Writing Amerindian Culture:

Ethnography in the Seventeenth Century Jesuit Relations from New France

by

Micah R. True

Department of Romance Studies
Duke University

Date:_______________________

Approved:

Michèle Longino, Supervisor

Roberto Dainotto

Laurent Dubois

Alice Kaplan

Walter Mignolo

Orin Starn

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Romance Studies in the Graduate School of Duke University

2009
ABSTRACT

Writing Amerindian Culture:
Ethnography in the Seventeenth Century Jesuit Relations from New France

by

Micah R. True

Department of Romance Studies
Duke University

Date: __________________________

Approved:

___________________________
Michèle Longino, Supervisor

___________________________
Roberto Dainotto

___________________________
Laurent Dubois

___________________________
Alice Kaplan

___________________________
Walter Mignolo

___________________________
Orin Starn

An abstract of a dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Romance Studies in the Graduate School of Duke University

2009
Abstract

This dissertation examines ethnographic writing in the Jesuit Relations, a set of annual reports from missionaries in New France to Society of Jesus authorities in France that were published and widely read from 1632 to 1673. Drawing on currents in cultural anthropological thought about the complex relationship between anthropologists, their subjects, and the texts they produce, I analyze how the Relations allowed Jesuit missionaries to define for French readers Amerindian cultures, European-Amerindian interactions, and the health and success of the colony and the mission for forty years, almost without competition, giving them extraordinary influence over perceptions of the Amerindian Other at the very moment that France’s interest therein was being piqued by an increasing awareness of the world outside of Europe. The texts now are lauded as the première source of information on the Algonquian and Iroquoian groups with which the Jesuits were in contact in seventeenth century New France. In this dissertation, I examine the ways Jesuits conveyed information about Amerindian groups, focusing on the rhetorical aspects of their accounts that have been largely ignored by social scientists who have mined the texts for data. Instead of considering the Relations as a collection of facts recorded by diligent field workers, I seek to understand them as texts that reflect multiple points of view and the political, religious, and intellectual pressures acting on their French Catholic authors. Were Amerindians human? If so, were they created in
Eden along with the ancestors of Europeans? How could one explain their presence in America, with little apparent knowledge of their origins? And if they were human and of the same stock as European Christians, how could one explain the fact that their beliefs and behavior were so different from those of their French Christian interlocutors? These questions, I argue, left an enduring mark on the Jesuits’ descriptions of Amerindian cultures, making their texts less the work of proto-anthropologists than a form of intellectual colonization.
For Tom, Shelley and Nick True

and

For Kim Dao
# Contents

Abstract ....................................................................................................................................... iv

List of Figures .................................................................................................................................. ix

Acknowledgements .......................................................................................................................... x

1. Introduction .................................................................................................................................... 1
   1.1 The Society of Jesus in New France ......................................................................................... 14
   1.2 The Jesuits’ Missionary Objects .............................................................................................. 24
   1.3 The Jesuit Relations .................................................................................................................. 37
   1.4 Theoretical Orientation ............................................................................................................ 47

2. “Leur Cognoisance n’est que Ténèbres”: Amerindian Creation Myths in the Jesuit Relations ............................................................................................................................... 66
   2.1 The Huron Creation Myth ............................................................................................................. 80
   2.2 The Montagnais Myth .................................................................................................................. 99
   2.3 The Algonquin Myth .................................................................................................................. 116
   2.4 Conclusion ................................................................................................................................... 126

   3.1 Torture and Conversion: the case of Joseph the Iroquois Captive ......................................... 148
   3.2 The Blood-thirsty Iroquois: Torture, Cannibalism and Politics ....................................................... 175
   3.3 Conclusion ................................................................................................................................... 204

4. “La Foy Entre Par l’Oreille:” Amerindian Languages and Missionary Authority ...... 211
   4.1 Jesuit vs. Recollet .................................................................................................................... 220
4.2 Des Langues Fortes Pauvres et Fortes Riches: Amerindian Languages in the Jesuit Relations ................................................................. 235

4.3 “Maistre et Escolier”: The Jesuits as Language Learners ........................................ 255

4.4 “Je Forge des Mots Approchans de Leurs Langues:” The Jesuits as Inventors of Amerindian Languages ................................................................. 269

4.5 Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 279

5. Conclusion: Jesuits in Space .......................................................................................... 283

Appendix: Comments on Critical Editions of the Jesuit Relations, with Concordance.... 298

Works Cited ......................................................................................................................... 330

Biography .............................................................................................................................. 344
List of Figures

Figure 1: Map of New France’s 17th century Amerindian population .................................. 30

Figure 2: Frontispiece of the 1636 Relation ................................................................. 42
Acknowledgements

A number of individuals and institutions have contributed significantly to this dissertation. In particular, I am deeply grateful to Professor Michèle Longino of Duke University, whose unflagging support, clear-eyed advice, and generous sharing of her time, experience and insight have made this dissertation immeasurably better. I could not have asked for a better mentor, both during and before my close work with her on the current project. I also wish to thank Duke professors Roberto Dainotto, Laurent Dubois, Alice Kaplan, Walter Mignolo and Orin Starn, who gave input at crucial moments in the project’s development and gave freely of their time and expertise. Professors John Steckley of Humber College, Luca Codignola of the University of Genoa, and Vincent Grégoire of Berry College also graciously provided guidance, and I thank them for their interest in my work. The Graduate School of Duke University, the Department of Romance Studies, the John Hope Franklin Humanities Institute, and the Center for Canadian Studies provided financial support throughout my graduate student career, including summer funding and relief from teaching duties that allowed me to give my undivided attention to this project, which is, I am sure, much better for their generous support. I also wish to thank professors Françoise Kuester and Benjamin Semple of Gonzaga University, who first piqued my interest in French literature. Without their timely influence, I doubt that I would have found myself on the
challenging and rewarding path that led to this dissertation. Looking even further back in my life, I must acknowledge my debt to Tom Morphet and Bonnie Hedrick at the Chilkat Valley News in Haines, Alaska, who taught me to write quickly and succinctly, and instilled in me an enduring love of language. I wish to thank my family—Tom, Shelley and Nick True—for their consistent support and interest in my work. Last but not least, I am grateful to Dr. Kim Dao for her support, and the patience and tolerance that it must have taken to maintain a relationship with a Ph.D. candidate who was in the midst of an all-consuming writing project.
1. Introduction

It would be difficult to overestimate the influence that the seventeenth century Jesuit Relations from New France have had on attempts to reconstruct the cultures of the Iroquoian and Algonquian groups of Eastern Canada as they existed at the time of contact with French colonists. The Relations, a set of annual reports from missionaries in New France to Society of Jesus authorities in France published from 1632 to 1673, are often cited as the single richest source of modern knowledge of such groups. And yet, as I will argue over the course of this dissertation, much more was at stake in the annual publications than the careful description of Amerindian cultures. One need look no further than the circumstances surrounding the beginning and ending of the published series to get a sense of the external factors that influenced their contents. The beginning of the series in 1632 coincided with the Jesuits’ ascent to the status of exclusive missionaries in New France, a coup that was at least partly the result of the order’s political prowess and that afforded them control over the flow to France of information about the colony and Amerindian groups. Cessation of publication in 1673 was precipitated by European squabbles that had nothing to do with the New France mission or the publications it produced, reflecting the mission’s place in a complicated religious and political nexus. In what is often referred to as the dispute over the “Chinese rites,” Jesuit missionaries in China and their detractors had engaged in a high-profile dispute over the Jesuit practice of adapting Catholicism to Chinese culture in the
hopes of facilitating religious conversion. To end the war of words, Pope Clement X forbade the publication of material relating to missionary work without written permission from the Vatican’s Sacred Congregation of Propaganda. In a sign that the French crown viewed the Pope’s move as a usurpation of its power, the Parlement of Paris specifically denied the Roman Congregation’s authority in France. As Lawrence Wroth summarized, “A French book bearing the privilege of the Propaganda would have been refused the right of publication [by the Crown].”¹ Continuing to publish the New France Relations in this political climate would have required defying either Papal or Royal authority. Not surprisingly, the Jesuits opted to discontinue the series rather than incur the wrath of King or Pope.²

