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Portraits from the Age of Exploration: Selections from André Thevet's Les Vrais Pourtraits et Vies des Hommes Illustres. Edited by Roger Schlesinge.

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Karoniaktejeh Hall, credited with being the ideological founder of the Warrior Society, is represented as a “manifestly homophobic” neo-Nazi fascist and Indian supremacist (p. 115). We are also told that Hall is reported to have a fondness for big bands and the music of Judy Garland. The first part of this portrait represents Hall as dangerous; the second part makes him appear ridiculous. Yet, even without a straw man such as this, the conditions that made Warrior militancy possible would still exist, and, as Johansen explains, these conditions are not the fault of the Warriors themselves. My sense is that the truth lies somewhere between Johansen’s and Hornung’s accounts. Each book reports a great deal of information not included in the other; a broader perspective on the conflict can be gained by reading both.

Informed by a myriad of Mohawk voices, *Life and Death in Mohawk Country* is an important contribution to the current debate on gambling in the Native American community. It may also inform debates taking shape in North America’s non-Indian community. Increasingly, gambling has been viewed as a solution to revive sluggish regional economies throughout the U.S. At the same time, its proliferation has become increasingly controversial. In this context, Johansen’s book may serve a growing audience.

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Portraits from the Age of Exploration: Selections from André Thevet’s *Les Vrais Pourtraits et Vies des Hommes Illustres*. Edited by Roger Schlesinger; translated by Edward Benson. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992. 160 pages. \$24.95 cloth.

This collection of twelve illustrated biographies of European explorers and Amerindian chiefs is drawn from a two-volume work published in 1584 by André Thevet (c.1517–92), the controversial cosmographer to four kings of France. The original edition, entitled *Les vrais pourtraits et vies des hommes illustres*, contained 232 biographies, most of them illustrated, of individuals from around the world and through time, from antiquity until Thevet’s own day. Their compilation was an extraordinary achievement, not only because of its scope, for exceeding comparable contemporary efforts, but also because it included Amerindians, a first in Euro-

pean literature. A posthumous, enlarged edition appeared in 1670–71 under the title *Histoire des plus illustres et sçavants hommes*; it was reissued in 1695. There was no doubt about Thevet's success as an author, despite attacks on his scholarship, both during his lifetime and afterwards. This selection of twelve chapters is well served by translator Edward Benson, who rendered Thevet's verbal flourishes and circumlocutions into an easy, almost conversational style.

Editor Roger Schlesinger's selections deal with the exploits of six Europeans and six Amerindians. The explorers are Pizarro, Cortés, Albuquerque, Columbus, Vespucci, and Magellan; the chiefs are Atabalipa (Atahualpa), Montezuma, Nacol-absou (king of the Promontory of the Cannibals), Paracoussi (king of the Platte), Quoniambec, and Paraousti Satouriona (king of Florida). Schlesinger's choices reflect the current interest in the Age of Exploration that was encouraged by the Columbian quincentenial celebrations. Thevet's biographical approach, with its frequent asides as to what he thought of certain actions or events, is more informative about his views than about his subjects. Fortunately, Schlesinger's careful annotations help considerably to put things in context. What emerges is an intriguing picture of the European mentality at a time when established orthodoxies were being severely shaken, and sometimes toppled, by information flooding in from the new discoveries.

This is especially true of the chapters on the Amerindians. Thevet, a staunch supporter of European imperialism, still saw much to admire in New World peoples and their civilizations; he reserved some of his severest criticisms for European chroniclers who, he felt, distorted New World realities. Not that he idealized his Amerindian subjects; far from it. He sought to treat New World peoples as he did the Europeans, dealing with them as individuals whose actions ranged from the heroic to the deplorable, but who in any event were sufficiently notable to have their lives recorded. Such an approach was highly unusual in an age when Europeans tended to regard Amerindians as exotic curiosities, rather than as equals.

There has been much discussion about the sources of Thevet's information. Although he was one of the most widely traveled men of his time, there are good grounds to doubt that he visited as many places as he said he did; similarly, his claim to have spoken twenty-eight languages is not substantiated in his work. It was this habit of personal exaggeration that damaged his reputation as a scholar. However, as royal cosmographer for France, he had access

to a wide range of information from the New World and plenty of opportunity to talk to persons who have been there. He had a passion for collecting information; indeed, he has been described by one unsympathetic scholar as a "bustling journalist." Much of his information on the Amerindian chiefs, for example, seems to have come from second-hand sources, both oral and written. Inclined as he was to boast about himself, when it came to his subject matter, he had a high respect for authenticity. The test of time has demonstrated that on the whole he used his information well.

Even more important than Thevet's writing is his use of illustration. As Schlesinger points out, his *Les singularitez de la France Antarctique* (Paris, 1577) was the first French book about the New World to be illustrated; it has been described as one of the most beautiful of sixteenth-century French publications. Some see the engravings that illustrate *Vrais portraits* as more important than the text. Not only are they generally accurate (Thevet went to great pains on this), but they have preserved iconographic data that would have been lost otherwise. Thevet could claim with justice that these portraits did much to popularize the new technique of copper-plate engraving. They were the culmination of his life-long interest in book illustration.

In contributing to the ongoing assessment of Thevet, this work also provides a sixteenth-century look at how Europeans saw themselves, and how at least one contemporary regarded persons from other regions and civilizations. As such, it contributes to a greater understanding of the European reaction to the New World and its adaptations to new realities.

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Raven's Song: A Novel. By Lee Maracle. Vancouver, British Columbia: Press Gang Publishers, 1992. 199 pages. \$12.95 (Canadian) paper.

Lee Maracle is a feminist philosopher of aboriginal descent who lives in Vancouver. Her work reflects all of these elements. Although her first book was published in 1976, Maracle's best work has appeared since 1990. She has produced an autobiography, poetry, short stories, and a philosophical essay. *Raven's Song* is her first novel.