invoked: "[G]iven [aboriginal peoples'] unstructured form of pre-contact beliefs, the missionaries' message provided a framework and ritualistic form for dealing with religious matters" (p. 134). Scholars of subarctic world view, including Robin Ridington, Catharine McClellan and others, have advanced quite the opposite perspective, that Athapaskan belief systems provided a systematic framework within which missionaries' rather programmatic teachings could be incorporated and evaluated.

What this book lacks most is some sense of historical consciousness of indigenous actors. Increasingly, historians working in areas where history has been compiled exclusively from colonial documents are questioning the rules and conventions that govern the production of knowledge about the past. The widely discussed issue of voice — which voices get included in history and which ones get left out — is not trivial. Coates does a service by laying out such a complete and annotated record of colonial documents, but his sometimes uncritical use of that record — leaving his reader to guess whether he concurs or disagrees with the statements he cites — is extremely problematic. Advancing the cultural, ideological and gender biases in those accounts presents a teleological outcome and thwarts his stated objective of documenting a relationship. As aboriginal people continue to record their own oral traditions about these same events, their stories may redress the imbalance in the written record by complicating our views about how northern history is to be understood.

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THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE CANADIAN NORTH. By ROBERT M.
30 figs. and maps, 42 tables, index. Softbound. Cdn$19.95.

The Geography of the Canadian North is an admirable volume,
the clarity, sensitivity and balance of which recommend it highly to
both lay readers and instructors of courses on northern Canada.

In the author's words, "The main thrust of the text is the matter of
northern development and its impact on the environment and Native
people." Four concepts organize the analysis. The first is the distinc-
tion between the arctic and subarctic regions of Canada’s North. This
distinction assists the author to avoid overgeneralization while cover-
ning both the provincial and territorial Norths. Also, the causal rela-
tionships that he identifies in each region, for example between the
availability of transportation systems and the type of non-renewable
resource development that appears, help the reader to understand pat-
terns of development in the other region and to appreciate the basic
principles of social and economic geography that underlie the text.
The second concept restates the basic thrust of the book: the process
of development is the fundamental determinant of the social geo-
graphy of the North. Unfortunately given the centrality of the concept
for the book, the author fails to define development or to explore at
the conceptual level the complexities that arise when an attempt is
made to weigh the costs and benefits or to assess the level of devel-
opment of structurally very different economies, such as are found in
the North. Third, the book relies heavily on a core-periphery analysis
to gain insights into the direction of northern development. The
fourth premise from which the book proceeds is that "frontier dual-
ism" — the presence of Native and non-Native peoples with distinctive
but interacting economies and cultures — constitutes the major
social and economic distinction and poses the most fundamental pol-
icy issues in the North.

The book opens with concise and highly informative discussions of
the climate, geomorphology, history and demography of the North.
It then examines what might be termed the "industrial resource de-
development" economy, encompassing both non-renewable resource
extraction and the exploitation of forest and hydro-electricity resources.

The book then describes the Native population of the North, its eco-

nomic patterns and the problems and choices that confront it.

The handling of the two economies is comprehensive and balanced.
Throughout, the argument draws effectively on a rich base of very recent research. This currency and depth both make the book a useful reference work for the present and suggest that it will retain its relevance well into the future. The author treats each of the economies and the difficult economic prospects facing the North frankly. In reporting egregious examples of environmental degradation caused by industrial resource development, he extends his analysis beyond
impersonal abstraction to demonstrate that these projects usually pro-
foundly victimize aboriginal people. He also fully documents the fail-
ure of these projects to contribute to the lasting strength of the
northern economy and to offer either long-term or abundant short-
term employment for Native workers.

At the same time, while recognizing the economic, social and cul-
tural importance of wildlife harvesting for Native people, he notes the
inability of this economy to provide them the cash income they need.
He also anticipates that anti-fur agitation, a high rate of Native popu-
lation growth and the concentration of Native people into communi-
ties are likely in the future to reduce, not so much northern Natives' involvement in the traditional economy, but the role it can play in
their overall personal economic strategies. In this context he provides
one of the clearest statements of the options among which native peo-
ple can choose, including the traditional economy, fly-in employment
on resource projects, transfer payments, community-based economic
development and employment with public and aboriginal govern-
ment agencies. In discussing employment prospects, he repeatedly
returns to the theme of the urgent need to increase the level of educa-
tional attainment of Native students.

The Geography of the Canadian North does suffer from one seri-
ous deficiency — its treatment of the evolving pattern of northern
governmental and quasi-governmental institutions. The discussion of
land claims is generally skimpy. Aside from one opaque reference, there
is no examination of Native participation in agencies established
by land claims settlements to regulate wildlife harvesting and
land uses incompatible with the traditional economy. This is a critical
topic because these agencies are intended to be the means by which
land claims will secure the future of the traditional economy. The dis-
cussion also fails to report the resistance of the federal government to
fully empowering these agencies. The reader is left unclear about the
real ability that claims might and actually do give northern Natives to
protect the traditional economy, but with the mistaken impression that
this ability is greater than is truly the case.

The reader is incorrectly informed at several points that land
claims create regional aboriginal governments. While this did result
in the James Bay and northern Quebec case, the northern claims set-
tlements currently being contemplated and the Inuvialuit settlement
of 1984 do not create regional governments. Indeed, the categorical
refusal of the federal government to negotiate the creation of such
governments as part of the claims settlements has significantly
delayed and complicated the claims process. In general, the treat-
ment of the ways in which northern political institutions are evolving and
the future impact of this evolution on the dual economies of the North
stands out for its vagueness and superficiality, particularly when con-
trasted with the deft and thoughtful treatment of so many other topics
in the book.

With this exception, The Geography of the Canadian North com-
pares most favorably to any of the books written in the last decade on
the subject of northern development. It is a judicious and insightful
discussion of this important subject, valuable reading for both new-
comers to this important subject and readers well versed in it.

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