As this set of circumstances suggests, the authors of the Jesuit Relations found themselves simultaneously limited and empowered by factors external to their work in New France. They were limited by the rules and expectations of both Crown and Pope, and failure to successfully negotiate these fraught political waters could, as the “Chinese rites” debacle would eventually prove, result in prohibitive limits being placed on their activities. And since the Relations were published and apparently avidly read by the French public, the Jesuits had to take care to please more mundane readers as well, by


entertaining them, informing them, and assuaging their fears about the Amerindian
Other. As I will discuss at some length in this dissertation, the Jesuit missionaries were
also—by virtue of their status as Catholics and members of an organization that spanned
much of the globe, with missions in India, China, Japan, Mexico, Brazil and many other
locales—limited by the possibilities that their worldview afforded for comprehending
new cultures without discrediting traditional European, biblical knowledge.

But the relationships and circumstances that limited the Jesuits also empowered
them. Thanks at least in part to their successful navigation of Church and Crown’s
authority, the Jesuits were the sole representatives of Catholicism in the colony for
decades, allowing them to pursue their own religious vision for New France and preach
their message without the interference of competing viewpoints. And the missionaries
also practically monopolized the flow of information in the other direction. As the only

---

3 Although a world-wide network of Jesuit missionaries existed by the time the order arrived in New France
in the seventeenth century, a plurality of the order’s missionaries operated within Europe. “In 1653, it had a
little less than 1,000 missionaries around the world, of whom the highest number (381) were in continental
Europe,” according to historian Luca Codignola. Luca Codignola, “Few, Uncooperative and Ill-Informed?
The Roman Catholic Clergy in French and British North America, 1610-1658” in Decentring the Renaissance:
Canada and Europe in Multidisciplinary Perspective 1500-1700, eds. Germaine Warkentin and Carolyn
Podruchny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004) 176. There has been a fair amount of recent
historical scholarship on the various Jesuit missions around the world and in Europe that promises to aid
scholars in better understanding how the order’s global network functioned in the sixteenth, seventeenth,
and eighteenth centuries, and could allow the questions I pose here about a specific mission to be extended
to other parts of the globe or to the entire Jesuit missionary enterprise. Such recent studies include Jennifer
D. Selwyn, A Paradise Inhabited by Devils: The Jesuits’ Civilizing Mission in Early Modern Naples (Burlington:
Ashgate, 2004); Dirk Van Der Cruyssse, Siam and the West, 1500-1700, trans. Michael Smithies (Chiang Mai,
Thailand: Silkworm Books, 2002); Andrew C. Ross, A Vision Betrayed: The Jesuits in Japan and China 1542-1742
(Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994); and Ines G. Zupanov, Disputed Mission: Jesuit Experiments with
Brahmanical Knowledge in Seventeenth Century India (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999).
missionary organization working in New France for crucial early decades of the colony’s development, the Jesuits’ published Relations allowed them to define for French readers Amerindian cultures, European-Amerindian relations, and the health and success of the colony and the mission for forty years, almost without competition. The extraordinary influence that the New France Jesuits had over perceptions of the Amerindian Other at the very moment that France’s interest therein was being piqued by an increasing awareness of the world outside of Europe is worth careful examination,4 since the Relations are now lauded as the première source of ethnographic information on the Algonquian and Iroquoian groups with which the Jesuits were in contact in seventeenth century New France. What kind of ethnographers were the Jesuit missionaries? How did their particular point of view shape the information in their texts, and what are the consequences for modern scholars who use them as sources? These are the questions with which this dissertation is concerned.

Instead of considering the Relations as a collection of facts recorded by the Jesuits, I seek to understand them here as texts that reflect multiple points of view and the various pressures acting on their French Catholic authors. As I will discuss in a later section of this introduction, modern ethnohistorians have done a remarkable job of demonstrating how the Relations reflect the various ways in which meaning was

produced on the ground in New France, in dialogue between Europeans and Amerindians. Left largely unexamined, however, has been how specific European anxieties, disputes, and pressing questions influenced Jesuit depictions of Amerindian cultures. Were Amerindians human? If so, were they created in Eden with Europeans’ ancestors? How could one explain their presence in America, with little apparent knowledge of their origins? And if they were human and of the same stock as European Christians, how could one explain the fact that their beliefs and behavior were so different from those of their French Christian interlocutors? Although Europe had long been aware of the existence of culturally different non-Christians in Africa and Asia, the newly discovered Amerindian was so radically different as to uniquely constitute “[…] a challenge to a whole body of traditional assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes,” according to historian J.H. Elliott. Issues raised by Europe’s contact with the Amerindian Other have long been acknowledged to have been vexing for European travelers and thinkers, and have attracted a fair amount of scholarly attention in recent decades. Less clear has been how such challenges are reflected in passages of texts like the Jesuit Relations that form the basis of modern knowledge of the Amerindian groups that Europeans

---

5 My own contribution to this project, an article entitled “Il faut parler pour estre entendu: Talking about God in Wendat in New France,” is forthcoming in the Cahiers du Dix-Septième.


encountered in the New World. As I argue in the rest of this dissertation by examining passages of the Relations that bear on topics of ethnographic interest, writing about Amerindian cultures was, for the Jesuits, as much a way of responding to European debates and anxieties as it was of disseminating and preserving their newfound knowledge of Amerindian groups. In the coming chapters, I follow in the footsteps of modern scholars who have mined the Relations for ethnographic data to uncover the extent to which the “facts” about Amerindians in the Relations were shaped by the intellectual and political concerns of Christian Europe. I also will reflect on the broader implications for scholarly understandings of cultural contact and ethnographic writing.

Students of colonial encounter and Amerindian cultures at the time of contact are practically unanimous in their assessment that the Jesuit Relations are the richest source of information on Amerindian cultures as they existed in the early- to mid-seventeenth century. In a comment typical of social scientists who study the Relations, historian Alain Beaulieu, for example, remarked that “It is no longer necessary to insist on the interest of

---

8 I am aware that I am glossing over not insignificant doctrinal and political differences that existed within Europe, especially during the seventeenth century after decades of religious strife in France. One could no doubt fruitfully examine the differences between Protestant and Catholic reactions to Amerindian cultures, or the differences across political boundaries. And yet, it is also true that the differences between religious and political factions in Europe were trivial in comparison to the differences between European and Amerindian cultures. Whether Catholic or Protestant, Europeans shared a common scripture and basic understanding of the origin of the world and man’s place in it. Although I acknowledge that it is somewhat simplistic to talk about the intellectual and political concerns of Christian Europe, I feel nonetheless secure in premising my argument on the notion that the example of the Amerindian other would have been surprising and troubling to Europeans of all stripes. For more on this, see Stephen Greenblatt, Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) 8-9.
these *Relations* for the history of the beginnings of the colonization of New France. They constitute by far the most important source of information on this period." 9 And reliance on the missionary accounts as a source of information is certainly not new. They were one of the major sources for Joseph-François Lafitau’s 1724 *Moeurs des Sauvages Amériquains Comparés aux Moeurs des Premiers Temps*, a work that is often cited as one of the earliest works of comparative ethology. 10 The Jesuit historian Pierre de Charlevoix, in his 1744 *Histoire et Description Générale de la Nouvelle-France*, praised the *Relations* as a unique source of information: “There is not even any other source on which one can draw to learn about the progress of religion among the savages, and to know these peoples of which they spoke […].” 11 From the time of their publication until the present day, the *Relations* have been the premiere source of information on the cultures that the Jesuits encountered in seventeenth century New France.

