is a very welcome contribution to this growing sub-discipline and it underlines the importance of rethinking the place of humans within nature in Canadian history.

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This lavishly illustrated large-format work is a modern edition of two extraordinary seventeenth-century manuscripts concerned with the people, flora, and fauna of northeastern North America: the Codex Canadensis, a predominantly pictorial work comprising 180 rich images, and the Histoire naturelle des Indes occidentales, a textual account of Canadian natural history. These works—attributed to the same author, Louis Nicolas—are introduced by art historian François-Marc Gagnon, while Réal Ouellet and Nancy Senior provide modernized French and English translations of the Histoire naturelle. Together these two texts resulted from an ambitious project to illustrate, describe, and classify the natural world of New France.

The Codex Canadensis, described by Gagnon as “an album of pen drawings,” is now housed at the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art in Tulsa, Oklahoma, while the Histoire naturelle resides at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. Although the texts were neither signed nor dated, Gagnon’s extensive introduction does the crucial work of mapping out the provenance of the manuscripts—analysis and background that is key to the value of this volume. He demonstrates how both works have been attributed to Nicolas, a French Jesuit who missioned in New France between 1664 and 1674. Gagnon lays out several textual clues that render this ascription highly plausible, including analyses by Anne-Marie Sioui and Germaine Warkentin which suggest that the manuscripts were penned in the same hand.

Nicolas proves to be as interesting as the work he produced; his temper and unusual behavior—such as taming and training two bears to perform tricks at the Jesuits’ Sillery residence—led to the disapproval of his confrères. While in New France, Nicolas travelled a great deal beyond the Saint Lawrence Valley, from Iroquoia to the pays d’en haut. As a result of his travels, his texts give a lively and sweeping depiction of the geography, flora, fauna, and peoples of northeastern North America. The Codex’s vivid drawings of men and women from various nations, including members of the Illinois, Ottawa, and Sioux, as well as images of indigenous material culture, such as several styles of canoes and cabins, are ethnographically significant. The Codex also includes two fascinating maps—one of eastern North America and one of the interior of New France—an area Nicolas refers to as “la Manitoünie”—that will surely spark scholarly interest. Interestingly, Gagnon notes (as has Warkentin) that Nicolas often modeled his images on pre-existing plates or woodcuts found in well-known published works, such as François Du Creux’s Historiae canadensis (1664) and Conrad Gesner’s Historiae Animalium (1551). Nicolas’s method, however, was not unusual and does not lessen the value of the images.
The *Histoire naturelle*, on the other hand, yields a wealth of botanical and zoological information. Although it is teeming with nomenclature that will be unfamiliar to most readers, the texts are extensively annotated with a focus on the identification of modern species names. These footnotes are the result of a collaboration of scholars from across the sciences and humanities, and reveal the truly interdisciplinary and comprehensive effort that went into producing this volume.

Drawing on Foucault’s *Les mots et les choses*, Gagnon’s introduction situates Nicolas’s approach to natural history as one caught between the epistemological shift from a reliance on similitude to determine natural laws to a more empirical and inductive naturalism. Gagnon argues that the frequent comparison between the Old and New Worlds, emphasis on the rare, the “poverty of the objective descriptions on the one hand, and the great place still given to analogies on the other” (p. 31) are all hallmarks of an antiquated approach to knowledge, or a “sixteenth-century épistémè” (p. 56). What Gagnon finds particularly anachronistic about Nicolas’ work is the “absence of a systematic conception of the order of nature,” especially in the descriptions of plants and animals in the *Histoire naturelle* (p. 44). However, when Gagnon turns his attention to an analysis of the internal logic of the texts, we learn that Nicolas did, indeed, have a coherent method of presentation. The *Histoire naturelle* is presented in thirteen books or sections, which group organisms together based on their utility, size, and habitat. Books 1 to 3 attend to plants and books 4 through 7 detail the “land, water, and amphibious four-footed animals.” In book 8, Nicholas is concerned with what he classified as entirely amphibious creatures. Books 9 to 11 address birds, while the final two books deal with fish. Each section includes a list of species names with accompanying descriptions that range from the vague (many plants are not physically described) to more extensive discussions (as in the case of the beaver which is, unsurprisingly, treated in detail).

Gagnon acknowledges that such classification schemes were not unusual for the seventeenth century, but still concludes that Nicolas’ work possesses an “archaic flavour” (p. 82). Nicolas’ approach to natural history was undoubtedly more Aristotelian than Linnaean, but Gagnon’s reliance on Foucault as a means of situating Nicolas’ work within the genre and disciplines of seventeenth-century natural history leads him to overestimate the “outmoded character” of the texts (p. 38). Engagement with some of the more recent historiography of natural history, such as the work of E. C. Spary, Brian Ogilvie, and David Freedberg, would have fine-tuned Gagnon’s argument and strengthened the connections made to the broader cultural, institutional, and political contexts of natural history. Regardless, Gagnon makes it clear that Nicolas’ texts were representative of the period’s culture of curiosity.

Ultimately, this edition will be of great value to scholars of New France and Canadian history more generally, reflected in its being awarded the 2012 Sir John A. Macdonald Prize. The high-quality colour illustrations are a rare resource that make this work particularly germane to visual culture studies and will appeal to a broader audience as well. It is hard to overstate the richness of this material, which has been made much more accessible through this attractive and well-researched volume.

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