

are interested in gaining insight into different ways of seeing and analyzing representations of the Middle East and Central Asia. Gillian Whitlock's work admirably traces the intertextual connections between life, history, autobiography, and politics and shows how the "war of words and signification [are] attached to the war on terror" (68) and how "book markets are connected to boardrooms and centers of command" (10). In short, in order to dispel the myths of "Orientalisms new and old" (93), the Orient must represent itself through works such as the life narrative and the Western reader must be wary of the text that "renews the fantasies of Occidentalism" (129).

Sheba Rahim

Ann Thwaite. *Passageways: The Story of a New Zealand Family*. Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2009. Pp. 352. \$45.00 (US and NZ).

Surely the most difficult burden in writing a family history is in rendering the story interesting and relevant to readers outside one's own family. The challenge must be even greater when the family has been ordinary and unremarkable—that is, in the sorts of ways that typically gain public notice, such as acts or lives of scandal, glamour or eccentricity. What makes Ann Thwaite's family so remarkable is perhaps its very ordinariness. Here were no criminals or lunatics, no celebrities or public figures, no egoists or seekers of the spotlight. The stuff of Thwaite's tale is indeed distinct in the absence of the usual woebegone clichés of a miserable childhood, of alcoholic parents, abusive uncles, and so forth. Instead, this is a tale, carefully documented with extensive research, lavishly complemented with genealogical charts and more than 300 images, of a family remarkable for their hard work and ambition to improve the lives of their offspring and for their love and commitment to each other.

In truth, there was nothing ordinary about Thwaite's family. Beginning in 1851, each of her great-grandparents—carpenters, farmers, servants and rail-workers—emigrated to New Zealand from the British Isles, and *Passageways* tells the stories of their difficult lives in nineteenth-century Britain, their often arduous ocean passages, and their struggles to establish themselves in their new world. In each case, the allure of a fresh start and of financial improvement overpowered their attachment to home and family as well as their fear of the unknown. All were willing to endure the miseries and indignities of a three- to four-month passage to New Zealand. Some of them witnessed

a frightening number of shipboard deaths while others celebrated new births aboard ship. Immigration generally meant a new life of farming, which was encouraged by the New Zealand Company with incentives. Once settled, these new New Zealanders improved their lives in a variety of ways, pursuing quick riches in the gold rush, building roads and improving the colony's infrastructure, and rising rapidly into the professional classes through enhanced educational opportunities.

In some ways, of course, such experiences are broadly familiar to many European emigrants. One of the appeals of this book is in fact the way this family history synecdochizes the European history of colonization, emigration and rise to respectability. The social histories within *Passageways* only feel familiar in their basic outlines; Thwaite, however, successfully recounts her ancestors' lives in distinct and fascinating ways. Even moments of family shame receive due attention. An uncle who suffered dreadful mental and physical disabilities was labeled an imbecile and abandoned in an asylum. Members of one branch of the family likely had made their living as "reivers," or cattle thieves, in the Scottish Borders, and perhaps not surprisingly were upon arrival to New Zealand heavily involved in the Land Wars with the Maoris and in a shameful massacre in 1868. The next generation, however, would carve out middle-class lives and become prominent and successful citizens, the women as well as the men.

The story takes a surprising turn in the 1920s as Thwaite's parents make the return passage to England. Having achieved perhaps all that was then possible with a New Zealand education, A.J. Harrop left Christchurch for Cambridge, earning a D.Phil. before establishing himself as a leading London journalist and independent historian. His courtship of and marriage to Hilda Valentine, herself a writer and editor, and their new life in England becomes the heart of this story. Thwaite and her brother would repeat their great-grandparents' voyage in a return to New Zealand to escape the imminent war. Under steady threat of submarine attack and interrupted by a collision with another ship in blackout conditions, their journey in 1940 was no less dangerous or lengthy than their ancestors'. The continuing journeys back and forth between the British Isles and New Zealand define this book and unify it as much as the stories of emigration and immigration. Thwaite is a writer formed as much by *passageways* as by her dual identity as a Briton and New Zealander.

A volume of family and personal history is a fascinating turn for this successful and established author of numerous biographies and children's stories. (She is also a Whitbread prize-winner and the wife of poet and editor Anthony Thwaite.) This intimate biography of a family, with its auto-

biographical glimpses, is no less significant or fascinating than her lives of Frances Hodgson Burnett, A.A. Milne, Emily Tennyson and Philip Henry Gosse. It is moreover as well-researched as any of her previous biographies. Fortunately, hers was a family loathe to throw out records and papers, and they were a lot given to writing voluminous letters, diaries and memoirs. In addition to the countless family records available to her, Thwaite made recourse to museums and archives in New Zealand as well as to a wide variety of published historical sources to substantiate her account. She is a writer of emotional sensitivity, using her biographer's experience imaginatively to reconstruct the thoughts and feelings of her characters. In addition to its important contributions to an historical understanding of New Zealand immigration, *Passageways* is a compelling and beautifully written story that never relinquishes its hold upon the reader.

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