

film the scenes. As Seton has himself remarked, “One of the most striking things about the collaboration between Ray and the Art Directors – most frequently Bansi Chandragupta – is the difficulty, is not impossibility, of the viewer being able to detect where the use of locations fuses into a set built in a studio”. The only shortcoming of this book is that Seton misses out on analysing those nine films which were made between 1978 and 1991 (prior to Ray’s demise). However, Indrani Majumdar, who had spent over two decades researching on Ray’s films had meticulously critiqued those nine iconic films in her ‘Afterword’ that was inserted towards the end of the book. She can also be credited for compiling the Chronology, Filmography and List of Awards for the benefit of the readers.

Ray not only depicted the lives of financially impoverished people in his films, but also the opulent Bengali zamindari society of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The author had said that some of the films like *Jalsagar*, *Devi* and *Monihara* explore the obsessions which dominate and bring disaster to people living within the enclosed world of zamindari society. Overall, this book, which is a result of extensive research and close association with the Ray family chronicles the life of the master craftsman himself, Satyajit Ray and the many hats worn by him- that of a musician, a scenarist and a director. The author’s style of writing is lucid and is suitable for the intended audience. Even the language used is clear and convincing. This new and revised edition is expected to re-introduce the genius of Ray to an entire new generation of readers and film aficionados.

Pallavi Gogoi*

MAYA ANGELOU. *Letter to My Daughter*.
New York, U.S.A: Random House, 2009,
pp: i-xii+192, Price US \$15.00, ISBN: 978-0-8129-8003-5

In yet another interesting anthology of reflective essays, Maya Angelou weaves her magic into narrating some of the finer details of her eventful journey of life. Some of these narratives barely find a description in the series of her autobiographical volumes. With its autobiographical undertone, *Letter to My*

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Daughter, thus unravels twenty-seven short essays and a commencement address, all written in a crisp style and concise format. Angelou's characteristic wit and her way with words instantly captures and stirs the reader's interest. Thus, the anthology enables the reader to find out more about Angelou's persona, as well as, her personal reflections on life and living. Also, the book is lovingly addressed to all her unborn daughters and extended to all her readers in search of that spark of inspiration through their own journeys of life. Significantly, the essays chronicle her early years of coming to terms with herself, her sense of identity, her idea of home, the playful inner-child within, the adult world saturated with difficult experiences and her memories of how her mother had first won a place in her heart.

In her essays, Angelou expresses her love for mankind; the importance of being charitable; the experience of early motherhood; showering praises for Guy—her son; recalling her moments of crises, of dreams deferred, of love shattered; describing the lone struggles of Vivian Baxter—her mother; remembering her own adolescent years dotted with incidents of deviance and crime; and lashing out against sexual violence or the threat to a woman's dignity that she had suffered as a child. Through the description of her eclectic experiences, Angelou provides glimpses of truth into everyday realities of the larger black experiences, the significance of taking a stand for oneself and others; the importance of being strong-headed at all times; sharing the lessons of life that she had gained in the hard way; reiterating the practical advices of her mother; recounting her own share of personal struggles and asserting the importance of believing in one's own gifts.

The essays are replete with homegrown witticisms and the gems of her practical wisdom apparent in the description of all her bitter-sweet experiences of life. She unravels some of the defining moments of her life and her serious reflections entailing her personal independence as a youngster; her misadventures along the way; her interesting travels across continents; challenges of raising a young son while struggling to find her own foothold; suffering humiliating experiences of racial prejudice; revisiting her thoughts on the national spirit; comparing the Southern way of life to that in the cities; reflecting on the sheer power of poetry; connecting to her spiritual side; and most of all reinstating the necessity of putting the mind to the best use without losing one's finer sensibilities.

Angelou's essays in this book also recalls her personal experiences with the defenders of the Black Panther, Bob Treunhaft and Decca Mitford, further highlighting some of the popular singers and musicians of her time with a special

mention of Celia Cruz and her legacy. She also highlights the remarkable contributions of Fannie Lou Hamer, expresses her solidarity for Coretta Scott King, reminisces her close association with the Black leader Martin Luther King Jr., discusses her bitter-sweet experiences of marriage with Paul Du Feu, offers a note of gratitude to her long lost lovers and captures a verse on the instincts of survival.

Pallavi Gogoi*

GREIL MARCUS AND WERNER SOLLORS (EDS).

A New Literary History of America.

Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009,

pp: 1095, Price: US\$ 23, ISBN: 978-0-674-03594

The volume in tracing the significant literary history of America that encompasses multiple voices of the nation, both narrates and re-examines the continuously evolving American experience in a bid to explore newer aspects of growth and development in American literary history. It contains informative entries on some of the leading American writers and intellectuals such as Anne Bradstreet, Phillis Wheatley, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Emily Dickinson, Edith Wharton, W.E.B. Du Bois, Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, Eugene O' Neill, Jean Toomer, William Faulkner, Saul Bellow, Robert Lowell, Flannery O' Connor, Philip Roth and Toni Morrison to mention a few. Further, the volume contains serially arranged essays which interestingly captures the composite culture that defines the American nation.

In broad strokes, the reader will find a wide range of information starting from the sea journey of Christopher Columbus to America in 1507 to the American nation being placed on a world map in 1607; the Salem Witchcraft trials of 1692 to the Declaration of Independence in 1776; changing literary trends from the Gothic to Transnational Poetry; days of Jim Crow to the Civil Rights; the Cherokee Nation's decision to Democracy in America; from the Slave narratives in 1838 to the American Transcendalist movement of 1855; from John Muir's Nature writing(1879) and introduction of Motion Pictures (1888) to the

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