

William N. Fenton. *The False Faces of the Iroquois. The Civilization of the American Indian Series, Volume 178.* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987) xxi, 522 pp., \$75.00.

This scientific and artistic tome on Iroquois Indian masks, literally a "coffee table book," has been a long time in production. It is the culmination of over sixty years of interest and study by William N. Fenton, deservedly acknowledged as the dean of Iroquois studies. The author's interest in the subject began during his childhood when he spent summers at his family's farm in up-state New York. His grandfather, W.T. Fenton, had obtained two masks from Amos Snow, an Iroquois friend and neighbor, during the mid-nineteenth century. His father, J.W. Fenton, acquired more than a dozen additional masks as part of his vocation as an artist. So it is not surprising that the young William Fenton turned to anthropology in college and returned to the descendants of Amos Snow to pursue his consuming interests in Iroquois culture and history. Fenton's first article on Iroquois masks and the Society of Faces was published in 1937. During subsequent decades, he studied over 1,500 masks in museums and private collections throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe.

Fenton's modestly-stated purpose in this book was "to fulfill the need for a monograph on the False Faces and Husk Faces *in all their aspects*" (emphasis added). The resulting magnum opus certainly achieves that goal in its exhaustive and multi-dimensional treatment of the subject matter, historical and holistic interpretation of the artifacts within their cultural milieu, and at least some broader theoretical and comparative socio-religious considerations of the Iroquois data base. The extensive text is impressively supplemented by copious photographs, color plates, and line drawings which illustrate such things as cornhusk twining techniques, steps involved in the manufacture of rattles and other dance paraphernalia, and longhouse floorplans showing the spatial patterns of False Face ceremonies. Fenton's combined personal/humanistic and professional/scientific approach to the subject is especially appealing to this reviewer. Casual readers may find some of the ethnographic detail tedious; but the serious scholar will delight in the treasure trove of data on individual craftspeople and religious practitioners whom Fenton has interviewed over the years. In particular, artists, art historians, ethnographers, archaeologists, and private collectors will find Fenton's typology of wooden and cornhusk masks instructive along with his consideration of regional variations in the ritual objects. Although some may not agree with Fenton's personal viewpoint, students of American Indian studies will be interested in his discussion of contemporary False Face ceremonies, revitalization activities by young Iroquois seeking their "roots," the issue of repatriation of masks now housed in various museums, and the whole question of the appropriateness of the public display of False Face masks.

Although the reviewer has very few negative criticisms of the book, two points are perhaps worth mentioning here. First, the colored plates are not numbered. This fact will confound future scholars who wish to cite specific comparisons to their own data. Second, Fenton's chapter on European parallels — which he admittedly calls a "Postlude" — is frustratingly superficial. To be sure, the Swiss folk Carnival masks (and even more, the Bergengeisten or Mountain Spirit masks) bear some striking stylistic similarities to Iroquois masks. Having offered that comparison, Fenton reasonably might have provided some photographs to illustrate his observation. As such, the discussion is more tantalizing than instructive although the reviewer agrees with Fenton that the two masking complexes are apparently not related historically or epistemologically. Nonetheless, Fenton or someone else might well pursue the artistic comparison further.

In conclusion, we salute the prodigious efforts of William Fenton in this work and his other extensive discussions of Iroquois culture and history. Researchers, artists, teachers, and students will long stand in debt to Fenton as they draw information from the deep well of knowledge encompassed in this tome.

—David M. Gradwohl
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Erna Fergusson. *Dancing Gods: Indian Ceremonials of New Mexico and Arizona*. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988) 286 pp., \$12.95 paper.

This new edition of *Dancing Gods* includes a six page foreword by Tony Hillerman, a fourteen page introduction by Erna Fergusson, and twelve pages of black and white illustrations prior to its 273 pages of manuscript. The text is arranged in nine units, with internal subdivisions, and ends with a ten page index.

This is the fourth paper back edition by the University of New Mexico Press. The original 1931 publication was edited by Alfred A. Knopf from Fergusson's 1920s writings about ceremonials for her Koshare Tours. The tour company's name was taken from one of the Pueblo Clown fraternities, and her *Dancing Gods* allows readers insight into the ceremonial dances of New Mexico and Arizona before the years of tourists took their toll.

The publication covers the dances of the Rio Grande and Zuni Pueblos, the Hopis, the Navajo and the Apaches. This reader finds herself wishing