Doo-Wop Pop, notices these shy kids and plans an intervention. Doo-Wop Pop, formerly a lead singer in a popular group known as The Icicles, sees the potential in these shy violets. He gathers them up after school, teaches them the moves he learned as an entertainer, and encourages them to find the music that is all around them.

The be-bop, doo-wop language begs to be read aloud while Bryan Collier's realistic, warm-hued golden illustrations bring the characters to life. Facial expressions and body language help tell the story of shyness overcome, learning to fit in, and discovering personal talent all at the same time. Certainly, the author gives a nod to the real Doo-Wop Pop, Earl (Speedo) Carroll, lead singer for The Cadillac in the 1950s. *They often called him Speedo, but his real name was Mr. Earl.*

Adelaide Poniatowski-Phelps  
Oakland Univ. (Mich.)

### 18-3-0328

Shange, Ntozake. *Coretta Scott*. New York: HarperCollins, 2009. 32 pp. Illus. by Kadir Nelson. ISBN 978-0-06-125364-5, \$17.99.

A serene and dignified young girl and her siblings walk five miles to the Negro school every day, all the while dreaming of freedom, while the White school bus passes them by. The young girl is Coretta Scott King, future civil rights activist and wife of Martin Luther King. Her story and that of the civil rights movement is told through the riveting poetry of Ntozake Shange and the captivating illustrations of Kadir Nelson.

This unique idea of exploring her life through rhythmic verse allows the reader to feel an emotional connection to Coretta's story that goes beyond the usual stating of biographical fact. The unwavering and striking words examine Coretta's life, including her childhood, young adulthood, and marriage to Martin Luther King, in a way that clearly and beautifully conveys her determination to gain freedom and equality for herself and all Americans. "Over the years learning and freedom took hold of Coretta's soul till she knew in her being that the Good Lord intended freedom for the Negro."

The vivid illustrations are equally glorious and intimate and are a perfect complement to the verse. Together they excellently portray the vast and epic March on Washington in all its magnificence, the serenity of civil rights marchers, and finally the love mirrored on the faces of Coretta and Martin, heads bowed together in prayer. Overall, a unique and fascinating picture book biography that would be equally well received by people of all ages.

Margaret Auguste  
Franklin Middle School, Somerset, N.J.

**18-3-0329**

Slate, Joseph. *I Want to Be Free*. New York: Putnam, 2009. 32 pp. Illus. by E.B. Lewis. ISBN 978-0-399-24342-4, \$16.99.

Borrowing from Kipling's *Kim* and Buddhist mysticism, Slate weaves a tale about a man and a boy and their desperate escape from slavery to freedom. "Before I die, I want to be free. But the Big Man says, You belong to me." Chained to a heavy ball, a young enslaved man realizes that in order to free himself, he must first rid himself of the weight attached to him. With considerable effort, he manages to break the chain, but he "Can't force the ring. It won't come free." Desperate for freedom, he sets out on a treacherous journey, hunted by dogs and men with guns. Early on, he encounters a little boy who has lost his mother, and decides, against the advice of other "gone-free men," to take the boy with him. In the end it is the boy, sent from God, who provides the ultimate freedom. He touches the ring and it disintegrates.

E.B. Lewis captures the emotion of this daring dash for freedom and enhances the telling of the story with his illustrations, using shadow and light that play beautifully with a backdrop of muted nature. While some may be put off by the rhyming text and limited vocabulary, beginning readers will enjoy sharing this story with siblings and classmates. In addition, the repetitive language invites participation during a read aloud.

Adelaide Poniatowski-Phelps  
Oakland Univ. (Mich.)

**18-3-0330**

Solomon, Chad, and Meyer, Christopher. *The Sugar Bush: The Adventures of Rabbit and Bear Paws*. Toronto: Little Spirit Bear Productions, 2006. 32 pp. Illus. by Chad Solomon. ISBN 978-0-973990-50-3, \$7.95 (pb).

Solomon, Chad, and Meyer, Christopher. *The Voyageurs: The Adventures of Rabbit and Bear Paws*. Toronto: Little Spirit Bear Productions, 2008. 32 pp. Illus. by Chad Solomon. ISBN 978-0-973990-62-1, \$7.95 (pb).

Modeled on the popular *Asterix Adventures*, these Ojibwe-centric graphic novels—two, so far—are set in eighteenth-century colonized North America. The protagonists are Ojibwe brothers dealing, in their inimitable ways, with their land-hungry new neighbors. Rabbit is a shrewd, cunning little guy, a headstrong kid who often confuses bravery with bravado. His younger brother, Bear Paws, is larger and stronger, kind of gullible, and always ready to pull Rabbit out of a scheme gone awry. The two are good, likable kids, sprinkling themselves with spirit powder to transform into animals, trying to get out of trouble, trying to get out of chores, and generally remembering the old stories and the traditional lessons they impart. In *The Sugar Bush*, our young heroes encounter a troop of bumbling British soldiers who don't speak Ojibwe and have no idea how to live on the land. In *The Voyageurs*, Rabbit and Bear Paws embark on what might be the single strangest journey in the history of the fur trade.

Young readers will enjoy following the adventures of Solomon's and Meyer's energetic young characters, and the joking and ironic

word-plays between the Ojibwe adults and children and animals. Solomon's appealing artwork is uncluttered, with light, bright colors and minimal inking; the font is a good size for the dialogue, and the panels are easy to follow. And, no matter what happens, Rabbit and Bear Paws' breechcloths stay remarkably in place.

Beverly Slapin  
Oyate, Berkeley, Calif.

**18-3-0331**

Tafolla, Carmen. *What Can You Do with a Paleta?* Berkeley, Calif.: Tricycle Press, 2009. 32 pp. Illus. by Magaly Morales. ISBN 978-1-58246-221-9, \$14.99.

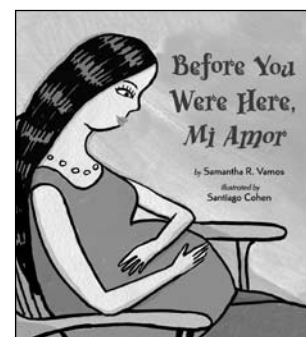
Vamos, Samantha R. *Before You Were Here, Mi Amor*. New York: Viking, 2009. 32 pp. Illus. by Santiago Cohen. ISBN 978-0-670-06301-7, \$15.99.

Two books for the youngest readers introduce Spanish words and a high point of a child's day in Mexico.

*Before You Were Here, Mi Amor* is a brightly illustrated (by Santiago Cohen) children's book that uses Spanish words within an English narrative. The linguistic term for using both languages while communicating is "code-switching"; it allows one to bounce back and forth between languages without losing the quality of the message being communicated. The interplay of languages in this book gives the reader a sense of ethnicity and bilingualism, and also offers the non-bilingual an opportunity to learn some Spanish. It is a very simple book that takes one through the preparations that are made within a family before a child arrives: *mami eats fruta*, *papi carves a mecedora* for rocking, and *tío cooks arroz con leche*. If the context leaves some a little confused about the meaning of the Spanish words, there is a glossary in the back of the book that provides definitions in English.

