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BEYOND "QUELQUES ARPENTS DE NEIGE : "

REPRESENTATION OF NEW FRANCE IN FRENCH TEXTS,

1703 TO 1780

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Introduction : Abandoned Children on the Banks of the Saint Lawrence

No line from literature seems to have had more longevity and been given as much weight in Québécois historiography than Voltaire's flippant remark about Canada in his 1759 work *Candide ou l'optimisme*. As Gordon, the great cynic of the *conte*, remarks to Candide, "Vous savez que ces deux nations sont en guerre pour quelques arpents de neige vers le Canada, et qu'elles dépensent pour cette belle guerre plus que tout le Canada ne vaut."[1] This refrain of Canada as "quelques arpents de neige" – several acres of snow – returns again and again in academic and non-academic works about New France and Canada even when the context is far removed from eighteenth century. It has become a potent metaphor to collapse all visions of New France pre-1763 into a single critical remark.

Indeed, since its foundation in the nineteenth century, French-Canadian historiography has paid an enormous amount of attention to the opinion France had of it in the years leading up to the Seven Years' War. In his 1845 edition of *Histoire du Canada depuis sa découverte jusqu'à nos jours* François-Xavier Garneau, largely considered the first "historien national du Canada,"[2] articulates what has become a common obsession with Voltaire in French-Canadian historiography :

> Voltaire, retiré à Ferney, célébra le triomphe des Anglais à Québec par un banquet […] Après le banquet, la compagnie se retira dans une galerie terminée par un théâtre élégant, où l'on joua *Le Patriote insulaire*, pièce remplie de sentiments chaleureux pour la liberté. Voltaire parut lui-même dans le principal rôle. Après la pièce, les fenêtres de la galerie s'ouvrirent, et l'on vit une cour spacieuse illuminée et ornée de trophées sauvages. On fit partir un magnifique feu d'artifice au bruit d'une belle musique guerrière. L'étoile de Saint-Geroge lançait des fusées, au-dessous desquelles on voyait représentée la cataracte de Niagara.

[1] Voltaire, *Candide ou l'optimisme, The Complete Works of Voltaire,* (Oxford : The Voltaire Foundation, 2003) 237.

[2] Pierre Savard and Paul Wyczynski, "GARNEAU, FRANÇOIS-XAVIER," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* vol. 9 (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003).

> Ce spectacle étrange donné par un Français a quelque chose de sinistre. C'est le rire effréné d'une haine plus forte que le malheur ; mais ce rire effrayant a reçu depuis son explication dans les bouleversement et les vengeances à jamais mémorables de 1793. La cause des Canadiens fut vengée dans des flots de sang. Mais, hélas! La France ne pouvait plus rien pour des enfants abandonnés sur les bords du Saint-Laurent, et un peu plus tard elle en avait perdu le souvenir[3]

While clearly apocryphal and teleological, this passage reveals the extent to which Garneau employs Voltaire as a metonymy for the opinion of all of France.[4] After invoking Voltaire directly, Garneau begins to elide him and France. By the second paragraph Voltaire has become "un Français" and in the final sentence "la France" has completely replaced Voltaire. In this way, Garneau implicates all of France in Voltaire's unseemly celebration – complete with fireworks and a play – at Ferney on the occasion of the French defeat on the Plains of Abraham. Voltaire's "rire effrayant" reveals a "sinister" "hatred" towards the *Canadiens.* But, the *Canadiens* have their "vengeance." Jumping forward thirty years, Garneau portrays the Terror of 1793 as a sort of cosmic revenge against France, which dared to "abandon" and forget its "children" in Canada. In this short and fanciful passage, Garneau is able to tie together three of the most important planks in French-Canadian historiography : the "mauvaise réputation" of Canada, the Providential Conquest – whereby British control saves Canada from the Jacobin's Terror – and, what Girard Bouchard has called, "le paradigme du bâtard." It almost goes without saying that Voltaire is the central figure in this historiographical trifecta.[5]

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[3] François-Xavier Garneau, *Histoire du Canada depuis sa découverte jusqu'à nos jours* (Beauchemin, 1882) 388, 389.

[4] Garneau claims to have taken this account from an article published the London-based paper *Public Advertiser* on November 28, 1759. While we may rightly inquire about the political ideology behind this article, published for an English audience, other aspects of the account raise questions of authenticity. The play *Un Patriote insulaire* either never existed or did not survive to the contemporary era. I have unable to find this text or any independent reference to it. In an endnote to his work *Behold the Hero : General Wolfe and the Arts in the Eighteenth Century*, Alan McNairn concisely sums up the problematic nature of Garneau's account. See page 257, note 36.

[5] For a more complete vision of Quebec historiography in the twentieth-century see Ronald Rudin, *Making History in Twentieth-Century Quebec* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

To this day, the citing of Voltaire as representative of French public opinion towards New France continues to be commonplace in French-Canadian and Québécois historiography. In fact, Voltaire's line from *Candide* has become so ubiquitous and well-tread in studies of the New World, that scholars can use it without even attributing it to Voltaire. For example, in Susan Mann's provocative 1980 work *The Dream of Nation : A Social and Intellectual History of Quebec* she employs it in a decontextualized and uncited manner. As Mann writes in her brief discussion of the Seven Years' War : "England would be left holding those disdained *few acres of snow* north of the rich American states (my emphasis)"[6] Although she uses Voltaire's words, Mann gives no mention of Voltaire. Moreover, in a pattern that reoccurs frequently, Mann precedes to make an ahistorical link between Voltaire and Charles De Gaulle's famous 1967 cry from Montréal's City Hall, "Vive le Québec libre." As Mann's use of Voltaire's comment suggests, context is unnecessary because the line has become something more than a flippant line from *Candide*. It has become an unquestioned truism – a universal reference – that stands in succinctly for the sense of abandonment that permeates Québécois historiography. Voltaire's comment has become a short-hand way for scholars to prove the poor reputation of New France for the French. Even Cécile Vidal and Gilles Havard, whose 2003 work *Histoire de l'Amérique française* is counter discusive in many ways, fall back on this old trope : "le souvenir [of New France] semble se résumer à la formule dédaigneuse de Voltaire ('pays couvert de glaces huit mois de l'année, habité par des barbares, des ours et des castors')."[7] Although they do not employ the *Candide* reference, perhaps recognizing the problematic nature of using an ironic *conte* in the study of history, Vidal and Havard still use Voltaire as a spokesman for the French

[6] Mann, Susan, *The Dream of Nation: A Social and Intellectual History of Quebec* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002) 27.

[7] Havard, Gilles, and Cécile Vidal, *Histoire de l'Amérique française* (Paris : Flammarion, 2003) 11.

public.

As the quotation from Mann already reveals, the convention of quoting Voltaire in historical studies is not confined to francophone scholarship. Peter Moogk, an Anglophone Canadian scholar, for example, again looks to Voltaire to prove New France's "fearsome reputation" in France in his 2000 work *La Nouvelle France, The Making of French Canada : A Cultural History.* "the loss of Canada was not regretted" Moogk argues. "Voltaire's flippant remark in *Candide* (1759) that the war in North America was being fought for 'a few acres of snow' reflected the superficial thinking of his day."[8] Like others before him, he then uses an ahistorical juxtaposition of comments from Marc Lescarbot (1533) and Pierre Boucher (1664) to give the impression that French opinion about Canada was static over two centuries!

Thus, if this current project might be critiqued for focusing on rosy depictions of New France, this is not the case. I do not discount the negative comments about Canada in the corpus I study. However, I contextualize the negative comments alongside the positive commentary that often accompanies it. Within the same primary texts visions of Canada a fearfully cold and harsh climate coexist with visions of a fertile and (potentially) prosperous land. Because of this duality, scholars should be more reticent than they are in assuming how readers of the day understood these contradictory images. It is *precisely* the quality of their works that reveals the powerful structuring force of Voltaire's quotation. Vidal and Havard, Mann, and Moogk make convincing historical arguments and have produced provocative scholarship. Yet, not even these scholars put this historiographical trope into question.

Beyond studies of eighteenth century French colonialism in Canada, Voltaire's line has

[8] Moogk, Peter N. *La Nouvelle France: The Making of French Canada : a Cultural History* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2000) 14.

taken on a life of its own. The line comes up in the title of a study of Presbyterian Canadians of the nineteenth and twentieth century : *The Burning Bush and a Few Acres of Snow* (1994). Similarly, Thomas Thorner and Thor Frohn-Nielson use Voltaire's line in their compilation of documents on Canada, *A Few Acres of Snow : Documents in Pre-confederation Canadian History* (1997). Surprisingly, Thorner and Frohn-Nielson include no writings from Voltaire as part of their work. To wit, they dispense with the eighteenth century in their first of ten chapters. However, their choice of title again suggests the potency of Voltaire's line on the way in which Canadians – francophone and anglophone alike – view their history.

The "Quelques arpents de neige" line has even permeated popular culture in Québec and Canada. For example, the French-Canadian version of "Trivial Pursuit," invented in Montréal in 1979, was graced with the title "Quelques arpents de pièges." This play on words that reveals the extent to which Canadians are familiar with the line. In the 1970s, the Québécois film maker Denis Héroux produced a historical drama about a Canadian couple with the backdrop of the lower Canada rebellions of the 1830s. The title, although anachronistic, was *Quelques Arpents de neige.* Claude Lévéillé's title song for the film, "Pour quelques arpents de neige," drips of nationalism and patriotic pride. As Lévéillé sings, "Pour quelques arpents de neige / Moi, j'aurai donné ma vie / Pour quelques arpents de neige / Oui, ma vie au pays." His sentiment is not surprising given the ascendency of Québec nationalism in the 1970s which will see its culmination in the failed sovereignty referendum of 1980. Even today, the line still captures the popular imagination. The entertainment company Treefrog games produced a 2011 board game in the spirit of Risk which took as its title "A Few Acres of Snow," allowing players to reenact the Seven Years' War for Canada. Finally, on their 2010 album the black metal group Chasse-

Galarie provides a dark, and frankly unlistenable, song that takes as its title, "Quelques arpents de neige." Many more examples of Voltaire's line in popular culture surely exist. However, these examples suffice to show that the influence of Voltaire's remark is wide and deep within Canadian and Québec historiography and the popular imagination.

Yet, the question remains, does this particular remark from *Candide* accurately French public opinion at the time, as Voltaire claims in a letter to the foreign affairs minister the Duc de Choiseul?[9] It seems problematic to employ Voltaire's quotation as historiographical short-hand for the poor reputation of France. Doing so flattens through teleological reasoning the representations of Canada given by various writers of New France. To put it another way, Voltaire expresses an opinion that cannot be read backwards and anachronistically applied to the whole of the French colonial project in Canada.

As Voltaire's line about "quelques arpents de neige" returns again and again in the following chapters, the specter of *Candide* haunts this work. However, this is not primarily a project on Québécois historiography and popular imagination. Instead, this project is an investigation of literary representations of New France in the French metropole in the period from 1703 to 1780. The central question of this project is two-fold : firstly, what did France think of its North American possession in the eighteenth century leading up to, and in the immediate aftermath of, the Seven Years' War? Secondly, what are the discursive ramifications of imagining New France in France at the time? In other words, how might the first-hand accounts and other texts by French writers about New France reflect back and shape the intellectual, social, and

[9] N.B. Voltaire's letter to the Duc de Choiseul dated September 6, 1762 : "Je suis comme le public, j'aime mieux la paix que le Canada, et je crois que la France peut être heureuse sans Québec." See Voltaire, "Correspondance XXV, lettre D10693," *The complete works of Voltaire.* Vol. 109 (Oxford : The Voltaire Foundation, 1973).

identity concerns of early modern France? Approaching the topic from a literary perspective, I am following the call made by Gordon Sayre in his work *Les Sauvages Américains : Representations of Native Americans in French and English Colonial Literature* to treat travel narratives as literature. Contrasting his literary approach to these works to that of the historian, Sayre argues that contemporary scholars must "explain what these books look like and how they work as texts."[10] More precisely, we must try and understand the context and intellectual objectives of the writers of these works. These writers never were – and rarely claimed to be – disinterested, critically distant, observers. Instead, they wrote with philosophical positions and worldviews that manifest themselves in their texts. Seen from this angle, the texts I study in this project tell us less about the "true" nature of settler or native life in the colonies than they do about the writers themselves and their philosophical preoccupations.

It has become a truism that to write about the other is simultaneously to write about one's self. Throughout this project I return to this paradigm as I argue that to write about identity in the New World is also to define what it means to be French. Attention to the literary aspects of the works holds its own set of problems, however. An overly decontextualized reading of these texts could easily lead to ahistorical or teleological readings, an ever present danger when working in an interdisciplinary mode. Even as I read these texts as literary documents, I have tried to pay heed to the historical and historiographical implications of these texts. Although this is not primarily an historical or historiographical project, I have attempted to avoid a literary reading that ignores historicity. My objective, ultimately, is to link the colonial project of New France with the development of Early Modern Frenchness. As a corollary to this, my project analyzes

[10] Sayre, Gordon M., *Les Sauvages Américains: Representations of Native Americans in French and English Colonial Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997) 2.

how writing about New France made certain notions – such as Frenchness, but also freedom, equality, and fraternity among French and Others – thinkable.

Why "Early Modern Frenchness" ?

One of the terms I will be using throughout this project, which needs to be defined before continuing, is the idea of "Early Modern Frenchness." Of course, since the work of Judith Butler, it is largely accepted that identity is inherently fluid, contingent, relational, and performative. Yet, the question remains, what makes "Early Modern Frenchness" particularly "modern" and particularly "French ?" I will define this term as the search for an identity that surpasses, without necessarily supplanting, the old *ancien régime* adage of membership into the French community as based on *un roi, une loi, une foi* – one king, one law, one faith.[11] Language is also important to my understanding of imperial Frenchness (a concept to which I will return below). Yet, Eugen Weber, among others, has argued convincingly that language is less of a marker of belonging in France before the twentieth-century than one might assume.[12] Conversely, however, historians of New France have argued that linguistic concerns *were* more salient in New France than in the metropole because of the presence of Amerindian languages and cultures.[13] Thus, I have paid attention to linguistic concerns. Thus, by the term "modern French" identity or "modern Frenchness" this project looks for attributes that go beyond the legalistic, linguistic, and

[11] Berthet, Thierry, *Seigneurs et colons de Nouvelle France: l'émergence d'une société distincte au XVIIIème siècle* (Cachan: Editions de l'E.N.S., 1992) 89.

[12] Weber, Eugen. *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford : Stanford University Press*, 1976*) 6.

[13] Belmessous, Saliha, "Etre français en Nouvelle-France: Identité française et identité coloniale aux dix-septième et dix-huitième siècles," *French Historical Studies* 27.3 (2004) : 516.

religious. I use the term to describe normative behaviors, language homogeny, and similar cultural and "proto-racial" values that are *imagined* to be shared among people who consider themselves members of the French state. Additionally, I call this identity "modern" because the writers in question imagine it as a horizontal relationship rather than a vertical one. That is, the writers in my corpus do not define Frenchness narrowly as being subject to the king of France (a vertical relationship). Rather, Frenchness is imagined as a set of practices and codes that are shared among a community (thus a horizontal relationship). To put it another way, the French modern identity in New France is one based on a sense of community derived less from kingship, than on kinship.

Why this time period, why this New France?

From the sixteenth century onwards, there were a number of attempts to replant France in the New World. Of course, the attempts at colonization in modern-day Brazil (1612) and in Florida (1562) were still-born affairs. However, starting in the seventeenth century the French colonies of North America see a number of attempts to valorize and better manage them, accompanied by a relatively impressive population growth. In short, it is during the late seventeenth century that New France becomes more than a backwater for *coureurs de bois* and fishermen. Setting the scene for this period is the establishment of the colony as a direct royal possession in 1662. Under the auspices of the Finance Minister Colbert, several hundred young women make their way to New France over the 1660s and 1670s as *filles du roi,* or King's Daughters. Although small in numbers, this half-hearted attempt at a more substantial colonial

implantation policy provides enough marriageable women for the population to grow, doubling the size of the settler community every 25 years, and marking Canadian history for at least the next two centuries.[14]

However, by the dawn of the eighteenth century, immigration of Frenchmen to Canada was waning. The difficulty of travel to New France, the lack of gold mines or the promise of rich plantations to run surely had their part to play in failing to attract would-be colonists. The Mississippi bubble of the 1720s most likely exacerbated the problem, as did Abbé Prévost's 1731 best-seller *L'Histoire du chevalier Des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut.* With its depiction of the Louisiana "desert," *Manon Lescaut* certainly did not inspire mass immigration. Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to confuse Louisiana with Canada.

Ironically, at the same moment that immigration to New France effectively ceased, it entered what has been called "Canada's golden age."[15] From roughly the early 1700s to the 1750s, the worst of European and Native American wars had ended, ushering in a period of relative peace and prosperity – a fragile *Pax Gallica*.[16] Trade, especially thanks to the exchanges between the *coureurs de bois*, who act as cultural and commercial intermediaries, slowly comes to define the relationship between Europeans and Native Americans.[17] The treaty of Utrecht of 1713 marks the loss of Acadia, but also brings a period of delicate peace between the two North American powers – France and England. In other words, during this time, there is a certain measure of imperial maneuverability, a chance to reassess and revitalize the colony. Safe passage to the colony was possible, even if the economic structure of the colony did not require or

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[14] Moogk 176.

[15] Miquelon, Dale, *New France, 1701-1744: A Supplement to Europe* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987) 4.

[16] Havard, Gilles,"'Les forcer à devenir Cytoyens:' État, Sauvages et citoyenneté en Nouvelle-France (XVII^{e} – XVIII^{e} siècle)" *Annales HSS* 64.5 2009: 1015.

[17] See Jacquin, Philippe, *Les Indiens Blancs: Français et Indiens en Amérique du nord, XVIe-XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Payot, 1987) 67.

facilitate large scale population implantation. If nothing else, it is a time when the bare survival of the colony is not in doubt. Although France will lose its continental North American possessions in 1763, in the early eighteenth century there was no reason to believe New France would cease to exist.

Additionally, unlike the early period of New France, which Brian Brazeau has analyzed in his 2009 work *Writing a New France*, by the eighteenth century Canada was a known quantity. As Brazeau points out in his analysis of Marc Lescarbot's *Histoire de la Nouvelle France*, Frenchmen in the seventeenth century still thought of New France as potentially identical to Europe. In this paradigm Brazeau writes, "new France would be an exact image of France, and America would serve as the mirroring surface."[18] The reality of Canada contrasted poorly with the hopes that metropolitan Frenchmen had for it in the seventeenth century. In the eighteenth century, the population was exploding (proportionally speaking) in Canada – thanks entirely to the high number of births of the *Canadiens.* In sum, the French writers of the eighteenth century certainly had a more realistic vision of their colony graced with the name "New" France. The *Canadien,* moreover, had become a member of the empire, complete with clichéd images of his character and mores. This North American Frenchmen, as I will argue, represented a disruptive identity that complicated notions of Frenchness. In the same texts the *Canadien* often become degenerated "sauvages" *and* an ideal Frenchman. Their perfect French accent and intelligence were legendary as were their "wild" mores, especially those of the *coureurs de bois* who passed significant amounts of time with the Native Americans.

While the choice of historical dates is always a bit arbitrary, an undefined chronology would be unmanageable. Thus, this study uses the publication of Lahontan's *Voyages en*

[18] Brazeau 117.

amérique septentrionale in 1703 and Raynal's third revision of *Histoire des Deux Indes* in 1780. As is clear by my choice of texts, I have chosen to extend my study beyond the Seven Years' War when New France becomes the province of Québec within the British North American colonial system. This choice is meant to reveal how the memory of New France does not disappear at the signing of the peace accords between England and France at the 1763 Treaty of Paris. Rather, Québec continues to be a space that French writers employ to question French identity. As Raynal seems to suggest, Frenchness transcends the machinations of imperial powers. Although now British subjects, the *Canadiens* remain sentimentally attached to their former metropole. Moreover, the types of reforms that Canada has experienced under British rule serve as a natural experiment for the types of constitutional reforms the *philosophes* hoped for all of France. In this way, Québec becomes a sort of model to replicate. The *Canadiens* realize the dream of a French population who have gained the benefits of British free-trade policies and religious tolerance.

Although the *Canadien* does not disappear completely from the French writings after Raynal, by the 1780s France is preoccupied with helping the renegade thirteen colonies of British North America. Thus, the Anglo-American colonies to the South seem to have eclipsed the lost empire in the French imagination. In terms of political history, the 1780s also marked the end of French pretensions on North America (with the exception of Napoleon's aborted bid to incorporate Louisiana back into the empire at the beginning of the nineteenth century). In a secret accord with the revolutionary government of the United States, Louis XVI disavows a reconquest of Canada, effectively ending any chance of New France rising anew.

Beyond these historical justifications, the eighteenth century has been long hailed as the century that gave birth both to the notion of public opinion and the concept of nationalism. In his

foundational text, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, Jurgen Habermas defines public opinion as the phenomenon of "the sphere of private people come together as a public ; [who] soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations."[19] Seen from this angle, the world of letters, salon and café culture, fair theatre, and other places of sociability allowed debate to break out of the halls of power. These spaces became instruments for the public to make claims on its rulers. At the same time, they provide forums in which to investigate the representations available to a wide and disparate public. Looking at only one form of representation – the theatre, or travel narratives, or the writings of the *philosophes* – would give an incomplete, and perhaps distorted, view of how writers depicted the colony over time. With this challenge in mind, I have drawn my corpus from a variety of works that transcend the hierarchical and generic divide of eighteenth century French society. Although by no means exhaustive, my project analyzes the representations of New France for elite and common audiences alike. Inspired by the etymology of the term "discourse," from the Latin *discurrere, dis* (away) and *currere* (run) – this project runs to and fro from different genres and varying modes of analysis. Chief among these are analytical modes drawn from literature, gender studies, and historiography.

"Creole Pioneers" of Frenchness

In his work *Imagined Communities : Reflections on the Origin and Spread of*

[19] Habermas, Jurgen, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Boston: MIT Press, 1991) 27.

Nationalism one of Benedict Anderson's central claims is that "creole pioneers" in the New World led the way in the development of a reading bourgeoisie, which in turned gave the world the exportable model of nationalism. "Why was it," Anderson asks, "precisely *creole* communities that developed so early conceptions of the nation-ness – *well before most of Europe?*"[20] Having asked the question, Anderson answers it thusly : "pilgrim creole functionaries and provincial creole printmen play the decisive historic role."[21] If "an illiterate bourgeoisie is scarcely imaginable" then "in world-historical terms bourgeoisies were the first classes to achieve solidarities on an essentially imagined basis," Anderson argues.[22] However, the question remains : what explains then the sense of identity of *Canadiens* in the mid-eighteenth century? No printing press existed in New France before the Seven Years' War. Despite this, language unified the *Canadiens* from an early date. Furthermore, the *Canadiens*' sense of shared identity predates the revolutions of the late eighteenth century, and thus the *Canadiens*' sense of belonging to an imagined community could not have been "imported" from them. In his universalizing vision, Anderson does not take into account French colonialism in the New World, which represents an inconvenient historical fact that problematizes his grand narrative of nationalism.

Québec is an exception in the Americas. As opposed to the struggles of the thirteen colonies or the inhabitants of New Spain to throw off the yoke of their metropoles, Québec traces its national foundational moment to the sudden and abrupt change of colonial powers at the end of the Seven Years' War. While it is true that writers perceived differences between the *Canadiens* and the Frenchmen from the earliest moments of French settlement of Canada, it is

[20] Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006) 50.
[21] Anderson 65.
[22] Anderson 77.

unclear why these differences are more salient than those that separated Paris – the center of *ancien régime* language and culture – from the other French provinces. In some ways, in fact, the *Canadiens* were more French than their continental counterparts. To give one example, the *Canadiens* – by which I mean to refer to the French settlers of Canada – spoke French far earlier than the Bretons or residents of Languedoc. Moreover, the returning *Canadiens* in the post-Seven Years War period were seen as exemplary French subjects, whose return to France was meant, at least in part, to reform the spirit of laziness of their fellow countrymen. In fact, Jean-François Mouhot suggests in his work *Les Réfugiés acadiens en France 1758-1785 : l'impossible réintégration* that one of the anxieties of the French regime was that the returning Acadiens would be corrupted by their metropolitan countrymen : "Il ne s'agit pas de les mélanger aux paysans français qui risquent de corrompre leurs moeurs pures apportées d'Amerique."[23] Furthermore, like the *Canadiens*, the *Acadiens*, in Mouhot's analysis, are more "French" than other populations in France :

> Les Acadiens étaient apparemment considérés comme authentiquement 'Français:' ils parlaient la langue officielle du royaume mieux que beaucoup de métropolitains; ils pratiquaient tous la religon catholique quand une minorité d'habitants du pays s'obstinaient à rester protestants : enfin, ils paraissaient plus patriotes que les authentiques originaires français.[24]

As Mouhot suggests, just because these settlers came from outside of Europe should not, by itself, lead us to believe that *Acadiens* and *Canadiens* were outside the boundaries of Frenchness. They were not "creole pioneers" of a *new* national identity in the way Anderson uses the term. On the contrary, the archival evidence suggests that the North American experience made these populations more French. The periphery of the French empire thus becomes a space

[23] Mouhot, Jean-François, *Les réfugiés Acadiens en France: 1758-1785 : l'impossible réintégration?* (Québec: Septentrion, 2009) 295-296.
[24] Mouhot 296.

where Frenchness is constructed and affirmed. Together, the *Acadiens* and *Canadiens* defy the national-independence narrative of much of Québécois historiography. They are not so much imagined as "new" nations by metropolitan writers, as much as perfected examples of what it meant to be French. In this way, they *are* creole pioneers, but of Frenchness and not of some early form of *québécosité*.

Imperial Frenchness in New France

Therefore, in this work I have conceptualized the *Canadiens* as members of an international French-speaking community. They give voice to an imperial French identity that transcends political boundaries. In this way, I am following the work of Frederick Cooper who has argued convincingly that until relatively recently in world history, empires were the norm. As Cooper argues in *Colonialism in Question : Theory, Knowledge, History* "the emergence of a world of nations […] was the contingent outcome of a variety of other aspirations."[25] In other words, the concept of the nation-state, which profoundly structures our contemporary sense of belonging, was not inevitable. As such, when studying the literature of the past, "we need to take seriously," Cooper argues, "what it meant for a polity *to think like an empire*."[26] Empires were better equipped that modern nations, Cooper suggests, to "conjugate incorporation and differentiation, to confront problems of long-distance extension and recognize limits of control over large and diverse populations."[27] Looking at the depictions of *Canadiens* and Native Americans through this prism, I have approached my corpus with an eye towards understanding

[25] Cooper, Frederick, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: UC Press, 2005) 200.
[26] Cooper 200.
[27] Cooper 200.

how difference was folded into an imperial identity. As opposed to some Québécois scholars of an earlier and more nationalistic generation, I do not conceptualize the depictions of the *Canadiens* as different than their metropolitan counterparts as proof of an early French-Canadian national identity.[28] In this regard, I am attempting to read these texts on their own terms without projecting the nationalistic and identity questions of the twenty-first century backwards onto them. The writers of New France rarely conceptualize the *Canadiens* through the prism of a separate nationalism, which was largely unthinkable until the Seven Years' War. Instead, these writers view the *Canadiens* as an alternative expression of the shared identity of Frenchness.

On the Margins : Contextualizing New France in the Study of Empire

From the beginning of their work *Tensions of Empire,* Fredrick Cooper and Ann Stoler posit the idea that "Europe was made by its imperial projects, as much as colonial encounters were shaped by conflicts within Europe itself."[29] This notion that the extra-European empires of Western Europe are crucial sites to explore the formation of metropolitan identity has become somewhat commonplace in contemporary scholarship. Nonetheless, it has only been relatively recently that French historians have begun to study Canada before the Seven Years' War in such a way. In their work on French colonialism in North America, Vidal and Havard speculate on the reason for this reticence among scholars. "Le désamour pour l'histoire coloniale," they ask, "tiendrait-il aussi, insidieusement, à 'l'échec' ultime de la colonisation française en Amerique du Nord […] les chercheurs de notre pays auraient-ils peur d'écrire une histoire dans laquelle les

[28] Dumont, Fernand. *Genèse de la société québécoise* (Montréal : Boréal, 1993) 155.
[29] Cooper, Frederick, and Stoler, Ann Laura, *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley : UC Press, 1997) 1.

Français apparaissent, en définitive, comme des 'vaincus'?"[30] Asked another way, after 250 years, is French pride still bruised by the loss of the colony of New France ? Joseph Zitomersky, as Vidal and Havard are quick to point out, has a slightly different explanation for the dearth of work on New France among French scholars. French historiography, Zitomersky argues, has long viewed the Revolution as the foundational moment for modern French identity.[31] As the Jacobins proclaimed it, the French Revolution was to represent a radical break from the past. Therefore, the colonial adventurism in New France was to be regarded as a folly of the *ancien régime* with little interest for the development of modern Frenchness.

Recent studies have begun to question the way in which the colonial project in Canada reveals French concerns with identity. However, few scholars have been willing to tie the construction of Frenchness in the New World to modern French identity. In her article, "Etre français en Nouvelle-France : Identité française et identité coloniale aux dix-septième et dix-huitième siècles" Saliha Belmessous articulates the link between "national" identity and "colonial identity" while disavowing a link with modern Frenchness : "il paraît pourtant maladroit d'en conclure que la colonisation de la Nouvelle-France aurait influé sur l'évolution de l'identité française à l'époque moderne."[32] Belmessous then proceeds to make an ahistorical link with the French sense of loss of Alsace-Lorraine in 1870 as a means of comparison. Because France did not react in the same way to the loss of New France, she concludes, then its loss must have had little discursive impact on their sense of identity. Even if we accept the premise that the average Frenchman did not bemoan the loss of Canada, it does not follow that New France was

[30] Vidal and Havard, 10.
[31] Zitomersky, "In the Middle and on the Margin : Greater French Louisiana in History and in Professional Historical Memory" *Le Citoyen dans l'empire du milieu. Perspectives Comparatistes* (Université de la Réunion, 2001) cited in Havard and Vidal 9.
[32] Belmessous 509.

inconsequential to the construction of modern French identity. On the contrary, France's willingness to hand over the *Canadiens* might suggest that this version of a freer, more open, and egalitarian Frenchness was seen as a problematic trend.[33]

Therefore, while Belmessous's work questions some components of French historiography, it leaves intact the heart of French historiographical discourse towards the New World. According to this tradition, after the loss of Canada and Louisiana at the conclusion of the Seven Years' War, France's attention turned towards its profitable sugar islands. Canada – France's most successful settler colony up to that point – faded in the collective memory as another misstep of the *ancien régime*. Or, as Lucien-René Abénon and John A. Dickinson summarize it in their work *Les Français en Amérique : Histoire d'une colonisation* : "à l'exception de quelques armateurs impliqués dans le commerce canadien, les Français connaissent mal le pays et n'estiment guère ces 'quelques arpents de neige' qui coûtent très cher à défendre. Devant la perte de la colonie en 1763, l'opinion française reste indifférente."[34] Yet, the guiding question of this project remains : is this accurate ? What was French opinion towards its colony? Or, more importantly, what images were available to a French audience leading up to the Seven Years' War and how do these representations function discursively ?

Modern inquiry into representations of the New World in France owes a good deal to Gilbert Chinard's 1913 volume *L'Amérique et le rêve exotique dans la littérature française au XVIIe et au XVIIIe siècle*. In this now classic work, Chinard attempts to establish a continuity between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and their debates in regards to the image of the "bon Indien."[35] The Americas – these peripheral territories of Europe – are the center of his study

[33] As we will see below, the unruliness of the *Canadiens* is critiqued by Charlevoix, among others.
[34] Abénon, Lucien-René, and John Alexander Dickinson, *Les Français en Amérique: histoire d'une colonisation.* (Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, 1993) 6.
[35] Chinard, Gilbert, *L'Amérique et le rêve exotique dans la littérature française au XVIIe et au XVIIIe siècle*

reflecting back on their metropoles. Or, as Chinard remarks in slightly different terms, "c'est de l'Amérique et des Iles que l'on va rêver et c'est des récits de voyages que proviennent directement toutes les utopies qui abondent avant Rousseau, et dont Rousseau s'inspire."[36] Chinard, of course, is writing for a different time with different intellectual imperatives. Despite the breadth of his study, today Chinard's work strikes the contemporary scholar as overly teleological as he draws a clear bright line from Montaigne, through the *philosophes* to the Revolution. As Chinard writes in one especially provocative passage, "les Flibustiers des Antilles et les coureurs des bois du Canada […] contribuaient en même temps que les sauvages américains à ruiner le vieil édifice,"[37] by which he means the *ancien régime.* If we judge Chinard's conclusion as overly hasty given contemporary analytical modes, we must nonetheless admire Chinard's attempt to disrupt center and periphery dynamics. Although he does not articulate it in as clear a fashion, Chinard's observations align well with Cooper and Stoler's suggestion that Europe's far-flung empires helped shape the history of ideas of their metropoles.

More recently, Brian Brazeau has taken up some of the same questions in his work *Writing a New France*. As Brazeau demonstrates in this work, the dream of rebuilding a replica of Old France in the New World was dashed by the climatological realities on the ground and the presence of Native Americans. These dual challenges served an important revelatory function on French identity. Brazeau argues convincingly that :

> beyond a portrait of a distinct vision of identity transported to America, we have found a multitude of interpretations of what it meant to be French at the time, interpretations which were both confirmed and transformed by contact with the New World. New France is a place in which we see identities not simply transferred but also created.[38]

(Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1970) vii.

[36] Chinard vii.

[37] Chinard 244.

[38] Brazeau 11.

While my project shares a similar interpretive stance vis-à-vis the creation of Frenchness *as a result* of New World exploration, I look beyond travel narratives and investigate a different time period. These differences lead to different interpretations and conclusions. In the seventeenth century New France had yet to gain a critical mass of population. By the dawn of the eighteenth century, New France was no longer a "'blank slate' upon which one would 'write European desires'" like it was in the seventeenth century.[39] It was a functional society whose colonial reality tempered the utopian fantasies of earlier writers. That is not to say that writers of New France succeeded in evacuating all utopian flourishes. Indeed, under the pen of writers like Lahontan, New France becomes at times an ideal model for old France to follow. At the same time, the presence of a permanent, growing population of *Canadiens* posed a series of challenges to identity with which the eighteenth-century writers of New France had to grapple. How French were these settlers? How had the climate and their trading with the *sauvages* changed them? Were these changes for the better or worse? What, if anything, is admirable and exportable about these settlers for the metropole? These questions were not nearly as salient in the early time period Brazeau investigates because of a dearth of permanent settlers.

In his 2006 work *In This Remote Country : French Colonial Culture in the Anglo-American Imagination, 1780 – 1860* Edward Watts examines the way in which the French frontier was imagined by the Anglo-Americans as they moved West in antebellum America. The memory of French colonialism provides, Watts argues, an "alternative whiteness" and represents "paths not taken" for a nation that was deciding whether to remain a peripheral nation, or to become a world power.[40] Although the French colonial experience is the focus of his work, it is

[39] Michel de Certeau quoted in Brazeau 94.

[40] Watts, Edward, *In This Remote Country: French Colonial Culture in the Anglo-American Imagination, 1780-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006) 5.

not the subject of his conclusions. Rather, Watts reconstructs the memory of the French in order to analyze how early white Americans thought of themselves as Anglo-Americans. In a similar way, my project focuses on the *Canadiens* and their Native American allies within the metropolitan French imagination in order to understand how Frenchness was constructed. Instead of a Europe-based and "white" identity, the Frenchness of the *Canadiens* was imagined as a more open, more tolerant, and negotiated identity.[41] The colonial project in Canada thus stands in contrast to later French colonial projects with their emphasis on acculturation, or creating "petits français." In Canada, Native American customs and mores were seen (sometimes begrudgingly) as integral components of the *Canadiens'* identity. The debate as to whether this replication of Native American values represented a degeneration or a regeneration of Frenchness is one of the questions of this work. At the apex of this first imperial moment, the image of *Canadiens* served as a potent tool for French writers to imagine alternative French identities and a freer socio-political structure.

In a more general way, my project also shares a kindred intellectual spirit with the recent collaborative project edited by Germaine Warkentin and Carolyn Podruchny, *Decentring the Renaissance : Canada and Europe in Multidisciplinary Perspective 1500-1700.* The goal of this project, as Warkentin and Podruchny lay it out, is to elucidate, "not solely […] the impact on Canada of people shaped by the European Renaissance and Early Modern periods, but to the impact of Canada on them."[42] Rejecting the metaphor of the Renaissance as flowing outwards towards the imperial peripheries, Warkentin and Podruchny reframe the Renaissance as a

[41] Although notions of race are not as concrete or systematic in the eighteenth century as the nineteenth and twentieth, proto-racial concerns were creeping into the logic of French colonialism, especially in lower Louisiana and the sugar islands. See Sophie White, *Wild Frenchmen and Frenchified Indians: Material Culture and Race in Colonial Louisiana* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012) 230 – 232.

[42] Warkentin, Germaine, and Carolyn Podruchny, *Decentring the Renaissance: Canada and Europe in Multidisciplinary Perspective, 1500-1700* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001) 7.

consequence of flows between center and periphery. Ultimately, they argue "to decentre […] is to put the categories themselves under scrutiny, to make them available for critical thought."[43] My work follows this same type of logic, but as applied to early and mid-eighteenth century Enlightenment culture. New France is not just a periphery on which Enlightenment ideas about nature and civilization, freedom and servitude are expressed. Nor is New France just a convenient rhetorical device to articulate one's desire for renewal or reform. Rather, I would like to argue that writing about New France expanded what was thinkable to the metropolitan French writer. By imagining Native Americans as not only convertible to Catholicism and French mores, but as potential models to replicate as well, writers of New France articulated a Frenchness that was more open and flexible. The *Canadiens* reinforced the possibility that such a form of Frenchness was possible, for better or worse, in the French New World.

In this introduction I have mentioned the figure of the *Canadien* at several points. It is worth underlining, however, that even though the French Canadian is a central character in this project, the French Canadian is not the subject of this work. Marcel Trudel, Allan Greer, and WJ Eccles have already produced authoritative studies on the history and culture of New France. Moreover, I have resisted the temptation to read as true the clichés about the *Canadiens* drawn from my corpus. Furthermore, we must remember that all the texts I analyze were meant for a metropolitan audience. It is highly unlikely that any significant portion of *Canadiens* actually read or were familiar with the works under examination. These texts most likely did not shape the way *Canadiens* thought of themselves, as least not in a direct way.

Although a historical treatment of New France as a site of identity anxiety is welcomed, a literary analysis of these questions remains woefully missing from this conversation. This project

[43] Warkentin and Podruchny 8.

attempts to fill this gap in scholarship through a textual analysis of several works that invoke the French New World. Far from encyclopedic in scope, this project aims, nonetheless, to interpret the selected texts as important sites of inquiry in the history of French mentalities towards identity. Throughout this project I argue that French writers at this time depicted New France as a socio-cultural laboratory to explore issues of Frenchness. Confronted with the Amerindian other, writers were forced to define the hitherto unquestioned boundaries of French identity. Could Native Americans become French? Would Frenchmen, drawn to the freedom of the Native Americans, degenerate into *sauvages*? Or, would "new" France provide the regeneration of French identity since it was unencumbered by the hierarchy of the metropole, had seemingly unlimited resources, and was free from the corruption of Paris? In short, in what way did New France give voice to the hopes and fears of the French writers of the early to mid-eighteenth century?

Why these texts ?

I take as my main corpus a variety of texts that invoke New France, written for popular and elite consumption in mainland France over the course of the eighteenth century. I have chosen texts that cut across generic as well as class divisions, but which all investigate what it means to be French in North America. To give them a unifying title, they are the texts of imperial Frenchness. With this unifying theme in mind, I will examine in the following chapters how the *Canadien*s represent a intermediary between the otherness of the Native Americans and the metropolitan French population. To put it another way, French writers of New France imagine

the *Canandiens* as complicating the binary divide of French and other. To write about the *Canadiens* and their Native American allies was to write about the very nature of what it means to be French and who could claim such a title.

Following a chronological timeline, I begin my study with an investigation of two travel narratives to Canada. The first of these narratives are the travel writings of Louis-Armand de Lom d'Arce de Lahontan, an early Enlightenment thinker, to New France. Published in 1703, Lahontan's *Dialogues avec un Sauvage,* has been hailed as the archetype of later philosophical dialogues pitting "natural" man against "civilized," European, man. I analyze this work in conjunction with his larger vision of New France, contained in his *Nouveaux voyages dans l'Amérique septentrionale*, published at the same time. I contrast Lahontan's proto-Enlightenment vision of New France with the Catholic missionary Pierre-Xavier de Charlevoix, whose *Journal historique d'un voyage fait par ordre du roi dans l'Amérique septentrionnale* appeared on the Parisian book market in 1744. As the leading voice of the influential *Journal de Trévoux* throughout the 1730s and 1740s, Charlevoix's account has long been seen as authoritative. Despite their philosophical differences, both writers share a desire to name and analyze the populations of New France – Native American and settler alike. In doing so, they begin to articulate the divergences and convergences between the *Canadiens* and their Amerindian counterparts.

Of course, I could have chosen other travel narratives, including Joseph-François Lafitau's 1724 *Moeurs des Sauvages amériquains*, or Claude Lebeau's 1738 *Aventures du s. C.Le Beau, avocat en Parlement, ou Voyage curieux et nouveau parmi les Sauvages de l'Amerique septentrionale*, or Antoine-Denis Raudot's *Relation par lettres de l'Amérique*

septentrionale, années 1709 et 1710. However, for various reasons, I have left these works aside. Lafitau focuses almost exclusively on the Native Americans, refusing to turn his proto-ethnographical eye on the *Canadiens.* Claude Lebeau's work borrows liberally from his predecessors and was severely critiqued at the time. For his part, Raudot's work was unpublished until the nineteenth century and thus is unlikely to have been widely read. Likewise, the Jesuits' Relations, while important, are unlikely to have been read by a wide, secular audience. By comparison, Lahontan and Charlevoix's texts seem to have been the most popular at the time and continued to be cited by later writers. Indeed, D'Holbach and Diderot cite them as authorities in their *Encyclopédie.* While cognizant of problems of diffusion and reception, I have chosen Lahontan and Charlevoix as representative of certain strands of proto-Enlightenment and elite visions of New France.

In my second chapter, I continue my analysis of Lahontan and Charlevoix within the context of eighteenth-century theories of degeneration. Through their depictions of interactions between Native Americans and settlers, Lahontan and Charlevoix suggest that the two populations are mutually influencing and changing one another. Both Lahontan and Charlevoix, I argue, view this evolution in ambiguous terms. Their more nuanced vision of the benefits and problems of societal change in the New World contrast sharply with the theories of degeneration proposed by Georges-Louis Leclerc, comte de Buffon and Cornelius De Paw, his radical disciple. I demonstrate that Lahontan and Charlevoix do not share the same vision of utter degeneracy in the New World. Indeed, Lahontan and Charlevoix at times imagine the New World as providing the possibility for regeneration of France. By contextualizing Lahontan and Charlevoix within the history of ideas, this chapter aims to show how writings about New France are understudied

sites in the history of science and the development of racial ideologies.

If Lahontan and Charlevoix appear to have aimed their work at an elite audience, the works of Alain-René Lesage are clearly focused on the wider public. In my third chapter, I study several of the works of Lesage that invoke the New World in order to tease out what a popular audience might have known of New France. As the foremost writer of eighteenth century *foire* theatre, Lesage produced a series of plays that may reveal better than other genres the popular images of the day. Lesage had an economic imperative to produce crowd-pleasing plays aimed at an heterogenous audiences. Moreover, the codifying of the plays into written form suggests their popularity and ability to capture the popular imagination. With these assumptions in mind, in my discussion of *Mariages de Canada* (1734) I show how Lesage depicts New France as a realistic *locus amoenus.* Under Lesage's pen Canada becomes a place where young French lovers can enjoy freedom from the stifling patriarchy of Paris. Although it is far from a utopia with streets of gold, Canada becomes a place where "contentement passe richesse." In the final scenes, the characters are invited to remake themselves in the New World, to construct a New France in the Canadian wilderness. Turning next towards Lesage's play *La Sauvagesse,* I demonstrate how the Native American character of Angolette places into question the boundaries of Frenchness. Assimilated linguistically and through clothing, Angolette reveals both the contours of French identity – one must speak French and be polite – while also suggesting the elasticity of Frenchness. The issue of hybrid identities, already suggested by Angolette, comes to a head in Lesage's *picaresque* novel *Les Avantures de monsieur Robert Chevalier, dit de Beauchêne, capitaine de flibustiers dans la Nouvelle-France* (1732). In this work Lesage presents a series of characters who are free in the North American space to develop and express culturally hybrid

identities. Blending Huron and French cultural values and materiality, such as clothing, each character in Lesage's work experiences a moment of cultural transvestism that ultimately puts into question the immutability of identity categories. In sum, these characters suggest that Frenchness in Canada is not as rigid or exclusionary as mainland France.

In the fourth chapter I turn my attention to images of New France in the works of Voltaire and Raynal. By comparing and contrasting Voltaire's *Lettres philosophiques* (1733) with his later works, such as *Candide ou l'optimisme* (1759) and *Ingénu ou l'Huron* (1767), I suggest that Voltaire's skepticism towards Canada is tied to his disillusionment with the burgeoning global market more generally. Unlike his critiques of colonialism in Surinam or Spanish America, which are unjustifiable on moral grounds, the colonial project in Canada is simply a waste of money. His admiration for the British North American colonies suggests that certain colonial endeavors in North America are justifiable, especially when based on Lockean principles of free trade and English tolerance. Reading Voltaire's praise for Quaker Pennsylvania in conjunction with his depiction of El Dorado, I show how British North America represents a sort of realistic utopia – an acceptable compromise.

In my reading of *L'Ingénu ou le Huron* I demonstrate the hybridity of Voltaire's title character, a "bas-Breton huron et anglais."[44] Recognizing the *Ingénu* as a *Canadien*, I suggest that the character of the Ingénu and his background in Canada tempers Voltaire's dismissal of Canada as "quelques arpents de neige." Like those before him, Voltaire suggest that Canada is a privileged space where it is possible to blend Huron naivety and English tolerance with French sensibilities in order to create the ideal world citizen.

In my concluding remarks, I suggest that New France never completely leaves the French

[44] Voltaire, *Ingénu* 56.

imagination. Pointing to the comments of nineteenth century writers, I show that New France remains a source of discursive potential as French writers post-Revolution continue to imagine a revitalized Frenchness in the New World. Employing the historical concept of the *longue durée*, I argue that the writings about New France are essential to our understanding of what it means to be French in pre-Revolutionary France. In terms of Québécois historiography, my project suggests that the poor reputation of New France is a simplification that plays into nationalistic aspirations of a significant part of modern Québec. The national motto of Québec is "je me souviens" – I remember. However, in their over-emphasis on Voltaire's assessment of New France, Québécois historiography and popular culture have misremembered.

As a way to conclude this introduction, I would like to return to Voltaire's *Candide*, in order to repurpose another famous line from this *conte* for my project : "il faut cultiver notre jardin." In her article, "Cosmopolitans, Slaves, and the Global Market in Voltaire's *Candide, ou l'optimisme*" Ingvild Hagen Kjørholt argues that *Candide* articulates, in the final analysis, a Dionysian cosmopolitanism. By this she means, Candide's actions represent "a radical rejection of polis, the city state" through their "withdraw[al] from the global flow" of commerce.[45] Faced with the worst of all possible worlds, Candide decides to create a new world of his own, insulated and cut off from the outside. This garden will not be as rich or as uncorrupt as the utopian El Dorado, but it promises a pedestrian and calm happiness in opposition to the utter corruption and chaos of Europe. In other words, like the *Canadiens* of New France, he learns from the indigenous inhabitants of the New World and incorporates their lessons into his own world. Again,

[45] Kjørholt, Ingvild Hagen. "Cosmopolitans, Slaves, and the Global Market in Voltaire's *Candide, ou l'optimisme*." *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 25.1 (2012): 84.

like the *Canadiens*, Candide has been changed by his experience in the New World. He represents, thus, the hope for a new type of European, freer and more tolerant than his fellow countrymen. As we progress through this project, this promise of a happy but mediocre existence and a new type of Frenchness reemerges again and again – in Canada. It is ironic that one of the loudest critics of French colonial policy in Canada admires the peace, tranquility, and ordinary – but realistic – happiness that so many French writers of the New World imagined in New France.

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Chapter 1 – The Travel Narratives of Lahontan and Charlevoix: Imaging New France and Naming its People.

Before considering the place of Canada in the French intellectual, moral, and cultural landscape of the eighteenth century, let us first consider the following two citations from Pierre-Xavier Charlevoix's 1744 *Journal d'un voyage fait par ordre du roi dans l'Amérique septentrionale*. The first comes from the "discours préliminaire" to the *Journal* where Charlevoix hypothesizes on the origins of the New World populations:

> Les anciens Celtes & les Gaulois, si renommés par leur habileté dans la Navigation, qui ont envoyé tant de Colonies jusqu'aux extrémités de l'Asie & de l'Europe, & dont on ne sçaurait presque nier que l'Origine ne remonte jusqu'aux Enfans de Japhet, n'ont-ils pas pu pénétrer par les Açorres jusqu'en Amérique?[46]

The second quotation comes from Charlevoix's description of Québec city, early on in his *Journal*:

> Quand la Capitale de la Nouvelle France sera aussi florissante que celle de l'Ancienne (& il ne faut désespérer de rien, Paris a été lontems beaucoup moins que n'est Quebec aujourd'hui) qu'autant que les yeux pourront porter, ils ne verront que Bourgs, Châteaux, Maisons de Plaisance, & tout cela est ébauché : que le Fleuve de Saint Laurent, qui roule majestueusement ses Eaux, & les amene de l'extrémité du Nord, ou de l'Ouest, y sera couvert de Vaisseaux : que l'Isle d'Orleans & les deux Bords des deux Rivieres, qui forment ce Port, découvriront de belles Prairies, de riches Côteaux & des Campagnes fertiles, & il ne leur manque pour cela que d'être plus peuplées.[47]

Reading these two passages about New France the reader is transported in time in two opposing directions. In the first quotation, we are transported back to the *nuit des temps* as Charlevoix asks the reader to imagine the first Frenchmen, those "anciens Celts & Gaulois," arriving on the shores of America to populate it, waiting, implicitly perhaps, to be reunited with their European brethren. In the second quotation, the use of the simple future tense represents a

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[46] Charlevoix, Pierre-François-Xavier de, and Pierre Berthiaume, *Journal d'un voyage fait par ordre du roi dans l'Amérique septentrionale* (Montréal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1994) 158.

[47] Charlevoix, *Journal* 220.

movement towards a utopian future as Charlevoix asks the reader to imagine Québec City as "aussi florissante" as Paris, filled with ships, fertile plains, and rich hillsides. Despite the bucolic nature of this quotation, this is not a given, but remains in rough draft, a mere "ébauché" that can only come to fruition when the land is "plus peuplée."

Taken together, these two quotations reveal a desire on the part of Charlevoix to stitch New France into the fabric of old French identity.[48] On the one hand, he is projecting onto this North American colony the Gaulish foundational myth of "Frenchness," legitimizing implicitly, it should be noted, the colonial project through proto-nationalist rhetoric. If the *Gaulois* settled America in some prehistorical time, then, according to a certain nationalistic perspective, the French colonists have a justification for reuniting their fellow "enfants de Japhet"[49] with the forgotten *mère-patrie*. On the other hand, and as importantly, Charlevoix sees New France as essential to the future and the glory of Old France. For the fruitful fields and bustling ports of some future Québec will be the jewel of "l'Empire François de l'Amérique, [...] beaucoup plus étendu, que n'a jamais été celui des Romains."[50] This reference to the Roman empire, coupled with the above citations, reveals the extent to which North America is seen by France as a way to replicate the greatness of ancient Rome through the processes of *translatio studii* – or transfer of knowledge and 'civilization' to the Natives — and *translatio imperii* – or transfer of power – through land claims.[51] New France, then, is a land of opportunity that holds the keys to France's

[48] I have used "New France" and "Canada" throughout this paper to refer to the Saint Lawrence river valley. Although New France technically included all the North American possessions of France, including the Ohio River Valley and later Louisiana, it appears that 'Canada' and 'New France' were used interchangeably during much of the eighteenth century. See "Canada," *Dictionnaire universel françois et latin, vulgairement appelé Dictionnaire de Trévoux : contenant la signification et la définition tant des mots de l'une éd.] Tome second* (Paris: Compagnie des libraires associés, 1771) 198.

[49] According to traditional biblical genealogy, Japhet is specifically the son of Noah who is sent to Europe to repopulate the world. The Native Americans are thus of the same post-diluvian 'race' as the Europeans. See *The Holy Bible English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Good News Publishers, 2001) *Genesis* 10 : 5.

[50] Charlevoix, *Journal* 221.

[51] Although largely associated with the Middle Ages, Jean-Claude Carron has suggested that the concepts of

future, yet is also deeply steeped in France's forgotten past. Future, past and present are, thus, united in this "rough draft" of a colony– or "ébauche" as Charlevoix writes. Onto this rough draft Charlevoix paints an ancient Gaulish past, and the dreams of French imperial domination.

