

Marian Anderson. *My Lord, What A Morning*. Introduction by Nellie Y. McKay. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992) 312 pp., \$12.95 paper.

When Marian Anderson passed away in April 1993 at the age of ninety-seven, the distinguished contralto was remembered as a gifted artist of great dignity and as a pioneer who shattered racial barriers in the arts. Indeed, most memorial tributes recounted her triumphant concert on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial on Easter Sunday, 1939. On that occasion, which became one of the earliest symbols of the struggle for civil rights in America, Anderson sang after the Daughters of the American Revolution denied her use of the recital stage at Washington's Constitution Hall. Additionally, in 1955 Anderson became the first black artist to perform with New York's Metropolitan Opera.

While she is deservedly remembered for those pioneering achievements, there is much more to Marian Anderson, whose career still would have been outstanding. Fortunately for readers not well acquainted with the life and work of this remarkable woman, Anderson's acclaimed 1956 autobiography, *My Lord, What a Morning*, has been reissued as a part of the Wisconsin Studies in American Autobiography.

My Lord, What a Morning is, like its author, dignified and entirely unpretentious. Anderson reveals very little of her feelings and inner life in telling her story. She focuses instead on her struggle to build a singing career and spends considerable time discussing the details of her profession—from the rigors of touring, to the demands of study and practice, to selecting proper stage attire, to the preparation required to arrange a concert program. Anderson demonstrates that her success was due not only to her natural ability, but also to a great deal of hard work and self-discipline.

If *My Lord, What a Morning* is a testament to the value of hard work, it is also one to the power and influence of a loving family and community. Anderson not only enjoyed strong family support, but her church and community rallied to her aid at critical times early in her career, helping her to obtain voice lessons, and even suitable stage attire. Although she had to overcome the constraints of poverty and a racist society, she had the tremendous advantage of knowing that she was a loved, valued member of her family and community. Anderson frequently expresses her gratitude to those who helped her along the way, and it is evident that the love and support of her family and community were tremendous factors in her success.

Although Anderson is closely associated with the struggle for civil rights, her role in the movement was not overtly political. She refused to publicly comment on the DAR controversy, noting that "I

did not feel that I was designed for hand-to-hand combat." Even after Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes invited her to perform at the Lincoln Memorial, Anderson was reluctant to do so. However, she eventually realized that she had a responsibility to perform, writing that "I could see that my significance as an individual was small in this affair. I had become, whether I liked it or not, a symbol representing my people. I had to appear." Indeed, Anderson spent the years after her retirement in 1965 quietly working for civil rights causes.

Her anger at the prejudice she encountered is expressed in a very measured way. Her accompanist and tour manager did their best to shield her from discrimination and unpleasant encounters, and she acknowledges that she was privileged in that respect. Still, long after she achieved international fame, she continued to face racism and discrimination on a daily basis at home in the United States. Yet she speaks of such incidents in terms of the inconvenience they caused, rather than expressing anger or disgust.

Nellie Y. McKay's excellent introduction places Anderson's life and achievements in historical and political context. Indeed, McKay believes that Anderson's restrained response to racism was a deliberate choice. At the same time that writers such as James Baldwin and Richard Wright were beginning to express their rage, Anderson consciously chose instead to live above racism. McKay suggests that Anderson wrote *My Lord, What a Morning* for young black people, and hoped to show them that it was possible to take a different path and to meet racism not with rage and anger, but with quiet resolve and personal dignity.

But for any audience, *My Lord, What a Morning* is an inspiring success story, one that provides valuable insight into the life of one of the truly great Americans of the twentieth-century.

Catherine Udall Turley
Arizona State University

John D. Buenker and Lorman A. Ratner, eds. *Multiculturalism in the United States: A Comparative Guide to Acculturation and Ethnicity*. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992) 271 pp., \$55.00 cloth.

The comparative nature of this book is its most outstanding feature. The editors and authors have all worked to make their approaches to the question of acculturation and ethnicity as comparable as possible across chapters—and across ethnic groups. The overall framework stresses the differing stresses that individuals in