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Dean Bavington. *Managed Annihilation: An Unnatural History of the Newfoundland Cod Collapse.* Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010. xxxii + 186 pp. $32.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-7748-1748-6.

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Species extinction has long been a staple of declensionist narratives about nature. Dodos, auks, and pigeons serve as symbols of human greed and environmental peril. To this pantheon of doomed species we should add the Atlantic cod (*Gadus morhua*) because the Grand Banks fishery, which was supposedly a shining example of careful, scientific management, imploded so spectacularly in 1992 that nearly two decades later fishers and scientists are still grappling with the magnitude of loss and, even worse, the prospect that a fishery that fed the Atlantic world for half a millennia might never recover. Cod are indeed another cautionary tale, but of what exactly is unclear. Scholars have been revising so many extinction stories that the old moralisms no longer work. The interplay of humans and nature was often messier than imagined, and bison, sardines, and anchovetas increasingly seem like didactics of complexity and uncertainty. Nevertheless, a righteous certitude informs Dean Bavington's *Managed Annihilation*, the fourteenth book in UBC Press's Nature/History/Society series, edited by historical geographer Graeme Wynn. Previous volumes have traced the interface of humans and nature, and Bavington--a native Newfoundlander who bookends his study with a childhood vignette of fishing for cod--follows suit. *Managed Annihilation* passionately critiques the management regime that presided over disaster. Its analysis of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans's (DFO) scientific authority is insightful and seething, especially concerning the consequences of biological modeling and neoliberal policy. Even after disaster, administrators mulishly resisted reform by forcing regulators to "calculate cost-benefit analysis [to prove] that restrictions on fishing on other marine development activities do not, on balance, irrevocably or unnecessarily harm the economy." As Bavington notes, the "DFO's precautionary approach provides the very ethical framework and burden-of-proof requirement that the precautionary principle was designed to avoid and eliminate" (p. 55).

Bavington reveals many failings of modern fishery management, especially within Canada's

very screwed up DFO, yet he also exposes some scholarly problems. As Doug Harris and others have noted, the DFO has a particularly long record of disserving fish and fishers, but its mechanistic and socially biased approach to fishery management has been standard practice across North America since the nineteenth century.[1] Thus while Bavington is often accurate, he is also unsurprising. Time and again he seems too close to Newfoundland to see the continental story. The role of the past in this "unnatural history" is also problematic. Although ***Managed Annihilation*** seeks "to historicize management by focusing on ... the interrogation of the idea of management as it has been, and is currently being, applied to cod fishermen and cod fisheries" (p. 3), its historical and spatial perspectives are fleeting and inconsistent. It is up to Wynn to cover the long durée in his introduction, "This Is More Difficult Than We Thought." This is required reading because only through it will readers gain a sense of the book's simplistic schematization of exploitation, management, and science.

According to Bavington, Newfoundland's fishery was a premodern society of "subsistence" fishers until replaced by "a market-based economic order" controlled by "the owners of capital and other fishing interests--bankers, investors, and merchants" (p. 13). Similarly, residents attuned to the local rhythms of nature sustained the fishery until industry and the state tried to rationalize the ocean's inexhaustible wealth, while science abetted tragedy as biologists reduced fish to numbers and ecology to mathematical models that managers then used to destroy cod and, as Bavington reminds us over and over, effect "the largest single-day layoff in Canadian history" on July 2, 1992 (p. 1). Throughout the book Bavington consistently neglects the contingencies that complicate his analysis. Newfoundlanders were always engaged in a transatlantic market, locals were also contributing to fishery innovation and intensification, and cod stocks had declined due to local fishing and environmental pressures long before the dark forces arrived. Thus the book's easy insider-outsider trope falters, as does its discussion of science. Beginning with T. H. Huxley's oft-quoted 1866 remark that the open seas were inexhaustible, Bavington offers a teleological history of science as monolithic, obsessed with abstraction, and handmaiden to the state and capital. A sharp divide exists between locals and "experts," the latter of whom were fools who made the systematic destruction of food webs "part of official fisheries policy" (p. 57). This is merely cant. Although Bavington has read on the history of science, he ignores the contests and qualifications that permeate this field, especially in the vein of fishery science.[2] Nor does he recognize how power was asymmetric in the dialectic between biologists and those legislators and politically appointed managers who treated heuristic models as analogs of reality.

Much of ***Managed Annihilation*** is an argument for an alternative, ecosystemic approach to what Bavington, borrowing from Carolyn Merchant, calls "managerial ecology" (p. 3). Several concepts underpin his call to reform management, including SOHO: "self organizing, holarchic, and open" systems (p. 44) and "post-normal science" (p. 45), but these are poorly defined and the core denunciation of normal science (pp. 26-27) actually grants it considerable authority. These internal inconsistencies are unfortunate because many observers share his view that management must be more nimble and consensual, that the neoliberal fetish of privatization is just another way to dispossess smallholders, and that science and management should reintegrate local ecological knowledge (LEK) into their calculus, just as it was in the late nineteenth century.[3] There is a danger, however, in romanticizing local wisdom. For all progressive conservation's failures, the history of locally managed market harvests is filled with similar tales of confusion and folly.[4] Science emerged as an important arbiter in part because of the limits of LEK, and as even Wynn argues in his introduction, we are "not well served by un-

bridled skepticism about scientific efforts to understand the processes that affect and change complex atmospheric, oceanic, or other systems" (p. xxii). Extinction is awful, but such events are messy. ***Managed Annihilation*** opens important questions about the role of science and the state in the destruction of the northern cod stocks, but its schematic approach to history fails to capture the complexity of both past and future.

Notes

[1]. Douglas C. Harris, ***Fish, Law, and Colonialism: The Legal Capture of Salmon in British Columbia*** (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); Arthur F. McEvoy, ***The Fisherman's Problem: Ecology and Law in the California Fisheries, 1850-1980*** (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

[2].For fishery history see George A. Rose, ***Cod: The Ecological History of the North Atlantic Fisheries*** (St. Johns: Breakwater, 2007). For science see Tim D. Smith, ***Scaling Fisheries: The Science of Measuring the Effects of Fishing, 1855-1955*** (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[3]. Dianne Newell and Rosemary Ommer, eds., ***Fishing Places, Fishing People: Traditions and Issues in Canadian Small-Scale Fisheries*** (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998); David Dobbs, ***The Great Gulf: Fishermen, Scientists, and the Struggle to Revive the World's Greatest Fishery*** (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2000).

[4]. Matthew McKenzie, ***Clearing the Coastline: The Nineteenth-Century Ecological and Cultural Transformation of Cape Cod*** (Hanover, Mass.: University Press of New England, 2010), 111-36; Taylor, ***Making Salmon***, 68-132.

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