

continuing importance of Desrosiers's work as significant scholarship, and Vaugeois himself concludes that, as literature, *Iroquoisie* is detailed to a fault and the narrative moves at a snail's pace. Despite the latter assessment, one is left with the impression that this work is aimed at the non-specialist audience. For example, in place of scholarly apparatus, Vaugeois has added numerous illustrations that "soutiennent le texte et en rendent la lecture encore plus agréable" (p. x). General readers might appreciate the sketches of "native scenes" for their representations of "exotic otherness", yet most scholars of Native people might express some concern over the fact that the illustrations lack captions explaining what is shown or their relevance, that their placement often pays no regard to chronology, and that Vaugeois mixes historical representations with sketches taken from works of fiction (for example, in vol. 4, p. 87, the picture of Tecumseh, who lived over 100 years after the events Desrosiers chronicles, and on p. 99, the scene taken from James Fenimore Cooper's novel *Last of the Mohicans*). Indeed, even the general reader might wonder at the value of untitled and undated maps reproduced in part or poorly and in such small size as to render them unreadable (for example, vol. 2, p. 188, and vol. 4, p. 259).

Desrosiers was certainly an important figure in Quebec intellectual life, and possibly that alone merits the publication of his writing. For those interested in the subject, *Iroquoisie* makes enjoyable reading, and it is the work of a skilled writer and student of history. But the reading public deserved a more thoughtful treatment of this work and its place in the historiography of its subject to better appreciate Desrosiers and his contribution to scholarship.

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Gordon M. Sayre — *Les Sauvages Américains: Representations of Native Americans in French and English Colonial Literature*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1997. Pp. 321.

Gordon Sayre's study began "as a dissertation in the Program in Comparative Literature at the State University of New York at Buffalo" (p. xxi). He describes his book as "a broad study of how Indians have been represented in literature in two languages across more than two hundred years and the eastern third of the continent of North America" (p. xviii). More precisely, his sources are published travel narratives with descriptive accounts of the aboriginal peoples written by European visitors in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The combination of the author's own experiences as an eyewitness with a general ethnography of "the Indian" was the dominant mode for these accounts. French texts dominate because the fur trade and Christian missionary work — which were of less interest to English-speakers — called for an understanding of and cooperation with Native peoples. English-language works, describing Native life, were more likely to be captives' narratives, which emphasized the resistance of the prisoner to French popery and Native savagery while awaiting deliverance. This was an unsympathetic perspective for recording aboriginal life.

Sayre wants to reawaken American scholars to the value of the French-language works of writers such as Bacqueville de la Potherie or Joseph-François Lafiteau.

The author states, "I have treated the texts of colonial exploration and cultural encounter as literature ... the style and rhetoric of each author and the historical context at the time of publication are important" (p. xix). "It is the patterns of European representations of the *sauvages* that are my topic, the codes of perception and expression in colonial writing about Native Americans" (p. 46). According to Sayre, the narratives relied on the "tropes" of negation (emphasizing the absence of familiar features of European life), substitution (likening aborigines to known Old World peoples), and "premier temps" (analogies to the Europeans' imagined past). Exposure to Native life forced the outsiders to question their own categories and values: Was the beaver pelt money or clothing? Was wampum currency, document, or ornament? For Amerindians, these functional distinctions were not so rigid or exclusive. The romantic conception of the Amerindian as virtuous natural man, egalitarian, meritocratic, and a free, consenting member of his nation was said to have been incorporated into the American political tradition as the continent's indigenous heritage. It might be added that this romantic conception also has shaped the aboriginal peoples' current perception of themselves.

The popularity of accounts of *les sauvages américains* in Old Regime Europe and the writers' desire to attract readers meant that authors followed certain conventions established by successful publications. The commonest format was a combination of the traveller's own experiences with a *moeurs des sauvages* essay, which described a generalized, timeless, universal Indian. Cultural differences and Native individuality were suppressed. "When faced with the option of either adding an appendix to describe the new and different customs of a recently contacted nation, or simply suppressing these differences to make the new nation fit the conventional pattern of the *sauvage*, most authors chose the latter" (p. 122). Details were plagiarized from earlier books to satisfy the readers' appetite for the exotic and the sensational. Readers expected to hear about the vengeful, man-eating and lascivious natives and an account of the torture of captives would be provided, even when the writer had not witnessed this event. The result was a blend of experience and preconceptions. Here was the origin of the noble red man who, paradoxically, could also be the ignoble savage. These were the contradictory aspects of the same legendary being. Unpublished manuscripts were not composed to appeal to a public audience, and Sayre has therefore excluded these from his study.

Sayre is right to object to historians and anthropologists who "pluck facts about the American Indians from explorer-ethnographers' texts without examining the interactions that each writer had with the Indians and the new perspectives on European culture that each drew from the experience" (p. 321). Yet, only the life of one writer, Louis-Armand de Lom, Baron de Lahontan, is discussed in detail. Conceding his points about the influence of the writers' personal interests, current events, and literary conventions, it is obvious that composite accounts of Native life before 1800, constructed out of extracts from different works, are not accurate pictures of life among the Eastern Woodlands peoples. Combining a quotation from the Baron de Lahontan with, say, the earlier observations of the Jesuit Paul Le Jeune, without

regard for each man's differing interests, origins, and purposes, results in an incoherent and questionable portrait. This should be an obvious truth; yet such literary pastiches are commonplace. Think of T. C. McLuhan's *Touch the Earth: A Self-Portrait of Indian Existence*, which quotes Lahontan's rhetorical Huron Adario along with other, more authentic, aboriginal spokesmen.

