

There is a detailed subject index, a very good cross-topical index, a list of contributors indicating their professional and/or tribal affiliations, twenty-six maps, abundant charts and figures, and some photographs. I have had occasion to look up research items several times during the six weeks since my review copy arrived. In each instance, I found the information I was seeking, thought the essays were tightly-written but illuminating, and appreciated the good cross-referencing system. In perusing various topics pertaining to my teaching interests, I found almost uniformly excellent summaries and appropriate suggestions for further reading.

The price for this book, as with most weighty encyclopedias, is hefty but the rewards within its attractive cover are worth the money. Those with tight budgets might want to seek out the discount price at their next ethnic studies conference!

David M. Gradwohl
Iowa State University

Eugene Eoyang. *Coat of Many Colors: Reflections on Diversity by A Minority of One.* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995). 188 pp., \$16.00 paper.

Eoyang's volume is a collection of personal essays that call for a more diverse conception of American culture and society. While the latter, of course, is a familiar if not universally-accepted theme, this actually is an unconventional and highly effective book because of the range of issues it covers and the author's basic writing strategy.

Over the course of ten chapters, Eoyang presents carefully-crafted discussions on who or what is seen as important in America; the teaching of "other" (not "foreign") languages; cultural influences on the accumulation of knowledge; biases regarding literate and nonliterate peoples; differing cultural perceptions of time, identity, and place; the importance of a liberal education; the unsuitability of racial categories; the differential treatment of immigrants; the rhetoric of racism; and the diverse essence of being American. These discussions are enlivened by anecdotes from the author's own experience and by numerous insightful observations on the pitfalls of Western analytic thinking, cultural influences on even familiar reference points, and the downside of literacy. Sometimes the discussions are aided by structural devices, such as an examination of the meanings of the word "we" to describe the inclusion and exclusion of various elements in American culture, the conceptualization of immigrants as audible and inaudible as well as visible and invisible to point out differences in their treatment, and the use

by analogy of the biblical story of Joseph and his coat of many colors to analyze America's multicultural past.

Most readers are likely to assess the merits and shortcomings of this book in terms of the content of Eoyang's ideas. This is fine, but it does miss an important point. In presenting his work, the author is following a strategy familiar to traditional Chinese scholars of trying out ideas in hopes of eliciting thoughtful responses, whether confirmatory or in disagreement. He is not stating nicely prepackaged thoughts for passive consumption but rather trying to actively engage the reader. Eoyang's writing succeeds in doing this, in part because it is dynamic, varied, and, to borrow his words from another context, "it has the feel of good conversation." His writing also succeeds because it poses tough questions and comes across as honest, straightforward, and not doctrinaire.

Eoyang's strategy is not without a downside. Many of his ideas are implicitly related, but they are not presented as a coherent body. In addition, his strategy certainly increases the chances that even sympathetic readers will disagree with some ideas and that they will find parts of the book more meaningful than others.

Eoyang's basic writing strategy is related to a perspective that underlies many of his ideas. This perspective is the need to reexamine things from more than one point of view and to understand the benefits of such a process. It is an often-touted but deceptively difficult and easily-ignored perspective that has particular relevance for the American ethnic experience.

Russell Endo
University of Colorado

Fred L. Gardaphe. *Italian Signs, American Streets: The Evolution of Italian American Narrative.* (Durham and London, Duke University Press, 1996). 241 pp., \$16.95 paper.

This indispensable interpretation of Italian American narrative literature can fruitfully be used in many ethnic and cultural programs. It is a study distinguished by familiarity with vernacular Italian American culture, as well as consciousness of the losses as well as gains in education in the dominant WASP culture. Trying to reconcile the difference between what Antonio Gramsci called the organic intellectual and the assimilated intellectual, Gardaphe has adopted "a culture-specific criticism that is sensitive to both Italian and American cultures."

The author "grew up in a little Italy in which not even the contagiously sick were left alone. . . . The only books that entered my home were those we smuggled in from public institutions." Nevertheless he became a book reader. At the end of a college and graduate school