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Review: 'Ethnic Historians and the Mainstream: Shaping America's Immigration Story'

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and challenging research site. Further scholarship is necessary and sure to come, but what Summers Sandoval has accomplished here is a valuable contribution to that conversation.

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LORI A. FLORES

Ethnic Historians and the Mainstream: Shaping America's Immigration Story. Edited by Alan M. Kraut and David A. Gerber. (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 2013. xvi + 208 pp. \$85 cloth, \$28.95 paper, \$28.95 digital)

Ethnic Historians and the Mainstream links two different strands of academic writing that have become a part of late twentieth-century and early twenty-first-century discourse: the memoir as a genre of seeking historical “truths” and, in turn, the historiographical essay that traces legacies and the transformation of scholarly production. The latter is, of course, less new than the former. The methodological framework for this volume revolves around the question: “How do historians come by their calling as scholars and decide on the projects that eventuate in the books by which they become known?” (p. 3). In the published work of their contributors, the editors sensed “an unusual degree of empathy” with those they researched (p. 2). That they had coupled their own cultural otherness with the marginality of their subjects was, the editors argue here, something to be explored and explained.

The book’s contributors have a lot to tell about the fields of immigration history and ethnic studies, and they offer provoking reflections on (1) the state of these intertwined fields; (2) why the fields have developed in particular directions (specifically linked to each author’s personal journeys); and (3) the creation itself of primary source material that is included in telling private, family, and professional stories. Each chapter incorporates both autobiographical and historical analysis. Thus, the authors make decisions about how and what to reveal about history and their own personal pasts. The contributions take two different approaches to the task of assessing the relationship between scholarly intimacy and the discipline of history’s empiricist call. In the first approach, authors focus on the way they struggled for the inclusion of topics hitherto outside the mainstream. In the second approach, contributors tend to disclose more personal histories to assess how their work and lives re-centered the intellectual debates. The first approach privileges the personal over the professional, while the second approach does the reverse.

The chapters by Theresa Alfaró-Velcamp, Deborah Dash Moore, María Cristina García, Dominic Pacyga, Eileen Tamura, Virginia Yans, and Judy Yung highlight stories about crossing boundaries in childhood and as young adults both prior to joining as well as in the academy. Yans states that she lived between two worlds of pristine and segregated Mamaroneck and the cosmopolitan ethnic enclave of her grandparents. “I learned to understand and to move back and forth between them” (p. 17). Dash Moore did the same growing up in “her” New York and “absorbed . . . how varieties of Jewishness appeared in public and private” (p. 33). García recalls a similar process of assimilation and navigation two decades after Yans’s and Dash Moore’s experiences of the “advantage of youth” (p. 149). Pacyga, Tamura, and Yung, in contrast, honed their skills at maneuvering the ethnic, racial, class, and transnational divides as new types of the first generation—for Pacyga in college, for Tamura in the Peace Corps, and for Yung finding and feeling home in America when she went to China in 1974 as a journalist and witnessed the October 1 revolution celebrations of the People’s Republic of China as an invited guest. Alfaró-Velcamp made many homes and met many family members when she came to terms with her own subject position: “A certain distance from the communities may be analytically helpful, yet being deemed part of the communities under study (being both Latina and of Arab ancestry in my case) may grant some legitimacy and access” (p. 179).

The chapters by John Bodnar, Violet Showers Johnson, Timothy Meagher, and Barbara Posadas forefront academic journeys and, more importantly, offer new revelations on the past via some important reinterpretation of their earlier findings. The importance of social and cultural history play heavily in their thoughts as does the weighing of agency and power. Each deals with family forgetting and rediscovery: “One person’s tragedy,” says Bodnar, “can become another’s inspiration” (p. 58). And, that inspiration might be in something reinvented—“I had grown up in a mid-twentieth-century Irish America ‘without Ireland,’” Meagher writes (p. 108). For Posadas, what was gained through the love of a mixed-race family was double identity and a type of invention (Filipino and Polish, the latter translating more readily to whiteness). If Posadas’s mother was what Jim Barrett and David Roediger call “inbetween,” Johnson was too. Becoming so was part of the immigrant and assimilative U.S. experience. “I am a child of the African Diaspora and this important facet of American history is also my story,” Johnson writes (p. 171).

The one significant shortcoming of *Ethnic Historians and the Mainstream* is the lack of conversation between and among the

scholars who have contributed to the book. If the new immigration history and ethnic studies are so much a part of moving outsiders in, as well as widening the margins, one would think that perspective would allow for fruitful, productive, and insightful dialogue. Indeed that approach is what Posadas refers to as inviting “previously excluded into the conversation” (p. 78). It is the fault of the editors for not pushing the authors to do more of it here. David Gerber’s introduction—in which he alludes to knowing the authors through personal acquaintance and written work—sets up the possibility. As Johnson writes, “American immigration history is huge but not amorphous.” Thus, there should have, and could have, been a lot more to talk about. What would, for example, Tamura and Johnson say to one another about their respective experiences with the Peace Corps (Tamura as a volunteer, and Johnson as child observer in Nigeria). Perhaps this volume will inspire the conversation that this reviewer wishes she had found in its pages.

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Oral History, Community, and Work in the American West. Edited by Jessie L. Embry. (Tucson, University of Arizona Press, 2013. ix + 350 pp. \$30 paper)

Editor Jessie L. Embry has gathered fifteen essays by oral historians and folklorists, to explore twentieth-century work and community throughout the U.S. West. In this lively tribute to oral history, interviews are foregrounded as an essential primary source. The essays outline a broad field, from conservative Utah housewives to Las Vegas black migrants to Mexican American field hands. In addition, this anthology illustrates the enduring professional tensions of the field. Laurie Mercier carefully reviews her career’s work in those terms, finding new meanings in words and their absences, contrasting community and individual memory, and examining the interplay of “dialogic discourse” (p. 45). Barbara Allen Bogart neatly sketches the Scylla and Charybdis of oral history, navigating the extremes of recording “a community’s view of its past with no reference to the outside,” and the looting of transcripts for evidence “with no reference to the community’s perspective on it” (p. 41).

The best essayists here weave a variety of primary sources with their oral history transcripts, and they evaluate that evidence with the “healthy skepticism” that Clyde Milner recommends in his afterword (p. 332). After reviewing the available archival material for his