Pan-Indianism among North America's Native peoples means that writers of European origin are not the sole propagators of the notion of the universal Indian. Aboriginal people have constructed their own eclectic syntheses from various recorded Native practices. In today's British Columbia, Shuswap Indians of the interior perform the Sun Dance, borrowed from peoples of the Great Plains, and a Salish litigant demanded a smudging ceremony, appropriated from the Southwest, during court proceedings here. Sayre, however, is more conscious of European cultural arrogance and an urge to dominate than of fashionable practices among modern Native peoples, and he often digresses about Eurocentric views and delights in pointing out paradoxes and contradictions. He states, "The self-righteous denunciations of barbarism shared by all Western cultures were hypocritical given the techniques and prevalence of state and church-sponsored torture in Europe" (p. 303), and "the insensitivity of the *sauvages* to pain was one of the most powerful elements of the popular stereotype, a notion that helped rationalize the inflicting of great pain on the Indians" (p. 173). Sayre also claims that white authors emphasized Native exoticism to distance themselves from their subject, although Jesuit missionaries said much about the shared human nature of those they sought to convert to Christianity.

Sayre's partisanship is evident when he argues that Amerindians had "semiotic systems" or symbolic forms of communication "that resisted the duplicity of European phonological writing" (p. 320). According to Sayre, aboriginal visual records were not only equal to European writing (p. 202), but were morally superior. Native mnemonic devices were not precise, oral traditions were mutable, and aboriginal speakers could be ambiguous and noncommittal. Sayre's relaxed standard for Native accounts is evident in a deferential reference to "Black Hawk, the Sauk native leader famous for his defiance of U.S. troops in Illinois territory in 1831–32, [who] recounts a history of the encounter of his ancestors with a French explorer in the lower St. Lawrence who, though unnamed, could well be Champlain" (p. 64). C. Marius Barbeau's record of Wyandot traditions at the beginning of this century indicates that Native oral traditions are a very unreliable guide to events that occurred more than a hundred years earlier. To see an account of Champlain's arrival during the first decades of the seventeenth century in the 1882 autobiography of a chief whose people lived south of Lake Superior requires more faith than this reviewer possesses. Nor was I persuaded to accept Sayre's claim that "the exchange economy of the fur trade was forced on the Indians by the Europeans" (pp. 265–266). On the other hand, his observations about how European settlers had to adopt many Native ways to succeed were apt, as was his comment about "the American colonist who internalizes the Indian he demonizes" (p. 129).

Sayre failed to apply the same critical rigour, exercised in dealing with his primary sources, to twentieth-century theoretical works. In chapter 3, "Travel Narrative and Ethnography", the theories of J. M. Coetzee, Hayden White, Roy Harvey

Pearce, Tzvetan Todorov, and others are recited, even when in disagreement, without resolution or evaluation by the author. On page 239, we read that “James Axtell believes” and that “Richard White disagrees”, followed by a comment that presenting beaver hunting as a traditional part of Native life evidently “put modern scholars in conflict”. On page 142, Sayre acknowledges the overuse of the concept of “the Other” in literary and cultural history, yet he proceeds to apply it liberally to European-Amerindian relations. The notion of “the Other”, as defined by Edward Said, does not work for white-aboriginal relations in North America. The French, in particular, saw Amerindians as potential Europeans with admirable virtues as well as vices. The *sauvage américain* was not an important reference point in the Europeans’ definition of themselves, although this figure shook the faith of some eighteenth-century European intellectuals in their own institutions.

Gordon Sayre’s *Les Sauvages Américains* is an intelligent, stimulating, and suggestive work. His observations in chapter 5 on the anthropomorphic portrayal of beavers as disciplined and intelligent builders, guided by their own architects and project supervisors, raise questions about the authors’ purposes. He suggests that the industrious manlike beaver was a foil for aboriginal failings and a model of the ideal French colonist. Sayre’s discussion of the social significance of the tattooing of Frenchmen, after the Native fashion, is lively, well informed, and fascinating. He effectively conveys the Europeans’ puzzlement over Native clothing that did not proclaim the wearer’s rank, over the mutability of Amerindian personal names, and about the willingness of adopted captives to assume the name and role of a dead person, even to go to war against their former countrymen. Balanced against these virtues are the writer’s moralistic digressions and a propensity to treat his own speculation as a logical, reasoned conclusion from the evidence. For example, on page 188, Sayre notes the exchange of gifts, including furs, in treaty negotiations, and then suggests a materialistic motive for diplomatic exchanges because “the process of concluding peace could bring a wealth of pelts to the European soldiers and traders”. Examples of other, far-fetched deductions can be found on pages 178, 226, and 228.

The conclusion, titled “Epilogue — Border: Niagara, 1763”, which deals with the significance of today’s international border, the increasingly romantic conception of the Noble Savage among the French after they had lost their North American possessions, and a greater interest in the Indians among Anglo-Americans, is loosely connected to the rest of the work. The proximity of Buffalo, New York — the site of the writer’s alma mater — to the Niagara River was one explanation for the consideration given to that river on pages 306 to 309. Here, the author might have reined in his discursive inclinations and drawn some broad observations from the preceding chapters. Like canoeists on the upper Niagara River, readers are in for an exciting and entertaining ride, but they should keep their paddles handy and not allow themselves to be caught in shoreline eddies or be swept away by the author’s emotive rhetoric. Otherwise, they will find themselves shooting past Goat Island and over the brink of an unscholarly Niagara Falls.

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