

Book Reviews

fore long, those who had ventured out to live on an isolated farm retreated to the small towns.

The Exodusters quickly faded from public attention as they were absorbed into the Kansas scene or moved on to neighboring states. Some returned to their former homes in the South. A few succeeded economically; but for the most part, it was a time of displeasure and suffering. *In Search of Canaan* vividly depicts this unusual occurrence in American history.

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Keepers of the Game: Indian-Animal Relationships and the Fur Trade, by Calvin Martin. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978. pp. xi, 226. \$10.95.

The fur trade has been a central element in the North American frontier experience. For Frederick Jackson Turner the fur trader and hunter was part of the "procession of civilization" that marched relentlessly from east to west. The Indian served as key figure in this economic relationship (at times a partnership); an alliance with social, cultural, diplomatic, and political overtones.

Most frontier scholars agree that the fur trade proved disastrous for the natives involved. It created severe cultural disruption and often physical dislocation. Except for the Rocky Mountains where few participated, the Indian was the most important cause in the near extinction of many furbearing animals. This traditional view portrays Indians as immediately recognizing the utilitarian superiority of European tools and weapons and, with them in hand, joining in an orgy of destruction. What transpires from this approach is the "notion of a technologically incompetent, uninspired aborigine who was transformed into a highly efficient agent of wildlife destruction once he became equipped with a lethal technology and gained access to the European marketplace."

THE ANNALS OF IOWA

Calvin Martin, historian at Rutgers College, challenges these traditional explanations. He intelligently argues that the fur trade must not be viewed solely from the European economic perspective. Instead we need to determine the Indians' conception of the experience as well. Martin's clearly stated thesis is that the "fur trade must be reconciled to the supernaturalistic world view of the Indian. . . . A kind of contractual agreement existed between man and animals: the one was not to ruin the other with the powerful sanctions each . . . possessed. . . ."

This young historian has not attempted to establish his revisionist views from a continental perspective. He has chosen to examine the European impact on Indian-land relations in one area: eastern Canada from Lake Winnipeg to the Maritime Provinces. Within this socially and culturally heterogeneous region of primarily Algonkian-speaking tribes, Martin selected the Micmac of modern New Brunswick and Nova Scotia and the Great Lakes Ojibway as test cases. From these examples, however, broader implications can and should be drawn.

The Indian's world was filled with super-human and magical powers—"manitous"—that determined his fate and Nature's course of events. Hunting, especially, was conducted according to a clearly understood sense of mutual obligations; both parties to the relationship clung tenaciously to a prescribed behavior pattern. Native hunting practices were determined more by need and limited by the problems of storing and/or transporting surplus meat than by inadequate hunting tools. Wildlife could punish man by avoiding him—thus starving him—or afflicting the hunter with disease. This is a far cry from the exalted human position in the Judeo-Christian tradition brought by Europeans.

The idea of material accumulation and hoarding in order to gain prestige was entirely alien to eastern Canadian Indian thinking, and many others as well. They simply did not possess, Martin argues, an inherent willingness to destroy wildlife on an unprecedented scale. The fur trade did, however, make the native's traditional life more convenient, the traditional goals more attainable.

When the Indians adopted European material culture and technology they were also impelled to accept other agents. For

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Martin, Christianity and European disease, ancillary to but intermeshed with the fur trade, subverted the native's spiritual beliefs and corrupted the Indian-land relationship. These factors alienated the Indian from the "keepers of the game"—the spiritual masters that regulated wildlife. He came to believe that animals had broken the faith of their past kinship. The Indian then set out to destroy his tormentors. Hunting became a war of revenge; the historic fur trade provided the means of annihilating the enemy—treacherous wildlife.

The author ties these conclusions with contemporary rhetoric that seeks to make the Indian a model conservationist. He believes very strongly that Indians should not be held up on the ecological pedestal because of a perceived condescending affection for Mother Earth. Martin concludes that "Eastern Canadian hunters were not conservationist-minded during the heyday of the fur trade . . . indeed they were baldly exploitive, because their traditional incentives to conserve wildlife were rendered inoperative."

This reviewer has followed the development of many of these ideas through Martin's journal articles and convention papers. This book represents the culmination of that work and incorporates the scholarly reaction to these earlier expressions. I find little to fault concerning the substance or conclusions. My major concern involves the unfortunately narrow reading audience the volume may attract. The author is heavily steeped in an interdisciplinary approach, for which he is to be highly commended. The narrative reflects a thorough reading in anthropology, ethnology, epidemiology (especially epizootics), and other related fields. It might be difficult for the lay person or the traditionally trained historian to hang onto every paragraph or every page.

Calvin Martin's conclusions are clearly stated and well substantiated. His themes and revisionist approach deserve a wide audience. Anyone interested in Indians, the fur trade, wildlife, and their inter-relationship should make every effort to read and understand this exceptional study.

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