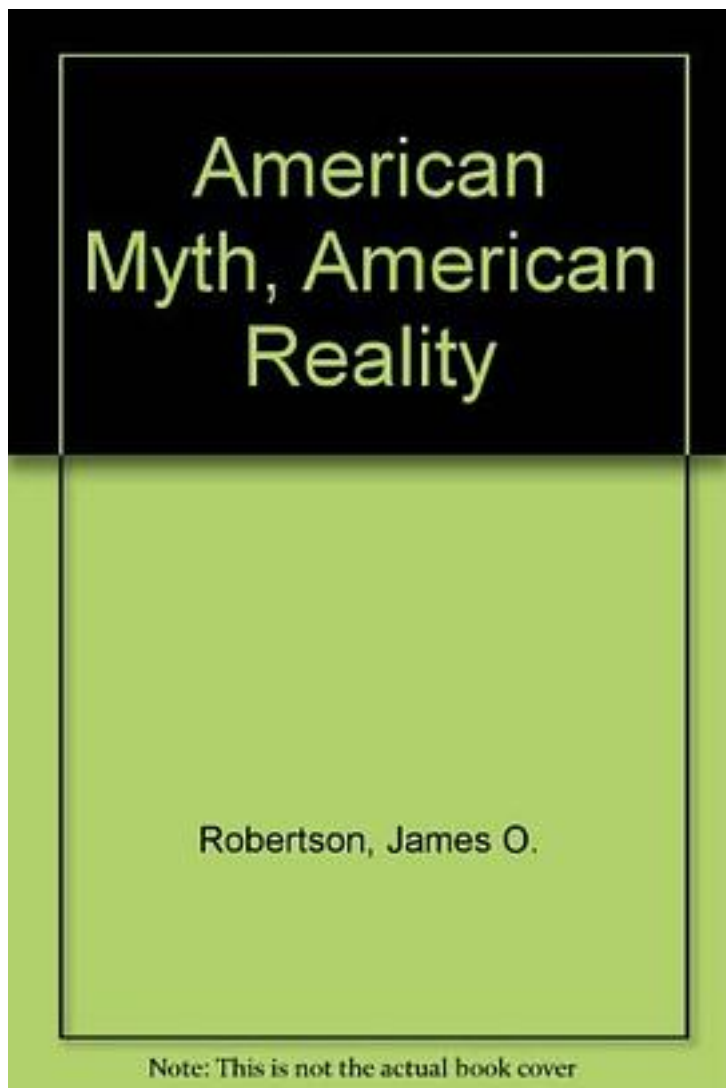


American Myth, American Reality



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From the early colonial years, Americans have seen themselves as people of destiny and mission. Our European forebears "invaded" the American continent, and we, in turn, moved west. It was our manifest destiny to conquer and populate the continent. We saw (and see) ourselves as independent and mobile. Columbus, the first Thanksgiving, the Founding Fathers, the frontiersman, the cowboy, the rugged individual who surmounts all obstacles, Daniel Boone, the Horatio Alger hero, Charles Lindbergh have all entered the American pantheon. We see ourselves as peace-loving and non-violent, although we ruthlessly conquered the native American and find war cleansing. We romanticize the small town and flock to the cities. All men are created equal, but we discriminate against blacks and Chicanos. We are consumer-oriented yet deplore the pollution that accompanies materialism. We pursue happiness and believe in progress and the infallibility of science, yet harbor doubts about our success, our power, and our role in the world. We believe in ourselves but, as we observe our social fabric, have begun to doubt the validity of the engine of progress.

James Oliver Robertson explores the American myths: the stories, metaphors, and images we use, consciously and unknowingly, to explain our world.

He tells of the myths we have inherited, created, accepted, and transformed in order to understand our society and ourselves--myths which enable us to maintain our ideals, and which ultimately provide our reality. He takes the familiar and, with daring imagination, explains the growth and evolution of our vision of ourselves.

American Myth, American Reality is an audacious and original interpretation of the functional value and importance of the myths we hold.

Readers will argue with and applaud this book; they will be staggered by its tremendous range and pertinence; they will follow its brilliant course, for it is a book that tells us what distinguishes Americans-how our myths are different, and how they reflect reality.

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