*What Can You Do with a Paleta?* honors the Popsicle man who goes through the barrios/neighborhoods of Mexican towns offering these cool treats on hot days. As with the ice-cream man here in the United States, children wait to hear the sound of a tinkling bell and the man who yells "Pale-ta-a-a-as." The author offers a nostalgic and sweet look back to a simple pleasure of childhood that sometimes, without one knowing it, taught some of life's first lessons. It all comes together quite tastefully with the artwork of Magaly Morales, whose illustrations fill the pages with creamy soothing flavorful colors. Tafolla, author of the award-winning *What Can You Do with a Rebozo?* produces another winner here.

Lisa Nolan  
Albany, N.Y.

**18-3-0332**

Watanabe, Etsuko. *My Japan*. La Jolla, Calif.: Kane Miller, 2009.

40 pp. Illus. by the author. ISBN 978-1-933605-99-9, \$14.95.

*My Japan* is not the fictional telling of the exotic, stereotypical version of Japan. Neither is *My Japan* a dull non-fiction book full of facts but little fun. *My Japan* is what Japan enthusiasts have been waiting for in a children's book—an informative and descriptive guide to life in Japan as told by a girl named Yumi. Yumi takes readers on a tour of her daily life. Everything kids would ask is shown through the detailed illustrations, such as the layout of a Japanese home, complete with Japanese names for items like school backpacks, clothes, decorations, and different types of food.

Yumi makes sure that readers learn about her country's customs, but not by simply telling; she shows readers scenes from Japanese life, filled with colors, people, and the events and celebrations that make life in Japan special. *My Japan* ends by highlighting what so many of us are curious about, Japanese writing. Kids can practice writing and make a real connection to their own learning and what Japanese children learn about reading in school. Young readers will finish this book and want to know more—and maybe even start asking for their first passport.

Kena Sosa  
Dallas, Tex.

### 18-3-0333

Williams, Megan K. Maddy's *Amazing African Birthday*. Toronto: Second Story Press, 2009. 32 pp. Illus. with photos by Alessandro Vallecchi and Maddalena Vallecchi Williams. ISBN 978-1-897187-47-0, \$12.95 (pb).

Williams and her daughter create this book to help explain what Maddy did while celebrating her tenth birthday in northern Tanzania on a two-week trip. She highlights two minority communities and a game park. There is no discussion of critical issues involved in game parks, such as poaching, environmental conditions, or neighbor encroachment. In addition, the author does not explain the purpose of a visit to a Maasai and a Hadzapi village. There are some informational bars that explain in greater detail certain phenomena. The tone of the text comes across as patronizing, particularly when the uncle and Maddy purchase pencils to distribute to Maasai children as gifts. The text is illustrated with photographs and graphics. Some of the photos are close-ups of activities or animals.

In general, the book represents what might be done as a social studies school project concerning communities. The focus is on topics of interest to elementary students with little or no formal instruction in Tanzanian history and culture. The informal language would make it suitable for reluctant readers and a model for descriptive writing about personal experiences. It could also be used for initiating discussion on social and environmental issues in Tanzania. However, one should be advised about the stereotypes and misinformation contained in the text. The reader needs to realize that this book is more fiction than fact.

Patricia S. Kuntz  
Madison, Wis.

### 18-3-0334

Yoo, Paula. *Shining Star: The Anna Wong Story*. New York: Lee & Low, 2009. 32 pp. Illus. by Lin Wang. ISBN 978-1-60060-259-7, \$17.95.

Children who dream of an acting career will be drawn to the life story of Anna May Wong, whose Hollywood career started in the 1920s. Anna May grew up in Los Angeles, the daughter of Chinese immigrants. The family operated a laundry, and all members worked long hours. During this hard manual labor, Anna May filled her head with daydreams of being an actress.

Starting with work as a movie extra and bit parts, she did become a star. The lessons of hard work she learned as a child proved useful during long hours on the movie set. Another lesson her father taught her—be proud of our people and our race—shaped her life, too. She became increasingly uncomfortable with the negative way Chinese characters were portrayed in films. This led to Anna May making the courageous decision to appear only in those movies with positive Chinese characters.

The themes of hard work, determination, and pride in one's ancestry are thoughtfully presented in this biography. The picture book format should not lead readers to believe this is a book limited to young children. It is a story for all ages.

Mary J. Lickteig  
Univ. of Nebraska at Omaha

## Intermediate (Gr. 4–6)

### 18-3-0335

Blanchard, Anne. *Arab Science and Invention in the Golden Age*. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Enchanted Lion Books, 2008. 80 pp. Illus. by Emmanuel Cerisier. Trans. from French by R.M. Brent. ISBN 978-1-59270-080-2, \$29.95.

Readers hoping for insight into Muslim contributions to early science and technology will be disappointed by this superficial survey. After misleadingly declaring that “by the 14th century the age of Muslim science was over,” (5) Blanchard profiles just six figures—and one of those better known as a mapmaker—from the preceding 600 years of Islam's history.

Swaddled in multiple chapters of historical background that are, at best, tangential to the topic area, she describes the lives and achievements of each scientist in terms that range from general to outright dismissive: Avicenna's “most famous” treatise, which is never otherwise identified, “is over a thousand verses long, and without the help of scholars who know how to decipher it, there is no point in attempting to understand what it says” (42). Along with factual errors, such as putting Copernicus in the wrong century and the expulsion of Jews and Muslims from Spain in the wrong year (56, 67), the author frequently uses Latinized forms for names and sticks exclusively to the Christian calendar for dates. Illustrated with a confusingly undifferentiated mix of new and period art, capped by a glossary/index so unsystematic that the few scientists she does mention aren't even listed, this makes a poor substitute for either Sally Gauchy's *Islam and Science, Medicine, and*

*Technology* (Rosen, 2008) or George Beshore's *Science in Early Islamic Culture* (Watts, rev. ed., 1998).

John Peters  
New York Public Library

### 18-3-0336

Bradford, Chris. *Young Samurai: The Way of the Warrior*. New York: Disney/Hyperion, 2009. 360 pp. ISBN 978-1-4231-1871-8, \$16.99.

A good teen-age yarn, a swashbuckling tale with lots of details of scabbles and duels and the lopping off of fingers and heads, this story also includes a good bit of Japanese language and culture, points of etiquette, and samurai ethics, teachings, and forms.

We do become fond of Jack Fletcher, the 12-year-old boy who lost his father and all his shipmates as part of an attempt to land the first English ship on the shores of Japan in the early 1600s, just after the Portuguese brought Japan to the attention of the world.

The sole survivor of that shipwreck, Jack is found and cared for and eventually adopted by Masamoto, a famous samurai. Jack is taught techniques of fighting with sword, short knife, and flying star, but is also advised, "It's not the technique you must master—it is yourself." He is taught that although there are enemies who wish to kill Masamoto and his family, and even a mysterious Ninja called Dragon Eye who for some reason wants to kill Jack, that one's real enemies are fear, anger, confusion, doubt, and despair.