Indeed, even scholars who are critical of the depiction of Amerindian groups in the Jesuit accounts and seek to restore an Amerindian voice to discussions of colonial interactions find it necessary to draw information from the *Relations*, at least indirectly.

---


Georges Sioui, an historian and a descendent of the Huron, found himself in this uncomfortable position in writing his own study of his ancestors’ culture. Jesuit observers of the Huron, Sioui writes, were less meticulous ethnographers than their Franciscan predecessors in New France, and their written descriptions were meant to undercut Huron culture and justify the colonial project. Sioui nonetheless occasionally cites the Relations and also draws on more recent works that rely heavily on the Jesuits’ texts, testifying to the degree to which, in the absence of Amerindian sources to account for the other side of the story, European—and especially Jesuit—voices dominate the discussion. Scholars like Sioui, who attempt to explore the Amerindian perspective on their cultures and on contact with Europeans, find only silence from the non-European side of seventeenth century encounters in New France, and must resort to speculation and careful reading of the texts of colonists and missionaries in searching for fragments of an Amerindian voice.

Despite the undeniable ethnographic interest of the texts and the long tradition of relying on them as a source of data, it would be simplistic to treat them solely as historical ethnographic documents. Even scholars who use the texts primarily to extract data have recognized that their Jesuit authors were master rhetoricians, and used their

writings as much to advance their own agenda as to document life in New France.

Denys Delâge put it this way:

Such ‘relations’ were generally addressed to a devout French public, and the narrators were also actors in these accounts. As missionaries, their aim was to convert the people whom they were observing to Christianity. The individual narrator therefore assumed the stance of judgmental spectator vis-à-vis these societies, which he posited as pagan. From such a perspective, the narrator obviously cannot give a ‘neutral’ ethnographic account of the habits and customs of the Amerindian peoples.¹³

And yet, recognition of the Jesuits’ rhetorical skill and political and religious agenda has generally not resulted in an adequate analysis of the ways in which those factors may have influenced the details Jesuits reported about the Amerindians they encountered. Those seeking to reconstruct Amerindian cultures have most often simply edited out or ignored everything but the “facts” in Jesuit accounts in the service of compensating for bias, a strategy that, as I will argue, often has resulted in a loss of meaning rather than a gain, and sometimes has caused traditional meaning to be ascribed to Amerindian behavior that the Jesuits highlighted for specifically religious or political purposes.

The texts have also attracted the attention of scholars of literature, who generally have treated them either as travel writing, as in several articles by Réal Ouellet,¹⁴ or as

---


an epic poem, as in Marie-Christine Pioffet’s 1997 La Tentation de l’Epopée dans les Relations des Jésuites. Rarely, however, has this line of inquiry intersected with the tradition of using the texts as a source of data. Literary studies have rightly cast light on the fact that the texts are more than primitive ethnographic field notes to be typed up by modern anthropologists. But such studies generally engage in only limited fashion with the aspect of the Relations that is the primary source of their longstanding popularity: the richness of their descriptions of the Amerindian groups encountered by the Jesuits. If students of Amerindian culture have tended to brush aside the literary qualities of the Relations, treating them as bias to be edited out rather than a rich site for interpretation, literary studies, though they still are heavily outnumbered, have similarly paid little attention to the obvious ethnographic interest of the texts.

This dissertation situates itself at the intersection of these two scholarly traditions. Here I closely read passages of the Jesuit Relations that describe Iroquoian and Algonquian cultures in seventeenth century New France. Instead of focusing on the ethnographic information contained in the Relations, I seek to discern the particular ways in which it was conveyed in order to meet the political, religious, and intellectual challenges that Amerindian cultures posed to Europe. I draw out the many signs, often ignored by modern scholars, that passages of the texts that appear to mark the radical difference of Amerindian groups also serve to render them familiar and non threatening.

---

15 Marie-Christine Pioffet, La Tentation de l’Epopée dans les Relations des Jésuites (Sillery: Septentrion, 1997).
As Rosemary Jackson has remarked, it is only natural that foreign objects and practices are always understood and assimilated in relation to what is familiar, the only tool that those encountering the unfamiliar have at their disposal as they seek to understand the new. As I hope to make clear over the course of this dissertation, the tasks of making the Amerindian other fit within the Catholic European worldview and reassuring readers that distant cultures posed no threat to Christian traditional knowledge left their mark on the ethnographic information contained in the Relations. Some of the passages I analyze here have been heavily relied upon by modern scholars. Comparing their interpretations with my own will provide specific examples for my critique of the ways in which the Relations have been used as sources of data. Such uses have failed to take full account of the nature and purpose of the Relations, and therefore end up inadvertently casting the Jesuits—inaccurately, I believe— as diligent and careful ethnographers. As I will argue, Jesuit writings about Amerindian cultures were crafted as interventions in some of the hard questions posed by the existence of people not accounted for in the supposedly comprehensive scripture-based history of humankind and of engaging in various political disputes in France and the Catholic Church.

Although this dissertation focuses on the specific case of the published Jesuit Relations from New France, it is my hope that my investigation will prove thought

---

16 Wrote Jackson, “[...] the ‘creative’ imagination, indeed, is quite incapable of inventing anything; it can only combine components that are strange to one another.” Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy, the Literature of Subversion* (London: Mehtuen, 1981) 8.
provoking in other contexts. The broader questions I take up here occurred to me long before I had even heard of the Jesuit Relations. My hometown, Haines, Alaska, was founded in the nineteenth century by Presbyterian missionaries who promptly began the work of “civilizing” the Tlingits who had occupied that corner of Southeast Alaska for centuries. At the same time as missionaries were actively suppressing Tlingit customs, European and American anthropologists were striving to preserve them in writing. Their texts now serve as guides for modern Tlingits seeking to relearn their ancestors’ way of life, a phenomenon that apparently is not unique to Alaska Natives.\footnote{In his 2004 book Ishi’s Brain, anthropologist Orin Starn reported encountering similar interest in early anthropological works among Amerindian groups in California. Orin Starn, Ishi’s Brain: In Search of America’s Last ‘Wild’ Indian (2004) (New York: Norton, 2005) 62.} I vividly remember reading, while in college, an article in my hometown newspaper that chronicled a local Tlingit woman’s effort to persuade the University of Washington Press to reprint The Tlingit Indians, a book based on the nineteenth century field notes of ethnographer George Thornton Emmons. Her interest in seeing the book reprinted stemmed from a desire to preserve traditional cultural knowledge, she told the Chilkat Valley News: “A lot of our elders are passing on, and there’s interest in the community to rekindle our heritage. We want to learn, and this book is such an accurate history. There are so many people who want this book.” I was fascinated by the fact that the woman’s efforts to access the knowledge of her ancestors necessarily involved relying on the perceptions of an outside observer. Did Emmons’ particular point of view, I wondered,
have a discernible impact on the “facts” he recorded? And if so, what would reliance on his work mean for modern Tlingits? Would it produce a renaissance of Tlingit culture, or would the renewed cultural practices actually be something new, a version of nineteenth century Tlingit life as perceived, shaped, and recorded by Emmons?

Another significant moment in the genesis of this project came in my first year of graduate school, when I participated in Professor Michèle Longino’s seminar on seventeenth century Mediterranean travel writing. A paper I wrote for that seminar addressed how depictions of travelers’ conversion to Islam contributed to French misunderstanding and fear of that religion. Once again I found myself pondering, in an academic setting this time, how outside observers shape cultures by writing about them. The specific questions about the Jesuit Relations that I address in this dissertation could also, it seems, be posed about nineteenth century anthropology and its relationship to modern Tlingit culture, about early modern Catholic/Muslim encounters on the Mediterranean, and probably in any number of other settings as well. Though I focus here on a relatively narrow topic, I gesture at much bigger questions.