Of course, Charlevoix is not the only traveler to New France to imagine it as a site of almost limitless possibilities. Rather, he is one among several voyagers to the New World whose travel narratives were published over the course of the eighteenth century. Indeed, Charlevoix's text has often been overshadowed by the other imminent writer of New France: the Baron de Lahontan, whose 1702 *Nouveaux voyages en Amérique septentrionale* (*Nouveaux voyages*) will continue to find resonance throughout the eighteenth century. Like Charlevoix, Lahontan shares this vision of New France as a place of opportunity, especially in terms of new and innovative social structures and interactions. In his *Dialogues avec un sauvage* (*Dialogues*), for example, which makes up the first part of his third tome of *Nouveaux voyages*, Lahontan's text serves as a meditation on the malleability of identity and its role in fostering the happiness of mankind.

Throughout the *Dialogues* the characters of Lahontan and Adario call on each other to make themselves over in the image of the Other. In this *tête-à-tête,* the character of Lahontan stands in – ironically, given his clear early-Enlightenment ideas and deist sympathies – for the Jesuit's christianizing mission, imploring Adario to: "connoître l'ignorance & la misére dans lesquelles on voit que les Hurons ont toûjours vêcu. Je suis ton Ami, tu le sçais ; ainsi je n'ay d'autre intérêt que celuy de te montrer le bonheur des François ; afin que tu vives comme eux, aussi bien que le reste de ta Nation."[52] In this call to replicate French mores among the Natives in

translatio studii and imperii are applicable to later periods as well. See Carron, Jean-Claude, "Imitation and Intertexuality in the Renaissance" *New Literary History* Vol. 19, No. 3 Spring, 1988: 565-579.

[52] Lahontan, *Dialogues* 849.

order to promote their happiness, the text seems to reveal early discursive strands of the *mission civilisatrice,* often associated with the colonial project of the Third Republic. In the ironic voice of the character of Lahontan, French colonization brings, selflessly – as the limiting *ne...que* construction suggests – French "bonheur" to the Native Americans. It is a "bonheur," moreover, that springs from the removal of Native American "ignorance." Of course, if this rhetoric reminds the modern reader of a rehearsal of later justifications for colonialism it is because the character of Lahontan is parroting, in order to ridicule, the long-standing evangelization projects of the Jesuits and Recollects in New France and Latin America. It is this evangelical project that articulates the first justification of the colonial endeavor in universalist and pseudo-humanitarian terms, terms that are employed again by later, more "secular," colonial regimes. While this early critique of evangelical colonization is by itself somewhat exceptional, what is truly radical in the *Dialogues* is the fact that Adario turns the conventional discourse on its head. It is not simply the Frenchman who is trying to convert the Native, but Adario also explicitly and repeatedly asks Lahontan to make himself "Huron:"

> le grand Esprit nous a fait honnêtes gens, en vous faisant des scelerats qu'il envoye sur nos Terres, pour corriger vos défauts & suivre nostre exemple. Ainsi, mon Frére, croi tout ce que tu voudras, aïe tant de foy qu'il te plaira, tu n'iras jamais dans le bon pais des Ames si tu ne te fais Huron.[53]

In a pastiche of Jesuit conversion discourse, the arrival of Frenchmen in Canada is seen not as part of God's, or "le grand Esprit's," plan to have the Europeans convert the natives, but rather God has sent them to the New World to be converted by the Native Americans. The whole evangelical mission is thereby inverted; the Native American is no longer the object to be remolded in the subjective image of the European, but rather the Europeans are to become like

[53] Lahontan, *Dialogues* 828.

the Native Americans. Long before Montesquieu's Usbek shows the hypocrisy of French society and calls into question a European sense of cultural superiority, Lahontan's Adario is highlighting the hidden faults and contradictions of French society, deflating any notion of Eurocentric triumphalism. In a word, Adario is rehearsing later Enlightenment ideals of cultural relativism and Rousseau's ideal of nature.

As these introductory examples show, Lahontan and Charlevoix's vision of New France is complex, revealing the hopes, dreams, and insecurities of metropolitan France in the eighteenth century. These are the hopes of imperial greatness on the level of the Romans, but also a nagging and consistent fear that something is awry in the colonial project. While Lahontan's text subtly questions the nature of French society in comparison with that of the Native Americans, in Charlevoix we see an implicit fear that the lack of population in New France threatens its future prosperity. As it is already clear, this is a far cry from the flattening and reductive vision of Voltaire's "quelques arpents de neige," which, as I argued in the introduction, has eclipsed more nuanced visions of New France in modern historiographical circles. The objective of this chapter, thus, will be to begin investigating this rich imagery of New France, and the consequences of it. By focusing on the works of the above writers this chapter ultimately suggests that a more complex image of New France and *Canadiens* was available to metropolitan Frenchmen than Voltaire's flippant remark may have us believe. [54]

In this chapter I propose a literary analysis of the travels narratives of Baron de Lahontan

[54] My use of the term *Canadiens* should be understood as Frenchmen living along the Saint Lawrence River in the eighteenth century. French colonists elsewhere were known only as 'créole,' or 'Français.' See Gilles Havard and Cécile Vidal, *Histoire de l'Amérique française* (Paris: Flammarion, 2003) 404.

and Pierre-Xavier Charlevoix in order to argue that the authors' texts give voice to an emerging sense of an early-modern "French" identity. As my analysis will show in this and the next chapter, the idea of early-modern "Frenchness" is tied to larger eighteenth century discourses on human perfectibility, progress, degeneration, regeneration, the relative cultural value of Other civilizations, and the universality of human nature. By teasing out the discursive strands on identity implicitly and explicitly suggested in these authors' works, we find ourselves before texts that do not share a myopic vision of European cultural superiority. Rather, Frenchness becomes a slippery, or floating, idea that is both challenged and defined most explicitly in relationship with Native American's subjectivity and mores. In this sense, these texts reveal the extent to which both Frenchmen and Native Americans are changed in the colonial space. Seen from this angle, the French *colons* in North America are not only *colonisateurs*, but are also in a sense *colonisés* through this contact.[55] As we will see, not only does the colonial situation lead to *créolisation* or *indianisation* of Europeans, but also, paradoxically, a sort of *francisation* that touches the Native American as well as the French settler populations.

Trying to grasp something as slippery and vast as Frenchness requires us to work in piece-meal and to reject totalizing pretensions. As such, this chapter will attempt to elucidate a larger phenomenon of identity formation by focusing narrowly on the discursive function of naming the European and Native American populations living along the Saint Lawrence river valley.

Another reason these texts are so informative to my study is because they are not published in the rush and excitement of adventurers who have just returned from afar, but rather they represent the mature reflections on the implications of New France and its peoples for

[55] Vidal, Cécile, "Francité et situation coloniale" *Annales Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 64, no.5, 2009: 1022.

France and Europe more generally. Indeed, Lahontan and Charlevoix publish their respective texts between nine and twenty years after their return to France.

For his part, Lahontan, a gentleman soldier sent to France at the age of seventeen, had over nine years to rework and reflect upon his voyage to the New World in the interval between his return to Europe in 1693 and the publication of his *Mémoire d'un voyage à l'amérique septentrionale* and *Journal d'un voyage à l'amérique septentrionale,* respectively the first and second tome of his larger *Nouveaux Voyages* in 1702. As for Charlevoix's text *Journal d'un Voyage*, it has an even longer gestation period. Although sent to New France in the early 1720s to research the demarcation between Acadia, ceded to England after the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht, scholar Pierre Berthiaume has suggested that the *Journal d'un Voyage* remained in rough manuscript form until the early 1740s.[56] There is no doubt that both Lahontan and Charlevoix took extensive notes during their extended stays in New France and took part in epistolary exchanges between New and old France. However, the gap between their experiences in the New World and the publication of their respective works reveal the fact that these texts are decidedly products of European *cabinets*, rewritten and reworked with European problems in mind. Furthermore, they are multifaceted works which vary in terms of tone and assumed audience. While both authors publish *Mémoires* of their voyages addressed to officialdom, the literary quality of their *oeuvres* are situated most clearly, perhaps, in their respective *Journals.* These rewritings in the popular epistolary style of the material contained in the drier *Mémoires* was meant, possibly, to make them more accessible to a general reading public. In the case of Lahontan, the pinnacle of his literary acumen appears in the third tome of his *oeuvre* : *Dialogues*

[56] Berthiaume, Pierre, "Introduction" in Charlevoix, Pierre-François-Xavier de, and Pierre Berthiaume, *Journal d'un voyage fait par ordre du roi dans l'Amérique septentrionale* (Montréal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1994) 58.

avec un sauvage. This text, which clearly serves as a harbinger to the later dialogues produced by the *philosophes*, most notably Diderot's *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville*, reveals an appreciation on the part Lahontan for the power of satire and the Other's gaze to reveal problematic contradiction in French society. As such, *Dialogues,* together with the respective *Journals,* and an occasional reference to the *Mémoires,* of each writer will provide our main field of research.

Before we can delve into the ways in which, and to what ends, these writers name the European and Native American population, we must see how they name themselves and are named by contemporary others. To this end, in what follows I will first consider each writer's motivations for writing, based on a brief biographical sketch and overview of his place in contemporary historiography.

Lahontan : *dénigreur* of New France?

If the name of Baron de Lahontan is somewhat well-known today among eighteenth century scholars more generally, it is largely thanks to the scholarship of Réal Ouellet, Alain Beaulieu, and Jacques Collin, among others. Together these scholars have attempted to rehabilitate the negative image of Lahontan within French-Canadian historiography. Until their work on Lahontan opened new readings of his work, serious scholars, both inside and outside Québec, saw Lahontan as a "fumiste,"[57] "pas assez sûr,"[58] and a "traître."[59] The Québécois historian Silvio Dumas, for example, writing at a particularly charged political moment in the

[57] Lahaise, Robert cited in Gougeon, Gilles, *Histoire du nationalisme québécois: entrevues avec sept spécialistes* (Québec: VLB Éditeur, 1993) 29.
[58] Cazaux, Yves, *Le Rêve Américain : de Champlain à Cavelier de la* Salle (Paris: A. Michel, 1988) 467.
[59] Groulx, Lionel cited in Oullet, "Introduction" 197.

1970s, seems to lay the failure of the whole New France colonial project at Lahontan's feet, claiming:

> Cette déformation d'un facteur primordial [le peu d'immigration de France vers le Canada] de l'histoire du Canada repose *uniquement* sur une calomnie colportée en France par des rimailleurs et des publicistes mal informés, puis reprise et amplifiée par des voyageurs et des fonctionnaires qui séjournèrent dans la Nouvelle-France, sans en connaître les moeurs ni avoir été des témoins de l'immigration dont ils parlent.[60]

As this citation suggests, Dumas reads Lahontan – whom he calls "le plus malveillant de ces dénigreurs"[61] of New France– in starkly negative terms vis-à-vis New France's population. Of course, Dumas's suggestion that the lack of immigration to the colony is due 'uniquement' to the tale told by writers of New France strikes us as an extraordinary example of scapegoating. His suggestion ignores, for example, structural and economic factors that may help explain immigration patterns. In a word, Dumas buys into the idea of what we might call the "forte mauvaise réputation"[62] theory of New France's failure – a theory which sees the reputation of the colony in France as deterministic in its success and ultimate downfall. Even today, this rhetorical position of explaining the failure of New France as the result of its poor image has been advanced by serious historians. Gérard Bouchard, for example, sees in Québécois historiography certain "mythes dépresseurs"[63] and a continuing "paradigme du batârd,"[64] cut off from, or abandoned, by the Motherland. The fundamental question remains, however, does Lahontan's text in fact provide such a negative image of New France?

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60 Dumas, Silvio, *Les Filles du Roi en Nouvelle-France; étude historique avec répertoire biographique* (Québec: Société Historique de Québec, 1972) 3 (my emphasis.)
61 Dumas 4.
62 See Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage,* 244.
63 Bouchard, Gérard, *Genèse des nations et cultures du nouveau monde: essai d'histoire comparée* (Montréal: Boréal, 2001) 82.
64 Bouchard 182.

To answer such a question is to approach the texts in a manner that has often been neglected by historians; namely, we need to question the text with literary tools. Yet, we must recognize the fact that we can never definitively know how Frenchmen at the time read, or understood these writers' texts, or the extent to which their interpretations influenced their actions.[65] What we can suggest, however, are feasible interpretations, based on nuanced analytical literary readings of the texts. This approach highlights the structure, context, and satire of Lahontan's work, which may have escaped early scholarship based around a strict historical interpretation. If, as Ouellet wrote in a think piece from 1979, Lahontan was "si longtemps mal-aimé et détesté [par] nos pères et professeurs" it is because historians simply were reading him too seriously and in excerpt.[66] By focusing only on a few letters from his *Nouveax Voyages*, and failing to see the internal irony of his texts, historians presented an image of Lahontan that is one-dimensional and overwhelming negative. It is my belief that an approach to the text that sees it as a literary document with intricate inner workings and nuance will help reveal new and interesting readings of Lahontan's work. In a larger sense, I see his text as creating an image of New France that was not nearly as negative as Québécois historiography has often claimed. As we will see below, Lahontan often has many laudatory things to say about the different populations of New France as he attempts to give weight to their identities.

In terms of Lahontan's own identity, it is still somewhat shrouded in mystery. Although we know he was born in 1666 and it is likely that he died around 1715, the exact date and circumstances of his death remain unclear.[67] What we do know is that he was born into a noble

[65] See Roger Chartier's, *Origines culturelles de la Révolution française* (Paris: Edition du Sueil, 2000) 98-100.
[66] Ouellet, Réal cited in Lahontan, Louis Armand de Lom d'Arce, and Jacques Collin, "Introduction," *Nouveaux voyages en Amérique septentrionale* (Montréal: L'Hexagone/Minerve, 1983) 31.
[67] Réal Ouellet suggests that he died on April 21, 1716, but he seems suspicious of the parish registry where his

family and was probably well-educated, citing Latin and Attic writers at several points in his texts. Lahontan was of the adventurous sort, hoping to make a name for himself in the New World. Numerous hunting excursions are described by Lahontan over the course of his text, and his time with the Huron seems to have provided him with some grasp of their language. Within the colonial society of New France, Lahontan appears to have rubbed elbows with the upper echelons of the New World socio-political order. Within his text, for example, Lahontan suggests that he and Governor Frontenac were on good terms, often dining together. His friendship was not enough, however, to protect him from personal animosities and rivalries with a certain Monbeton de Brouillan, governor of Plaisans who denounced him to the king and essentially ran him out of the colony.[68]

Besides this personnel conflict, the financial fortunes of his father clearly influenced the direction of Lahontan's life. His father incurred quite a lot of debt, depleting the family's fortune and entangling Lahontan in drawn out legal proceeding after his death in 1674. Ultimately losing his case and fortune, Lahontan's animosity towards lawyers and the whole legal process clearly shines through his text. In letter II of his *Nouveaux Voyages*, for example, he praises the lack of lawyers in New France and the simplicity of the legal system : “Chacun y plaide sa cause, car on ne voit ni Procureurs ni Avocats, ainsi les Procès sont bien-tôt finis, sans qu'il en coûte ni frais ni épices aux parties.”[69] Moreover, legalistic pretensions have been eschewed as, “Les juges qui ne reçoivent du Roi que quatre cents livres de pensions par an sont dispensez de porter la robe & le bonnet.”[70] Reading sub-textually, thus, we can see the praise for the swiftness and justness of this system as a subtle critique of the pomp and circumstance and complications involved with

death was marked. See Ouellet, “Introduction” 16.

[68] Hayne, “Lahontan.”

[69] Lahontan, *Journal* 274.

[70] Lahontan, *Journal* 274.

French legal proceedings. From the beginning of his work, thus, Lahontan presents – quite subtly at this point – New France's legal system as a sort of improved – dare I say regenerated – version of what exists in France.

Yet, despite his close association with Frontenac and his praise for the simplified legal system, Lahontan clearly bristled under the weight of the authoritative nature of New French society. In letter VIII, he describes the role of overly zealous religious orders in the structuring of society in the colony:

> Vous ne sauriez croire à quel point s'étend l'autorité de ces Seigneurs Ecclésiatiques. J'avouë qu'ils sont ridicules en leurs maniéres d'agir, [...] ils veillent plus soigneusement à la conduite des filles & des femmes que les peres & les maris. Ils crient après les gens qui ne font pas leurs devotions tous les mois, obligeant à Pâques toutes sortes de personnes de porter des billets à leurs Confesseur.[71]

Above and beyond the enforcement of religious and conservative social practices and obligations, there is more than a hint of anti-intellectualism in the actions of certain clergy members in New France:

> Ils deffendent & font brûler tous les livres qui ne traitent pas de dévotion. Je ne puis songer à cette tirannie, sans pester contre le zéle indiscret du Curé de cette Ville. Ce cruel entrant chez mon hôte & trouvant des livres sur ma table, se jetta à corps perdu sur le Roman d'avantures de *Petrone*, que j'estimois plus que ma vie […] il en arracha presque tous les feuillets avec si peu de raison, que si mon hôte ne m'eut retenu lorsque je vis ce maleureux débris, j'eusse alors accouru chez ce turbulant Pasteur pour arracher aussi tous les poils de sa barbe. Ils ne se contentent pas d'étudier les actions des gens, ils veulent encore fouiller dans leurs pensées. Jugez, après cela, Monsieur l'agrément qu'on peut avoir ici.[72]

Together these two citations provide an image of New France that is highly Catholic and structured by religious authorities. This is a far cry from a lawless wilderness. Instead the narrator presents the portrait of a society where the power of the first Estate has been distilled

[71] Lahontan, *Journal* 313, 314.
[72] Lahontan, *Journal* 315.

and rendered extremely potent. While the tone is certainly ironic— as the last sentence of the second quotation reveals— this image of New France cuts both ways. On the one hand it reveals a power structure that is highly influenced by ecclesiastic members, an influence which Lahontan believes excessive. On the other hand, the Catholic nature of society, at least in terms of religious practices and duties, reveals an image of society that is hyper-Catholic. If Catholicism is seen as a constitutive element of "Frenchness," as some have suggested,then is *Canadien* society not in some sense imagined as hyper-French?[73] Indeed, historians have suggested that it is in New France that the myth of Catholic homogeneity is first imagined, despite some evidence of Protestant activity in the colony.[74] In this way, the imagined religiosity of the *Canadiens* does not set them apart from their French brethren, but instead reinforces a certain, official, vision of "Frenchness."

Putting this question of religiosity aside for the moment, Lahontan's temperament vis-à-vis the authorities of New France clearly causes him some problems, ultimately leading to his fleeing of the colony in 1693. Without fortune, and unable to return to France or New France without fear of being imprisoned – or worse – for the desertion of his post, Lahontan wanders Europe, as the preface to the *Suite du Voyage* suggests. Finding himself in England during the War of Spanish Succession, Lahontan decides to publish his *oeuvre*. By 1705, Lahontan no longer harbors any illusion of returning to France: "Je m'étois tellement flatté de r'entrer dans la grace du Roy de France, avant la déclaration de cette Guerre."[75] While referencing the military war pitting France against Spain and England, Lahontan perceives his text as a front in his own

[73] Belmessous, Saliha, "Etre français en Nouvelle-France: Identité française et identité coloniale aux dix-septième et dix-huitième siècles," *French Historical Studies* 27.3 2004: 510, 511.
[74] Belmessous 512.
[75] Lahontan, "Préface," *Suite du Voyage* 793.

personal war against “des Pédans”[76] who write against him in France, who he attacks “à coups de plume.”[77] With this motivation for writing in mind, it becomes clear that Lahontan has a proverbial axe to grind with the French empire. To put it another way, his own personal baggage cannot be forgotten when reading these texts.

If Lahontan's work represents, on the one hand, the response of an alienated ex-patriot; on the other hand, it also reveals proto-Rousseauian themes. In England Lahontan finds, “l'unique Païs de tous ceux qui sont habitez par des peuples civilisez, où cette liberté paroit plus parfaite.”[78] Yet, this is qualified praise.[79] The important distinction that he makes in this citation is that England is the best suited for freedom among ones inhabited by “peuples civilisez.” In short, the Hurons – a veritable race of men in nature – remain the point of reference for Lahontan when it comes to ultimate freedom. Indeed, in the Preface to *Suite du Voyage*, Lahontan reminisces about the simplicity of “sauvage” life as opposed to the chicanery of European society: “J'envie le sort d'un pauvre Sauvage, *qui leges & Sceptra terit*, & je souhaiterois pouvoir passer le reste de ma vie dans sa Cabane, afin de n'être plus exposé à fléchir le genou.”[80] It is perhaps this utopian idea of ultimate freedom from laws and the “scepter” that pushes Lahontan to embrace his title of “sauvage” given to him by his critics: “lorsqu'ils disent que je suis Sauvage […] [c]es Observateurs me font beaucoup d'honeur […] car en disant simplement que je suis ce que les Sauvages sont, ils me donnent, sans y penser, le caractére du plus honnête homme

[76] Lahontan, “Préface,” *Suite du Voyage* 796.
[77] Lahontan, “Préface,” *Suite du Voyage* 796.
[78] Lahontan, “Préface,” *Suite du Voyage* 798.
[79] The freedom must not have been as idyllic as he imagined, for Lahontan leaves England to find himself at the end of his life at the Court at Hannover, Germany. The lack of any written document by Lahontan during this period suggests either he was unable, or, perhaps, unwilling to write. Instead, he seems to have filled his time at the German court in pleasant conversation. See Oullet, “Introduction” 15.
[80] Lahontan, “Préface,” *Suite du Voyage* 797.

du monde."[81] Not only does Lahontan put an ironic twist of the term "sauvage" in this quotation, he reveals the emptiness of the term. It is only by endowing the term as the negation of European civility that it becomes an insult. Lahontan suggests, on the contrary, that "sauvage," and French civility are not at odds, but complementary. By using the term "sauvage" simply as a synonym for "honnête homme," he creates an equation which connotes the height of civil French distinction. In other words, according to Lahontan's definition, to be "sauvage" is to be "honnête homme," a highly "civilized" trait, thereby putting into question the very categories that the terms mean to establish and delineate.

Through this acceptance and embracing of the term "sauvage" Lahontan reveals, thus, his alienation from French society. Nonetheless, Lahontan does not reject his "Europeanness" – he spends the rest of his life in European capitals. Be that as it may, he has clearly been marked by his time among the Native Americans. As he says in his *Réponse à l'extrait des Journalistes de Trevaux*, "j'ai trouvé tant de charmes dans l'aimable liberté des Canadois, & tant de cruauté dans mon esclavage, qu'il n'y a point de difference de l'ame des Sauvages à la mienne."[82] More than a simple appreciation of Huron values, Lahontan seems to be constructing a sort of *persona* for himself. Indeed, we can almost imagine that Lahontan has given himself a Native name: Lahontan "ame des Sauvages." In this way, these citations where Lahontan embraces and re-appropriates the "sauvage" epithet might suggest a type of self-fashioning, to use Stephen Greenblatt's term, or a construction of identity incorporating perceived Huron principles.[83]

Not content simply to reveal his awakening to the advantages of Huron society, Lahontan hopes to transform European society more generally. To push the above analogy further,

[81] Lahontan, "Préface," *Suite du Voyage* 795.
[82] Lahontan, "Réponse à l'extrait des Jounalistes de Trevaux" 1016.
[83] See Greenblatt, Stephen, "Introduction," *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

Lahontan seems to want France to re-fashion itself according to the principles of "ces Philosophes nuds" : the Hurons.[84] And what is the main Huron principle that Lahontan holds up for Europe to contemplate? The abolition of private property: "Il me semble qu'il faut être aveugle pour ne pas voir que la propriété des biens (je ne dis pas celle des femmes) est la seule source de tous les désordres qui troublent la Société des Européans." In true Enlightenment fashion, the text is meant to open the eyes of those who do not see the ravages caused by European vices, in this case, private property. Therefore, when Adario implores Lahontan, to "fais toy Huron"[85] he is not only talking to the character of Lahontan, but to Lahontan, representative of every "Esclave François […] qui croyant estre bien sage est assûrement bien fou."[86] Considering the *oeuvre* as a whole in this light, thus, allows us to read it as a call by Lahontan to escape the madness, or "folie," at the heart of French society – private interest and unjust laws which leads to enslavement to a hierarchical social order. As it will become clear, it is in New France that such a break from this "esclavage," through alternative social-political and economic structures becomes thinkable.

Charlevoix: Cheerleader of New France

Whereas Lahontan seems largely alienated from French society, Charlevoix is in some respects the model of officialdom. Perhaps for this reason, he leaves more archival traces for contemporary historians to follow. Born into a family of *ancienne noblesse* in Saint-Quetin France in 1682, by the age of 17 Pierre Charlevoix joins the *Compagnie de Jésus.* At this point,

[84] Lahontan,"Préface," *Suite du Voyage* 795.
[85] Lahontan, *Dialogues* 831.
[86] Lahontan, *Dialogues* 831.

he adds the "Xavier" to his name to become Pierre-Xavier in honor of the sixteenth century Saint Francis Xavier, "apostle to the Indies."[87] The choice of this name perhaps reveals Charlevoix's early interest in the New World, and extra-European societies more generally, and explains his assignment at the *Collège des Jésuites* of Québec from 1705 – 1709. On his return to France from the New World, he finishes his education at *collège Louis-le-Grand* in philosophy. With his 1715 publication on Japan, Charlevoix seems to have made enough of a name for himself as an historian and proto-ethnographer that the crown gives him the task of writing a *Mémoire* on the disputed borders of Acadia in 1719. From 1720 to late 1722 Charlevoix will visit most of France's New World possessions, including Canada, Detroit, Biloxi, New Orleans, and finally Saint Domingue. Back in France, Charlevoix will attach himself to the Jesuit-dominated *Journal de Trévoux,* becoming the predominant force at the publication from 1737 to 1745.[88] His *Histoire et description générale de la Nouvelle France*, however, will only see the light of day in 1744, some 20 years after his voyage to the colony.

French-Canadian historiography has traditionally been quite kind to Charlevoix. Dumas, for example, sees him as the respectable foil to Lahontan : "erudit, lettré, historien compétent, le Père de Charlevoix avait une culture et une tournure d'esprit remarquables, supérieures."[89] This praise of Charlevoix among contemporary scholars extends to Anglophone researchers, as David M. Hayne has praised his text as a "substantially accurate narrative" which possesses, "undeniable literary qualities [...][and a] skilfully organized narrative."[90] Although there is no denying the literary talent and intellectual acumen of Charlevoix, such skills are not enough to

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87 Berthiaume, Pierre, "Chronologie de Charlevoix," *Journal d'un Voyage fait par ordre du roi dans l'Amérique septentionale.* Bibliothèque du Nouveau Monde. Montréal, 1994. Tome I, 77 footnote 1.
88 Berthiaume, "Chronologie de Charlevoix" 81.
89 Dumas 91.
90 Hayne, "Charlevoix."

explain the sharp contrast between his and Lahontan's traditional places in French-Canadian historiography. If Lahontan has often been read – in overly reductive readings, as we have suggested – as denigrating the early *Canadiens,* Charlevoix's text is often seen as the panegyric counterweight to these descriptions.

Indeed, his decidedly positive portrait of New France feeds into the "survivance" historiographical lens by which later historians wished to recast French-Canadian history. In this telling of New France, the *Canadien* are not a defeated people, conquered providentially by the English, but a valiant, hearty, and Catholic French-speaking community unique on the North American continent.[91] In short, his text has been understood as giving voice to certain patriotic and nationalistic sentiments vis-à-vis the French settlements along the Saint Lawrence, settlements and sentiments which give rise ultimately to modern-day Québec.

In some ways this nationalistic reading is understandable, for Charlevoix's text does provide unabashedly glowing descriptions of Canada, both in terms of its natural resources and, as we will see, the European society that lives there. In its portraits of the landscape, for example, Charlevoix's text tends towards the superlative. The Saint Lawrence river is not only "[l]e Fleuve, le plus Poissonneux peut-être de tout l'Univers,"[92] but also "le Fleuve le plus naviguable de l'Univers."[93] Similarly, the forests of New France are full of potential : "il n'y a peut-être pas au monde de Pays, qui porte de plus de sortes de Bois, ni de meilleur espece, jugez quelle richesse il en pourra un jour tirer."[94] Writing of the air and climate, Charlevoix affirms, "on respire en ce lieu l'air le plus pur"[95] and "nous ne connoissons point au Monde de Climat

[91] See Bouchard 107 – 110.
[92] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 367.
[93] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 211.
[94] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 252.
[95] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 223.

plus sain, que celui-ci: il n'y regne aucune Maladie particuliere."[96] As these few citations reveal, in Charlevoix's rhetoric we see the repetitive use of the superlative grammatical construction to describe New France in such a way as to suggest that it is not merely as equal to old France, but in fact superior. Likewise, by using terms such as "univers," and "monde" Charlevoix suggests that these lands are practically perfect, for there are no better ones in or outside of metropolitan France.

If there is more than a hint of utopianism in the above descriptions, Charlevoix uses a variety of literary techniques in certain passages to highlight explicitly his vision of New France as a North American *locus ameonus.* Writing about Canada's maple trees and the beverage Native Americans create from its sap, Charlevoix sees the land as a fulfillment of prophesy: "Auriez-vous cru, Madame, qu'on trouve en Canada ce que Virgile dit en prédisant le renouvellement du siécle d'Or, que le Miel couleroit des Arbres?"[97] The link between the Golden Age, the golden color of honey, and the maple of the trees, highlights the hidden richness of the colony. Although actual gold was not found abundantly in New France, Charlevoix suggests that New France provides, nonetheless, untold treasures – in this instance, a sort of gold which springs forth from the very trees of the dense forests. Moreover, New France is imagined in this citation as an essential element in France's return to a sort of Golden Age reminiscent of the Romans. Combined with the passage that began this chapter, in this citation Charlevoix is again consciously inserting New France into the destiny of imperial France to replicate Roman greatness – to become the *new* Romans in a *new* Golden Age in a *New* World.

Alongside this allusion to antiquity are more biblical references, coupling Roman

[96] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 402.
[97] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 309.

mythology with Judeo-christian imagery. Charlevoix perceives New France's resource, for example, as a godsend : “Le Fleuve Saint Laurent & les Forêts fournissent aux Habitans deux sortes de Mannes,” specifically the abundant wood and fish.[98] The thick forests, thus, are re-imagined as celestial gifts, rather than a problem that needs to be overcome. Likewise, the word “manna,” of course, references the Jewish exodus in the desert, suggesting a link between New France and the Promised Land as recounted in the Old Testament. In this way, New France is a sort of New Jerusalem, a motif that scholars have traced back to the foundation of New France.[99] As such, the colonial project of New France is not simply a matter of international rivalries and commercial interests, but becomes reincorporated into a larger religious project – above and beyond conversions – ordained by God.

Indeed, in his travels in the western and southern portions of New France, Charlevoix's use of allusions and similes continues to reinforce the Promised Land motif that becomes more and more apparent. In the natural scenery he describes the untouched land in overtly religious terms : “Combien de Chênes me representoient celui de Mambré? Combien de Fontaines me faisoient souvenir de celle de Jacob?”[100] Unpacking each allusion in turn, we see that the reference to the *Oak of Mamre* from Genesis is clearly a justification of the colonial project. As we will remember in Genesis, Abraham leaves Egypt in search for a new home for himself and his descendants. According the Old Testament it was at the Oak of Mamre that God gave the land to Abraham “and all [his] descendants as a permanent possession,” despite the fact that other people already lived on the land.[101] It is Mamre's tree which becomes Abraham's, through a transfer of possession legitimized by God. In this way, Charlevoix subtly suggests that France

[98] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 399.
[99] See Brazeau's chapter on Marc Lescarbot in *Writing a New France.*
[100] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 533.
[101] ESV, Genesis 13:15.

has a right to conquer the land despite its being inhabited by the Native Americans. Just as God promised Hebron to Abraham and the Jewish people, Charlevoix sees New France as God's promise to the *gaulois* empire.

Charlevoix's reference to Jacob's Well or fountain is equally revealing of the significance of New France for France. In the Book of John from the New Testament, Jacob's Well is the site of one of the most well-known scene in the life in Jesus. Speaking with a Samaritan woman, who represents the non-Jewish Other in the New Testament, Jesus compares the water in the well to "a spring of water welling up to eternal life"through salvation in Christ.[102] Thus, the allusion again reference something "eternal" or "permanent" in reference to New France, while also subtly playing, perhaps, with the fantastical notion of the fountain youth, long believed to exist in the New World. The allusion to water is equally revealing because as a priest Charlevoix surely intended to evoke the religious imagery associated with it. In the Catholic tradition, water is associated with the notion of purification, renewal, new life, or regeneration, and essential to the sacrament of baptism. Indeed, throughout his descriptions of the landscape there is a sense of rediscovering virgin territory, analogous to new life brought through baptism. All around Charlevoix, he sees "beautés simples & naturelles, que l'art n'a point alterées, & qu'il ne sçauroit imiter."[103] This image of unaltered nature, free from the hand of man's industry, "art," understood in conjunction with the religious passages and allusions discussed above point to New France as more than a rich and fertile land for exploitation; it is a new Eden. It is in the context of this new Eden – this "untouched" land, which the "new" in New France suggests – that a new population, purified by the colonial experience will emerge. As we will see shortly and more fully in chapter

[102] ESV, John 4: 14
[103] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 533.

two, like Lahontan, Charlevoix's descriptions of the *Canadien* may represent this population and an acknowledgement of *new* possibilities available to it in this "new" land.

Before, going on however, we might linger on the exceptionally positive imagery of New France presented by Charlevoix and its ramifications on our understanding of the image of New France in France at the time. To put it simply, if these descriptions strike the contemporary reader as particularly laudatory, the rhetorical question remains, how much more striking would this description have been at the time? We must remember that eighteenth century France still suffers frequent outbreaks of communicable diseases in its crowded metropolitan cities, as well as bouts of famine. Given this laudatory description of the climate and plentifulness of the river and wood, combined with religious enthusiasm for renewal, how could this portrait of the New World fail to capture the imaginations of the general population if – and this is the open question – they were able to read or hear passages from, or about, Charlevoix's text?

The beginning of an answer to this question lies within Charlevoix's text itself. At several moments, he explicitly references the poor reputation of New France in the metropole. As he writes: "Ceux, qui ont le plus crié que ce Pays n'étoit bon à rien, ont été plus d'une fois ceux mêmes, qui ont empêché qu'on n'en retirât aucun avantage."[104] Elsewhere he states, "on a fait à la Nouvelle France, sans la connoître, une fort mauvaise réputation."[105] Later in the text, he affirms, "on ne connoît en France le Canada que par son mauvais côté. Il est surprenant qu'en France, où l'on voit si souvent des Personnes, qui ont passé une bonne partie de leur vie en Canada, on ait une idée si peu juste de ce Pays."[106] In each of these citations, Charlevoix critiques the hearsay quality of reports from New France, as the use of the pronouns "on" and "ceux"

[104] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 177.
[105] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 244.
[106] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 392.

seems to suggest. That is to say, Charlevoix does not mention who exactly is spreading negative rumors about New France. Instead, the critics are unnamed and thus unhitched from the reality of the colony; they exist in a sort of intangible discursive ether. Furthermore, in the first of the three citations Charlevoix uses the word "crier," which, although figurative, lends a certain critique of the loose oral culture which has denigrated the colony. These "crieurs" – those who have passed some time in the New World, as the third citation suggests – have prevented others from investing time and money into the colony. Yet, in all the citations, there is a sense that the "forte mauvaise réputation" is an unfair, unwarranted, and myopic vision of Canada, based on ignorance and partial knowledge. Perhaps one of the great ironies of this text then is that Charlevoix crystalizes and preserves the "mauvaise réputation" cliché, by encapsulating and transmitting it in the written word *at the same time* that he hopes to dispel it.

One of the motivating factors for writing this text is clearly to combat what Charlevoix sees as a false image of the New World colony. In a passage which seems to speak to his larger project, Charlevoix asks rhetorically, "[c]ombien de Gentilshommes dans toutes les Provinces envieroient le sort des simples Habitans du Canada, s'ils le connoissoient?"[107] As this citation shows, Charlevoix advances the idea that "Gentilshommes," which is more than a mere pleasantry, but an actual class distinction, are surpassed by the "simple" inhabitants of the New World. Moreover, the use of the conditional "si" clause sets up a hypothetical proposition – the Gentilshommes do *not* know Canada, but *if they did*, they would have a very different vision of it. In fact knowledge, as expressed by the Charlevoix's continual use of the verb "connaître" seems to be the ultimate goal of his project. Like later colonial administrators of the Third Republic, Charlevoix's goal is to make his countrymen aware and proud of their colonial empire.

[107] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 402.

If we can use the metaphor of a trial, Charlevoix's text represents New France's defense. What this presents to the modern reader is an image of New France that, while perhaps negative in some circles, clearly had strident supporters who held positions of authority in the socio-cultural realms. To put it simply, the image of New France seems to have been more nuanced and complex than modern historiography would have us believe.

Taken together, we can begin to tease out the way in which Lahontan and Charlevoix's texts complement and/or complicate each other vis-à-vis their image of New French society. In other words, how did they imagine the *Canadien* society and the Native Americans? What are the moments of congruency and divergence between the texts, and what can they tell us about the way in which 'Frenchness' was defined, shaped, and imagined in relationship with and in contrast to the Native Americans within this colonial space?

What's in a name? : *Canadien, Canadois, Francois-Canadien, Francois, Paysans,* or *Habitans*

Until the rise of the "Québécois" demonym during the Quiet Revolution of 1960s, the question of what to call the French-speaking population living in the Saint Lawrence River valley had been a challenging one. Even during the period of French colonization, Canada was unique in that, unlike European settler populations in Louisiana or the Caribbean, the term "créole" was not a sufficient catch-all.[108] By the turn of the eighteenth century the question of what to call this population was not really any clearer. As a result, in Lahontan and Charlevoix's text they consciously wrestle with the name they should associate with the European settler

[108] Havard and Vidal 404.

population, as well as with their Native American allies and enemies. Throughout their texts terms such as *Canadien, François*, *François Canadien*, *Créole de Canada, Paysans*, and *Habitans* are used *seemingly* interchangeably to describe the European population of New France. For the Native Americans, "sauvage" is the most prevalent term. As Peter Moogk and others have suggested, however, it did not necessarily have quite the negative connotation that savage has in English, but evokes wilderness and naturalness as its etymological root, *silva,* forest, references.[109] While Charlevoix and Lahontan do, in fact, seem to use the term in a somewhat neutral manner, the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* does not share such a vision of the term "sauvage," defining the term as:

> Se dit aussi des hommes errans, qui sont sans habitations reglées, sans Religion, sans Loi, & sans police. *Homines efferat: , silvestres, agrestes.* Presque tout l'Amerique s'est trouvée peuplée de *Sauvages*. La plupart des *Sauvages* sont Anthropophages. Les *Sauvages* vont nuds, ils sont velus, & couverts de poil.[110]

Against this decidedly negative definition of "sauvage," Lahontan and Charlevoix's use of the term functions as a rehabilitation and a problematization of such archaic visions of the "sauvages," who are neither hairy, nor without laws or religion, and certainly not "anthropophages," – cannibals – in these texts.

With both both Peter Moogk's and *Trévoux* definition in mind, we see that "sauvage" is a highly contentious term, whose meaning is not readily fixable. Indeed, the unfixed nature of categorization is reinforced by the myriad names for the Native American population which make an appearance in the texts. Among these terms are : *Canadois*, *Barbares*, *Nations*, *Amériquains*, the specific tribe's name, and, less frequently, *habitans.* Although there is some

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[109] Moogk 17.

[110] "Sauvage," *Dictionnaire universel françois et latin, vulgairement appelé Dictionnaire de Trévoux : contenant la signification et la définition tant des mots de l'une éd.] Tome troisième* (Paris: Estienne Ganeau, 1704) n.pg.

fluidity between them, the difference in naming often is related to the rhetorical or discursive objective of the narrative voice of the text. As such, this is not simply a semantics game; the power to name is the power to classify, categorize, understand, generalize and ultimately control a population. Moreover, by naming what is "other," one also must name and define what makes up a collective sense of "self." Yet, the slipperiness of terms, and the way in which they are used for different discursive purposes, suggests that the contours of a French or Native identity were fluid, contingent, and contextual. For this reason, the struggle to give a name to these populations reveals one facet of a larger debate about what it means to be – and who exactly is – French in New France.

The most frequent term in both Lahontan and Charlevoix's text to describe the European population is simply "François." Although an exhaustive analysis of the use of each instance of "François" is impossible, as it would take us too far away from our declared objective, and yield perhaps too little analytical interest, it still has an important discursive function. When it is not being used in a general way to discuss France's territorial claims, or in a metonymic way, it can be read as a trans-imperial term, which reinforces the division between French, English, and Native Americans. In Lahontan's text, for example, he writes about the political machinations that pit the "Anglois" against the "François," as they attempt to co-opt the Native population : "L'intérêt des *Anglois* est de leur [the *Iroquois*] persuader que les *François* ne tendent qu'à les perdre, qu'ils n'ont autre chose en vûë que de les détuire lorsqu'ils en trouveront l'occasion ; que plus le *Canada* se peuplera & plus ils auront sujet de craindre."[111] The ultimate goal of the English, Lahontan claims, is to provoke the *Iroquois* to "leur faire la guerre de tems en tems […]

[111] Lahontan, *Mémoires* 627, 628.

afin d'obliger les Habitans d'abandonner le Païs & dégoûter en même tems ceux qui auroient envie de quitter la *France* pour s'établir en *Canada*"[112] These two citations together clearly present a zero-sums vision of England's colonial project. Not simply satisfied to compete commercially with the French, the English must destroy the French establishments by instigating skirmishes between them and the Native Americans.

In his choice of vocabulary, Lahontan's narrative voice evokes the importance of imagination in the outcome of the colony. It is imagined threats, instigated through English persuasion, that drive the Iroquois to fight the French. Tales of this real violence then weigh negatively on the imagination of those Frenchmen – it disgusts them, Lahontan claims. Importantly, these are the very people who might be tempted to immigrate to the colony. Yet, despite this bleak portrait of the forces, real and imagined, set up against Canada, in this citation there is a glimmer of hope in the use of the future simple form of "se peuplera." If the future of the colony were in doubt, it seems that the hypothetical imperfect tense would have been more appropriate. There is a sense then that against the odds, Canada *will* be populated and continue to be in French hands.

The motivation behind England's colonial policy, in Lahontan's estimation, has to do with the very nature of English colonial identity in the New World. As he describes them, "les *Anglois* de ces Colonies ne se donnent pas assez de mouvement, ils sont un peu trop indolents."[113] The implication, thus, is that the English must convince the Native Americans to forgo trading with the Frenchmen who travel to them to trade, and instead make their way to the English

[112] Lahontan, *Mémoires* 628.
[113] Lahontan, *Mémoires* 628.

settlements. In this context, the *coureurs de bois* are imagined as the opposite of these lazy Englishmen : “les Coureurs de bois *François* sont plus entreprenant qu'eux, & les *Canadiens* sont assurément plus actifs & plus vigilants.”[114] In this way, Lahontan defines New World “Frenchness” not simply in relationship with and in contrast to Native mores, as is most evident in his *Dialogues*, but also to a certain extent in comparison with “Englishness.” There is a certain ironic twist in Lahontan's choice of vocabulary, as he valorizes movement, and trade with the Native Americans, “entrepreneurial” qualities that he sees in the French-speaking population, but which are lacking in the English colonies. This movement and frequenting of the Natives was, of course, often seen as detrimental to the development of the colony. Charlevoix, for example, bemoans the fact that “une partie de la Jeunesse est continuellement en course”[115] which leads to “une habitude de libertinage”[116] and a loss of the “goût de travail.”[117] Constant movement, associated with a monolithic economy based on the fur trade, makes agricultural endeavors less appealing in Charlevoix's estimation : “de-là vient que les Arts ont été longtems négligés, que quantité de bonnes Terre sont encore inclutes”[118] and ultimately, “le Pays ne s'est point peuplé”[119] In Lahontan's telling, however, it is the stationary *Anglois* who are “indolent,” and lacking the “vigilance” and know-how of the *Canadiens*.

Indeed, this juxtaposition of Englishness and Frenchness in the New World is not unique to Lahontan's text, but is also a preoccupation of Charlevoix. By describing what he calls the “*Différence des Colonies Angloises & Françoises*” Charlevoix is also able to define Frenchness through the differences in the colonial styles of the English and the French:

[114] Lahontan, *Mémoires* 628 - 629.
[115] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 250.
[116] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 250.
[117] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 250.
[118] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 250.
[119] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 250.

> Qui ne connoîtroit les deux Colonies, que par la maniere de vivre, d'agir & de parler des Colons, ne balanceroit pas à juger que la nôtre est la plus florissante. Il regne dans la *Nouvelle* Angleterre, & dans les autres Provinces du Continent de l'Amérique soumises à l'Empire Britannique, une opulence, dont il semble qu'on ne sçait point profiter; & dans la Nouvelle France un pauvreté cachée par un d'aisance, qui ne paroît point étudié. Le Commerce & la Culture des Plantations fortifient la Premiere, l'industrie des Habitans soûtient la Seconde, & le goût de la Nation y répand un agrément infini. Le Colon Anglois amasse du Bien, & ne fait aucune dépense superfluë; Le François jouit de ce qu'il a, & souvent fait parade de ce qu'il n'a point. Celui-là travaille pour ses Héritiers; celui-ci laisse les Siens dans la nécessité, où il s'est trouvé lui-même, de se tirer d'affaire comme il pourra. Les Anglois Amériquains ne veulent point de Guerre, parce qu'ils ont beaucoup à perdre; ils ne ménagent point les Sauvages, parce qu'ils ne croyent point en avoir besoin. La Jeunenesse Françoise, par des raison contraires, déteste la Paix, & vit bien avec les Naturels du Pays, dont elle s'attire aisément l'estime pendant la Guerre, & l'amitié en tout tems.[120]

As with the citations from Lahontan's text above, in this passage, the term "François" is an inclusive term for all the settlers of European descent. There is no *Canadien*; the title of "François" subsumes all others – when it exists in relationship and contrast to the English. The difference between the two identities is, indeed, stark. If, as the passage claims, the English are austere spend-thrifts who squirrel away their money for future generations, the French have a certain *je-ne-sais-quoi* quality, or, as Charlevoix puts it, an, "aisance, qui ne paroît point étudié." To be French in New France is to be chic – to have "le goût de la Nation." Even if one is poor, to be French is to spend more than one has, thinking nothing of your heirs. On the whole, there is a certain *carpe diem* quality to Charlevoix's description of the French in New France.[121] If New England is rich, it seems miserable. New France is poor, but there is an "agrément infini." Reading beyond the rather amusing descriptions, however, we see the image of two societies that are taking very different paths. While the English are embarking on what appears to be an early-capitalistic trajectory, amassing capital and investing in commerce and long-term agricultural

[120] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 235.

[121] The parallels between Charlevoix's description and the analysis by David Bell of imafined French national character are quite striking, especially in terms of a certain 'légèreté.' See Bell, David Avrom, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680-1800* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2001) 147.

endeavors, the French are still awash in feudalistic values.[122] Principal among these are the importance of *industrie* – which is not so much "industry," as we use it in English, but *savoir-faire*, adaptability and adroitness. Besides this is the importance of status, marked by outward appearance, and gained through the nobility of war and prowess in combat.

Yet, if there are certain feudal elements to Charlevoix's descriptions, alongside these is a vision of Frenchness in New France that we might qualify as highly individualistic. As we see in the above passage, the idea that in New France one "laisse les Sien dans la nécessité, où il s'est trouvé lui-même" letting everyone "se tirer comme il pourra," reveals an almost radical vision of self-sufficiency and individuality. Moreover, this is not an anomaly in the text. As we have seen and will see, characteristics such as independence, freedom, and a certain rugged individualism – more in line with what might be considered a traditional, read nationalistic, historiographical reading of the United States – often shines through the descriptions of the *Canadien* population. Despite being in some ways a *topos* of New World literature, the notion of individualism is an essential aspect of these narratives. Moreover, as historians such as Daniel Roche have suggested, the rise of individualistic behavior, in conjunction with the growth of the private sphere and the society of consumption, is an important feature in the development, *à la longue durée*, of modern conceptions of identity in eighteenth century France.[123] Thus, if the growth of individualism is an exceptionally important part of changing *mentalités* vis-à-vis French identity before the Revolution, in Charlevoix's – as well as Lahontan's – text we see clearly a vision of individualism as being practiced already by Frenchmen in Canada in the early eighteenth century. In short, the *Canadiens* are in some ways imagined as more French than their

[122] Vidal and Havard have suggested that vestiges of feudalistic noble values remain markers of Frenchness in the early eighteenth century, particularly in the colonial context. See Havard and Vidal 238.

[123] See Roche, Daniel, "Conclusion," *Histoire des choses banales: naissance de la consommation dans les sociétés traditionnelles (XVIIe-XIXe siècle)* (Paris: Fayard, 1997).

metropolitan counterparts.

If the term “Canadien” seems rather self-explanatory today, the evolution of this demonym is steeped in history.[124] In his revealing study, *Histoire d'un mot: l'ethnonyme "canadien" de 1535-1691*, Gervais Carpin traces the way in which the term *Canadien* evolved over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, applying first to the Native population of New France, and becoming more commonly used in reference to the growing settler community.[125] By the end of the seventeenth century, Carpin claims the transition was complete. After 1691, the term “semble suffisamment installé dans les textes pour ne plus craindre de le perdre.”[126] Despite this claim, there appears to have been some lingering confusion about to whom the name applied. In the 1771 edition of the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux*, for example, “Canadien” is defined as :

> François établi ou né en Canada. *Candiensis, Francus homo in Canadiensi plaga Francis parentibus natus. Canadien* n'est pas la même chose que Canadois. Nos François qui sont né en Canada, ou qui y ont été, distinguent fort ces deux mots. Un *Canadien* est un homme né en Canada, mais de parens François établis en Canada, ou qui y ont demeuré, & qui pendant leur séjour y est venu au monde : au lieu que Canadois est un Sauvage, un naturel de Canada.[127]

The link between being both “François” and “Canadien” is thus explicit in this definition. In fact, this link is emphasized as the definition reaffirms four separate times that these are Frenchmen “born” or “established” in Canada. Rather than an either / or proposition, difference is elided as “Canadien” becomes simply a spatial marker. Furthermore, this definition reads as an

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[124] The term 'Québécois,' which a majority of French-speaking Canadians living in Québec call themselves, is a 20th century nationalistic invention which would be anachronistic in terms of a study of eighteenth century New France.

[125] Carpin, Gervais, *Histoire d'un mot: l'ethnonyme "canadien" de 1535-1691* (Sillery, Québec: Septentrion, 1995) 22-24.

[126] Carpin 24.

[127] “Canadien,” *Dictionnaire de Trévoux Tome second* 198, 199.

admonishment to those who misuse the term, confusing it with "Canadois," which *should only* be used to speak of the Native population, as the dictionary claims. By explicitly referencing the misuse, however, the *Dictionnaire* seems to suggest that even by the late eighteenth century, the term "Canadien" was not yet completely fixed in the vocabulary of identity of the time. This reveals the continued slipperiness of the term well into the eighteenth century, beyond even the close of the Seven Year's War.[128]

Despite this unmoored quality of the term as late as 1771 in France, when Lahontan and Charlevoix use the label *Canadien* it is always aimed at the European population. The term is often associated positively with the heartiness and adaptability of the European population in the New World. As Lahontan describes them in his *Mémoires* : "vous sçaurez que les *Canadiens* ou *Creoles* sont bien faits, robustes, grands, forts, vigoureux, entrepenans, braves & infatigables"[129] For his part, Charlevoix, shares Lahontan's admiration for the *Canadiens*, describing them in similar terms. As he says, "Les Canadiens, c'est-à-dire, les Créoles du Canada**,** respirent en naissant un air de liberté, qui les rend fort agréables dans le commerce de la vie, & nulle part ailleurs on ne parle plus purement notre Langue. On ne remarque même ici aucun Accent."[130] Read together, the parallel structure between the two citations is striking. In both cases, the term *Canadien* is defined as synonymous for creoles, which at the time was applied to Europeans born in the colony.[131] In this way, Lahontan and Charlevoix both underline the continuity between

[128] As we will see in chapter 4, Voltaire in his 1753 *Essai sur les moeurs et l'esprit des nations* is able to play satirically and polemically with the label *Canadien*, in reference to the Native Americans and their supposed cannibalism. See Voltaire, and Bruno Bernard, *The Complete Works of Voltaire: 22 : Essai sur les moeurs et l'esprit des Nations ; 2* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2009) ?.

[129] Lahontan, *Mémoires* 623.

[130] Charlevoix, *Journal* 234.

[131] "Criole," *Dictionnaire de trévoux tome III* 18.

Frenchmen and the *Canadien* compatriots. Indeed, in Charlevoix's citation, he highlights the linguistic conformity between the French spoken in France – or at least in the *île de France* – and New France. Moreover, the use of negating vocabulary, "nulle part" and "aucun" has the discursive function of banishing difference. Combined with his use of the first-person plural pronoun "notre Langue," Charlevoix suggests that *Canadien* and *Français* are not exclusionary terms, but rather different shades of a shared identity. Nonetheless, the difference in names does seem to imply some specificity and, perhaps, cultural differentiation. The question remains, thus, to what extent was being *Canadien* imagined as different from, and/or the same, as being *François*?

