

Summaries of articles

Rituals of Agression in 17th-century Aquitaine

G. HANLON

Research on delinquance using judicial records is handicapped because those records show only those crimes that society thought necessary to repress. This is partially overcome in sing archives from the different tiers of judicial machinery. For the 17th-century Agenais it was nevertheless possible to identify not only the types and frequency of criminal acts, but also their actors and the extraordinary level of elite violence. Furthermore, an analysis of blow-by-blow accounts derived from judicial testimony permits us to go farther and identify the repetitive, or ritual stages of a given encounter, and the way in which it evolved over the century for men and women. The unfolding of each confrontation becomes a key to understanding society and its values.

Constructing Gender in Early Modern England: Observation, Gossip and Reputation

S. D. AMUSSEN

The roles of men and women in society are not natural ; they are the result of expectations that must be taught to each new generation, and which are enforced, formally and informally, by society. This article examines the expectations of women and men in early modern England and the enforcement of those expectations. The focus is on informal enforcement, through the building of reputation on the basis of observation and gossip ; these processes are observed in reference to courtship, relations within marriage, and marital breakdown. This study demonstrates the importance of informal methods of control in the social construction of women and men, and of their relationships with each other.

Behind the Mirror: Satanic Myths and Cultural Realities during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

R. MUCHEMBLED

The sabbat is quite a myth. It was forged by the élites of Europe, on the basis of a mixture of popular cultural realities herein linked together as "satanic" practices.

Woman is placed at the heart of a so-called religion of the devil. She stands behind the mirror, occupying a place in this “counter-world” which is exactly the same as that occupied by the witch-hunters in their own world.

However, a witch-craze requires two other conditions: that the myth be spread by zealous local officers, and above all that the “middling sort”, i.e. the local notables, play an active role. The last condition makes all the difference between “open” and “closed” villages, regions, districts or states. In the first case people (or a part of them) agree with the Law, which comes from outside. In the second, they maintain the old internal balance achieved by a large-scale indulgence in private revenge.

This model explains, I think, important contrasts among witch-hunts all over Europe. Such a persecution occurs not only as a part of a religious evolution but mainly of a political movement: the villagers are gradually forced to tie their communities firmly to modernity and progress.

***Hirsute Arrigo, Crazy Pietro, Amon the Dwarf and Other Beasts :
Concerning a Painting of Agostino Carracci***

R. ZAPPERI

A painting by Agostino Carracci in the Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples, carries the title Composition with figures and animals. However, old inventories identify the figures as a wild man, a dwarf, and a fool, the basest members of the Roman court of Cardinal Odoardo Farnese. The painter, who was part of the Farnese court until the end of the sixteenth century, created an astonishing polemical portrait which, by restoring human dignity to such creatures, implicitly challenges the official ideology that condemns them to the level of animals. This challenge was inspired by Democritus, the Greek philosopher who believed that animals were superior to man, to whom Agostino Carracci devotes a highly intriguing picture also at Capodimonte.

Byrsa. Elissa’s Ruse and the Foundation of Carthage

J. SCHEID AND J. SVENBRO

The story of Carthage’s — or Byrsa’s — foundation by Dido serves as a reference myth to folklorists: in fact, Dido’s treacherous demand for “as much land as an ox-hide (búrsa) can hold” has a great number of parallels in the most different cultures. But it is on purpose that the present article leaves out these parallels in order to focus the attention on Byrsa, whose legend is studied in relation to its Greco-Roman linguistics, cultural and historical context.

***Protestants Books, Catholic Books
in Seventeenth-Century Metz***

PH. BENEDICT

338 inventories from the years 1645-72, including several book-sellers’ inventories, illuminate book-ownership and reading patterns in a city with a large Protestant minority. The Protestants were far more likely to own books of enough value to appear in the private inventories than were their Catholic neighbors, but the booksellers’ records reveal a large, otherwise invisible body of cheap Catholic literature. The Catholic

SUMMARIES OF ARTICLES

Reformation also spread the printed word, but it did not foster a devotional life based on the intensive reading of complex texts. Alongside the Bible and psalter, many Huguenots owned Crespin's martyrology, Calvin's works, and the controversial and doctrinal writings of seventeenth-century French Protestant theologians. Investigation of individual libraries sheds light on the culture and religious formation of different members of the Protestant community, from pastors and professional men to learned artisans and military noblemen.

***The meaning and function of the "crisis" in Academic
Philosophy in France at the Turn of the Century***

J.-L. FABIANI

Taking as its starting point the paradoxical nature of the persistence with which the French academic philosophers evoked the critical situation in which they found themselves between 1880 and 1914, this study attempts to bring to light the social stakes involved in the debates over Philosophy at the turn of the century. It begins first by evaluating the strategies of the legitimation and disqualification of individuals and groups and defining the limits of this crisis which fails to call into question the relative social optimism and group-cohesion of, philosophy professors. It then attempts to measure the relative decline of Philosophy within the context of the academic disciplines. The rally of support for the philosophy class and the status quo of the discipline itself appears then as a consequence of this relative decline in position. The rigour and success of this rally of support accounts for the fact that no real transformation in the teaching of philosophy took place during the Third Republic. Nevertheless, behind this unmoving façade, the proliferation of references to the crisis of the discipline can be taken as an index of the changes which determine its position within the educational system and the image which the professors have of their activity.

Le Directeur-délégué de la Publication : François FURET

Imprimerie Nationale

Commission Paritaire des publications et agences de presse, n° 20816.

N°2 - Dépôt légal : juin 1985

5.565.002.5