

Indian self as tribal and kin enmeshed with the modern Western self, independent and individualistic. He sees the essence of preliterate autobiography as the reciting of one's adult deeds rather than the contemporary (since Rousseau) project of explaining how the author came to be who he/she is.

In comparing Indian autobiography with the writings of the Greeks, Romans, Egyptians and Hebrews, Brumble places himself in line with the comparative ethnological project of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, although his interests are literary and psychological rather than racial or cultural. Although sometimes suggesting a vague evolutionism, he is careful to maintain the integrity of particular cultures. Cautious not to view these autobiographies, and thus these individuals, as mere products of their own culture, Brumble invites the reader to meet unique individuals through their autobiographies and, at the same time, be aware of the forces that influenced their lives and the texts they produced. Thus he demonstrates the determinate ramifications of culture without falling into the trap of cultural determinism.

Brumble states that the main purposes of his work are to interest more people in Indian autobiography and to show the relationship between written and oral autobiography. He more than succeeds. Both his use of a wide range of autobiographies to illustrate his points and his intensive study of a few autobiographies stimulate further interest in this genre, as does his annotated bibliography at the end of the work. Finally, his perspectives and insights provide an entree with which to gain a deeper understanding both of Indian autobiographers and the complex cultural milieu which shaped them. One would wish that Brumble consistently applied all his modes of analysis in each chapter. For example, in his chapter on Charles Eastman, he fails to examine the important role of Eastman's editor-wife in his writings. Nevertheless, I strongly recommend this book for general reading and as an introductory text for a course in native American studies or comparative literature.

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James P. Comer, *M. D. Maggie's American Dream: The Life and Times of a Black Family*. (New York: New American Library, 1988) 228 pp., \$18.95.

Maggie's American Dream is a poignant story about the struggles and achievements of the Comer family from the early decades of the twentieth century to the present. Dr. Comer presents his family's history through the use of side-by-side autobiographies, his mother's and his own. The purpose of the book is to capture the vision and personal struggles of Comer's

mother, Maggie, and the efforts by her children to fulfill her and her husband Hugh's goal to obtain a college education and pursue professional careers. The book begins with Maggie's oral narrative, a collection of interviews that James had compiled over a three to four year period, in which she describes her growing-up years as the child of Mississippi sharecroppers and her eventual marriage to Hugh Comer, the son of an Alabama preacher.

This is a story of one family's experiences. At the same time, familiar themes emerge that can be found in African American history: the centrality of home, kinship, and community in the struggle for survival and advancement within a structurally racist society. The book does well to point out that such networks and institutions were the glue that held people together regardless of whether one resided north or south of the Mason-Dixon line. The racism Maggie confronted growing up in the South also existed in Illinois, where she and Hugh reared their family. Although separated by generational boundaries, mother and son reveal in their own words a common devotion to family and the church, both of which served as inspirational forces in their lives. Another important theme is the development of James's own race consciousness during the 1950s, a period in which the Civil Rights movement was gaining momentum, challenging and slowly dismantling the country's segregation laws and customs. Woven throughout the book is the pressure placed upon the Comer children to disprove racist stereotypes through individual achievement. Juxtaposed to these efforts, which Maggie encourages, is the gradual realization by her son of the institutional nature of racism that extended beyond simply changing the attitudes of his white classmates and teachers. Yet, he and his siblings apparently coped well through the encouragement and support of their parents. For James Comer, family and community were central to his survival as a black man coming of age in such turbulent times.

This book is a rich source of information on the daily life of a working-class black family. The oral histories offered here are valuable contributions to the writing of recent history. It is of particular value as a primary source for black women's history. The story is a familiar and affirming one about a black woman who had grown up in rural poverty and had struggled to build a secure life for her children.

As is typical of edited autobiographies, these narratives are mediated twice, not only by the tellers of the story, but also by the interviewer/collector. The fact that James collected and edited both autobiographies results in the story of family as told by James and only in a mediated way by Maggie. Readers should also bear in mind that since the purpose of this work was to document Maggie's life, rather than to present a critical discussion, an analysis of racism exists between the lines and critiques of sexism and classism are virtually absent.

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