In his discussion of the "Bonnes et mauvaises qualité des Créoles de Canada," Charlevoix plays with this divide between *Canadien* and *François.* By juxtaposing the two words, Charlevoix creates a third term, "François Canadiens." His use of the term, however, defies profoundly the way in which the contemporary reader would understand it. Whereas today the compound noun French-Canadian, or Canadien-français highlights a lineage between modern Canadian and French identities – reinforcing the "French" cultural and linguistic heritage of certain francophone Canadians – Charlevoix's use is radically different. He employs the term not to suggest a strong link between *François* and *Canadien* society, but rather to mark a distance between them. Defining the negative qualities of the European settler population as, "la légereté, l'aversion d'un travail assidu & réglé, & l'esprit d'indépendance"[132] he claims that these are "le défaut, qu'on reproche le plus, & avec plus de fondement aux Francois Canadiens. C'est aussi

[132] Charlevoix, *Jounral d'un Voyage* 402.

celui des Sauvages."[133] By ringing the conceptual bell of the similarities between Native Americans and the European society in the New France, Charlevoix gives voice to a fear of imitation of the Native Americans by the Europeans. Thus, his use of the term "François Canadien" suggests a tertiary position between "canadois," or Native American, and French. Seen from this angle, when Charlevoix uses the term "François Canadien" he means to speak of "François Canadois," or simply a French Savage hybridity.

This term "François Canadien" is not, however, a creation of his own, but is an echo of Marie de l'Incarnation, who is widely believed to have coined the term "French Canadian," in a 1667 letter. Under her pen, she describes,"tous nos jeunes François-Canadois" as being those who "sont très-vaillans, et qui courent dans les bois comme des Sauvages."[134] Seen in this light, we see that Marie de l'Incarnation also view "François-Canadois" as like the "sauvages." Even though Charlevoix replaces the term "Canadois" – which was used exclusively for the Native population by the eighteenth century – with "Canadien," it is clear that there remains a slipperiness between the two identities. Pushing my analysis further, it should be noted that this use of *François Canadien* or *François-Canadois* is reminiscent of the sometimes contentious debates on hyphenated identities and multiculturalism which have gripped contemporary post-colonial Western societies. In short, in these two examples, to have a hyphenated identity, to be "François(-)Canadien" was to be "Other." Neither completely French nor Native American, it represents a hybridity which put into question one's "Frenchness"' while also differentiating him or her from the "Sauvages." In this way, Charlevoix's use of the term corresponds well with Homi Bhabha's well-known theoretical definition of hybridity as "neither one nor the Other but

[133] Charlevoix, *Jounral d'un Voyage* 402.
[134] Marie de l'Incarnation, *Correspondance* 768, cited in Carpin 130.

something else besides, in-between."[135] If this term, thus, seems quite provocative, it should be noted that it is exceedingly rare in Charlevoix's text, used only in two instances: in the above example and in letter XXVII to describe four "François Canadiens" that he meets in Louisiana, living outside of the French sphere of influence and amidst the Native Americans.[136] The rarity of the term suggests, thus, that he is indeed using it for polemical and discursive effect, rather than employing a widely used label.

Another term which shares the slipperiness of "François Canadien" is the term "Habitans," which both Lahontan and Charlevoix use for varying discursive ends. Of course, the word "habitans" is not an essentialist term, but rather makes reference to an action – that of in*habiting* New France.[137] At certain level everyone – European and non-European alike – is a "habitans." However, the term is endowed with discursive force when these two writers use it to advance socio-cultural judgements and observations about the populations of New France. The implication of the term is that the settler population keeps their essential Frenchness even though they are living in the North American space. They are still resoutely French, but are living under a different system. As such, the term "habitans" tends to precede the articulation of certain privileges the settler population enjoys. We see this clearly in the following citation by Lahontan, where "habitans" becomes a signifier of a certain level of economic parity in the colony :

> Les Païsans y vivent sans mentir plus commodément qu'une infinité de Gentilshommes en France. Quand je dis Païsans je me trompe, il faut dire habitans, car ce titre de Païsans n'est non plus receu ici qu'en *Espagne*, soit parce qu'ils ne payent ni sel ni

[135] Bhabha, Homi K, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994) 313.

[136] In this instance 'François Canadien' also suggests rusticity and geographical displacement; they are 'Frenchmen from Canada.' Charlevoix, *Jounral d'un Voyage* 743.

[137] The *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* (1771) gives a rather standard (ie contemporary) definition of the term 'habitant' : "Qui a établi sa demeure, sa résidence en quelque lieu..." See "Habitant," *Dictionnaire de Trévoux Tome troisième* 451.

> taille, qu'ils ont la liberté de la chasse & de la pêche, ou qu'enfin leur vie aisée les met en parallele avec les Nobles.[138]

In this instance of self-correction, as Lahontan replaces the term "païsans" with "habitans," the reader understands his use of the latter term as serving the rhetorical end of muddling class distinctions in Canada. In this humorous passage Lahontan invents a satiric etymology for the term *païsans*, playing with the word's homophonic relationship with the verb *payer* – to pay. Since "ils ne *payent* ni sel si taille" they cannot be considered "païsans," or payers. The freedom from the two most despised taxes under the *ancien régime* – the *gabelle,* or salt tax, and the *taille*, which was a direct land tax on non-nobles – provides an image of Canada as a sort of fiscal paradise. Along with their tax exemption, hunting rights were meant to be the exclusive privilege of the noble class, but in the New World everyone enjoys this freedom. Thus, the "habitans" with their "vie aisée" are not only figuratively, but also legally "en parallele avec les Nobles." In this way, "habitans" becomes a term that flattens class distinction – there are no peasants in New France according to Lahontan. Similarly, Lahontan voids the value of titles such as "noble" or "gentilshommes" as these terms become empty signifiers in New France. Everyone is a "habitans." The economic conditions which give rise to these social stratification in metropolitan France simply do not exist in the colony, according to the passage. In other words, the nobles and *gentilshommes*, like the peasants are all subsumed under the label "habitants," which references not a class distinction, but residency, and shared privileges, in the North American colony.

Charlevoix, for his part, also employs the term to suggest a sort of economic equality among the people of New France. As he notes more generally about Canada, "les Habitans y sont

[138] Lahontan, *Nouveaux Voyages* 264.

fort à leurs aise. En générale les anciens Habitans sont ici plus riches que les Seigneurs"[139] The impoverishment of the nobility and the rise of the bourgeoisie is, of course, not limited to the banks of the Saint Lawrence, but is a phenomenon that is felt in France throughout the eighteenth century, and is traditionally though to have great historical consequences.[140] What is exceptional about the Canadian example, however, is how acutely this impoverishment of the nobles is felt there. Because land is readily available in New France and because of its small population base, the traditional sources of income for the nobility, rents from *seigneuries*, were rather paltry.[141] Considering this fact alongside the other privileges – hunting and tax exemption – afforded to all *Canadiens* regardless of social status, and it becomes obvious the extent to which being noble in New France was no great mark of greater economic prestige. This effective lack of economic privileges associated with class may explain Charlevoix's observation that, "Il y a dans la Nouvelle France plus de Noblesse, que dans toutes les autres Colonies ensemble"[142] partly because "Plusieurs Familles y ont été annoblies."[143] And why would the king not afford the title of nobility to co-opt certain segments of the population in New France? Besides the social prestige conferred by the title of nobility according to *ancien régime* mentalities, what does the title mean in a place where it brings little or no economic distinction?

If New France often mirrors superficially the class cleavages that also existed in the metropole, in these texts these distinctions are imagined as less rigid. Indeed, in some ways, the nobleman and the bourgeois merchant of New France were conflated, thanks to the greater

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139 Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 280.

140 Indeed, the rise of the bourgeoisie is one of the planks in the, now highly problematized, 'classic interpretation' of the French Revolution. See Doyle, William,"Appendix 3 : The Revolution and Its Historians," *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford [England]: Clarendon Press, 1989).

141 See Greer, Allan, *The People of New France* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997) 39.

142 Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 401.

143 Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 401.

economic leeway afforded to the former. Faced with the impoverishment of the nobility in New France, the king allows them to practice commerce, which in the metropole was considered a derogation of noble duties.[144] Despite this, in this colony, "peuplé [...] de Gentilshommes [,] la plupart ne sont pas à leur aise. Ils y seroient encore moins, si le Commerce ne leur étoit pas permis, & si la Chasse & la Pêche n'étoient pas ici de droit commun"[145] Although incapable of putting *gentilshommes* completely at "aise," this citation shows that commerce, along with hunting and fishing, provides the nobles a measure of economic sustenance. As we see in this quotation and the preceding ones, this "droit commun," unavailable in the metropole, is not bemoaned by Lahontan and Charlevoix, but in fact praised. The suggestion I am making, thus, is that a form of economic and legal equality on a large scale and the suppression of class privileges vis-à-vis hunting and tax rights, is thinkable – and a reality – in New France long before it becomes so in mainland France.

Class distinctions remain, of course, but, especially in the country-side outside of Montréal and Québec, they have much less force. On the *seigneurie* owned by a certain Baron de Beckancourt, "Grand Voyer de la Nouvelle France,"[146] Charlevoix's description of his existence reinforces this idea of an equality of material conditions in New France:

> la vie, que mene M. de Beckancourt dans ce Désert, car on n'y voit point encore d'autre Habitant que le Seigneur, rappelle assez naturellement le souvenir de ces anciens Patriarches, qui ne dédaignoient point de partager avec leurs Domestiques le travail de la Campagne, & vivoient presque aussi sobrement qu'eux[147]

The use of the term "Habitant" is interesting in this case because Charlevoix clearly

[144] Berthet 43.
[145] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 401- 402.
[146] Lahontan, *Nouveaux Voyages* 283.
[147] Lahontan, *Nouveaux Voyages* 283.

delineates it from “domestiques.” This suggests that 'habitan' or 'habitant' was a distinct, large, class, but was not, as the preceding citations seemed to suggest, an all-encompassing term. *Habitant* does not simply mean “inhabitant.” Indeed, the text says that his land is also home to an Abénaquis (Abenaki) village. The term “habitan” in this instance, thus, does not include Native Americans, who do, of course, also in*habit* the land. Despite this subtle distinction of class suggested in this citation, the use of a comparative grammatical structure “aussi sobrement qu'eux” reinforces the image of economic equality of classes. The image is quite striking in fact because Charlevoix paints a portrait of the *Seigneur* working in the fields alongside his *domestiques*. Yet there is something quite noble in this portrait, thanks largely to the references to Biblical antiquity.

As we have already seen, Charlevoix employs to great effect allusions to the Bible, and does so again in the above citation in his use of the words “Désert” and “anciens Patriarches.” This vocabulary suggests a link to the book of Exodus and the forty year trek of the Jews in the desert of Egypt. Subtly, thus, Beckancourt, the *seigneur*, is compared to Moses. Following this logic, the desert will be transformed into a fertile Promised Land when “il aura fait défricher tout son Terrein,”[148] allowing him to have “avec le tems […] des Vassaux & […] des conditions beaucoup meilleures”[149] As such, Beckancourt's *seigneurie* represents the potential of New France to recreate an agricultural and feudal society in the North American space while also recalling a New Jerusalem. If this reveals a hope of replicating the hierarchical structure of *ancien régime* France in the New World, the discursive use of *habitant* throughout Charlevoix's text suggests perhaps that the relationship between Lord and Serf will be less imbalanced in this

[148] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 283.
[149] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 283.

new land, faced with new economical and environmental conditions.

Naming the Native Americans : ***Sauvages, Habitans,* or *Barbares?***

Reflecting on the use of "habitan" in these texts allows us to pivot towards an analysis of how the names associated with the Native American population also serve certain discursive ends. In Lahontan and Charlevoix's text the term "habitan"" is used rarely to speak of the Native American population, preferring the term "sauvage." On the rare occasion Charlevoix does use "habitans" for the Native Americans, it is to underline their humanity. Unsurprisingly, this humanity is only conferred on them once they have been Christianized :

> ce qui fait à tous une impression d'autant plus grande, que la réflexion même y contribuë, c'est la solide piété des Habitans de ce Désert.
>
> Ce sont des Sauvages, mais qui n'ont plus de leur naissance & de leur origine, que ce qui en est estimable, c'est-à-dire, la simplicité & la droiture du Premier Age du Monde […][et] une innoncence de moeurs incroyable, un Christianisme pur [150]

In this citation the term "habitan" replaces the term "sauvage." As if anticipating confusion of his use of the term, Charlevoix clarifies that these *habitans* are not Europeans : "ce sont des Sauvages, *mais* [...]" This confusion is signifiant because it reveals a sense of identitary malleability that runs through Charlevoix's text. That is to say, *habitans* and *sauvages* are not seen as essentialist identities, but based on actions, and degrees of assimilation. These "Habitans de ce Désert" are no longer simply *sauvages*, but have been purified of their wild vices through Christianity. An example of the "noble savage" trope of the eighteenth century, this citation depicts the Christian neophytes implicitly as new Adams and Eves. The choice of vocabulary,

[150] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 239.

"simplicité," "innocence," and "Christianisme pur," along with the reference to the "premier age du monde" all suggest a people free of corruption and sin. This freedom, however, comes from the fusion of *sauvage*' and French values. As we will see in the next chapter, contact between Native Americans and Europeans presents, thus, both a rediscovery of original innocence, and a supreme challenge to it.

Like Charlevoix, Lahontan uses the term "habitan" to discursive ends in order to suggest it it is not a rigid identitary term, but should be understood in a larger sense. Nonetheless, Lahontan rarely uses the term "habitan" to speak explicitly of the Native Americans. Nonetheless, he does seem to recognize that *habitans*, in a general sense, can refer to a variety of populations, including the Native Americans. As we see in the following citation, he does this by fusing together the words "Habitans" and "François" :

> [Governer Frontenac] ayant connu les avantages que ces Barbares ont sur les Européens en ce qui regarde la guerre de ce païs-là ne voulut pas faire à son tour des entreprises inutiles, & fort onereuses au Roi. Au contraire il travailla autant qu'il pût à [...] rassûrer la plûpart des *Habitans François*, qui étoient sur le point d'abandonner & de s'en retourner en *France*, si la guerre eût duré [151]

The combination of these two descriptive labels to suggest a new term, "Habitans François" suggests that there are other *habitans* – Native Americans and Englishmen, for example – in the same space. If the use of the term "Barbares" already has a hint of irony, as Lahontan imagines them as superior in war to the Europeans, the term "Habitans François" reinforces this satiric tone. That is to say, in the above citation Lahontan inverts the hierarchy of power. The *barbares* are on top in North America, threatening to drive the French off the land. Furthermore, the French are just "habitans," or temporary visitors, instead of rightful owners of

[151] Lahontan, *Nouveaux Voyages* 288 (my emphasis).

the land. In this way, Lahontan can be read as subtly critiquing the colonial mission. This critique, launched already in the *Nouveaux Voyages*, becomes explicit and full-throated in the *Dialogues avec un Sauvage* as the Huron Adario asks rhetorically, “C'est vous qui estes venus ici nous trouver. Qui vous a donné tous les païs que vous habitez? De quel droit les possédez vous? Ils apartiénent aux *Algonkins* depuis toûjours.”[152] As many scholars have noted, in this instance, Lahontan's text, written almost seventy years before Diderot's *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville*, foreshadows the later Enlightenment critiques of the colonial project.[153] Rather than delve into ways in which this later *philosophes* might have possibly used Lahontan's text as a foundation for their own, let us simply note the way in which this text opens up the boundaries of colonial discourse. The think-ability of such a critique of colonialism, articulated from the prospective of a colonized individual, is possible first, not under the sun of the tropical islands of Tahiti or Saint Domingue, but in the colonial space along the Saint Lawrence river valley.

Another way Lahontan emphasize the humanity of the Native Americans is by using labels that either do not have a clear moral connotation, like “Amériquains,” or “Peuples,” or ones whose moral connotation evokes pity. In Lahontan's text, it is the Portuguese *médecin* who becomes the spokesman for the humanity of the *sauvages* in letter XXIV of the *Nouveaux Voyages* :

> il me démanda ce que je pensois du salut de tant d'Amériquains auxquels vrai-semblablement l'Evangile n'avoit jamais été annoncée. Vous devez bien croire, Monsieur, que je ne hésitai pas à les condamner de plein vol au feu éternel ; ce qui le fâcha si fort qu'il pensa me dévisager. ‘Comment (dit-il) peut-on damner ces pauvres gens avec tant d'assurance [...][qui] suivent exactément la loi de l'équité naturelle,

[152] Lahontan, *Dialogues* 831.
[153] Collins 27.

exprimées en Latin par ces paroles si connuës, *Alteri ne feceris quod tibi fieri non vis.*'[154]

By using the term "Amériquains" in this quotation, the text removes the essentialist connotations of "Sauvages," allowing the interlocutors to discuss the moral implications of conversion doctrine. In this conversation the Portuguese doctor astutely uses the term "Amériquains" and the adverbial phrase "tant de" in order to highlight their sheer numbers. By doing so, he implicitly suggests the injustice of the character Lahontan's condemning of them all to Hell. To reinforce this point, these "Amériquains" morph into "ces pauvres gens" in the doctor's discourse. This change of labels both evokes sympathy on the part of the reader and underline the harshness of strict salvation dogma. The character of Lahontan becomes an effective straw man in this passage as he mindlessly parrots Catholic orthodoxy, condemning the *Amériquains* without hesitation, "de plein vol[,]" to Hell, or "au feu éternel." As becomes obvious in the *Dialogues avec un Sauvage,* Lahontan uses to great effect this rhetorical tool of mimicking Catholic doctrine – without engaging in any profound intellectual way with its consequences or its applicability to local context – in order to mock it. What is left, then, is an emphasis on actions. Salvation is not a belief system, but an adherence to the Golden Rule, as the doctor renders eloquently in Latin at the end of the citation.

Of course, Native Americans are not always portrayed so nicely in the texts. The term "barbare" is the preferred term of these writers when they wish to underline and problematize the perceived inhumanity and otherness of the Native Americans. Indeed, in the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux*, "barbare" is defined as radically different: "Etranger qui est d'un païs fort éloigné,

[154] Lahontan, *Nouveaux Voyages* 500.

sauvage, mal poli, cruel, & qui a des moeurs fort différentes des nôtres."[155] The vocabulary is, of course, revelatory as the word "étranger" has the connotation of both strange and foreign. Coupled with the term "éloigné," the definition provides a sense of extreme distance, not only literally, but also figuratively with the (European) reader. In this gap, the incivility of the *barbares*, starkly contrasts the assumed civility subsumed in the comparative phrase "différentes des nôtres." By using this first-person plural, the writer of this definition reveals an assumed, but undefined, commonality among the reading public united in opposition to *barbare* impoliteness and cruelty.

Yet, this otherness, is regularly put into question in Lahontan and Charlevoix's writings. In Charlevoix's text, for example, it is often through the juxtaposition of terms that he reveals the importance of actions, rather than essentialist qualities, in determining who is *barbare*. The term "barbare" occurs in the text frequently as a moral judgement. However, it is a judgement that defies cultural bounds. In other words, the *sauvages* can become 'barbare' both when practicing traditional customs, like chanting, and when indulging in European vices, such as drinking. Charlevoix describes a Native ceremony, for example, in these terms: "Rien, Madame, n'est moins divertissant, que ces Chants & ces Danses. D'abord tous sont assis à terre comme des Singes, sans aucun ordre."[156] This utterly dehumanizing term of "singe" – monkey – is both reinforced and problematized with the description of the two types of music the Native Americans can produce:

> une Musique bien ennuyante & bien désagréable, du moins à en juger par ce que j'en ai vû. Des Gosiers serrés, une Monotonie continuelle, des Airs, qui ont toujours quelque chose de féroce, ou de lugubre. Mais leur voix est tout autre, quand ils chantent à l'Eglise. Pour ce qui est des Femmes, elles l'ont d'une douceur, qui surprend; elles ont

[155] "Barbare," *Dictionnaire de Trévoux tome premier* 859.
[156] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 240.

même beaucoup de goût & de disposition pour la Musique.[157]

Having depicted the Native Americans as monkeys, Charlevoix's text reinforce the animalistic portrait by adding words such as “féroce” and “lugubre” in the description of their music. Taken together, this is the portrait of beastly men singing dark, gloomy and ferocious airs in the woods. This negative portrayal contrasts sharply the image of Native Women singing in church. There is, in fact, almost a parallel structure between the two description as the women become “tout autre;” the ferociousness and lugubriousness of the Native ceremony are replaced with “douceur” and “goût” and the monotony and ennui by “surpr[ise].” Although his text has a highly assimilationist and euro-centric moral and subjective perspective, Charlevoix at least recognizes the humanity of the Native Americans, blaming traditions and actions for their perceived brutishness.

However, assimilation does not necessarily make the Native Americans any less “barbare.” Charlevoix suggests that corruption by European vices – as we will investigate further in chapter two – can also be a cause of their barbarianism :

> On voit jusques dans les Places & les Ruës de Montreal, les Spectacles les plus affreux, suites inévitables de l'Yvresse de ces Barbares : les Maris & les Femmes; les Peres les Meres & les Enfans: les Freres & les Soeurs, se prendre à la Gorge, s'arracher les Oreilles, se mordre à belles Dents comme des Loups enragés. Les Airs retentissent pendant les nuits de hurlemens beaucoup plus horribles que ceux dont les Bêtes féroces font retenir les Bois.[158]

The location of these fits of drunkenness is important, because it suggests that those Native Americans who are the closest to the *Canadiens* – in their towns and public squares – are “les plus affreux.” These Native Americans who have obtained alcohol from the Europeans are “loups enragés” whose “hurlemens” are compared to the “Bêtes féroces.” Alongside this

[157] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 241.
[158] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 344.

animalistic vocabulary, a focus on certain parts of the body often associated with wild animals – "gorge," "oreilles," and "Dents" – reinforces the beast-like qualities of the population under the effects of European alcohol. Interestingly, thus, there is an oxymoronic movement suggested in the texts, for the closer the Native Americans move – literally and figuratively— to the European center, the more "beastly" they become. In other words, it is in the very center of Montréal that the intoxicated Native Americans become the most like wild animals. Instead of becoming more civilized as they approach European civilization, the Native Americans become more uncivilized.

Of the two writers under investigation, Lahontan is the better of the two in understanding and recognizing this agency in the Native population. Although the respective texts sometimes give the impression that the Native Americans are simply pawns in English or French imperial machinations, Lahontan's text, especially, seems to signal the fact that the Native Americans are acting rationally and according to their own needs. The fundamental rationality and agency of the Native population is reinforced by the use of the specific tribe name, which both complicates visions of a homogenous *sauvage*, and provides an acknowledgement of their capacity to shape the outcomes of the two European empires in North America. In this spirit, Lahontan plays satirically with the power of naming, first acquiescing to monolithic visions through his use of the term "barbares" and shifting towards a use of specific tribe names :

> C'est une sottise de dire que ces Barbares dépendent des *Anglois* ; cela est si peu vrai que quand ils vont troquer leurs péleteries à la *Nouvelle York*, ils ont l'audace de taxer eux-mêmes les Marchandises dont ils ont besoin lorsque les Marchands les veulent vendre trop cher. J'ai déja dit plusieurs fois qu'ils ne les considérent que par raports au besoin qu'ils en ont, qu'ils ne les traitent de fréres & d'amis que par cette seule raison, & que si les François leur donnoient à meilleur marché les nécessitez de la vie, les armes &

> la munition &c. ils n'iroient pas souvent aux Colonies *Angloises*. Voilà une des principales affaires à quoi l'on devroit songer ; car si cela étoiet ils se donneroient bien garde d'insulter nos Sauvages amis & Alliez non plus que nous […] il faudroit outre cela tâcher d'engager deux ou trois Nations de demeurer ensemble, comme font les *Outauas* & les *Hurons* ou les *Sakis* & les *Pouteouatams* (appellez *Puants*).[159]

The irony in this citation is subtle, but important, because it reveals how inappropriate the term "barbares" is in reference to this population. It seems patently ridiculous – "une sottise" – to call "barbares" a people who practice a form of nascent capitalism. As they search for better markets and protect their industry by imposing taxes, Native Americans are engaging in the same sort of economic practices as the Europeans. In other words, the Natives are rational economic actors, and not dependent, childlike barbarians. Thus, if the problem is of an economic order, rather than a question of Native infantile essentialism, the solution to the problem is also market based : "Si les François leur donnoient à meilleur marché les nécessitez de la vie […] ils n'iroient pas souvent aux Colonies *Angloises*"[160] Once this point has been made, all of the sudden the text drops the term "Barbares" and the Natives become instead, "nos Sauvages amis & Alliez."[161] From this position, Lahontan goes further to suggest that these populations are semi-independent groups, making alliances which are subtly analogous to the Europeans. When the Natives are finally seen as rational actors, capable of economical and political agency, they are given their proper tribal names. By encouraging the confederation between the Native populations "comme font les *Outaouas* & tous les *Hurons* ou les *Sakis* & les *Pouteouatamis*,"[162] he reveals a sense of differentiation between the groups, who are no longer simple *barbares,* or *sauvages*, but separate groups acting in concert. Whereas "barbare" is an essentialist term that serves the discursive function of dehumanizing the native population, the conscious and explicit removal of the label

[159] Lahontan, *Mémoires* 627.
[160] Lahontan, *Mémoires* 627.
[161] Lahontan, *Mémoires* 627.
[162] Lathonan, *Mémoires* 627.

in the text reveals a valorization of the tribes' humanity. The use of the exact tribal name renders the tribes' names analogous to the demonyms of French and English, suggesting that each group is a force in this space. Although the term has evolved over time, the use of the word "Nations" to speak of these groups, reinforces this equality between Native and non-Native actors in New France. In this way, it is simply a matter of perspective as to whether the Native American groups are national powers, like the English or French, or if the French and English are simply new tribes in the North American territory, like the Huron and Sakis.

Conclusion

In these texts I have pieced together an image of Canada that ,far from being clearly negative, is more nuanced. Especially in Charlevoix's text, Canada is envisioned in overtly religious terms as a Promised Land. For his part, Lahontan does not share the same enthusiasm and religious zeal for colonialism as Charlevoix; yet he clearly shares the vision of New France as a place of possibilities. One of these possibilities, is to refashion collective identity. In this chapter we have attempted to show the identitary *bricolage* that occurs in the North American space as colonists and travelers to Canada meditate on, and struggle with, the question of what it means to be French in New France.[163] In my analysis of the terms used to describe both Europeans and Native Americans, I have found fluidity and contingency among them. In other words, one could be all at once *Canadien, François*, *Créole*, *Habitan,* and, as I will discuss further in the next chapter, *Sauvage* and *Barbare*. The sheer number of labels and the discursive connotation of each reveals the way in which identity was unsettled and contingent in the Saint Lawrence river valley. It is in the search for terms – in the navigating between these different

[163] Havard, "Les forcer à devenir Cytoyens" 1009.

labels – that the slippery contours of Frenchness begin to come into focus. The elucidation of such questions of identity becomes salient in New France because it is a space inhabited by myriad Native American tribes, old and new French stock, and other European colonists, most notably the English. To define Frenchness in this context was to define oneself in relationship, opposition, or in conjunction with these "Others."

As such, the contested nature of this space, along with frequent interactions between different peoples, allow for a series of identitary questions – some of which we have already begin to suggest – to be asked and investigated in New France about Frenchness. To what extent, for example, does contact make the *sauvage* more French, or vice versa ? Is contact between people a process of betterment – do people incorporate the best moral and cultural values of the other? Or, do the vices of one people denigrate the other ? In short, is colonization a regenerative or degenerative process?

These questions will be the subject of my next chapter.

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Chapter 2 – *Sauvage* foils or *sauvage* foibles ? : Fear of Degeneration and Hope for Regeneration in New France.

In the preceding chapter, my discussion of Lahontan and Charlevoix revealed how the interaction between the Native American and French settler population gives voice to nascent concerns about identity. As Tzvetan Todorov wrote in *La Conquête de l'Amérique*, "on connaît l'autre par soi mais aussi soi par l'autre."[164] However, I problematized this notion because identity is not fixed and immutable ; the "soi" is *constructed* by interaction with "autre," and not merely recognized, or known, as the verb "connaître" in Todorov's quotation suggests. My contention in the first chapter was that identity in New France was decidedly fluid and in constant flux; it was under constant construction. It is within this flux and interaction between European-settler and Native Americans that notions of "Frenchness" come to the fore. In this chapter, I build on this analysis in order to analyze how writings on New France play into larger intellectual discourses that were shaping intellectual life in mainland France, namely concerns of regeneration and degeneration.[165] This chapter argues, ultimately, that the writings from this peripheral French territory reflect back on the center, helping to shape and define the larger discussion in ways that contemporary scholarship has far too often ignored.

If the Native Americans are at times foils to the *Canadiens* – these French settlers of New France – in Lahontan and Charlevoix's texts, they are also the cause of the *Canadiens*' "*sauvage*" foibles. In this sense, the supposed "*indianité*,"as Réal Ouellet has referred to it, of the French

[164] Todorov, Tzvetan, *La conquête de l'Amérique: la question de l'autre* (Paris: Seuil, 1982) 245.

[165] While 'régénération' exists in the dictionnaries of the time, 'dégénération' does not seem to have been widely incorporated into them, despite Buffon and others' use of the term. In modern French 'la dégénérescence' appears to be more common than 'la dégénération.' Therefore, in order to avoid anachronistic or linguistic misunderstandings, I have favored the English equivalent of these words in order to focus on the concepts as discursive markers.

settlers was both valorized and critiqued by Lahontan and Charlevoix.[166] At the same time, Lahontan and Charlevoix imagine these processes of renewal and degradation to function in a multidirectional way. Both the Native American and the French settler can either succumb to the vices of the "Other," or replicate the "Other's" best moral qualities. The *européanité* of the Native Americans, like the *indianité* of the Europeans, thus represents both a corruption and an amelioration of the respective communities. In this way, these texts present an ambiguous vision of socio-cultural hybridity in the New World. This ambiguity in Lahontan and Charlevoix's works contrasts diametrically with the vision of the New World offered by later thinkers. With the rise of the climatological theories of degeneration promoted by Georges Louis Leclerc de Buffon and his strident disciple Cornelius de Pauw after 1750, the settler populations of the New World will definitively be seen as a degenerative bunch, as the Americas becomes, by definition, a place of degeneration. In a word, the hope for regeneration in the New World will fade.

Scholars have underlined the importance of the notion of regeneration in the evolution of eighteenth century French *mentalité*s. As Mona Ozouf points out in her article "Régénération" from the *Dictionnaire critique de la Révolution française*, the term holds an "extraordinaire charge énergétique" in myriad writings of the late eighteenth century.[167] The notion of regeneration becomes, as Ozouf notes, an important buzzword of the French Revolution. As she defines it, regeneration is "un programme sans limite, tout à la fois physique, politique, moral et social, qui ne prétend à rien moins qu'à créer un 'nouveau peuple.'"[168] (Indeed, the creation of a

[166] Ouellet, Réal, "Aux Origines de la littérature québécoise : nomadisme et indianité" in Marcato Falzoni, Franca, *Mythes et mythologies des origines dans la littérature québécoise* (Bologna: CLUEB, 1994) 1.
[167] Ozouf, "Régénération," *Dictionnaire critique de la Révolution française*, ed. Furet, François, Mona Ozouf, and Bronisław Baczko (Paris: Flammarion, 1988) 821.
[168] Ozouf, "Régénération" 821.

new demonym – "*Canadien*" – to speak of the New World settler population along the Saint Lawrence river is to my mind the quintessential act of imagining a society of *hommes nouveaux*.) Drawing from the deep wells of Catholic theology, from which both the terms regeneration and degeneration arise, Ozouf underlines how the former term "désigne tantôt la naissance spirituelle du baptême, tantôt la nouvelle vie qui doit suivre la résurrection générale."[169] Although the concept of degeneration is not her main focus, the implication of her analysis is that it is the mirror of regeneration. Degeneration is associated, thus, with the Christian concept of original sin and lack of human perfection.

While these terms clearly spring from the Christian tradition, what is less clear is the way in which these late eighteenth century concepts were shaped by earlier discursive and philosophical trends before the revolutionary period. In her analysis, Ozouf suggests that these terms were being re-appropriated throughout the eighteenth century in a variety of different secular contexts:

> L'idée d'homme nouveau est très loin, quand la Révolution éclate, d'être une idée neuve. Tout le XVIIIe siècle a rêvé autour des images de la seconde naissance. Le Huron posant le pied en terre civilisée, l'homme tiré du fond des bois, le naufragé qui aborde aux îles fortunées, l'aveugle-né rendu à la lumière : autant d'expériences qui aidaient à spéculer sur l'innocence retrouvée.[170]

Describing what sound like plot points from various French literary works from the traditional French literary canon, Ozouf suggests that fiction allowed the idea of regeneration to jump from the theological to the "secular" realm.[171] In this way, Ozouf's analysis can be seen as seconding the remark by Roger Chartier in his *Les Origines culturelles de la Révolution*

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[169] Ozouf, "Régénération" 822.
[170] Ozouf, "Régénération" 821.
[171] I have placed secular in quotation marks in order to point out that our contemporary understanding of the division between 'secular,' and 'religious,' 'philosophical' and 'lay' is problematic when speaking about the eighteenth century. As Robert Darnton has shown, such divisions where much less clear. See Darnton, Robert, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995) 72.

française that the French Revolution represents a "transfert sacral" from the Catholic Church to the early modern French state.[172] What I am suggesting in this chapter is that Ozouf and Chartier's analysis of the importance of the writings of the *philosophes* in this transfer can be applied as well to the writings about New France. Just as Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, Condorcet, etc. have their role to play in this process of transference, the writings from New France also have a role to play in making regeneration thinkable. The underlying concepts of regeneration and degeneration do not come *ex nihilo*, but rather emerge from a variety of intellectual strands, including ones articulated in the North American space. In the same spirit as Chartier, I suggest that the texts from and about New France, "sont inscrits, ensemble, dans un processus de longue durée qui les englobe et déborde et que, avec des modalités différentes, [...] sont habités par les même fins, traversés par de semblables attentes."[173] By using the terms regeneration and degeneration in a somewhat provocative way, I am linking New France to later philosophical discourses. This provocation is needed, in my opinion, because writings on New France have long been ignored and seen as a marginal, even forgettable, part of the eighteenth century. On the contrary, I demonstrate in this chapter that New France was an important socio-cultural laboratory, mediated by writing, for proto-Enlightenment ideas and questions of identity.

By invoking the idea of the "Huron posant le pied en terre civilisée," Ozouf is subtly underlining the importance of French colonization in the New World on the development of regeneration as a concept. Of course, it has long been noted that European writers in the eighteenth century often used the exotic "orient" and untamed America to imagine an innocent, uncorrupted foil to the supposed decadence of eighteenth century Europe. However, the new

[172] Chartier, Roger, *Les origines culturelles de la Révolution française* (Paris: Seuil, 1991) 159.
[173] Chartier 281.

Canadien population and their Native American allies can be seen as a third space between this binary of Native American's "innocence" and France's "decadence." In other words, I will investigate how the texts portray the *Canadiens* and Native American who act like the Other. Is this cultural hybridity a positive or negative development ? Are *Canadiens* and Native Americans and their "sauvage," or "European," ways a type of degeneration or regeneration?

Buffon and De Pauw's Degenerated America

The association between degeneration and the New World, an idea which gains wide currency in France in the second half of the eighteenth century, is largely attributable to the writings of Buffon and De Pauw. In his *Histoire Naturelle générale et particulière, avec la description du Cabinet du Roi*, Buffon articulates a theory of degeneration caused by climate that he applies first to animals and plants and then expands to include humans :

> il y a (donc), dans la combinaison des éléments et des autres causes physiques, quelque chose de contraire à l'agrandissement de la nature vivante dans ce Nouveau Monde : il y a des obstacles au développement et peut-être à la formation des grands germes ; ceux mêmes qui, par les douces influences d'un autre climat, ont reçu leur forme plénière et leur extension tout entière, se rapetissent sous ce ciel avare et dans cette terre vide, où l'homme, en petit nombre, était épars, errant.[174]

Not only a place ill-suited for growth and flourishing of indigenous populations, the New World is also dangerous for those born elsewhere. Even fully formed Europeans shrink before an "avaricious" and "deserted" landscape. If Buffon does not pronounce the term "dégénérer" or "colonisation" explicitly in this passage, he surely is alluding to them with his imagery of

[174] Buffon, Georges Louis Le Clerc de., *Histoire Naturelle de L'Homme tome XI* (Paris: Impr. Royale, 1778) 370 cited in Duchet, Michèle and Buffon, "L'anthropologie de Buffon," *De l'homme* (Paris: François Maspero, 1971) 27.

(European) man crumbling before an intemperate, New World, climate. Seen in this light, his observation in the fourteenth volume of the *Histoire Naturelle* reads as an oblique warning to would-be colonists: "Dès que l'homme a commencé à changer de ciel, et qu'il s'est répandu de climats en climats, sa nature a subi des altérations […] après des siècles, des continents traversés et [l]es générations [sont] déjà dégénérées par l'influence des différentes terres."[175] Ostensibly offering an explanation for the phenotypic differences between different human populations, the reader also easily gleans the negative implications for colonists who might want to "changer de ciel." If inescapable "altération" and degeneration await those who leave their climate, who would wish to do so? Therefore, even if it is not Buffon's goal to decry colonization, it is easy to see how the eighteenth century reader might interpret this as a denigration of the French settler population, the New World, New France, and the colonial project more generally.

Scholars of Buffon tend to downplay Buffon's role in the theorization of moral and "racial" degeneration. As Michèle Duchet has argued, "pour [Buffon] les termes de 'dégénérescence,' de 'dégradation' ou de 'dégénération' n'ont de sens qu'à l'intérieur de son propre système anthropologique."[176] Yet, as Buffon articulates an idea which he means to be applied narrowly, once these terms are in the discursive ether, he can no longer define how they are used. Even if his contemporaries misread him, as Duchet suggests, it is nonetheless true that he rings a conceptual bell which cannot be un-rung. Jacques Roger argued, for example, that Buffon changed his mind about North America and he "s'est retiré du jeu."[177] However, "ce discours avait laissé des traces"[178] in eighteenth French discourse that forever marked the French *imaginaire* of the New World.

[175] Buffon, *Histoire Naturelle* XIV, 178 cited in Duchet 29.
[176] Duchet 28.
[177] Roger, Jacques, *Buffon: un philosophe au Jardin du Roi* (Paris: Fayard, 1989) 552.
[178] Roger 552.

A logical place to find the traces of Buffon's notion of degeneration is in the work of the naturalist De Pauw. Less well-known today than Buffon, De Pauw produces a highly polemical texts in a tit-for-tat debate with Dom Pernety, a Benedictine Maurist who accompanied Louis Antoine de Bougainville on his voyage to the Falkland islands. Contemporary scholars have termed this heated debate the "dispute of the New World."[179] As Réal Ouellet characterizes this dispute, "la controverse oppose deux systèmes de pensée : celui de Pernety – et jusqu'à un certain point Lahontan – qui voit le Sauvage d'un point de vue moral, dans son être anhistorique, et celui de De Pauw, de Voltaire, de Buffon, qui l'évaluent comme un ensemble de 'déterminismes.'"[180] In terms that are more explicit than Buffon, De Pauw applies his deterministic paradigm not only to the Native Americans, but to the European settlers as well. In his 1770 *Défense des Recherches philosophiques sur les Américains* De Pauw offers a clear articulation of his belief that, "les Américains [sont] une race d'hommes dégénérés par l'inclémence du climat ; mais il a encore assuré que les Européens, qui vont s'établir en Amérique, y dégénerent aussi."[181] If this is a radical position – which the nascent intelligentsia of the United States, especially Thomas Jefferson, will critique with vigor – it nonetheless reveals how closely tied together degeneration, colonization, and the New World are by the second half of the eighteenth century in France.[182]

This vision of the New World by French intellectuals was not, of course, always the dominant one. In Lahontan and Charlevoix's texts the reader does come across the term "dégénérer," but their conclusions on whether this is indeed occurring in New France are more

[179] See Gerbi, Antonello, *The Dispute of the New World; The History of a Polemic, 1750-1900,* Pittsburgh : University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973.
[180] Ouellet, "Introduction" 185, 186.
[181] De Pauw, Cornélius, *Recherches philosophiques sur les Américains ou Mémoires intéressants pour servir à l'Histoire de l'Espece Humaine tome 3* (London : 1774) 136.
[182] Jefferson famously critiques Buffon's theories of American degeneration in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785). See also Lee Ann Dugatkin, *Mr. Jefferson and the Giant Moose* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 2009).

nuanced. Indeed, they argue that both degeneration *and* regeneration are possible in New France, revealing a stark contrast between early and late eighteenth century French visions of their New World colony.

Over the course of the eighteenth century the terms *régénérer* and *dégénérer* undergo an evolution in their meanings. In the dictionaries of Furetière (1701) and Trévoux (1721 and 1771) "régénérer" and "dégénérer" are defined in explicitly theological terms. For *dégénérer* we read in Furetière, "Se dit figurément des choses spirituelles, & de tout ce qui se tourne ou se change de bien en mal."[183] By 1721, however, Trévoux has added a less explicitly theological definition : "devenir moindre en valeur, en mérite. Se relâcher de la vertu, de la vigueur de ceux qui nous ont précédés […] Les Romains ont bien degénèré de la vertu de leurs pères."[184] Thus, while the term floats between secular and religious realms, its definition evokes a sense of loss and change, which transcends both realms. In this way, the loss of certain values like "vertu," "vigueur," "valeur," "mérite," as well the verb form "se change" are all interconnected with the term degeneration.

Like *dégénérer*, the verb *régénérer* seems to be explicitly and exclusively theological in nature in the early eighteenth century. However, it becomes more encompassing as the century progresses. Furietière in 1701 defines *régénérer* as a "terme de Theologie, qui ne se dit qu'en cette phrase : il a été regeneré; pour dire, il a été engendré de nouveau spirituellement, il est devenu enfant de Dieu."[185] The noun *régénération*, does not seem to have escaped the narrow

[183] "Dégénérer," (1721) 578.
[184] "Dégénérer," (1721) 578.
[185] Furetière, Furetière, Antoine, Pierre Bayle, and Henri Basnage de Beauval, "REGENERER," *Dictionnaire universel: contenant generalement tous les mots françois tant vieux que modernes, & les termes des sciences et des arts …* (La Haye : Chez Arnoud et Reinier Leers, 1701) npg.

applicability of its verb form: “Action de regenerer. La *regeneration* se fait par le lavement du Saint Esprit, dont le baptême est le signe.”[186] As this entry suggests, *régénération* is more anchored in a theological vocabulary than its antonym *dégénérer*. Again taking its cues from Furetière, the 1771 edition of Trévoux gives a verbatim definition of *régénérer*. However, it also gives the term a scientific connotation: “terme de Physique, & sur-tout de Médecine. Réproduction. Quand une fois la plaie est bien nettoyée par l'usage des détersifs, la cure s'achève par la *régénération* des chairs, c'est-à-dire par la réparation de la substance perdue, & par la réunion des parties divisées.”[187] Vocabulary such as “nettoyée,” “détersifs,” “cure,” “réparation” and “réunion” suggests the idea of purification and renewal that bridges the realm of Christian and scientific vocabulary. If a large-scale study of the evolution of the terms *régénération* / *régénérer* and *dégénérer / dégénération* remains beyond the scope of this current project, we may, nonetheless, tentatively posit an evolution in their meanings. The theological bent of these terms slowly makes way for an expansion into more secular parlance long before the revolutionary period. It should be noted, moreover, that given the cost of reproducing a book and editing a definition, dictionaries do not follow the vagaries of popular speech. They reflect well-established and elite definitions of vocabulary. In this way, they may not fully reveal the extent to which terms evolve over relatively short periods of time.[188] As such, any shift in definition is revealing because these texts are fundamentally conservative and slow to change.

Although these exact terms do not appear often in Lahontan and Charlevoix's texts, the

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[186] Furetière, et al “REGENERATION” npg.

[187] “REGENERATION” *Dictionnaire universel françois et latin: vulgairement appelé Dictionnaire de Trévoux, contenant la signification & la définition tant des mots de l'une & de l'autre langue...*(Paris: Compagnie des libraires associés, 1771) 231.

[188] A cursory look at a term such as 'sauvage' reveals this to be the case. While voyageurs to the New World had long written about the dearth of hair on Native Americans. The dictionaries continues to define 'sauvages' as hairy, forest dwellers.

underlying concepts do. Gauging the importance of the concepts of *régénérer* and *dégénérer* for these authors is not simply a matter of searching for the presence and frequency of these words in their respective texts. Lahontan and Charlevoix conceptualize regeneration and degeneration as occurring in a complicated, multidirectional process that greatly affects French and Native American cultures within the zones of colonial contact.

Degeneration, regeneration, and Lahontan.

After a long description of his voyage down the "riviere longue," at the end of letter XVI of his *Nouveaux Voyages*, Lahontan seems to reject the burden of philosophizing on the nature of the Native American he has encountered. If, as he claims, his text is meant simply to "reveiller l'esprit des réflexionnaires," Lahontan simultaneously claims that, "le mien est trop superficiel pour philosopher sur l'origine, la croyance, les moeurs & les maniéres de tant de Sauvages."[189] As the use of the expression "tant de Sauvages" suggests, Lahontan does not see the Native Americans as a monolith, but rather as distinct and varied groups. Put another way, there are *so many "*sauvages" that the origins, beliefs, and customs of the Native Americans are not generalizable. To wit, in several instances Lahontan compares Native American societies to European ones in order to highlight the subtle distinctions between them. Speaking of the Algonquin language, for example, Lahontan claims, "on l'estime beaucoup en ce païs-ci, parce que toutes les Nations qui habitent à mille lieües à la rond (à la reserve des *Iroquois* & des *Hurons*) l'entendent parfaitement, n'y ayant pas plus de difference de leur langage à celui-ci que

[189] Lahontan, Louis Armand de Lom d'Arce, Réal Ouellet, and Alain Beaulieu, *Nouveaux Voyages*, in *Œuvres complètes* (Montréal, Québec, Canada: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1990) 433.

du Portugais à l'Espagnol."[190] More than simply a way of describing Native American society in terms that the European reader can understand, Lahontan subtly gives voice to the nuances and cleavages among Native American societies. On the one hand, the mutual intelligibility of the Algonquin languages suggests a close political alignment, analogous to the one between Spain and Portugal at the time. On the other hand, the linguistic barrier between the *Iroquois* and *Hurons* provides insight into their historical animosity for one another. Indeed, the tension between the Iroquois and Huron populations is a theme that returns throughout the *Nouveaux Voyages*. What is important to take away from Lahontan's comparisons is the notion that he refuses the flattening gaze of European superiority. While the Native Americans are different than the Europeans, they are not homogenous Others, but distinct socio-cultural and political units with spheres of influence and internal divisions.

Even within groups that are seemingly united, Lahontan is attuned to subtle differences. Again using Europe as the reference, he compares the Iroquois to the Swiss : "Ces Barbares composent cinq Cantons, à peu près comme les Suisses ; sous des noms differents, quoique de même Nation & liez de même interêts."[191] Through his use of irony – for these "barbares" are forming societies in the Swiss model – Lahontan is suggesting that Native American society is as complex and varied as European ones. As such, Lahontan does not see the Native Americans – or Europeans – as products, or victims, of their environment. Despite a harsh climate and a lack of European technology, Native Americans have organized themselves in similar ways to Europe. Since these populations have agency, Lahontan is effectively deemphasizing a deterministic and causal link between climate and society. This ultimately throws into question the very notion of

[190] Lahontan, *Nouveaux Voyages* 276.
[191] Lahontan, *Nouveaux Voyages* 286.

degeneration and regeneration based solely on climatological criterion.

Indeed, the climatological link between a population and its degeneration or regeneration is explicitly rejected in Lahontan's dispute with the Portuguese *médecin*. In this passage at the end of the *Nouveaux Voyages*, Lahontan takes on the ironic voice of Catholic orthodoxy against a philosophically minded Portuguese *médecin*. Using a dialogical structure that mirrors the form of Lahontan's *Dialogues avec un sauvage,* this dispute is in some ways the summation of Lahontan's text. It gives voice to the intellectual and moral quandaries Lahontan has hinted at throughout his work. Faced with the differences between the people of the New and Old World the *médecin* suggests – against traditional Catholic teachings – that :

> les Peuples des Continens de l'Amerique de l'Asie & de l'Afrique étoient issus de trois Peres differens. Voici comme il le prouvoit. Les Amériquains different des Asiatiques, car ils n'ont ni poil ni barbe ; les traits de leur visage, leur couleur & leur coûtumes sont differentes ; outre que n'ayant ni tien ni mien, ils vivent en commun sans propriété de biens, au contraire des Asiatiques. Il ajoûtoit à cela que l'Amerique étoit trop éloignée des autres parties du monde pour s'imaginer que personne eût peu passer en ce nouveau Continent avant qu'on eût trouvé l'usage de l'aimant […] il croyait impossible que ces deux sortes de Peuples tirassent leur origine d'Adam.[192]

As is clear from this quotation, the *médecin* deduces the origins of Native Americans from their physical traits as well as from cultural and geological differences. In the *médecin's* estimation, the gulf between these different peoples is too great to be explained by simple cultural or climatological explanations. Rather, they must have come from three different fathers, thereby rejecting the biblical account of the rise of humankind. The consequences of this reasoning is clearly appealing to Lahontan because it contradicts Catholic doctrine – a perennial target for him. Moreover, the quotation can be read as a clear dismissal of a scientific theory of degeneration. That is, Native Americans are not simply degenerated Asians, and – pushing the

[192] Lahontan, *Nouveaux Voyages* 497, 498.

logic of the idea further – Europeans are not simply the least degenerated descendants of the tribe of Adam. Rather these people are the product of distinct and separate genealogies.

Nonetheless, the idea that different populations have different origins remains a troublesome notion for Lahontan because it assumes an essentialist view of humankind. According to this theory, each race, having its own Adam, remains essentially distinct and different from the others. This essentialist paradigm, moreover, leads to a dramatizing of difference and, pushed to the extreme, could justify slavery or the inhumane treatment of the "sauvages." Throughout his text, however, Lahontan, is very careful *not* to radicalize difference, instead he constantly draws on the similarities between Europe and America while also decrying the inhumane treatment of Native Americans. In a way the *médecin* – whom we must remember is largely a fictitious ruse to protect the narrative voice – suggests an intellectual challenge to the reader. He offers an explanation of difference that undermines traditional Catholic orthodoxy. At the same time, he also challenges Lahontan's critical belief in human agency and his vision of human universality. That is to say, if one tribe of humans is fundamentally of a different origin than others, then all of the appeals to replicate Huron values that we read in *Dialogues avec un Sauvage* seems futile. If these people are of a different origin, how can one hope to learn from, or more perniciously, convert them? Incapable of giving a definitive answer, Lahontan's narrative voice focuses on what is observable, leaving questions of causation to other minds.

In terms of intellectual history, Lahontan's meditative reflection on the differences between people of the Old and New Worlds reveals the fact that climatological theories of difference are already in the realm of European discourse by the early eighteenth century. However, Lahontan rejects them out of hand. In the quotation below, Lahontan sets himself up as

a straw man, advocating for a climatological explanation of difference in order, ultimately, to reject it :

> Je lui répondis aussi-tôt que quand la foi ne me persuaderoit pas évidemment que tous les hommes sont généralement descendus de ce premier Pere, son raisonnement ne seroit pas assez fort pour me prouver le contraire, puisque la difference qui se trouve entre les Peuples de l'Amérique & ceux de l'Afrique ne provient d'aucune autre cause, que de la differente qualité de l'aire & du climat des uns & des autres.[193]

In his false apology of Catholic orthodoxy, the narrative voice presents a two-pronged rebuttal: one according to faith, and the other based on natural phenomena, that is, climate and "qualité de l'air." Lahontan continues, proposing a sort of experiment : "Que cela est si vrai qu'un homme & une femme Négre, un Sauvage & une Sauvagesse transplantez en Europe produiroient des enfans qui dans quatre ou cinq générations seroient infailliblement aussi blancs que les plus Anciens Europeans."[194] Explicitly, Lahontan's narrative voice is arguing that the "Negres" and the "Sauvages" will be changed – become "aussi blancs que les plus Anciens Europeans" – simply as a result of the European climate. The logically corollary to this idea, which the Portuguese *médecin* will use to prove Lahontan wrong, is that Europeans should change under "sauvage" climates. This line of reasoning follows an impeccably inverted and ironic logic. Thus, the narrative voice's false naïveté serves an important discursive function : by proposing an experiment in words he becomes the voice of rationalism. The Portuguese *médecin,* conversely, will propose observational data. Seen in this light, the historical writer Lahontan pits reason against empiricism. Empiricism carries the argument.[195]

In reaction to the narrator's *thought* experiment of transporting people from other

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[193] Lahontan, *Nouveaux Voyages* 498.
[194] Lahontan, *Nouveaux Voyages* 498.
[195] This shift from rationalism to empiricism as the premier epistemological mode that we see in Lahontan's text suggests that the New World is not immune to changing intellectual models – the famous 'crise de conscience.' New France is part of an intellectual world system.

continents to Europe, the Portuguese *médecin* summarizes the results of the *natural* experiment created by the colonial fact :

> Le Médecin nia ce fait, en soutenant que les descendans de ce Négre & de cette Négresse y naîtroient aussi noirs qu'en *Guinée* […] il ajoûta encore à cela que les descendants des premiers Portugais qui habiterent *Angola*, le *Cap vert* &c. il y a plus de cent ans, sont si peu bazanez qu'il est impossible de les distinguer d'entre les naturels de Portugal.[196]

The example of Portuguese colonialism thus discredits a deterministic link between climate and phenotypical differences. If the descendants of the Portuguese are "impossible" to distinguish from the "naturels de Portugal" the implication is that degeneration is not a result of climate. On the flip side of that same coin, regeneration is also not linked in a direct way to the European climate because the children of "ce Négre & de cette Négresse" born in Europe will continue to be "aussi noirs qu'en *Guinée.*" The climate alone cannot account for the differences among people according to the *médecin*.