Jack is taught the way of Bushido, the way of the Samurai, with its virtues of rectitude, loyalty, benevolence, respect, honesty, honor, and courage, and he sees those virtues demonstrated in his dealings with the people who have come into his new life.

Adding to the mystery of the culture itself, Jack's new world is further confounded by his new step-brother, Yamato, who resents his presence, and later by Kazuki, an apprentice from another school, who gives Jack a taste of what it is like to be the object of hatred and anger, of racial, cultural, and class prejudice. Jack's yellow hair marks him as a "gaijin," a foreigner, the lowest of the low on the social ladder. But to console him, there is the beautiful Akiko, a girl, also in training in Bushido, who takes his education, his life, and his heart delicately under her wing.

There is a lovely glossary of Japanese terms at the end of the book, but it easily could have been twice as long. For those interested in Bushido, the two pages of notes on sources provide further reading as well as thoughts to ponder.

Ginny Lee  
Syracuse, N.Y.

### 18-3-0337

García, Nasario. *Rattling Chains and Other Stories/Cadenas ruidosas y otros cuentos*. Houston: Piñata Books, 2009. 160 pp. Bilingual (English-Spanish) ed. ISBN 978-1-55885-544-1, \$9.95 (pb).

I took classes with Dr. Nicolás Kanellos in the 1980s, and I've had the privilege of purchasing and teaching from Arte Público and Piñata Books publications. In his classes, teaching, and publishing projects, Dr. Kanellos has tirelessly supported and circu-

lated Latino traditions in all forms—with special emphasis on Mexican-American traditions.

*Rattling Chains* is emblematic of this mission to support and circulate Latino traditions, especially Mexican-American ones. Excellent for intermediate and middle school libraries, and especially user friendly for "struggling readers," García's bilingual collection of stories is an interesting first person retelling of many of the old Mexican-American legends from the point of view of a child, Junie Lopez. We hear the legends as Junie heard them: the Lady in Black, La Lechuga (the Barn Owl), La Llorona (the Hollering Woman), and El Coco (the Boogeyman). It's a great collection of the traditional oral tales *minus* the anthropologists, *plus* the child's imagination. What a great way to support and circulate Mexican-American legends for the next generation.

James C. Jupp  
Arkansas State Univ.

### 18-3-0338

Hegedus, Bethany. *Between Us Baxters*. Lodi, N.J.: WestSide Books, 2009. 306 pp. ISBN 978-1-934813-02-7, \$17.95.

Twelve-year-old Polly is a "black sheep Baxter," a member of a poor White family whose members don't conform to the rules of their small, segregated Georgia town in 1959. For one, Polly's mother, Lisbeth, is friends with her Black co-worker, Henri. Second, Polly is friends with Henri's niece, 14-year-old Timbre Ann. And Polly's father, Otis, has a drinking problem plus a hot temper that cost him jobs and made it hard for him to get a new ones. As a result, Polly wears cast-offs from Timbre Ann's family. And Lisbeth's prosperous family has banished the Baxters after Otis's drunken outburst at a family dinner.

When rich Uncle Jimmy comes to Otis with a business proposition, things get really tense. Prosperous Black businesses in town are burning, and Timbre Ann's family has received a threatening message. Torn between loyalty to her family and loyalty to her only friend, Polly has started to argue with Timbre Ann, and their differences threaten to tear them apart. Lisbeth and Henri remain close, but their friendship could cost both families dearly.

First-time author Hegedus creates compelling situations and characters rooted in a painful era of U.S. history. She shows what can happen when good people are pushed to their limits, when "depending on who's watching, right can be wrong." Her language and voice, grounded in her own rural Southern heritage, capture the flavor of the place and time.

Lyn Miller-Lachmann

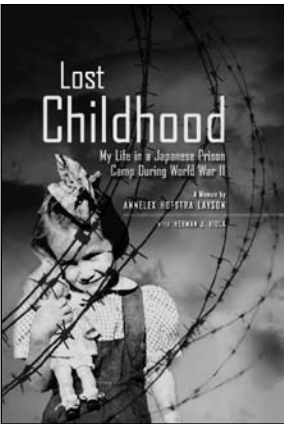
### 18-3-0339

Layson, Annelex Hofstra, with Herman J. Viola. *Lost Childhood: My Life in a Japanese Prison Camp During World War II*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Books, 2009. 112 pp. ISBN 978-1-4263-0321-0, \$15.95.

In contrast to the many accounts of life under the Nazis, and of how Japanese Americans were interned in this country in World

War II, this brief memoir will provide middle level readers the first glimpse behind the barbed wire of Japanese prison camps since Doris E. Sandford's hard to find *My Friend, the Enemy: Surviving a Prison Camp* (Multnomah Publishers, 1992) and J.G. Ballard's fictionalized (and more adult) *Empire of the Sun* (Simon & Schuster, 1984). The youngest child of a Dutch family living on the island of Java, Layson was just four years old in 1942 when she, her mother, and her grandmother were forcibly relocated by the invading Japanese. In what she characterizes as "snapshots, or tiny movies" (14) she recalls, in childlike, matter of fact tones, lining up for daily tallies; trying to understand orders shouted in a foreign language; crowded and steadily deteriorating living conditions in successive camps; subsisting on a diet of rice, bananas, snails, and laundry starch ("It doesn't taste like much, but we ate it mixed with round sambal [a hot pepper] to spice it up") (56); and, most vividly, feelings of fear and anxiety that still occasionally resurface in nightmares. She mentions beatings and killings in the camps without describing them in detail, and says that she herself was never physically harmed.

In a strange twist, once the war ended, her Japanese captors joined a squad of Allied soldiers to provide protection from violent Indonesian nationalists until she and her family at last moved to the Netherlands, and later to the United States. Enhanced by a section of family photos and capped with a time line, 1939–1949 (the year Indonesia became formally independent), Layson's narrative makes absorbing reading for both students of the Second World War and general readers too.



John Peters  
New York Public Library

### 18-3-0340

Levine, Kristin. *The Best Bad Luck I Ever Had*. New York: Putnam, 2009. 266 pp. ISBN 978-0-399-25090-3, \$16.99.

Levine's debut novel is an excellent work of fiction. The story takes place during 1917 in Alabama. A new postmaster arrives in this small town and shocks everyone by being Black. Dit is the most disturbed, as he is expecting that the postmaster's child will be a boy his age, and instead finds himself with a neighbor who is not only Black, but a girl! Through many shared experiences, Dit and Emma become good friends and learn much about each other and racial issues. In the end, Emma's family leaves Alabama, and Dit, along with many community members, are sad to see them depart. Levine shows many of the problems that occur during the year Emma's family lives in Alabama, and we see how the extremely racist community deals with the many issues. By the end of the year, members of the community learn that many of their preconceived notions are incorrect and are able to—of course not without drama—change their opinions. It does not hurt, of

course, that Emma is rather bright and her father is a hard worker, following a postmaster who was lazy.

