In this, his most recent work, Bruce Trigger makes the case that the history of eastern North America in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was shaped by the interaction of Natives and Europeans, and to fully appreciate the nature of those events the approaches and findings of disciplines other than history, in particular ethnohistory, must be considered. This is not a novel argument to those familiar with the last fifteen years of writing on Native and European history, but is in this book that the point is most clearly and concisely made. Using eastern North America as an example, Trigger discusses earlier contributions to the subject, points out perceived shortcomings and then re-examines the subject in the light of recent work by archaeologists, social anthropologists and ethnohistorians. In these discussions, historians clearly emerge as the villains who have either ignored Natives, stereotyped them as inferior savages or interpreted their actions in terms of questionable theoretical constructs. Although Trigger's synopsis of earlier scholarly writing is generally accurate, the manner in which he evaluates it will strike some historians as unfair. Most scholars work within the methodological and theoretical confines of their intellectual milieu with whatever research material they have. Traditionally the past of Native societies was regarded by historians as outside the purview of history simply because the entire documentary record on early Canada was by Europeans. Since Native people did not record their thoughts, how might the motives for their actions be ascertained? In order to develop hypotheses about the behaviour of pre-literate societies, it is of course necessary to understand their cultures, a field of research clearly outside history. Such work is being pioneered by ethnohistorians like Trigger and is gradually finding its way into historical writings. The

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villains in all this, if villains there need be, are not the historians but the anthropologists and archaeologists trained to study pre-literate societies, who, until recently, were unable or unwilling to come to grips with the documentary record to develop the syntheses and cultural models necessary to make better hypotheses. Since scholarship is essentially a cumulative process, it would have been enough for Trigger to review earlier scholarly writing in its intellectual context without casting relatively recent developments in archaeology, social anthropology and ethnohistory as the stuff that has finally rescued early Canadian history from the historians. Given the fragmentary and diverse record of Native-European relations, all interpretations of that record are necessarily hypotheses which, hopefully, will improve as diverse approaches are tried on old and new data. I have little quarrel with Trigger's comprehensive knowledge of past scholarship, although some disciplines and a number of significant contributions are not mentioned; my criticism is the apparent lack of understanding with which some of the scholarship is treated.

The substantive parts of the book are essentially a summary of his Children of Aataentsic, published in 1976. The archaeological period has been considerably updated and the rest streamlined into a tightly reasoned description and explanation of Native-European relations to about 1660, with a few cursory comments on relations to the end of the century. All of this is vintage Trigger in a more compact and readable form based on his understanding of primary and secondary sources. The book has been hailed as "revisionist history" not only because of its ethnohistorical perspective, but also because it attempts to debunk "heroic" figures such as Champlain, Brebeuf and Dollard Des Ormeaux as the founders of New France. To Trigger, the decisions made by these individuals were of lesser importance to the founding of New France than the economic links forged by the traders with the Natives. The traders were of course important, but we know very little about them and almost all operated within a policy framework laid down by the priests and
administrators Trigger is trying to debunk. It has become fashionable to give "great men" feet of clay but to do so one must have clear evidence. Trigger argues from hindsight with little sympathy for the problems faced by the priests and administrators trying to develop policies relating to alien cultures. In places his analysis ceases being objective history as evidence is twisted to suit Trigger's point of view. A case in point are the circumstances surrounding the murder of the Huron men by their Onondaga escort in 1657 while on their way with Father Ragueneau to the Onondaga mission. Trigger (p. 279) points to this incident as another case of French (Jesuit) treachery toward their old Huron allies. In his eagerness to appease the Iroquois, Father Ragueneau, as Trigger interprets it, told the French workmen who were present at the slaughter not to interfere with it. The letter that describes these events puts the circumstances somewhat differently. Initially a Huron woman was murdered. When the Huron men and French workmen sprang to their arms Ragueneau asked them to resist so that he and others could parley with the Onondaga escort. While he was running around trying to restore calm the Onondaga axed the Huron men. There are other examples of this kind which suggests that Trigger is losing objectivity in trying to make a point. His discussion of the role of the early French traders in forging Native relations may be correct; I just wish that we had more documentary evidence. If these arguments had been made for the period following 1660, which marked the development of the coureurs de bois and the beginning of direct French participation in the interior fur trade, Trigger would have been on surer ground.