Convinced by the *médecin's* argumentation, Lahontan's narrative voice abandons his intellectual position and accepts, and even deploys, the Portuguese *médecin's* empiricism. By doing so, the narrative voice undermines the reader's belief in the sincerity of his first principles and his rationalistic approach. Yet, the narrator's empiricism is fundamentally cautious because he refuses to theorize about what he does not – or cannot – know. As Lahontan writes about *les coureurs des bois*:

> Il est seur que les Sauvages de *Canada* & tous les autres Peuples de l'Amérique n'ont naturellement ni poil ni barbe, que les traits de leur visage & leur couleur un peu olivatre marquent une grande difference entr'eux & les Europeans. *J'en ignore la cause,* cepedant *ce n'est point l'effet de l'air & des aliments*. Car sur ce pied là les descendants des premiers François qui s'établirent en *Canada* il y a près de cent ans, et qui pour la pluspart courent les bois, vivant comme les Sauvages, devroient être sans barbe, sans poil, & dégénerer aussi peu à peu en Sauvages, ce qui n'arrive pourtant pas. (my

[196] Lahontan, *Nouveaux Voyages* 498.

emphasis)[197]

Starting with that which the narrative voice is "seur" – that there is a "grande difference" between the Natives and the Europeans – he precedes to draw conclusions about the nature of degeneration. Although the narrative voice has little trouble declaring this difference not to be "l'effet de l'air et des aliments," he resists the temptation to speculate on its cause. As such, his observations serve the purpose of eliminating possible theories, rather than proposing a new one. What makes the passage so convincing is that the example of the *coureurs des bois* has all the trappings of a proper experiment, as we understand it in a modern sense. All variables have been accounted for – the *coureurs* live in the same conditions, and eat the same food as the *sauvage* among whom they live. Yet, the hypothetical result of such conditions, that they should have "dégéner[é] aussi peu à peu en Sauvages" has not occurred. As such, Lahontan eliminates the tested variables, namely climatological and dietary explanations of difference.

The extent to which European settlers remain distinct physically from the Native American's does not mean that they are immune to "sauvage" mores. They are, after all, living like "sauvages." Again, this emphasis on agency is an essential element in Lahontan's thinking on degeneration and regeneration in the New World. While the narrative voices close the proverbial door on physical degeneration, they leave open the possibility of a moral degeneration or regeneration.This will become especially poignant in our discussion below of Native American and their interactions with *Canadiens.* In short, if climate is decidedly not the cause of degeneration or regeneration in Lahontan's estimation, human choices, mores, and social practices are.

[197] Lahontan, *Nouveaux Voyages* 498.

Lahontan is keenly aware of the corruptive potential of European mores and practices on the Native American populations. Money, for example, is the proverbial source of all evil in Lahontan's estimation. As the character of Adario from Lahontan's *Dialogues avec un sauvage* makes clear : “Cet argent est le Pére de la luxure, de l'impudicité, de l'artifice [...] & généralement de tous les maux qui sont au Monde.”[198] This *mal européan* becomes a refrain in the text, highlighting the decadence of French society. In his articulation of French social and moral failings from an outsider's perspective, Adario is the forefather and archetype to Montesquieu's Usbek from *Lettres persanes* and Diderot's Ouro from *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville*.

Like the later *philosophes* such as Rousseau, Lahontan sees private property and money as the seed of Western civilization's decadence. Additionally, Lahontan laments that these notions are so highly contagious. Indeed, at several points in Lahontan's work the narrator mentions the refusal of Native American even to handle money because of its corruptive nature. Adario asks rhetorically, for example, “Di-moy, je te prie, si nous avons tort [...] de ne vouloir point ni manier, ni même voir ce maudit argent.”[199] In his *Mémoires* Lahontan uses similar language: “Il faut que vous remarquiez qu'aucun d'eux ne veut manier de l'or ni de l'argent.”[200] Lahontan’s use of a tactile vocabulary to refer to to money is revealing in these citations. Etymologically tied to the French word for hand, the word “manier” suggests that the mere touch of money would be too corrupting. What is more, even the sight of money has the potential to debase the Native Americans. Yet, this corruption is not theoretical, but has already begun to modify Native American mores. As Lahontan writes in his preface to the *Dialogues*: “c'est un fait incontestable,

[198] Lahontan, “preface,” *Suite du Voyage* 795.
[199] Lahontan, *Dialogues* 850.
[200] Lahontan, *Mémoires* 318.

que les Nations qui n'ont point été corrompus par le voisinage des Européans, n'ont ni *tien* ni *mien*, ni loix, ni Juges, ni Prestre!"[201] As this citation reveals, Lahontan ties money to a whole European system – laws, courts, and religious establishments – which draw the Native Americans away from what Rousseau will call, famously, "l'état de nature." Like Rousseau, moreover, the tone of Lahontan's text implies that there is little hope of returning to a time before this corruption.

The truly corruptive force of money is not in its exchange value, *per se*, but in the sort of mental colonization that the arrival of the concepts of *tien* and *mien* entails. As Gordon Sayre has pointed out in his *Les Sauvages Américains*, Native Americans clearly used jewelry, beaver skins, and other materials as a form of currency before the arrival of Europeans.[202] Thus, the difference between the barter economy of traditional Native American societies and the nascent capitalistic market economies of Europe is not so much the concept of money, exchanged for services and goods, but the concept of private property. With this shift in *mentalités*, the notion of individualism trumps communal values and concerns. To show why this is pernicious, Lahontan subtly juxtaposes the image of Native American society before and after the arrival of European mores. The reader will notice, revealingly, that the turning point between these two portraits is the word "Chrétiens:"

> Lors qu'un *Sauvage* n'a pas réüssi à la Chasse des *Castors*, ces Confréres le secourent sans être priez. Si son fusil se creve ou se casse, chacun d'eux s'empresse à lui en offrir un autre [...] il n'y a que ceux qui sont Chrétiens & qui demeurent aux portes de nos Villes, chez qui l'argent soit en usage. Les autres ne veulent ni le manier, ni même le voir, ils l'appellent le Serpent des François[203]

In the last sentence of this citation, Lahontan's narrative voice influences the way in

[201] Lahontan, "preface," *Suite du Voyage* 795.
[202] Sayre, Gordon M., *Les Sauvages Américains: Representations of Native Americans in French and English Colonial Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997) 145.
[203] Lahontan, *Mémoires* 637-638.

which the reader is meant to understand the nature of European capitalistic markets on Native societies. By comparing money to a serpent – a weighty symbol in Christian mythology – Lahontan is drawing a direct link between money and the Christian notion of original sin. Lahontan invites the reader to re-conceptualize the beginning part of this passage as a depiction of a Native American Eden. Lahontan portrays Native American society, pre-European colonization, as a time where fraternal ties compensated for a poor hunt. Lahontan sees it as a sort of prelapsarian society that existed before the corruption of private gain. In this way, Lahontan reinforces the alienating nature of European mores by highlighting the chasm that they have created among the Native Americans. The Christian converts, for example, are the ones who use money and have moved towards the European fortifications – these closed spaces that, because of the corruption which lies within them, represent the inversion of Eden. As for the traditional Native Americans, these "autres," who have not been alienated from their ways, "ne veulent ni […] manier, ni même [...] voir" money. Thus, Lahontan's text conceptualizes Christian conversion and the arrival of European mores as part of a process of alienation. Read in this light, Lahontan's 1703 text foreshadows the critiques of colonialism that will be heard in nineteenth and twentieth century decolonization movements.

As the tone of the above citation suggests, Lahontan's text views religious conversions as a source of degeneration for the Native Americans because it pulls them away from their communal societies. Furthermore, the development of commercial markets also leads to the corruption of the Native Americans : "ayant des Castors de reste, après avoir fait leur amplette, [ils] boivent excessivement, & tuent ensuite leurs Esclaves. Ils se querellent, se battent, & se

mangent le nez & se tueroient infailliblement, si ceux qui detestent ces sortes de breuvages ne les retenoient."[204] Instead of using their excess beaver skins for communal betterment, Native Americans who traffic with Europeans use them to become inebriated, which leads ultimately to fighting and murder. As we saw in the previous chapter, this question of the degenerating effect of alcohol is also invoked by Charlevoix in roughly the same terms. We will remember, for example, that under the influence of alcohol, the Natives Americans have a tendency to "se mordre à belles Dents comme des Loups enragés."[205] Thus, both writers underline the way in which alcohol turns the Native Americans almost literally into beasts. Similarly, this shared image of Native Americans who "se mord[ent]" or "se mangent" reinforces the old trope of Native Americans as cannibals. Yet, their supposed cannibalistic behavior only comes about under the influence of European intoxicants. To put it simply, Native Americans degenerate into "beasts" and "cannibals" only when they come in contact with the Europeans. Indeed, this description of Native Americans under the influence of European liquors stands in stark contrast to the peaceful portrait Lahontan depicts earlier in his work. As he writes in his ever panegyric style, "ils ne se querellent, ni ne se battent, ni ne se volent, & ne médisent jamais les uns des autres."[206] Alcohol, like money and economic markets, thus, is a corrupting force which brings about the inversion of Native American mores at the hands of French assimilation.

Nonetheless, if degeneration is one of the consequences of colonization for the Native Americans, for the Europeans, this same process offers the chance at regeneration. As the reader sees in the citation below, the character of Adario implies that the French are degenerated by

[204] Lahontan, *Nouveaux Voyages* 317.
[205] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 344.
[206] Lahontan, *Mémoires* 638.

their hierarchical social structure:

> [les Hurons] se raillent de la grande subordination qu'ils remarquent parmi [les Français]. Ils nous traitent d'esclaves, ils disent que nous sommes des misérables dont la vie ne tient à rien, que nous nous dégradons de nôtre condition, en nous réduisant à la servitude d'un seul homme qui peut tout, & qui n'a d'autre loi que sa volonté[207]

In this citation Lahontan links degeneration with Frenchness, and human agency. This emphasis on agency becomes clear through the use of the active reflexive verb in the first person plural: "nous *nous* dégradons de nôtre condition, en *nous* réduisant à la servitude."[208] Rather than an outside force degenerating and vanquishing the "nous," it is the "nous" that degrades *itself* through servitude. As the narrative voice adds in even clearer terms, "ils disent que le tître de *Sauvages*, dont nous les qualifions nous conviendroit mieux que celui d'hommes, puis qu'il n'y a rien moins que de l'homme sage dans toutes nos actions."[209] Clearly this is an example of Lahontan's text turning the Euro-centric vision of the world on its head; the French are "sauvage" and the Native Americans are "civilized." Reading these citations together, the reader understands that "savagery" is not tied to any particular essence ; being "French" or "Native American" is not, in itself, a marker of civilization or lack thereof. Rather, the emphasis is on actions.

The *Canadiens* are, however, in the unique position of being able to escape this French "degradation." We will remember that in New France "leur vie aisée les met en parallele avec les Nobles."[210] This emphasis on equality in New France must be read in conjunction with the egalitarianism and freedom Lahontan perceives in Huron society. In a word, *Canadien* society resembles that of the Hurons. However, the "indianization" of the *Canadiens* is not complete.

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[207] Lahontan, *Mémoires* 639.
[208] Lahontan, *Mémoires* 639.
[209] Lahontan, *Mémoires* 638.
[210] Lahontan, *Nouveaux Voyages* 264.

Nonetheless, Lahontan does describe the Native Americans and the *Canadiens* in very similar terms, suggesting certain commonalities between them. For their part, Native Americans are "généralement droits, bien faits, de belle taille […] infatigables, endurcis au mal."[211] Similarly, in his description of the *Canadiens*, Lahontan writes : "les *Canadiens* ou *Creoles* sont bien faits, robustes, grands, forts, vigoureux, entrepenans, braves & infatigables."[212] As the reader notes here, the similarities go beyond the physical, but touch the moral realm as well. Both groups are not only hearty, but also seem stoic, "endurcis au mal" and "infatigables." In this way the *Canadiens* share similar characteristics with the Native Americans, these "philosophes nuds" of the New World.

Having established certain physical and moral similarities between these two groups, Lahontan paves the way for the reader to interpret his praise for innovations or novelties in *Canadien* society as replications of Native American practices. The Hurons, for example, are a people who, according to Lahontan, are all equal: "les Sauvages n'ayant *ni tien ni mien* ni superiorité, ni subordination, & vivant dans une espece d'égalité conforme aux sentimens de la Nature."[213] They also have the luxury of having "ni loix, ni Juges, ni Prestre."[214] If New France is far from being a place of strict equality, proto-communism, or freedom from laws, judges, and priests, it has made some advances towards a more egalitarian and freer society. As I discussed in the first chapter, Lahontan clearly sees in New France the flattening of class distinction, brought by the freedom to fish and hunt, and the lack of taxes. These are improvements over metropolitan France where inequality and noble *privilèges* remain the order of the day. Read in this way, these advances in *Canadien* society represent a model for a regenerated "Frenchness" influenced by

[211] Lahontan, *Mémoires* 632.
[212] Lahontan, *Mémoires* 623.
[213] Lahontan, *Mémoires* 672.
[214] Lahontan, *Mémoires* 795.

knowledge of Huron society.

Alongside these improvements, however, there remain pernicious European mores among the *Canadiens*. Lahontan's list of critiques includes the *Canadiens'* avarice, thirst for luxury, and the power of the Catholic Church and its overly zealous priests. Therefore, Adario's appeal to Lahontan in the *Dialogues* to "songe à te faire Huron" represents a call to regenerate French society, writ large, along the lines of Huron values.[215] This process, however, is an active, rather than passive, one. His comment on the French women brought to New France reveals this emphasis on agency:

> on peut ici faire une remarque assez curieuse, c'est qu'en quelque partie du monde où l'on transporte les plus vicieuses Europeanes, la populace d'outre mer croit à la bonne foi que leurs pêchez sont tellement effacez par le batême ridicule dont je vous ai parlé, qu'ensuite elles sont sensées filles de vertu, d'honneur, & de conduite irreprochable. [216]

Lahontan's use of the religiously-laden phrase "batême ridicule" connotes not only the wet passage in the belly of a ship, but also the notion of new life, rebirth, or regeneration, in the colonies. Obviously, the adjective "ridicule" reveals Lahontan's disdain for such a foolhardy belief in the *passive* regeneration that colonization is supposed to have on the European settlers. If "les plus vicieuses Europeanes" do not automatically become respectable, it is because Lahontan recognizes that simply changing the latitude of people does not fundamentally change them; only human agency can do that.[217] Again, Lahontan rejects environmental factors in the alteration of human societies.

Nonetheless, Lahontan's advocating for a sort of indianization of French society should not be misread as a praise of *métissage,* or the actual reproductive intermingling of the French

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[215] Lahontan, *Dialogues* 858.
[216] Lahontan, *Nouveaux Voyages* 266.
[217] More generally speaking, Lahontan represents a philosophical position that does not fit with the full-throated support of climatological theories of difference, advanced by later *philosophes*.

and the Huron. If we return to the dispute with the Portuguese *médecin* that oriented the theoretical underpinnings of Lahontan's vision of degeneration, we see this apprehension vis-à-vis "miscegenation :"

> il se trouvera des gens qui soutiendront aveuglément que les enfans des Afriquains & des Ameriquains degenerent peu à peu en Europe. Cela peut arriver envers ceux de qui les meres se laissent caresser par les Europeans, ce qui fait qu'on voit tant de mulatres aux Isles de l'*Amérique*, en *Espagne* et en *Portugal* ; au lieu que si elles étoient aussi bien gardées, en Europe que les Portugaises le sont en Afrique & en Amerique, les enfans des Brazilienes ne dégénéreroient non plus que les enfans des Portugaises. Voilà, Monsieur, le raisonnement de ce médecin qui rencontre assez bien sur la fin.[218]

As we see in this quotation, the Portuguese *médecin* evokes two sorts of degeneration: one being a passive process caused by climatological variations, the other based on genetic changes caused by sexual intermingling. Unlike later eighteenth century *philosophes*, in this passage Lahontan's narrative voice explicitly rejects climatological theories of difference, allowing only sexual intercourse as a means of degeneration. The African and American population transported to Europe will still look "African" or "American" after several generations if there is no sexual exchange. Likewise, "les enfans des Portugaises" do not "degenerent" as long as "les mères" are "bien gardées." This emphasis on protecting women – men are not mentioned – reveals how the female body is a site of colonial concern and a literal site of colonial contact.[219] This fear of *métissage* is translated as a justification for limiting the freedom of women, under the guise of protecting them. This fear of degeneration, however, works in both directions. Miscegenation, in Lahontan's view, degenerates not only the African or American but also the European. In this way, his vision of "race" is almost platonic in that he seems to suggest the existence of some ideal version of an "African," or "American," or

[218] Lahontan, *Nouveaux Voyages* 499.

[219] Feminist theorists have noted the importance of the female form as a site of colonial contact in many different colonial experiences. See Stoler, Ann Laura. *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

"European." Thus, sexual intermingling appears to draw each category away from its own ideal. In short, incorporating Huron values into French society is seen as a regenerative act ; reproducing with the Hurons is a type of degeneration.

Ironically, this surveillance of women is itself a type of degeneration which affects the European women more acutely than the Native American women. As we read in Lahontan's description of the *marché de femmes*:

> Après la reforme de ces Troupes on y envoya de France plusieurs Vaisseaux chargez de filles de moyenne vertu, [...] Ces Vestales étoient pour ainsi dire entassées les unes sur les autres en trois differentes sales, où les époux choississoient leurs épouses de la maniére que le boucher va choisir les moutons au milieu d'un troupeau.[...] enfin chacun y trouvoit chaussure à son pied.[220]

In this tawdry description, the male gaze has effectively turned the women into merchandise. Like objects on a shelf in a store, the women are "entassées," or staked, one on top of the other. Mixing metaphors in order to reveal the full extent of the objectification of the new female colonists, Lahontan then portrays the women as "moutons," while their future husbands become "boucher." With this metaphor, sexual violence is implicitly underlined, as the butcher is meant to "slaughter," rape, his wife. Indeed, the sexual innuendo crescendos with the new metaphor of the women as a "chaussure," in which the man inserts his phallic "pied." What I am suggesting in this reading is that this objectification of women can be read as part of Lahontan's vision of European degeneration which often accompanies the colonial experience. In this way, Native American women, "Maîtresses de leurs corps" represent a better model of female sexuality and expression.[221] With this in mind, the reader understands better the stakes of the second market scene in Lahontan's work when he describes the *Canandiennes'* gaze on the

[220] Lahontan, *Nouveaux Voyages* 266.
[221] Lahontan, *Mémoires* 670.

Native American traders :

> C'est un plaisir de les [les 'Sauvages'] voir courir de boutique en boutique l'arc & la fléche à la main tout-à-fait nuds. Les femmes les plus scrupuleuses portent leur éventail sur les yeux, pour ne pas être effrayées à l'aspect de si vilaines choses ; mais ces droles qui connoissent aussi bien que nous les jolies Marchandes, ne manquent pas de leur offrir ce qu'elles daignent quelquefois accepter, quand elles voyent la marchandise de bon aloi.[222]

As an inversion of the *marché de femmes*, here the *Canadiennes* become the surveyors of the "vilaines choses" – a thinly veiled reference to genitalia – of Native American men. No longer the "moutons" on display for European men, these women are the "jolies Marchandes." The sexual organs of the Native men are the "marchandise de bon aloi" that they can freely choose or reject. In this way, the same metaphors used to describe the European women are now applied to the Native American men. The initial colonial experience of the European women is thus inverted.

Therefore, these women are acting more like Native American women in their rapport with the sexual relationship. Native American women, as the reader learns at the end of the *Dialogues,* also choose their partner based on his "'merchandise:" "les filles qui voient de jeunes gens nuds, jugent à l'oeil de ce qui leur convient […] les unes aiment un homme bien fait, quoiqu'il ait je ne sçay quoy de petit en luy. […] d'autres préférent un homme d'esprit & vigoureux, quoiqu'il ne soit ni bien fait, ni bien pourveu de ce que je n'ay pas voulu nommer."[223] This objectification of men that the reader sees in these two quotations highlights the way in which women in the New World can turn the tables, as it were. They are employing their agency, which places them on a more even plane with the men in the colony. Read in this way, these female settlers, despite rather atrocious beginnings, experience a type of sexual regeneration and

[222] Lahontan, *Nouveaux Voyages* 317.
[223] Lahontan, *Dialogues* 879.

an equality that is in some ways unthinkable for the vast majority of women in metropolitan France.[224]

Although Lahontan clearly advocates for the replication of Huron socio-cultural and economic practices, there are limits to the assimilative potential of the Other's values. While the adoption of Huron values is implicitly portrayed as a regenerative, or perfective, process, actual sexual dalliances between the two populations becomes a source of degeneration for both of them. As I have suggested through several different examples, Lahontan's emphasis throughout his work is on active human decisions. Neither regeneration nor degeneration are necessarily inherent in the colonial experience, but the socio-cultural practices of a population and their mores can lead to a better society, or a worse one. What the colonial space allows is the chance for new practices to become practicable and thinkable. This is thanks in part to the newness of the European society that is remaking itself in the New World, but also as a result of the examples given by the Native Americans.

Degeneration, regeneration, and Charlevoix.

The origins of the Native Americans serves as a point of entry into the vision of degeneration and regeneration present in Charlevoix's *Journal d'un Voyage.* Indeed, the preface to his *Journal* is made up of a "Dissertation preliminaire sur l'origine des Ameriquains" in which

[224] Of course, this may be a fantastical invention by Lahontan. Indeed, Charlevoix rejects Lahontan's portrayal of the women of Montréal in such terms : "Mais si par hazard, Madame, vous tombez sur le Livre de la HONTAN, où il est parlé de cette Foire, donnez-vous bien garde de prendre tout ce qu'il en dit pour des vérités. La vraisemblance n'y est pas même gardée. Les Femmes de Montreal n'ont jamais donné lieu à ce que cet Auteur y met sur leur compte, & il n'y a rien à craindre pour leur honneur de la part des Sauvages. Il est sans exemple qu'aucun d'eux ait jamais pris la moindre liberté avec les Françoises, lors même qu'elles ont été leur Prisonnieres. Ils n'en sont pas même tentés, & il seroit à souhaiter que les François eussent le même dégoût des Sauvagesses" (*Journal d'un Voyage* 345).

he comments on “les differentes opinions des Sçavans sur ce sujet.”[225] In this “dissertation” Charlevoix provides a gloss of the research that has been done vis-à-vis the Americas and finds it wanting. Having discussed at some length the different theories of Native American origins, both of the polygenist and monogenist sort, Charlevoix comes down – unsurprisingly, as he is a practicing Jesuit – on the side of Christian monogenism. As he asks rhetorically, “peut-on concevoir que les Petits-Fils de Noé lorsqu'ils furent obligés de se séparer, & de se répandre, selon les desseins de Dieu, par toute la Terre, ayent été dans l'imposibilité de peupler presque la moitié de l'Univers?”[226] As such, Charlevoix explicitly rejects the polygenist stance of Lahontan and the Spanish missionary Gregorio Garcìa. Garicià’s work *Origen de los Indios*, written in 1607 and republished in 1725 and 1729, popularized the idea that there were “dos Adanes, uno in Asia, i otro en las Indias Occidentales.”[227] Nonetheless, if, as Charlevoix claims,“on ne me persuadera jamais qu'une partie si considérable de la Terre ait été ignorée ou négligée des premiers Fondateur des Nations,”[228] he must still face the difficult question of how to explain the differences between societies. Whereas in Lahontan's text, the narrative voice explicitly refuses to theorize on the cause of difference, Charlevoix's text does not display the same intellectual caution. As such, it is in this theorization of difference – in the pursuit of the origins of Native Americans – that we see the formation of a nascent theory of degeneration and, by logical extension, regeneration.

Unlike in Lahontan's text where physiological differences play a major role in determining degeneration or regeneration, here they are unimportant. Indeed, Charlevoix states

[225] Charlevoix, Pierre-François-Xavier de, and Pierre Berthiaume, “Dissertation preliminaire sur l'origine des Ameriquains”*Journal d'un voyage fait par ordre du roi dans l'Amérique septentrionale* (Montréal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1994) 103.
[226] Charlevoix, “Dissertation préliminaire” 152.
[227] Berthiaume, 107 note 15.
[228] Charlevoix, “Dissertation préliminaire” 159.

explicitly that physical differences do not relate to the question of origins :

> si on me demande pourquoi les Amériquains n'ont point de barbe, ni de poil par tout le corps, & pourquoi la plûpart sont de couleur rougeâtre, je demanderai à mon tour pourquoi la plûpart des Afriquains sont noirs? Cette question n'entre pour rien dans la dispute sur l'Origine des Amériquains.[229]

If he rejects physiological differences as signs of degeneration, moral degeneration remains *the* main factor in explaining the vast divide in cultural practices seen not only in the Americas, but across the globe.[230] This sort of degeneration does not take into account climatological considerations. Instead, in his "disseration préliminaire" Charlevoix ties the concept of moral degeneration to communal forgetting, separation, and corruption by new ideas from outside groups.

In order for these three processes to occur, Charlevoix must assume that all societies can trace their origins back to a singular source. To forget, to be separated from, and to be corrupted by "outsiders" implies an original unity. In this respect, Lahontan and Charlevoix share a certain universalist vision of humanity, despite their very different philosophical positions.[231] Whereas Lahontan attempts to draw parallels between European and Native cultures in order to suggest commonality between the two – and demonstrate that differences are primarily superficial – Charlevoix takes a very different track. While recognizing the radical differences across societies as a fact, he does not see specific cultural and religious differences as linked to an essential alterity. Rather, these differences are a result of a community that has lost touch with its

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[229] Charlevoix, "Dissertation préliminaire" 160.

[230] It should be noted, however, that this deemphasizing of climatological explanations of difference in the "dissertation préliminaire," contrasts rather starkly with his discussion in the *Journal.* In the *Journal,* as we will see, climate plays an essential role – both as a degenerative and regenerative force – in the formation of Native American and *Canadien* identities. The different philosophical approaches might be understood as an evolution in Charlevoix's thinking as we will remember that the editing of his *Journal* takes place over a twenty year period.

[231] In some ways, degeneration and regeneration only make sense within a universality paradigm; to regenerate or degenerate becomes a question of the distance of a people from a platonic ideal of Man.

fundamental Judeo-Christian origins, dating back to Noah. As he writes :

> on a cherché dans les Moeurs, les Coûtumes, la Religion, & les Traditions des Amériquains, leur premiere Origine: cependant je suis persuadé que cet examen ne peut produire qu'un faux jour, plus capable d'éblouir & d'égarer, que de conduire sûrement au but, qu'on se propose. Les anciennes Traditions s'effacent de l'esprit de ceux, qui n'ont, ou qui pendant plusieurs siécles n'ont eu aucun secours pour les conserver ; & la moitié du Monde est dans le cas.[232]

As this passage reveals, Charlevoix suggests that differences between societies are merely the result of a loss of "anciennes Traditions," which have been forgotten. This "efface[ment] de l'esprit" – this act of forgetting of former values and customs – matches almost perfectly the definition of degeneration as we saw in the dictionaries of the time. Difference is thus de-radicalized and de-essentialized. All "sauvage" traditions, mores, and religious practices are corruptions of long-forgotten Judeo-Christian ones. In this way, Charlevoix provides a justification for the civilizing mission of the Catholic Church. As Charlevoix implies, the priests and the Church may serve as the "secours pour […] conserver" these "anciennes Traditions." Therefore, Charlevoix seems to be saying: Native Americans are related to Noah and, thus, the Old World religious traditions ; they have simply forgotten them. When coupled with Charlevoix's musings – discussed in chapter one – that "les anciens Celtes & les Gaulois […] qui ont envoyé tant de Colonies jusqu'aux extrémités de l'Asie & de l'Europe […] n'ont-ils pas pu pénétrer par les Açorres jusqu'en Amérique?"[233] – there is a sense that Charlevoix is coupling his evangelical mission with proto-nationalistic sentiments in the service of French colonialism. Not only have the *Amériquains* forgotten their Judeo-Christian heritage, they also have forgotten that they are French. The French colonial project, seen in this light, is meant to remind them of these two facts.

[232] Charlevoix, "Dissertation préliminaire" 153.
[233] Charlevoix, "Dissertation préliminaire" 158.

According to Charlevoix, this process of communal forgetting comes about by physical and spiritual separation from "civilizing" forces. As Charlevoix asks rhetorically, "Pourquoi s'étonner que les Amériquains, si lontems ignorés du reste du Monde, soient devenus Barbares & Sauvages, & que leurs plus florissants Empires se soient trouvés dénués de tant de choses, qu'on croyoit d'une nécessité indispensable dans notre Hemisphere."[234] As the reader understands in this citation, Charlevoix links Native American's separation from the European world with a process of *becoming* "Barbares & Sauvages." Therefore, he implies that connection to a world system is a marker of one's relative degree of "civilization." Conversely, being outside of a world system– being "ignoré" by it – is tied to a loss of "civilization." The semantic field of the citation, moreover, links the "Sauvage & Barbare" nature of the Native Americans to a discourse of lack. The Native Americans are "dénué" of culture. They are figuratively "naked"– "nu" in French. Although metaphorical, Charlevoix is also highlighting the *literal* nakedness of the Native Americans. Yet, the prefix "dé" in the word "dénué" reveals a belief in a degenerative *process* that the *Amériquains* have undergone over time. They have been *un*clothed, literally and figuratively, by separation. Moreover, the use of the *passé composé*, which traditionally has marked a past event which influences the present state of things, reinforces this emphasis on a socio-cultural and historical process that is still being felt in the present.

Therefore, the Native Americans are not *essentially* "Barbares & Sauvages." Instead, they are victims of a larger, universal force. Read in this way, the universal forces of degeneration can affect European settlements as well. Charlevoix uses the example of early Spanish and French buccaneers in *Saint Domingue* to prove his point:

Quand une fois on a renoncé à l'unique véritable [religion], on ne tarde point à la perdre

[234] Charlevoix, "Dissertation préliminaire" 158.

> de vûë […] Nous en avons vû dans le siécle précédent un exemple bien sensible. Les Boucaniers de *Saint* Domingue étoient Chrétiens, & n'avoient de commerce qu'entr-eux : toutefois en moins de trente ans, par le seul défaut d'exercice de Religion, d'instruction, & d'une autorité, qui les retînt dans le devoir, ils en étoient venus jusqu'à n'avoir plus du Chrétien que le Baptême. S'il avoient subsisté seulement jusqu'à la troisiéme génération, leurs Petits-fils, auroient été aussi peu instruits des principes du Christianisme, que les Habitans de la Nouvelle Guinée, ou des Terres Australes.[235]

This citation shows an equivalence between Europeans and the indigenous people of extra-European spaces, as the *Boucanniers* who forget their Christian roots risk becoming like the inhabitants of New Guinea and Australia. Degeneration through a loss of tradition, thus, is a general concern that can only be prevented by "une autorité, qui les retînt dans le devoir." By placing local populations on the same plane as the Europeans, Charlevoix highlights the need for Catholic missionaries not only for the benefit of the local population, but also for the preservation of the settlers' "Europeanness." In short, Europeans must also be reminded that they are Christian. At the heart of the proselytizing mission of the Catholic Church is not only the matter of colonizing the Native "Other," but also of "colonizing" the European settler. In this desire to re-christianize the European *Bouccaniers*, Charlevoix suggests a metaphorical "réparation de la substance perdue"[236] – namely their Christian faith – as well as a "réunion des parties divisées,"[237] or the reunion of the *Bouccaniers* with their European brethren. This is clearly a form of regeneration.

Whereas regeneration can come about through the influence of Catholic "autorité," degeneration is the result of the corrupting influence of the wrong kind of "Others." In Charlevoix's estimation, this sort corruption does not take long to take root :

> Les Moeurs dégénerent en très-peu de tems par le Commerce d'autres Nations, par le

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235 Charlevoix, "Discours préliminaire" 154.
236 "REGENERATION" (1771) 231.
237 "REGENERATION" (1771) 231.

> mélange de plusieurs Peuples, qui se réunissent ; par le changement de domination, toujours suivi d'une nouvelle forme de gouvernement. A combien plus forte raison cette altération de moeurs & de caractere doit-elle être sensible parmi des Peuples errans, devenus Sauvages, vivant sans principe, & sans regles, qui les rappellent aux Moeurs antiques, telles que sont l'éducation, & la société. Les Coûtumes s'abolissent encore plus aisément. Un nouveau genre de vie en introduit de nouvelle, & l'on a bientôt oublié celles, que l'on a abandonnées.[238]

It is clear in this passage that the culminating point of such interaction is with the "Peuples errans deven[ant] Sauvages."[239] Again, the emphasis is on the process of *becoming* "sauvage" through the forgetting of "Moeurs antiques" and the absence of principles and rules. Degeneration in this passage seems to go hand-in-hand with instability, and change more generally. The reader notices, for example, a series of terms that evoke movement and novelty : "changement," "nouvelle forme," "altération," "errant," "nouveau genre," and "nouvelle." Simply put, novelty is dangerous because it replaces the old with new, and "on a bientôt oublié" the former, which Charlevoix implicitly considers better. Thus, the circle is complete and the reader sees the link between degeneration, forgetting, cultural corruption, and the fear of the new. On this point, this passage reveals the extent to which degeneration plays into larger esthetic norms from the eighteenth century that privileged continuity of forms and repetition, and saw newness as off-putting or bizarre. The question thus becomes, how does this apprehension of the new effect conceptions of the "New" World?

Charlevoix and the Paradox of Converting Native Americans

In his role as a Jesuit priest, Charlevoix radically opposes Lahontan's vision of

[238] Charlevoix, "Discours préliminaire" 153, 154.

[239] Although Charlevoix is writing about Native Americans specifically in this case, this link between wandering and 'savagery,' has also been associated by later scholars as part and partial of the French-Canadian national identity. See Ouellet, "Aux Origines de la littérature québécoise : nomadisme et indianité."

Catholicism as a degenerative force on the Native American populations. However, he does share Lahontan's vision of European vices as highly contagious and corrupting. Describing Catholic neophytes among the Native American population, Charlevoix reveals the duality of European assimilation:

> Ce sont des Sauvages, mais qui n'ont plus de leur naissance & de leur origine, que ce qui en est estimable, c'est-à-dire, la simplicité & la droiture du Premier Age du Monde, avec ce que la Grace y a ajoûté; la Foi des Patriarches, une Piété sincere, cette droiture & cette docilité de Coeur, qui font les Saints; une innoncence de moeurs incroyable, un Christianisme pur, & sur lequel le Monde n'a point souflé l'air contagieux, qui le corrompt [...][240]

In some ways, this citation fits the very definition of regeneration, as it originates from the Catholic dogma of religious conversion. Indeed, Christian conversion seemingly wipes away any perceived faults in Native Americans, leaving behind only "ce qui en est estimable." What is more, "Grace y a ajoûté" Christian traits. Therefore, the Native Americans have been perfected – made whole – by the addition of Christianity to their original innocence. Here, though, we arrive at a series of paradoxes which ultimately belie Charlevoix's somewhat banal lauding of conversion. For if the Native Americans already have "la simplicité & la droiture du Premier Age du Monde," which evokes a prelapsarian state of being, why would they need the addition, or supplement, of grace? How can one add to original perfection?[241] Moreover, at the end of the citation, Charlevoix implies that "le Christianisme pur" that the Europeans offer to the Native Americans necessarily brings corrupting forces. That is to say, alongside Christianity, Europeans also bring the "air contagieux" of European mores which corrupts this state of purity. Assimilation represents, uncomfortably, both a move towards purification and towards

[240] Charlevoix, *Journal* 239.

[241] The fifth century Pope Leo I attempts to answer this in a famous, but mysterious, citation that has become part of the Roman Catholic Catechism, "Christ's inexpressible grace gave us blessings better than those the demon's envy had taken away." See *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* 2nd ed. (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2000) III, 412.

corruption. Thus, the binaries of Native American "savagery," and European "civility," along with the division between "pure" and "corrupt" exist in an unstable relationship. To put it another way, Native Americans are paradoxically innocent, yet not innocent, and thus in need of conversion. This conversion, in turn, leads to a purification, which also is a sort of corruption. Within this citation, thus, Charlevoix reveals – unwittingly perhaps – the contradictory nature of the assimilationist project that represents, at the *same time* and through *the same means*, a regeneration and degeneration of the colonized subject.

Indeed, Charlevoix admits that interaction with Europeans changes the Native Americans in paradoxical ways. If they are willing to convert, the fervor does not last long. Writing about a group of Hurons aligned with the French, Charlevoix laments, "Ils sont tous Chrétiens, & on leur a bâti une jolie Chapelle [...]. Il faut pourtant avoüer que leur ferveur n'est plus au point, où on l'a vûë les premieres années de leur Etablissement parmi nous."[242] If their commitment to Catholicism wanes, what is, then, the legacy of European assimilation among the Native Americans? For Charlevoix, it is the corruptive force of self-interest. As he notes, "il faut avoüer que ceux, avec qui nous avons plus de commerce, ont déja un peu perdu de cette antique générosité, & de cet admirable désintéressement. Rien n'est plus contagieux, que l'esprit d'intérêt, & rien n'est plus capable d'altérer les moeurs."[243] Here we come across vocabulary that evokes the tone of regret of lost values. On one side of the quotation, Charlevoix presents a portrait of traditional Native American mores, among them "antique générosité" and "admirable désintéressement." On the other side, Charlevoix juxtaposes European values; they are a "contagieux [...] esprit d'intérêt," brought on by "commerce," which has the double meaning of

[242] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 239.
[243] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 295.

economic exchange and social interaction. This interaction has caused the Native Americans to lose traditional values, which again, is the very definition of degeneration. Furthermore, with his use of the term "avouer" in these two quotations, Charlevoix reveals that the superficial successes – mass conversions and assimilation – do not necessarily correspond to what lies beneath. By admitting this fact Charlevoix shows that he recognizes this uncomfortable division between surface and depth, where the signifier – outward adherence to Christianity – does not correspond to what it should signify – a profound religious commitment. In the same respect, the choice of adjectives to describe traditional Native Americans' values as "antique" and "admirable" create a sense of nostalgia for these disappearing values. If French society has "altér[é] les moeurs" of the Native Americans, it is not wholly an alteration for the better.

Nonetheless, Charlevoix never places Catholic conversion under the sign of corruption in an explicit way. Yet, a close reading of the text offers an interpretation that undercuts the stated goal of conversion. In the following passage, for example, Charlevoix provides a problematic justification for religious conversions, contrasting the natural freedom of the *Amériquains* with the freedom of biblical law:

> En un mot, ces Amériquains sont parfaitement convaincus, que l'Homme est né libre, qu'aucune Puissance sur la Terre n'a droit d'attenter à sa liberté & que rien ne pourroit le dédommager de sa perte. On a même eu bien de la peine à […] leur faire entendre que [...] la Loi, qui nous retient, nous rapproche de notre premiere liberté, en paroissant nous la ravir.[244]

Through his argumentation, Charlevoix attempts to justify conversion by comparing what might be called first nature freedom (or natural law) with second nature freedom (or positive law). The first nature is that of "l'Homme né libre" in the world. Free of innate laws and socio-moralistic codes, this is a theoretical state – anticipating Rousseau's later theories – that predates

[244] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 563.

the foundation of society.[245] Biblical law, for its part, paradoxically "nous rapproche de notre premiere liberté, en paroissant nous la ravir." In this logic, conversion is a perfection of this first natural freedom. However, it wears the mask of loss. It is a process of perfecting which also seems to cause a loss of perfection. This becomes clearer as Charlevoix continues:

> Heureusement pour eux, l'expérience ne leur fait pas sentir, sur bien des articles essentiels, toute la vivacité de ce penchant [du Péché], qui produit ailleurs tant de crimes. Leurs connoissances étant plus bornées que les nôtres, leurs désirs le sont aussi davantage : réduits au simple nécessaire, auquel la Providence a suffisamment pourvû, à peine ont-ils l'idée du superflu.[246]

Implicit in Charlevoix's argument is the idea that conversion and assimilation are types of knowledge – *connaissances* – that bring with them both corruption and redemption. Since Native Americans had "connaissances bornées," they also had innocence. Yet, Native Americans, as we saw above, are prone to replicate the poor, "contagious," mores of Europe. Having been infected, Catholicism offers a path to freedom. In a word, assimilation is both the disease and the cure. By replacing Native American's natural freedom with Catholic freedom, Charlevoix is implicitly offering a freedom that is a replication of the first. In short, conversion can be read as offering a sort of degenerated freedom – a shadow of their prelapsarian innocence.

But, if Charlevoix's conception of the Native Americans reads like the romanticized tropes of the "noble savage," he clearly sees conversion and assimilation as the ultimate goals. Nonetheless, Charlevoix still has a somewhat progressive view of the Native Americans pre-conversion. Throughout his text, Charlevoix refuses to conceptualize the Native Americans as essentially of a different nature from the French. Rather, difference is a matter of socio-cultural and religious practices which are not immutable or static. This lack of essentialism is clear in his

[245] Charlevoix is certainly aware of socio-cultural and ethical codes in Native American society, but his argument works better if he ignores this reality. Stripping the Native Americans of their cultural practices allows Charlevoix to avoid difficult questions of relativism.

[246] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 563.

discussion of the feasibility and desirability of assimilating the Native Americans:

> la Cour a eu si longtems à coeur [un projet] de *Franciser* ces Sauvages, c'est le terme, dont on se servoit. Je crois du moins pouvoir assûrer que, si on avait suivi ce projet, le Canada seroit aujourd'hui beaucoup plus peuplé qu'il ne l'est; que les Sauvages, attirés & retenus par les secours & les douceurs, qu'ils auroient trouvés dans nos Habitations, auroient multipliés, au lieu qu'ils sont diminués étonnement, & se seroient attachés à nous de maniere, que nous en pourrions à present disposer, comme des Sujets mêmes de la Couronne[247]

Although as yet undefined, Charlevoix uses the term "franciser" as short-hand for a series of perceived values that differentiate the settlers from the Native Americans. Furthermore, the choice of vocabulary that Charlevoix employs to describe the French model implies its superiority over local customs. For example, he claims that the "Sauvages" would have been "attirés & retenus par les secours & les douceurs" of French civilization. Such vocabulary highlights the appeal of "Frenchness," while also giving voice to an early vision of "la France généreuse," which will serve as a justification for later colonial projects. The "secours" and "douceurs" are a sort of benevolent offering to the Native Americans, given in exchange for an alliance with the crown. Yet, Charlevoix's use of the past conditional tense reveals that such assimilationist dreams have largely been unsuccessful. The failure of such a project of *francisation* has consequences for both the settlers and the Native Americans. While Canada remains scarcely populated, the Native Americans have, as a community, dwindled. This decrease in population among the Native Americans is a type of degeneration. If *régénération* is tied etymologically to reproduction through the root word *génération*, then *(dé)génération* is tied to the notion of depopulation. Indeed, Charlevoix is struck by the fecundity of the *Canadiennes* as opposed to the Native Americans.[248] What can explain such differences in reproduction rates?

[247] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 250.
[248] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 401.

Charlevoix suggests that it relates directly to "Frenchness." Thus, the lack of "Frenchness" among the Native Americans is a sign of degeneration, which is "proved" by the fall of the Native American population while the Europeans fruitfully multiply. Although Charlevoix's first assumption is wrong – according to our contemporary understanding of the impact of European diseases in the decimation of Native peoples in the Americas – the logic of his reasoning clearly points to a series of inter-related dualities. That is to say, in this quotation, "Sauvage" and French align directly with notions of degeneration and regeneration.

Therefore, in the above passage Charlevoix presents early discursive strands of the *mission civilisatrice* as well as a meditation on what it means to be French. As a warning to posterity, Charlevoix suggests that future successes in colonization will be tied to assimilating the local populations. More ominously, his text can be read as an unintentional warning to the colonized subject. If the un-Frenchified "Sauvages […] disparoissent d'une maniere aussi sensible" his implication can be read as : *franciser* or *périr*.[249] One perishes not through overt violence, but rather through a slow and steady decline. In this way, *francisation* implicitly becomes tied to notions of regeneration.

Yet, having opened the conceptual door towards a *francisation* – at least in theory – of the Native American subject, Charlevoix must admit that this metaphorical door swings in both directions. In other words, Charlevoix also implicitly opens the door to a form of indianization by the *Canadiens*. The question thus becomes: will the *Canadiens*, under the influence of the same climate and in contact with the Native Americans, replicate the "innocence" of the Native Americans, or their "barbary"?

[249] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 252.

For Charlevoix, the extent of *Canadiens'* regeneration or degeneration is directly related to their replication, for better or worse, of "sauvage" mores and practices. Charlevoix finds both the *Canadiens* and the Native Americans to have similar character flaws: "les Vagabonds [les coureurs de bois] qui avoient pris du goût pour la liberté d'une vie errante & pour l'indépendance, resterent parmi les Sauvages, dont on ne les distinguoit plus, que par leurs vices."[250] Here Charlevoix paints the portrait of a group of *Canadiens* in very similar terms to Lahontan. He evokes, for example, the words "liberté," and "indépendance," which Lahontan's text valorizes. Under the pen of Charlevoix, however, freedom and independence become linked with "vie errante," and "vices."[251] Through constant contact with the "Sauvages," these Europeans become indistinguishable from them. In a word, they degenerate into "Sauvages."

Indeed, in the middle of a long proto-ethnographical description from his *Journal*, Charlevoix offers a contradictory vision of the French settlers in New France, the *Canadiens*, who "seroient des hommes parfaits, si avec leurs vertus ils avoient conservé celles de leurs Ancêtres."[252] This movement towards perfection – which, etymologically speaking, is linked with the notion of completeness, or *perficio* – is due, he tells us, to "leurs vertus." Yet, Charlevoix suggests that these "vertus" are different than those of their forefathers. Charlevoix appears to pluck this language of loss straight from the definition of "dégénérer" offered by the dictionaries of the time. With the definition of "régéner" and "dégénérer" in mind, the reader begins to see how Charlevoix places in dialogue two competing visions of the *Canadiens* as an

[250] Charlevoix, *Journal* 248.

[251] In fact, this image of the *Canadien* seems to have become somewhat commonplace starting in the late Seventeenth century. The travel writer Antoine-Denis Raudot (1679 – 1737) described the *Canadiens* in a letter entitled "Les Créoles du Canada": "Le Canadien a de l'esprit, est fier, orgeuilleux, vif, hardy, industrieux, et capable de supporter les fatiques les plus outrées il ayme à voyager et à courir les bois, a bien de la peine à s'attacher à un lieu et tient du Sauvage pour aimer l'independance et l'oisiveté" (extract published in Berthiaume, "Appendices" 962).

[252] Charlevoix, *Journal* 402.

almost perfect people – renewed, "perfected," or "regenerated" in the New World, but also "degenerated" from their forefathers.[253]

Beyond just the *coureurs de bois*, a large part of *Canadien* society seems to have been ambiguously affected by contact with the Native Americas. Just as "nos Canadiens ont tous [...] assez bonne opinion d'eux-mêmes"[254] they share this trait with "les Sauvages [qui sont] naturellement fiers."[255] Charlevoix also describes both groups as bellicose. For the Natives, "il est rare [...] que ces Barbares refusent de s'engager dans une guerre [...] le moindre motif, un rien souvent les détermine."[256] The *Canadien* for his part, "déteste la Paix."[257] As we see in these quotations, and more fully in the previous chapter, Charlevoix clearly recognizes the overlapping, fluid nature of identity in the colony. These characteristics, however, are often portrayed by Charlevoix as "défauts" shared by the *Canadiens* and the Native Americans: "la légereté, l'aversion d'un travail assidu & réglé, & l'esprit d'indépendance [...] *C'est* là, Madame, le défaut, qu'on reproche le plus, & avec plus de fondement aux Francois Canadiens. C'est aussi celui des Sauvages."[258] Charlevoix is clearly aware, moreover, of the notion that these character "defects" are caused by the climate. "On diroit que l'air, qu'on respire dans ce vaste Continent, y contribuë, mais l'exemple & la fréquentation de ses Habitans naturels, qui mettent tout leur bonheur dans la liberté & l'indépendance, sont plus que suffisans pour former ce caractere."[259] Thus, Charlevoix again associates liberty and independence with "sauvage" mores. However, he seems somewhat skeptical of climatological explanations for these "défauts," as the reader

[253] I will come back to these terms of 'degeneration' and 'regenerartion' in my analysis below.
[254] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 335.
[255] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 346.
[256] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 475.
[257] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 235.
[258] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 402.
[259] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 402, 403.

notices in his use of the phrase "on diroit." He is not necessarily saying these things. He is simply providing the climatological justification that he has heard. While not completely discounting such explanations, Charlevoix suggests that the true change in character of the Europeans comes about by contact with the Native Americans.

Nonetheless, the *Canadiens* represent in some ways a regenerated "Frenchness." Alongside values like freedom and independence, Charlevoix praises the *Canadiens'* beauty – "le plus beau sang" – wit – "l'esprit enjoué" – and the purity of their French – "aucun accent."[260] In fact, in at least one instance, Charlevoix seems to suggest that the colonial experience in New France is decidedly and explicitly regenerative for the French settlers. In *Histoire et description de la Nouvelle France*, Charlevoix writes, for example: "on remarqua même que parmi les nouveaux venus, les plus libertins ne pouvoient tenir lontems contre les exemples de vertus, qu'ils avoient sans cesse devant les yeux, & qu'au bout de six mois plusieurs n'étoient plus reconnoissables, & ne se reconnoissoient plus eux-mêmes."[261] This metamorphosis that these colonial libertines undergo corresponds directly to the idea of regeneration. They have become virtuous shadows their former selves. This change surprises even them, as suggested by the phrase, "ne se reconnoissoient plus." Just as the example of the "sauvages" seems to lead inescapably to the development of an insidious spirit of freedom and independence among the *Canadiens*, new arrivals, confronted with the chaste examples of the *Canadiens*, "sans cesse devant les yeux," are almost powerless to resist. They cannot help replicating these mores – this virtuous contagion. Seen in this light, Charlevoix presents colonization as a decidedly double-edged sword, praising the potential for radical regeneration while also bemoaning the

[260] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 234

[261] Charlevoix, Pierre-François-Xavier de, and Jacques Nicolas Bellin. *Histoire et description generale de la Nouvelle France: avec le journal historique d'un voyage fait par ordre du Roi dans l'Amérique septentrionnale* (Paris: chez la veuve Ganeau, 1744) 162.

degenerative possibilities.

Like those who come after him – namely, Buffon and De Pauw – Charlevoix sometimes suggests that the North American climate is degenerative ; yet, he does so in a nuanced way. In fact, climatological degeneration is not permanent for the *Canadiens*. As we see in Charlevoix's discussion of familial relations, even if *Canadiens* are acting like *sauvages*, these negative traits have not been essentialized:

> il y a une chose, sur quoi il n'est pas facile de les excuser: c'est le peu de naturel de plusieurs pour leurs Parens, qui de leur côté ont pour eux une tendresse assez mal entenduë. Les Sauvages tombent dans le même défaut, & il produit parmi eux les mêmes effets [...].Il est vrai aussi que hors de chez eux ils [les *Canadiens*] ne conservent presqu'aucun de leurs défauts.[262]

In this passage, Charlevoix underlines the supposedly weak parental-child relations as they exist within Native American and *Canadiens* families.[263] Read alongside his grumblings about the spirit of freedom and independence that reign in the colony, it becomes clear that Charlevoix is implicitly noting the lack of a strict social and hierarchical structure in New France. Although he only references the "effets" of these weak bonds in oblique terms, it is obvious that he sees the new form of kinship ties among the *Canadiens* as a negative consequence of their interaction with Natives.

Yet, at the end of the quotation, Charlevoix changes focus, and implicates the climate as a the cause of these "défauts." However, the effects of the climate can be read in at least two ways. If the *Canadiens* are somewhat corrupted by the environment, they are also purified by it. As he writes, "hors de chez eux," or outside of their home, "ils ne conservent presqu'aucun de leurs

[262] Charlevoix, *Journal* 405.

[263] Charlevoix is clearly well versed and anchored in the larger philosophical debates and paradigms of his century. Besides his espousal of certain Rousseauan ideas, Charlevoix seems to be advocating, for example, a Lockean vision of the family.

défauts."[264] The climate thus, paradoxically is at once and the same time, the cause of their "excellentes qualités" and the cause of their character flaws.

