

the underside of Americanization or modernization. Inevitably from these sources, we learn far more about women in the parsonages than about the vast majority of women who became the "proverbial domestic servants" and farm women. The title promises something the book does not entirely deliver—the story of the peasant women who did milk cows in Norway and what happened to their work and gender and class identities in America. Thus we still need a social history of those women who claimed this ethnic identity but articulated it quite differently—those for whom a conservative Lutheranism may have proved far more problematic or far less significant.

*Doing What the Day Brought: An Oral History of Arizona Women*, by Mary Logan Rothschild and Pamela Claire Hronek. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1992. xxxvii, 176 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$40.00 cloth, \$16.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY ELIZABETH HAMPSTEN, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA

For *Doing What the Day Brought*, Mary Logan Rothschild and Pamela Claire Hronek interviewed thirty women of various ethnic, economic, and professional backgrounds who were in their seventies or older at the time and had lived their adult lives in Arizona (actually in the central Salt River valley, around Phoenix). The book's introduction summarizes women's history in Arizona, and the chapters following describe periods in women's life cycles and illustrate the information with quotations from interviews: arrivals in Arizona; childhoods usually rural and taking place before statehood; daily activities growing up; community building in adulthood; and work at every stage of life. In a concluding chapter women reflect on changes they experienced. The women interviewed are shown in two photographs: in youth, and at the time of the interview. A bibliography includes books and articles on women in the West and in Arizona.

Two impressions struck me about these women, who in the main reflect fairly traditional values (most said they were against the Equal Rights Amendment although they favored equal pay): they all sound enthusiastic about living in Arizona and love the state, and several also hold grave reservations about the very progress of the region that made their own lifetimes exhilarating. Settlement years had to have been hard for some, but having prospered, the memories of these women are happy: "When we first came here [to Phoenix], . . . the desert was solid [with] beautiful flowers. It was

gorgeous. We used to go and pick flowers with a horse and buggy" (133). I note this ebullience because it is less emphatic, I think, among women in some other regions (as in North Dakota, where I have lived), who even when they might recall picking wildflowers are likely to hold too much poverty, cold, hunger, and too many dead children in their memories to sound altogether joyous or even enthusiastic about the new life that (usually their husbands') adventuring had brought them to. But the Arizona women, living almost at the epicenter of the American Dream, interestingly express skepticism: "All of these women," the authors say, "saw settlers conquer the desert . . . [and] many have real qualms about what will happen to Arizona with its continuing unbridled growth, which is often at odds with the natural environment." (In whose mind did settlers "conquer" the desert? Did women use the word, or are the authors merely gliding over a cliché? Either way, the terminology of war should give pause.)

There are wise and strong women in this book, but I wish the authors had listened to them even more closely. I regret having no very coherent sense of any of the women individually, because of the way their comments are scattered among chapters according to topic, and, I suppose, because the purpose of the book is elsewhere. The authors say they wanted "to retain the sense and flavor of the women's own words, but we also wanted to write a more general analytical history of Arizona women, using the oral histories we had gathered as the primary, but not only, data set" (xvii). This "double lens" as they term it, "to both see these women's lives and envision changing Arizona," may be one lens too many. Of course individual lives are affected by the history, politics, economics, and other circumstances of the time, yet "changing Arizona" is another story, which distracts from the special strengths of the interviews (and sometimes appears at cross purposes to them). The authors seem to assume that "general analytical history" is of a higher order than "women's own words," or at least is needed to shore them up. My own conviction is that the two are different and can stand independently. Asking people to talk in depth about their lives gives information that is not available any other way. Although it does not necessarily lead to quantifiable data (or need it), it does invite specific techniques of analysis. (If testimony is wanted for its informational content, then surely the short answer survey is appropriate.) The sentences I quoted about picking flowers, for instance, come in a section in which women were "asked to reflect on their communities": that particular respondent, it seems to me, treats the growth of Phoenix rather offhandedly, but is animated by the

memory of flowers. Is it likely, I wonder, that her concrete experience was resisting the expressed object of the settlement venture? I wish the authors had responded more subtly to such possible ambiguities.

The value and the pleasure of this book is that it makes one glad to listen in on some women who have lived so long in the Salt River valley, which in itself, for Arizona, is rather an accomplishment.

*These United States: Portraits of America from the 1920s*, edited by Daniel H. Borus. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992. xii, 410 pp. Illustrations, biographical sketches of the contributors. \$25.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY JOSEPH F. WALL, GRINNELL COLLEGE

Early in 1922, when Warren G. Harding's "normalcy" and Sinclair Lewis's "Babbitry" were setting the tone most satisfying to Americans in that post-Wilsonian, post-World War I era, a discordant note was struck by the appearance of *Civilization in the United States*, edited by Harold Stearns. The book consisted of thirty-three essays that analyzed American culture and found it wanting. So acerbic was the book's evaluation of our culture that most Americans ignored it. Only for those disillusioned Americans labeling themselves the Lost Generation did it become a gospel of truth.

One intellectual, however, felt that Stearns's book must be answered in detail by a more sympathetic and careful analysis of the forty-eight states then making up the American Union. Ernest Gruening, managing editor of *The Nation*, immediately laid plans for a series of articles that would portray the United States not in its generalized totality, but in its wonderfully complex individuality. The series began on April 19, 1922, with an article on Kansas by William Allen White, for Gruening knew that the redoubtable editor of the *Emporia Gazette* was always ready, willing, and able to evaluate his native state. For the next twenty-eight months, the individual states, as scripted by their chosen authors, made their appearance in the pages of *The Nation*, following no rational order, neither alphabetical nor geographical. The last state essay, Ralph D. Paine's on New Hampshire, was published on August 20, 1924.

The authors were apparently given *carte blanche* as to what they would include—and exclude—in their six- to eight-page essays. Most of the writers did subscribe to the general editorial policies of the liberal, progressive *Nation*, but even that generalization is not applicable to all on this highly eclectic roster of writers.

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