

Interventions is recommended for academic libraries.

Kristin Whitehair
Univ. of Kansas Medical Center Library

18-3-0274

Sobel, Mechal. *Painting a Hidden Life: The Art of Bill Traylor*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 2009. 200 pp. ISBN 978-0-8071-3401-6, \$34.95.

Sobel discusses the life and art of African-American painter Bill Traylor. Between being born a slave on a cotton plantation in Benton, Alabama, in 1853 and dying in a terrible old folks' home in Montgomery in 1949, Traylor lived a life that was defined by the experience of violence against Blacks in the twentieth century. Sobel argues that Traylor's paintings are filled with hidden symbolism related to the lynching of his son and other violence suffered by Blacks in the South. But Traylor, like his paintings, was also influenced by his large family (blood and fictive kin), wives and children, the possibility that he murdered his wife's lover, his inner rage, slavery, the American South, the Jim Crow period, the blues, conjure power, sexual rivalry, Africa and the African Diaspora, the Baptist Church, and Catholicism.

A complex man who used his paintings in a subversive way to discuss ideas and messages of protest that were not recognized by the White population, Traylor "created a visual language that had great power and also, in his hands, great beauty" (4). Black-and-white and color images and photos are included. The book offers a new glimpse into the life and art of an important American artist and is recommended for colleges and universities.

Melissa Aho
Univ. of Minnesota

Biography/Autobiography

18-3-0275

Agosin, Marjorie. *Of Earth and Sea: A Chilean Memoir*. Tucson: Univ. of Arizona Press, 2009. 162 pp. Trans. from Spanish by Roberta Gordenstein. ISBN 978-0-8165-2666-6, \$16.95 (pb).

Through short personal essays that read like poetry, Agosin describes the process of growing up in Chile, exile, and return that has been the story of her life. The essays are divided into three parts. The first describes her childhood in a South American Eden—her grandmother's house in Osorno in southern Chile and the house where she lived with her parents in Santiago. Readers are treated to the sights, the sounds, the smells, the stories of her beloved Mapuche nanny, Carmen, and the rituals of a German Jewish home. But even in this gorgeous, rain-swept land among the lakes, be-

tween the mountains and the sea, there are ill omens—notably the anti-Semitic Germans who would later become the Pinochet dictatorship's fervent supporters.

Agosin left Chile as a teenager, along with her parents, in 1971. In the second part of the book, she describes the 1973 coup and its aftermath as if she had been there. One realizes that she has inhabited the bodies of those who endured the violence—those who were tortured in secret prisons as well as the loved ones of the disappeared. The third part narrates her return to her beautiful but now scarred country, as she mourns what has been lost, assesses how much has changed, and finds in the landscape the comfort of her memories and a source of healing. Her cello is a symbol of her voice as she carries it, plays it, loses it, and finds it again.

Gordenstein's translation captures perfectly the imagery, rhythm, and emotion of Agosin's writing. Those who love Chile as the author does will cherish this memoir, which should attract new fans for Agosin's work. It belongs in high school and college libraries and is a good choice for classes in world history, literature, Latin American studies, Jewish studies, and women's studies.

Lyn Miller-Lachmann

18-3-0276

Bay, Mia. *To Tell the Truth Freely: The Life of Ida B. Wells*. New York: Hill & Wang, 2009. 374 pp. ISBN 978-0-8090-9529-2, \$35.00.

Bay, an associate professor of history at Rutgers University, does a fine job of placing anti-lynching pioneer and journalist Ida B. Wells-Barnett within her milieu, tracing the problems faced by a strong-minded individual faced with the double handicap (for the time) of being Black and female. The portrait here of Wells is three-dimensional—she is neither fully saint nor sinner—and Bay wisely demonstrates that part of the cause of her fading from the national picture was her hot temper rather than efforts by anyone to hold her down.

An extremely readable resource based primarily on secondary sources, Bay's monograph is a useful introduction for students not only to the anti-lynching movement but to the rise of a Black leadership class in the United States. Academic and public libraries will also, however, want to purchase Schechter's *Ida B. Wells-Barnett and American Reform, 1880–1930* (Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2000), which covers the same territory.

Anthony J. Adam
Prairie View A&M Univ

18-3-0277

Christgau, John. *Kokomo Joe: The Story of the First Japanese American Jockey in the United States*. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2009. 216 pp. ISBN 978-0-8032-1897-0, \$17.95 (pb).

More than just a footnote to American sports history, *Kokomo Joe* is about U.S. history. Yoshio Kobuki had a life of bad breaks, beginning with his being born premature and tiny, having his mother and most of his siblings die of the Spanish flu, being sent

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