As a clear partisan of the colonial project in New France, Charlevoix believes the *Canadiens* have great potential. As he asks rhetorically, "Combien de Gentilshommes dans toutes les Provinces envieroient le sort des simples Habitans du Canada, s'ils le connoissoient?"[265] Yet, these "Habitans" have not always taken advantage of their envious position. Charlevoix follows this rhetorical question with another that highlights the degenerative capacity of New France: "Et ceux, qui languissent ici dans une honteuse indigence, sont-ils excusables de ne pas embrasser une Profession, que la seule corruption des moeurs, & des plus saines maximes à dégradée de son ancienne noblesse?"[266] Vocabulary such as "corruption" and "dégradée" are part of this vision of *Canadiens'* degeneration. Juxtaposing these two quotations, Charlevoix presents an uneasy balance of praise and condemnation for the *Canadiens.* The implication of this tension, I have argued, is that these French settlers represent a new and different type of "Frenchness," made hearty by the climate, but also corrupted by it and by contact with Native Americans. Chief among these foibles brought about in New France are the notions of freedom and independence. Yet, if Charlevoix evokes these two ideals in order to denigrate them – if he holds them as signs of degeneration – he cannot control their sign values. In other words, does the eighteenth century reader share his apprehension towards freedom and independence in the New World? Or, is this a tempting portrait of liberation for a highly stratified and socially-rigid metropolitan society?

Conclusion

[264] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 405.
[265] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 402.
[266] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage* 402.

It is clear that the comparison of Lahontan and Charlevoix's vision of regeneration and degeneration provides differing portraits of the peoples of New France. Whereas they both seem to believe that French mores can have a degenerative effect on Native populations as they replicate European vices, only Charlevoix believes in the regenerative capacity of colonization for the Native Americans. Charlevoix's commitment to Catholicism and conversion never allows him to question the evangelizing project of colonization. Lahontan, however, finds very little redeeming value for the Native Americans in their adoption of French values. Conversely, he suggests the possibility of a sort of regeneration for the *Canadiens* who are able to adopt Huron practices – to "[se] faire Huron."[267] Tempering this call for assimilation is his belief that sexual intermingling of the two groups represents a form of degeneration. In short, intermarriage remains a bridge too far. If Lahontan and Charlevoix both see *Canadien* society as more free, egalitarian, and independent than metropolitan France, they conceptualize these developments in diametrically opposed ways. For his part, Lahontan sees them as signs of progress, regeneration, and as a move towards a society built along egalitarian "Huron" values. Charlevoix is more dismayed by these developments, seeing them as a corruption of the values of the *Canadiens'* "ancêtres." Despite the positive qualities that Charlevoix sees in the *Canadiens,* he also perceives certain degenerative characteristics, which undercut this positive portrait. Together, these writers present a complex image of hybridity in the context of New France.

What has crystallized in this chapter is, thus, two different, but complex, views of the *Canadiens* and, by extension, New France. Far from a charm school for wayward Europeans, it is not a panacea of Christianized Native Americans either. Nor, however, is it a place of utter

[267] Lahontan, *Dialogues* 858.

"ensauvagement" – which, moreover, would mean different things for these two writers.[268] Rather, New France offers the possibility for the development of certain socio-cultural practices that are unthinkable in metropolitan France. At different times over the course of my analysis I have pointed out how these writers' respective texts play into larger philosophical discourses and questions that gripped mainland France in the eighteenth century. In this way, I have attempted to recontextualize the role New France played in the development of eighteenth discourses.

Some nagging questions remain, however, which must be answered in order to assess more fully the image of New France in the early eighteenth century *imaginaire*. Are Lahontan and Charlevoix's vision of Canada and the *Canadiens* simply visions of New France from an elite point of view? Although Lahontan and Charlevoix's texts were popular in their day, and appear to have been read, or at least known by the later *philosophes*, did any segment *outside* of an elite public share their vision of New France and the *Canadiens*? More generally, how, and to what extent, did a broader eighteenth century public in metropolitan France understand their North American colony in the early to mid-eighteenth century? Simply put, what visions of New France and the *Canadiens* were available to them? In the next chapter I will attempt to offer at least one part of a larger response through a case-study of Alain-René Lesage's literary production involving New France.

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[268] Like Réal Ouellet before him, Maurice Lemire has argued that the notion of 'ensauvagement' plays a central role in the development of French Canadians' sense of identity. See Lemire, Maurice, *Le mythe de l'Amérique dans l'imaginaire canadien,* Québec : Éditions Nota bene, 2003.

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Chapter 3 – Utopian Visions and Dressing Across Borders : The Discursive Role of New France in Alain-René Lesage's *Beauchêne*, *Les Mariages de Canada*, and *La Sauvagesse*

In the previous chapters I discussed the colonial texts of two relatively elite travelers to the New World whose texts marked their social milieu. While Lahontan and Charlevoix's texts reveal a specific vision of what scholars have termed the "colonial mind" – as they have *actual* experience in the New World – they are also attempting to shape a colonial *imaginaire* among the French public.[269] But, is this colonial *imaginaire* available to all, or simply the educated classes? In other words, what visions of New France were available to popular audiences at this time, and how might they have interpreted or "read" these representations ? What was the discursive function of such depictions in the popular realm ? What might they reveal about the socio-cultural landscape, the hopes, assumptions, and fears of this wide swath of the French public? To put it more succinctly, how did eighteenth century Frenchmen outside scholastic literary exchanges and the halls of power imagine the French colony in North America, graced with the title of "New" France?

With these questions in mind, this chapter analyzes several texts by the early eighteenth century writer Alain-René Lesage in order to reveal the discursive potential of the *imaginaire* of New France. As opposed to Charlevoix and Lahontan, Lesage aims squarely at a popular audience.[270] As such, his texts about the New World are important documents the study of

[269] In *The French Colonial Mind,* ed. Martin Thomas (Lincoln : University of Nebraska Press, 2011) Martin Thomas defines the "colonial mind" as "a collective conscious, or unconscious, thought process" (xi) by colonial participants who shared "attitudes, presumptions, and expectations" (xi) about the colonies. I use the term colonial *imaginaire* throughout this chapter in order to stress the fact that few people who read or heard these texts actually went to Canada. New France exists only in their *imaginaires*.

[270] Lesage's success at the *foire* is referenced in the entry "opéra comique" in the *Encyclopédie*, "on peut dire en un sens, qu'il fut le fondateur de ce spectacle, par le concours de monde qu'il y attiroit," 11:495 in *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, etc.,* eds. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert (University of Chicago: ARTFL Encyclopédie Project [Spring 2013 Edition], Robert Morrissey (ed), http://encyclopedie.uchicago.edu).

popular depictions of the New World colony. In what follows I concentrate my attention on Lesage's picaresque novel *Les Aventures de Monsieur Robert Chevalier dit Beauchêne, capitaine de flibustiers dans la Nouvelle-France* (1732) along with two *foire* plays, *La Sauvagesse* (1732), written with the help of Jacques-Philippe d'Orneval, and *Les Mariages de Canada* (1734), collected in the 1737 Lesage-edited *Recueil de l'Opéra-Comique*. Based on my close readings of these texts and appropriate theoretical models, I argue first, that the depictions of New France available to a popular audience of the time were not nearly as negative as contemporary historiography might have us believe. In fact, they share certain elements of the Promised Land trope that we already observed in our study of Charlevoix. Secondly, I suggest that these texts present the New World as a space of social experimentation. By valorizing the "right" kind of Native-French hybridity, these texts open up questions of essential identities and categories, problematizing not only cultural and sexual differences, but hierarchical ones as well. By focusing narrowly on the hybrid characters of *Beauchêne*, I refer to this problematization of identities as a process of "cultural transvestism." Ultimately, this chapter underlines the importance of the study of the *imaginaires* of New France in French intellectual history.

The Picaresque, *Foire* tradition, and Alain-René Lesage

By the time *Beauchêne* appeared on the Parisian book market in 1732, Lesage had already achieved some success in France with his play *Turcaret* (1709) and the first nine tomes of his picaresque novel *Gil Blas.* His imperative to continue writing, however, was clearly driven by the need for a steady income. As one contemporary critic faintly praised him in 1733:

> Le Sage, auteur de *Gil Blas*, vient de donner la vie de M. Beauchêne, capitaine de filbusters. Ce livre ne saurait être mal écrit, étant de Lesage; mais il est aisé de s'apercevoir […] qu'il ne travaille que pour vivre, et qu'il n'est plus le maître […] de donner à ses ouvrages du temps et de l'application.[271]

Perhaps because of the supposed mediocrity of these plays, these works be Lesage have languished in relative obscurity by contemporary literary criticism, known by few scholars outside the field. Whatever the literary merits of Lesage, he clearly writes with an eye towards turning a profit on his works, revealing his sense of the tastes of the literary and theatrical market and audiences. In this respect, the supposed mediocrity of Lesage – whether such a judgment of taste is merited or not – may in fact be an advantage to our study. As Christian Marouby, one of the few contemporary scholars to publish on *Beauchêne*, has suggested, the "unexceptional" quality of Lesage's work may "perhaps more accurately than contemporary masterpieces, […] provide us with a representation of the average mentalities, of the ordinary attitudes and perceptions of the period."[272] Because of his economic incentive to write, Lesage must respond to the audiences' tastes. When looking at his depictions of New France, then, the contemporary scholar can say with some confidence that Lesage responds to the received ideas and assumptions about New France of his audience.

Because these texts are largely unread today, it may be helpful to summarize briefly the narrative structure and plot in order to facilitate my analysis. Even as the tale of the swashbuckling Robert Chevalier failed to become a bestseller – as suggested by the small number of reprints that were produced before the nineteenth century[273] – Lesage's text was still

[271] *Journal d'un Contemporain* (1733), quoted in Assaf, Francis, "Utopian Beginnings, Dystopian End: Mlle Duclos' Indian 'Nation' in Alain-René Lesage's *Beauchêne,*" *Romanische Forschungen*: 98:1/2 (1986) 81.
[272] Marouby, Christian, "Utopian Colonialism," *North Dakota Quarterly*: 56.3 (1988 Summer) 148.
[273] See Harry Kurz discussion of the publication history of *Beauchêne* in Le Sage, Alain René, and Harry Kurz, *Les aventures du flibustier Beauchêne* (New York: The Century Co, 1926) xviii.

part of an American vogue that gripped Europe in the 1730s. As Frédéric Deloffre has written about Lesage's corpus of America-inspired works, "[il] marque sa place dans l'histoire du mouvement philosophique à propose du thème du bon sauvage. Surtout peut-être, il fait preuve d'un sens aigu de l'actualité […] présent[ant] une image piquante et somme toute plutôt attirante de la Nouvelle-France."[274] Indeed, as we will see, unlike Abbé Prévost's wildly successful *Manon Lescaut*, released a year before *Beauchêne,* Lesage's text portrays New France in less overtly negative tones.[275] Lesage also gives New France a larger role in his text than Prévost does for Louisiana.

At its core *Beauchêne* is the story of Robert Chevalier, a *Canadien* who as a child steals away to an Iroquois tribe, embracing the Native American life.[276] When he finally returns to the French colony, he becomes a cultural liaison between the settler community and Native Americans before venturing out into the Atlantic as a pirate. His privateering on the open seas takes him to Saint Domingue, Jamaica, Ireland, Brazil, and Africa. All the while he listens and records the tales of his shipmates, including a certain Monneville, whose story represents half of the text's narrative. The orality of the text allows Robert Chevalier and his fellow pirates to provide commentary and opinions on the stories they have heard, suggesting the way in which the historical reader should read the text. While many minor stories are told over the course of the work, the major narrative strands revolve around three characters : Robert Chevalier,

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[274] Deloffre, Frédéric, "Lesage et la Nouvelle-France," *Lesage, écrivain (1695-1735)* ed. Jacques Wagner (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997) 323.

[275] With its narrative climax in Louisiana, *Manon Lescaut* clearly serves as an inter-text to the Monneville episode of *Beauchêne*. For a comparative study see Assaf, Francis, "Structure de *Beauchêne*," in *Lesage, écrivain (1695-1735)* 203 – 205.

[276] The veracity of Lesage's text, which he claims to have received as a manuscript, has been the focus of some scholarly work. Although Robert Chevalier does appear to have existed, *Beauchêne* is clearly fictional. See Baudry, René, "Chevalier, *dit* Beauchêne, Robert," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online,* Vol. 2 (U of Toronto, 2000, March 2013 <http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id_nbr=708>). See also Francis Assaf's discussion in "Structure de *Beauchêne*," 197.

Monneville, and Mlle du Clos. Monneville's story recounts his banishment to the New World after spending his childhood disguised as a girl. Mlle Du Clos's story, for her part, is the quintessential tale of an innocent exiled to New France by petty jealousy. A "fille du roi" she becomes the leader of a tribe of Huron, reshaping it into a veritable utopia. As I will discuss further below, despite their seemingly dissimilar plot lines, their stories subtly parallel one another and, considered together, represent a provocative meditation on identity and the *imaginaire* of New France.

Undeterred by the relative lack of interest in *Beauchêne*, Lesage again uses New France and the people of the New World in two *foire* plays, performed in 1732 and 1734, respectively, and published in his 1737 *Recueil*. In the first of these, *La Sauvagesse* (1732), Lesage and his writing partner d'Orneval put on stage the story of a beautiful Native American woman, Angolette, who has been transported back from the "Pays des Sauvages," having learned perfect French during her transatlantic journey.[277] Over the course of the play, Angolette becomes the voice of naivety and frankness in affairs of the heart as she has run away from her mistress to escape an arranged marriage. In a theatrical gesture worthy of Marivaux, Angolette unknowingly falls in love with Clitandre, the very nobleman whom her mistress has arranged for her to marry. At the end of the play the major obstacles to their love – Angolette's lack of "Fortune & de la Noblesse,"— are washed away in a *deus ex machina* as her European protector arrives on the scene at just the right time to make Angolette her heir.[278] The play thus presents Angolette's lack of money as a greater barrier to their union than her cultural background, which plays no part in

[277] Lesage, Alain-René, Louis Fuzelier, and d' Orneval, *Les Mariages de Canada, Le théâtre de la foire. Tome IX* (Paris: chez Pierre Gandouin, 1737) 226.
[278] Lesage, *Mariages* 265.

hampering Clitandre and Angolette's marriage. While largely derivative, our interest in the play lies with the character of Angolette and the identitary concerns and possibilities her presence subtly brings to the play.

The second play, *Les Mariages de Canada* (1734) depicts life and love, as the title suggests, in New France. In this story, which is clearly influenced by the success of Prévost's *Manon Lescaut* and Lesage's less successful *Beauchêne*, Damis, a minor nobleman, has come to New France to find his lover Lucille. Lucille, like Mlle Du Clos from *Beauchêne*, has been exiled to New France by her "méchante"[279] "Belle-mère."[280] Through a series of happy coincidences, Lucille and Damis are reunited thanks to the discerning tastes of Madame Bourdon, the *directrice* charged with coupling the new arrivals. This same serendipitous plot line is repeated with the other major characters of the play, whereby Mezzetin and Colombine, and Clarisse and the Chevalier are all reconciled, respectively, in the New World. Once married, they are sent to the frontier to establish a French settlement where their guiding principle is "contentement passe richesse."[281] Already, thus, this final refrain suggests the hopeful tone of the play vis-à-vis New France.

Considerations of genre

Before moving forward, it is important to ask how the generic categories of the *foire* and the *picaresque* novel shape the interpretation and the conclusions modern scholarship can draw from them. Heavily influenced by the Italian *Commedia dell'arte* tradition, the *foire* theaters of

[279] Lesage, *Mariages* 306.
[280] Lesage, *Mariages* 306.
[281] Lesage, *Mariages* 360.

the early to mid eighteenth century have roots in the Middle Ages. Only in the mid seventeenth century, however, were they formally housed at their sites at Saint-Germain and Saint-Laurent.[282] The Saint-Germain *foire* ran from early February until Palm Sunday and was considered the more prestigious of the venues, attracting members of the bourgeois, minor noblity and the common people.[283] From July to late September, the Saint-Laurent *foire* house around a hundred merchants, selling their wares in spaces they rented for as little as two sous.[284] Alongside this economic activity, street performers, jugglers, and dancers entertained the passing crowds. In this respect, The *foire* as a whole was another type of popular commodity among others, offered to a diverse public, trying to make itself heard among the cacophony of French boulevard culture.

The popularity of the *foire* theaters made them prime targets for hostility from the *Comédie française* as it blamed the *foire* plays for a drop in their revenues. Starting as early as the late seventeenth century, the *Comédie française* began encouraging the institution of ever more draconian rules governing *foire* performances in order to protect their bottom line.[285] The more rigid the rules, however, the more interest they generated among the public for the *foire* plays. Indeed, the public flocked to the *foire* to see how the theater would circumvent the latest rules against them. Because of these laws – forbidding dialogue and later speech all together, for example – the *foire* theaters were a sort of laboratory of theatrical innovation. In a word, the plays had shades of the avant-garde as playwrights crafted increasingly innovative narrative techniques to flout the rules. Beside the innovative narratology, the *foire* tradition can be considered an early form of market-driven entertainment as the plays lived and died by the

[282] Isherwood, Robert M, *Farce and Fantasy: Popular Entertainment in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) 22.
[283] Isherwood 23.
[284] Isherwood 23.
[285] Martin, Isabelle, *Le théâtre de la foire: des tréteaux aux boulevards* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2002) 34.

money they brought in from the audience. As one performer in 1715 said to the crowd before his performance, "si des représentations badines vous divertissent, des jeux bas ou trop grossiers vous révoltent; voilà votre goût, Messieurs, c'est à nous de nous y conformer, & c'est aussi ce que nous nous proposons."[286] As this citation suggests, the writers (and actors) had to construct narratives and performances that appealed explicitly to the tastes of the audience.

While there is little doubt that both the aristocracy and the *petit peuple* made up the audience of the *foire* theater, scholars have disagreed about how to characterize the culture of the plays. Robert Isherwood has suggested in *Farce and Fantasy: Popular Entertainment in Eighteenth-Century Paris*, for example, that the *foire* plays represent a confluence of high and low culture, "no separation of taste publics existed at the fairs and boulevards"[287] as all were "unified by derisive laughter" and "the corse language and gesture of the people."[288] The source of this laughter, however, came from myriad sources. In her recent study *Le Théâtre de la Foire: Des tréteaux aux boulevards* Isabelle Martin has pointed out that, "les matériaux savants fournissent [...] un fonds non négligeable de personnages, de thèmes et d'intrigues."[289] While Martin agrees that popular culture was an important element of *foire* esthetics, references and illusions drawn from "higher" genres were included by the writers as subtle appeal to audiences from more elevated backgrounds. As a place of social inclusivity, existing in parallel to the market, the *foire* was a market of discursive exchange.[290] Through playful ribbing or abject ridicule, the *foire* connected the public to the state and represented a move towards open

[286] Parfaict, Claude and Paifaict, François. *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des spectacles de la foire.* Vol. 1. (Paris: Briasson, 1743) 171, 172. Also cited in Isherwood 89.
[287] Isherwood 250.
[288] Isherwood 3.
[289] Martin 124.
[290] Fraser, Nancy, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text*: 25-26 (1990, pp. 56-80) 57.

criticism. In this respect, the *foire* is a powerful example of Jürgen Habermas's concept of the burgeoning *Öffentlichkeit*, or public sphere, in eighteenth century France.[291]

The social and economic milieux in which the *foires* takes place must be noted. As Martin points out "La foire attirait aussi les colporteurs de livres interdits, les soldats en congé, les valets débauchés, les prostituées, etc.: une frange d'associaux à la recherche d'une aubaine ou de l'anonymat!"[292] With this in mind, we can imagine that tawdry tall-tales and stories from the East and West colored the *foire* experience more generally. The plays would not have been so much a distraction or *divertissement* from the fair, but rather reinforced the general *carnavalesque* ambiance. As Martin claims, the theatre represents therefore a "microcosme de la société française de son temps."[293] Additionally, given the fact that the commercial system of France at the time was still steeped in mercantilist and extractionist economic theories, it is perhaps unsurprising that Lesage would present plays that seem pro-colonial at a fair based on the trading of goods. In a word, Lesage is not writing in a socio-political or economic vacuum. Rather, he is writing for a mixed audience, piqued by the exotic and the transgressive.

Lesage's preservation of the plays in written form represents a proverbial double-edged sword for scholarly interpretation. On the one hand, Lesage is making conscious choices in his selection of texts to be reworked for publication. This is a decidedly abridged account of the *foire* literary production. In his estimation, many plays were unworthy of publication: "On y a vû

[291] In his work *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* Habermas does not deal specifically with the *opéra comique*, but seems to suggest that the popular theater became an inclusive "public sphere" only when "the main floor became the place where […] the people congregated who were later counted among the cultured classes." (38, 39) See Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1989).

[292] Martin 25.

[293] Martin xvii.

tant de mauvaise productions, tant d'obscenitez […] Ces productions, qu'on ne peut rappeller que désagréablement pour ce Theâtre, n'y sont point employées […]"[294] These bad plays, "ont dû leur succès au jeu des Acteurs, ou à des Balets brillans."[295] His objective, therefore, is only to provide texts that "ont plû par le merite de leur propre fond."[296] Lesage's pretensions towards refinement and seriousness that we read in his *Préface* help elucidate some of the issues with which scholars of the *foire* tradition have wrestled. For example, his *Préface* problematizes the view, advanced by Isherwood, that Charles Favart's takeover in 1750 marks the beginning of the "seriousness" of the *foire*. Isherwood sees in Favart's directorship of the *foire* "the murder of marketplace humour, the *embourgeoisement* of taste."[297] However, much of the slapstick humor has already been evacuated from the Lesage plays under question in this study. Moreover, in his *Préface*, Lesage seems to suggest that he has taken steps to appeal to a mixed audience, "Il n'est pas facile de trouver un milieu entre le haut & le bas; de raser la terre, pour ainsi dire, sans la toucher. Le Sublime n'est pas plus difficle à attrapper, que l'art d'amuser l'esprit en badinant."[298] In his effort to negotiate the space between the high and low, the sublime and the frivolous, Lesage problematizes the division between "high" and "low" genres, "seriousness" and "banter."

The idea that there is a rising confluence of different taste publics is reinforced by the materiality of the *recueil* itself. As a physical book, these texts can move beyond the performance of a troupe and can be read aloud or in silence. Lesage mentions this himself in the *Préface*, dissuading buyers from merely reading the texts, "il faut chanter & ne pas lire simplement nos Couplets […] en les chantant, vous y mettrez du vôtre, & nous aurons meilleur marché de vous:

[294] Lesage, "Préface," ai.
[295] Lesage, "Préface," ai.
[296] Lesage, "Préface," ai, aij.
[297] Isherwood 101.
[298] Lesage,"Préface" a iii.

Au lieu que, si vous ne faites que les lire, vous prendrez garde à tout"[299] The act of signing with the text implicates the reader, making him or her metaphorically a member of the troupe. The reader is asked to join his or her voice to the multitude. Moreover, the physicality of the book might suggest that Lesage was hoping to cash in on the rise of private theaters among the rich. As Isherwood has suggested, these private theaters were at least partially designed for those among the upper class who wished to participate in *foire* theater culture from the comfort, and privacy, of their residences.[300] The bookishness of the *recueil* also has implications for Lesage's legacy, as it is a concrete and enduring example of his work. As such he is more interested in furthering his own prestige than in providing an accurate depiction of the corpus of *foire* theatre. Seen in this light, the modern scholar must be cautious in drawing over-arching conclusions from this collection.

Isabelle Martin has succinctly noted the challenges and opportunities provided by Lesage's *recueil*. As she notes, "les tracasseries de la censure, plus sévère pour la publication que pour la représentation, provoquaient encore des délais supplémentaires […] Ces retards ont cependant un aspect positif pour le lecteur, sinon pour l'histoire du théâtre, car ils donnent à l'auteur le temps de s'écarter des modes passagères."[301] Thus, the lack of overtly bawdy material may be explained in part by the reality of the censure. The temporal displacement suggests, furthermore, that these plays held literary and commercial merit in Lesage's estimation. Indeed, the fact that Lesage was inclined to publish *La Sauvagesse* and *Mariages* in his 1737 *recueil*, a full five years after their initial performance at the *foire*, suggests the continued interest in the New World among the public. In other words, interest in New France is not a "mode passagère."

[299] Lesage, "Préface," a v.
[300] Isherwood 34.
[301] Martin 89.

Yet, what we are reading as modern historical readers is the reworking of these texts for an explicitly literate audience. The ephemeral moment of performance is lost, replaced with the refined text. As Martin points out, the need to self-censor in writing was great at the time and tempered, perhaps, the freedom that the fleeting moment of performance afforded the *foire* plays. Moreover, we know that what works on the stage often falls flat on the written page. Similarly, the written page allows reworkings that the time constraints of putting on a play do not allow. Without recourse to original manuscripts, which do not seem to have survived, the polished and published version is all we have to work from. However, these observations should not paralyze our analysis, but rather temper our readings and interpretations as we must forgo questions of textual evolution between written and oral texts, as well as the impact of performance on interpretation.

Like the *foire* tradition, the *picaresque* novel was born of foreign influences and appealed explicitly to a carnivalesque esthetic. Yet, even the term *picaresque* is anachronistic and must be used with some caution. In was only in the late nineteenth century, thanks to the scholarship of Fonger de Haan and Frank W. Chandler, that the genre was established as such.[302] Using the anonymously-published 1554 Spanish novel *La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes y de sus fortunas y adversidades* as an Urtext of the *picaresque* genre, scholars have used the category to classify numerous works. While they may have taken inspiration from the Spanish forebearer, it is unclear whether authors considered their own texts as belonging to a specific genre. In his 1984 study of Lesage's novels, *Lesage et le picaresque*, for example, Francis Assaf uses genre theory

[302] Wicks, Ulrich, *Picaresque Narrative, Picaresque Fictions: A Theory and Research Guide* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989) 11.

as a tool of analysis, but runs into several narrative exceptions that problematize the clear categorization of Lesage's work as *picaresque*. For example, the character of Robert Chevalier places honor above fortune, a valorization which Assaf qualifies as being "une […] attitude loin d'être picaresque."[303] In addition, the orphan motif, largely associated with the *picaresque*, is somewhat flimsy, as Robert Chevalier returns to Montréal as the prodigal son and is reunited (briefly) with his biological parents.[304] While Assaf is comfortable categorizing *Beauchêne* as an updated French version of the *picaresque*, scholarship from the late twentieth century has generally questioned the generic category of the *picaresque.* Although it may still provide certain analytical clarity, the *picaresque* can also be an overly restrictive or reductive frame.[305] As such, as I use the term *picaresque* I am referring more to a narrative mode than a strict generic label.

Nonetheless, for my study it will be helpful to understand in large brush strokes what the *picaresque* mode means. Although it is in some ways a pastiche of the heroic *roman* genre dating back to antiquity, scholars have pointed out that the *picaresque* has multiple origins. Alongside the reference to antique epics, the *picaresque* also combined elements from popular culture, such as proverbs, tall-tales, and anecdotes.[306] The protagonist of the picaresque novel, the *picaro,* is meant to be a sort of anti-hero, to whom all levels of society can relate. As Giancarlo Maiorino claims in his introduction to *The Picaresque : Tradition and Displacement*, "the picaresque foregrounded its reverse, that is to say, an unredeemable poverty of purse and thought that in fact was all too permanent for most people."[307] Be that as it may, it is unlikely that those who lived in "unredeemable poverty" ever had the occasion, or education, to read such novels. Although some

[303] Assaf, Francis, *Lesage et le picaresque* (Paris: A.-G. Nizet, 1983) 125.
[304] For a summary of the motifs of the *picaresque* see Wicks 64 – 67.
[305] Wicks 4.
[306] Maiorino, Giancarlo, "Renaissance Marginalities," *The Picaresque: Tradition and Displacement* (Minneapolis, Minn: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) XVII.
[307] Maiorino XVIII.

have pointed to a "democratic intended readership,"[308] Helen H. Reid has questioned this view. As she remarks in *The Reader in the Picaresque Novel*, the readership would have been made up of the highborn, "and virtually no *picaros*."[309] Perhaps the upper echelons of society saw in the *picaro* a figure of ridicule and a prankster. Or, perhaps they read these books with an eye towards societal escapism. Confined either by *de jure* or *de facto* social constraints, the relatively well-off readership might have seen in the *picaro* what Robert Heilman called the "catharsis of rascality." By this Heilman means, "the secret inclination to discontinuity, to hit-and-run raids on life, the impulse to shun the long and exacting unity, to live instead by episodes."[310] This confluence of upperclass and lower class tastes – similarly to the *foire* esthetic, moreover – may suggest, in the *longue durée* perspective, a society moving towards more relativist and self-critical inclinations. I say relativist and self-critical because the *picaro* is not so much the object of study in himself. Rather, he represents a vessel through which to view eighteenth century European society more generally. As Frank W Chadler, noted in his foundational text on the picaresque, *Romances of the Roguery*, "We do not so much look at the rogue as borrow his eyes with which to look at the world."[311]

In this way, the *picaresque* mode fit solidly within the aesthetic tastes of the day, riding the literary vogue of "spy novels" in the same vein as Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes*. However, in the *picaresque* the characters through whom the audience sees society are not complete aliens, but rather "half outsiders."[312] Although the *picaro* shares a similar narrative position as that of Montesquieu's Usbek and Rica, the *picaro* holds a different status within society. In *Beauchêne*,

[308] Wicks 7.
[309] Reed, Helen H, *The Reader in the Picaresque Novel* (London: Tamesis Books, 1984) 17, 18. Cited in Wicks 7.
[310] Heilman, Robert "Variations on Picaresque (*Felix Krull*)" quoted in Wicks 44.
[311] Chandler, Frank Wadleigh, *Romances of Roguery; An Episode in the History of the Novel* (New York: Macmillan Co, 1899) 60.
[312] Maiorino, xv.

for example, the characters are not "naïve" Persians or Hurons who are providing critiques of society, but individuals who, while marginal, are still critiquing their society from within it. My suggestion, in short, is that the position of these characters on the extreme periphery of society gives greater force to their social critiques than if they were decidedly outside of it.

Yet, deciding who is more of an outsider in these texts is somewhat beside the point. Rather, it should be understood that "outsiderism," is "constitutive of the [*picaresque*] genre itself. Outsiderism thus stood opposite canonicity, whose texts ignored the marginalized periphery where the rest of humanity lived."[313] What is more, in Lesage's *Beauchêne*, and also in the *foire* plays for that matter, the marginality of these characters is doubled, for they are both literally, i.e. geographically, and socially on the periphery of French society. Nonetheless, to be on the periphery is still to be inside, reflecting back on the center. This delicate position of "half outsider," I suggest, dissuades the audience from simply reading past the characters, interpreting them as fantastical inventions who exist solely to provide a critique of society from a naïve, outside, and relativist perspective.

In this respect, social and geographical marginality unifies the three texts under study. Yet, this distance is belied, or overcome, by the moment of reading or performance. Writing about *La Sauvagesse,* Andrea Grewe has remarked that "in La *Sauvagesse* das Ideal eines natürlichen, gleichsam unschuldigen und unverdorbenen Lebens nicht mehr in eine mythische Vergangenheit oder an einen literarischen U-topos verlegt, sondern in die unmittelbare räumliche und zeitliche Nähe."[314] ("In *La Sauvagesse* ideal nature, that is to say innocent and unspoiled life, no longer lies in a mythical past or a literary *U-topos*, but rather in direct spatial and temporal

[313] Maiorino, xv.
[314] Grewe, Andrea, *Monde renversé-théâtre renversé: Lesage und das Théâtre de la Foire : avec un résumé en français* (Bonn: Romanistischer Verlag, 1989) 362.

proximity."[315]) That is to say, the *sauvagesse* Angolette, is both on the stage, thus literally close, but also metaphorically close to the audience as her story is based on a "true" account set in a relatively close spatial proximity and chronological period. This dual proximity, in turn, increases what Grewe calls the "Identifikationsmöglichkeiten"[316] ("possibility of identification") the audience has with the performance / text. This possibility of identification serves several discursive functions, notably raising the questions of group identity. By making Angolette a sympathetic outsider who is invited into the French fold, Lesage's play should be read as opening a space of identitary negotiation. By pushing the limits of what can be considered "inside" and "outside" French society, the text subtly invite the reader / audience to meditate on who can be French, and what that label means.

New France as both a forced exile and escape from European social-constraints

If duality – outsider vs. insider, marginality vs. centrality, highbrow vs. lowbrow – is a powerful motif that runs through the *foire* and the *picaresque* traditions, within the texts duality pervades the narration and even the setting. One of the most important dualities for this current project is that of the status of New France in the texts. On the one hand, Lesage's texts often portray Canada as a place of forced exile for France's undesirables. On the other hand, if this forced exile is seen as a way of ridding the kingdom of discontents, it also offers the possibility of freedom and rebirth. As such, the exile motif surrounding New France is not exclusively negative. Rather, New France becomes a place of reluctant refuge, with many obstacles and

[315] All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.
[316] Grewe, 362.

challenges, but great opportunities as well.

One of the main possibilities available in Canada is freedom from the tyranny of parental surveillance and control. Ironically, this freedom comes as the result of parental banishment and punishment. In *Mariages*, for example, the main characters commiserate and lament the severity of their parents who have unjustly sent them to Canada against their will. Consider, for example, these quotations: "les méchantes femmes que les Belles-meres!"[317] or "mon pere/ qui, dans sa mauvaise humeur/ malgré moi, m'a fait faire [ce voyage]"[318] and "Ma chére Clarice / Hé quoi, vous voilà./ Ciel! Quelle injustice! / Vous en Canada!"[319] Throughout the text, parents stand resolutely in the way of the characters' star-crossed love, sending their children to New France to separate them from their lovers. Other than Damis, who has come to find and rescue Lucille, no other character has come of his or her own accord.[320]

Yet, in the play, fate seems to have found a way to circumvent the tragedy of the characters' exile and parental authority by reuniting the lovers in New France. As Clarice sings, "le Dieu puissant de Cithére […] Pour nous venger de votre Pére / Nous a rejoints ici tous deux."[321] As this citation already suggests, the text attempts to imbue the audience with utopian feelings towards New France through the allusion to the god of Cythera, that is to say, Venus. New France may be a place of exile, but it can also by a place of love. In this comparison, the audience perceives the continual tension between the fantastical and real. Yet, whereas Cythera is a mythical paradise, New France is a real colony with a concrete and tangible reality behind it.[322]

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[317] Lesage, *Mariages* 307.
[318] Lesage, *Mariages* 312.
[319] Lesage, *Mariages* 356.
[320] Reading the text in historical context, *Mariages* could be read as a critique of the much despised practice of *lettres de cachet*, a motif shared with Abbé Prévost's *Manon Lescaut.*
[321] Lesage, *Mariages* 357.
[322] The concreteness of New France in Lesage's works contrasts with other plays from the eighteenth century that share similar reversals of hierarchy. To give just one example, in Marivaux's plays *La Colonie* (performed in

The use of the colony of New France as its setting sets *Mariages* apart from other *foire* plays. This text goes beyond pure farce and fantasy – as Isherwood tends to view the *foire* theatre – beyond voyages on "billowy clouds to utopian lands."[323] Outside the realm of "pure literarishe Fiktion,"[324] as Grewe put it, or the mythical *allieurs*, these stories take place within the real and tangible, albeit fictionalized, French empire. As such, this text portrays New France as an outlet, or escape from the narrow confines of a parental restraints that stands in the way of young love, but it does so even while acknowledging the tragedy of being forcibly sent there.

Just as the god of love has duped the characters' parents, the flouting of authority at various societal and cultural levels becomes a recurring theme in these texts. To give one important example, in *Mariages* (and also in *Beauchêne*), the text presents a character who has destroyed his father's library as vengeance for exiling him to New France. In *Mariages*, the Chevalier describes his destructive actions in these terms:

> je me suis bien vengé de sa tyrannie...La veille de mon départ de Paris je me glissai la nuit dans sa bibliotheque où je fis un désordre effroyable. J'ôtais de chaque Tome vingt ou trente feuilles, sans respect pour aucun Auteur ancien ou moderne, profane ou sacré. Je couvris le plancher de leurs dépoüilles […] Je mutilai dans ma rage / Cent Auteurs vieux & nouveaux […] / Orateurs, & Poëtes, / Voyageurs, Interprétes/ Sçavans Commentateurs, / Tous les Dictionnaires, / Et même les Grammaires / Ont senti mes fureurs […] Ainsi mes mains autoricides / en une nuit de son logis / Firent un Hôtel d'Invalides"[325]

Of course, the reparation of mutilated books as an especially costly burden in the eighteenth century. While this action can be chalked up to the rebelliousness of youth, the text suggests that the Chevalier's actions mark a desire for epistemological freedom. Through the dual process of anthropomorphizing the books and metaphorically speaking of their destruction in

1729 and reworked for publication in 1750) and *L'Ile des esclaves* (1725) women and slaves are, respectively, in charge. However, the islands are otherworldly, existing only within the dramatic fiction of the play.

[323] Isherwood 251.

[324] Grewe 365.

[325] Lesage, *Mariages* 315.

terms of a field of battle, the Chevalier emphasizes the violence that he committed on them. These works are not frivolous novels, or works from other "low" genres, but represent the pinnacles of Western knowledge. He has destroyed not only the great "Orateurs & Poëtes" and "Sçavans Commentateurs" but his rage has reached even the grammarians. Pushed farther, the Chevalier is advocating something akin to "epistemic violence," to re-appropriate Gayatri Spivak's term for a different context, against the Western canon.[326] Yet, he is challenging Western pillars of knowledge not from an outsider's position – not from the subaltern – but rather from a privileged position inside the structure. He is, we will remember, a Chevalier whose family can afford a large library. Even this character, from a lofty play in the social hierarchy, appears to recognize the constraints of Western knowledge and mores and sees in New France a way to start anew – to find his own voice and path to knowledge.

It is tempting to see the historical Lesage speaking through the Chevalier in this passage. Anguished, perhaps by his lack of mainstream success, the passage may serve as a meta-commentary by Lesage on the act of writing and personal legacy. Read from this angle, Lesage is signaling the constraints of the literary and epistemological structure of his time, and his desire to transcend them – to send their "dépoüilles," or remains, to the "Hôtel d'Invalides." This desire seems to suggest two interwoven processes that Harold Bloom refers to as *Kenosis* and *Daemonization* in his work *The Anxiety of Influence.*[327] That is to say, I read the destruction of the library within these texts as the historical Lesage's desire to break with the past. To quote the definition Bloom gives of *Kenosis*, Lesage desires to mark his "discontinuity with the precursor"[328] and quite literally to "empt[y] out" the precursors through the removal of their title

[326] See Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, Donna Landry, and Gerald M. MacLean, *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak* (New York: Routledge, 1996) 219.
[327] Bloom, Harold, *The Anxiety of Influence; A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973) 14, 15.
[328] Bloom 14.

pages, thereby removing their symbolic authority. At the same time, Lesage is practicing a sort of "Counter-Sublime"[329] (*daemonization*) by elevating the lowly *roman picaresque* to the level of the heroic epic.

Like the historical Lesage, the character within the text is suggesting that the division between high and low genres and *epistemes*, or knowledge systems, are arbitrary. As if to show this point, the Chevalier wields this freedom – freedom from "Tous les Dictionnaires, / Et même les Grammaires" – in his creation of a neologism to describe his act violence against his father's library : "autoricide." What I find interesting in this choice of vocabulary is the dual etymological interpretation. "Autoricide" can be understood – as the textual context suggests – as the act of killing books, from the Latin roots *auctor* (author) and *caedere* (to slay). However, the term *auctor* also has an etymological relationship with the word "authority." Thus, a more pernicious definition of "autoricide" would be, "the act of killing authority," symbolized by the books he has destroyed.

Indeed, in the *Beauchêne* version of this story, which clearly provides the model for the play's episode, a *fils de librarie* appears to flout authority more explicitly than the Chevalier from *Mariages* : "Que j'ai tronqué de jurisconsultes et mutilé d'orateurs! Que j'ai laissé sur le carreau de pères de l'Église, qui n'ont plus face de chrétiens! Je n'ai rien épargné, théologie, médecine, histoire, poésie, romans, tout a passé par mes mains […]"[330] All symbols of authority – the law, theology and the Bible – lie in ruins at his feet. And to what end? Through his destruction, the books become analogous to the exiled son :

> Pour ceux qui avaient de longues préfaces, ils n'en seraient pas moins bons si du moins sur la première page je leur avais laissé leur nom, leur âge et le lieu de leur naissance. Il

[329] Bloom 15.
[330] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 1, 8.

> est vrai que faute de cela les malheureux vont passer comme moi pour des aventuriers qui n'ont ni feu ni lieu et ne sont réclamés de personne.[331]

This is an important remark by the *fils* character because he is equating the canon of Western knowledge with the experience of an *aventurier*. Knowledge might be passed down from the greats, but *aventuriers* have their own kind of knowledge on par with them. If we again see this as meta-commentary on writing, whereby the *fils* and Chevalier stands in for Lesage, we can read this as a justification for, and defense of, *Beauchêne* and *Mariages.* Lesage seems to be suggesting that the *foire* and *picaresque* traditions – two popular, but little-respected, genres of their day, "réclamés de personne" – hold their own epistemological value equal to the great works of Western civilization. However, this is more than a parenthesis in Lesage's text – more than a wink to literary scholarship and a critique of canonical choices – because this declaration of writerly and epistemological freedom is mirrored by the freedom offered in New France. In other words, the concept of New France provides new opportunities not only for the characters in the works under discussion, but also for Lesage who can use this extra-European space as a way to mark the values of his works.

To return to the texts themselves, the near absence of clear authority figures also plays into the idea, either explicitly or implicitly proposed by these texts, that new, more democratic, social arrangements are possible in this North American French colony. At the end of *Mariages*, for example, Madame Bourdon, who as the resident matchmaker holds the most power in the colony, sends the newly married colonists to "[s'] établir sur les bords du fleuve Saint Laurent avec ceux qui ont été mariés dans cette Maison depuis trois jours. Partez ensemble. Vous

[331] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 1, 8.

trouverez près du Rivage le vaisseau qui doit vous porter au Canton où vous ferez votre demeure."[332] It is essential to note that the only people being sent to this new settlement are young, newly married couples. Madame Bourdon does not ask them to report to a commander or other authority figure. Rather, she invites them to make their own home – "f[aire] votre demeure." The "natural" hierarchy of age or experience is missing from this future settlement. This is to be a community of equals; a society built more closely along the horizontal axis of fraternal equality than the vertical axis of parental authority. In short, the sense from the text is that they are making their own society, free from the constraints of the past and Europe. Indeed, the text confirms this interpretation in the rather cheerful vaudeville that ends the play. As the characters sing, "Allez tous ensemble / Joyeux & contens / Tout le long de la Riviére […] Ah! Qu'il fait bon là!"[333] and "Nos aurons dans notre Chaumiére / Une liberté tout entiére [...] Ne respirant que la tendresse, / Nous pourrons faire l'amour : / Contentement passe richesse."[334] It is not quite a paradise, of course – they will live "dans un désert." Nonetheless, it is a "désert où la Nature / Ne fourniroit pour nourriture / Que de l'eau claire & du pain/ Un Amant avec sa Maîtresse / Oublîroit le genre humain : Contentement passe richesse."[335] Together these citations create the portrait of settlers who are joyous, happy and free, living along the river in a place where it is suggested the temperature is pleasant. This is a far cry from what one would expect from a cruel and unjust exile among "quelques arpents de neige."

Thus, in opposition to the lamentations of the cruelty of parents who have sent their children to Canada against their will, the characters begin explicitly to conceptualize Canada as a *locus ameonus*. Damis, for example, tells Lucile that he has come to Canada to "passer [s]es

[332] Lesage, *Mariages* 358.
[333] Lesage, *Mariages* 358.
[334] Lesage, *Mariages* 360.
[335] Lesage, *Mariages* 360.

jours avec vous dans une agréable habitation que je suis en état d'acheter."[336] He continues by depicting Canada in terms that draw on the notions of refuge and escape. Consider, for example, Damis's statements that, "C'est dans cet azile, / Ma chére Lucile / Que mille plaisirs / Combleront vos désirs […] / A ce lieu charmant / Rendons-nous promptement"[337]or "Je vais avec Lucile / Dans un séjour agréable & tranquille."[338] Worried that Lucile has forgotten him during her voyage to New France, Damis wonders, "Mais aimez-vous toujours dans votre asile?"[339] This choice of vocabulary here is striking. Canada is an "azile" and a "lieu charmant" that allows the freedom to express "plaisirs" and "désirs." It is free of strife, promising a life that is "agréable et tranquille." What is also important to note is that these descriptions of New France lack any ironic subtext. If the text is playing with received notions about Canada, playing on a comical reversal of expectations, the text does not hint at a satiric interpretation. Although the tonality of the performer's choices may have shaded the audience's interpretation of these lines, Canada in this text is painted earnestly in utopian terms.

Mariage's depiction of Canada as a Promised Land clearly plays on the Biblical tropes of faraway lands with both positive and negative connotations. On the one hand, Lesage's text explicitly calls Canada a "désert," implying suffering and hardship through his evoking of the Biblical story from Exodus of the Israelites' forty year trek in the Egyptian desert. On the other hand, Canada also represents a new Eden, earned by the very suffering and exile that life in New France requires. Indeed, the fact that these young people have been "exiled" *into* Eden by their fathers (and mothers) suggests an inversion of the Fall, as presented in the book of Genesis.

Free of the chicanery and intrigues of eighteenth century French life, New France is a

[336] Lesage, *Mariages* 332.
[337] Lesage, *Mariages* 332, 333.
[338] Lesage, *Mariages* 339.
[339] Lesage, *Mariages* 339.

place of new found innocence and renewal. For example, in France Mezzetin and Colombine's marriage was full of "fureurs & [...] invectives."[340] But here in the New World they can reconcile, rediscovering "la paix" and the "r'allume [d]es feux,"[341] as Mezzetin puts it. Indeed, in Canada, Colombine has become, according to Madamme Bourdon, a "femme nouvelle."[342] The religious connotation of this vocabulary – which brings to mind notions of rebirth and renewal on par with the ceremony of baptism – surely was not lost on the audience of the time. For his part, Mezzetin is happy to take on the new role of a farmer, "j'entends bien le Jardinage / et le Labourage aussi."[343] As this citation suggests, he casts himself in the mold of the first gardner, that is to say Adam. New France is his paradise, or, as the etymology of this word suggests, garden.

Alongside the Biblical allusions and references, it is not difficult to see how this description of Canada would have appealed to a certain segment of the audience of the *foire*. At a time when illness and famine were far too common occurrences, how could the portrait of New France as a place of "l'eau claire & du pain" fail to capture the imaginations of this public? Moreover, the denouement of *Mariages* fits well within the realm of realistic expectations that a popular audience may have for their own lives. In a society where social ascension is elusive, the text's final refrain "Contentement passe richesses" appears to speak to folksy moral sensibilities. On the whole, *Mariages* presents itself as a somewhat realistic, if overly rosy, account of the colonial experience. As Grewe has suggested, if Canada represents "eine neue Form der Ile de Cythère"[344] (a new kind of *ile de Cythère*) it is nonetheless, "einer entmystifizerten und stärker an der Wirklichkeit orienterten Form die Utopie der Liebesinsel wieder zum Vorschein"[345] (a form

[340] Lesage, *Mariages* 347.
[341] Lesage, *Mariages* 349.
[342] Lesage, *Mariages* 347.
[343] Lesage, *Mariages* 341, 342.
[344] Grewe 365.
[345] Grewe 365.

of the "Love island" utopia, demystified and oriented closer to reality). By placing Canada within the realm of the real and demystified, Lesage's texts plays with utopian tropes, anchoring them in a colonial reality. In this respect his texts helps reconstitute an *imaginaire* about Canada that is, on balance, rather favorable. This vision thus problematizes the types of negative historiographical conclusions about New France that I discussed in the opening chapter of this work. In sum, if we were to read this play as a bit of pro-colonial propaganda, a reasonable interpretation would be that Canada might not hold great riches, but it does hold the possibility of freedom from want and society's constraints. Although *Canadiens* and French settlers will never be rich, they might just find happiness in New France.

New France and *Beauchêne*

Of course, this portrait of bucolic contentment in Canada is not exclusive to *Mariages,* but is also present in *Beauchêne*. The narrative voice of Robert Chevalier begins his tale, for example, by highlighting the advantages of life in Canada, invoking "cette heureuse tranquilité que procure aux Canadiens la soumission que le Gouvernement exige d'eux."[346] This link between happy tranquility, submission and the government is revealing in so far as the former is brought about because of the latter. As opposed to *Mariages* where it is seemingly the lack of hierarchical surveillance that brings happiness, here happiness is guaranteed by it. Rather than a lawless society, the text explicitly signals that New France is firmly under the jurisdiction of the crown.

However, the physical distance that separates Canada from Europe reinforces the motif of

[346] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 1, 11.

New France as a refuge. In the Monneville episode of *Beauchêne*, for example, Monneville does speak about the way in which European wars disrupted trade: "La guerre affreuse que Louis XIV avait alors sur les bras influa sur nous et interrompit notre commerce."[347] However, according to his Monneville's account, the French settlers in Canada are largely spared the worst of the horrors of war, famine and strife. During this latest war, the *Canadiens* are able to "goûter la douceur du repos dans cette agréable solitude."[348] Additionally, the settlers find everything they need in nature:

> notre rivière nous fournissait du poisson excellent et en abondance. [...] Notre chasse remplissait nos cuisines de bonne viande et nos magasins de pelleteries. Les bois voisins étaient remplis de chevreuils, moins gros mais bien meilleurs que ceux d'Europe. Je puis dire que j'étais là dans un pays de bénédiction.[349]

His experience in Canada represents, thus, a "séjour tout gracieux."[350] Drawn from the deep well of christian vocabulary, the terms "bénédiction" and "gracieux" in these citations serve the discursive function of underlining the utopian nature of Canada in subtly religious terms. Again, New France represents as sort of Promised Land for the French – a land of abundance and plenty – given to them, as the vocabulary suggests sub-textually, by God. Somewhat surprisingly, moreover, the text portrays New France as a new Eden not only for Catholic France, but also for its religious minorities. As Monneville continues, "mes voisins étaient de bons protestants qui ne voulaient pas le paraître. Il y avait plus de trente ans que leurs pères et mères, ayant eu occasion de chercher une retraite si éloignée, s'y étaient réfugiés avec de grandes richesses."[351] More than simply a refuge, here the text strikes at the myth of Catholic homogeneity in the French

[347] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 35.
[348] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 95.
[349] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 36, 37.
[350] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 36.
[351] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 36.

empire.[352] If New France appears to be completely Catholic, the reality on the ground is much more complicated, at least according to *Beauchêne*. In this instance, thus, Canada serves as a foil to France; it is a land of plenty, untouched by European wars, where the Edict of Nantes remains in effect, at least in *de facto* terms.

Legacy of the "filles du roi" debacle and the drawbacks of New France.

As we see in the examples above, the *fille du roi* experiment of the late seventieth century appears to have greatly shaped the discourse and *imaginaire* surrounding New France among popular audiences. Written almost forty years after the embarkation of the *filles du roi*, *Beauchêne* and *Mariages* still present the portrait of the French New World as a place of forced marriages. However, Lesage's texts play with this cliché about New France, reinterpreting these marriages in highly ambivalent terms. Although not ideal arrangements, they may offer some bucolic happiness. Moreover, the texts present these marriages under the sign of (mostly male) sexual fantasies, thereby recasting them in a less dreary light – at least for men.

To be sure, these marriages are often described in negative terms. In *Mariages* the character speak of these unions as "le sort affreux" of "ces filles malheureuses," provoking "l'éternelle douleur / le désepoir, l'horreur / D'un hymen effroyable."[353] For their part, Monneville and Mlle Du Clos from *Beauchêne* view their fate "avec horreur." Canada is a place of "exil"[354]

[352] Perhaps because French-Canadian identity had, until the Quiet Revolution, been tied to Catholicism, the Protestant influence in New France had largely been ignored by early historians. Thanks to the pioneering work of Marc-André Bédard and his *Les Protestants en Nouvelle-France* (Québec: Société historique de Québec, 1978) we now know that French Protestants (Huguenots) did in fact immigrate to New France. For more recent scholarship see Robert Larin, *Brève histoire des protestants en Nouvelle-France et au Québec (XVIe – XIXe siècle)* (Québec: Editions de la paix, 1999).

[353] Lesage, *Mariages* 326*,* 327.

[354] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 15.

and Mlle Du Clos shows the "peu de goût qu'elle se sentait pour une semblable union."[355]

Nonetheless, the horror of these unions is relative in the text. For example, one of the companions of the monk – whom Monneville befriends on his passage to the New World – offers a different take on these relationships. Having heard the story of how "on a grand soin de procurer à chacun sa chacune" in New France, he remarks with "un grand éclat de rire" that "sans mentir […] voilà une plaisante police."[356] As a member of the ecclesiastic community, this *compagnon* has taken a vow of celibacy. There will be no union of any sort for him. His commentary, thus, seems to suggest that a forced marriage is better than no marriage at all. Moreover, his alliterative commentary – "plaisante police" – can be understood in at least three ways, as *plaisante* is linked both to the notion of the pleasant, the erotically pleasurable, and the comical. Even Monneville says, "j'en ris aussi, mais du bout des dents,"[357] suggesting mixed emotions about his fate. By the same token, the term *police* in the phrase "plaisante police" can reference both a "policy" or "practice" as well as the notion of ironic social "civility" (*poli*). These marriages are meant to protect French civility, by reducing the temptation of libertinage or sexual intercourse with the Native Americans. Of course, the *compagnon* and Monneville both hold a similar relationship in the text as that of the reader. They have heard the story and comment on it within the narrative. Thus, their interpretive framing demonstrates how the reader *could* understand this practice in a positive, humorous way, or with horror and awkward laughter. Reader could see these forced unions as sad and ghastly affairs, or they can choose to interpret them as potentially erotic, and almost absurdly comical.

