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Marie L. McLAUGHLIN, *Myths and Legends of the Sioux* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1990, Pp. 224, $6.95 (paper), ISBN 0-8032-8171-4)

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Marie L. McLAUGHLIN, *Myths and Legends of the Sioux* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1990, Pp. 224, $6.95 (paper), ISBN 0-8032-8171-4)

Myths and Legends of the Sioux, originally published in 1916, is clearly an excellent product of its times: however, reprinting the collection of thirty-eight stories in 1990 in its original form appears opportunistic and even irresponsible.

The two page foreword, written by Marie L. McLaughlin in 1913, provides the author's credentials as a collector of Sioux folklore and legends. Mrs. McLaughlin was one quarter Sioux, raised in "Indian Country", fluent in Sioux since childhood and closely associated with Sioux people throughout her life. The language used in the foreword echoes popular themes of the early 1900s with discussions of "a race" which is "honest and childlike and fair", and of "earnest, thoughtful, dignified, but simple and primitive people". By so closely identifying with these people, Mrs. McLaughlin manages to make these statements somewhat less offensive to the 1990's audience than is typical of most period pieces. The foreword provides the sophisticated reader with a social and temporal context within which to evaluate the stories in the book. However, in the 1990's, the audience for such books of "legends and myths" tends not to be sophisticated in the least. That is, the primary readership for this type of book is the tourist who discovers it on the rack of an "Indian Trader" souvenir shop, and who reads it as the definitive statement about the Sioux people.

Contemporary English language text collections of Native American stories suffer from many of the same problems evident in this work: stories are provided with no indication as to the identity of the author/narrator; the stories are often made more generic by editing out specific names and places; when Native terms are provided, they are written in a stereotypic syllabified (each syllable separated by hyphens) orthography rather than in a more standard Native orthography; the stories are presented with no apparent organization; and genres are left undifferentiated. Again, this is excusable in a volume created in the early 1900's, but many of these difficulties could be addressed through a careful editing of the materials. That is, this volume could have easily been evaluated and reorganized to reflect Sioux genres, including such obvious categories as "rabbit tales", "Unktomi (Spider) stories", Warrior legends, "corn stories" and so on. At the very least, a second foreword for the reprint edition was in order to explicitly address the problems and strengths of the book.

In the final analysis, there is no doubt that the stories collected by Mrs. McLaughlin are excellent. The breadth of the thirty-eight stories is commendable, and the content is culturally rich. In addition to the stories, she provided twenty hand-drawn illustrations which, while quite elementary in style, often give interesting insights into the tales. This book deserved to be reprinted thanks

to the content of the stories, but the volume ought to have included an explanation of why, apart from financial gain, this 1916 book should be presented in 1990.

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Dan BEN-AMOS and Emmanuel BIN GORION, editors, *Mimekor Yisrael: Selected Classical Jewish Folktales* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1990, Pp. xiii + 271)

I was frustrated by this work which I found neither fish nor fowl nor good red herring and thus an anomaly, if not quite one of the abominations of Leviticus. My perplexity derives from a questionable decision by the publisher to offer the general reader a selection from the much larger, three-volume, compilation *Mimekor Yisrael: Classical Jewish Folktales* (Indiana UP, 1976), but furnished only with a three page introduction and brief headnotes by Dan Ben-Amos. The publisher's blurb on its cover also announces a new "scholarly edition" of *Mimekor Yisrael*, prepared and annotated by Ben-Amos, for those with an "in-depth" interest in Jewish history and folklife. I have not yet been able to see the scholarly version, so let it be clear that this review speaks only of the selected edition intended for those with just a passing interest in Jewish "exempla".

Perhaps there is such a readership. They would need more help that they are given, however, by the cogent but too brief introduction and headnotes, to fully appreciate these richly faceted, culturally resonant narratives. The stories were compiled as an anthology from a variety of sources — medieval narrative collections, chapbooks, literary versions of fables — by Micha Joseph bin Gorion (1865-1921), an East European scholar and author. They show the diversity of oral and written sources, from Jewish and non-Jewish folklore, which made up a body of instructive, inspirational, and entertaining folk literature which ran in conjunction with official Jewish religion. The compilation as a whole, even to judge by this selected edition, is a massive achievement of great interest to the narrative scholar because there are so many parallels to international folktale and legend tradition. It is all the more frustrating as with this rich body of tales we are not given sufficient interpretation or commentary, despite having at our elbow, in Dan Ben-Amos, a guide who could have said much more about