

## Comptes rendus — Book Reviews

CORNELIUS JAENEN. — *Friend and Foe. Aspects of Franco-Amerindian Contact in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1976.

For nearly five hundred years the New World's inhabitants have been the focal point for tremendous debates among scholars. From the first, a significant amount of admiration and involvement or disparagement and vehemence have tinged the reports of merchant-adventurers, explorers, ecclesiastics and academics who have dealt with the Indian. Among both friends and foes the dramatic contrasts between various native cultures have inspired strong emotion. Most participants have tended to focus either on the dark or on the bright side of Indian civilization and it is possible to sense this passion and involvement in the letters and diaries of Columbus, Cortes, the Recollet friar Gabriel Sagard, or the Jesuit *Relations*. Explorers, missionaries, conquistadors and travellers have made conflicting reports on the character of the Indian, and not surprisingly, their judgements are startlingly diverse. Conflicting opinion, not unanimity, appears to be the norm. One individual, Duran, envisioned a tribal democracy in which all Indians worked together for the commonweal while another, Montesquieu, perceived in Aztec Mexico only a mass of superstitious commoners terrorized by despots. Lescarbot and Champlain, as noted in Donald Smith's *Le Sauvage*, "visited the same area at the same time, yet discovered different people". Lescarbot's noble savages were, for Champlain, "poor people, rude and of little interest". McLulich in "Fur Traders, Explorers, Philosophers, and the Image of the Indians" notes that uncertain of themselves, or of the character of the Indians they encountered, individuals such as Hearne, often contradicted themselves within their own reports.

For centuries Europeans and their offspring have found it difficult to repress the pleasure of reading about the Indian; and this is partly the basis of the extraordinary appeal of Dr. Jaenen's *Friend and Foe*. Unfortunately, despite the popularity of the Indian in the imagination of the European, many academics, and especially Canadian historians, have not taken a great interest in the Indian's involvement in the early history of the Dominion. An eminent Canadian historian recently suggested to a student that "Canadian history did not begin until 1837". Others, such as A. G. Bailey and George Woodcock, have begun to turn the trend away from those who could scarcely speak of the Indian without implying either deprecation or somehow justifying John A. Macdonald's acquisition of an empire. Indeed, in most histories, as studies by Jim Walker and McDiarmid and Pratt have shown, the Indian has usually either been ignored or discussed in stereotypic terms — the noble savage or the pesky redskin. In addition, Ronald Haycock's suggestion that these images of the Indian are usually accompanied by a healthy sprinkling of Paternalistic Darwinism (undoubtedly to make more palatable the horrors of the conquest) seems to be true.

The value of Professor Jaenen's examination of this period is that it transcends the usual stereotypes. As Pearce discusses in *Savagism and Civilization*, Dr. Jaenen also demonstrates that an understanding of the notions held by the European, and their penchant for holding tenaciously to these opinions, often in the face of overwhelmingly contradictory evidence, can supplement significantly our knowledge of the general workings of society. Dr. Jaenen, although no less inter-

ested in the Indian, is concerned more with the European's attitude towards them and, like Benjamin Keen, in his superb history *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, is preoccupied more with the relationship between social and intellectual concepts and changing patterns of opinion than he is with the political history of the founding of New France.

What makes this book both distinctive and refreshing is its fairness and its willingness to consider the claims of those who loved and those who despised the Indian. The virtues of the book are not glamorous but, what is vividly clear throughout is Professor Jaenen's willing acceptance of responsibility to the discipline, a conscientious application of historical methodology and a devotion to objectivity. He is a superb historian who, despite the academic limitations thus imposed, has managed to create a history that has the capacity to be inspiring. As a historical document it is one of the most recommendable books to have been written on this theme. The judges of the Ste. Marie prize have chosen well.

Roy Harvey Pearce's notable attempt to examine critically and imaginatively the attitudes held by the European towards the Indian has, for some time, been the standard interpretation in this area; but, Professor Jaenen examines this phenomenon from a distinctly Canadian perspective. He suggests that while privileged Frenchmen dreamed of empire, great wealth, or perhaps a new race of man, the more thoughtful, such as Montaigne, reflected on the tragic history of a people whose most permanent characteristic in the light of the European onslaught, it would seem, was failure. While many of our histories proclaim the Indian a bronzed stalwart or savage barbarian, Jaenen mentions sadly, but without pity, how famine, deprivation and disease, often carried by unsuspecting clerics, decimated a people.