The discussions of prehistoric events are generally well grounded and cautious. By Cartier's time the Iroquoian groups lived in villages of varying sizes, the largest of which were heavily fortified. Warfare was endemic with evidence of breached villages and some population movement. Who was fighting whom is not clear except that the St. Lawrence Iroquoians seem to have been at war with the Huron or Mohawk (or
both) and by that time had only one major fortified village and about seven apparently unfortified hamlets. Various explanations are weighted as to when, why and by whom the St. Lawrence villages were finally destroyed, but a satisfactory hypothesis is elusive because evidence is insufficient. There is no question that both the Huron and Mohawk had the capacity to destroy the St. Lawrence Iroquoians. Of the various hypotheses, Trigger favours one that places responsibility on the Mohawk, ostensibly because they wanted the trade goods entering the St. Lawrence valley. There is however no evidence that there was much of a fur trade before the 1580s; that the St. Lawrence groups were setting themselves up as targets by actively trading with Europeans; and that the Mohawk had any interest in the St. Lawrence trade after the St. Lawrence groups were eliminated. The same arguments can be made for the Huron who showed little interest in the French trade when they first contacted Champlain in 1609. This reviewer would reason that the demise of the St. Lawrence groups was the culmination of traditional warfare which had little to do with the beginnings of the fur trade. The reason Trigger chooses an economic interpretation is because it lays the foundations for his explanation of the Iroquois ("beaver") wars and with them the dispersion and assimilation of the Huron, Petun, Neutral and Erie. These events form the bulk of the substantive part of the book.

Trigger's view of this period is essentially an economic interpretation which postulates early recognition by Natives of the superiority of European trade goods, eagerness to acquire these goods, growing dependence on them, and finally genocidal wars to gain the hunting territory necessary to acquire the furs in order to pay for the trade goods. This is not "revisionist history." It is an elaborate hypothesis that has its intellectual roots in the writings of McIlwaink, Innis and Hunt. Trigger points out deficiencies in the earlier versions of this argument and in so doing revises it, but the main features are still an economic interpretation of Native motivations in their
dealings with Europeans and increasingly with each other. What is disappointing is that this interpretation is not presented as a hypothesis; that evidence to the contrary is not mentioned or dismissed; and that no other hypotheses are seriously discussed. Three examples of this kind of reasoning will be given below.

First, the late sixteenth-century movement of the eastern Huron out of the Kawartha Lakes area to Huronia is explained by Trigger as a desire on their part to be closer to the "major trade route along which European goods were entering southern Ontario" (p. 157). The fact that the Huron had told Champlain that they moved because of warfare is dismissed and my alternate discussion of these events is ignored. Secondly, Iroquois raids, as they increased over time, are interpreted by Trigger as looting raids for furs and trade goods. He offers very little evidence for, and no evidence against, this interpretation. In a recent study by Jose Brandao that examined 147 Iroquois raids (1626-1666) for which there was sufficient documentation, only seven resulted in a reported loss of material goods to the Huron, French or their allies. On almost all of these raids some people were killed or captured. One also wonders why the Iroquois would want to travel hundreds of miles to loot when they had ready access to Dutch goods closer to home. Thirdly, did the Iroquois finally wipe out the other Iroquoian groups in order to gain hunting and trapping territory to meet their demand for trade goods, and were the Huron so dependent on European goods that they did not dare sever their ties with the French? Numerous seventeenth- and eighteenth-century authors state categorically that Native warfare was not fought for territorial gain. Even though the Iroquois ultimately gained southern Ontario as a hunting territory, was this merely a result of their wars or a deliberately planned event. There is, moreover, no conclusive evidence that the Iroquois were short of furs before the 1660s. The only clear evidence for increasing dependence on European trade goods (Huron or Iroquois) is Mohawk (Iroquois) dependence on Dutch muskets, powder and shot to carry on their warfare. The escalating sale
of muskets correlates with increasing Iroquois aggression as do periodic Dutch restrictions on arms sales with attempts at peace. The question one must ask oneself is whether the results of actions are a clear reflection of motives? Can hypotheses be developed that place greater emphasis on non-economic, more traditional, Native motives for what happened in the early seventeenth century?

