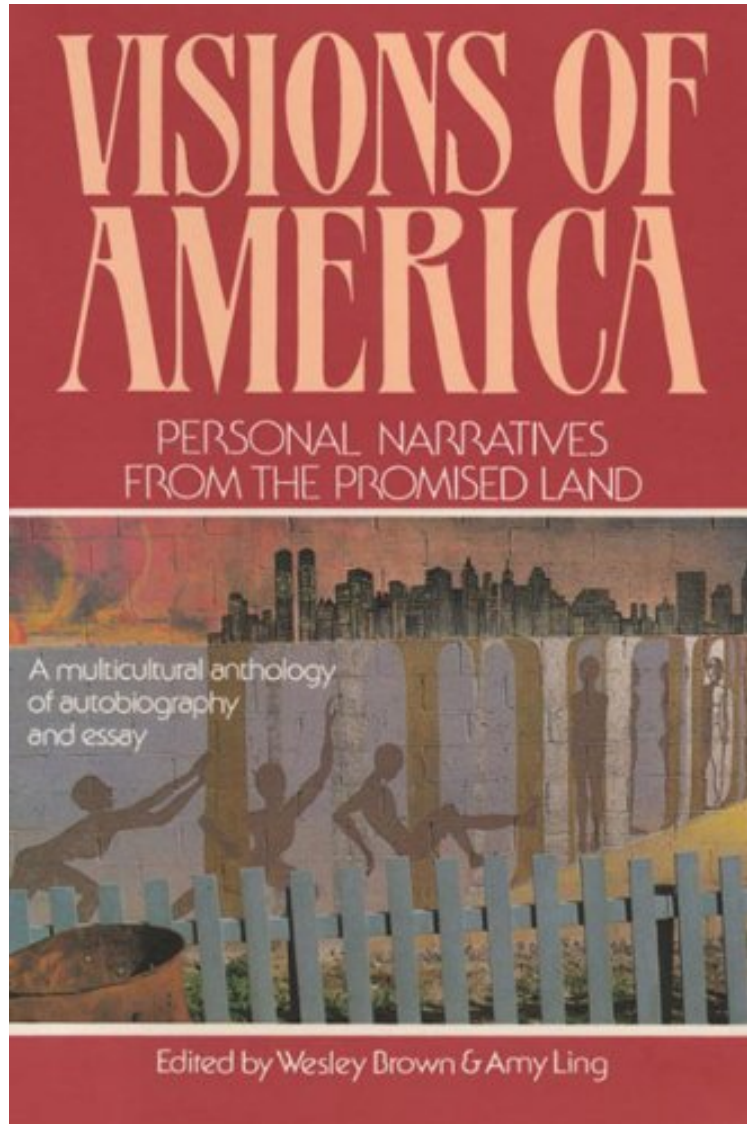


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## Visions of America: Personal Narratives from the Promised Land

*From Persea*

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**From Persea : Visions of America: Personal Narratives from the Promised Land** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Visions of America: Personal Narratives from the Promised Land:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Gloomy collection By dadisme There are some well written essays, but overall the narratives are dark. It would be improved with more variety of mood to match the good variety of ethnicities.

This anthology of personal essay and autobiography follows the waves of immigration into and migration within the United States from 1900 to the present. Thirty-six writers of diverse racial and cultural backgrounds explore the specific tensions of being American with roots in another culture and also address historical moments which have defined American life during this century—the battle at Wounded Knee, the Second World War, the civil rights movement, and the Vietnam War, among them. Powerful, first-person accounts, they follow different paths. But each one is driven by the deep need to bear witness and to bring coherence to personal and collective experience. The contributors are: James Baldwin, Wendell Berry, Carlos Bulosan, Judith Ortiz Cofer, Joan Didion, W. E. B. Du Bois, Charles Alexander Eastman, Gretel Ehrlich, James Farmer, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Mary Gordon, Vivian Gornick, Jessica Hagedorn, Barbara Grizzuti Harrison, Eva Hoffman, June Jordan, Maxine Hong Kingston, Kim Yong Ik, Ron Kovic, Paule Marshall, Pablo Medina, N. Scott Momaday, Bharati Mukherjee, Geoffrey O'Brien, Gregory Orfalea, Sonia Pilcer, Mario Puzo, Jonathan Raban, Adrienne Rich, Richard Rodriguez, Anton Shammas, Monica Stone, Gary Soto, Michael Stephens, Sui Sin Far, and Anzia Yezierska. *Visions of America* is the nonfiction companion to *Imagining America: Stories from the Promised Land*, also edited by Wesley Brown and Amy Ling.

From Publishers Weekly In this rich and diverse collection, three dozen 20th-century writers muse about their experiences in and observations of America. A companion to *Imagining America: Stories from the Promised Land*, also edited by Brown and Ling, these essays—most reprints or excerpts from books—suggest that multiculturalism can expand our vision rather than divide us. Though the essays are organized in rough chronological fashion, some emphasize place (Barbara Grizzuti Harrison on Bensonhurst, Michael Stephens on Hawaii), others identity (Richard Rodriguez on language, Eva Hoffman on "postmodern uncertainty"), others the immigrant experience (Bharati Mukherjee) or the changing times (Joan Didion on the 1960s, James Farmer on the civil rights movement). Some Americans must leave home to find insights (June Jordan in the Bahamas), while some non-Americans come here to observe, such as the Palestinian Anton Shammas (who sees the country as big enough to contain the "portable homelands" brought by immigrants). Amidst the play of ideas and emotions surrounding ethnicity and identity, essays by Wendell Berry and Gretel Ehrlich celebrate the enduring truths of the land. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Companion to the excellent story collection *Imagining America* (LJ 11/15/91), this montage of essays and memoirs responds to 100 years of American life from perspectives of "semi-otherness." Thirty-eight noted writers consider the intricacies and absurdities of being present-tense Americans with foreign histories. The diverse group includes Paule Marshall, Adrienne Rich, Mario Puzo, and Gary Soto. They contribute interpretations of personal ethnic and cultural experiences, eyewitness reviews of episodes that have informed the nation's identity, and provocative, self-referential social critiques. Too ambitiously broad in themes and approaches to coalesce well, *Visions of America* is a disparate but consistently high-quality sampling of writers whom America should be proud to claim. Recommended for general collections.—Janet Ingraham, Worthington P.L., Ohio Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. About the Author Wesley Brown, novelist and playwright, is also the editor of *Imagining America* and *Visions of America*. He is on the faculty of Rutgers University. Amy Ling (d. 1999), critic and scholar, was the founding director of the Asian American Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.