Furthermore, the text wraps New France in a veil of eroticism, signaled by the unbridled

[355] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 18.
[356] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 12.
[357] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 15.

passion of the "catins"[358] bound for New France. Comparing the ship to "l'arche de Noé,"[359] which suggests the inevitability of coupling, Monneville comments on the moral character of the passengers in sexualized terms :

> Il y avait du désordre dans le vaisseau, et ce désordre augmentait de jour en jour par l'indiscrétion des officiers, qui se familiarisaient un peu trop avec nos belles Parisiennes. Les matelots suivaient leur exemple […] le capitaine, craignant les reproches de la Cour plus que ceux de sa conscience, entreprit de resserrer ses nymphes, mais il était bien difficile d'empêcher tant d'alcyons de faire leurs nids sur les flots.[360]

As the euphemisms and metaphors in this citation reveal, the moral standing of these passengers is far from irreproachable. Instead, the text presents the reader with the image of "belle Parisiennes," these "nymphes" who are figuratively made into love birds, "alcyons." The allusions to the Greek myth of Alcyone, goddess of the wind and lover of king Ceyx of Tachis, turned into a bird by Zeus, here serves the discursive objective of joining love and seafaring. The halycon birds, moreover, are associated with calm and safe seas. Coupled, thus, with the allusion to nymphs, this passage subtly evokes themes of idyllic love and peace, reminiscent of the "Love island" utopia discussed above. The metaphor is ironic insofar as the relationships on the boat both threaten "disorder" while also representing a source of calm brought by erotic love. Seen in this light, the text subtly downplays the innate horror of forced marriage for these prostitutes and their "filous" lovers. Instead, it suggests, as we saw in *Mariages,* that "On est toujours moins misérable, / Si l'on ne sçauroit être heureux."[361] Canada may be a forced exile with many drawbacks, but in both *Mariages* and *Beauchêne* the text presents the audience with examples of people making the best of their situation.

Indeed, the male characters of *Mariages* seem to focus on the "positive" aspects of these

[358] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 5.
[359] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 17.
[360] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 16.
[361] Lesage, *Mariages* 359.

forced marriages, imagining and hoping for a compatible mate. The character of Chevalier, for example, regrets his Clarice, left behind in Paris, but happily accepts his fate: "je me console d'être hors de Paris. Je suis bien-aise de voir le monde. Les voyages font bien les Gens."[362] Beyond this jovial tone, he relishes the chance to be paired up with a new woman. He imagines the woman Mme Bourdon has destined for him as "une fille appétissante/ qui danse, qui saute & qui chante / D'une maniére qui ravit […] je croi qu'un tendron de [l]a main (de Mme Bourdon) / vaudra bien ma Clarice."[363] In the tawdry universe of sexual innuendo, the terms that the Chevalier employs accentuate the erotic tonality of this passage. Most obviously, the term "ravir" plays off the notion of pleasing and ravish, a clear euphemism for sexual intercourse. Yet, it is the woman who ravishes in this text, revealing the Chevalier's hope to find a woman who is interested in amorous relations. Similarly, the Chevalier's use of the gastronomical terms "appétissante" and "tendron" to describe the woman recalls the language of Lahontan in *Nouveaux Voyages*, "les époux choisissoient leurs épouses de la maniére que le *boucher* va choisir *les moutons* au milieu d'un troupeau."[364] However, in Lesage's text, it is Mme Bourdon who becomes the "butcher," choosing the choice "tenderloins" for her client. Far from dreading a forced union, thus, the Chevalier's sexual appetite is whetted with anticipation. He is figuratively drooling to devour and be devoured by his mate.

Besides using erotic imagery and a somewhat bawdy lexical field, this scene also functions as a *mise-en-abîme* of the *foire* itself.[365] My suggestion here is that the space of the

[362] Lesage, *Mariages* 318.
[363] Lesage, *Mariages* 320.
[364] Lahontan, *Nouveaux Voyages* 266.
[365] Although it is difficult to ascertain beyond a doubt whether Lesage read Lahontan, the similarity between Lahontan's description of the "marché aux femmes" and the plot of *Mariages* suggests a shared colonial *imaginaire* about such practices in the New World. In his introduction to the *Oeuvres complètes* of Lahontan, Réel Ouellet contends that the *foire* plays show "seulement comment certaines images issues de de Lahontan ont pris place dans l'univers culturel français de l'époque" (144).

performance, i.e. the *foire*, affects the reception and interpretation of the plays. Because these *foire* plays are occurring alongside the commercial exchange of goods and services, the plot reflects back on the economic activity of the fair. In short, *Mariages* represents a fair within a fair as the men request a mate and the merchant, Mme Bourdon, selects the choice "cut." In fact, Mme Bourdon herself explicitly makes this metaphor as she says to Mezzetin, who has requested a new wife in New France, "Je vais à mon magasin (bis.) / Moi-même chercher du fin, / Une fille de mise: / Je vais t'amener enfin / De bonne marchandise."[366] The boarding house becomes a store, or "magasin," housing her "marchandise," the marriageable women. Thus, the play invites the audience to imagine a fair where one might choose a spouse as easily as one chooses a tenderloin from the butcher. Where might such a fair exist? New France. Therefore, the text reinterprets these forced marriages in a comical way, presenting them as distinct advantages that might await would-be male colonists.

Therefore, if the texts portray New France as a destination few choose of their own free will, they also play on male sexual fantasies as a way to counterbalance the theme of forced exile. In this respect, they are attempting to reshape and restructure the *imaginaires* surrounding New France. In order to do this, the text portrays New France in a way that responds to the audience's aspirations, without placing New France under the sign of the purely fantastical. The reality of New France must be believable, or at least have the aura of verisimilitude.

Native Americans and French Relations

Another aspect of the colony that these texts invoke with ambiguity is the presence of the

[366] Lesage, *Mariages* 343.

Native Americans. Although largely absent from *Mariages*, at the end of that text the characters do finally make reference to the Native Americans in New France: "N'apréhendons pas des Hurons / Les farouches visages: / Ou nous les aprivoiserons, / Par nos plus doux usages; / Ou, plus heureux, nous deviendrons / Peut-être aussi Sauvages."[367] While this quotation appears to point to a sort of civilizing mission, whereby the colonists are meant to tame, *aprivoiser*, the wild, *farouches,* Huron through their mores and cultural practices, *doux usages*, the text conceptualizes this exchange as a two-way process. Indeed, becoming like the "Sauvages" is valorized by the text, playing on the common trope of the "bon sauvage" as the foil to decadent European civilization.

This trope of uncorrupted *sauvage* innocence is especially visible in *La Sauvagesse.* When Angolette admonishes the Frenchmen for their coyness in love, she conceptualizes the difference according to the paradigm of Frenchness versus Nativeness : "Lorsque toujours dans l'innocence; / On ne dit rien que ce qu'on pense/ On parle Iroquois: (Bis)/ Lorsque l'on dit qu'on est sincére/ Quoique l'on sçache le contraire/ On parle François (Bis)."[368] Beyond a critique of coquettish French behavior, Angolette's comparison between French and Native culture serves as a larger meditation on cultural relativity. By making her presence the most dominating, the text invites the audience to identify with Angolette and to embrace her alterity in order to reflect on French cultural practices. Throughout the play Angolette comments on the strangeness of the French: "Quelle Nation que la Nation Françoise! Il faut convenir qu'elle tranche bien avec la nôtre" and "Quelle étrange façon de faire l'amour!"[369] What is strange and bizarre here is not Angolette and her "otherness," but rather Frenchness, or the subjective position of the audience.

[367] Lesage, *Mariages* 359, 360.
[368] Lesage, *La Sauvagesse* 244.
[369] Lesage, *La Sauvagesse* 242.

In this way, her character subtly problematizes the notion of what it means to be "*sauvage*." While "On croit les Sauvages des Gens / Dépourvûs de bon sens" this is only because "l'on connoît peu nos usages! / Ils sont pleins de raison: / Nous ne sommes Sauvages / Seulement que de nom."[370] Taken together, these citations imply that the *real "*sauvage" is not Angolette, but the French with their strange courting rituals.

Anglolette's critique of French society gains credence through her position of cultural hybrid, occupying a societal space between insider and outsider. While she remains "sauvage," she has mastered formal French, and is now dressed in proper European clothing. Moreover, her story represents an inversion, or mirror image, of the *filles du roi* trope seen in *Mariages* and *Beauchêne*. Instead of a European woman sent to the New World, here we have the account of a Native American woman brought to France to be married against her will. She is a far cry, however, from the Hurons with with their "farouches visages" as portrayed in *Mariages*. Rather, she is an idyllic creature, perfectly embodying European standards of beauty, while still retaining the clichés of "sauvage" naïvety. The text describes her as "une Beauté Romaine/ Une minois des plus jolis, / Un tein de roses & de lys, / Une taille de Reine."[371] She also possesses "une franchise sans égale, un air naturel, mais si gracieux, qu'elle plaît même à ceux à qui elle dit leurs vérités."[372] Thus, she is so polite and beautiful that even when she critiques people, no one minds. At the same time, she retains an air of animality and strangeness. Before she enters the stage, she is described as "une Fille bizarrement vêtuë"[373] who can "coul[er] de l'abre comme un Chat, & se m[ettre] à courir comme un Daim"[374] or, alternatively, is gentle "comme un

[370] Lesage, *La Sauvagesse* 271, 272.
[371] Lesage, *La Sauvagesse* 225.
[372] Lesage, *La Sauvagesse* 229.
[373] Lesage, *La Sauvagesse* 227.
[374] Lesage, *La Sauvagesse* 227.

Agneau."[375] The narrator's choice of animals, especially the fallow and the lamb, serve as allusions to antiquity and the Bible, suggesting the innocence and nobility of Angolette. Yet, she only appears on stage once she has been "tamed" by the signs of Frenchness; namely clothing and language. Her protector "lui a fait faire un habit à la Françoise […] [qui lui] sied à ravir"[376] and "lui a apris le François pendant le voyage"[377] to France from the "Pays des Sauvages."[378] The person who appears on stage, thus, is already well on her way towards French assimilation.

In fact, Angolette has a command of the language far beyond that of a lowly peasant, demonstrating, again, her level of assimilation and "natural" nobility. Let us consider, for example, the linguistic contrast in this exchange between Angolette and the peasant Lucas, discussing the coquettishness of Lucas's love interest Colette :

> Lucas: "Je l'y rends mille sarvices tous les jours. Quand alla va charcher de l'iau à la fontaine, je l'y remplis sa cruche, & la porte jusques cheux elle; Quand je dansons sous l'Orme, je vas trejours la prendre, & je laisse là les autres: Enfin finale je l'y baille sans cesse queuque signigiance d'amour, & rien n'y fait."
>
> Angolette: "Ton coeur ne peut-il pas s'attacher à une autre?"[379]

Beyond adding local color, the contrast between Lucas's and Angolette's speech reveals the difference in their innate social status. While Lucas is "French" in the text, his speech is clearly less polished than Angolette's. As he speaks in concrete and lowly terms, with an inflected accent, her register is elevated and formal, employing metonymy ("ton coeur") and grammatical inversion. This elevated register suggests that Angolette is some ways more "French" than the run of the mill French peasant. Additionally, Angolette places into notions of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism where social class defied culture and origins. At the very least,

[375] Lesage, *La Sauvagesse* 228.
[376] Lesage, *La Sauvagesse* 229, 230.
[377] Lesage, *La Sauvagesse* 226.
[378] Lesage, *La Sauvagesse* 226.
[379] Lesage, *La Sauvagesse* 238.

her rusticity is not of the same order as that of the French peasants, but instead comes from nature. Ultimately, the subtext of this play is that Frenchness is not an innate characteristic, but rather learned and cultivated. The limits of "Frenchness" are not primarily tied to place, or birth, but rather the performance of various cultural signs, such as polished language and politeness.

The promise of a future marriage between Clitandre and Anglotte represents in a larger sense a possible union between French and Native ideals. In order to facilitate such a fusion, the text must first elucidate supposed Native mating practice. It does so by ending with a "Ballet Sauvage […] qui vous aprendra de quelle façon les Garçons Sauvages recherchent les Filles qu'ils veulent épouser."[380] As an example of a theatrical *mise-en-abîme*, the ballet within the play places the characters of the text in the same position as the *foire* audience. It serves the function of presenting a microcosm of the larger themes of the play, tidily summarizing the moral of the larger text to both audiences, inner and extra-textual. In this regard, the ballet invites the audience to compare favorably the "Huron" way of courtship whereby, "C'est le goût seul chez les Hurons / Qui détermine une Fillette;" against French courtship practices where, "C'est l'argent qui fait aux Tendrons/ A Paris souffler l'allumette."[381] Through a parallel structure, the text suggests in this passage that love, or "goût" is not a frivolous emotion, but rather leads to decisiveness among the Huron women. Conversely, economic concerns are not the stuff of long-lasting marital unions in France, but instead lead to unserious trysts. Clearly, the Hurons are the model to replicate.

However, the plot of the larger play does not strictly acquiesce to Huron customs, but instead represents a mélange of what the text portrays as Huron sensibilities and French concerns

[380] Lesage, *La Sauvagesse* 266.
[381] Lesage, *La Sauvagesse* 272.

of class. While the "goût," attraction, or love between Clitandre and Angolette does propel their initial courtship, they cannot be married without "la Fortune & de la Noblesse."[382] To do so remains mere "folles idées."[383] While the text suggests that cultural divisions are no impediment to marriage, social hierarchy clearly is. The characters are thus expressing a form of cosmopolitan sensibility that defies national boundaries, if not social class.[384] Thus, the marriage of Clitandre and Angolette seems to advocate for a metaphorical marriage of Huron and French practices, synthesizing the needs of the heart with the social realities of France. Angolette's cultural hybridity provides a revelatory function of the absurdity of certain aspects of French courtship culture, such as coquettishness and economic concerns. At the same time, her hybridity crystalizes "positive" aspects of French culture, such as formal and polite speech, and "natural" nobility. The text suggests that both are needed for the upper classes to have happy marriages.

Mlle Du Clos' Hybrid Utopia and Cultural Transvestism

While *La Sauvagesse* and *Mariages* suggest the flexibleness of French identity in subtle ways, in *Beauchêne* this fluidity is far more explicit. As we see in the main stories of Mlle Du Clos, Robert Chevalier and Monneville, identity is largely performative in the text. To be French or Native American is to dress and act like a French person or Native American. Or, in the case of Monneville, to be a man or woman is to dress like one. By considering their tales as a narrative triptych, in the rest of this chapter I will argue that their stories reveal the permeability

[382] Lesage, *La Sauvagesse* 265.
[383] Lesage, *La Sauvagesse* 265.
[384] As it has been pointed out before, the *philosophes* tended to think of themselves as a transnational community that represented a distinct class. See Thomas J. Schlereth, *The cosmopolitan ideal in Enlightenment thought, its form and function in the ideas of Franklin, Hume, and Voltaire, 1694-1790* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1977) 12.

of identity, and ultimately, problematize identitary categories all together. They do this through a process that I call cultural transvestism – a term I will come back to. Once we recognize the transvestic mode, it becomes clear that it is a potent structuring force throughout *Beauchêne*. Mlle Du Clos, Robert Chevalier and Monneville each experience their own period of "transvestism."

In order to define this concept in concrete terms, let us begin with an example of this "cultural transvestism" as seen in the example of Mlle Du Clos. Cast off by her mother who accused her and her brother of plotting to commit matricide, Mlle Du Clos at first takes up residence with Monneville at a fort on the frontier of New France. On the literal edge of the French empire, Mlle Du Clos soon crosses over to the Huron village, where she quickly becomes their *sakgame*, or leader. When her companion Monneville comes to visit her, he is struck both by the vestimentary evolution of Mlle Du Clos and the radical changes she has made to the Huron village. Mlle Du Clos is "parée de coliers, de bracelets, de plumes et de fourrures" in an "attirail si bizarre."[385] Likewise, the Native Americans have begun to wear European *chemises*. Beyond their dress, the Huron society has been remade thanks to the schools established by the French :

> Je vis des plaines cultivées, des cabanes bâties solidement, des villages peuplés des gens de différentes professions […] La sakgame, par le moyen de ces étrangers [Français], avait établi des espèces d'écoles où les Hurons, pour la plupart, s'exerçaient et réussissaient parfaitement aux arts les plus utiles à la société […] on pouvait appeler cet endroit la capitale du pays, on n'y manquait de rien, et la police y était [établie].[386]

As we see in this quotation, Monneville emphasizes how French and Huron cultural practices have been fused together to create a new, better society. Expressions like

[385] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 39.
[386] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 39.

“parfaitement,” “plus utiles,” “n'y manquait de rien” and “police” paint the portrait of this society as a utilitarian and civilized society of sedentary farmers. To be sure, the Huron have learned from the French, but Mlle Du Clos has also taken on the dress and customs of her tribe as the village mixes European and Native American practices and knowledge. While the utopian aspect of the scene has brought some scholarly attention, few scholars have fully recognized the importance of Mlle Du Clos's cultural hybridity within the context of the larger work. By dressing and acting across the cultural divide, Mlle Du Clos and her Huron village are operating in a transvestic mode. It is transvestic insofar as this mode emphasizes the surface over the interior, the mutable over the immutable, and the ease of movement between French socio-cultural practices and Huron ones.

Because I am using the term "transvestism” in a way that stretches beyond common usage, it is important to define my use of this word before continuing. “Transvestism” is often used as a synonym for “drag,” or the practice of dressing across culturally specific and normative gender lines. However, the term transvestism can be broadened if we consider its Latin etymology, from *trans,* “across,” and *vestitus,* “dress.” With this definition in mind, I am employing the term “cultural transvestism” to analyze the practice of dressing and acting across and any established socio-cultural boundaries. While the character of Monneville from *Beauchêne* is a transvestite in the common sense of the word – having been raised as a girl until late puberty – this is only one of several manifestations of transvestism in the text. Robert Chevalier and Mlle Du Clos also dress and act across cultural boundaries, revealing the performative nature of identity. Reading the text in this way, I am borrowing in some ways from the definition of transvestism offered by scholar André Jolles. In his 1931 article “Die

literarishen Travestien: Ritter – Hirt – Schelm" Jolles suggests that "travesty" – which he means as to disguise – represents "our yearning to escape temporarily from society, to change our necessities, and to become someone else without completely ceasing to be ourselves."[387] Where Jolles and my analysis differ is in this question of essentialism. While Jolles sees a fundamental and immutable identity underpinning the transvestite's "literary play," my own perspective is more Butlerian.[388] Jolles suggests that the transvestite cannot "divorce himself totally from himself: the possibility of a return cannot be omitted."[389] However my perspective is that there is no essential "self" to which to return; it is all performative. As such, I tend to see the examples of "transvestism" in the text as a type of play that problematizes the notion of essential categories, as opposed to temporary escapes from them. As Judith Butler has famously suggested, "it is precisely the *repetition* of that play that establishes as well the *instability* of the very category that it constitutes."[390] By dressing like a Huron, Mlle Du Clos becomes a Huron. However, by revealing the relative ease of this transformation – you only have to dress like one to be one – she opens the proverbial door to a questioning of the very nature of identitary categories. For if she can become a Huron simply by dressing like a Huron, what exactly would prevent a Huron from becoming French by dressing like French person ?

Although this type of reversal of hierarchy and gender is certainly part of a carnivalesque aesthetic, *Beauchêne*, I argue, goes beyond the traditional reading of this mode. Mlle du Clos' village is not only a crystallization, or reinforcement, of the hierarchical societal order through fictional reversals, as scholars have often insisted.[391] Ultimately, rather, it undermines the

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[387] Jolles, André, "Die Literarishen Travestien: Ritter – Hirt- Schelm" cited in Wicks 39.
[388] Wicks 41.
[389] Jolles, cited in Wicks 40.
[390] Butler, Judith, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," *Critical Theory since Plato* 3rd edition (Boston, MA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005) 1493.
[391] Davis, Natalie Zemon, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France: Eight Essays* (Stanford, CA : Stanford

hierarchy through inverted repetition. In this respect, my view aligns with that of Natalie Zemon Davis who suggested in her work *Society and Culture of Early Modern France*, that the "disorderly woman," by which she means any woman who did not comport to social norms, "was a multivalent image [...][that represented] partly a chance for temporary release from the traditional and stable hierarchy; but it is also part of the conflict over efforts to change the basic distribution of power within society."[392] As such, I read *Beauchêne* as a questioning of the old social order, rather than simply as an escape from it. According to this reading, the moments of cultural transvestisms in *Beauchêne* do not merely represent a carnivalesque "safety-valve"[393] to ward off social unrest, but they also challenge the categories that divide humanity along ethnographic, class, or gender lines.[394]

With this definition of "transvestism" in mind, the reader begins to understand the text's preoccupation with vestimentary concerns as revelatory of a paradigm that accentuates performativity over rigid essentialisms. If clothing is consistently portrayed as a marker of one's societal belonging, it is a highly changeable or unstable sign. We have already seen this phenomenon with Mlle Du Clos, who becomes the *sakgame* through her dress. As Monneville's narrative voice notes somewhat ominously, "La sakgame avait trop de prudence pour ne pas suivre les coutumes de ses sujets dans les choses indifférentes."[395] As is clear in this citation, there is a danger in not following the customs, including vestimentary choices, of the Hurons

University Press, 1975) 130.

[392] Davis 131.

[393] Wicks 41.

[394] This is largely the perspective of Marjorie Garber suggests that transvestism is one manifestation of a "crisis of category" that opens "a space of possibility structuring and confounding culture" (17). See Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing & Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

[395] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 39.

among whom Mlle Du Clos resides. In this respect, the citation is paradoxical in that Monneville explicitly calls Mlle Du Clos's embracing of Huron traditions as an act of "prudence" at the very moment he calls them unimportant, or "indifférentes" choices. Vestimentary concerns are both very important and not important at all. Monneville's commentary reveals the extent to which these mundane practices and dress are trivial on the superficial level, yet remain deeply significant below the surface. This is a realization that he does not quite grasp at first, believing Mlle Du Clos's actions to be a simple ruse. For example, when he first sees Mlle Du Clos dressed as the *sakgame*, he believes she is in on the "joke" : "Il fallut pour nous empêcher de rire d'un attirail si bizarre qu'elle gardât l'air sérieux et imposant qu'elle avait."[396] In Monneville's estimation Mlle Du Clos must keep a straight face to prevent her compatriots from laughing. She is taking the ceremony and her dress seriously – Monneville seems to presume – for the benefit, and protection, of the visiting Frenchmen. Her imposing and serious air is meant to "nous empêcher de rire," rather than to signal her deep respect for Huron culture. Moreover, the tone of his comments suggest a notion of pretending on the part of Mlle Du Clos, who is following – "suivre" – and maintaining –"garder" – a Huron cultural script. As Monneville states even more explicitly, "son addresse à ménager son crédit en suivant elle-même des coutumes qu'elle n'approuvait pas […] supposait un génie supérieur et capable de tout."[397] Monneville thus sees her behavior as a mask, a type of play, that reveals Mlle Du Clos's keen sense for practical politics. He fails to recognize, or simply downplays, her commitment to these customs. However, Monneville and the reader soon realize that Mlle Du Clos' outward appearance is revelatory of a deeper inward transformation. As Monneville says to Mlle Du Clos after she delivers an

[396] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 39.
[397] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 47.

especially cutting critique of French euro-centrism, "Vous voilà devenue Américaine."[398] In this comment Monneville shows how her dress and adherence to Huron customs are manifestation of her developing "Americanness." From superficial dress and cultural transvestism – acting and dressing like a Huron – Mlle Du Clos has actually become the character she is "playing."

However, this Native American identity never completely subsumes Mlle Du Clos's Frenchness. Instead, her Native American identity functions as a semi-independent character in the story. If Monneville conceptualizes Mlle Du Clos's role as *sakgame* as a mask of her true self, over the course of his stay this division between disguise and authentic self becomes less clear. Indeed, by the time he leaves the village Monneville has begun to reconceptualize the *sakgame* and Mlle Du Clos as two separate identities: "Songez que la sakgame des Hurons n'est pas obligée de garder les secrets de Mlle Du Clos."[399] As this citation suggests, Monneville sees the *sakgame* and Mlle Du Clos as two different individuals inhabiting the same person. No longer simply wearing the mask of the *sakgame* as a way to escape from French law and hierarchy, Mlle Du Clos is both herself and the *sakgame*. The question thus arises as to whether this woman is more authentically the French Mlle Du Clos or the sovereign *sakgame* of the Huron? In fact, after his experience at the village, Monneville begins haphazardly to use the title of Mlle Du Clos and *sakgame* to speak of Mlle Du Clos. Thus, even Monneville is not sure which title best captures this woman's true essence. She is one and both at the same time. This dual identity is thereby complementary, overlapping, and interchangeable.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that Mlle Du Clos is choosing to be the *sakgame*, as she embraces an identity that has shades of transnationalism. As Monneville asks her, "si ce frère

[398] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 56.
[399] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 57.

si chéri vous priait de retourner dans l'ancien monde, rejetteriez-vous sa prière?"[400] Metaphorically speaking, this "ancien monde" represents both the Old World writ larger and *her* former world – as "ancien" suggests both. Mlle Du Clos faces a choice, whether to stay in New France as a ruler among the Hurons or to return to France, filled "la malice et l'injustice"[401] of those who made her "une esclave dans un pays étranger."[402] Yet, slave she is not, for "le Ciel, plus juste, [l'] y fait vivre en souveraine." In this way, Mlle Du Clos's tale represents not only a cutting critique of French society, which casts away innocents to foreign lands, but it also reveals the new identitary possibilities in the New World, this land meant to be an exile. Her story is one of inverted hierarchies. Women are on top; and the status one holds in France can be radically modified through identitary play.

If the example of Mlle Du Clos suggests that to dress and act like a Huron is to become a Huron, the corollary to this is also true : to dress and act like the French is to become French. Although Mlle Du Clos largely accepts Huron practices and dress, one of the most important societal changes Mlle Du Clos brings to the community is the introduction of Western dress. As she explains to Monneville:

> avant mon arrivée les femmes qui savaient filer au fuseau faisaient [...] des bandes en forme de jupons fort courts […] mais, depuis que j'ai fait semer du chanvre, qui vient admirablement bien dans ce pays, j'ai introduit l'usage du linge, et il y n'y a plus personne dans cette habitation qui ne porte des chemises, à la réserve des jeunes gens quand ils vont à la chasse […] ils ne veulent porter que leurs armes.[403]

In this citation, Mlle Du Clos subtly suggests that she has clothed the Hurons, covering their nakedness or near nakedness with the beginnings of European-style dress. This evolution of

[400] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 67.
[401] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 67.
[402] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 67.
[403] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 49.

dress comes hand in hand, moreover, with the implementation of European-style agricultural policies, such as the planting of hemp. This outward manifestation of Frenchness – the wearing of *chemises* – reveals the way in which dress is connected to a larger societal evolution among the Hurons of the village. If this represents the first step in an assimilationist project, there remains much to be done. Mlle Du Clos is explicit, in fact, about the goals of her reforms. As she says to Monneville, "vous ne voyez encore rien. Tout cela n'est qu'une ébauche de ce que j'ai envie de faire. Si vous demeuriez dans ce pays-ci, et que la France vous fût aussi indifférente qu'à moi, vous verriez dans dix ans le canton de mes bons amis aussi beau que la plus fertile des provinces."[404] Despite her claims of indifference to France, her society is largely a replication of the French model, serving as the example against which to judge her society. Likewise, her rule over the Huron follows the logic of French absolutism, "Imaginez-vous ces autorités despotiques qui se font obéir d'un coup d'oeil. Telle est la mienne, et j'ose dire encore plus agréable, puisqu'elle est fondée seulement sur l'affection et non sur la crainte."[405] Inverting Machiavellian political wisdom, in the New World Mlle Du Clos rules because she is loved, not feared. All of this is tied together, however, by the string of cultural transvestism. By asking the Huron to dress like the Europeans, and by dressing like a Huron, Mlle Du Clos has solidified her control over them. This mutual cross-dressing leads them to a middle ground, different than the identitary positions from which they started. Indeed, both groups are both performing something akin to Homi Bhabha's concept of "colonial mimicry," by which he means "the desire for a reformed, recognizable 'Other,' as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite."[406] The mutual mimicry of each side ends up creating a new identity altogether. It is a cultural hybridity

[404] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 43.
[405] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 50.
[406] Bhabha, Homi K, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994) 122.

underpinned by French absolutism.

Her Huron village is thus the perfected form of absolutism – an absolutist's utopia. Indeed, the affective ties she has over the Huron augments her soft power as the Huron's imitate her French "civility:"

> Je remarque même tous les jours qu'en bien des choses ils vont au-devant de ce qu'ils croient devoir me faire plaisir, et pour se conformer à mes manières ils s'écartent des leurs. C'était par exemple une coutume établie parmi eux d'entrer les uns chez les autres et de s'y asseoir à la première place qu'ils trouvaient, sans dire mot ni se faire la moindre politesse, maintenant ils s'entresaluent en inclinant un peu la tête et en souriant, parce qu'ils ont observé que c'est ainsi que j'en use avec eux quand ils m'abordent[407]

Like the perceived nakedness of the Hurons that she covers with European-style cloth, here Mlle Du Clos conceptualizes the Native Americans' culture through the discourse of lack. Before her arrival, as this citation shows, their "coutume" is without "la moindre politesse." It is thanks to her example that the Hurons have abandoned their practice to conform to hers French ones. In a word, she has used the appeal of Frenchness to win over the Huron. In fact, there is a sense in the quotation that certain aspects of Frenchness, namely French civility, has a strong, "natural," appeal.[408] Even without her dictating their compliance to such normative French behavior, the Huron are drawn to it. As the choice of terms suggests, the Huron villagers "vont au-devant de ce qu'ils croient devoir me faire plaisir ;" they have outpaced her expectations, replicating her mannerisms faster than she deemed possible. They personally undertaking a type of cultural transvestism as they act across socio-cultural lines.

Another tool that Mlle Du Clos uses to win over the Huron is the French language. Indeed, the ability to speak French buys the Huron women proximity to the *sakgame.* Among the

[407] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 50.

[408] Indeed, French politeness seems to have been an element of French identity that the *philosophes* were particularly proud of. In his *Temple du Goût* (1731) Voltaire applauds, for example, "Ces Graces simples & naïves / Dont la France doit se vanter;/ Ces Graces piquantes & vives,/ Que les Nations attentives / Voulurent souvent imiter," (23) See Voltaire, *Le temple du goût* (A Amsterdam: Chez Jaques Desbordes, 1733).

larger population :

> la langue française était de l'hébreu pour eux, en revanche elle était assez familière à une douzaine de jeunes filles qui étaient aux côtés de leur souveraine et lui faisaient une petite Cour fort galante. Surtout les deux qu'elle avait amenées à notre habitation la savaient bien et l'enseignaient aux enfants de leur cabane.[409]

In this citation the reader notes that in order be a member of this "petite Cour fort galante" one of the prerequisites is to speak French. This suggests already, the way in which language acquisition is tied to social hierarchy. Indeed, the fact that the women are teaching it to their children suggests they understand the importance of the French language to maintain preferential treatment from the *sakgame*. Yet, this linguistic choice can also be seen in accordance to the logic of the transvetic mode, as they are "dressing" their thoughts in French words. These French words are not simply one-for-one translations of Huron concepts, but instead reinforce the internal societal changes gripping the Huron village. They are not, for example, a troop of women, but a "court," like one might have found at the palace of Versailles. These Huron women have been transformed, separated from their Huron compatriots through their adoption of French. The suggestion is, thus, that to speak French is to become more French.

Taking all these examples together – the Huron's wearing of French *chemise,* their agricultural achievements, the rise of French civility, along with the growing importance of the French language – we see clearly the extent of the Huron's cultural transvestism. Through their vestimentary changes, to the metaphorical putting on of French airs, the Huron example from Mlle Du Clos's village reveals the performative nature of identity. In this way, the text places into question the essentialist quality of identity, both Huron and French. For the modern reader, there

[409] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 44.

is a disconcertingly clear colonial discourse that belies Mlle Du Clos's Huron utopia. Is she simply trying to make "petits Français," in a similar way to later colonial regimes? Does her Huron utopia represent an early articulation of later associational or assimilationist colonial policies of France?

On the one hand, the Mlle du Clos episode does reveal early discursive strands of the *mission civilisatrice.* She states explicitly, for example, that her actions are colonizing and proselytizing in nature, as she claims, "je ne crois pas qu'il soit impossible d'en faire de bons chrétiens" and "je travaille pour le service de Dieu et pour celui du Roi en travaillant pour le bonheur de ce peuple"[410] However, her approach is the inverse of the Catholic missionaries who are most interested in changing the Huron from the inside out, focusing too much of their efforts on the redemption of souls. As she explains, "Au lieu de paraître d'abord ne vouloir que le bien temporel de ces sauvages pour les conduire insensiblement au spirituel, ils débutent par déclamer contre leur religion dans des termes qui révoltent ces malheureux."[411] While the missionaries begin by focusing on the spiritual, Mlle Du Clos suggests that the way to win over the Native Americans is through the superficial, or the "bien temporel." Her methodology is thus to work from the outside in. The wearing of European clothes brings about new socio-cultural practices, and these practices, in turn, pave the way for spiritual transformation. The text, thus invites us to ask whether or not this cultural transvestism represents a step towards full assimilation? Are the Hurons to pretend to be French until they are, in fact, French?

On the other hand, Mlle Du Clos is the clearest and loudest voice in the text in support of cultural relativity. For example, she justifies the sexual liberties the Native American women

[410] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 52.
[411] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 51.

take with Monneville and his entourage by utilitarian logic. Decimated by war with the Iroquois, it is right that the Huron should want to reproduce. Additionally, she appeals to Huron mores and practices whereby "le mariage n'est point regardé dans ce pays comme un engagement qui vous lie pour toujours."[412] Fundamentally, she is asking the Frenchmen who are visiting the village to judge the women according to the logic of Native culture.

Like Diderot's later *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville*, this story has all the trappings of the eroticization of the non-European Other. However, the trope of the sexually available Native American woman in this instant is more reminiscent of Lahontan's treatment of female sexuality, which I discussed previously. Like Lahontan, Mlle Du Clos's description of Huron mating practices serves *both* as a statement of female sexual autonomy and as an erotic enticement for the male reader. It is, for example, the woman who is in charge of the sexual relationship, choosing a mate according to her fancy: "Qu'un mari soit absent, sa femme en prend un autre, qu'elle garde jusqu'à sont retour. Est-il revenu? Elle renvoie celui des deux qu'elle aime le moins."[413] While this clearly can be read as a proto-feminist critique in favor of sexual agency for women, Mlle du Clos also realizes the erotic appeal for the Frenchmen to whom she is explaining such customs. She has explained this cultural practice, the narrator tells us, "en souriant." Moreover, Monneville must use all his rhetorical skills to convince one of his fellow French travelers to refrain from indulging in the sexual availability of the women. The comparison of this Frenchman to a "nouveau Deucalion"[414] is revealing for its implications on cultural hybridity. As one of the sons of Promethius, Deucalian, is implored by an oracle to repopulate the earth after a worldwide flood. The text sets this Frenchman up as demi-god, sent

[412] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 45.
[413] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 45.
[414] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 46.

from France to create French-Huron children, loyal to the French crown. While the text portrays his willingness ironically as a "si charitable"[415] gesture, Monneville must use all of his rhetorical skill to convince him that "des mariages de deux jours n'était dans le fond qu'un vrai libertinage pour les Français."[416] The tone and allusions in this passage point to a sexual fantasy for the male colonists within the text and the reader outside of it. It is important to note, nonetheless, that Monneville's condemnation of these "mariages de deux jours" applies only for the French. This village has different cultural and sexual norms and must be judged according to them. In this way, Monneville becomes the voice of cultural relativity, but also of protecting rigid mores, when it applies to the French. His fellow Frenchman must not be allowed to cross the cultural and sexual divide. In a word, he must not be allowed a moment of cultural transvestism.

More than a recognition of cultural relativism, Mlle du Clos pushes Monneville to see his own culture through the eyes of the Native Americans. She asks Monneville to imagine "si les peuples de ce nouveau monde […] étaient venus les premiers à la découverte de nos côtes, que n'auraient-ils pas eu à raconter de la France à leur retour chez eux?"[417] Inverting the colonial paradigm, in her alternative history it is the Native Americans who holds the privileged *regard.* From this position, it is the French who "n'ont pas l'esprit,"[418] who speak "une langue bizarre"[419] and who have "une vénération supertiteuse"[420] and "point de dieux."[421] By giving the Hurons agency, Mlle Du Clos' discourse serves a dual purpose : it serves both as a justification for Huron practices, which only seem strange because of their otherness ; and shines a light on the

[415] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 46.
[416] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 46.
[417] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 52.
[418] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 54.
[419] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 55.
[420] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 55.
[421] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 55.

strangeness of French social practices. This is a mental experiment that allows the reader to imagine him or herself from an outside perspective. It allows the reader to undertake a type of cultural transvestism – to put on the cloak of Huron subjectivity. By doing so, the French reader may better recognize that "les sauvages peuvent penser des Français ce que les Français pensent des sauvages."[422] By swapping one identity for another, the reader is meant to see the validity and parity of all identities, problematizing strict categorical differences.

To bring my discussion back to the larger point of this chapter, what is interesting here is not necessarily Mlle Du Clos's espousal of cultural relativity, but, rather, her status and the space in which she articulates such ideas. Of course, there is a long tradition of French writers using the "oriental" other as a way to shine light on the abuses of French society.[423] What is different in these examples is that this critique of French society does not come from some mythical *ailleurs*, but from a Huron village that possess no explicitly magical or fantastical properties. What is more, Mlle Du Clos' status is that of a *fille du roi,* and thus part of a real historical phenomenon. She is both on the outside and inside of two different cultures, the French and the Huron. Like Montesquieu's earlier Persians or Madame de Graffigny's later Inca princess, Mlle du Clos embraces this in-between, hybrid, identity. Yet, unlike in the case of Montesquieu and Graffigny's texts, Mlle du Clos is an inversion of the typical narrative. Rather than an outsider coming to the French center, she represents the French center remolded on the edges of empire. She seems to have followed the advice that Adario gave to the character of Lahontan in *Dialogues avec un Sauvages*, she has made herself Huron in an attempt at true happiness.

[422] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 56.

[423] I am thinking notably of Letter 67 of Montesquieu's 1721 *Lettres persanes*, which tells the story of Aphéridon and Astarté, two Zoroastrians whose tale provides a *mise-en-abîme* of cultural relativism as they are the Other of the Persian Others.

However, this conversion is more complicated than Adario and Lahontan may have realized as she is caught in a constant tension between marginality and centrality. Among the French she is an exiled "esclave" as well a member of an elevated social class. Among the Native Americans she is both a foreigner and the sovereign. While Mlle Du Clos holds a position of authority within both the French and Huron social order, she is in some ways also outside of them both. Paradoxically, she is at the same time, socially marginal and not marginal. Yet, this paradox gives greater credence to her critique of French society because she straddles two worlds. Long silenced by European society, her hybridity and cultural transvestism finally allow her to speak – not only to the Hurons, but also to the French.

As the foil to Mlle Du Clos, Robert Chevalier also nurtures a hybrid *Canadien*-Native identity, donning Native garb and living among them. His identification with the Iroquois nation is signaled particularly by his dress : "j'entrai […] d'un air effronté, habillé en sauvage, à mon ordinaire."[424] Moreover his dress marks him as "un sauvage curieux" and "un Iroquois qui ne vous fera pas peur."[425] More than simply an outward appearance, he conceptualizes himself as Iroquois, and not as a Frenchmen who is cross-dressing as one : "je me suis regardé longtemps comme Iroquois."[426] In this respect his cultural transvestism is of a different nature than Mlle Du Clos for he dresses as a Native American because he has internalized this identity. Mlle Du Clos, however, dresses like the *sakgame* because she realizes the power the transvestic mode affords her. As she states, "je ne veux plus paraître Française ni donner aux esprits inquiets la moindre occasion de penser que je songe à quitter ce pays-ci."[427] Mlle Du Clos is conscious of this

[424] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 1, 35.
[425] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 1, 71.
[426] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 1, 24.
[427] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 47.

division between appearance and being – *paraître* and *être.* She is aware that she is playing a part in order to solidify her power and calm her community. Yet, even in her case, by the end of her tale she has become "Américaine." The *paraître* and the *être* converge as her outward appears becomes a manifestation of an inner reality.

Whereas Mlle Du Clos realizes from the beginning that her role as *sakgame* is a performance, Robert Chevalier recognizes the performativity of his youth only in hindsight. Later in the text he describes his younger self as "ce jeune homme qui, faisant sottement l'Iroquois, quoique Canadien, pensa payer de sa vie le ridicule désir de passer tout de bon pour sauvage."[428] As the expression "faisant […] l'Iroquois" reveals, he finally considers his adoption into the tribe as an example of acting the part of an Iroquois. He was attempting to pass – "passer" – for a real – "tout de bon" – Iroquois. The vocabulary he uses, moreover, suggests a moral judgement of his actions. To pretend to be a "sauvage" was "ridicule." The tone of Robert Chevalier's quotation is one of regret of his youthful indiscretions; he was a foolhardy "jeune homme" willing to "payer de sa vie" in order to pass for a Native American. While Mlle Du Clos carefully cultivates the *sakgame* identity, Robert Chevalier seems to be at the mercy of Native American socialization : "Il m'a fallu plusieurs années, je ne dis pas pour vaincre, mais seulement pour adoucir un peu cette férocité que j'ai contractée avec ces hommes si différents des autres."[429] His Nativeness is thus conceptualized according to the discourse of disease. He must fight – "vaincre" – this "férocité" "contractée." Unlike Mlle du Clos, thus, his embracing of Native American culture and traditions is not as nearly as conscious of a choice. She practice identitary agency, while he is unaware of the constructed nature of his identity. Like Mlle du

[428] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 1, 165.
[429] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 1, 24.

Clos, he is dressing across the social boundary, but fails to recognize the mutability and importance of his dress.

In his attempt to be embraced by the Iroquois tribe as a legitimate member, Robert Chevalier often behaves more "savagely" than the Native Americans from whom he claims to have caught his ferociousness. After having been adopted by his Native American parents, for example, he is so violent and mean that they consider sending him back to the European settlement: "je cherchais souvent querelle et […] Il y avait tous les jours quelque tête cassée de ma façon. Ce qui était cause que mes parents sauvages voulaient quelquefois me renvoyer au Canada."[430] Similarly, he is far more of a warmonger than the other member of the tribe : "je n'aspirais qu'aux combats."[431] In his bellicosity, Robert Chevalier is more "Iroquois" – according to the received notions of what it meant to be Iroquois at the time – than the Iroquois among whom he lives. His actions represents, thus, a sort of identitary exaggeration. This exaggeration of identity, moreover, borders on an overdetermination of identity. Not only is Robert Chevalier dressed as an Iroquois, but he is also more violent than the Iroquois, and appears to have achieved a higher social status than many of his Iroquois comrades. In this respect, he is, at least, triply Iroquois. As Marjorie Garber suggests in her study on transvestism, *Vested Interests: Cross-dressing & Cultural Anxiety*, this overdetermination is essential to the transvestic mode as it is "a mechanism of displacement from one blurred boundary to another."[432] His violent nature is pushed to almost absurd limits. Indeed, his violence almost leads to an actual "displacement," or rejection from the Iroquois community. Therefore, in its extremeness, his violence reveals itself to be performative rather than innate. Extreme violence is explicitly rejected by the

[430] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 1, 23.
[431] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 1, 24.
[432] Garber 16.

community, showing that is not an essential component of Iroquois identity.

This questioning of essential identities extends beyond the example of the Iroquois as Robert Chevalier's actions also reveal the performative nature of Frenchness. For example, when Robert Chevalier is captured along with a group of Iroquois by the *Canadiens* it is not his outward appearance that marks him as a *Canadien*, but rather his ability to speak French. Having his pride hurt by the comments of a commanding officer, Robert Chevalier finally speaks out in French. This is an action which "cause une extrême surprise aux Canadiens."[433] Here, two differing sign values, one linguistic, and one vestimentary, are in competition. The *Canadiens* must attempt to read these signs, seeing past his outward appearance, giving him "toute l'attention que leur paraissait mériter un jeune Iroquois qui parlait si bien la langue française."[434] His dress again serves as a paradoxical exaggeration of his identity, creating discomfort and tension as the *Canadiens* troops are unsure how to interpret these disparate cultural signifiers. Is he a *Canadien* dressed as an Iroquois, or an Iroquois whose command of French reveals his belonging to the French fold? His identity is blurry, revealing the problematic nature of identity more generally in the New World as Native American and French meld together and mutually influence and define one another.

Robert Chevalier's "Frenchness" is also denoted in the text by his refusal to fight alongside the Iroquois against his *Canadiens* brethren. This refusal is rather exceptional in the text given the Robert Chevalier's aggressiveness in most other situations. Despite describing himself as "violent, toujours prêt à frapper"[435] and a "querelleur furieux,"[436] his emotional attachment to the French out ways his thirst for violence. As he says, "je refusais de suivre mes

[433] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 1, 28.
[434] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 1, 28.
[435] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 1, 12.
[436] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 1, 13.

parents en guerre contre les Canadiens […] je ne voulais point absolument combattre contre les Canadiens" because of "l'amour que je conservais pour ma patrie."[437] Taken all of this to account, we see that identity is marked not only by dress, but also by actions. If affective ties, linguistic abilities, and vestimentary choices are also markers of belonging, these are all relatively changeable. Read in tandem with Mlle Du Clos's tale, the story of Robert Chevalier reveals a discourse on identity that downplays essentialisms. In its place, the transvestic modality of the text suggests that identity defies rigid categorical constraints, is largely performative, blurred, and constantly evolving.

Yet, this transvestic mode is not limited to the New World, but can also be seen in the Old World, as the example of Monneville reveals. Because his tale does not primarily focus on New France, I will spend less time on it; however, it is an essential component in understanding the discourse of performativity that I have been analyzing. Indeed, in its narrative position as the bridge between the tales of Robert Chevalier and Mlle Du Clos, Monneville's story makes up the central panel in *Beauchêne*'s transvestic triptych. In this way, it reinforces the conclusions I have drawn above. Monneville's episode serves two distinct functions for my analysis: first, it problematizes the essentialism of gender. Secondly, it suggests that the fluidity of identity is not a phenomenon relegated to the mythical *ailleurs*, but is possible in the Old Word as well. By subtly questioning gender – often seen as the example *par excellence* of a natural essentialism – the Monneville episode radically problematizes all categories.

Gender in Monneville's story represents a type of knowledge, transmitted and learned from society. Until it is revealed to him by his guardian, Monneville is blissfully unaware of his

[437] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 1, 25.

biological sex. As his *nourrice* observes, "vous n'êtes point une fille […] je suis sûre que vous l'avez ignoré jusqu'à ce moment."[438] As the word "'ignorer" suggests, the fact that Monneville does not recognize distinctly his biological sex is because he lacks the knowledge of the criterion of such categories. He must learn that he is not a girl and what that means in the social realm. If he is "fort étonné,"[439] this knowledge of his sex quickly begins to modify his behavior towards his "sister" Lucille in gendered terms. As he notes,

> Je n'étais plus cette petite soeur qui se montrait toujours prête à rire et à jouer. La différence que je commençai à sentir qu'il y avait de son état au mien m'ôta tout d'un coup cet enjouement qui la divertissait auparavant. La tendresse que j'avais pour elle ne diminuait point, mais [la tendresse] devenait plus timide et plus respectueuse.[440]

With his recognition of the "différence" between gendered "états," Monneville changes rather suddenly. His ease at laughing and cheerfulness – characteristics that Monneville associates with femininity – are replaced with respectfulness and reserve. This change is almost instantaneous, happening "tout d'un coup." This suggests the powerful role gender has– once it is learned – in structuring people's behavior. Monneville does not start to "act" like a boy until he learns that he is a boy. His "masculinity" is thus not innate, but rather anchored in the repetition of normative social gestures.

Another way in which the text suggests the performative nature of gender is through the association it makes between clothing and identity. When he is finally able to clothe himself in male-specific clothing, Monneville speaks of his dress as a happy metamorphosis. As he says, "je fus bientôt métamorphosé en garçon […] Que je fus content de moi sous cette forme si désirée! Un chevalier nouveau n'est pas plus fier de sa croix, ni un nouvel evêque de sa mitre, que je

[438] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 1, 198.
[439] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 1, 199.
[440] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 1, 200.

l'étais de mes culottes."[441] The choice of metaphors – the cross and the mitre – are clearly phallic images. Moreover, the Bishop and the Knight are two potentate signs of patriarchal power, uniting religion, law and male-dominance. They are also meant to be inviolable institutions who protect the supposed essentialism of eighteenth century traditionalism. In this way Monneville's breeches bestow on him his masculinity and give him his phallic power on par with these other manly professions. The clothing literally makes him a man. Yet, like the cross or miter, clothing can be easily removed and changed. This suggests that gender and power dynamics are fluid and changeable.

Despite his "metamorphosis," in some ways Monneville's "true" identity remains that of the girl who was raised next to Lucile. Upon his return to his estate after his long absence in New France, for example, Monneville remains unrecognizable to Lucile, whom he means to marry. Unswayed by his arguments and private knowledge of her as a child, Lucile "doutait encore" and "ne [le] reconnût que comme par degré."[442] In order to convince her of who he is, Monneville must again become Lucile's "petite soeur" :

> Il ne fut plus question que d'affermir Lucile dans la foi qu'elle commençait d'ajouter à nos discours. Il me vint sur cela une pensée qui fit plus d'effet que tout le reste : je quittai pour un moment ma perruque et pris, à l'aide des femmes de chambre du château, une coiffure pareille à celle que je portais à l'âge de dix ans. Ensuite je me présentai devant les dames et, feignant de pleurer, je m'approchai de Lucile pour la prier de me consoler comme autrefois en me permettant de lui baiser la main.[443]

Beyond dressing as a woman, he must, in fact, pretend (*feindre*) to be a girl, crying and kissing Lucille's hand. Thus, it is not simply a matter of outer appearance, but of performance as well. Since Lucile "souhaiterait d'avoir sa petite soeur pour mari"[444] the suggestion is that

[441] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 1, 227.
[442] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 130.
[443] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 132.
[444] Lesage, *Beauchêne* tome 2, 139.

Monneville's identity as the "petite soeur" is the authentic one, at least to Lucile. The inevitable question thus arises: which version of Monneville is actually his authentic self? Which identity is performative? Is he truly pretending to be a girl, as he claims, or is Monneville, the man, his disguise?

Thus, the Monneville story is far from a plot tangent – unrelated to the principal tale of Robert Chevalier, as some scholars have suggested.[445] Rather, this episode represents a parallel story that mirrors and enters into dialogue with the other two examples of transvestism. It shapes the reader's understanding of Robert Chevalier and Mlle Du Clos' cultural transvestism by pushing the limits of essential categories. To use a term drawn from Jauss's theories on reader-reception, this episode opens the reader's "horizons of expectations" (*Erwatrungshorizont*) by pushing the limits of the thinkable.[446] If something as seemingly fundamental as gender is fluid, how much more so is societal belonging? If readers can accept the gender transvestism of Monneville, then they can almost certainly accept the cultural transvestism of Mlle Du Clos and Robert Chevalier.

Reading the text in this way, it becomes clear *Beauchêne* represents a profound meditation on the contours of identity. What makes one French, *Canadien*, Huron, or Iroquois? What makes one male or female? These are questions of fundamental categories that structured life under the *ancien régime* and continue to make their presence felt in the present. What is important to take away from this questioning of categories is the extent to which New France represents a privileged space in which to explore such issues. Thus, *Beauchêne*, like *Mariages*

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[445] This is Harry Kurz opinion from the early twentieth century: "Books III, IV, and V are given over entirely to Monneville's account of his own life and adventures, which have nothing whatever to do with Beauchêne" (xviii).

[446] See Hans Robert Jauss, *Aesthetic experience and literary hermeneutics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

and *La Sauvagesse,* reveals the discursive potential of New France and its population in disrupting and problematizing the structure and the unquestioned socio-cultural assumptions of eighteenth century France. As such, a study of the colonial *imaginaire* appears to be tied to a larger evolution, *à longue durée*, of mentalities in pre-Revolutionary France where rigid social categories and essentialisms were slowly chipped away.

New France towards *l'oubli* ?

So far in this project I have attempted to tease out the nuanced and ambivalent image of New France in a variety of texts aimed at both elite and popular audiences. If, as I have been suggesting, New France has an understudied, yet undeniable, role in articulating early strands of Enlightenment discourse and in raising questions of identity, why does New France seem to disappear from writings after 1763? Although France's humiliating defeat in the Seven Years' War certainly goes a long way in explaining this marginalization of Canada in the late eighteenth century, a larger shift appears to be happening in France. First, with the loss of New France, the *philosophes* appear to turn firmly against the colonial project. Second, the mythical *ailleurs* of Tahiti and the South Atlantic seem to capture the imaginations of writers of utopia. Nonetheless, New France does not completely disappear from Enlightenment texts, but rather, the experience in the New World is radically reinterpreted. Losing much of its luster, the ambivalent image of New France turns increasingly negative in the texts of the *philosophes*, especially in those of Voltaire and Raynal. Understanding the ways in which these two writers use New France to discursive ends may go a long way in explaining why New France has, until recently, had little

impact on the historiography of France. As such, a consideration of the traces of New France in several of these two *philosophes* writings will be the subject of my next chapter.

