

cussion in general will for many readers reinforce one prevailing stereotype of Asian Americans as “perpetual foreigners.”

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Julie Brown, ed. *Ethnicity and the American Short Story.* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1997). xx, 252 pp., \$50 cloth.

Replete with essays, all excellent in diverse ways and covering a broad range of American ethnicities, this cutting-edge text successfully answers questions about claims of uniqueness and difference for ethnic American short stories as the grounds for inclusion in critical discussions of the genre.

For one thing, major differences do not derive from the traditionally taught American lineage, but rather from individual ethnic ancestral archetypes. Madolyn Jablon claims that for African American writers it is “oral narratives” and Gail Y Okawa, that for Hawaiians it is “talk story.” But what about each individual ethnicity’s unique cultural myths? Myths provide sources of commonalities between minority and mainstream short story writers, as well as differences. Instead of focusing entirely on differences, the editor might also have included essays on similarities to and influences by mainstream writers, as well as on differences. Also, as strong as all the essayists are in showing how “politics” (i.e., racism and sexism) impact on the work of ethnic “minority” writers, the essayists, except for Okawa, are weak in identifying class issues. Further, Brown might also have expanded this fine work to include essays on more American “minorities,” or perhaps might consider doing this in a second work.

Essayists such as Bill Mullen and John Streamas focus on the political as sources of inspiration. Mullen shows how pervasive racism impacted on the writing and publication of Richard Wright’s and Chester Himes’s powerful short stories, but fails to mention Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston (who took on racism and sexism). Streamas discusses “The Invention of Normality in Japanese American Internment Narratives” during World War II, but omits R. A. Sasaki’s *The Loom and Other Stories*. Other essayists take a feminist perspective. Margot Kelly analyzes the Chicana Tejana Sandra Cisneros’ *House on Mango Street*, while Susan E. Griffin finally breaks the pattern of critical work restricted exclusively to that text with an analysis of Cisneros’ true masterpiece, *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories*. Hardy C. Wilcoxon analyzes Chinese female student’s responses to Amy Tan and Maxine Hong Kingston. Interesting, but not germane to the topic of this text. Susan Koppelman’s “The Naming of Katz” links complex responses of Jewish Americans to “whitening” and passing in the dominant culture with those

of other "minorities," primarily African Americans.

Still another significant "minority" contribution to the genre of the short story is the "short story cycle" which Rocio Davis contends is characteristic of African American, Native American, and Asian American cultures, failing to acknowledge Latina innovations to the short story through the use of the "short story cycle" by Puertoriquenas Nicholasa Mohr, Rosario Ferre, and Judith Ortiz Cofer.

Even recent entries into the ethnic canon are included, such as Chris Wise's essay on Arab American ethnicity which deals with Ramzi M. Salti's use of the problem of coming to terms with homosexual identity in Arab culture. Laurie Leach analyzes the often tragic results of difference in relation to concepts of space and privacy in "Indo American" writers. However, she allocates too much space to a short story by an American writer married to an Indian that could have been shared with an Indo American writer.

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Karen Christian. *Show and Tell: Identity as Performance in U.S. Latino/a Fiction.* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997). 188 pp., \$19.95 paper.

Christian's crucial contribution to ethnic studies is her book's argument that ethnic identity is more performance than essence. Of course, this is an unresolved and essentialized issue, but Christian summarizes the debate well, situating her study in the performance camp as she relies on Judith Butler's theory of performativity to examine the inter-related performances of ethnicity and gender in Chicano/a, U.S. Cuban, Puerto Rican, and Dominican texts. As Christian explains, static U.S. Latino/a identity categories create "collective fictions" that "regulate performances of gender, sexuality, and cultural identity," but alternative performances of ethnicity and sexuality, Christian argues, subvert these "collective fictions" and show instead that identity is always in flux (21). Her study thus refreshingly challenges the practice of defining "U.S. Latino/a" at the expense of excluding alternative texts, subject matter, and even authors. This is the book's greatest strength, making it a key text for U.S. Latino/a literary critics and ethnic cultural studies in general.

The essence vs. performance debate is fuzzy, however, so at times, Christian's analysis balances tenuously between two positions of a circular argument. While rejecting essential ethnic identity, for example, her study essentializes "dominant culture" and, more problematically, Anglo American identity, as if "Anglo" and "American" are not