

Mary Lefkowitz. *Not Out of Africa: How Afrocentrism Became an Excuse to Teach Myth as History.* New York: Basic Books, 1996. Pp. iii, 222. Cloth, \$24.00. ISBN 0-465-09837-1.

Mary Lefkowitz is an established classicist working at Wellesley College. Her interest in Afrocentrism developed as she began to be questioned about the failure of classicists to discuss the significance of African--especially Egyptian--influences in the development of modern Western culture. Of course there are such influences, a fact she does not deny. Nonetheless, as she began to examine the works of Afrocentrists such as Martin Bernal, George G.M. James, and others, she found assertions that seemed indefensible. These included the idea that Aristotle plagiarized much of his philosophy from the library at Alexandria--a library not built until after his death--and that Socrates and Cleopatra were black. The latter claims were based on questionable inferences from sources. Much of Cleopatra's ancestry is known, but one grandmother is identified only as a slave/concubine. There is no evidence to suggest that this grandmother was black or even that sub-Saharan Africans were common among the Ptolemy family servants and slaves. Lefkowitz does not deny that the grandmother could have been black, but suggests that it seems unlikely.

Lefkowitz has also devoted some effort to tracing the claims of Afrocentrism. She makes an interesting case for the key to these ideas being in the rituals and traditions of freemasonry and dating prominently from an eighteenth-century work of fiction by the Abbé Jean Terrasson and brought into the ideas of African-Americans about themselves by Marcus Garvey and others. She argues that Afrocentrist writers have picked up these ideas uncritically--in actuality European ideas about Egypt dating from before the first translations of hieroglyphics in the early nineteenth-century.

Ultimately her critique of Afrocentric writings goes far beyond factual errors. No historian would be surprised at errors or even overly enthusiastic use of sources to make a point. These are problems that should be corrected by the usual give and take of scholarly debate, though unfortunately errors sometimes become orthodoxy and have political protection because they provide legitimacy for the status quo. Lefkowitz insists, however, that typically Afrocentrists have failed to use sources critically and judiciously in their eagerness to construct a heritage for those of African descent. Rather than engage in a dialectic to weed out errors and come to an understanding of the past that is as accurate as the sources allow, they have been inclined to indulge in argument *ad hominem* and denounce those who differ from them as racists rather than respond to the criticisms.

For those teaching history this controversy represents a number of problems. Students should be taught methodology, including the careful combing and weighing of available sources, respect for truth and accuracy, and the dangers of trying to manipulate historical scholarship to support ideology. They should learn how much the present owes to the past and that the acknowledgment of this is not only correct but courteous. To tolerate continuing poor methodology undermines the whole rationale for studying history. Lefkowitz would welcome Afrocentrists who wish to explore African connections to

Greek and later cultures but will not tolerate assertions of a "stolen legacy" based on factual error and dubious, exaggerated assumptions from questionable sources. Unfortunately, the science essays included in the Afrocentric curriculum offered to American schools have come under similar criticisms, adding to the overall impression of shoddy scholarship by those involved. (For examples of such criticism see the series of articles by Bernard Ortiz de Montellano, "Multicultural Pseudo-Science: Spreading Scientific Illiteracy Among Minorities-Part I," *Skeptical Inquirer*, 16 [Fall, 1991], 46-50; "Magic Melanin: Spreading Illiteracy Among Minorities-Part II," *Ibid.*, [Winter, 1992], 162-72; "The Dogon People Revisited," *Ibid.*, 20 [Nov.-Dec., 1996], 39-46. See also, Walter F. Rowe, "School Daze: A Critical Review of African-American Base Line Essays," *Skeptical Inquirer*, 19 [Sept.-Oct., 1995], 27-32.)

The real tragedy of the situation is that if the Afrocentric version is taught, eventually young African-Americans will learn that the heritage presented to them is merely a construct and not grounded in solid research. Their disillusionment is likely to be great; they may think that it was not that their heritage was ignored but that there was so little of it that it became meaningful only if pumped up with false and dubious information. The situation is made worse by the fact that there is a real heritage which, although commonly given too little attention, should be the source of enormous pride and which can be found if sought. (For an old example see Basil Davidson, *The African Genius* [Boston: Atlantic Monthly/Little Brown, 1969].) Every teacher of history should read Lefkowitz for a lesson in methodology and for a better understanding of the Afrocentric curriculum that is being urged on many institutions at various levels of study.

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William R. Keylor. *The Twentieth-Century World: An International History*. New York, USA & Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1996. Third Edition. Pp. xvii, 595. Cloth, \$49.95; ISBN 0-19-509769-6. Paper, \$22.00; ISBN 0-19-509770-X.

This is an excellent text for an upper-level course in international affairs. It is about national interests, the "power, prestige, and prosperity" of nations in the twentieth century. Drawing upon secondary sources, Keylor has sifted them and written a clear story about power politics. He has made a special effort to include in this new edition explanations about the economic relations among nations and a narrative of the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe with the collapse of the U.S.S.R. Recent events in the Mid-East and Yugoslavia are also included. To get to this end-point, he uses a chronological approach that is easy to follow. After a short introduction, he divides the century into three time periods. The first joins the two world wars and the breakdown of relations of the major powers that led to each disaster. The Cold War then follows. The lesser powers align themselves according to their interests in relation to the two opposing, imperial superpowers. Latin American and African nations are also included. Finally, with the