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Chapter 4 – New France in the Discourse of Voltaire and Raynal : Cautionary Tales, Sentimentality, Anglophilia.

L'Ennemi Canadien ?

Before there was a French discourse of anti-Americanism, there was the *ennemi candien.* Or, at least, that is how it would seem from a cursory reading. The example of Louis Antoine de Bougainville is instructive on this point. Before penning the work for which he is best known today – his 1771 *Voyage autour du monde* – Bougainville served as a young aide-de-camp to General Louis-Joseph de Montcalm, leader of the French forces in Canada during the Seven Years' War. Chronicling, and often bemoaning, his assignment in Canada, Bougainville composes a rather sobering account of the war's progression and the tension between metropolitan Frenchmen and the *Canadiens.* In a 1756 letter to his brother, for example, Bougainville makes a trenchant and revealing critique of the *Canadiens* : "Il semble que nous soyons d'une nation différente, ennemie même."[447] His official reports are barely more cheerful :

> Les Canadiens et les Français, quoiqu'ayant la même origine, les mêmes intérêts, les mêmes principes de religion et de gouvernement, un danger pressant devant les yeux, ne peuvent s'accorder; il semble que ce soit deux corps qui ne peuvent s'amalgamer ensemble. Je crois même que quelques Canadiens formaient des voeux pour que nous réussissions pas.[448]

In these two citations the *Canadiens* become an adversary to be reckoned with on par with the English. Rhetorically speaking, conceptualizing the *Canadiens* as enemies makes France's defeat, which Bougainville is preparing for, easier to bear.[449] Nonetheless, a sense of shared identity is still present in these citations. In the second quotation, for example,

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[447] Bougainville, Louis-Antoine, "Lettre du 7 novembre 1756," *Ecrits sur le Canada: mémoires, journal, lettres* (Sillery: Septentrion, 2003) 363.
[448] Bougainville, Louis-Antoine, *Journal de l'expédition en Amérique commencée en l'année 1756, le 15 mars* in *Ecrits sur le Canada : mémoires, journal, lettres* (Sillery: Septentrion, 2003) 331.
[449] Bougainville, *Mémoires* 32.

Bougainville repeats the word "même" three times, using it to underline the notion of shared origins, religion, and government between these populations. All the same, they have become two separate bodies – "deux corps" – which can be understood either as separate troops, according to the language of military operations, or as a metaphor for separate nations. In this way, Bougainville seems to suggest that the *Canadiens* are almost the same, but not quite. They are well on their way to Otherdom.

Despite his gloomy opinion of *Canadiens* in certain instances, Bougainville also continues to reiterate the positive aspects of the French settlers. In phrasing that recalls the earlier assessments of Lahontan and Charlevoix, Bougainville notes that "les simples habitants seraient scandalisés d'être appelés paysans. En effet, ils sont d'un meilleur [*sic*] étoffe , ont plus d'esprit, plus d'education pour que ceux de France […] ils vivent dans une espèce d'indépendance […] le Canadien est haut, glorieux, menteur, obligeant, honnête, infatigable pour la chasse."[450] The paradox of describing the *Canadiens* as both "honnête" and "menteur" points to the ambiguity within his vision of the colonial population. He feels connected to these people, yet quite separate from them as well. Indeed, he fears he might be turning into a *Canadien.* As he writes to his brother, "au sortir de l'Amérique notre conversation sera farcie de mots américains, de tournures barbares, d'expressions sauvages. Ici l'on est peu poli, et peut-on ne pas se ressentir d'un air qu'on aura si longtemps respiré?"[451] Bougainville's concerns give voice to the fact that senses of belonging are convoluted and contextually based. Almost against his will, Bougainville senses that he is becoming a cultural hybrid. In letters to his mother, for example, he describes himself as the "fils d'Amérique"[452] and an "Iroquois."[453] Like the Frenchmen who preceded him,

[450] Bougainville, *Mémoires* 83.
[451] Bougainville, "Lettre du 21 avril, 1758" 395.
[452] Bougainville, "Lettre du 21 avril, 1758" 394.
[453] Bougainville, "Lettre du 19 août 1757" 378.

Bougainville feels himself changed by the American experience.

By invoking Bougainville at the beginning of this chapter, I mean to underline the complicating factor of New France for analyses of French discourses towards identity in the early modern period. The impact of this first colonial moment on notions of Frenchness has been relatively neglected by scholars.[454] Instead, researchers have tended to focus on how France defines itself in relationship with, and often in opposition to, Anglo-American society in North America. In his 2002 work *L'Ennemi américain,* for example, Philippe Roger points to the mid-eighteenth century as the "préhistoire"[455] of French anti-Americanism. Seeing anti-Americanism as less a coherent set of socio-ethical or political positions, Roger points to it as a discourse "débridé" that follows the logic of "accumulation," rather than that of demonstration, or proof.[456] Anti-Americanism is a "tradition," he argues, uniting the French across socio-cultural, political and intellectual circles at different moments from the early-modern era to the present.[457] Anti-americanism "fait partie intégrante de 'l'exception française.'"[458] Yet, despite the sweeping and well reasoned nature of Roger's analysis, it elides the discursive differences between British and French North America. He ignores New France. However, if the discourse surrounding America ultimately provides insight into what it means to be French, the representations of New France and its people in France are certainly important elements in understanding French conceptions of national identity in the eighteenth century. In short, we cannot understand French representations of America without invoking France's colonial ambitions there. Of course, Roger chooses to start

[454] Recent works, however, has underscored the importance of the Acadian deportation of 1755 on French discourses of identity. See Christopher Hodson, *The Acadian Diaspora: An Eighteenth- Century History* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) and Jean-François Mouhot, *Les réfugiés acadiens en France, 1758-1785. L'impossible réintegration?* (Quebec City: Septentrion, 2009).
[455] Roger, Philippe, *L'ennemi américain: généalogie de l'antiaméricanisme français* (Paris: Seuil, 2002) 22.
[456] Roger 18.
[457] Roger 581.
[458] Roger 523.

his analysis at the end of France's colonial period in North America, thereby by-passing the question of New France and its loss on the discourse of anti-Americanism. Nonetheless, the memory of the French colonial period does not disappear at the 1763 treaty of Paris. As I will argue below, the French *imaginaire* of Canada and the French North American colonies continues to inform philosophical debates on colonialism, economic liberalism, and identity even after the end of hostilities.

To this end, this chapter investigates the continuing discursive role of Canada in the work of Voltaire and Raynal, two of the most influential writers of eighteenth-century France. Using a variety of texts by Voltaire, including *Lettres philosophiques* (1734), *Le Mondain* (1736), *Essai sur l'esprit et les moeurs des nations* (1756), *Candide, ou l'optimisme* (1759) and *L'ingénu ou le Huron, une histoire véritable* (1767) I contextualize Canada within Voltaire's shifting stance towards economic liberalism and colonialism.[459] Although not as cruel as the colonial projects in South America and in the sugar islands, New France represents in many ways the height of *ancien régime* incompetence. At the same time, Voltaire's negative visions of Canada are part of his general appreciation of English colonial policies as foils to French ones. In this way, writing about Canada allows him to envision a renewed French identity infused with English tolerance and "natural" man's reasoning.

The epitome of this new Frenchman is the Ingénu – a hybrid figure born from the Canadian colonial situation. As a synthesis of "natural" and "civilized" man, as well as a blend of

[459] In her article "Cosmopolitans, Slaves, and the Global Market in Voltaire's *Candide*, *Ou l'Optimisme,*" *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 25.1 (2012): 61-84, Ingvild Kjørholt analyzes the evolution of Voltaire's thoughts on global trade to argue that he problematizes of the meaning of "cosmopolitan." Faced with the brutality of the world market, Candide embraces a different sort of cosmopolitanism, based on the ideas of Diogenes. This cosmopolitanism is characterized by a "radical rejection of polis, the city state, and consequently of the Aristotelian view of the human being as a political animal – the idea that humanity is defined by belonging to a political society." (84)

English values of tolerance with French notions of *politesse,* the Ingénu is the consummate cosmopolitan. In this way, Voltaire uses a *Canadien* to reveal the ideal Frenchman – worldly, tolerant, and polite. The Ingénu's blending of cultural mores is only possible, however, because of his education in Canada, which represents a cross-roads between societies and a space free of pernicious French prejudices. In this way, *L'Ingénu* tempers Voltaire's vision of Canada as "quelques arpents de neige." Indeed, I will argue that Canada is an important, and under-appreciated, component in the Ingénu's cosmopolitanism.

As for Raynal, his *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes*, published and reedited between 1770-1780, represents a repository of the main strands of intellectual thought towards the New Worlds, both East and West, including North America and New France.[460] No less of a collective *oeuvre* than Diderot and D'Holbach's renowned *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné,* Raynal copies liberally from Diderot, De Pauw, Thomas Paine, Charlevoix, and others. As such, Raynal's work is a fruitful terrain of investigation of the French *imaginaire* of the Americas and colonization. Throughout the *Histoire* the text reveals ambivalence towards the failed colonial project in North America. My analysis focuses specifically on Raynal's use of rhetorical devices to evoke regret and sentimentality on the part of the reader towards the lost colonies and the French colonists left behind. Ultimately, I argue that Raynal's text employs these devices to investigate the contours of Frenchness within the colonial matrix of Britishness and Native Americanness.

After the Seven Years' War, Canada, now a possession of the English crown, represents a

[460] The text's status of a best-seller has been confirmed by scholar Gilles Bancarel who has identified 46 printings of the *Histoire des deux Indes* from 1770 to 1820. See Cecil P. Courtney, *"*Les métamorphoses d'un best-seller : l'Histoire des deux Indes de 1770 à 1820" *Raynal, de la polémique à l'histoire*. Ed Bancarel, Gilles and Gianluigi Goggi (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2000) 110. I have used the 1780 edition for this chapter.

union of Frenchness and Englishness. The *Canadiens* are a French population living under the laws and customs of Great Britain. Rather than languishing under British rule, Québec is thriving, Raynal claims, thanks to the social and economic reforms brought by the English. For Anglophiles like Raynal (and Voltaire, for that matter), Canada may have represented a sort of "natural" experiment whereby the sort of constitutional and economic reforms based on the English model are possible. Implicating both French and Québecois historiography, these texts suggest that even after the Seven Years' War, Canada has an important discursive role in helping Voltaire and Raynal articulate a cosmopolitan hybridity.

"La France peut être heureuse sans Québec..."[461] : On the path of Voltaire's anti-Canadianism

It would be easy enough to accept Voltaire's rejection of Canada as proof of an apprehension towards colonialism more generally. In her 2005 work *Turn to Empire*, Jennifer Pitts argues, for example, that "lively skepticism about Europe's pretended superiority […] gave way after 1830 to nearly universal acceptance of colonial rule as justifiable fact of global politics."[462] Although Pitt correctly highlights the relativistic paradigm of many *philosophes,* we should avoid conflating relativism with strident anti-colonialism. Voltaire was a partisan of certain colonial-esque endeavors. The discovery of new markets and trade with local populations were justifiable in his view. Conquest, slavery, and domination were not. Moreover, Voltaire lauds the North American English colonies of Pennsylvania, Carolina, and New England as examples of colonial societies based on Lockean principles of "natural" law, religious tolerance,

[461] Voltaire, "Correspondance XXV, lettre D10693," *The complete works of Voltaire.* Vol. 109 (Oxford : The Voltaire Foundation, 1973).

[462] Pitts, Jennifer, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005) 165.

and free trade. As such, his negativity towards Canada comes less from a place of opposition towards all colonial contact, *per se*, than it does from the type of colonization that France has undertaken there. Therefore, before we reevaluate the discourse around Canada in Voltaire's work, it behooves us to evaluate Voltaire's stance towards colonialism and classical liberalism.

Like many eighteenth century thinkers, the larger world held intriguing possibilities for Voltaire. Mutually beneficial economic trade was uniting the world and making life better. In his 1736 poem *Le Mondain*, for example, Voltaire's narrator sings the praises of global trade :

> Le superflu, chose très nécessaire,
> A réuni l'un et l'autre hémisphère.
> Voyez-vous pas ces agiles vaisseaux
> Qui, du Texel, de Londres, de Bordeaux,
> S'en vont chercher, par un heureux échange,
> De nouveaux biens, nés aux sources du Gange,
> Tandis qu'au loin, vainqueurs des musulmans,
> Nos vins de France enivrent les sultans ?[463]

In this rather optimistic passage, Voltaire advocates a type of contact that is commercial rather than explicitly colonial. In the absence of military domination, "heureux échange" unites the hemispheres. New markets and new products increase happiness in both directions, as basic needs, satiated, give way to the desire for luxury, or the superfluous. The true "vainqueurs des musulmans" are not a French naval fleet or standing army, but the quality of France's wine. As opposed to domination and conquest, the *rayonnement* of French civilization progresses, through trade. However, if *Le Mondain* suggests that commercial exchange is a preferable form of contact between peoples, it does not preclude other types. That is to say, colonies can be justified in the context of Voltairian thought, but only a certain type of colonization is legitimate. On this point, English colonies are Voltaire's touchstone.

[463] Voltaire, "Le Mondain," *The Complete Works of Voltaire* vol. 16 (Oxford : The Voltaire Foundation, 1968) v. 23-30.

Voltaire sees in the English New World the possibility to reengineer society. The Quakers of Pennsylvania are a defensible model for colonial contact that has the potential to reshape the world. As opposed to a policy of conquest and destruction that Voltaire laments in the Portuguese and Spanish colonial settlements, the Quakers win over the Native Americans through their tolerance and pacifism. As he writes in a portion of his 1734 *Lettres philosophiques* about William Penn's colony:

> Les naturels du pays, au lieu de fuir dans les forêts, s'accoutumèrent insensiblement avec les pacifiques quakers : autant ils détestaient les autres chrétiens conquérants et destructeurs de l'Amérique, ils aimaient ces nouveaux venus. En peu de temps un grand nombre de ces prétendus sauvages, charmés de la douceur de ces voisins, vinrent en foule demander à Guillaume Penn de les recevoir au nombre de ses vassaux. C'était un spectacle bien nouveau qu'un souverain que tout le monde tutoyait, et à qui on parlait le chapeau sur la tête, un gouvernement sans prêtres, un peuple sans armes, des citoyens tous égaux, à la magistrature près, et des voisins sans jalousie.[464]

Far from a screed against the inherent injustice of colonialism, in this citation Voltaire seems to advocate a type of assimilation of Native Americans based on cultural seduction – what contemporary political scientists term "soft power" – rather than force.[465] The cultural policies of the Quakers have "charmed" the local population into submitting themselves to the European leader. The pomp and circumstance associated with the *ancien régime* do not hold sway in the colony, and even language is reshaped with an emphasis on equality. With more than a touch of utopian panache, Voltaire imagines a fundamentally "nouveau" government that can accommodate difference through tolerance and equality. Moreover, Voltaire defines its newness through a discourse of absence. In the last sentence of the above citation, for example, the repetition of the word "sans" emphasizes how Quaker society is perfect because it lacks certain trappings of European culture. For Voltaire, this New World colony represents, thus, a realization

[464] Voltaire, *Lettres philosophiques,* ed. Gustave Lanson and André M. Rousseau (Paris: M. Didier, 1964) 48.
[465] Nye, Joseph, *Soft Power : The Means to Success in World Politics* (PublicAffairs: New York, 2004) 5.

of "l'âge d'or dont on parle tant, et qui n'a vraisemblablement existé qu'en Pennsylvanie."[466] As opposed to the cynicism towards utopian thought that pervades other parts of Voltaire's *oeuvre,* here the New World is a place for the renewal of European institutions and society. Free from the confines of the past and the social rigidity and stratification of Europe, Pennsylvania becomes "cette contrée, unique sur la terre, où s'est réfugiée la paix bannie partout ailleurs."[467] Thus, Voltaire imagines the New World colony of Pennsylvania as a refuge / model. It is a place to escape the militarism and intolerance of the Old World, and the model of how the world *should* work.

However, if the American Quakers are spared some of the corrupting influences of Europe, they are not perfect. Religious "superstition," a perennial target of Voltaire, still seeps into Quaker practices : "Otez ce nom de *Quaker*, cette habitude révoltante et barbare de trembler en parlant dans leurs assemblées religieuses, et quelques coutumes ridicules, il faudra convenir que ces primitifs sont les plus respectables de tous les hommes: leur colonie est aussi florissante que leurs moeurs ont été pures."[468] Despite their eccentric customs, Voltaire envisions the Quakers as an admirable and relatively uncorrupt society. Importantly, Voltaire's use of the terms "primitifs" and "barbare" rings a conceptual bell as it subtly equates the Quakers with the "prétendu sauvages" of North America. The Quakers' simplicity, independence, tolerance, and egalitarian nature put them on equal footing with the Native Americans and allow them to win over the local population. As such, Pennsylvania becomes a place of social mixing. Although the Europeans remain the center – the Native Americans become the vassals of the Europeans, and not vice versa – this society still represents the sort of happy contact between groups for which

[466] Voltaire, *Lettres philosophiques* 48.
[467] Voltaire and Lanni, Dominque, *Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations et sur les principaux faits de l'histoire depuis Charlemagne jusqu'à Louis XIII* (Paris: Garnier frères, 1963) 384.
[468] Voltaire, *Essai sur les moeurs* 383, 384.

Voltaire advocates in *Le Mondain*. More than this, the Quakers are a middle ground between the Otherness of the Native Americans and the decadence of modern Europe.

If Pennsylvanian Quakerism has only a touch of an otherworldly quality about it, Voltaire's depiction of Eldorado in *Candide* (1759) is explicitly fantastical. Both are instructive, however, of the kind of reforms Voltaire desires for French society. Located vaguely near Cayenne in French Guiana, Voltaire's Eldorado is a utopia through subtraction – much like Quaker Pennsylvania. As Guillaume Ansart has argued, "Eldorado is essentially defined by negative reference to Europe. It is characterized less by what it is than by what it is not."[469] Indeed, in the citations below we will notice the repetition of grammatical negation. As the *vieillard* from Eldorado informs Candide about prayer, "Nous ne […] prions point [Dieu], dit le bon et respectable sage ; nous n'avons rien à lui demander."[470] The people of Eldorado practice a simple deism, notable for the *absence* of superstitions and rituals. Likewise, religious hierarchy and arcane religious debates are unknown in Eldorado : "nous sommes tous ici du même avis, et nous n'entendons pas ce que vous voulez dire avec vos moines."[471] This choice of verb "entendre" – a synonym for *comprendre* at the time – is especially telling in this citation as it suggests that the notion of monks and ecclesiastic orders are outside the realm of the thinkable for these people. It is an ironic reversal of expectation for the eighteenth century French reader who might find difficult the idea of a perfect society *without* Church hierarchy. As for government, it is still monarchical like France, but lacks the pretension and social distancing of French customs : "l'usage, dit le grand officier, est d'embrasser le roi et de le baiser des deux

[469] Ansart, Guillaume, "Imaginary Encounters With The New World: Native American Utopias In 18th-Century French Novels," *Utopian Studies* 11.2 (2000), 38.
[470] Voltaire, *Candide, The Complete Works of Voltaire* vol. 48 (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1968) 189.
[471] Voltaire, *Candide* 189.

côtés."[472] A strikingly simple greeting, this *usage* intimates a physical closeness between the king and his people as well as a less rigid social ladder. Additionally, in a land where everyone agrees and the king embraces his subjects, there is no court, parliament or prison, but instead a "palais de sciences."[473] Empiricism and reason are the lodestars of this society.

Reading the Eldorado tale in conjunction with Voltaire's remarks about Quaker Pennsylvania, the reader is struck by their similarities. Even if Pennsylvania is not paved with gold, it does share many of the socio-cultural policies of Eldorado. Of course, Eldorado remains the *philosophe's* ideal. It is, as René Pomeau suggests, "le paradis utopique, le meilleur des mondes inaccessible."[474] Pennsylvania, meanwhile, is not quite so perfect – because it is accessible and real. In this respect, it represents an acceptable compromise, analogous to what Pomeau calls "le bonheur, médiocre mais réaliste, du 'jardin'" of *Candide.*[475] Importantly, Voltaire situates both visions of society, realistic and unrealistic, in the New World. As such, Voltaire seems to be advocating a type of colonialism that looks towards the utopian ideal of Eldorado, within realistic parameters. After all, it is not the "boue jaune" of Eldorado that makes it utopia ; Rather, it is the society's blending of tolerance, freedom, deism, and scientific reason. It is a reengineered society in the New World.[476]

French colonialism, however, is far different from Voltaire's conceptualization of the happy circumstances of the English North American colonies or Eldorado. Voltaire denounces French (as well as European) colonialism in the Caribbean because of its reliance on African slave labor. Although the sugar islands are profitable, they are morally unjustifiable. Faced with

[472] Voltaire, *Candide* 190.
[473] Voltaire, *Candide* 191.
[474] Pomeau, René, "Introduction," *Micromégas, Zadig, Candide* (Paris: Flammarion, 1994) 34.
[475] Pomeau, "Introduction" 34.
[476] Voltaire, *Candide* 192.

the brutality of colonialism, Voltaire's optimism towards global trade has faded. In his *Essai sur les moeurs des nations*, for example, Voltaire comments ironically on the naivety of his younger self, bringing to light the horrible price of the "superflu […] très nécessaire:"

> On comptait en 1757, dans la Saint-Domingue française, environ trente mille personnes, et cent mille esclaves nègres ou mulâtre, qui travaillaient aux sucreries, aux plantations d'indigo, de cacao, et qui abrégent leur vie pour flatter nos appétits nouveaux, en remplissant nos nouveaux besoins, que nos pères ne connaissaient pas. […] Nous leurs disons qu'ils sont hommes comme nous, qu'ils sont rachetés du sang d'un Dieu mort pour eux, et ensuite on les fait travailler comme des bêtes de somme: on les nourrit plus mal; s'ils veulent s'enfuir, on leur coupe une jambe, et on leur fait tourner à bras l'arbre des moulins à sucre, lorsqu'on leur a donné une jambe de bois. Après cela nous osons parler du droit des gens! [...][Ce pays] n'est pas sans doute un vrai bien; mais les hommes s'étant fait des nécessités nouvelles, il empêche que la France n'achète chèrement de l'étranger un *superflu devenu nécessaire.*[477] (my emphasis)

Condemning the cruelty of the slave trade and the colonial process that reinforces it, Voltaire mimics the vocabulary of his earlier poem. Yet, the triumphalism of *Le Mondain* is gone. In its place the "superflu devenu nécessaire" has become the cause of a great number of abuses, chief among these is slavery and the ghastly torture it entails.

As Ingvild Kjørholt suggests in her article "Cosmopolitanism in Voltaire's *Candide*," the mutilated Surinam slave of *Candide* is the negative foil of the cosmopolitan ; he is an "inverse and complementary figure, who – like the cosmopolitan – has no home of his own."[478] While the latter is radically free and equal among other international elites, the former is defined as unfree. Both cosmopolitan and slave, however, are products of the world market. But, as *Candide* suggests at numerous points, ultimately, both figures are abased by the global system. Thus, the prosperity brought by international trade comes at too great a price. The Europeans' and local populations both lose their humanity through the slave-trade, conquest, and wars – the motors of

[477] Voltaire, *Essai sur les moeurs* 380.
[478] Kjørholt, Ingvild Hagen, "Cosmopolitans, Slaves, and the Global Market in Voltaire's *Candide, ou l'optimisme*." *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 25.1 (2012) : 62.

global commerce. Incompatible with the ideals of humanism, slavery reduces the slave to a beast of burden at the hands of a Europe whose tastes for sugar and indigo make all Europeans slave-masters.

Therefore, Voltaire's critique of Canada must be understood within the context of his apprehension towards the world market starting in the 1750s. While Canada does not share the immorality of slavery, it is far too expensive and troublesome for the French. In his 1768 *Précis du Siècle de Louis XV* Voltaire spells this out rather explicitly :

> Ces quinze cents lieues, dont les trois quarts sont des déserts glacés, n'étaient pas peut-être une perte réelle. Le Canada coûtait beaucoup & rapportait très-peu. Si la dixième partie de l'argent englouti dans cette colonie avait été employée à défricher nos terres incultes en France, on aurait fait un gain considérable ; mais on avait voulu soutenir le Canada, & on a perdu cent années de peines avec tout l'argent prodigué sans retour.[479]

In this citation Voltaire suggests a practical application of *Candide*'s moral that "il faut cultiver notre jardin."[480] The energy and money spent on adventurism in Canada would have been better used to nation-build – as we might call it – at home. Considered alongside his condemnation of Saint Domingue and the other sugar colonies, it is clear that Voltaire's critique of colonialism differs depending on the circumstance. If the colonization of Canada is unjustifiable for economic reasons, the colonization of the more profitable sugar islands is morally untenable. As proof of this, Voltaire leaves open the possibility of colonizing Louisiana, which has not yet become a fully fledged slave-holding society on the scale of Saint Domingue. As he writes in *Essai sur les moeurs*, "Peut-être un jour, s'il y a des millions d'habitants de trop en France, sera-t-il avantageux de peupler la Louisiane; mais il est plus vraisemblable qu'il faudra l'abandonner."[481] These are thin odds, but they are still a possibility.

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[479] Voltaire, *Précis du siècle de Louis XV, Œuvres historiques*. ed. René Pomeau (Paris: Gallimard, 1957) 1508
[480] Voltaire, *Candide* 260.
[481] Voltaire, *Essai sur les moeurs* 374.

Synthesizing Voltaire's philosophy from these texts, a vision of enlightened colonialism comes to focus. A policy of economic liberalism, tolerance, and equality that Voltaire advocates in these works, has not been, however, the *modus operandi* of the French colonial regime. In lieu of English tolerance, New France is closed to non-Catholics, at a great cost to the colony. As Voltaire writes in *Essai sur les moeurs* : "On prétend que depuis la révocation de l'édit de Nantes, qui a valu des peuplades aux deux mondes, le nombre des habitants de la Virginie se monte à cent quarante mille, sans compter les nègres."[482] The implication, of course, is that the Huguenots have taken their labor to the English colonies, leaving the French possessions to languish. English colonies, conversely, enjoy the fruits of their policies of religious openness. Writing about the colony of Carolina, for example, Voltaire comments,

> Le plus grand lustre de cette colonie est d'avoir reçu ses lois du philosophe Locke. La liberté entière de conscience, la tolérance de toutes les religions fut le fondement de ces lois. Les épiscopaux y vivent fraternellement avec les puritans; ils y permettent le culte des catholiques leurs ennemis, et celui des Indiens nommés *idolâtres*.[483]

Through a radically relativist gesture, Voltaire places all religions on equal ground – even the so-called idolatry of the Native Americans. Again, this suggests that the New World represents a space where society can be remade along the lines of fraternity, brought by tolerance. Catholic, Protestant, and pagan can live side-by-side and shoulder to shoulder. The philosophy of Locke can be planted in the New World without the weeds of historical religious animosities. Voltaire implies, thus, that French intolerance, through the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, has prevented France from enjoying England's success at home and abroad.

Yet, the English colonies have not always been free of pernicious superstition. In the

[482] Voltaire, *Essai sur les moeurs* 382.
[483] Voltaire, *Essai sur les moeurs* 381, 382.

Salem witch trials of the late seventh century Voltaire sees the rebirth of "d'anciennes folies […] en Amérique."[484] Soon, however,

> la maladie cessa; les citoyens de la Nouvelle-Angleterre reprirent leur raison, et s'étonnèrent de leur fureur. Ils se livrèrent au commerce et à la culture des terres. La colonie devint bientôt la plus florissante de toutes. On y comptait en 1750, environ trois cent cinquante mille habitants; c'est dix fois plus qu'on n'en comptait dans les établissement français.[485]

In this passage Voltaire draws a non-sequitur line uniting the cessation of superstition with a reinvestment in commerce and agriculture as well as English colonial superiority over the French. The textual movement from the witch hunts to population comparisons intimates that something is deficient in French colonialism. Even these Puritans, who "se livraient à cette abominable démence," have created a more prosperous colony than New France.[486] The example of New England implies, thus, that superstition can be overcome, thereby bringing prosperity. He seems to suggest by comparison that France never embraced the solution to its colonial malaise – commerce and agriculture and the rejection of religious intolerance – while the English colonists did. To state it plainly, the English colonies are the example to replicate.

The title of Voltaire's 1756 work *Essai sur les moeurs et l'esprit des nations* suggests that there is something in the essential character of nations that determines specific outcomes. This, however, is a textual sleight of hand. In fact, Voltaire resists the temptation to see English colonial success or French colonial failure as the result of such determinism. As he asks and answers rhetorically in the later *Précis* :

Quelle est la raison de cette supériorité continuelle [des Anglais]? […] Serait-ce enfin que

[484] Voltaire, *Essai sur les moeurs* 384.
[485] Voltaire, *Essai sur les moeurs* 385.
[486] Voltaire, *Essai sur les moeurs* 385.

> le climat & le sol anglais produisent des hommes d'un corps plus vigoureux, & d'un esprit plus constant que celui de France, comme il produit de meilleurs chevaux & de meilleurs chiens de chasse? Mais depuis Bayonne jusqu'aux côtes de Picardi & de Flandre, la France a des hommes d'un travail infatigable, & la Normandie seule a subjugué autrefois l'Angleterre.[487]

Referencing the climatological theories popularized by Buffon, which "explain" why English horses and hunting dogs are superior to French ones, Voltaire rejects them out of hand for humankind. "No," Voltaire responds, there is nothing inherent in the French climate that makes them weak or inconstant ; nor are the English stronger and more determined because they live on the other side of the channel. Rather, the failure of the French against the English in Europe and America has everything to do with internal politics and religious strife. As Voltaire characterizes it, in the 1750s the French parliaments were embroiled in "une autre guerre si ancienne & si interminable, entre la juridiction séculière & la discipline ecclésiastique."[488] This dispute preoccupied Paris while America remained "désolée" and ignored. While we need not follow this path too far, what is important to take away from this is the fact that religious quarrels and contentious politics prevent France from focusing and succeeding on the world stage. As such, the New World represents the outward manifestation of England's success and France's failures. Subtly, but persistently, Voltaire affirms that England is better suited to found colonies. This is certainly thanks to their naval might, of course, but is also a result of tolerant policies, liberal economics, and a constitutional monarchy. Seen in this light, the nations' respective colonies are the peripheries that reveal either the efficiency or deficiency of their metropoles. New France cannot prosper as long as Old France lies in economic and political turmoil. French colonial failures in America, thus, serve as a warning about the folly of trying to found colonies

[487] Voltaire, *Précis* 1509, 1510.
[488] Voltaire, *Précis* 1514.

while internal strife and poor governance consume all of the state's energy and resources. Read this way, the loss of Canada is simply the outcome of long-term failures and structural problems at the heart of Old France.

Taking all of this together, we cannot maintain that Voltaire was entirely anti-America. While his critique of French colonial policy in Canada remains trenchant, he also praises the success of English colonialism in America. Yet, the English success in colonialism is but one indication of the superiority of the English socio-cultural and economic model over French absolutism and intolerance. Thus, Voltaire's apprehension towards Canada should not be conflated with a general anti-American sentiment. Rather it fulfills an important discursive function : it allows him to create a stark comparison between France and England. His analysis of the New World allows him to advocate English style reforms within the French system.

Nonetheless, if Voltaire is undeniably against French colonialism in Canada, does that mean he is necessarily against the *Canadiens* – the French-born settlers of New France ? Turning our attention to *L'Ingénu ou le Huron*, I will suggest that the Ingénu's "Canadienness" – a much understudied aspect of the text – reveals an appreciation on the part of Voltaire for this colonized, hybrid character. Through the Ingénu, Voltaire slightly reframes his vision of Canada as a place that allows a character like the Ingénu to exist. As we will see below, Voltaire's text recognizes and highlights the benefits that the Ingénu draws from his French North American origins, especially in terms of education and his cultural hybridity.

A Canadian Hybrid : *L'ingénu ou le Huron, une histoire véritable*

Voltaire's discussion of the French New World is largely devoid of any reference to *Canadiens* – at least *French*-Canadians. His few mentions of French settlers are oblique. In *Essai sur les moeurs* and the *Précis*, for example, Voltaire prefers synecdoche over direct invocations. He writes of buildings and not people. The colonies of Canada and Louisiana are still merely "quelques cabanes"[489] and "méchantes-maisons."[490] One of the few times Voltaire does invoke the French settler population directly it is to comment on the ease by which they became English subjects : "Les colons du Canada aimèrent mieux vivre sous les lois de la Grande-Bretagne que de venir en France."[491] This reticence on the part of Voltaire to write directly about the colonists can be understood as part of his rhetorical strategy. If he desires peace – even "une paix si déshonorante et si nécessaire"– above all else, then it behooves him to deemphasize the human cost of losing the colony.[492] Moreover, the question of the *Canadiens* might represent an awkward subject that he wished to evade. Historical precedent suggested that British control over a French settler population might end poorly, as demonstrated by Great Britain's expulsion of the *Acadiens* from Nova Scotia in 1755. Thus, it is perhaps politically and ethically easier for Voltaire to advocate ceding the colony if he conceptualizes it as empty – a mere "quelques arpents de neige," or a few miserable cabins. To suggest that France hand over a colony of French subjects to a nation that has shown animosity towards the settlers would have been a more difficult task, discursively at least.

When Voltaire does use the demonym "Canadiens" it is almost always to speak of the Native American population. Yet, as we saw in an earlier chapter, by the mid-eighteenth century

[489] Voltaire *Essai sur les moeurs* 370.
[490] Voltaire, *Essai sur les moeurs* 374.
[491] Voltaire, *Précis* 1513.
[492] Voltaire, *Précis* 1513.

"Canadien" had become a common term to describe the French settler populations.[493] The term "Canadois," conversely, was meant for the Native Americans. Voltaire, however, refuses this nomenclature, using *Canadiens* as a synonym for *sauvage.* Nonetheless, the question of who exactly is "savage" is an open question. Like Jean de Léry and Montaigne before him, the (Native) *Canadiens* in Voltaire's text are cannibalistic foils to vicious Europeans :

> Des peuples chasseurs, tels qu'étaient les Brasiliens et les Canadiens, des insulaires comme les Caraïbes, n'ayant pas toujours une subsistance assurée, ont pu devenir quelquefois anthropophages. La famine et la vengeance les ont accoutumés à cette nourriture, et quand nous voyons, dans les siècles les plus civilisés, le peuple de Paris dévorer les restes sanglants du maréchal d'Ancre, et le peuple de La Haye manger le coeur du grand-pensionnaire de Wit, nous ne devons pas être surpris qu'une horreur chez nous passagère, ait duré chez les sauvages.[494]

Like the *sauvages*, the Europeans are also guilty of cannibalism at times. Yet, the *sauvages* are reduced to this practice out of necessity, and not out of vengeance. The Europeans, conversely, do it out of spite and hate. Voltaire suggests, thus, that the dichotomy opposing civilized Europe and savage American is less clear and often, in fact, inverted.

Alongside this fairly conventional reading, it seems to me that Voltaire is also making a larger philosophical point about society in the French colonies. On one level, it functions as a reminder that Canada does not belong to the French, but to the Native Americans. They are the "true" Canadians. As Voltaire writes in the *Précis*, "Si la philosophie & la justice se mêlaient des querelles des hommes, elles leur feraient voir que les Français & les Anglais se disputaient un pays sur lequel ils n'avaient aucun droit : mais ces premiers principes n'entrent point dans les affaires du monde."[495] On another level, Voltaire's use of the term *Canadien* may represent a humorous comment on the settler population through the rhetorical use of *quid pro quo*. If

[493] See Carpin, Gervais. *Histoire d'un mot: l'ethnonyme "canadien" de 1535-1691* (Sillery, Québec: Septentrion, 1995)
[494] Voltaire, *Essai sur les moeurs* 344.
[495] Voltaire, *Précis* 1477.

"Canadien" was largely accepted as a term for the settler population by the time of Voltaire's writing, than the reading public may stumble at Voltaire's use of the word. He makes it sound as if the French in Canada – the *Canadiens* – have become cannibals. While we must rely on a certain amount of conjecture, Voltaire does appear to be playing with the notion that Europeans risk "ensauvagement" in the New World.

Despite Voltaire's reticence to write about the colonial population of Canada, his 1767 work *L'Ingénu ou le Huron, une histoire véritable* puts onto the page arguably the world's most famous eighteenth century *Canadien*. Of course, the text never explicitly labels the Ingénu as such. Although he is raised by the Huron, the reader learns that he carries a portrait of his biological parents – presumably the long-lost brother of the Kerkabons and his wife, natives of Brittany. Moreover, his physical features suggest European heritage : "son menton est cotonné"[496] and "Ce grand garçon-là a un teint de lis et de rose,"[497] from which the characters surmise that "il est donc fils d'un homme d'Europe."[498] Furthermore, in an earlier outline of the *conte,* Voltaire writes that the Ingénu is "élevé chez les sauvages."[499] Although it is a subtle distinction, Voltaire's use of the passive voice suggests that the Ingénu is not a "sauvage," but is merely raised as one. In other words, he is a Frenchman born and raised in Canada, or simply a *Canadien.*

Scholars, however, have tended to neglect the Ingénu's Canadian origins. Or, if they are noted, these origins are viewed as relatively inconsequential biographical details. In his article "Un 'Bon sauvage' voltairien : L'Ingénu," René Pomeau characterizes the descriptions of Canada

[496] Voltaire, *L'ingénu* ed. Dominique Lanni (Paris: Flammarion, 2004) 49.
[497] Voltaire, *Ingénu* 39.
[498] Voltaire, *Ingénu* 49.
[499] Haven, George R. "Voltaire's *L'Ingénu* : Composition and Publication," *The Romanic Review* 63 (1972) : 262.

as “des évocations fantaisistes.”[500] Voltaire’s objective is not, Pomeau suggests “de mettre en oeuvre la documentation apportée par le missionaire.”[501] Rather, Pomeau views the Ingénu’s Canadian origins as a convenient ruse to explain his naivety : “Parce qu’il est ‘sauvage’, l’Ingénu réalise le cas idéal de la table rase.”[502] On this blank slate, Voltaire is able to write his apology for French cultural superiority. Or, as Pomeau neatly summarizes “le sauvage ne devient vraiment ‘bon’ qu’à condition de cesser d’être sauvage.”[503]

While it is clear that Voltaire’s main goal is not to give a realistic account of life in Huronia, the Ingénu’s origins in Canada should not be so quickly discounted. In fact, his Canadianness is more than coincidental in the text. On the contrary, it is essential to the text's discourse on the relationship between “natural” and “civilized” man. Rather than a type of acculturation – whereby the Ingénu becomes more and more French – the Ingénu’s change in the text can be seen as a movement towards cultural hybridity. The Ingénu negotiates the differing cultural values and signs, creating a third form of action between that of “civilized” Frenchman and “sauvage” Huron. To use a term from post-colonial theory, the Ingénu “elude[s] the politics of polarity.”[504] He defies binaries, opening the path to a new type of man.

The juxtaposition of binaries and tertiaries is not limited to the character of the Ingénu, but is manifest at every level of the *conte.* For example, much scholarship from the twentieth century was centered on the genre-bending qualities of *L’Ingénu.* Some scholars have seen Voltaire’s blending of *conte* and *roman sensible* as an “undesirable dichotomy.”[505] Others, like

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[500] Pomeau, René, "Un 'Bon sauvage' Voltairien: L'Ingénu," *Studi di Letteratura Francese, Serie I - Storia - Lett* 7 (1981) 63.
[501] Pomeau, “Un ‘Bon sauvage’” 63.
[502] Pomeau, “Un ‘Bon sauvage’” 72.
[503] Pomeau, “Un ‘Bon sauvage’” 73.
[504] Bhabha, Homi K, “Cultural diversity and cultural differences” in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, ed Ashcroft, Bill, Griffiths, Gareth, Tiffin, Helen, (London: Routledge, 1995) 206.
[505] Mylne, Vivienne, “Literary Techniques and Methods in Voltaire’s *contes philosophique*,” *Studies on Voltaire* vol.

David E. Highnam, have expressed admiration for the innovativeness of this genre that "combine[s] into one aesthetic whole the intellectual 'philosophy' of the *conte* and the emotional empathy of the *drame.*"[506] Whether the story should be seen as a "flawed masterpiece or masterful innovation," as Highnam asks in the title of his article, is beside the point for the current chapter. Instead, we should note that even the genre itself is a hybrid.

Within the text, uncomfortable binaries abound, most evidently in Voltaire's choice of names for his characters. The translinguistic eytmology of "Kerkabon," for example, with its enjambement of the Gree*k* prefix "*kerka*," meaning "bad," with the French word "*bon*," clearly signals an oxymoronic duality, reflected in the personas of these characters. Likewise, the name Saint Pouange ironically juxtaposes the word "*ange*" with the prefix "*pou,*" or louse. Thus, his name underscores his parasitic nature, living off the virtue of young women while dressing himself in the cloak of religious respectability.

In this same vein, the Ingénu represents the ultimate example of contrasting identities, represented by his own ambiguous name. He is more than *simply* a naïve European, or a Huron, as the title of the work suggests. He is both, but also more. He is "Hercule," a title which emphasizes his brute strength and mythical origins. At the same time, he is "bas Breton," which was already a marginal identity within eighteenth century France.[507] This marginality is reinforced by the mythical opening story of the founding of Bretagne, whereby Saint Dunstan – an Irish foreigner – lands on Brittany's coast and founds a priory. It could be argued that the story of Saint Dunstan represents a subtle colonial gesture as Bretagne becomes a space settled by

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68*,* 1064, cited in Highnam, David E. "L'Ingénu: *Flawed Masterpiece of Masterful Innovation*" *Studies on Voltaire* vol. 143*,* note 2, p. 71.

[506] Highnam 71.

[507] See Weber, Eugen, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1976) 6.

foreigners. Thus, even the Ingénu's French origins are made "Other."

The text expresses the Ingénu's hybridity even more clearly at his baptism, when the narrator refers to him as "un Bas-Breton huron et anglais."[508] This grouping of identities reveals how the Ingénu defies the simple binary of self and other – French and Huron – that the title of Voltaire's *conte* suggests.The overlapping of contemporary eighteenth-century identities alongside the allusions to Greco-roman and Celtic mythology disrupt clear identity categories. He is neither one nor the other, but a fusion of traditions and identities.

In a similar fashion, the Ingénu's education follows a hybrid modality, with many different tutors. In the Huron village, for example, he learns some French from a Frenchman, who is perhaps a Catholic missionary. In New England, a Huguenot helps him perfect his linguistic abilities in French. His candor is remarked by *both* the Huron and the English, who give him the name Ingénu "parce qu['il] di[t] toujours naïvement ce qu['il] pense."[509] Thus, "ingénu" is not a mocking epithet given by the English. It is not, as Eglal Henein suggests, a sign of his having been "conquis par la société."[510] Instead, it shows that the Ingénu transcends cultural divides. Beyond the Ingénu's natural curiosity, the narrator explicitly states that the Ingénu has read some English books, especially Shakespeare, from which he has embraced certain English mores, such as tolerance. The reader learns, for example, that "L'Ingénu répondit qu'en Anglettre on laissait vivre les gens à leur fantaisie."[511] Taken together, the Ingénu's education blends Huron socio-cultural practices with bits of French Protestantism, English ethics, and Shakespearean sentimentality. This Huron-Breton-English-Hercules-Canadian is a budding cosmopolitan, or world citizen, who is curious about the world and different systems of

[508] Voltaire, *Ingénu* 56.
[509] Voltaire, *Ingénu* 40, 41.
[510] Henein, Eglal, "Hercule ou le pessimisme: analyse de *L'Ingénu,*" *Romanic Review* 72.2 (1981) : 154
[511] Voltaire, *Ingénu* 46.

thought.

Moreover, his hybridity is fostered by the North American space, which the text implicitly depicts as a terrain of cross-cultural and transnational contact. Indeed, the text explicit reference the benefits that growing up in Canada had for the Ingénu. His excellent memory, for example, is a result of both his French origins in Brittany and the Canadian climate :

> L'Ingénu avait une mémoire excellente. La fermeté des organes de Basse-Bretagne, fortifiée par le climat du Canada, avait rendu sa tête si vigoureuse que, quand on frappait dessus, à peine le sentait-il; et quand on gravait dedans, rien ne s'effaçait; il n'avait jamais rien oublié. Sa conception était d'autant plus vive et plus nette que, son enfance n'ayant point été chargée des inutilités et des sottises qui accablent la nôtre, les choses entraient dans sa cervelle sans nuage.[512]

As this citation reveals, the Ingénu's superior mental capabilities are the result of a confluence of factors. Thanks to his French origins, he has well-tuned mental organs, which allow him to reason. The brisk climate of Canada aids his education, although it is not deterministic. A *sauvage* education, free of "inutilités" and "sottises" and "nuages" is helpful, but it is not enough to produce these results. Rather, it is the alchemy of these factors that make him a laudable human specimen. Indeed, this "formula" might be defined in an almost mathematical fashion : French origins in Canada, plus Huron sensibilities and English mores, minus French cultural "sottisses." Whatever we make of this hybridity, this type of heterogeneity is thinkable in French North America.

This is not the only time in this relatively short text that the narrator highlights the beneficial nature of the Ingénu's Canadian upbringing. During his imprisonment with Gordon at the Bastille, for example, the narrator reiterates the importance of the Ingénu's early childhood among the *sauvages* :

[512] Voltaire, *Ingénu* 53.

> La cause du développement rapide de son esprit était due à son éducation sauvage presque autant qu'à la trempe de son âme : car, n'ayant rien appris dans son enfance, il n'avait point appris de préjugés. Son entendement, n'ayant point été courbé par l'erreur, était demeuré dans toute sa rectitude. Il voyait les choses comme elles sont, au lieu que les idées qu'on nous donne dans l'enfance nous les font voir toute notre vie comme elles ne sont point.[513]

Despite his sound reasoning and the absence of prejudices, the Ingénu is not the epitome of human perfection. This is not Voltaire giving into Rousseau's exaltations of "natural" man. Rather, the Ingénu's Canadian background provides the ideal foundation on which to build knowledge, which must be perfected and molded. Indeed, the reading and contemplating that Ingénu undertakes in prison brings about a series of "métamorphoses, car [il a] été changé de brute en homme."[514] As such, the text suggests that his rugged Canadianess is certainly an advantage, but the civilizing force of European philosophy is what finally allows him to realize his full potential. Yet, this metamorphosis has been placed into question by Marie Wellington who argues in her article "Hercule, Mlle de Saint-Yves, and the Unity of *L'Ingénu*" that "unity resides in the character, and the metamorphosis, in the text" (5). Wellington concludes that "nothing *essential* is different" in the character of the Ingénu at the end of the story.[515] The circumstances have changed, not the character. Although I am not wholly convinced by Wellington's argument, the Ingénu's knowledge of French *bienséance* at the end of the tale can be interpreted as another layer of hybrid complexity. Having learned the "right" social codes, the Ingénu adds "civilized" Frenchman to his identity repertoire. In other words, he can be a Huron and a Frenchman – the division is a false dichotomy.

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513 Voltaire, *Ingénu* 104, 105.
514 Voltaire, *Ingénu* 90.
515 Wellington 15.

The Ingénu's evolution is more than simply a tale of one individual, but instead represents an allegory for all human progress, dating back to the biblical story of Genesis. In some ways the Ingénu and Mademoiselle Saint-Yves de Kerkabon easily fit into the mold of the story of Adam and Eve. Even Saint-Yves' name suggests a link to the garden of Eden ; she is Saint-Yves, or, as the homophone confirms, Saint Eve. Moreover, at the beginning of the story the Ingénu and Saint-Yves remain blissfully ignorant of the way France and its customs works. Following "natural law," the Ingénu attempts, for example, to consummate his "marriage" with Saint-Yves without following proper Catholic protocol. As for Mademoiselle Saint-Yves, she remains naïve to the sexual favors that grease the political wheels of Paris. Furthermore, if the Bastille is a sort of hell on Earth, then the wildness of Canada represents a paradise from which the Ingénu unwittingly banishes himself. As the Ingénu bemoans during his captivity, "La lumière faite pour tout l'univers est perdue pour moi. On ne me la cachait pas dans l'horizon septentrionale où j'ai passé mon enfance et ma jeunesse." The religious allusion to the "light," reminiscent of the Genesis story of creation, is subtle, but clear. In Canada, the light was not hidden, but rather the Ingénu was in constant communion with it. In the Bastille, darkness, associated with evil, reigns. The radical freedom of Canada, standing in symbolically for Eden, is lost to the Ingénu who must discover the logic that rules the postlapsarian world of France. There are physical chains, to be sure, in the Bastille, but the Ingénu is mainly imprisoned because he violated the societal constraints of France, of which he was ignorant. These metaphorical chains, which seem "natural" and evident to the culturally initiated, only appear that way because France has already left the "natural" law behind. The Ingénu must learn the ways of this fallen world – he must gain knowledge of "civilized" notions of "good" and "evil" – if he is to find his footing in France.

Alongside the subtle Christian allegory, the Ingénu also serves as a metaphor for the evolution of nations. As the Ingénu notes :

> Je m'imagine que les nations ont été longtemps comme moi, qu'elles ne se sont instruites que fort tard, qu'elles n'ont été occupées pendant des siècles que du moment présent qui coulait, très peu du passé, et jamais de l'avenir. J'ai parcouru cinq ou six cents lieues du Canada, je n'y ai pas trouvé un seul monument; personne n'y sait rien de ce qu'a fait son bisaïeul. Ne serait-ce pas là l'état naturel de l'homme? L'espèce de ce continent-ci me paraît supérieure à celle de l'autre. Elle a augmenté son être depuis plusieurs siècles par les arts et par les connaissances.[516]

In stark contrast to the relativist stance of the work and the laudatory descriptions of the Ingénu's natural intelligence, free of "préjugé" and "erreur," this citation reaffirms a hierarchy where Europe is on top. However, by using himself as a metaphor, the Ingénu removes the essentialist element of this hierarchy. The Huron are not inherently inferior, they simply lack "les arts et […] les connaissances." One perceives, thus, a nascent belief in progress within a vision of human universalism. All societies, the citation seems to suggest, move towards the European, and supposedly universal, model. However, the Ingénu represents a form of evolution that is not one of pure acculturation. He admits the superiority of European "arts et […] connaissances" without abandoning his belief in freedom and natural reason, which the text associates with Huronia.

With its philosophizing on the natural state of man, Voltaire's text is clearly engaging with the ideas of Rousseau. Of course, Jean-Jacques' 1754 *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* had the effect of unleashing one of the prime philosophical debates of the eighteenth century, pitching "civilized" man against "man in nature." Despite Voltaire's quotation above, *L'Ingénu* is not primarily a self-congratulatory praise of Western society over

[516] Voltaire, *Ingénu* 90.

"savage" man. Rather, Voltaire proposes a synthesis of the two within the character of Ingénu. Without specifically using the word "hybrid," Pomeau notes the duality of the Ingénu's : "suffisamment débarbouillé et civilisé pour devenir sortable, il conserve cependant assez de sauvagerie pour provoquer une révolution dans le petit monde bas-breton où il fait une brutale irruption."[517] Moreover, the material objects – such as the brandy and biscuits – that the Ingénu has with him when he arrives in France are not from Huronia. They are most likely from the English.[518] These objects suggest the Ingénu's affinity for the English and his movement towards European aesthetics. Seen from this angle, the Ingénu is already on his way to a hybrid identity before he even enters the *conte.*

Because he bridges the divide between "civilized" European man and "savage" natural man, the Ingénu is the ideal spokesman for a third option. Both European and Huron society are deficient at some level. As the Ingénu notes, "on les appelle *sauvages* ; ce sont des gens de bien grossiers," nonetheless, "les hommes de ce pays-ci [la France] sont des coquins raffinés."[519] What is needed, thus, is a society that defies the false binarity of "grossiers" or "coquins." In this French Huron – this *Canadien* retransplated to France – Voltaire finds his advocate for a society of Frenchmen attuned to the natural law of "noble savages" and English tolerance. It is only in the library-prison of the Bastille that these socio-cultural stances can meld together and create the *philosophe's* ideal man. As the narrator states, "Le jeune Ingénu ressemblait à un de ces arbres vigoureux qui, nés dans un sol ingrat, étendent en peu de temps leurs racines et leurs branches quand ils sont transplantés dans un terrain favorable ; et il était bien extraordinaire qu'une prison fût ce terrain."[520] Despite the backhanded compliment of Canada as a "sol ingrat," the text

[517] Pomeau, "Un 'Bon sauvage'" 67.
[518] Pomeau, "Un 'Bon sauvage'" 66.
[519] Voltaire, *Ingénu* 83.
[520] Voltaire, *Ingénu* 95.

suggests that it, nonetheless, succeeded in creating an "arbre vigoureux." This French *Canadien*, raised by Hurons, captured by the English and taught tolerance and reason, represents a cosmopolitan ideal. Only by leaving Canada behind, however, can he become self-actualized, as we might say in our modern parlance. Ultimately, therefore, Canada is a *non-dit* of the text. Canada is the essential space for hybridity to occur and for European "préjugé" to be avoided, yet it is still the place of "hommes grossiers" and "sol ingrat." Be that as it may, this is a more nuanced view of Canada than we see elsewhere in Voltaire's oeuvre. It is a subtle shift, but an important one.

