

intellectual, teasing out the problematics of writing a work to exist in differing media. Blaise tackles the uncomfortable topic of cultural protectionism, arguing throughout with a knife-edged clarity and concision. Most touching are the two new memoirs, Smith's "Ontological Arseholes: Life with Montreal Story Teller" and Fraser's "The Guy in the Wings with his Pint." Both take a cold, hard clear-eyed approach to their own status: writers commemorating a time since which they have published relatively little. What is most inspiring is that both display an invigorated writerly expertise which bodes well for future production. Smith especially, one of the "most unjustly neglected writers in Canada," provides incontrovertible proof that he deserves more (and better) criticism than he has received here and elsewhere.

Unfortunately this is also true of the others if one goes by the "critical essays" which form the bulk of this collection. In general they operate anecdotally, relying on such sophomoric topics of the "artist versus society" calibre. With the exception of Michael Darling's shrewd analysis of one story by Blaise, most sludge along well-worn thematic pathways, gasping within the shroud of Leavis and the school of organic imagery. Lawrence Garber does attempt to explore the "how" of Smith's fiction; he argues with great pains that *Cape Breton is the Thought-Control Center of Canada* is an anti-traditional work, but does so by placing Smith within the tradition of absurdist writing. Louis MacKendrick paraphrases Smith and Fraser; Dennis Duffy tells what he did on his summer holidays (while mentioning his fondness for Hood); Barry Cameron reveals that Metcalf's stories (unlike others?) should be read like poems because they are "elliptical"; and Keith Garebian proffers a long-winded retrospective which, because of the editorial policy of non-interference, repeats

much of the preceding memoirs. One of the problems is that Struthers includes "critical essays" which make no pretence to be "critical." Barry Cameron's biographical summary of Blaise is ripped from its larger context in *Canadian Writers and Their Works*; Kent Thompson's profile of Metcalf is exactly that: a good profile — but not, by any stretch of his or my imagination, a piece of critical analysis.

As a whole, then, *The Montreal Story Tellers* is a haphazard achievement; the abridged memoirs when juxtaposed reenact the brilliant symbiosis of the group in performance. But the "critical essays" disappoint.

GARY BOIRE

## INDIAN HISTORY

OLIVE PATRICIA DICKASON, *The Myth of the Savage: and the Beginnings of French Colonialism in the Americas*. University of Alberta Press, \$30.00.

JON WHYTE, *Indians in the Rockies*. Altitude, \$18.95.

THE MYTH OF THE SAVAGE does a great deal to explain the still-obvious conflicts between the so-called "whites" and "reds" in America. Olive Patricia Dickason, in this detailed and well-documented work, shows how (and to a large extent *why*) the first Europeans to arrive formed certain attitudes about the native, attitudes that invariably sprang from misinformation, fallacious analogy, and preconceived notions rather than from the experience of actual contact. The large subject of the book is the forming of a myth about the peoples of the New World, the continuance of which was advantageous to Europeans. Dickason explores the two-edged (positive-negative) aspects of the myth: the native as natural and innocent, the native as uncivilized and barbaric, emphasizing that



the duality simply extended the main opinion, already firmly rooted by the early sixteenth century: "the characterization of Amerindians as savages." The eventual thrust of the book, as the subtitle indicates, is the importance of that characterization to France: specifically, the importance of the myth of the savage to the beginnings of French colonialism in the Americas. However, Dickason first carefully prepares the reader for that concern.

To make vivid the reactions of Europeans to the discovery of the New World and to give a true sense of early prevailing attitudes, Dickason relies on varied sources: on written accounts (beginning with letters of Columbus and Vespucci), on early (engagingly erroneous) maps, and on pictorial expressions such as paintings, drawings, woodcuts, engravings, etc., many of them by artists who had never been out of Europe. Although all these sources are interesting and informative, it is the pictures that really surprise and delight the reader in that they so suddenly and so dramatically communicate the early misconceptions, whether they be idealistic, perjorative, or just plain wrong. A sampling will make clear their general impact.

A dark-skinned couple, colourfully dressed and beaded, stride through paradisaical lushness of vegetation. The man carries a bow in his outstretched hand; there is a quiver of arrows at his shoulder. Behind them, a bare-breasted girl gathers fruit along the shore and a curly-headed man floats on the lake in a high-prowed canoe; beyond is an arched door, seemingly set into the hillside of the far shore. Caption: "Amerindians were sometimes shown looking more like Africans."

