

of four young women as they try to establish their identity as second generation Indian Americans. Therefore, it is an important addition to works relating to the American ethnic experience.

Kasturi DasGupta
Georgian Court College

Nathan Glazer. *We Are All Multiculturalists Now.* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997). 192 pp., \$19.95 cloth.

Some of the readers familiar with Nathan Glazer's writings may be surprised or intrigued, as the case may be, by his latest book, *We Are All Multiculturalists Now*. That title seems quite an extraordinary declaration from a man who became known in the 1980s for his neoconservatism as well as for his persistent criticism of certain liberal social policies such as affirmative action. Has he finally seen the light? Not exactly. The book is by no means an apologia nor is it a ringing endorsement of multiculturalism either. Indeed, the reader is held in some suspense till the last chapter to find out what Glazer really means by "we are all multiculturalists now." Nevertheless, his main purpose in the book, he says, is to examine the phenomenon of multiculturalism—"that new dispensation" as he calls it. And he does it with relative even-handedness.

To being with he declares that, as far as cultural wars in education are concerned, the multiculturalists have won. They have won in the sense that the old assimilationist orientation (dispensation?) in the curriculum toward the "melting-pot" ideal has been abandoned. That is his assessment, but one that is not shared by many critics of multiculturalism some of whom ascribe to it all that has gone wrong with education in public schools in particular and the society in general. Glazer identifies what he considers "the four big questions" that critics have about multiculturalism and he analyzes these questions in some depth. These questions, he says, represent critics' fears.

One of the fears is that multiculturalism will lead to national disunity. The distinguished historian, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., is one of the leading proponents of this view. He presents his case against multiculturalism in his controversial book, *The Disuniting of America* (1990). Schlesinger, Jr. is particularly harsh on Afrocentrism. Like most critics, he regards Afrocentrism as an offshoot of multiculturalism with a separatist agenda. He claims that Afrocentrist scholars are doing a disservice to African American history—a history that, he believes, is a part of the Western democratic tradition even though it had been shamefully neglected. While Glazer is also critical of Afrocentrism because he considers it extreme, nevertheless, he believes that the mainstream African

American experience is a significant, if not the legitimating, force in the multiculturalist movement. As a matter of fact, Glazer argues that African Americans have played a much greater role in American history than women.

The main demand of multiculturalists, as Glazer understands it, is for inclusion and not separatism, as most critics charge. He points out that the multiculturalists are “no Quebec separatists, Croatian nationalists, Sikh or Tamil separatists” (75). Indeed, Glazer underscores this point by citing the fact that members of the groups, such as African Americans and Hispanic Americans, who advocate multiculturalism are disproportionately represented in the U.S. armed forces and that their loyalty has not been questioned.

Glazer sees multiculturalism as the price America is paying for its failure to incorporate African Americans into its society. “Price” may be too strong a word, if not a wrong one, to use in this case. African Americans, in particular, and other advocates of multiculturalism in general do not have a punitive intent towards America. As a matter of fact, African Americans have continually been rebuffed on account of race by an America that has been willing to assimilate European ethnic groups. Glazer notes, moreover, with some discomfort, that as the other non-whites are becoming less differentiated from whites in terms of residence, income, occupation and so forth, America will remain a society consisting of two nations, that is, black and the others. This pessimistic scenario, however, is not one envisioned by most multiculturalists. Their project is to bring about a better and more inclusive America. It is, in a sense, a quest for “a more perfect union.”

Glazer admits that he had opposed intrusive government measures of integration. He and others, believed, apparently erroneously, that those measures were not necessary since discriminatory restrictions had been outlawed. He had in mind the pattern of integration of European immigrants for which he, admits, he was rightfully criticized by Ronald Takaki, among others. Nevertheless, Glazer is still an assimilationist at heart.

Finally, what does Glazer mean by “we are all multiculturalists now”? Well, he concedes the point that we are not *all* multiculturalists. He only used that expression in the same way others had used it before in reaction to something unpleasant and unavoidable. He cites the case of a nineteenth century British Chancellor of Exchequer, Sir William Harcourt, who is said to have retorted “we are all socialists now” when accused of socialism after having imposed progressive taxation on estates—an act that he thought inevitable. It was, therefore, not a whole-hearted embrace of socialism.

Likewise Glazer recognizes the fact that racial and ethnic diversity is an unavoidable social reality in America. Thus, to whatever ex-

tent one wishes to accommodate this diversity, he says, one would be considered a multiculturalist.

Jonathan A. Majak
University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse

Cora Govers and Hans Vermeulen, eds. *The Politics of Ethnic Consciousness*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997). xi, 377 pp., \$79.95 cloth.

Govers and Vermeulen's book seems to be a timely one, considering the resurgence of inter-ethnic strife that is causing so much misery in many parts of the world, especially since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the cold war. The book, however, is not an expose on the politics of ethnic consciousness. Rather, it is a collection of case studies that address certain aspects of ethnic consciousness. Govers and Vermeulen provide the theoretical context for these studies in the introductory first chapter of the book. Indeed, the book can be usefully divided into two main parts, with the first chapter constituting one part and the rest of the chapters constituting the other.

In the first chapter, Govers and Vermeulen describe, albeit briefly, the changes or shifts in ethnic studies since the 1960s. The first is the shift to social organization of ethnic differences. They point out that those who focused on social organization, like Fredrik Barth for example, have been dubbed "situationalists". Their study of ethnicity became a study of ethnic politics, with ethnic groups regarded as political and economic interest groups.

The second shift occurred in the 1980s—a shift to ethnic consciousness that is characterized as "constructionist". Much of the first chapter is focused on this second shift. Govers and Vermeulen hasten to point out, however, that constructionism is neither a movement nor a school, but its central concern is ethnic identity itself.

Ethnicity, they say, was regarded as a pre-modern phenomenon in functionalist theory—one that was destined to disappear as a result of modernization. Ethnic minorities were expected to be assimilated by dominant majority cultures. Govers and Vermeulen attribute this to an air of confidence that prevailed within nation states up to the end of WWII.

The post-WWII era saw the reassertion of ethnicity, brought about by, among other things, anti-colonial struggle and the rejection of assimilation policies in that nation states. In the United States, Jews had rejected assimilation as early as the turn of the century. In the 1960s, African Americans not only rejected assimilation but also asserted their racial and cultural identity. Ethnicity became a matter of ascription *and*