This is a wonderful book for older elementary and middle school children to learn from and discuss. Many issues of racism and stereotypes are raised and openly argued. The read is easy and interesting along with delightful. It is an attractive story to both boys and girls and would have a strong place in any class library.

Miriam Guttman  
Mount Mary College, Milwaukee, Wis.

### 18-3-0341

Lin, Grace. *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*. New York: Little, Brown, 2009. 280 pp. ISBN 978-0-316-11427-1, \$15.99.

Here is a proper fairy tale, complete with the poetic, lyrical language proper to fairy tales. It is a Chinese story, chock full of other stories, many of them ages-old traditional Chinese folktales, some of them altered slightly and adapted to fit into this tale, but very recognizable.

Minli lives in poverty with her mother, who sighs at being so poor, and her father, who loves to tell her stories. After spending a precious coin to buy a goldfish who magically tells her the way, Minli sets out to look for the Never Ending Mountain to ask the Old Man of the Moon how she can change her family's fortune. Along the way she meets a variety of characters, some of whom we know from Chinese folktales.

Versions of the traditional tales of dotting the eyes on a painting of a dragon so lifelike that this brings him to life, of the Herd Boy and the Spinning Maid (the stars, Vega and Altair, who meet once a year across the Milky Way), the greedy monkeys, the peaches of immortality, the Taoist priest who tricks the peach merchant in the marketplace, and even Hill Climbing Day (to avoid disaster) all appear as little jewels set in the tiara of this story.

Profound thoughts from the characters that Minli meets lead her to think about what makes for happiness, foolishness, greed, generosity, and friendship. All are encompassed in what Minli's father said to her before she set out on her journey: "Stories are not a waste of time."

Ginny Lee  
Syracuse, N.Y.

### 18-3-0342

McClure, Gillian. *The Land of the Dragon King and Other Korean Stories*. London: Frances Lincoln, 2008. 60 pp. Illus. by the author. ISBN 978-1-84507-805-8, \$19.95.

This book looks as thin as a picture book but actually contains nine stories rich with illustrations, many flowing over two-page spreads. The stories themselves are a pleasant selection of classics, such as "The Herdsman and the Weaver" and "Clever Rabbit," along with pourquoi stories like "Why the Sea Is Salty" and "Why Pigs Have Snouts." The stories do reflect many Korean cultural values, such as the title story vividly illustrating a daughter's devotion to her father, and "Me First" showing respect for elders—even

among deer, rabbits, and toads! All are simply told and should be great for read alouds, especially for younger children.

McClure includes an informative introduction in which she explains that the book started with a collection of sketches she made while visiting her son who was working in Korea during the 1990s. When she went beyond the cities, she found the landscapes of the folklore she herself was reading. The acknowledgments and sources are also valuable and increase appreciation of McClure's work. (They also explain why "Clever Rabbit" seemed so familiar. Suzanne Crowder Han's *Korean Folk & Fairy Tales* (Hollym, 1991) was also the basis of Han's own picture book, *The Rabbit's Judgment* (Holt, 1994).

Suzanne Li  
Queens College, City Univ. of New York

### 18-3-0343

Meehan, Kierin. *Hannah's Winter*. La Jolla, Calif.: Kane Miller, 2009. 216 pp. ISBN 978-1-933605-98-2, \$15.95.

Hannah's mother drags her to Japan from Australia so that she can research her latest horticultural masterpiece. While her mother writes her book about the endlessly colorful and exotic Japanese foliage, Hannah will be living with the Maekawa family in Kanazawa, outside Osaka, who own a stationery store. "Paper is a source of history and wisdom." This belief will begin Hannah's adventure not only through life in Japan, but also through a mysterious old script regarding an ocean boy who needs help.

With the help of her new friends, Hannah sets out to discover more about this ocean boy. His name is Kai, but he must be long gone now. How could Hannah, Mikiko, and Hiro possibly help him now? With every new clue, the mystery gets deeper and deeper, like the ocean, its possibilities and its dangers. What happened to Kai and who was he really? Perfect for 10–14 year olds who love culture, writing, and mysteries, *Hannah's Winter* holds surprises all the way to the last ink drop. Who wouldn't want to know how a good story ends?

Kena Sosa  
Dallas, Tex.

### 18-3-0344

Naidoo, Beverly. *Burn My Heart*. New York: HarperCollins, 2009. 206 pp. ISBN 978-0-06-143297-2, \$15.99.

The Mau-Mau resistance group in Kenya in the 1950s was instrumental in Kenya's fight for independence. In this novel Naidoo juxtaposes three boys in their effort to understand what is happening to their families in 1952. Although Mathew, eleven, has befriended Mugo, thirteen, the kitchen boy on Mathew's family farm, their status is not equivalent. Mugo's Kikuyu grandfather cultivated the land prior to the English colonization. Now his family works as laborers on the land claimed by Mathew's father. At the same time, Mathew has also become friends with Lance, a bully who unquestioningly follows his police inspector father's rigid enforcement of the colonial laws. The three boys struggle

through the political events as their parents are forced into situations that are not what the boys would like. The accusations of setting fire to the fields that also burns the stables bring the three boys and their families in direct conflict. Their innocent games become life threatening. Each faction suspects the other without evidence.

Naidoo alternates chapter narrations between Mathew and Mugo so that the reader may appreciate the boys' perspectives on colonialism. Her notes and glossary are helpful. The setting is a profound period of history about which U.S. youth are rarely aware. The suspense may burn one's heart. Highly recommended.

Patricia S. Kuntz  
Madison, Wis.

### 18-3-0345

O'Brien, Anne Sibley, and O'Brien, Perry Edmond. *After Gandhi: One Hundred Years of Nonviolent Resistance*. Watertown, Mass.: Charlesbridge, 2009. 192 pp. Illus. by Anne Sibley O'Brien. ISBN 978-1-58089-29-2, \$24.95.

The authors, a mother and son team, present 16 examples of nonviolent resistance to occupations, dictatorships, racial discrimination, and other forms of injustice since 1908. The O'Briens begin with Gandhi himself—and his early activism on behalf of foreign-born residents of South Africa. The authors go on to cover Thich Nhat Hanh in Vietnam, U.S. civil rights activists Rosa Parks and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Australian Aboriginal civil rights activist Charles Perkins, Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu in South Africa, César Chávez, Muhammad Ali, Mairead Corrigan and Betty Williams, the Madres of the Plaza de Mayo, Aung San Suu Kyi, the student activists of Tienanmen Square, Vaclav Havel, Wangari Maathai, and the millions of people across the globe (including this reviewer) who demonstrated against the impending war in Iraq on February 15, 2003.