Nine stylized figures wearing headdresses, skirts, anklets, and elbow bracelets — all made of feathers — stand or sit near or under a structure of poles in front of the sea on which are two sailing ships. Caption: "In this woodcut, of the earliest and most widely published representations of

Amerindians, the subjects have the air of classical Romans." Something unclassical about the picture, however, is that portions of a human carcass hang from a rafter, and that one of the women is chewing on a human arm.

A calm-eyed figure with a bulging, bare stomach and a Mona Lisa expression sits beneath a tree, in Roman-style headdress and a battle skirt (both of feathers). He holds a bow in his right hand, and in his left is a human leg. Behind him are tall stakes topped with human heads, and several figures leaping around a blazing fire on which roasts a whole human carcass. The caption: "The replete cannibal."

As well as giving us clear indications of strange versions of the people, the pictures vividly present laughable (although seriously meant) projections of many other aspects of the New World — the beaver, for example. "A French view of a Canadian beaver" shows an animal with a lion-like body and a cow/monkey head. "Beaver hunting in Canada" shows figures aiming, some with rifles, some with bows and arrows, into a beaver lodge that is a perfectly arched structure cross-sectioned with perfectly square cubicles for the animals. One beaver, on the shore in the background, rests its forepaws on a man's knee. It is not clear if the man is fending off its attack or if he is trying to pet it. In "Beaver building a dam," several of the fifty or so beavers on the construction site walk upright carrying bundles of even-lengthed bundles over their shoulders.

By giving such close attention to the early misconceptions Dickason makes understandable the kind of thinking that gave rise to the myth of the savage. Then later, when she describes the differences between the Amerindian and European societies, it is credible that the same kind of thinking could prompt the Europeans to deny that the native society had any structure of value system: "By classifying the Amerindians as savages, Europeans were able to create the ideology that



helped to make it possible to launch one of the great movements in the history of western civilization: the colonization of overseas empires." Thus, by nurturing the myth, the newcomers were able to determine the outcome of their dealings with the peoples whose land and resources they wanted.

Jon Whyte does not stress the impact of European intrusion as Dickason does. Rather, his Indians in the Rockies before the fur traders, missionaries, treaty makers, railroad builders, and tourists intruded upon them. Without pretending to be either ethnographer or historian, Whyte begins at the time 11,500 years ago when "a band of toolmaking hunters entered the Rockies," and offers a plausible history of the people up to the coming of the white man. After that, he covers the topics standard in works on Amerindians: the introduction of the horse, the activities of hunting, fishing, crafts, sports and games, and the effects of the arrival of fur traders and missionaries — smallpox, liquor, religion, laws, and, eventually, reserves. Of this part, his chapter "The Art of Beadwork," in which he shows how the Stoney culture combined the floral design of the Woodland People and the geometric design of the Plains People, is most moving and lyrical.

Like Dickason, Whyte makes extensive use of pictures (about fifty pages of pictures to the seventy of text). There are watercolours and oils (many by members of the Whyte family, from 1845 on) and there are posters, but the bulk of the pictures are photographs. As well as black-and-white portraits and "snaps" of people and scenes (the earliest date is 1907), there are hand-coloured portraits and photos, and hand-coloured lantern slides — all of which add realistic touches to the latter part of the book, which is a recording of the more recent history of the Banff area. Whyte tells of the

naming of local rivers and mountains, of the Stoney Indian who first allowed a white man to see Lake Louise, of the building of the Banff Springs Hotel in 1887, of the beginning Banff Indian Days in 1899 and of their annual occurrence until they ceased in 1978, eighty-nine years later. And it is the last few chapters that are most vividly written — perhaps because the events are within the memory of Whyte and his family, but certainly because he is writing of his two great loves: the mountains where he has always lived and the people he has always been close to (his father, at the age of seven, was adopted by a Stoney family).

Despite any imbalance between generalized and specific treatments, Jon Whyte, Curator of the Heritage Collection of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, willingly shares the knowledge and the materials that are in his keeping. What he gives us is a remarkably rich time-portrait of the Stoney People.

PEGEEN BRENNAN

## A NEW BRUNSWICK ROBERTS

*The Collected Poems of Sir Charles G. D. Roberts: A Critical Edition.* Ed. Desmond Pacey. Asst. Ed. Graham Adams. Wombat Press, \$49.50.

ANYONE MAKING HIS WAY into this long-awaited volume by that most reliable of scholarly routes — the Bibliography — would not proceed further with complete confidence in the accuracy and comprehensiveness of its editors. Although edited by Carrie MacMillan and Glenn Clever respectively, the proceedings of the Symposium on Roberts at Mount Allison and the University of Ottawa are both attributed here to Fred Cogswell, whose *Charles G. D. Roberts and His Works* is