

Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson, eds. *The Myths We Live By*. London and New York: Routledge, 1990. \$19.92.

Samuel Johnson once remarked that "a women's preaching is like a dog walking on his hind legs. It is not done well, but you are surprised to find it done at all." Historians are no longer surprised to find a collection of papers printed, but too often we are disappointed with the results. This collection succeeds by choosing papers that speak to a large theme, the intersection of myth and history, and by grouping them under several smaller themes: the making of myth; nationhood and minorities; manhood and images of women; and family stories. The editors have written an effective introduction to the collection that underscores the various themes and the shifting concerns of oral historians and defines myth in the larger sense as a metaphor of memory. This approach has the virtue of analyzing the construction of myths and the narrative shaping of events.

In the first section, Elizabeth Tonkin discusses "The History and Myth of Realism" and focuses on history as "representations of pastness." Jean Peneff analyzes rather specific myths, namely, the self-made man, the unhappy childhood, the modest social origin, and the successful militant life in her article on "Myths in Life Stories." She uses autobiographies as a vehicle to illustrate the refraction of the past through "sublimation or blackening, exaggeration or cover-up, heightening or repressing, total inversion or partial tampering." The strength of her examples, e.g. Stendhal and Hugo, is undermined by her tendency to make unsubstantiated generalizations that leap off the page. For example, "The consumers of this myth—sociologists, criminologists, and journalists alike—prefer people with strong personalities who develop resourcefulness and cunning, and adapt to difficult situations. Themselves individualistic intellectuals, with a stable way of life but with 'tortured' personalities, they are fascinated by stories of people who achieve harmony and balance in the worst situations." This claim and other assertions undercut the credibility of the author. In "Mythbiography in Oral History," Louisa Passerini focuses on myth as "an expression of alienation" through a study of car workers in Coventry and Turin, as "part of the history of the imaginary" through oral testimonies of Italian terrorists, and lastly as "the realization of a more general but also more archetypal myth" through students involved in the 1968 movement. The last article by Rosanno Basso, "Myths in Contemporary Oral Transmission," uses a stereoscopic approach to a children's strike.

The second section ranges from the contemporary, "The Anzac Legend: Exploring National Myth and Memory in Australia" by Alistair Thomson, to the thirteenth century, "William Wallace and Robert the Bruce: The Life and Death of a National Myth," by Marinell Ash. Bill Nasson uses the life of a Namaqualand village carpenter and smith in "Abraham Esau's War, 1899-1901: Martyrdom, Myth, and Folk Memory in Calvinia, South Africa." This discussion of a civilian victim of South African war is preceded by an analysis of how Italians in Nazi camps reshaped the constraints of the concentration camps through myth in "Myth, Impotence, and Survival in the Concentration Camps," by Anna Bravo, Lilia Davite, and Daniele Jalla.

The third section includes an illuminating discussion of the shaping of culture in the Swedish forest by Ella Johannsson in "Free Sons of the Forest: Storytelling and the Construction of Identity Among Swedish Lumberjacks" and a sophisticated presentation of "Uchronic Dreams: Working-Class Memory and Possible Worlds" by Alessandro Portelli. Portelli demonstrates how Communist working-class activists in Terni, a naval steelwork town, use uchronia, what could have happened, the possibility of another ending, to construct their narrative of certain events in the history of the Communist Party. "Myth as Suppression: Motherhood and the Historical Consciousness of the Women of Madrid, 1936-9," by Elena Cabezali, Matilde Cuevas, and Maria Teresa Chicote, fails to convince. The authors emphasize the selective nature of the women's memory of their Civil War experience, one suspects, to

reinforce their thesis that "the myth exercised a hypnotic effect so that women forgot what they did and neither discovered it nor passed it on to future generations." The feminist agenda leads them to devalue their own protagonists. More convincingly argued is Julie Cruikshank's "Myth as a Framework for Life Stories: Athapaskan Women Making Sense of Social Change in Northern Canada." She raises interesting questions about the persistence of traditional narrative, about the use of those narratives and their relation to gender, but the limited length does not allow her to explore how such stories serve an "adaptive strategy." The agenda of Rina Benmayor, Blanc Vazquez, Ana Juarbe, and Celia Alvarez mars their "Stories to Live By: Continuity and Change in Three Generations of Puerto Rican Women." They allege that "The stories of migrant Puerto Rican workers empower us." They may indeed do that. Unfortunately, the authors lack the distance to evaluate the stories critically and discard many of the caveats raised in the introduction.

That problem does not bedevil the next article in the last section, entitled "Ancient Greek Family Tradition and Democracy: From Oral History to Myth." Rosalind Thomas examines how certain Athenian family traditions were overlaid or obliterated in order to conform with the traditional view of Athenian history and how such traditions helped create the foundation myth of Athenian democracy. Paul Thompson's interview with John Byng Hall, Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist at the Tavistock Clinic in London, underscores "The Power of Family Myths" and the re-enacting of certain imageries. The article by Barbara Henkes on "Changing Images of German Maids During the Inter-War Period in the Netherlands: From Trusted Help to Traitor in the Nest" and that by Natasha Bruchardt on "Stepchildren's Memories: Myth, Understanding, and Forgiveness" illumine the role of personal memory in dispelling negative images.

The more successful and most valuable articles in this collection raise larger issues such as the telescoping and restructuring of memory, the invention of tradition, and the "mythical" elements in narratives. Contemporary oral histories with all their vagaries and inherent methodological problems can but often do not address these larger questions. This book could be assigned in a course devoted to oral history for it illustrates both the strengths and pitfalls of oral interviews. Certain sections in the book could be used effectively in a methodology class not only to discuss certain problems raised by oral history but also to examine the biases inherent in autobiography and the methodological problems of history. History, as Tonkin reminds us, "must have a face." This book could be used to discover its historiographical features and its emotive power.

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Victoria Yans-McLaughlin, ed. *Immigration Reconsidered: History, Sociology, and Politics*. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990. pp. ix, 342. Cloth, \$39.95. Paper, \$14.95.

This book contains eleven essays by leading historians and social scientists of immigration that present new research in this area. While emphasizing an interdisciplinary approach, these scholars utilize local, global, and comparative perspectives in their work. These essays are especially useful for scholars of American history since they provide a broader context in which to teach about the American immigration experience. They help us to realize that historical questions and issues pertaining to the American immigration experience are not necessarily unique.

In short, these articles address the international aspects of migration; they question the classical assimilation model (whereby immigrant culture progresses in a linear fashion toward