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Histories of childhood and family written during that period exaggerated the rate of change and misjudged its direction. The medieval and early modern periods were taken as starting points, and were portrayed in too negative and static a manner. Dynamism, even consciousness, was reserved for the more recent past, which was assumed to be inherently progressive. Now, in a more stable, conservative period, the present is no longer so dynamic, and the contrast between it and the distant past is less pronounced. It is the continuity of human behavior which has become the focus of attention. We are learning to appreciate the universality of the affections and the constancy of personal relationships over both time and place.

Pollock's emphasis on continuity and her insistance on individual variation is thus a welcome revision of earlier overgeneralizations. At the same time, she gives too little attention to the ways in which people in different times and places have shaped the basic features of everyday life. Her repeated assertion that class, religion, and even gender have had no fundamental effect on childrearing practice and child development is implausible. Her own evidence contradicts this position. The absence of a systematic examination of lower-class autobiographies, as well as inattention to sex differences in the evidence that is used, are serious deficiencies. Many readers will also be irritated by the style and organization of the book, which is as plodding as it is repetitive. Yet the power of Pollock's central thesis is undeniable. The previous conception of the history of childhood no longer stands. The tremendous task of reconstruction must now begin.

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The Myth of the Savage: And the Beginnings of French Colonialism in the Americas. By Olive Patricia Dickason (Edmonton, University of Alberta Press, 1984) 372 pp. $30.00

That the discovery of America, or more significantly Americans, had profound effects on Europe is well known. But the meaning of that discovery, even after the passage of nearly 500 years and the decline of earlier national rivalries, continues to be a subject of debate among scholars. Scholars attempting to interpret the reality of the Amerindian (Dickason's word), as well as those attempting to analyze the conception of the Indian in the minds of Europeans, are confused by the apparently contradictory messages transmitted by the evidence.

Yet Dickason shows that these contradictory appearances are often part of the same reality. The themes of innocence and bestiality, she points out, "developed side by side, opposite aspects of the same reality" (51). Nudity, for example, could and did symbolize both. The two apparently contradictory meanings of this and other aspects of *l'homme*

sauvage (whether in its noble savage or bestial savage guise) continue from the earliest contact to the present day. Too many writers feel that the two concepts are mutually contradictory and invent fanciful explanations, such as those concocted by European *literati* in order to serve domestic European purposes. Dickason prefers to remain true to the historian's larger responsibility to all the evidence rather than to present a simplistic thesis to explain the dilemma.

Dickason brings a knowledge of European folk culture to bear on her subject, pointing out the strong similarity between the "wild men" of the Old World and *l'homme sauvage* of the New World. (The French *sauvage* has milder connotations than the English "savage.") Like the wild men of the woods, Dickason notes, "Amerindians represented anti-structure, man before the acquisition of culture had differentiated him from animals" (273).

What Dickason does assert is that the "unfolding complexities of the Americas challenged the Western World" in its acceptance of the "belief that man was part of a cosmic hierarchical order, a Great Chain of Being of collective units enclosed one within another" (43). The evidence from the New World clearly established the existence of cultures that did not fit into the accepted European order.

Unlike many studies of the "myth of the savage," Dickason's study is firmly rooted in the documentary record of European contact with the natives of the New World. In addition, it displays a thorough familiarity with the evolution of the concept in the post-contact literary and historical record.

Dickason's research, although based primarily on a comprehensive consideration of traditional printed historical sources, includes extensive exploitation of manuscript archives, particularly those of Ottawa and Paris. She skilfully weaves the material into thematic divisions. Her research design and methodology are those of traditional history. But Dickason's effective use of those sources distinguishes her work from that of Chinard and other literary scholars. Such scholars tend to treat *l'homme sauvage* as a literary conceit. It is not. It is firmly anchored in the historical record.[1]

One of Dickason's more interesting conclusions is that "the first contact that most sixteenth-century Europeans had with Amerindians was not in the New World but in the Old" (205). Dickason recounts in one of her chapters the extraordinary record of Indians sent, or taken, by Europeans to their countries for everything from use as galley slaves to diplomatic representatives of their people to the royal courts of Europe.

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1 Gilbert Chinard, *L'Exotisme américain dans la littérature du XVIe siècle* (Paris, 1911); *idem, L'Amérique et le rêve exotique au XVIIe et au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1913).