Before proceeding to my analysis of specific passages of ethnographic interest in the Relations, I will briefly outline in the pages that follow the historical context of French-Amerindian contact in New France, the textual history of the Jesuit Relations and

the role they have played in producing Western knowledge of Amerindian cultures, the current state of thought on those texts, and my own theoretical approach. I will have occasion over the course of this dissertation to discuss each of these topics in further detail, but the following brief discussions will provide the necessary background for my analysis.

1.1 The Society of Jesus in New France

After nearly a century of occasional exploration and failed attempts to establish an enduring presence in the area that is today Eastern Canada, France finally gained a permanent foothold in 1608, with the founding of Quebec by Samuel de Champlain.19 Although the event lent a measure of stability to France’s presence in North America after the previous century’s half-hearted and disorganized efforts,20 the colony was slow to develop. According to Beaulieu, “At the end of the 1620s, Quebec was still just a modest trading post occupied by several dozen Frenchmen, the survival of whom

19 James Axtell, The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) 32. Until his death in 1635, Samuel de Champlain was a major force in the expansion of New France. He was also, until 1632, a frequent publisher of accounts of his own adventures in the colony. His death near the beginning of the Jesuit monopoly on the New France mission would have contributed to their new status as practically the only source of information on the colony and missionary progress. Gilles Havard and Cécile Vidal, Histoire de l’Amérique Française, edition entièrement revue (2006) (Paris: Flammarion, 2005) 81.

20 Havard and Vidal 65.
depended on goods imported annually from France.” 21 The Crown, preoccupied with lingering civil strife and intra-European affairs, had little attention to spare on New France in the early decades of the colony, and instead sought to solidify French control there by tapping merchants to act as proxies. 22 In these early decades of the colony, consortiums of merchants were granted ten- or fifteen-year monopolies on New France trade in exchange for their agreement to administer the colony and oversee its growth. 23 As payment for exclusive rights to New France’s natural resources, a series of trading companies half-heartedly transported settlers to the colony, including, in 1615, four Franciscan Recollet missionaries. 24 These early days of the New France mission were chaotic and fruitless indeed. The trading companies displayed little interest in promoting missionary work, despite the Crown’s hope that New France would be settled and Christianized as a side-effect of trade. Instead, trading companies brought protestant merchants to the colony, the very presence of whom was seen by the Recollets an obstacle to winning Amerindian converts, presenting, as it did, evidence that the Christian religion was divided. 25 The Recollets, in turn, were a thorn in the side of profit-

21 My translation. “À la fin des années 1620, Québec n’est […] encore qu’un modeste poste de traite occupé par quelques dizaines de Français, dont la survie dépend des vivres importés annuellement de France. Beaulieu 46; See also Havard and Vidal 85.

22 Havard and Vidal 69.

23 Axtell 36.

24 Axtell 36; Havard and Vidal 69.

25 Beaulieu 44.
oriented merchants, who viewed the missionaries’ attempts to Christianize and Frenchify Amerindians as counter-productive, turning “[…] good Indian hunters into poor French farmers at the expense of trade […],” according to Axtell.26 With trading companies, missionaries, and the Crown seemingly working at cross purposes, it is little wonder that the early years of the colony were not marked by resounding success in any domain.

Like the rest of French activity in the New World, Jesuit missionary work began slowly, and endured two false starts before finally gaining traction in 1632. The first Jesuits to arrive in North America were Pierre Biard and Enemond Massé, who disembarked in 1611 at Port-Royal, a small settlement in modern-day Nova Scotia that Champlain had established in 1605. Just two years later, after the pair had been joined by two more missionaries and moved to the island of St. Sauveur near Maine, colonists from Virginia arrived to forcefully assert English control over the area, effectively ending the Jesuits’ first, brief stint as missionaries in the New World. 27

When Jesuit priests arrived on the continent for the second time in 1625—propelled by the backing of the colony’s new Viceroy, the Duc de Ventadour28—they joined the Recollet order’s call for the cancellation of the monopoly on trade then held

26 Axtell 36.
28 Blackburn 27.
by the Caën Group, a company made up of both protestant and Catholic merchants who were perhaps naturally more concerned with extracting wealth than with promoting colonization. For three years, until the English occupied Québec in 1629 and expelled the missionaries along with the other French inhabitants of the colony, the two orders shared the missionary field, sometimes working side by side despite their different approaches to converting the Amerindians they came in contact with. Unlike the Jesuits, the Recollets believed that Amerindians could not be converted to Catholicism unless they also were ‘civilized,’ forced to adopt the French language and lifestyle. The Jesuit methods that would eventually supplant those favored by the Recollets were more accommodating of local custom. As Carole Blackburn wrote,

The Jesuits did not foresee a similar need for such wholesale assimilation and did not attempt it, even after realizing the extent to which Aboriginal religious beliefs were intertwined with Aboriginal cultures. They continued to adapt Native customs to Christian ritual and to learn and use Native languages in their missions throughout the seventeenth century.

Despite their differing mission philosophies, the two orders co-existed in New France from 1625 until 1629, apparently in relative harmony.

29 Blackburn 43-44; Beaulieu 46.
30 Blackburn 27.
32 Trigger 378-379.
33 Blackburn 131.
But even during this brief period, it was clear that the Jesuits recognized that their missionary work depended on the alignment of religious, political, and commercial interests. They promptly set about creating a political climate that would ensure the cooperation and support of the Crown in the missionary enterprise. According to ethnohistorian Bruce Trigger, “Instead of seeking an alliance with Champlain, as the Recollets had done, the Jesuits undertook to control the highest echelons of the colonial administration in France itself, in order to ensure that no traders, officials, or other religious orders in France could oppose them.”\footnote{Trigger 403.} The order was involved from the beginning in the formation of the Compagnie de 100 Associés, also known as the Compagnie de la Nouvelle France, the trading company that replaced the Caën group in 1627.\footnote{Havard and Vidal 87.} The new company was designed specifically by the powerful Cardinal Richelieu in order to “inscribe New France indelibly on the map of North America,”\footnote{Axtell 38.} a goal that the Jesuits, for their part, seemed to view as essential to the success of their mission. As mission Superior Paul Le Jeune wrote in 1635, “Plus la puissance de nos François aura d’éclat en ces contrées et plus aisément feront-ils recevoir leur créance à ces barbares qui se mènent autant et plus par les sens que par la raison” (“The more imposing the power of our French people is made in these Countries, the more easily they can make their belief...
received by these Barbarians, who are influenced even more through the senses, than through reason”). The company’s charter did much to harmonize the missionary project with the Crown’s attempts to govern its colony through the intermediary of a consortium of merchants, insisting as it did that the new company attend to religious aspects of life in New France. Merchants who were members of the Company were specifically forbidden to transport anyone other than French Catholics to the colony, and were required to provide material support for three missionaries at every settlement they established. The company’s charter provided for it to assume military, economic, and territorial control over the colony, a degree of power judged necessary for the success of both economic and religious attempts to control New France. The stage was thus set for an alliance between economic and religious interests in New France, but the

37 Lucien Campeau, ed. *Monumenta Novae Franciae*, 9 vols. (Québec: Les Presses de l’Université de Laval, 1967-2003) vol 3, 64; Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed. *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610-1791*, 73 vols. (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1896-1901) vol. 8, 15. For reasons that are laid out in detail in an appendix to this dissertation, I have opted to rely on Campeau’s edition of the Jesuit Relations. I reluctantly use Thwaites’ edition, long the standard reference for scholars, for its English translations of the texts. To compensate for Thwaites’ often faulty translations, I have checked the passages quoted in this dissertation against the Campeau edition and made corrections as necessary. My alterations to Thwaites’ translations are in brackets, and his original renderings are included in footnotes in cases where I have deemed changes necessary. All future references will include volume and page number only (e.g. Campeau 3.64; Thwaites 8.15).

