

James Robert Payne. *Multicultural Autobiography: American Lives*. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1992) xxxiii, 338pp., \$39.95 cloth, \$18.95 paper.

In the introduction to this excellent collection of critical essays on multicultural autobiography Payne states that what sets this work apart from most other works on autobiography, is "the attempt in this volume to bring together different critical voices, each speaking from an area of expertise on a particular American cultural tradition." Drawing on concepts developed at the 1982 Reconstructing American Literature Institute at Yale, Payne did not impose any theoretical orientation on the eleven contributors. Consequently, while the contributors have relied upon the current criticism and commentary on the blossoming field of autobiography, each is a recognized scholar in the cultural traditions about which they write. In his introduction, Payne gives an overview of earlier notable contributions to autobiographical writings and views *Multicultural Autobiography* as furthering the understanding of the recent, most productive trend in this field: the employment of pluralist approaches to redefine the American experience.

It is necessary to list the essays published in this work to genuinely appreciate the scope of its achievement: "John Joseph Mathews's *Talking to the Moon: Literary and Osage Contexts*" by A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff; "Autobiography after Emancipation: The Example of Elizabeth Keckley" by Frances Smith Foster; "The Children Ceased to hear My Name: Recovering the Self in The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois" by Keith E. Byerman; "George Washington Cable's "'My Politics': Context and Revision of a Southern Memoir" by James Robert Payne; "At Home in the land of Columbus: Americanization in European-American Immigrant Autobiography" by Richard Tuerk; "My House Is Not Your House: Jerre Mangione and Italian/American Autobiography" by Fred L. Gardaphy; "The Ghetto and Beyond: First-Generation American-Jewish Autobiography and Cultural History" by Steven J. Rubin; "Protest and Accommodation, Self-Satire and Self Effacement, and Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter*" by Stephen H. Sumida; "Autobiography as Guided Chinatown Tour? Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and the Chinese-American Autobiographical Controversy" by Sau-ling Cynthia Wong; "Autobiography and Ethnic Politics: Richard Rodriguez's *Hunger for Memory*" by Raymund A. Paredes; and "The School of Caliban: Pan-American Autobiography" by Jose David Saldivar. Each essay (as well as the introduction) is followed by a bibliography of key works in the field of ethnic autobiography.

As would be expected, many pivotal issues are raised in these essays that deserve critical attention and discourse for the field of

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multicultural autobiography. For example, Ruoff provides a clear example of bicultural autobiography in the work of John Joseph Mathews. Foster focuses on the “in-between” period after the Civil War but before the end of the century and gives an account of the difficulties Keckley encountered in controlling the circumstances of publication, the first of many such accounts in this volume. Sau-ling Wong considers issues of the ethnic autobiographers conflicting “obligations” to her own ethnic community as well as to “outsider” readers, in addition to charges of fictionalization in autobiography. Saldivar, by including American authors not in the United States, demonstrates that political boundaries may be obscuring our perception of cultural relationships.

As Payne states in his concluding remarks in the introduction, there are still cultures absent from this volume that need to be explored, such as personal histories of Irish Americans, Puerto Ricans, Arab Americans, and immigrants from East India and Korea, and he hopes that this volume will inspire others to add their voices to the true cultural diversity of American life writing. As he says, “[t]here is much work, much exploration, to be done before we decide what is the ‘essential’ American language and character.” *Multicultural Autobiography* is certainly a leap toward the goal of giving recognition to the true multivocal diversity of American lives.

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Alejandro Portes and Ruben G. Rumbaut. *Immigrant America: A Portrait*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990) xx, 300 pp., \$11.95 paper.

The subtitle of this book is apt. Its authors paint a rich and varied portrait of recent and turn-of-the-century immigrants to America: Vietnamese and Cuban refugees, Mexican, Chinese, Polish and Irish laborers, Indian professionals, Korean entrepreneurs. Unlike many works which focus on a particular nationality or type of immigrant, Portes and Rumbaut attempt a broad comparative sketch. The result is an enlightening synthesis of a very large literature. The authors discuss origins—who the immigrants are and why they come; the *context of exit*, or conditions under which people leave home; issues of *adaptation* (economic, social, and psychological); and *contexts of incorporation*, such as local labor markets, affecting immigrants’ integration into American society.