The authors draw the readers into each chapter through a brief vignette. Several pages of explanation and elaboration and a page with biographical notes and key terms follow. A useful bibliographic essay concludes the book. Students are introduced to the key principles of nonviolent direct action, important tactics (such as demonstrations, boycotts, and hunger strikes), and challenges (such as apartheid, strikebreakers, juntas, and house arrest). Some points seem oversimplified; the role of the Madres of the Plaza de Mayo in bringing down Argentina's dictatorship was secondary to economic hardship and the country's losing a war in 1982. (Neighboring Chile would have been a better example of the efficacy of human rights activism in ending a dictatorship.) All chapters begin with dates, but the one for the women activists in Northern Ireland, Corrigan and Williams, should have been 1976, not 1967. These errors (and the repeated use of "tribe" to refer to African ethnic groups) notwithstanding, this is an important and accessible introduction to the concepts of nonviolent resistance and its recent incarnations.

Lyn Miller-Lachmann

**18-3-0346**

Saldaña, René, Jr. *The Case of the Pen Gone Missing/El caso de la pluma perdida: A Mickey Rangel Mystery/Colección Mickey Rangel, detective privado*. Houston: Piñata Books, 2009. 96 pp. Bilingual (English-Spanish) ed. Spanish translation by Carolina Villarroel. ISBN 978-1-55885-555-7, \$9.95 (pb).

Charming and fun.

Do we need a Mexican-American Encyclopedia Brown? Yes, but I'll get to that later.

Saldaña's *The Case of the Pen Gone Missing* is a page turner in English or Spanish. Great for intermediate or middle school libraries that serve Latino students, especially because of the bilingual edition, it's particularly friendly for beginning readers.

The story places us back in classrooms, but this time, we're with Mickey Rangel inquiring about motives, looking for clues, receiving help from a mysterious "angel," and—of course—cracking cases. Who stole the pen that Eddie's father got from the president of the United States? Was it Bucho, Toots, some other class member?

Now, back to the question of a Mexican-American Encyclopedia Brown ... Why not? Ever since Borges's Lönnrot, we've had Latino sleuths to match (or even exceed, the case could be made) Poe's Dupin or Doyle's Holmes. Paco Ignacio Taibo, a Mexican story craftsman, is the best writer of detective pulp alive. Latino identities, we must remember, while historically bound are also universal. Why not be developing young Latino readers who see themselves as Latinos, sleuths, and readers?

James C. Jupp  
Arkansas State Univ.

**18-3-0347**

Salisbury, Graham. *Calvin Coconut: Trouble Magnet*. New York: Random House Children's Books, 2009. 150 pp. Illus. by Jacqueline Rogers. ISBN 978-0-385-73701-2, \$12.99.

Calvin Coconut is a mixed-race nine-year-old living in Hawaii with his mother and six-year-old sister; his father, an entertainer, abandoned the family for a life under the bright lights in Las Vegas. School is about to start again, and Calvin and his friends are not happy. Sixth-grade bully Tito Andrade has targeted Calvin—more so after the first day of school, when Calvin accidentally spills grape juice on Tito's prized World Wrestling Entertainment shirt. In addition, the 15-year-old daughter of one of Calvin's mother's friends is moving in with them, and Calvin has to give up his room.

With its beachside setting, multiethnic characters, and episodic structure, this first volume in a new series will grab readers. The bright, appealing cover and the black-and-white illustrations inside give life and personality to the characters. Salisbury, who grew up in Hawaii, conveys the dialect with subtlety, as he also does depicting several *haole* (White, from the mainland) characters. A lighthearted romp through a week in Calvin's life, the book does not feature much in terms of compelling or original situations (the school bully has become somewhat cliché in books for this age group), though young readers should like the humor and

the vivid depiction of the Hawaiian setting.

Lyn Miller-Lachmann

**18-3-0348**

Villareal, Ray. *Who's Buried in the Garden?* Houston: Pinata Books, 2009. 160 pp. ISBN 978-1-55885-546-5, \$10.95 (pb).

Another coming-of-age novel by Villareal, award-winning author of *My Father, the Angel of Death* (Pinata Books, 2006) and *Alamo Wars* (Pinata Books, 2008) will satisfy the appetites of middle grade readers for fast-paced adventure. Villareal portrays in an exciting plot the ramifications of making bad decisions and having to make amends.

Meet protagonist Joshua, a seventh grader who must face the fact that his best friend Artie is a liar and not a good influence. Artie convinces Joshua that there is a body buried in the yard of their neighbors, the Foleys, who have been heard yelling at each other. Artie is convinced that Mrs. Foley killed her husband and buried him in their backyard. Artie brings other friends, in addition to the reluctant Joshua, into the scheme to get famous by solving the mysteries of the disappearance of Mr. Foley and the mound of earth, about seven feet long and covered with flowers, in the backyard of the Foley house.

Along with his involvement in his friends' lack of respect for property and extra-legal scheming to dig up the hapless Mr. Foley without alerting the local police, Joshua finds solace in his friendship with Lorena, the prettiest girl in the seventh grade. Lorena convinces Joshua to be less critical of his friends and concentrate on doing the right thing himself.

Plummer Alston "Al" Jones  
East Carolina Univ.

**18-3-0349**

Woodson, Jacqueline. *Peace, Locomotion*. New York: Putnam, 2009. 134 pp. ISBN 978-0-399-24655-5, \$15.99.

Written in the form of a series of letters from twelve-year-old Lonnie Collins Motion (Locomotion to his friends) to his nine-year-old little sister, Lili, Woodson's latest novel is the companion to her National Book Award finalist and Coretta Scott King Honor Winner, *Locomotion* (Scholastic, 2004), written entirely as a series of poems.

Lonnie is a foster child who lives with his new foster mother Miss Edna. Lili lives in another foster home. They are both happy with their new families. Lonnie decides it's his job to help Lili remember everything important that happens while they are growing up. He tells Lili about his new foster brother, Jenkins, who served in the U.S. Army in Iraq and is returning, injured. He becomes obsessed with the process by which the word "peace" begins to take on a whole new meaning in his life. Locomotion wants peace for his family, including his foster family and Lili, and peace for himself as he matures in very trying circumstances.

Woodson has many award-winning novels for young people to her credit, and she is the winner of the Margaret A. Edwards

Award for lifetime achievement in writing for young adults. Middle grade readers will appreciate *Peace, Locomotion* for “telling it like it is” growing up in turbulent times.

Plummer Alston “Al” Jones  
East Carolina Univ.

## Young Adult (Gr. 7 and up)

### 18-3-0350

Elliott, Zetta. *A Wish After Midnight*. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Rosetta Press, 2008. 232 pp. ISBN 978-1-4414742-4-7, \$15.99 (pb).

Fifteen-year-old Genna Colon hates her run-down neighborhood in Brooklyn, wishes her older brother and sister would set a better example for her, and longs to be a doctor and live on the nice side of Prospect Park. She brings her baby brother, Tyjuan, regularly to the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, a peaceful place where she can dream her dreams. While there, she meets Jonah, a Jamaican-American boy her age with dreadlocks and a love for the music of Bob Marley. But Genna's mother doesn't approve, and one night, after stalking out of her tenement home, Genna finds herself transported to her neighborhood in 1863.