38 The company’s charter called for “[...] une forte compagnie pour l’establissement d’une colonie de naturels François, catholiques de l’un et l’autre sexe; jugeant que c’estoit le seul et unique moyen pour avancer en peu d’années la conversion de ces peuples, et accroistre le nom François à la gloire de Dieu, et reputation de cette Couronner” “[...] a strong company for the establishment of a colony of naturalized Frenchmen, Catholics of both sexes, judging that it was the only way to advance in a short time the conversion of these people, and to enhance the name of France to the glory of God and the reputation of the crown”. *Edict du Roy pour l’establissement de la Compagnie de la Nouvelle France avec l’arrêt de verification de la Cour de Parlement de Paris* (Paris: Cramoisy, 1657) 4; my translation.
English takeover of Québec in 1629 halted the new arrangement before it had a chance to work. When they were expelled along with the Recollets in 1629, the Jesuits had been well on their way to securing considerable power in New France, having aligned themselves with the Crown’s vision of transforming New France through a Catholic trading company that was specifically designed to favor the conversion of Amerindians to Christianity.

When England returned the colony to France in early 1632, the Jesuits were well-positioned to claim a prominent role there due to their attention to mission politics in the previous decade. With the support of Jean de Lauson, an official of the Compagnie de 100 Associés, the order gained exclusive missionary access to New France. Despite outcry from the Recollets, the Jesuits maintained their status as the exclusive missionaries of the New France colony until 1657, when Sulpician missionaries arrived in Montréal, giving the Jesuits several uninterrupted decades in which they could pursue their vision of New France as a “Jerusalem blessed [by] God.” This political coup, which I will have occasion to discuss in further detail in a later chapter, inaugurated the period with which I am primarily concerned in this dissertation. Starting in 1632, annual reports penned by Jesuit missionaries were published, and apparently eagerly read in France.  

39 Blackburn 30-31; Codignola, “Few, Uncooperative, and Ill Informed,” 176.
41 I will discuss the circulation and readership of the relations in a later section of this introduction.
After two decades of trying and two false starts, the Jesuits were finally in a position to preach their message to the Iroquoian and Algonquian inhabitants of New France without the interference of protestant traders or competing Catholic orders. And not only would the order’s voice be the only one heard by potential converts, it had nearly monopolized the flow of information in the other direction as well, from New France to Europe. With no rival groups to publish competing accounts of Amerindian cultures and the progress of missionary work, the Jesuits, as modern scholarship’s continuing reliance on them attests, were in a position to strongly influence how Amerindian groups would be understood by outsiders for centuries to come.42

For the three decades following the Jesuits’ 1632 return to New France, the Church, and particularly its Jesuit representatives, was the body primarily responsible for the colony’s growth and progress.43 The Church controlled more than a quarter of the land distributed by the Compagnie de Cent Associés during the period, which the Jesuits cleared, allowing crops to be planted immediately upon the arrival of new settlers.44 Starting in 1645, Jesuits would take an even more direct role in colonial

42 Although their annual reports were certainly by far the dominant voice on the subject of New France, it is true that others were heard as well. Gabriel Sagard, A Recollet brother who had spent much of 1623 and 1624 in New France, including about a year in Huron country, parlayed the experience into two books, the 1632 Le Grand Voyage du Pays des Hurons, and the 1636 Histoire du Canada, which was essentially a revision and expansion of the first book. Written, as they were, many years after the fact, both tomes would have lacked the urgency and topicality of the Jesuit Relations, and could not hope to compete with the Jesuits’ annual barrage of information.


44 Eccles 42.
government, as the trading company found itself nearing bankruptcy, mired in debt and therefore “unable to provide the funds needed to maintain and defend the colony, let alone provide for its expansion,” according to historian W.J. Eccles.\(^{45}\) Settlers including the Jesuits formed the *Communauté des Habitants*, ushering in an era of self-government of the colony.\(^{46}\) In 1647, the council was replaced by one composed of the governor of the new city of Montréal,\(^{47}\) the Jesuit superior, and elected popular representatives. This arrangement, and subsequent incarnations of self-government, suffered from insufficiently clear lines of authority and failures of leadership. “From the first establishment of a colonial council, its members displayed a lamentable lack of administrative talent, and the colony’s financial affairs were soon in disarray,” according to Eccles.\(^{48}\) The weak colonial government coupled with persistent warfare between French and Iroquois groups made it “[…] abundantly clear to the French at home and in Canada that New France would not survive if drastic measures were not taken on her behalf,” according to Axtell.\(^{49}\) In response to these pressures and in a reflection of increasing royal interest in the colonial project, the newly-anointed King Louis XIV

\(^{45}\) Eccles 58. This financial crisis was apparently due to the destruction by the Iroquois of the Huron trade networks that supplied the *Compagnie* with its furs, which I treat in more detail in the next section of this introduction. Havard and Vidal 98.

\(^{46}\) Although it handed over control of the colony, the *Compagnie* remained active in the St. Lawrence area fur trade until the crown took direct control of the colony in 1663. Havard and Vidal 100.

\(^{47}\) Montréal was founded in 1642. Havard and Vidal 25.

\(^{48}\) Eccles 58-59.

\(^{49}\) Axtell 40.
made New France a Royal colony in 1663, a decision that dramatically changed life there and the Jesuits’ role in it. Wrote Axtell:

Wielding the wealth and power of what had emerged as Europe’s greatest nation, they temporarily subdued the Iroquois menace with a veteran commander and a thousand select troops; established a sound administrative system around a military governor, a civil intendant, and a Sovereign Council; strengthened the economy; and increased the population by promoting large-scale emigration and attempting to balance the sex ratio with marriageable filles du roi.

The Crown’s new hands-on role resulted in a decline in Jesuit influence in the colony. According to historian J.H. Kennedy, “The nature of their function reverted to the rigid spirituality that had been originally intended; gradually they lost that freedom […] to go beyond strictly religious matters which had so mightily reinforced their preaching in the past.” The boom in immigration resulting from the installation of a strong colonial government brought thousands of soldiers, women, and profiteers to the colony, who

---

50 Havard and Vidal 71.

51 Axtell 41. At the moment of royal intervention in 1663, French inhabitants of the St. Laurent valley numbered just 3,035. By the end of the seventeenth century, New France had 15,000 inhabitants, demonstrating the dramatic impact direct royal control had on the colony. Delage 252. Despite the arrival between 1634 and 1663 of more than 200 single “filles à marier” recruited to marry men in New France by religious groups in the Old Country, the gender makeup of the colony’s population remained severely unbalanced. In 1666, the colony was home to 45 single women between the ages of 16 and 40, and 719 single men of the same age. In an effort to balance the population to allow for more rapid growth from within, about 800 “filles du roi”—so named because the king subsidized their passage to the colony and in at least some cases paid their dowry—were sent to the colony between 1663 and 1673. About half were indigent, half were orphans, and most were younger than 25. Seventy-six were between the ages of 12 and 15. Jacques Lacoursière, Histoire Populaire du Québec, vol 1: des Origines à 1791 (Sillery: Septentrion, 1995) 114-118.

carried with them the vices from which the Jesuits had sought to shield New France. Not only did Jesuit influence over life in the colony wane, but their near monopoly on the flow of information to France was nearing an end as well. Publication of their popular Relations would cease just ten years later, bringing an end to a period in which the Jesuits had a dominant influence over the colony’s religious and political life, and unchallenged supremacy as the chroniclers of New France’s Amerindian cultures.