L'Ingénu : An Historical Precedent?

This discussion of re-transplantation begs the question : is Voltaire basing the *Ingénu* on a historical reality? The subtitle of the work, after all, is "une histoire véritable." Yet, what is exactly "true" in this tale? Certainly not the actual events of the work. Although the "truth" value most likely lies in some philosophical position, such as the final moral of the story, "malheur sert à quelque chose," this does not completely preclude an historical reading. Indeed, the temporal setting of the story and the historical moment of publication in France are both important moments in colonial history. Set at the end of the seventeenth century – the story begins on July 15, 1689 in the evening to be exact – the text's critiques are displaced in the past, perhaps as a way to protect the historical author. This way, Voltaire can claim that he is denouncing past abuses, and not current ones. As importantly, however, is the moment of historical publication. Since *L'Ingénu* was written four years after the signing of the 1763 Treaty of Paris, we might ask

how the societal impact of this conflict influenced its composition. What impact might the return of the colonial population to France have had on Voltaire's text?

Thanks to the work of the historian Robert Larcin, we can estimate that around 4000 French settlers – nearly six percent of New France – returned to France at the end of the Seven Year War.[521] Although relatively small in numbers, this population of immigrants has largely been lost to historical and literary inquiry. In his 2003 article, "Des 'Pieds-blancs' venus du froid ? Les réfugiés canadiens à Loches et en Touraine à la fin du XVIIIe siècle" Jean-François Mouhut attempts to fill in some of the historical gap. As his title suggests, he conceptualizes the returning *Canadiens*, anachronistically and somewhat problematically, as "pieds blancs." This is revealing terminology as it suggests an analogue between the returning *Canadiens* and the displaced French-Algerian settlers of the twentieth century – the so-called "pieds noirs." Although Mouhut admits that the impact of these *Canadiens* were not nearly as widely felt as the return of the Algerian settler communities, he opens the door for further investigation. Could the genesis of *L'Ingénu* be a place to trace the impact of these "pieds blancs?"

This influx of settlers from Canada was almost certainly noticed by Voltaire, who had a literary exchange with the Duc de Choiseul, a powerful voice in the ministry of foreign affairs at the time. Archival documents reveal that Choiseul, and Louis XV, were concerned about the returning *Canadiens*. In an *ordonnance* signed on March 24, 1762 Choiseul ordered the returning Canadian officers of the king to relocate to Touraine in order to "leur accorder des secours pour subsister."[522] Weary from their defeat in New France, these officers suffered "la privation des

[521] Larcin, Robert cited in Mouhot, Jean-François, "Des «Pieds-blancs» venus du froid ? Les réfugiés canadiens à Loches et en Touraine à la fin du XVIIIe siècle," *Les Amis du Pays Lochois / Société des Amis du Pays Lochois*, n° 19, (2003 : pp. 129-144) 131.
[522] Mouhot 131

biens que la plupart possédaient dans cette colonie."[523] A "petit Canada," as Mouhut puts it, sprang up in the small village of Loches where forty or so *Canadien* families took refuge.

Beyond this population, we might look at the influence of the returning soldiers and fishermen who had experience in New France. Estimates vary widely, but somewhere between 27,000 and 36,000 Frenchmen might have made their way to Canada before 1760.[524] Because the vast majority of these voyagers returned to mainland France, first-hand accounts of the Canadian wilderness, such as travel narratives, were available. We might surmise, therefore, that Voltaire shared some of the stereotypes of *Canadiens* that we have seen in the accounts of travelers. Witty, yet unpolished, strong and independent, ignorant of French customs, these are the clichés about *Canadiens* (which apply equally to the returning Acadian refugees) that we have seen in our study of travel narratives to New France.[525] Of course, these images apply equally to the Ingénu.

Raynal's *Histoire des deux Indes* : Sentimentality, Métissage, and Providential Conquest

As we turn our attention towards Raynal, an important point of conjuncture between these two writers becomes apparent : namely, their anglophilia, especially as it concerns the New

[523] Mouhot 131

[524] See Robert Larin, "L'immigration européenne au Canada français des débuts à 1865" in *Les origines familiales des pionniers du Québec ancien, 1621-1865*. Ed Fournier, Marcel, and Denis Beauregard (Sainte-Foy, Québec: Fédération québécoise des sociétés de généalogie, 2001) 2. Peter Moogk claims slightly lower numbers in *La Nouvelle France: The Making of French Canada : a Cultural History* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2000) 88.

[525] Mouhot demonstrates that Acadians and Canadians shared a similar, paradoxical portrayal in the documents of French administrators : "s'ils sont parfois jugés 'méritants,' 'exemplaires,' de 'bonnes gens' ayant de 'bonnes mœurs,' ils sont le plus souvent 'paresseux,' 'insolents,' parfois 'méchants, odieux, corrompus,' 'révoltés,' 'en proie à la folie' ou 'se pren[ant] pour des Seigneurs.'" (Jean-François Mouhot, "L'invention de la nation ? (Re) présentations des acadiens réfugiés en France (1758-1785)" *Actes du 32e Colloque de l'Association Française d'Etudes Canadiennes (AFEC) tenu à Poitiers en juin 2005* (Bruxelles, Peter Lang, 2005) 2.

World. Like Voltaire, Raynal finds much to admire in the North American English colonies, including the former French possession of Canada, now Québec. Unlike Voltaire, however, Raynal is writing in an altered socio-political landscape. By the time the third edition of Raynal's *Histoire des deux Indes* hits the book market in 1780, Canada has been under English control for nearly two decades. The North American English colonies are in full revolt with the overt support of the French crown. Although the French officially pledge not to reconquer Canada in its 1778 Treaty of Alliance with the United States, Marcel Trudel suggests in 1975 work *La Révolution américaine* : *pourquoi la France refuse le Québec* that this official position was somewhat controversial among Louis XVI's advisors. The Duke of Levis, Trudel notes, bemoaned this missed opportunity to "procurer à la France de magnifiques établissements" in the New World.[526] Given the tumultuous geopolitical situation of North America in the 1780s, it is thus unsurprising that Raynal consecrates two books of the *Histoire* to North American colonization. Indeed, book sixteen focuses entirely on the history of French possessions in North America. What *is* surprising is the relative dearth of current studies that investigate Raynal's discourse of the legacy of New France. Instead, scholarly projects from the late 1970s focused on questions of contribution by Diderot and other *philosophes*, sidestepping somewhat the political and philosophical positions of the work.[527] Since the 1980s, however, focus has turned to close readings of the text itself, opening it to colonial and post-colonial readings. This is the line of inquiry that I wish to pursue here. Therefore, I have continued to attribute authorship to Raynal, even though the story the work's composition is more complicated than that.[528]

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[526] Trudel, Marcel, *La Révolution américaine: pourquoi la France refuse le Canada, 1775-1783* (Sillery, Québec : Éditions du Boréal Express 1976) 166.

[527] I am thinking specifically of the juxtaposition of Michèle Duchet's *Diderot et l'Histoire des deux Indes: ou, L'écriture fragmentaire* (Paris: A.-G. Nizet, 1978) with Gilles Bancarel, Gianluigi Goggi, et al.'s work *Raynal, de la polémique à l'histoire* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2000).

[528] See the detailed reference tables in Duchet 63-105.

Like Voltaire, Raynal has serious qualms about the type of colonialism being practiced by the European powers of the time. Territorial conquest and coercion, for example, are illegitimate uses of power. Raynal decries the violence of the colonial project, writing,"Barbares Européens! L'éclat de vos entreprises ne m'en à point imposé. Leur succès ne m'en a point dérobé l'injustice."[529] Although the comment is aimed specifically at the Portuguese, Raynal clearly condemns colonial violence by Europe generally. This gesture of inversion – the Europeans are the true "barbares" – extends to European pretensions of ownership over the discovery of "new" lands :

> Leurs navigateurs arrivent-ils dans une région du Nouveau Monde qui n'est occupée par aucun peuple de l'Ancien, aussitôt ils enfouissent une petite lame de métal sur laquelle ils ont gravé ces mots : 'cette contrée nous appartient.' Et pourquoi vous appartient-elle? N'êtes-vous pas aussi injustes, aussi insensés que des sauvages portés par hasard sur vos côtes s'ils écrivaient sur le sable de votre rivage ou sur l'écore de vos arbres: 'ce pays est à nous'?[530]

Echoing a colonial critique through historical inversion that we have come across before – notably in Lesage's *Beauchêne* and Lahontan's *Dialogues avec un Sauvage* – this comment indicates the potency of the argument at the time. The rhetorical form makes clear that to claim possession of a land simply because no other Europeans have claimed it is "injuste" and "insensé." Moreover, the mental experiment the narrator proposes of reversing the situation places the Native Americans on the same moral ground as the Europeans. Sailing across the ocean does not make the Europeans inherently superior on a moral or ethical level to the Native Americans.

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[529] Raynal, *Histoire philosophique & politique des deux Indes,* Ed. Yves Bénot (Paris: Découverte, 2001), Livre I, Ch. XXIV, 49.
[530] Raynal, Livre VIII, Ch. I, 21.

Despite Raynal's reservations about colonialism and his cutting critique of conquest, it is too simplistic to argue that he is strictly anti-colonial. Rather, Raynal points to certain types of colonization, heavily influenced by Lockean ideals of liberalism, that are legitimate. Empty spaces are fair game for colonial implantation. As he explains, "Si [la contrée] est toute peuplée, je ne puis légitiment prétendre qu'à l'hospitalité et aux secours que l'homme doit à l'homme" however, "si la contrée est en partie déserte, en partie occupée, la partie déserte est à moi. J'en puis prendre possession par mon travail."[531] He thus sets up a few guideposts for legitimate colonization. The implantation of a metal blade in the name of a European country does not transfer possession of that territory, but the working of the land does. Besides agricultural or industrial projects, free trade is an essential component of acceptable colonial policies. In this regard, forcible extraction of gold is a theft and a crime : "tous les Européens, tous indistinctement, dans les contrées du Nouveau Monde, [...] ont porté une fureur commune, la soif de l'or."[532] The trading of it for European goods, however, is acceptable :

> Si je ris en moi-même de l'imbécillité de celui qui me donne son or pour du fer, le prétendu imbécile se rit aussi de moi qui lui cède mon fer dont il connaît toute l'utilité, pour son or qui ne lui sert à rien. Nous nous trompons tous les deux, ou plutôt nous ne nous trompons ni l'un ni l'autre. Les échanges doivent être parfaitement libres.[533]

Thus, colonialism based on free trade, equality, and community agency are legitimate. The Native Americans must be able to decide for themselves – on equal footing with the Europeans – what, when and how they wish to trade. Although this vision of colonialism does not specifically deal with Canada, it does reveal the type of colonial policies that Raynal's text finds ideal and fruitful. It is the colonial model that the French have too often failed to follow in

[531] Raynal, Livre VIII, Ch. I, 118.
[532] Raynal, Livre IX, Ch. I, 150.
[533] Raynal, Livre VIII, Ch. I, 120.

North America.

Raynal finds much to critique in the colonial policies that the French undertook in America. The colonial administration failed, for example, to distribute land in a way that encouraged sedentary farming. The implementation of "la coutume de Paris," which called for land inheritance to be split equally among male heirs had the disastrous results as "ce domaine fut réduit à rien ou presque rien, par des partages multipliés, dans une longue suite de générations."[534] Another option was available and better, as Raynal affirms:

> Si, comme le bien plus l'auroit exigé, les loix eussent assuré l'indivisibilité de la possession au fils aîné, la province auroit pris une autre face. Le père, poussé à l'économie & au travail par le désir de préparer un sort heureux à ses autres enfans, auroit demandé de nouvelles terres ; & il les eût couvertes de bâtimens, de troupeaux, de moissons, & y auroit placé sa nombreuse postérité. Les nouveaux propriétaires auroient suivi, à leur tour, cet exemple d'une tendresse très-bien entendue ; & avec le tems, la colonie entière auroit été peuplée & cultivée.[535]

Alongside this change in inheritance rights, Raynal claims that certain governmental incentives, chiefly an easier path to land ownership, would have made Canada much more prosperous :

> De legers encouragemens accordés à des citoyens qu'on auroit appellés dans la colonie, en leur Assurant cette liberté que tout homme desire, la propriété qu'il a droit d'attendre de son travail, & la protection que toute société doit à ses members : ces encouragemens donnés à des propriétaires guidés par les circonstances locales, éclairés par l'intérêt personnel, auroient produit des effets infiniment plus grands & plus durables.[536]

While we will let historians and political scientists debate whether these policy prescriptions might have changed the fate of New France, let us focus instead on the rhetorical structure of these two citations. The imagery of these citations reveals the type of ideal colonial society that Raynal envisions. He depicts a society that embraces freedom, property rights, thrift,

[534] Raynal, Livre XVI, Ch. XIII, 245.
[535] Raynal, Livre XVI, Ch. XIII, 245.
[536] Raynal, Livre XVI, Ch. V, 174, 175.

and agriculture. It is a society that follows "le bien" – the common good – as well as "l'intérêt personnel," and has home rule rather than costumes dictated from afar. Raynal reinforces this idealization of an agricultural colony through his use of the past conditional tense and the subjunctive pluperfect. These are alternative paths that France *could have taken*, but did not. Commenting on these grammatical structures in her article "Louisiana as a Figment of the Imagination : Raynal's Reflections on the French American Colony," Jennifer Tsien points out that Raynal is "conjuring images of his idealized colony, which is not rich in gold but in agricultural potential" (15). Indeed, rather than the gold-lined streets imagined to exists in the New World, "Raynal's dream is solidly anchored in the realm of the commonplace" (Tsien 15). Although her focus is on Louisiana, the same observation extends to Raynal's vision of Canada.

One of the biggest failures and points of regret in Raynal's discussion of New France is the colonial regime's poor social policies. In a gesture that strikes the twenty-first reader as exceptionally forward-looking, Raynal advocates for sexual *métissage* and cultural hybridity between the French and Native Americans. As he asks rhetorically :

> N'aurait-il pas été plus humain, plus utile et moins dispendieux de faire passer dans chacune de ces régions lointaines quelques centaines de jeunes hommes, quelques centaines de jeunes femmes? Les hommes auraient épousé les femmes, les femmes auraient épousé les hommes de la contrée. *La consanguinité*, le plus prompt et le plus fort des liens, aurait bientôt fait des étrangers et des naturels du pays une seule et même famille.[537] (my emphasis)

Rather than seeing sexual congress as something to avoid – an *ensauvagement,* as it were – Raynal sees it as smart colonial politics. More than simply a less costly way of creating French subjects, it is also more humane, and both effective and affective. Through his choice of vocabulary, Raynal indicates that *consanguité*, or the mixing of blood through sexual congress, is

[537] Raynal, Livre IX, Ch. I 150, 151 (my emphasis).

a force that draws people together. From "étrangers" and "naturels du pays" these marriages will create "une seule et même famille." As these adjectives reveal, these are not to be second-class subjects, but equal members of society. Interestingly, Raynal does not say that this *métissage* will make the Native Americans into Frenchmen. This is not so much an apology for assimilation through marriage and sexual relations as it is the vision a new entity : a hybrid that is neither the one nor the other, but something new altogether. Given the clear taboo of intermarriage – as we see in certain sections of the *Code noir* – Raynal's advocating for it is quite radical.[538] Reflecting on the failures of the French in the New World, however, allows Raynal to envision such a policy of intermarriage. In short, hybridization and intermarriage become thinkable, and even desirable. As eighteenth-century writers and historians attempt to assess and understand where France went wrong, radical possibilities come forward. All options must be considered. Yet, we notice again that Raynal leans on conditional and hypothetical grammatical structures. As such, there is a sense that Raynal is not only writing the history of the Indies as it actually occurred, but is also suggesting an *alternative* and parallel history. As the French word *histoire* denotes, this is at times both a *history* and a *story* – a tale of what could have been.

Another aspect of French colonial social policy that Raynal's text takes issue with is the refusal to allow French Protestants to settle in the New World. Like Voltaire, Raynal decries the exclusion of Huguenots as detrimental to the New World colonies. As he writes about the failure of Louisiana to prosper under the French colonial regime :

> Mais l'émigration d'hommes utiles qui en portant chez des nations étrangères leur industrie & leurs talens, les élèvent tout-à-coup au niveau de la nation qu'ils ont

[538] Article nine of the *Code noir* specifically punished slave-holder whose "concubinage" with slaves produced offspring with a 2,000 pound sugar penalty. See Lucien Peytraud, *L'esclavage aux Antilles françaises avant 1789 : d'après des documents inédits des archives coloniales,* Ed. Jean-Marie Tremblay (Paris : Hachette 1897, 158 - 166) http://classiques.uqac.ca/collection_documents/louis_XIV_roi_de_France/code_noir/code_noir.pdf. Retrieved : June, 2013, 8.

> abandonée, est un mal qui ne se répare point. Le cosmopolite, dont l'ame vaste embrasse les interest de l'espèce humaines s'en consolera peut-être. Pour le patriote, il ne cessera jamais de s'en affliger.[539]

The word choice in this citation draws from the vocabulary of physical and mental pain. Words like "un mal qui se répare point" and "s'en affliger," for example, depict the emigration of the Huguenots as a type of wound to the French nation. Raynal, thus, plays on nascent national sentiment in order to critique the policies that have caused the French protestants to abandon France. The text's narrator, however, is torn on his assessment of this reality, placing patriotic and cosmopolitan sentiments in opposition. What is more, these notions are mutually defining. The flight of the Huguenots causes the narrator to see these people as members of the national community, while also seeing in their loss a chance to express universal solidarity. Therefore, the fleeing Huguenots provoke both a pain and a consolation. The narrator uses these people and the colonial fact, thus, to give voice to the debates between nationalism and universalism – between world-citizenship and the French exception.

Given the ascendancy of Buffon's climatological determinism at the time, the contemporary reader is struck by the extent to which the failures in New France are man-made, rather than climatologically determined. Unlike Voltaire's pessimism towards the geographical constraints of New France, Raynal sees much potential. Describing the climate of New France, for example, he notes :

> On trouva que l'hiver y étoit long, le froid excessif, la neige abondante, la quantité d'insectes prodigieuse : mais qu'une côte saine, un port excellent, & des havres commodes, rachetoient ces désagrémens. On y vit un pays uni, que la nature avoit enrichi & coupé de prairies abondantes, par une infinite de petites sources qui le traversoient; un sol extrêmement varié, ouvert à la culture de toutes les espèces de grains; du gibier & des bêtes fauves sans nombre; un grand abord des meilleures sortes de poisson; une population de sauvages plus considerable que dans les autres isles. Ce dernier fait

[539] Raynal, Livre XVI, Ch. IX, 213.

confirmoit seul tant d'avantages.[540]

While Raynal does not deny the harsh winters in New France, he also recognizes Canada's natural benefits. This is a rather idyllic portrait of the landscape, described in superlative and rarified adjectives and adverbs such as "excellent," "abondates," "extrêmement varié," "toutes," "meilleurs," etc. Beyond the natural beauty, Raynal depicts a society that has overcome the "désagréments" of the colony. Around Montréal the French have succeeded in creating a prosperous society : "Rien de plus délicieux à voir que les riches bordures de ce long & vaste canal. Des bois jettés çà & là, […] des églises & des châteaux que l'on découvroit de distance en distance au travers des arbres."[541] Interspersed with verdant nature is evidence of humankind's hand. Churches and châteaux arise through the fields and trees indicating that this is a functioning and permanent society that has put down domestic and religious roots.

Despite this, however, Canada is underdeveloped and represents a missed colonial opportunity. As the narrator laments, "tout concouroit donc à la prospérité des établissemens du Canada, s'ils eussent été secondés par les hommes qui sembloient y avoir le plus d'intérêt."[542] As this citation reveals, the languishing of Canada is fundamentally not due to environmental or ecological factors, but rather to a failure of economic stewardship and political leadership. The grammatical structure, moreover, again accentuates the tone of regret about Canada's lack of success under the French regime. Farming, Raynal affirms, never reached its apex : "Si la culture s'étoit étendue & perfectionnée, les troupeaux se seroient multipliés. L'abondance du glan & la quantité des pâturages auroient mis les colons à portée d'élever assez de boeufs & de cochons."[543] Perhaps, the narrator implies, these animals could even have one day made New France self-

[540] Raynal, Livre XVI, Ch. II, 155.
[541] Raynal, Livre XVI, Ch. XIII, 244.
[542] Raynal, Livre XVI, Ch. XVII, 274.
[543] Raynal, Livre XVI, Ch. XVII, 266.

sufficient. Mines, likewise, were left unexplored : “quel parti la cour de Versailles auroit pu tirer de la mine découverte aux Trois-Rivières, à la superficie de la terre & de la plus grande abondance!”[544] Canadian wood had bad press: “Une administration si vicieuse avoit totalement décrié le bois du Canada, & anéanti les ressources que cette contrée offroit à la marine.”[545] Raynal’s use of the term “anéanti” is confusing in this passage. The French have *underused* Canadian lumber because of rumor and misconceptions. They have destroyed this line of economic prosperity instead of the rich forests, which have a poor reputation. Likewise, manufacturing was never introduced on a wide scale because of “un usage pernicieux de son privilège” which ruined the nascent industry. Thus, “la France s'ôtoit à elle-même le double avantage de procurer les matières premières à quelques-unes de ses manufactures, & d'assurer des débouchés aux productions de quelques autres.”[546] Again, these are the paths untaken, which, in hindsight, seem so obvious and prudent to Raynal's narrator.

Without enumerating every instance of the text depicting Canada in a positive light, it is nonetheless clear that Raynal's text depicts Canada as more than a mere “quelques arpents de neige.” Instead, it is a cautionary tale of how *not* to do colonization. Raynal asks, rhetorically, “Le Canada méritoit-il le sacrifice de ce qu'il coûtoit à la métropole ? Non. C'étoit la faute de la puissance qui lui donnoit des loix.”[547] Thus, he does not necessarily suggest that France try to retake the colony. It is simply too expensive and underdeveloped. Yet, the “faute” is that of the royal administration and colonial advisors, not some inherent flaw in Canada. The question remains : is this Raynal's opinion alone, or is he revealing a more wide-spread and contemporary opinion? As a best-seller of the eighteenth century, Raynal's work certainly exposed many French

[544] Raynal, Livre XVI, Ch. XVII, 268.
[545] Raynal, Livre XVI, Ch. XVII, 270.
[546] Raynal, Livre XVI, Ch. XVII, 271.
[547] Raynal, Livre XVI, Ch. XVII 266.

readers to his bucolic vision of Canada. Of course, how the French public understood and reacted to the remorseful tone of Raynal's work is an open question. All the same, the text invokes Canada and Louisiana with heady natural imagery, depicting it as territory with almost limitless opportunities. This is an image of a land that was bountiful, but woefully underexploited. The blame for this lies with a short-sighted and unhelpful political and economic system.

Beyond the economic and political issues involved with the loss of the colonies, Raynal's narrator writes passionately about the injustice of abandoning the French colonists in the New World. Sentimentality drips from these passages as the narrator chastises the crown for failing to live up to its obligations to these settlers. In the transition from his analysis of Louisiana to Canada in book sixteen, Raynal provides a particularly biting critique of royal capitulation and geopolitical trading in the New World. Having first defined "la suprême loi" in utilitarian terms as maximizing "le bien & le salut des peuples," Raynal asks rhetorically :

> Or, en appliquant cette règle aux traités de partage & de cession que les rois font entre eux, voit-on qu'ils aient le droit d'acheter, de vendre & d'échanger les peuples sans les consulter? Quoi, les princes s'arrogeront le droit barbare d'aliéner ou d'hypothéquer leurs provinces & leurs sujets, comme des biens meubles & immeuble.[548]

As the narrator emphasizes in this rhetorical questioning, the colonies are not empty lands, but administrative provinces, filled with subjects. By flouting the natural, or "suprême," law, these princes are practicing their "droit barbare" by trading colonies. This word choice, of course, heightens the tone of condemnation as it plays on the murky division between civilization and savagery. Likewise, the narrator relies heavily on the vocabulary of economics to denounce these trades. Verbs like "d'acheter, de vendre & d'échanger" function as a rhetorical device to underline the dehumanizing comparison of people to pieces of property – mere

[548] Raynal, Livre XVI, Ch. X 228.

furniture.

The *Canadiens* often fall into somewhat clichéd depictions. It is striking how consistent this portrait remains over the course of the eighteenth century. This suggests that a stable image of *Canadiens* has taken hold in the French *imaginaire* by the time Raynal puts his quill to paper. Already in 1703, as we saw in an earlier chapter, Lahontan was singing the praises of the *Canadien*'s "aisance" in analogous ways to Raynal. With "cinq ou six boeufs consacrés au labourage" the *Canadiens* enjoy, according to Raynal, "une aisance inconnue, en Europe, aux gens de la campagne. Cette espèce d'opulence permettoit aux colons d'avoir un assez grand nombre de chevaux qui n'étoient pas beaux, mais durs à la fatigue, & propres à faire sur la neige des courses prodigieuses."[549] Clearly, life in Canada is better than that of rural France. However, alongside this opulence, the narrator still conceptualizes the *Canadiens* as lazy. In fact, the narrator ties the *Canadiens'* lassitude directly to their relative wealth and the flattening of social class in Canada. During the winter, the farming community "étoit consumé dans l'inaction, au cabaret, ou à courir sur la neige avec des traîneaux, comme les citoyens les plus distingués."[550] The real critique is not so much their inaction or penchant for the cabaret, *per se*, but that they are enjoying the pleasures of the upper classes. Somewhat paradoxically, Raynal also sees the *Canadiens* as also having suffered an *ensauvagement* : "Les colons François, loin de leur [aux Sauvages] donner les moeurs de l'Europe, avoient pris celles du pays qu'ils habitoient : l'indolence de ces peuples pendant la paix, leur activité durant la guerre : & leur amour constant pour la vie errante & vagabonde."[551] Thus, the *Canadiens* are both pretentiously haughty, daring

[549] Raynal, Livre XVI, Ch. XXI, 267.
[550] Raynal, Livre XVI, Ch. XIII, 251.
[551] Raynal, Livre XVI, Ch. XXI, 295.

to act like distinguished citizens, but also savage. This critique, of course, represents a discursive paradox. It is no longer relative opulence that makes the *Canadiens* "indolent," but the influence of the Native American mores. Obviously, anti-Canadianism is alive and well in the late eighteenth century. Like the later anti-American discourse Roger has studied, this anti-Canadianism is a discourse filled with contradictions, following the path of accumulation rather than logic.

Raynal also critiques the *Canadiens* for their religiosity. As he writes, "on remarquoit dans les deux sexes plus de dévotion que de vertu, plus de religion que de probité, plus d'honneur que de véritable honnêteté."[552] More than being religious hypocrites, favoring surface over depth, their embrace of religion adds to their idleness : "Les fêtes nombreuses d'une religion qui s'est étendu par les fêtes même, empêchoient la naissance, interrompoient le cours de l'industrie. Il est si facile, si naturel d'être dévot, quand c'est pour ne rien faire!"[553] In this citation Raynal ironically depicts *Canadien's* Catholic festivals as the main evangelizing force. They are what allow the religion to spread and take hold because they are unserious. The religiosity of Canada provides Raynal a way to critique the *Ancien régime* not only on an economic and political level, but also on a socio-religious one. Although they are a highly Catholic society, the *Canadiens* are far from perfect. Their religion seems farcical. Thus, an outwardly religious society does not necessarily translate to a prosperous or morally upright one. Yet, the *Canadiens*' imperfections are not their fault alone, as they suffer from the structural flaws of the colonial regime which tried to "introduire en Amérique l'image du gouvernment féodal qui fut si long-tems la ruine de l'Europe," as Raynal claims.[554] Thus, the real failings of the *Canadiens* is their Frenchness.

[552] Raynal, Livre XVI, Ch. XIV 253.
[553] Raynal, Livre XVI, Ch. XIV 252.
[554] Raynal, Livre XVI, Ch. XV 256.

Raynal suggests that the plethora of Catholic feast days that the *Canadiens* enjoy and their penchant for worldly entertainment *à la française* are what ultimately leads to the colony's faltering. Therefore, this is more than just a critique of *Canadiens*, but of the colonial project and the social order of the day.

As a counterweight and foil to the French legacy in Canada, Raynal juxtaposes the success of the English tutelage of Québec. As opposed to French North America, the colonies of British North America enjoy, Raynal suggests, the benefits of the "English" values of hard work and tolerance. Although Raynal is careful not to heap too much praise on the English, there is a clear sense in the text that the English colonial policies are the model to be replicated. As such, English stewardship of Canada serves as a sort of "natural" experiment, revealing how the new management has turned the colony to its advantage. Raynal begins his praise of Québec under English rule by highlight population growth : "La population que les combats y avoient sensiblement diminuée, s'est élevée à cent trent mille ames dans l'espace de seize ans [...] C'est la paix, c'est l'aisance, c'est la multiplication des travaux utiles qui seuls ont produit cet événement heureux."[555] As this citation points out, the end of war has it role to play in this expansion of the populace, but economic reforms are the true drivers of this phenomenon. Enumerating these reforms over several pages, Raynal highlights, for example, the growth in industry : "Depuis long-tems on faisoit au Canada des bas, des dentelles, de grosses toiles, des étoffes communes. Ces manufactures se sont étendues, mais on ne les a point perfectionnées."[556] The English regime has also brought about agricultural reforms : "La culture du lin, du chanvre, du tabac a reçu des

[555] Raynal, Livre XVII, Ch. IX, 384.
[556] Raynal, Livre XVII, Ch. IX, 385.

accroissemens sensibles. Celle du bled a sur-tout attiré l'attention de la colonie."[557] Likewise, "Les troupeaux se sont multipliés."[558] Even the longstanding staple of Canadian commerce, the fur trade, has increased under English rule :"Le commerce du castor & des pelleteries n'a pas diminué, comme on le craignoit. Il a même un peu augmenté […] Les fourures ont d'ailleurs doublé de valeur en Europe, tandis que les objets qu'on donne en échange n'ont que peu augmenté de prix."[559] On the judicial front, English criminal laws have replaced prejudicial French ones, a change which represents "un des plus heureux présens que pût recevoir le Canada."[560] Raynal's list of advantages brought by English rule continues, but needs not overly burden us here. Instead, we can point to Raynal's summary statement that "la colonie [est] devenue plus riche qu'elle ne le fut sous une autre domination."[561] This thinly-veiled reference to the French regime serves as a subtle comparison between the two empires' methods of colonization. Whereas the French colony was costly, poorly managed and, at best, moderately successful, the English focus on commerce and manufacturing have turned Québec into a rich colony with a bright future : "L'étendue du Canada, la fertilité de son sol, la salubrité de son climat sembleroient l'appeller à de grandes prospérités" even if "de puissans obstacles s'y opposent."[562] In other words, the well-known obstacle of settling Canada have not disappeared, but the English have taken a path that leads to greater prosperity. In sum, Canada under the French regime is a cautionary tale ; Canada under English rule is the story of succeeding in the face of natural obstacles.

Somewhat unexpectedly, this passage foreshadows the traditional Québécois discourse of

[557] Raynal, Livre XVII, Ch. IX, 386.
[558] Raynal, Livre XVII, Ch. IX, 386.
[559] Raynal, Livre XVII, Ch. IX, 385.
[560] Raynal, Livre XVII, Ch. IX, 380.
[561] Raynal, Livre XVII, Ch. IX, 388.
[562] Raynal, Livre XVII, Ch. IX, 388.

providential conquest, or "*la conquête providentielle*." Far from the words of Raynal, Québécois historians tend to date the beginning of this historiographical discourse to the sermon of Joseph-Octave Plessis, Monseigneur of Québec, pronounced on January 10, 1799. In this famous speech, Plessis articulates the notion that God led the English to victory in the Seven Years' War in order to save the *Canadiens* from the "ravages" of the French Revolution.[563] His sermon is a call for the *Canadiens* to resist "les expressions enchantresses de raison, de liberté, de philanthropie, de fraternité, d'égalité, de tolérance."[564] Without English rule, Plessis argues, "le funeste arbre de liberté sera planté" in Québec and the *Canadiens* will share "tous les maux"of France, such as anti-clericalism and fratricidal violence.[565] Like Raynal, sentimentality and provocative metaphors are the motor of Plessis's argument. If Québec succumbs to the French revolutionary "torrent,"[566] then *Canadien* children will drink "le lait empoisonné de la barbarie, de l'impiété du libertinage."[567] Great Britain's tutelage is the great bulwark against such ghastliness. Yet, Great Britain does more than protect the *Canadiens* from the horrors of freedom, but it also "respecte la religion du pays."[568] She is "plein de ménagemens pour les sujets" and "donne au peuple une part raisonnable dans l'administration provinciale."[569] Great Britain has replaced the French the court system, which "étoit trop sévère," with a "chef-d'oeuvre de l'intelligence humaine,"that is, the English criminal court.[570] Given all these advantages, Plessis argues that Great Britain

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563 Plessis, Joseph Octave, *Discours à l'occasion de la victoire remportée par les forces navales de Sa Majesté britannique dans la méditerrannée le 1 et 2 aout 1798 sur la flotte francoise: prononcé dans l'église cathedrale de Québec le 10 janvier 1799* (Quebec: Imprimé au profit des pauvres de la paroisse et se vend à l'imprimerie, 1984) 6.

564 Plessis 5.

565 Plessis 15.

566 Plessis 7.

567 Plessis 23.

568 Plessis 18.

569 Plessis 18.

570 Plessis 20.

"mérite surtout [la] reconnoissance et [les] éloges" of the *Canadiens*.[571] Clearly, Plessis shares a certain anglophilia with Raynal and Voltaire. Moreover, many of the types of reforms and accommodations Plessis notes are the same ones that Voltaire and, especially, Raynal support.

As one of the foundational myths of French-Canadian and Québécois historiography, the "*conquête providentielle*" remains a controversial perspective, even today.[572] Leaving this somewhat polemical debate aside, I want to highlight the common ground between Raynal and Plessis. As we have seen, both Plessis and Raynal agree, respectively, that English control has brought "tant de bienfait" and "heureux présens" to the *Canadiens.* Of course, what exactly is "good" about this conquest often differs radically between these two men. Rather than the preservation of traditional Catholic mores and customs, Raynal sees the "conquest" as having improved economic conditions, for example. Although openly hostile to one another, the French-Canadian Ultramontans – a conservative group of Catholic clergyman who had a heavy hand in Québec's politics until the 1960s – and the Enlightenment skeptic find common ground in their evaluation of Québec under English rule. As such, this analysis underscores a paradox in Québécois historiography. In Raynal we find a continental and Enlightenment rejoinder to the discourse of the *conquête* that does not completely match modern historiography of Québec. This is the Enlightenment in the service of English "conquest."

Conclusion

In Voltaire and Raynal we see that the dream of far away lands, free from the corruption

[571] Plessis 22.

[572] See Ronald Rudin's discussion of the evolution of the providential conquest as an historigraphical concept in Rudin, Ronald, *Making History in Twentieth-Century Quebec* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997) 62 – 74.

of *Ancien régime* politics and socio-cultural tradition, remains a potent image. Although Voltaire cares little for Canada, he cannot escape the charms of Eldorado and Quaker Pennsylvania. Even Canada – after the Seven Years' War – comes back as a space that produces the Ingénu, who is free of European prejudices. For Raynal, Canada is a missed opportunity while the *Canadiens* seem to give voice to a sense of international Frenchness. What these text reveal is the fact that the *Canadiens* do not exit the French *imaginaire* unceremoniously in 1763 with the signing of the Treaty of Paris. On the contrary, I have shown how Canada and North America remain an important discursive tool in Voltaire and Raynal's works. Writing about Canada allows both writers to express their anglophilia, critique the French regime, and to interrogate the relationship between natural and civilized man. If they find much to critique in the colonial regime of New France, it is no less a laboratory of cultural hybridity and of socio-economic policy. In short, the French *imaginaire* of Canada after 1763 is not inconsequential, as some might assume. On the contrary, the study of it elucidates some of the main philosophical debates of the time period. It is a margin that not only reflects back on the center, but also molds it.

Neither Voltaire and Raynal believe colonization has met its end, and their texts provide a warning to future colonial regimes : do not replicate our mistakes. As Raynal warns ominously : "si l'Afrique enfin allait devenir le théâtre de notre barbarie, comme l'Asie et l'Amérique l'ont été, le sont encore : tombe dans un éternel oubli le projet que l'humanité vient de nous dicter ici pour le bien de nos semblables! Restons dans nos ports."[573] As we know with the benefit of historical distance, these warning go unheeded and the lessons of New France were not learned.

[573] Raynal and Bénot, *Histoire*, Livre XI, Ch. XI, 167.

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Conclusion : Memories of New France : The New Becomes Old

"Ils partent pour la Nouvelle-France dans un exode sans précédent," writes Ludovic Hirtzman in an article about French immigration to Québec entitled "Les Français s'exilent de plus en plus au Québec...published in January 2013 on *Le Figaro*'s website.[574] His use of the title New France is especially provocative because it has not officially existed as a political entity since 1763. Nonetheless, Ludovic's phrasing gives voice to the way in which Québec is still viewed to this day by certain French citizens as a space to create a New France. Indeed, Ludovic's article replays many of the observations about Québec that we have encountered in our study of the representations of New France in the eighteenth century. In Québec, one French national claims, "il n'y a pas de stress. En France, l'ambiance est lourde, l'actualité pesante. Ici, les nouvelles sont positives."[575] This recalls the language of Charlevoix who describes Québec as "une Société agréable" where "Les nouvelles courantes se réduisent à bien peu de choses."[576] Life is easier in New France / Québec both travelers – eighteenth and twenty-first century alike – seem to suggest. Similarly, in a related article, entitled "Le Rush des jeunes Français vers Montréal," journalist Lucille Quillet quotes a student from Lyon who replicates the discourse of earlier writers in his vision of the supposed sexual availability of the *Québécoises* : *"*Les Québécois sont adorables même s'il faut briser la glace parfois, témoigne Pierre-Etienne, en échange universitaire avec Lyon II. Par contre, ce sont les filles qui accostent les mecs!"[577] In this

[574] Hirtzman, Ludovic, "Les Français s'exilent de plus en plus au Québec, La 'Nouvelle-France' attire pour la facilité d'y trouver un emploi ou la qualité de ses universités" *Le Figaro*, 2 January 2013. Available : http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2013/01/01/01003-20130101ARTFIG00150-les-francais-s-exilent-de-plus-en-plus-au-quebec.php.

[575] Ludovic 1.

[576] Charlevoix, Pierre-François-Xavier de, *Journal d'un voyage fait par ordre du roi dans l'Amérique septentrionale,* ed. Pierre Berthiaume (Montréal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1994) 246.

[577] Quillet, Lucille, "Le Rush des jeunes Français vers Montréal" *Le Figaro*, 11 November 2012. Available :

quotation it is easy to hear the echo of Lahontan who imagines that Frenchmen in the New World will find among the *Canadiennes* a "chaussure à son pied."[578] Like their *Canadiennes* forebears, the Québécoises are imagined as aggressive and transgressive towards socio-sexual codes. As this citation suggests, the sexualization of the extra-European female continues to be felt in the present.

While these articles about Québec suggest a continuity of images from the eighteenth century to today, a real difference between these time periods exists in terms of immigration. Unlike in the eighteenth century, Québec seems to have finally been able to attract the attention of a French population ready to move. According to the last Canadian census, more than 30,000 French citizens immigrated to Québec from 2008 to 2012, or roughly three times the number of French immigrants who settled permanently in New France during the entirety of the first imperial moment.[579] In addition, by the end of 2011, a total of 59,210 French-born immigrants were living in Québec.[580] Seen another way, there are as many permanent French-born immigrants living in Québec today as their were *Canadiens* at the end of the Seven Years' War. The French have finally come to New France, but three centuries too late.

Over the course of this project, I have consciously resisted the temptation to become an imperialist after the fact. We should not wish that France had continued to hold on to their

http://etudiant.lefigaro.fr/les-news/actu/detail/article/le-rush-des-jeunes-francais-vers-montreal-388/.

578 Lahontan, Louis Armand de Lom d'Arce, *Nouveaux Voyages en Amérique septentrionale* in Œuvres *complètes,* ed. Réal Ouellet and Alain Beaulieu(Montréal, Québec, Canada: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1990) 266.

579 Ministère de l'Immigration et Communauté culturelle, *Portrait statistique des immigrants permanents et temporaires dont le pays de dernière résidence est la France 2008 – 2012* (Montréal : Gouvernement du Québec, June 2013) 7. For a discussion of the estimated number of immigrants to New France over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth century see Peter N. Moogk, *La Nouvelle France: The Making of French Canada : a Cultural History* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2000) 107, 108.

580 Ministère de l'Immigration et Communauté culturelle, *Population immigrée recensée au Québec* et dans les régions en 2006 : caractéristiques générales (Montréal : Gouvernement du Québec, May 2009) 45.

empire in the New World. This is not because the French were not as "good" of colonizers, or that the British had more legitimate claims on the land. All the colonial powers were equally illegitimate. The destruction of Native American culture and the subjugation of a continent is unjustifiable no matter how "positive" the outcome might have been. The fact that Canada, Québec, and the United States have become prosperous countries and relatively progressive and pluralistic republics cannot vindicate imperialism retroactively. Therefore, in the reading of my corpus, I have tried to avoid making a value judgement on whether or not New France represented a "better" form of imperialism. Instead, I have viewed the documents as artifacts of the mentalities of the day. Ultimately, these texts reveal how history is contingent and unpredictable. Anglo domination of North America was not predestined or "manifest." The *Canadiens* were not bound to become their own "nation." Indeed, Charlevoix, as I noted in an earlier chapter, imagines the future of New France as "aussi florissante" as its metropole ; it is to be a veritable jewel of the French empire.[581] For their part, Lahontan and Lesage imagine the French will be renewed, or, better, regenerated in the New World. Even after the fall of New France, Raynal and Voltaire see the francophone community as sentimentally attached to the French, but reinvigorated by English tutelage. The *Canadiens* realized the *philosophes*' dream of a tolerant constitutional monarchy – something France will experiment with and fail to implement over the course of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

By analyzing these eighteenth century writers I have demonstrated that they view North America in very different terms than we do looking back at history. New France was not fundementally different than any other part of the French empire, such as Gascony or Languedoc. Unlike, perhaps, the pilgrims of New England or the Germans who populated

[581] Charlevoix, *Journal d'un voyage* 210.

Pennsylvania, the French did not come to the New World to escape the old. In fact, the French population living in New France at the time were imagined in some ways as becoming *more* French. This realization puts into question some of the historiographical threads that make up the cloth of our grand historical narratives. The notion of when and how Frenchness developed is especially problematic given this project. Before the Revolution of 1789, Frenchness was already being constructed and challenged by the experience of colonists in New France. Moreover, the writers I have examined often saw the *Canadiens* as a freer, more tolerant, more egalitarian, and more fraternal society than pre-revolutionary France. In many ways, thus, the *Canadiens* represented the avant-garde of Frenchness. Even in the period directly before the Seven Years' War, Canada continued to represent the hopes of a new France, reborn in North America.

Of course, the image of the New World does not disappear after the Seven Years' War. If the Revolution takes little interest in the *Canadiens*, the nineteenth century will quickly rediscover the French New World. François-René de Chateaubriand's novellas *Atala* and *René* from *La Génie du Christianisme*, for example, reveal the continued presence of the first French imperial moment in the French imagination. Despite the continuity of images, I have ended my study in 1780 for historical and practical reasons, some of which I highlighted in my introduction. The image of the *Canadiens* and this first colonial period undeniably continue to fascinate certain nineteenth century writers. However, the nineteenth century seems to use Canada for different discursive ends. In general, the French experience in the New World becomes a cautionary tale for nineteenth century partisans of imperialism. As Edwards Watts argues convincingly, nineteenth century French writers often valorize the "French" model of

colonization as more tolerant and happier. However, they also see it as far less effective than "Anglo" colonization patterns. To show this, Watts looks to the text of Michel Chevalier, a French Saint-Simonian engineer, who documented his travels to North America in the 1830s in his work *Lettres de l'Amérique du Nord*. Imagining an alternative reality where France kept possession of the American west, Chevalier writes:

> Si ces pays fussent restés français, la population qui s'y fût développée eût été plus gaie que l'américaine; elle eût mieux joui de ce qu'elle eût possédé; mais elle eût été entourée de moins de richesse et de comfort [*sic*]; et des siècles se fussent écoulés avant que l'homme eût été en droit de se dire la maître, sur la même étendue de sol que les Américains ont asservie en moins de cinquante ans.[582]

A tone of regretful nostalgia gives voice to what have could have been. New France would have been a less rich and less comfortable society, Chevalier argues, but it would have been a happier one. The French new world promised a space to work out something akin to the American dream *à la française*. Although the French once possessed in America "la portion la plus fertile, la plus belle, la mieux arrosée, la mieux taillée pour recevoir un superbe empire en harmonie" by the time Chevalier is writing all that remains are "des regrets amers et impuissants."[583] Despite the tone of wistfulness, Chevalier uses the failed French colonial experiment as a lesson for nineteenth century colonial projects in Africa. (Of course, we have already seen some inklings of this in the writings of Raynal.[584]) In Chevalier's text he directly links the loss of the Canadian colony to French colonization of northern Africa :

> Nous ne fonderons de colonie ni à Algers ni ailleurs, à moins que le gouvernement ne se

[582] Chevalier, Michel, *Lettres sur l'Amérique du Nord* Tome 2 (Paris : Librairie de Charles Gosselin et Ce 1837) 107.

[583] Chevalier 102, 103.

[584] As Raynal writes, "si l'Afrique enfin allait devenir le théâtre de notre barbarie, comme l'Asie et l'Amérique l'ont été, le sont encore : tombe dans un éternel oubli le projet que l'humanité vient de nous dicter ici pour le bien de nos semblables! Restons dans nos ports." (*Histoire des deux Indes,* Tome VIII. Paris: Bibliothèque des introuvables, 2006, Book XI Ch. IX, p. 167) It should be noted, however, that Raynal's focus is not Canada, but rather the history of the abuses of European imperialism more generally in the "Indias."

> charge d'y remplir, sauf les modifications exigées par le progrès des temps et par les circonstances, le rôle que jouèrent au Canada la noblesse et le clergé. […] nous ne sommes pas beaucoup plus avancés que du temps de Louis XIV : peut-être le sommes-nous moins […] jusqu'à ce qu'll y ait 200,000 ou 300,000 Français notre domination n'y sera [à Algers] qu'éphémère.[585]

Thus, Canada becomes the model to avoid. Instead, the government must foster a strong settler presence in Africa. In other words, the Third Republic should not repeat the mistakes of Louis XIV in Canada. Furthermore, the state must take over the colonizing functions that the nobility and clergy of the *ancien régime* performed in Canada. Clearly, Chevalier does not believe the former French model of land grabs and empires-on-maps-only is a good long-term strategy. This is "proved" for Chevalier by the fall of New France and the subsequent expansion by Anglo-Americans into the former French possessions of North America. Thus, Canada continues to be an important element in the repertoire of colonial discourse in the nineteenth century, but the parameters and objectives of this discourse have changed.

Far from a fading trend, the French colonial adventure in Canada continues to be a source of creative inspiration throughout the nineteenth century. To give just one potent example, in his 1889 novel *Famille-sans-nom* Jules Verne tells the tale of a French Canadian family during the Lower Canada Rebellions of the late 1830s. By way of introducing his work to the public, Verne quotes Voltaire : "'On plaint ce pauvre genre humain qui s'égorge à propos de quelques arpents de glace', disaient les philosophes à la fin du XVIIIe siècle – et ce n'est pas ce qu'ils ont dit de mieux, puisqu'il s'agissait du Canada, dont les Français disputaient alors la possession aux soldats de l'Angleterre."[586] Interestingly, Verne never names Voltaire as the source of this

[585] Chevalier 120 – 122.
[586] Verne, Jules, *Famille-sans-nom* (Paris : Bibliothèque d'éducation et de récréation, 1889) 1, 2.

quotation, which suggests either that the remark had already become so well-known that it needed no attribution, or that Verne did not want to critique Voltaire directly. To wit, Verne implicates all of the *philosophes* in this quotation. As we saw in the introduction to this project, Verne is following a long historiographical tradition. The observations of Voltaire stand in as shorthand to write about Canada in the eighteenth century French imagination more broadly. Discursively, thus, Verne lays the blame for France's loss of Canada at the feet of the Enlightenment. These philosophical denigrators of New France were terrible wrong about it, however. As Verne claims :

> Les Français, il est vrai, n'ont pu conserver cette magnifique colonie américiane; mais sa population, en grande majorité, n'en est pas moins restée française, et elle se rattache à l'ancienne Gaule par ces liens du sang, cette identité de race, ces instincts naturels, que la politique internationale ne parvient jamais à briser.[587]

As the reader notes, Verne describes Canada in laudable terms ; it was a "magnifique colonie." What is more, the population remains French. Unlike the authors of the early period, however, Verne makes an explicitly racial connection between the French Canadians and the French. They share the same blood and are part of the same "race." Verne has effectively essentialized and naturalized Frenchness as these French Canadians are born with French "natural instincts." What that means exactly, is quite unclear in the text. Nonetheless, the quotation shows how racial discourses have solidified the notion of identity, replacing the more open notion of Frenchness that we see in the texts of the eighteenth century that invoked Canada. The reader gets the distinct message that Verne is not referring to Native Americans or the *métis* in his compliment to French Canadians. Frenchness and whiteness are linked together, weakening the ideal of a Frenchness that might be hybrid or open. In short, his vision of shared

[587] Verne 2.

Frenchness between the *Canadiens* and the French is quite different than what we saw in the earlier period. Although proto-racial concerns *were* present in Lahontan and Charlevoix's texts they were not as constricting or concrete as in Verne's.

Another aspect of Verne's text that differs from the eighteenth corpus I have chosen for this project is Verne's discursive use of the Canadians. Like Chevalier before him, Verne employs the struggles of Franco-Canadians against the British as a way to write indirectly about present political concerns. In Verne's case, writing about Canada allows him to write about the annexing of Alsace-Lorraine as well. The shadow of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 haunts this tale of French-Canadian resistance, and as Verne writes :

> Cette Nouvelle-France, n'était-ce pas un morceau de la patrie, comme cette Alsace-Lorraine que l'invasion brutale allait arracher trente ans plus tard? Et les efforts tentés par les Franco-Canadiens pour lui rendre au moins son autonomie, n'est-ce pas là un exemple que les Français de l'Alsace et de la Lorraine ne doivent jamais oublier?[588]

In his effort to draw a parallel between the loss of Canada to the loss of Alsace-Lorraine, Verne suggests violence by the French nationals may be the only way for them to resist the Prussians. Beyond his use of Canada as a discursive tool to write about contemporary politics, Verne is also recasting the history of Canada and France's relationship to it. Verne sees Canada as a "morceau de la patrie" that has been separated from France by a "invasion brutale." He clearly hopes that the French Canadians will one day have "au moins son autonomie," if not something more. Verne is writing, of course, in the heady days of the Third Republic when Jules Ferry's dreams of *la plus grande France* was ascendant.[589] With this in mind, it becomes clear that Verne is re-appropriating Canada and rewriting France's colonial history as a continual struggle to expand the *patrie*. Verne holds out hope that Canada might shine positively on France's current

[588] Verne 10.
[589] Giradet, Raoul, *L'Idée coloniale en France de 1871 à 1962* (Paris : Hachette, 1995) 96.

colonial ambitions. In short, he is still dreaming of a New France.

As a way to conclude, I would like to turn to the letters of Alexis de Tocqueville, written during his time in North America in the 1830s. This voyage, of course, will give the world one of Tocqueville's most enduring works, *De la démocratie en Amérique*, published in 1835 and 1840. While the nascent United States is clearly the focus of that work, Tocqueville also has a foray into French Canada. More so than in his magnum opus, Tocqueville's vision of Québec come to us through his personal correspondence. In an especially provocative letter to Abbé Lesueur, Tocqueville reveals a continuing fascination with the French-speaking population of Bas-Canada, or Québec. In Québec he is surprised to find that the *Canadiens* "sont aussi Français que vous et moi."[590] Beyond a shared identity with the *Canadiens*, Tocqueville suggests that his visit to Québec was like stepping back in time. The *Canadiens* practice "les anciennes habitudes, les anciennes mœurs françaises." As such, "Nous nous sentions comme chez nous, et partout on nous recevait comme des compatriotes, enfants de la vieille France, comme ils l'appellent. A mon avis, l'épithète est mal choisie. La vieille France est au Canada, la nouvelle est chez nous."[591] As this citation reveals, for Tocqueville Québec represents the *ancien régime* preserved in amber. Discursively, Tocqueville inverts France and Québec. Québec – this vestige of New France – becomes old France while post-revolutionary France becomes the new. Unlike his eighteenth century counterparts, Tocqueville does not see Frenchness in Canada as something innovative and disruptive to static notions of identity. On the contrary, Québec now becomes the site where Tocqueville can imagine a simpler and less convoluted sense of nationalism. "New France" is

[590] Tocqueville, Alexis de, *Correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville* (Paris : Michel Lévy frères, 1867) 56
[591] Tocqueville 56.

now a space of nostalgia – a place to imagine what Old France used to be. Under Tocqueville's pen, the new becomes old.

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