

Explorations in Sights and Sounds, No. 13 (1993)

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.

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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

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each ethnic group have had to struggle with in their quest to “become American.” It also emphasizes the importance of recognizing that no group is monolithic in its responses to acculturative pressures, that there is always a range of individual paths which might be chosen.

The chapters are wide-ranging but not totally inclusive. There are chapters on African Americans, American Indians, German Americans, Irish Americans, Scandinavian Americans, Polish Americans, Jewish Americans, Italian Americans, Chinese Americans, and Mexican Americans. Although many other groups could have been included, the editors note that questions of timing and the availability of appropriate scholars limited the final choice of groups. This does limit the scope of the book. Nonetheless, interesting contrasts and comparisons emerge.

The editors state that they wanted their questions to be suggestive rather than prescriptive and that they encouraged flexibility in dealing with the questions they posed to each author. Each chapter includes a bibliographical essay on acculturation, assimilation, traditionalism and interaction with mainstream American culture, and there is a general bibliographical essay at the end of the book focusing on comparative works. The overall result seems to work. Although there is a bit of stiffness in some of the chapters, each chapter seems to have its own style and its own set of responses. The chapter on African Americans must, for example, address questions of segregation and stereotype more so than the chapters on European Americans, and the chapter on Native Americans must, of course, address issues of cultural diversity and sovereignty which are not relevant for most other ethnic groups in the US.

Stressing the comparative approach, and maintaining a focus on how each ethnic group has confronted issues of Americanization and assimilation, each chapter details the role of voluntary self-help institutions as intercultural conduits, the impact of “modernizing” forces on ethnic identity, and the political, social and economic strategies used by each group to assert its own unique culture and to protect it from total absorption into the mainstream. Also covered are the inevitable tensions between individuals of different generations.

Some interesting contrasts and similarities emerge from this exercise. The present origins of many Polish and Italian immigrants seem to have produced some unexpected similarities of experience between these two groups, which may help to explain some similarities in response (e.g., the development of fraternal and benevolent societies devoted to assisting new immigrants to acculturate while maintaining “old world” identities). Scandinavians, Germans and Jews seemed to have weaker ties to their “old country” lands than did Irish or Chinese Americans and thus tended to acculturate more readily. Chinese, Mexican and African Americans, having been

systematically excluded from "mainstream" economic opportunities for many decades, developed culturally isolated "pocket communities." Although Irish Americans spoke English and were geographically mobile, their sense of "old country" nationalism reinforced their ethnic identity in America. The way in which German American ethnicity was gradually erased contrasts strongly with the ways in which both Native American and Jewish Americans continued to strive for bicultural adaptations in which traditional culture is maintained alongside of "American" culture. The editors do a good job of bringing out such comparisons, but careful reading of this text should provide a great many more. This is a text that is highly recommended for ethnic studies scholars. The advantages of a comparative approach, and the sheer amount of bibliographic and historical detail provided, make this a book worth reading. One wishes only that more groups could have been included.

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Pastora San Juan Cafferty and William C. McReady. *Hispanics in the United States: A New Social Agenda*. (Rutgers, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1992) 257 pp., \$32.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper.

This book is an unrevised third printing of eleven inspiring essays written by twelve social scientists who have devoted years of research to their respective fields. The book opens with an enlightening introduction by the editors, Pastora San Juan Cafferty and William McReady.

The essays in this collection raise important questions concerning the social agenda for Hispanics in this country in the 1990s. As we all know, US history cannot be properly analyzed without taking into consideration the important role played by immigration. Immigrants have come to the United States from practically all regions of the planet, and a large number of these immigrants, both in the past and in the present, have been Hispanic.

Hispanic newcomers arriving in the US now come in a time of diminishing resources and a decreasingly prosperous economy. New immigrants find themselves in a changing social context, and new questions must be asked and new agendas and different social policies must be established to address these changes.

This is the very purpose of the eleven essays in this book, which raise numerous concerns. The authors not only study the myriad problems that Hispanic communities are now confronting, but they also address the problems that continue to affect those