1.2 The Jesuits’ Missionary Objects

Jesuit missionary activity, and therefore the ethnographic descriptions in the Relations, focused on Huron, Montagnais and Algonquin Amerindian groups. Before briefly sketching the historical contours of Jesuit interaction with these groups, it is necessary to address a problem that would otherwise manifest itself on practically every page of this dissertation. The names Huron, Montagnais and Algonquin are labels imposed on Amerindian groups from outside, by the Europeans who first encountered them in the colonial period. Increasingly, the name “Huron” is being replaced in ethnohistorical scholarship with “Wendat,” the name that group used to designate itself. Similarly, “Innu” sometimes appears in place of “Montagnais,” a term that is

53 Axtell 64.
54 Trigger Preface.
now considered pejorative by some. Although my first instinct was to embrace the more culturally sensitive terms that are increasingly preferred by modern scholars and by some Amerindians themselves, I ultimately decided to use the designations employed in the Relations. Because most of the sources I quote here—including the Jesuit Relations—use the names assigned by European colonizers, I initially wrote many paragraphs in which a single group was referred to by two names, with the colonial label appearing in quotations and the now-preferred term in my own analysis. While this system may work well in texts that focus on a single group, I found the result confusing in the present study, which bears on several Amerindian groups. For the sake of simplicity and consistency, then, I have opted to use labels imposed on Amerindian groups from outside.

But my decision is not only motivated by practical concerns. Employing the names that Europeans gave to Amerindian groups also reinforces one of the central premises of this dissertation, that descriptions in the Relations of various groups are not scientific specimens that perfectly represent Amerindian cultures. Rather, such descriptions portray cultures as they were perceived by the missionary authors of the Relations, and those perceptions do not always correspond to modern understandings of


56 For example, I use both “Huron” and “Wendat” in my article “Retelling Genesis: The Jesuit Relations and the Wendat Creation Myth,” Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature 34.67 (2007): 465-484. I flatter myself that my argument there is no less clear for the use of two names for a single group of people.
the makeup of Iroquoian and Algonquian groups. Using the terms “Huron,” “Montagnais,” and “Algonquin” to refer to the groups that the Jesuits wrote about emphasizes the mediatory role that European observers played between Amerindian groups and modern scholars who seek to understand them. I am, after all, not studying these groups themselves, but rather Jesuit portrayals of them. Adopting the currently-preferred terms would risk obscuring or downplaying the degree to which Jesuit writing strategies shaped the ethnographic information in the Relations, a counter-productive move in a dissertation that aims precisely to explore those interventions. Self-given names like Wendat and Innu appear in only the rarest of instances in this dissertation, when used by a source I cite or when used to designate a modern member of those groups. As a generic term, I have opted for “Amerindian,” mostly because I find all other options unappealing.57

Upon their arrival in New France in 1632, the Jesuits focused primarily on the Montagnais and Algonquin. Both groups belonged to the larger Algonquian language

57 Although many scholars have opted for “Indian,” the term appeared most often in English texts during the colonial period, making it an odd fit for a study of French publications. The term the Jesuits most often used, “sauvage,” has unpleasant connotations in modern English that were not necessarily present in the original French, but are nonetheless best avoided altogether. (See C.E.S. Franks, “In Search of the Savage Sauvage: an Exploration of North America’s Political Cultures,” American Review of Canadian Studies 32.4(2002): 547-580. Many common alternatives—such as “Native American,” “American Indian,” and “First Nations”—call to mind relationships with the modern national governments of Canada and the United States that did not exist at the time of contact. Applying these terms to colonial interactions that occurred on both sides of the present border therefore poses challenges that only distract from my argument. For a good discussion of the difficulties involved in selecting names for Amerindian groups, see Gordon Sayre, Les Sauvages Américains: Representations of Native Americans in French and English Colonial Literature (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997) preface.
family,\textsuperscript{58} and also were linked to each other economically, socially, and religiously, in addition to sharing a common enemy, the Iroquois. The Montagnais inhabited the area east of the St. Maurice River, up to Sept-Îles (see figure 1) and the Algonquin resided to the west of the river, in the Ottawa Valley and surrounding area.\textsuperscript{59} Jesuits were in contact primarily with three Montagnais bands, the so-called Tadoussac, Québec, and Trois-Rivières bands. The picture is less clear for the Algonquin groups the Jesuits encountered:

A certain confusion reigns in the case of the Algonquins, but several bands appear more often in the documents: The Kichesipirins or Algonquins of the Island, who established their principal camp on Morrison Island, the Weskarinis or Algonquins of the Petite Nation, who lived near the Rouge, Petite Nation, and Lièvre rivers, and the Onontchatonons or Iroquet people,\textsuperscript{60} who occupied, it seems, the Nation du Sud river valley.\textsuperscript{61}

Because both the Jesuit Relations and modern attempts to reconstruct the ways of life of these groups rarely focus on specific bands, and instead treat Montagnais, Algonquin and Huron cultures more globally, the details of the composition of the Amerindian groups that Jesuits encountered in New France are not particularly important for the

\textsuperscript{58} Trigger xliii.

\textsuperscript{59} Beaulieu 21.

\textsuperscript{60} The Iroquet, and Algonquian group, should not be confused with the Iroquois, an Iroquoian group.

\textsuperscript{61} My translation. “Une certaine confusion règne dans le cas des Algonquins, mais quelques bandes apparaissent plus souvent dans les documents: les Kichesipirins ou Algonquins de l’Isle, qui établissent leur camp principal sur l’île Morisson, les Weskarinis ou Algonquins de la Petite Nation, qui vivent dans les environs des rivières Rouge, Petite Nation et Lièvre, et les Onontchatonons ou peuple d’Iroquet, qui occupe, semble-t-il la vallée de la rivière Nation du Sud.” Beaulieu 21.
present study. A general understanding of the groups on which Jesuits focused their efforts, and which groups they regarded as enemies, is sufficient for my purposes.

The Algonquian groups that the Jesuits attempted to convert—both Montagnais and Algonquin—were nomadic, following the seasonal movements of the animals on which their subsistence depended. As the Jesuit priest Paul Le Jeune himself learned while spending the winter of 1633-1634 in the company of a Montagnais band, the hibernal wanderings of that group were nearly ceaseless. According to Beaulieu,

The low density of resources obligated them to disperse in small, very mobile economic units. As soon as one area no longer assured the subsistence of the group, they moved camp. In this way, between November 12 1633 and April 14 1634, the Montagnais with whom Lejeune wintered established 23 camps, the longest lasting 15 to 20 days, and the shortest just one or two days. The fact that these groups routinely traveled in small bands was regarded by European observers as a symptom of a lack of centralized political power. Without strong central leaders who could be persuaded to convert to Christianity and influence others to do the same, it seemed that effecting widespread religious and social change in the form of conversion to Christianity would be time-consuming and difficult. The Montagnais' frequent physical movement was itself viewed as a significant obstacle by the missionaries “[...] because they interpreted it as an unstable and vulnerable way of life

62 Beaulieu 22.
and because its non-sedentary nature made attempts at conversion logistically difficult,” according to Blackburn.  

The priests believed that daily practice of Christian rites was necessary for new converts, in order to make sure the religion took hold, a seemingly impossible goal as long as Algonquian groups remained nomadic. According to James Axtell, “Unless every wandering lodge had its own hardy priest, the native languages could not be mastered, without which there was no way to convey Christ’s message. And unless the natives and their sustenance could be planted in one place, there was no hope of taming their wild independence to French law and Christian order.”