Brutally beaten and not knowing how she got there, Genna finds herself in an orphanage. The kindly White Dr. Brant takes an interest in her and offers her a position as a nanny in his home, but she finds it hard to abide Mrs. Brant's prejudice and emotional instability. Lost and about to be beaten again by a group of racist White men, Genna is rescued by the biracial Paul and they become friends. Then Jonah joins her in her time travel, and jealousy ensues. Jonah, who has escaped from a plantation in the South, wants to move to Africa as part of the American Colonization Society. Meanwhile, the violence of the Draft Riots across the river spreads to Brooklyn and endangers them all.

Elliott, author of the award-winning picture book *Bird* (Lee & Low, 2008), offers a thoroughly researched, intelligent, and thought-provoking novel that takes place in both present and past. Genna is a strong character with a unique voice, and Elliott skillfully maintains that voice even after her unexpected journey to 1863. She engages teen readers on a philosophical level by exploring what Genna and Jonah know in hindsight and how our world may have turned out differently had people then made different choices.

Lyn Miller-Lachmann

### 18-3-0351

Liu, Cynthea. *The Great Call of China*. New York: Puffin/Speak,

2009. 224 pp. ISBN 978-0-14-241134-6, \$7.99 (pb).

The latest edition to the S.A.S.S. (Students Across the Seven Seas) series for middle school readers explores main character Cece's struggle to reconcile her Chinese heritage with her adoption into a Caucasian-American family. Liu gives surprising depth to Cece as she juggles the constant balancing act that adopted children live as they try to meet their need to know their beginnings, consider their adopted parents' possible need for reassurance that they are the “real” parents, and respect for the decisions made by their birth parents with unknown circumstances. Liu also does an excellent job of developing a full range of Chinese-American characters who are enrolled in her anthropology program in Xi'an China—from the cute boy Will, a second-generation Chinese American from Connecticut who speaks some Chinese, to Cece's roommate Jess who speaks fluent Mandarin and wrestles with the expectations of her first-generation Chinese-American parents who demand academic success in high-powered fields like medicine, science, or law while Jess prefers high fashion.

Cece also befriends Peter, the Chinese university student host she is paired with for the duration of her anthropology program and who teaches Cece about Chinese culture, and Kallyn, another American student who could pass for an Abercrombie model with her blue eyes and long legs and who loves anthropology as much as Cece. These friends are instrumental in helping Cece with her search for information about herself while in China and supporting her as she deals with the consequences.

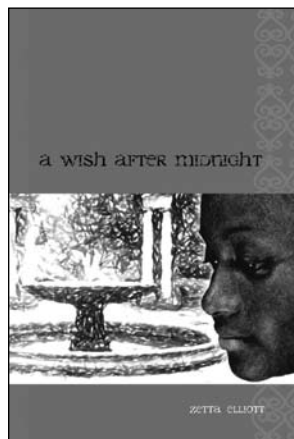
Sharon Chur Lapensky  
Minneapolis, Minn.

### 18-3-0352

Mah, Adeline Yen. *China: Land of Dragons and Emperors*. New York: Random House Children's Books, 2009. 256 pp. ISBN 978-0-385-73748-7, \$17.99 (cl); 978-0-385-90669-2, \$20.99.

Lively, in places stomach-wrenchingly graphic, and both historically and culturally accurate, (although this reviewer wonders about some of the suggested pronunciations of Chinese words), this pocket book of Chinese history makes China understandable to the West. Told in simple, colorful language, here is the history of China from the First Emperor, who built the Great Wall, standardized coins, measurements, and the Chinese writing system, to the present-day Communist government. Omitted are the first nearly 3,000 years of accepted history, including the legendary period, the first dynasties, which lasted four or five hundred years each, and the Zhou Dynasty in which the great sage, Confucius, lived.

Beginning with the Qin Dynasty (pronounced “Chin” and arguably the source of our word “China”) which lasted a brief 15 years about 200 years before the Christian era, we are taken on a colorful tour of the major dynastic families that ruled China, the customs, the quarrels, the battles between warlords, the struggles for power, the peasant revolts, the Mandate of Heaven, stories of deception, stories of intrigue, stories of betrayal, stories of rise to power and stories of fall from power, the festivals, the many inventions in which China long preceded the West, the role of women



and their own sometimes vicious striving after power and popularity, the poetry and art of the golden dynasties, the attraction of calligraphy, the Silk Road, Marco Polo, the biggest navy in the world in the 1400s (the biggest ships were longer than a football field), a list of swear words and insults, discussions of porcelain, tea, and the Imperial Exams.

Reading like a novel, this page-turner history of China is also sprinkled with black-and-white photographs, maps, and drawings. Special pages offer brief but full essays on special topics, such as the Caves of a Thousand Buddhas, matches, Chinese New Year, rice, Kublai's Palace, the Moon Festival, the Great Wall, and the Chinese language.

Better than a textbook, this history will be popular with teachers and students alike—and even with parents, grandparents, and other people who want to know what makes China China.

Ginny Lee  
Syracuse, N.Y.

### 18-3-0353

McMullan, Margaret. *Cashay*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2009. 208 pp. ISBN 978-0-547-07656-0, \$15.00.

Cashay and her sister Sashay are inseparable; they are best friends. That is until Cashay loses Sashay forever to a stray bullet while walking home from school. Cashay's whole world is suddenly turned upside down. Not only does she lose her sister, she loses her mother to drugs and is forced to fend for herself. She does not know how to cope with her sister's death, so a counselor at school has her attend an after-school program. She finally meets Allison, her mentor, who turns out to be the person Sashay needs to help her cope with her sister's death and heal her wounds.

Allison and Cashay come from two different worlds, but they become friends. Not only does Allison give Cashay the encouragement she needs to grieve for her sister, but she also helps the teenager to find a way out of the situation she has found herself in and to realize that she does have a future. Through Allison, Cashay finds the strength to know that she can do more and that even though Sashay is no longer with her, she doesn't "have to be dead and gone."

McMullan has written a touching story that follows Cashay as she tries to cope with a tragedy and make a future for herself. This book is recommended to older readers, ages 15 and up.

Heather Jones  
Cypress Lakes High School, Houston, Tex.

### 18-3-0354

Mendenhall, Emily, ed. *Global Health Narratives: A Reader for Youth*. Albuquerque: Univ. of New Mexico Press, 2009. 238 pp. Illus. by Hannah Adams. Foreword by Kate Winskell. ISBN 978-0-8263-4605-6, \$21.95 (pb).

In Paraguay, ten-year-old Miguel Angel's daily task is to draw water from the well with the help of a horse. Although his mother adds drops of chlorine bleach to help purify the water, there is

still danger of parasites ("Karai Guasu's Cock-A-Doodle-Do" by Deborah Casanova). In Verne Miller Case's "Innocence's Journey," set in Zambia, Innocence undertakes a long journey on foot to get help for his mother sick with AIDS.