Most of what Professor Jaenen writes has been said before. The value of the book is that this wealth of information has been drawn together and reported in a fashion that makes it indispensable to the student of the contact period in the northeast woodlands. It is therefore not so much that he is touching upon new ground but that he is touching on virtually all of it. Everything comes under his scrutiny from the Indian's fear of transubstantiation to their inability to comprehend the Jesuit's use of a handkerchief, and the detailed knowledge present in the book is formidable enough to overwhelm the faint at heart. By isolating attitudes and then examining them in depth Jaenen manages to avoid that most common of errors in this volatile area of study — oversimplification. He has struggled successfully to present a rational reconstruction of the past that is refreshingly free from distortion and he cannot be faulted for his monumental efforts of substantiation which, at times, makes this book tough slogging.

*Friend and Foe* contains a wealth of information and its existence may be justified simply on the grounds of its immense detail and profuse footnoting. Thus the diligent reader is more than rewarded by the value of the notes, the comprehensiveness of the source material and the superb bibliography. Thus Dr. Jaenen's book adds a new dimension to the study of early contact previously untouched by notables such as Harold Innis, Donald Creighton and Alfred Bailey. In the tradition of Chamberlin's *The Harrowing of Eden* and King's "The Glorious Kingdom of the Saguenay" Jaenen examines those other, perhaps more mystical, motives of the European. Suddenly we are aware that the people of the Old World were awe struck at the discovery of the Americas and, in turn, the doubling of the size of their universe almost overnight. From what perspective did the Europeans perceive this new golden land? How much were the half remembered pagan myths of old, the Scandinavian legends or early Christian mysticism a part of the European's attempts to understand the Indian? McLulich has suggested that "the

Indian was understood... in fact, was imagined or invented... in accordance with the emotional needs of the observer or theorist'. Similarly, Jaenen has marbled his sources in the context of the European's mythopoeic interpretations of the Indian, while throughout, ensuring that thus rendered, that Indian is allowed his due — not, as an ideal to be emulated, or as a demon to be exorcized but simply, as a human being.

Other than a number of annoying typographical errors throughout, there is little that can be said in criticism of this book. Unfortunately, Professor Jaenen at one point resorts to what has become a trite cliché in Indian studies today. The red man living in harmony with his universe of the my heart-soars-like-an-eagle school of Indian historiography has become fashionable in today's ecologically aware society, but it is only partially true and begs further examination. Such a generalization is unbecoming to an incisive mind, for it tends to categorize all Europeans or Euro-Canadians without considering the many who did not, and have not yet, wished specifically to conquer or dominate. It condemns outright, the Montaignes, the Thomas Mortons and the many others who, in Rudy Weibe's terminology, have in the past "gone Indian". Worse, such statements imply a philosophical attitude on the part of the Indian that has dismaying noble savage overtones. It is true that the original "harmony" enjoyed by the Indian with nature was indeed set askew by the arrival of the European capitalist ethic but that the Huron, for example, adapted so readily to the dictates of unrestrained ecological exploitation for profit indicates that it may have been more than simply a philosophical attitude that defined their particular relationship with their universe. Perhaps the limitations placed on them by their technology may have had something to do with their world view? However, this is but a small point in an otherwise compassionate, gracefully presented understanding of the Indian.

In style and sensitivity the book reflects Jaenen's thorough knowledge of his chosen topic. Throughout he injects his characters with their own individual and oft-times self congratulatory voices, and by revealing the European's quest for a higher truth, he exposes the real truth of the Old World: the European was often blessed with a fictional universe of his own.

Canada's historians generally have not been kind to the Indian. Various acts of military aggression, intrigue and political land grabbing have resulted in the creation of what is today merely a base remnant of those people who shyly greeted Cartier at the Gaspé. However, in their attempts to reconstruct the founding of the Dominion, historians until recently, have often concentrated too much on the so-called "two Founding nations." Canada, according to so many of these historians was not destined to be Indian, it was to be European.

This book destroys, one hopes, forever, Mary Rowlandson's pesky red-skin and Cooper's noble, but somewhat maundering, savage. He shows them to be what they were — products of the European imagination. *Friend and Foe* represents a broadening and deepening of understanding of the Indian. It will be a valuable tool for the serious student, and will gather little dust on bookshelves. We are left with the sense of having witnessed a talented historian applying his imagination to the task that lesser individuals would have only dreamed of attempting. If, as Dr. Jaenen has suggested, "the study of New France is still in its infancy and there is much research to be done yet", the historian who wishes to surpass this exceptional book faces a demanding challenge.

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