An early goal of the Jesuits was therefore to settle nomadic groups into European-style villages, based on the model of early seventeenth century Jesuit reducciones in Paraguay. From 1638 to 1676, the Jesuits created five such communities of Amerindian converts. But nearly a decade of hard work and less-than-satisfying results convinced the Jesuits to abandon the reduction as a primary strategy around 1641,

---

64 Blackburn 35.
66 Axtell 46.
Figure 1: Location of Amerindian groups around the time of Jesuit arrival in New France (Marcel Trudel, Histoire de la Nouvelle France, vol. 1.)
in what Axtell has characterized as a perhaps inevitable shift away from a previous emphasis on civilizing Amerindians already in place, thanks to the Recollet friars, upon the Jesuits’ arrival in New France. “No longer would authentic Christians reside solely in Frenchified parishes along the St. Lawrence. After 1641, they could be found at dozens of “flying” missions for a few months of the year and deep in familiar woods for the rest.”\textsuperscript{68} In these seasonal “missions volantes,” the Jesuit missionaries took to accompanying converts in their seasonal wanderings to ensure that they did not stray from the Jesuits’ teachings, resigning themselves to the material necessity of Algonquian nomadism for at least part of the year.\textsuperscript{69}

The priests also established a mission among the Huron, the five Iroquoian nations that inhabited the land between Georgian Bay and Lake Simcoe in modern-day Ontario (see figure 1).\textsuperscript{70} From the earliest days of the published Relations, Jesuit missionaries expressed their belief that the group represented the best hope for large-scale conversion of Amerindians. As Le Jeune commented in 1633,

\begin{quote}
Le fruict qu’on peut recueillir de ceste mission sera grand, s’il plaist à Dieu. Si les Pères qui sont destinez pour les Hurons, nation stable, peuvent entrer dans le pays et que les guerres ne troublent point ces peuples, il est croyable que,
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{68} Axtell 62.
\textsuperscript{69} Jetten 45.
\textsuperscript{70} Trigger 27-31. For a more detailed discussion of the historical geography of Huron territory, see Conrad Heidenreich’s Huronia: a History and Geography of the Huron Indians 1600-1650 Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1971. The term “Iroquoian” designates a language family including the Huron, the Iroquois, and various other groups. Trigger xliii.
\end{flushright}
dans un couple d’années, on verra qu’il n’y a nation si barbare qui ne soit capable de reconnoistre et honorer son Dieu.71

However, the fruit which may be gathered from this mission will be great, if it please God. If the Fathers who are assigned to go to the Hurons, a stationary tribe, are able to enter the country, and if war does not trouble these people, probably in two years it will be seen that there is not a nation so barbarous as not to recognize and honor God.72

Unlike their Algonquian trading partners and allies against the Iroquois, the Huron were sedentary, with an economy based on “corn agriculture, supplemented by some fishing, hunting, and gathering, as well as trade.”73 Although they continued their work among Algonquian groups along the Saint Lawrence River, the Jesuits impatiently awaited the opportunity to begin work in Huron country from the moment of their arrival in 1632.74 The missionaries got their wish in 1634 when Champlain finally convinced the Huron to transport three Jesuits and accept their presence in Huron country by implying that renewal of the French-Huron trade alliance depended on it.75

71 Campeau 2.447
72 Thwaites 5.191.
73 Blackburn 35.
74 Jesuit priest Jean de Brébeuf had already spent three years in Huron country prior to the fall of Québec in 1629 (Blackburn 38-39). According to the Jesuit Relations, he was just beginning to gain proficiency in the Huron language when the English takeover of the colony forced him to abandon the mission. In another sign that the Jesuits regarded the Huron as prime candidates for conversion, the 1633 Relation reports that the Huron had begged a departing Brébeuf to return soon to baptize them (Campeau 2.447-448).
75 Blackburn 39.
Under the leadership of Father Jean de Brébeuf, a mission was established in the Huron settlement of Ihonatiria.\textsuperscript{76}

The Jesuit tenure among the Huron was tumultuous. Epidemic disease arrived at the same time as missionaries did,\textsuperscript{77} and although the Huron reportedly clamored for baptism initially, believing it to be a cure, resistance grew to it later in the 1630s, as suspicions intensified that the Jesuits themselves were causing illness through witchcraft. “Disasters always gave rise to charges of witchcraft among the Huron themselves and the epidemics of the 1630s were no exception,” wrote Trigger,\textsuperscript{78} adding that the fact that the Jesuits were not put to death, as Amerindian sorcerers often were, was likely only due to Huron dependence on trade with the French. “That the Jesuits were not slain or even asked to return to Quebec at this time, despite the extreme hostility that many families must have felt towards them, is evidence of the degree to which the Huron now felt themselves to be dependent on French goods.”\textsuperscript{79} All told, the epidemics of the 1630s resulted in a loss of about half of the Huron population.\textsuperscript{80}

If epidemic disease was the most pressing problem for the Huron in the 1630s, it was replaced by Iroquois raids that increased in frequency throughout the following

\textsuperscript{76} Trigger 494.
\textsuperscript{77} Trigger 499.
\textsuperscript{78} Trigger 505-537.
\textsuperscript{79} Trigger 544.
\textsuperscript{80} Trigger 601.
decade. Iroquois groups, supplied with firearms by their Dutch trading partners, “battled the Hurons mercilessly from 1641 on.” The Iroquois campaign ramped up in intensity mid-decade, signaling the eventual demise of the Huron confederacy. According to Blackburn, “By 1650, the majority of Huron villages had been destroyed by the combined effects of this warfare and the accompanying food shortages and diseases.” Many of the Huron who had survived the epidemics of the previous decade died at the hands of their Iroquois enemies, and the Jesuits themselves were not immune to the violence. Father Antoine Daniel was killed in 1648, to be followed one year later by Fathers Jean de Brébeuf and Gabriel Lalemant. The end of the decade marked the end of the Huron as a political body. Those not killed by the Iroquois or disease took up residence among the French at Québec, fled to the west, or were absorbed by other Iroquoian groups. Though some Huron survivors retreated with the missionaries themselves to settle near Québec, where they continued to be ministered to by the Jesuits, they received relatively little attention in the Relations following the disintegration of their confederacy.

---

81 Trigger 658.
83 Snow 115.
84 Blackburn 39.
85 Blackburn 40.
86 Those that moved west eventually came to be known as the Wyandot. Trigger 789; Snow 115.
The Iroquois lurk constantly in the background of the Jesuit Relations, apparently waiting for opportunities to pounce on unsuspecting Algonquians, Hurons, or even the Jesuits themselves. The opening chapter of the 1647 Relation, entitled “La Perfidie des Hiroquois” (“Of the Treachery of the Iroquois”) depicts those nations as killing machines motivated primarily by bloodlust: “[…] ils se respandirent en divers endroits pour prendre, tuer, et massacrer autant de François, d’Algonquins et de Hurons qu’ils pourroient” “[…] they spread themselves about in various places, in order to capture, kill, and massacre as many French, Algonquins, and Hurons as they could”). As allies of Dutch Protestant traders and enemies of Huron and Algonquian groups, the Iroquois were perhaps inevitably enemies of the French, a situation that, as I will argue in more detail in the third chapter of this dissertation, gives the Jesuits’ condemnations of the group as ferocious beasts overtones of the complex relationships between religious, economic, and political factions in Europe as well as in the New World.

It appears that little was known for sure by the Jesuits about the shadowy Iroquois menace. The Relations, as Tooker has pointed out, indicate that the priests were

---

87 Campeau 7.74; Thwaites 30.229. Trigger attributes the apparent uptick in Iroquois violence to tensions produced by trade. Until the early1640s, “[…] warfare between these groups had been largely a matter of blood feud with ritualistic overtones [but] the growing need for European goods encouraged the development of an economically oriented warfare.” Trigger 661. Dean R. Snow argues that economic factors were not the only ones, and that “the motivation of revenge against the unknown agents of [epidemic disease] made these at least as much mourning wars as they were beaver wars.” Snow 114.