These are examples of short stories that aim to inform young people about the importance of world public health and how it is affected by "disease, inequality, and the environment." Stories are graded according to reading levels 1 through 5 and are set in diverse countries around the world. Topics include a wide range of diseases such as diabetes, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, rubella, and epilepsy and cover a variety of problems such as access to medical care, drugs, poverty, pollution, childbirth, and gender-based violence. Lavone Bradfield's "Dancing between Cleveland and Standing Rock," for example, draws attention to the lack of "effective health care on American Indian reservations." Included are stories written from the perspective of migrant and refugee children. The importance of relationships and social action is emphasized across this collection of case studies presented through fiction. A glossary is provided.

Hilary S. Crew  
Kean Univ.

### 18-3-0355

Myers, Walter Dean. *Dope Sick*. New York: HarperCollins, 2009. 185 pp. ISBN 978-0-06-121477-6, \$16.99.

Strasser, Todd. *If I Grow Up*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009. 220 pp. ISBN 978-1-4169-2523-1, \$16.99.

Volponi, Paul. *Response*. New York: Viking, 2009. 145 pp. ISBN 978-0-670-06283-6, \$15.99.

Crime, despair, teen fatherhood, and being African American are recurrent themes in *Dope Sick*, *If I Grow Up*, and *Response*. In *Dope Sick*, Jeremy Dance, known as Lil J, is 17 years old and headed for a bad end. He steals prescription painkillers from his mother, an alcoholic, and he is growing very attached to heroin. When he attempts to go on a job interview at Home Depot, he gets sidetracked and winds up on a drug deal with his friend Rico. Lil J is shot in the arm by an undercover cop. Rico shoots one of the officers, gets caught, and finds himself sitting in a jail cell. Meanwhile, Lil J hides in a dark, abandoned building where he meets a mysterious young man named Kelly who sits in front of a television set with a remote.

The story takes an interesting turn when Lil J watches images from his very own life unfold on the television set that Kelly appears to be controlling with the remote. Readers learn about his home life and his relationship with his friends, his girlfriend, and his young son. A SWAT team is downstairs searching for him. Lil J wants nothing more than to start that fateful day all over. He also witnesses TV updates on the officer's condition and the ongoing search for him. Myers has created a suspenseful and thought-provoking story.

The aptly titled *If I Grow Up* reveals the harsh realities of gangs and life in the ghetto. DeShawn is 12 and lives with his sister and grandmother in the Frederick Douglass Project, a neighbor-

hood described as “blanketed in gunfire, fear and isolation.” It is not uncommon to hear gunshots there every day. Gang rivalry in nearby Gentry Project only fuels the fear and despair. DeShawn is friends with Marcus Elliot, the leader of a gang called the Douglass Disciples. DeShawn finds it challenging, however, to resist being a gang member, especially while growing up and watching them enjoy large-screen TVs, fancy sneakers, and cars. He takes an interest in the sister of a gang member, and the two of them must constantly sneak around. Strasser reveals a stark and gritty picture of a life filled with gang violence and retaliation.

In *Response*, Noah and two friends, all African American, enter a predominantly White neighborhood in an attempt to steal a car where, unbeknownst to them, a racial incident had occurred two decades earlier. They are chased by three White teens, and Noah is beaten with a baseball bat, leaving him with a fractured skull. Noah, a young father, lives with his parents and grandmother in a predominantly Black community nearby. His fellow students and teachers remain divided on the incident. Some students wear T-shirts in support of one of the accused. Readers follow part of the story from the angry point of view of the main attacker, Charles, who is jailed and awaiting trial. As the story leads up to the trial, Noah must deal with the aftermath of the incident, including a struggle to maintain relationships with his family and his daughter and to finish high school. Teen readers will enjoy Volponi’s interesting and absorbing story.



Valerie A. Canady  
*Mental Health Weekly*

### 18-3-0356

Roitman, Gina. *Tell Me a Story, Tell Me the Truth*. Toronto: Second Story Press, 2009. 157 pp. ISBN 978-1-897187-53-1, \$17.95 (pb).

Survivors of the Holocaust experienced many challenges in rebuilding their lives after the war. For the children of survivors, these challenges continue as many second generation survivors are sharing their stories.

This book concerns the life of Leah Smilovitz, a fictional character who represents the author in her relationship with her late mother. Leah not only faces the conflicts of adolescence, she also deals with the conflicting emotions of her parents, who met in a refugee camp after World War II and then settled in Montreal. As she grows up, Leah realizes that her family is remarkably different from the families of her friends. Her parents have irrational fears, are often overprotective, and find social situations difficult.

As Leah strives for independence, spends time in Israel, begins and ends relationships with men, and deals with a difficult marriage, she bravely confronts the issues she must face as a second generation survivor. She finds strength and inspiration from her

brother and sister-in-law and from the memories of her parents.

Through this book, Roitman provides insight into the challenges faced by children of Holocaust survivors. While the story can sometimes be depressing, it is demonstrative of the strength and courage of a woman who, against all odds, lives a productive and meaningful life.

Hannah M. Heller  
Baltimore, Md.

### 18-3-0357

Sanders, Scott Loring. *Gray Baby*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2009. 336 pp. ISBN 978-0-547-07661-4, \$16.00.

Clifton Carlson, the biracial protagonist of *Gray Baby*, is only six years old when he and his White mother watch as two White police officers beat his African-American father to death. The two officers call the incident an accident in which Mr. Carlson resisted arrest.

Ten years later, Clifton continues to feel like a social outcast, with a mother, who in her extreme depression and her grief over the injustice of their lives, has turned to alcohol. Fortunately, Clifton’s school principal involves him and his classmates in a fun activity called the Balloon Ascent to foster school spirit; this activity involves tying return address tickets to balloons released into the air. The student whose balloon ticket is returned from the farthest point is the winner. Even when Clifton doesn’t win, he gets the idea to use bottles rather than balloons to carry his messages down the New River near his home.

One of the messages reaches Swamper, a 65-year-old man who lives in a shack on the New River and sells fish to make a meager living. Swamper gives Clifton a chance to earn some extra money helping him fish. Soon after meeting Swamper, Clifton unwittingly witnesses the kidnapping of a young girl and begins to fall into a pit of hopelessness. He turns again to Swamper who counsels him through the crisis and in the process becomes a source of love and inspiration to young Clifton. Was the fact that only Swamper responded to the messages in Clifton’s floating bottles a coincidence or fate? This exciting novel will reveal the answer to this mystery as well as many others.

Plummer Alston “Al” Jones  
East Carolina Univ.

### 18-3-0358

Whitney, Kim Ablon. *The Other Half of Life*. New York: Random House Children’s Books/Knopf, 2009. 256 pp. ISBN 978-0-375-85219-0, \$16.99 (cl); 978-0-375-95219-7, \$19.99.

Many times in life we ask ourselves, “What is the other half of life?” That simple question is the recurring theme that haunts the thoughts of 15-year-old Thomas. It is 1939, and the world is quickly spinning into a downward spiral for the people of the Jewish faith. Hitler was in the process of bringing despair and destruction to all of mankind. Thomas is forced to leave his parents and Germany in order to save his life.

