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New World Encounters. Edited by Stephen Greenblatt. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993. 344 pages. Paper (no price listed).

Stephen Greenblatt opens his introduction to this collection of essays written in memory of the French historian and critic Michel de Certeau with a quote from Samuel Eliot Morison's *The European Discovery of America: The Southern Voyages, 1492–1616*. The quote constructs Columbus's voyages in religious metaphors, invoking the spread of Christianity to "a new race of Gentiles . . . the people of this New World, pagans expecting short and brutish lives, void of hope for any future . . ." (p. vii).

Greenblatt then contrasts the tone of Morison's history ("the vision of the victors") with that of the authors in this volume. He remarks that none of the authors has made a crusade of refuting Morison. "Rather," Greenblatt writes, "they seem to inhabit a different century, one that has seen all of the assumptions behind Morison's eloquent sentences decisively challenged" (p. vii).

In relation to the quincentennial of the event that Morison so often called "the discovery," Morison's words seem oddly antique, even though they are only two decades old. Even the word *encounter* (as used in this book's title) seems a bit tame for what happened to Native Americans after "the discovery." David Stannard (in *American Holocaust*) make a very credible case that the five centuries following those first European errands in the wilderness have witnessed the greatest episode of human misery in history.

This collection of essays makes evident the fact that all history has a point of view. Here we see not only Morison, eloquent as he could be, spreading the propaganda of victory, but we find the roots of his perspective in the tone of Columbus's "Letter to the Sovereigns," announcing his "discovery" of the "New World." Only a few days off the boat, unable to understand any but the rudiments of the native peoples' languages (and next to nothing of their cosmology), Columbus states that the Spaniards are being greeted as "the people from heaven" (p. 5). For all he knew, Columbus may have been hearing the native people asking each other where to hide their women and children.

The myth of the heaven-sent people pops up again and again in Spanish accounts of the *conquista*. Cabeza de Vaca invokes it in the 1540s; his accounts have native people flocking around the Spaniards "to be touched and blessed" (p. 68). One reflects on the paucity of native sources that display an attitude so convenient to

the building of the material and spiritual aspects of empire. It would seem that "feel-good" history is no recent invention of the so-called politically correct.

This collection of essays dissects the "language of empire" (p. 73), shaping the indictment for the most part with the *conquistadores'* own words. When native sources are used, they illustrate how different a perceptual world the peoples of the Americas occupied when they first met the Spaniards. The Inca and the Aztec integrated the destruction wrought by the Spaniards into their own beliefs regarding the end of worldly epochs. The Spanish often seemed perplexed by Aztec poetry that mixed images of flowers with blood sacrifice and death.

Many of the essays in this volume show how much progress has been made during the last two decades in reconstructing an historical voice for native peoples in the Americas vis à vis a school of history that seemed to look at the first peoples as obstacles to progress or as grist for European ideologies.

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The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization. By Daniel K. Richter. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, 1992. 436 pages. \$45.00 cloth; \$14.95 paper.

Daniel K. Richter sets out to accomplish much in his work on the peoples of the Iroquois League. He is seeking nothing less than a "re-vision" of Iroquois history from the seventeenth to the early eighteenth century—placing "both Iroquois and colonial North American history in fresher fields of view" (p. 2). Given the magnitude of the task he has set for himself, it is somewhat of a surprise that he succeeds. His re-vision begins on page one and continues thoroughly and consistently throughout this study of the Iroquois's slow and subtle loss of mastery over their lands, as intruders pressed into their "world on the turtle's back."

All comes into focus through Richter's presentation of the Iroquois Cosmogonic Myth and his rendering of the Iroquois account of the establishment of the League of the Iroquois.