A plausible alternative hypothesis for the Iroquois war is that they are the culmination of the endemic warfare that existed in the Great Lakes area before the seventeenth century. The French and Dutch settled among groups who were hostile to each other and who saw the Europeans as potential allies in their warfare. In order to further their economic aims the Europeans were obliged to take sides in intertribal warfare. The French complied with their first alliance in 1603 and proved their worth by participating in raids against the Iroquois. In the late 1620s the Mohawk forced the Dutch to establish permanent relations with them which grew into a formal alliance in 1643, including the sale of arms. The fur trade was seen by the various Native groups not only as a means to acquire useful, durable goods. It also helped to fashion, extend and maintain alliances with the Europeans. What upset traditional warfare were not newly acquired economic motives by the Natives, but the Dutch trade in muskets to the Mohawk, a trade forbidden in New France except when it became obvious that there was a military imbalance. Even at that late date French muskets were restricted to a few Christian converts. By the 1640s the Iroquois were in a military position to destroy their old enemies, a task they accomplished with speed and efficiency. In 1643, Father Jogues, a captive among the Mohawk for fourteen months, reported what may be the only contemporary account of Iroquois motives based on conversations with them. In his view the ultimate Iroquois aim was to join all Iroquoian groups into one people, in one land, and to destroy those who opposed them. It is possible that this aim was given greater urgency through the epidemics of the 1630s which had reduced the Iroquois
population. The persistent practice of capturing other Iroquoian speakers, most of them for adoption, may have been part of the same pattern. Trigger makes no mention of Father Jogues' observations, and fails to interpret the adoption of the remnant Huron, Petun, Neutral, Erie and later the Susquehannock and Tuscarora in that kind of context. It was a dream of empire that may have been an extension of the formation of the Iroquois League. Seventeenth-century writers fail to mention any persistent Iroquois economic motives in their warfare.

It is doubtful if the Huron maintained their relations with the French because they had become dependent on trade goods. It is clear that their economy could function without them and there is no evidence that knowledge of traditional tools was lost in less than a generation. The French trade brought prestige and useful goods to the Huron trader but it also brought disease and finally disunity, as traditionalists argued with the pro-French faction on the merits of severing French relations. In the end the trade continued not because of dependency; it continued in spite of the epidemics (blamed on the French) and of disunity because the Hurons' only hope of survival as a distinct people lay within the French-Native alliance system. By the 1640s the Dutch-backed power of the Iroquois was too great to sever ties with the French. Since the French alliance proved to be ineffectual, the Ontario Iroquoian groups suffered the fate the Iroquois had in store for them when they spoke to Father Jogues. Later Iroquois actions, such as the movement of a large part of the remnant Huron near Quebec to Iroquoia in 1656-7, or the adoption of six hundred Erie in 1680, can be interpreted in a similar manner.

I have dwelt at some length on what I regard as the book's main shortcomings. I have done so for two reasons. First, Trigger's views have been written as if there are no acceptable alternatives and they are being received as such. Secondly, I think it is time that new hypotheses are formulated based on a rereading of the original sources. The economic motivations currently attributed to sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century
Native behaviour strike me as being rationalizations by scholars steeped in notions about "rational economic man." My reading of the primary sources has not convinced me that the Native cultures of early Canada were demonstrably "rationally economic" in their behaviour except in the performance of necessary subsistence pursuits. Social, political and occasionally religious aspects of culture seem to have been more important agents that motivated their behaviour toward others. I think it is time to see if the fur trade and the so-called "beaver wars" can be analyzed from a Native social and political point of view.

In spite of what I have said about Natives and Newcomers, the book will long stand as a brilliant summary of past and current thought by Canada's leading ethnohistorian. It should not, however, be accepted uncritically. Instead it should serve as a point of departure for re-examining old questions for which there will never be any completely satisfying solutions.

Conrad E. Heidenreich

NOTES


2 R.G. Thwaites, ed. The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, Vol. 44 (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1899), 73-77.


6 Thwaites, Jesuit Relations, Vol. 24, 297.