

Hunting for Empire: Narratives of Sport in Rupert's Land, 1840-1870. By Greg Gillepsie. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007. 200 p., ill., notes, bibl., index. ISBN hc. 978-0-7748-1354-9 \$85 978-0-7748-1355-6 pb. \$32.95)

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valuable companion to the insider's perspective of former Parks Canada staffer Rick Searle in his popular book *Phantom Parks*. Policy makers, environmentalists, and all Canadian citizens who care deeply about our national parks should study Kopas' work carefully.

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Hunting for Empire: Narratives of Sport in Rupert's Land, 1840-1870.

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Greg Gillespie begins this book with a story about himself, a young boy sitting in a small town barbershop, surrounded by magazines on hunting and fishing, displays of deer antlers, and pictures of various game animals, and the Queen. The vignette nicely captures the main thrust of *Hunting for Empire*. Gillespie analyzes the published accounts of selected mid-Victorian travellers in the lands of the Hudson's Bay Company from the perspective of those who read them. He is interested in the cultural work these texts did at home, particularly in the context of British imperialism.

Gillespie has read widely in the cultural history of empire, and puts this reading to good use. In a series of thematic chapters, he approaches the same set of narratives using different types of analytical frameworks. The narratives reveal distinct, interesting and interconnected features when Gillespie views them from literary, sporting-culture, cartographic and landscape-aesthetic perspectives. The focus is not so much on the multiple meanings of these narratives, but on the layering of these meanings as part of a general imperial vision. Gillespie tries to avoid reading the narratives as simple reflections of particular cultural and scientific ideas, and is at his best when he is attentive to the tensions and contradictions within the texts.

Overall, the analysis is heavily influenced by David Cannadine's concept of "ornamentalism." Gillespie is interested in the different ways in which the British adventurers brought their own gentlemanly scientific and sporting values to the lands they visited, and how they sought to domesticate the landscapes, animals and behaviours they observed. Readers of these narratives were more often introduced to what was familiar, rather than to what was exotic.

I found Gillespie's approaches to these texts stimulating in conception, but somewhat frustrating in execution. There are many useful discussions of how cultural historians of empire have approached diverse topics such as hunting and cartography, but those discussions too often exceed the application of the approaches to the narratives that Gillespie is analyzing. I longed for a closer reading of and attention to the texts themselves.

I also longed for some more context, some sense of the contexts in which these narratives were produced and consumed. Gillespie does offer us a collective biography of the authors, but, since the works of some half-dozen writers frequently are used to illustrate themes, he could have done more. In a slim book, readers would tolerate a few more paragraphs on the authors and their particular journeys to the west, and on the publishing history of their works. Readers will learn more about the life of African game hunter Gordon Cumming, than about British North American travelers James Carnegie or William Francis Butler. Readers do not learn much about who might have read these narratives, or what role the expectations of publishers, editors and readers played in shaping the kinds of narratives that were produced.

In *Hunting for Empire*, then, Greg Gillespie reads hunting and exploratory narratives not for what they might tell us about the territory of the Hudson's Bay Company, but for what they tell us about the process of imagining empire. His approaches and readings of familiar narratives are tantalizing, if not always completing satisfying.

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***Awful Splendor: A Fire History of Canada.* By Stephen J. Pyne.** (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007. xxix + 549 p., ill., notes, index, ann. ISBN 978-0-7748-1391-4 hc. 85 \$ 978-7748-1392-1 pb. 34,95 \$)

Écrire sur l'histoire des incendies forestiers du Canada constitue une tâche colossale. Le Canada est un pays vaste aux multiples visages, où abondent les feux et les forêts ainsi que la littérature pour les décrire. C'est un défi à la hauteur de Stephen J. Pyne, professeur d'histoire rattaché au département de biologie de l'Université d'État de l'Arizona, dont l'heptologie « Cycle du feu » intègre dorénavant l'expérience canadienne dans l'histoire du feu sur la Terre.