

some characteristics of both. *Ittaturi* can be *stregi*, or witches, but they can also be ordinary people whose envious or hostile emotions become strong enough to broadcast harm. Having presented the tacit system of beliefs underlying *mal'oucchiu* and the ritual techniques most commonly used for its prevention and cure, Migliore ends this chapter with a caveat: the model described here is after all an abstraction, half cultural concept, half ethnographer's construct. As such it can never capture the living complexity of *mal'oucchiu*. We can begin to appreciate that complexity only by attending to the many uses that this cultural form assumes in different contexts, or in Pirandello's terms, to its place in "the flux of life."

The book's remaining chapters take up this task, presenting a wide range of different cases in which *mal'oucchiu* serves variously to explain illness, define neighbourly conduct, account for the falling-out of friends, mark degrees of social distance and provide a rich resource for argument and moral commentary. These cases are the real strength of Migliore's book; beyond demonstrating the versatility of *mal'oucchiu*, they offer a series of vivid cautionary tales for anyone who may feel tempted to explain a cultural idiom by invoking one of its functions.

Some readers may find this book's very limited engagement with current anthropological theory to be a real drawback, while for others it will be a reminder that theory is not everything. Certainly the questions raised and cases presented here would lend themselves well to general courses in ethnography, as well as to courses in medical and psychological anthropology and Mediterranean culture. Migliore's clear, straightforward style and frequent use of anecdotes would make *Mal'oucchiu* an excellent choice for undergraduates, even at the introductory level.

Melanie G. Wiber, *Erect Men, Undulating Women: The Visual Imagery of Gender, "Race," and Progress in Reconstructive Illustrations of Human Evolution*, Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1997.

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Palaeoanthropologists, like most people, are fascinated with our remote history. They present ideas about our past, and back them up with fossils and reconstructions of early social life. Describing and explaining our origins began well before anthropology developed as a formal academic discipline. But by the middle of the 19th century, these once-speculative ideas had been incorporated into evolutionary and progressive models of our past. When I was young, one of my favourites was a coffee-table book called *The Epic of Man*, published by Life Magazine (1961). It is full of pictures of ancient people and sites, but what were really fascinating were the reconstructions of life in the past, presumably drawn from archaeological and historical sources. Very little was

about human evolution, only the first 20 or so pages. But the ideas of progress and developmental change resonate through the book as it visually describes human history from the most remote period up to the beginning of civilization. One never thought to question what was portrayed or how it was presented. This was the generally accepted picture of the development of society, progressing from its most primitive to its most complex stages in a unilineal fashion.

In the study of human evolution, palaeoanthropology, visibility is often a means to success. New fossil discoveries are well reported in the press and popular publications, but their significance and interpretation is not often discussed. Fossils are facts, as is their anatomy, context and position in time and space. All else is interpretation, and is often subjective, not to mention culturally loaded by our own preconceptions. It is well understood within the discipline that fossil specimens are rare and are hotly contested. But in general publications, there seems to be a clear party line or consensus view of human evolution.

Misia Landau (*Narratives of Human Evolution*, Yale University Press, 1991) was one of the first to recognize that the stories palaeoanthropologists tell us about their discoveries are structured in the same way as origin myths found in all societies. They function in the same way, providing an explanation of our place in nature. While these narratives share much with mythology, labelling them as "science" says that the accounts presented by palaeoanthropologists represent the absolute truth, rather than just being folk tales. As the co-discoverer of the structure of DNA, James Watson, recently said while opening a conference on human evolution, all societies have origin myths. But only geneticists had access to the truth, as one's DNA does not lie.

It is within this context, and in the context of deconstruction of scientific thought, that one can place *Erect Men/Undulating Women*, the new book by Melanie Wiber of the University of New Brunswick. Ostensibly it discusses the issue of how early humans are portrayed in scientific illustrations, and how these illustrations reflect the dominant society's preconceptions about gender and race. These reconstructions are presented as facts, but often omit a discussion of how they are created. Many rely on the assumption that human history is composed of technological and cultural advances which divorced us from biological controls, as culture and nurture replaced nature. Some of these models are familiar to all of us, such as the idea that all human societies share a sexual division of labour. Women gather, look after the kids, stay at home while men hunt, make tools, and protect the family. As recently as 1980, Owen Lovejoy used monogamous pair bonding and a sexual division of labour as the basis of a model for the origins of bipedal locomotion which was published in *Science*, the flagship journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Other models assume that technology and hunting, both realms of (predominantly) male behaviour, directed human evolution. These often fly in the face of ethnographic data which show the

importance of women's work in the maintenance of the family and society.

Wiber presents a number of case studies using quite well-known illustrations. She discusses her own and her students' interpretations of these, as well as whatever information she has been able to acquire from the artists or illustrators who created them. Many were reluctant or unwilling to co-operate, and refused permission to reprint their work in this volume. The issues behind their reluctance provide another focus of analysis in the book.

One wonders how aware are scientific illustrators and palaeoanthropologists about the hidden meanings in their text and illustration. One of the few reflective articles that I know about was produced by David Pilbeam (1980) just as our "facts" about Miocene hominoids and human origins were being overthrown. The interpretation of the fossil evidence for hominid origins literally changed overnight, and a new consensus was produced. A similar thing happened in 1987 with the publication of the first mitochondrial DNA study of living people. It proposed a recent common origin for all of us,

and additionally, since mtDNA is inherited through the female line exclusively, also led researchers to look at the whole question of the role of females in our past.

In critiquing the whole framework in which palaeoanthropologists and scientific illustrators operate, Wiber gives us much to think about. This book is in the tradition of Lutz and Collin's *Reading National Geographic* (University of Chicago Press, 1993), and other recent works of deconstruction in visual anthropology. I can recommend Wiber's book, but think it could be best understood by supplementing it with an insider's perspective on similar issues, Lori Hagler's edited volume, *Women in Human Evolution* (Routledge, 1997).

Reference

Pilbeam, D.R.

1980 Major Trends in Human Evolution, *Current Argument on Early Man*, L.K. Koenigsson (ed.), Oxford: Pergamon: 261-285.