Thomas and his young sweetheart, Priska, try to escape the rise

of Hitler by boarding a cruise ship, the *St. Louis*, bound for Cuba. The journey is harrowing, as many Nazi agents are on the ship. The Jewish teens miss their families and homes, worry about the future, and try to evade fellow passengers who believe in their destruction. The ship docks in Havana, but the Jewish passengers are not allowed to disembark. After being refused permission to enter the United States (which had jurisdiction over Cuba at the time), Priska writes a heartbreaking letter to Eleanor Roosevelt and pleads for the First Lady's help. The ship returns to Europe, and Thomas and Priska are forcibly split up, as the *St. Louis's* passengers are distributed among various Western European countries, most of which will soon be overrun by Nazi forces.

This is a painfully emotional story encompassing all of the most sorrowful human emotions into one unforgettable tale. One will not soon forget the victims of the Holocaust after reading this book, written through the eyes of a Jewish young man living through the events of that time.

Leslie Owen  
Neosho, Wis.

### 18-3-0359

Williams-Garcia, Rita. *Jumped*. New York: HarperCollins, 2009. 169 pp. ISBN 978-0-06-076091-5, \$16.99.

This book follows three young women through the choices they make and how they impact others. Readers begin with African-American Leticia, who has to attend "zero period" due to failing a class. After the remedial class, she hears something that may help the next girl, Trina, but is torn between alerting her and not. Trina is a Puerto Rican teen who is not lacking in self-confidence. She is so wrapped up in herself that she does not see what is going on around her, that Dominique, or "basketball Jones," as she is known, is going to jump her after school. Dominique, who is African American, is not doing well in one of her classes, and her coach has benched her from her one love, basketball. When Trina pushes past Dominique in the hallway, the angry and frustrated basketball player decides that she is going to have to teach this disrespectful stranger a lesson.

Readers follow these three girls with dread as they make everyday choices, and Williams-Garcia shows how their choices impact each other. While the author draws a portrait of each girl's life, the book did not keep my attention. I was disappointed in the ending and that while the girls' lives did intertwine, not one of them ever realized this. In addition, due to some mature content I would only recommend this book to older teens.

Heather Jones  
Cypress Lakes High School, Houston, Tex.

### 18-2-0360

Yee, Lisa. *Absolutely Maybe*. New York: Scholastic, 2009. 288 pp. ISBN 978-0-439-83844-3, \$16.99.

Don't be confused by the oxymoronic title of Yee's first young

adult novel. "Maybe" is actually the nickname of 16-year-old Maybelline Mary Katherine Mary Ann Chestnut, named for her mother Chessy's favorite brand of mascara and two Miss Americas. Chessy runs a charm school in Kissimmee, Florida, where students are taught the Seven Select Rules for Young Ladies and coached to be beauty pageant winners. To say that Chessy is a disengaged parent is an understatement: she has been married six times, but never to Maybe's biological father. As Chessy prepares to marry a seventh man, a real sleaze who attempts to rape Maybe, Maybe decides that she is fed up with her life as a charm school reject.

When dyeing her hair using various colors/flavors of Kool Aid, confessing the attempted rape by Chessy's latest boyfriend, and being beaten up by charm-school students in the girls' bathroom all do not get her mother's attention, Maybe decides once and for all to leave Kissimmee behind her and hitch a ride to Los Angeles with her best friends Thammasat Tantipinichwong Schneider (aka Ted), an adopted Thai American, and Hollywood (aka Daniel) to find her real father. What they find in Los Angeles surprises them and changes their lives totally for the better. Maybe finds out that she has the life skills needed to meet life's challenges, including the challenge of trying to bring her family back together.

Plummer Alston "Al" Jones  
East Carolina Univ.

## Video

### 18-2-0361

Kim-Gibson, Dai Sil. *Motherland: Cuba Korea USA*. New York: Women Make Movies, 2006. DVD. 41 minutes. Color. \$75.00 (rental); \$250.00 (sale).

In 1945, at the age of seven, filmmaker Kim-Gibson crossed from North to South Korea with her parents in pursuit of freedom and democracy. Her pursuit of educational opportunity took her farther from home—to the United States in 1962, where she married and became a citizen. But feeling increasingly "homeless" as a result of domestic and foreign policies during the Bush administration, Kim-Gibson decided to travel to Cuba—an "enemy" country—to make a film.

There, she met another woman of Korean descent who was born in the same year as she, Marta Lim Kim. Marta was born in Cuba; her parents had arrived there via Mexico, where the family immigrated at the beginning of the twentieth century. Marta introduced the filmmaker to the thriving Korean Cuban community living in the town of Matanzas. Later on, Kim-Gibson would meet members of Marta's family who had moved to Miami both before and after the 1959 revolution.

Much of the documentary centers on different perceptions of the Cuban Revolution, socialism, and U.S.-style capitalism. The Korean Cubans are as passionate in defense of the revolution as the

Miami relatives are against it. Kim-Gibson makes no secret of her socialist leanings, ironic given her family's journey. In addition to voicing this valuable, though somewhat taboo, perspective, *Motherland* explores the concept of "home" and the friendship of two women who have found common ground despite living in countries at odds with each other.

Lyn Miller-Lachmann

### 18-3-0362

Smalley, Logan. *Darius Goes West: The Roll of His Life*. Athens, Ga.: Darius Goes West, 2006. DVD. 94 minutes. Color. \$23.99.

*Darius Goes West* is a heart-warming documentary about a 15-year-old African-American boy, Darius Weems, from Athens, Georgia. Darius has Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. He has watched his older brother die from the disease. This encourages Darius to take on a grand adventure. (Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, a genetic disease found only in males, causes progressive weakness in all the muscles of the body. Signs of the disease can occur as early as age three in some boys, and few live to adulthood.).

Darius and a group of his friends decide to take a trip across country from Athens, Georgia, to Hollywood so that Darius can get his wheelchair souped-up like the cars on *Pimp My Car*. This requires Darius to leave the comfort and security of being at home with his mother. He and his mother have faith in the young men who will be traveling with him. They both believe he will be well taken care of.

The group is made up of mostly college-aged men and one older guy who acts as the adult on the trip. They begin their journey in a rented RV. Well, of course, in an adventure like this, the RV breaks down not far into the trip. This is just one of several hardships the young people will encounter. Yet they never give up. This movie shows how if you are really determined you can reach your goals.

As the young men travel, they learn the true meaning of friendship and courage. They learn a lot about real love. Each of the boys on the trip is touched by Darius. This is a wonderful documentary about a person with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy who never gives up hope and never stops enjoying life. It teaches about love, acceptance, and perseverance. Recommended for viewers of all ages.

Charlie Spencer Lackey  
Duke Univ. Medical Center Library



## Coming In The Next Issue

**coming in the next issue**

- Recommended picture books with biracial/multiracial characters
- Using multicultural poetry anthologies in the classroom
- Interview with Native American author Joy Harjo
- The 2009 Sundance Film Festival
- The 2009 Tribeca Film Festival
- Recommended books in Spanish for children and teenagers