88 Snow 114.
not even sure if the Iroquois League was composed of five or six groups. Modern scholars have settled on the lower figure. Unlike the five close-knit parts of the Huron confederacy, the Iroquois groups were “dispersed in tribal clusters in a line stretching across upper New York State” (see figure 1). The group nearest to the Huron, and consequently the most feared, were the Seneca, located 70 leagues to the south/southeast, in the Genesse Valley. To the east lay the homes of the Cayuga, the Onondaga, the Oneida, and the Mohawk. Despite the tendency of Jesuit observers to homogenize the Iroquois as a single menace, modern scholars recognize that the league was culturally heterogeneous, albeit with significant similarities among its members. Despite the lurking threat that the Iroquois represented for the Jesuits, the Relations record early, largely fruitless attempts to convert them that ended in tragedy. Father Isaac Jogues attempted to minister to the Mohawk in 1642, and was rewarded for his efforts with brutal torture. In 1646, the same priest tried again, only to be blamed for an epidemic that broke out, tortured again, and killed. The Jesuits eventually were successful in expanding their mission to the Iroquois, but it was not until 1667 that all

\* Tooker 7.
\* Trigger 97.
\* Trigger 98.
\* Trigger 17-18; Trigger 98.
\* Trigger 98.
\* Trigger 645-647, 654-657; Snow 114.
five Iroquois groups were finally at peace with the French. Missionary ties were established with individual groups at various times from the early 1650s on, but the situation was never stable. Not surprisingly, given the tumultuous and sometimes violent relations between the French and the Iroquois during the time the Jesuit Relations were published, depictions of the Iroquois therein are generally very negative. As I will have occasion to further discuss in a later chapter, the Iroquois were portrayed as a mortal threat to the French priests and to those they were trying to convert to Catholicism.

1.3 The Jesuit Relations

The Jesuit Relations, the name commonly given to the reports from the New France mission that were published annually in France between 1632 and 1673, are part of a long letter-writing tradition of the Society of Jesus. From the earliest beginnings of the order in the sixteenth century, members were required to write weekly letters to

---

95 Snow 119.
96 Snow 117-119.
97 Wroth 110. As Blackburn notes, missionaries wrote reports for most of the years between 1611 and 1791. I focus here only on the published Relations of 1632-1673, since it is the very fact that they were designed for public consumption that makes them interesting, in my view. Blackburn 4. Pierre Biard’s 1611 published Relation and Charles Lalemant’s 1627 published letter to his brother, Jérôme, are also briefly considered here since they, like the Relations, were purportedly private Jesuit documents that were actually quite public.
Ignatius Loyola. The order’s founder himself explained his reasons for requiring regular correspondence in the *Constitutions*, a collection of rules and instructions for members of the Society of Jesus: “For in this way it will be possible to have better information about the persons and to govern the whole body of the Society better, for the glory of God our Lord.” ⁹⁸ In 1565, the growing order reduced the requirement to a single report per year, submitted by the leaders of each province to the Order’s authorities in Rome, and circulated within the order. Passing the reports to outside readers was, in these early years, expressly forbidden. ⁹⁹

By the time the New France Jesuits began writing their annual reports, a tradition of publishing such texts had developed in the order’s South American and Asian missions, ¹⁰⁰ and it is clear that the texts with which this dissertation is concerned were intended for publication. As Joseph Donnelly, himself a Jesuit, has put it, “[The]
Jesuit Relations were not primarily designed as official reports of the superior of the Jesuit mission in New France to his provincial or to the Jesuit general. [They were] designed for public consumption.\textsuperscript{101} It is interesting to note that despite the fact that they were clearly intended for publication, the frontispieces of the New France Relations specifically allude to their traditional, internal function (see figure 2). The 1635 Relation, to cite just one representative example, was titled thus:

Relation de ce qui s’est passé en la Nouvelle-France en l’année 1635, envoyée au révérend Père Provincial de la Compagnie de Jésus en la Province de France, par le Père Paul Le Jeune de la mesme compagnie, Supérieur de la résidence de Québec.\textsuperscript{102}

Relation of What Occurred in New France in the Year 1635 Sent to the Reverend Father Provincial of the Society of Jesus in the Province of France. By the Father Paul Le Jeune of the same Society, Superior of the residence of Quebec.\textsuperscript{103}

Suggesting, as it does, official communication between two specific members of the Society of Jesus, the title would have given readers the impression that they were reading internal, private correspondence. And yet, since Jesuit missions around the world were expected to support themselves by attracting “[…] gifts of land, goods, and money from churches and individuals, from the state, and from converts in the field,”\textsuperscript{104} the Relations were composed with the mission’s material interests in mind. As I will

\textsuperscript{101} Donnelly 2.
\textsuperscript{102} Campeau 3.44.
\textsuperscript{103} Thwaites 7.251.
\textsuperscript{104} Wroth 112.
endeavor to show throughout this dissertation, the necessity of pleasing potential financial and spiritual supporters of the mission ensured that more was at work in the Jesuits’ writing strategies than a care to carefully report mission progress to superiors. The available evidence suggests that the Relations were a popular success in France. At just vingt sols a copy, the Relations were among the most modestly priced offerings of Sébastien Cramoisy, who published all but the 1637 Relation, and it seems that sales were brisk. According to Wroth, the many editions and reprintings that Cramoisy produced of most of the Relations are a measure of their popularity:

[... the Relations were issued not in small editions for a fixed and limited group, and then forgotten in the usual manner of reports, but in comparatively large numbers for a public that awaited them eagerly and demanded from time to time reprintings of their matter. It is difficult to explain on any other ground the number and the complexity of the forms in which the great series was offered to the public.]

In addition to the multiple legal reprintings of the Relations, bootleg editions were produced in Lille and Avignon, suggesting that the texts were in high demand in

105 Wroth 142. For reasons that are not entirely clear, the 1637 Relation was published in Rouen by Jean le Boulenger. Wroth speculates that a financial advantage could have led the Jesuit provincial to temporarily abandon the Parisian printer Cramoisy. In any case, the defection was short-lived, perhaps due the multiple typographical errors that appeared in Boulenger’s edition. The following year, Cramoisy resumed printing the Relations. For more, see Wroth 138-140.

seventeenth century France.\textsuperscript{107} The Relations themselves contain indications that the authors believed their words were reaching a wide audience. In 1636, Brébeuf reported having heard that “[…] l’ancienne France brûle de très ardents désirs pour la Nouvelle” [“[…] old France is burning with ardent desires for the New”].\textsuperscript{108} In Le Jeune’s eyes, France was “on fire” for the mission\textsuperscript{109} and the Relations were read by “une bonne partie de la France” [“a large part of France […]”].\textsuperscript{110}

External sources seem to confirm the Jesuits’ impression that their publications were highly valued in seventeenth century France. In his nineteenth century three-tome history of Jesuit activity in New France, Camille de Rochemonteix, himself a Jesuit, cited a seventeenth century letter reportedly written by Father François de la Chaise, then royal confessor, to Jesuit official Paul Olivia, asking why publication of the Order’s annual New France Relations had ceased:

Or, nous avons affaire à un Roi très Chrétien […] qui est très persuadé que les Relations seront partout très utiles aux colonies françaises; elles sont réclamées avec insistance par tous ceux qui désirent vivement le progrès de nos colonies, la propagation de la Foi et du nom français.\textsuperscript{111}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{107} Pouliot 24.
\textsuperscript{108} Campeau 3.307; Thwaites 10.7.
\textsuperscript{109} Thwaites 11.39; Campeau 3.524.
\textsuperscript{110} Campeau 4.557; Thwaites 18.61.
\textsuperscript{111} Camille de Rochemonteix, Les Jésuites et la Nouvelle-France au XVIIe Siècle d’après beaucoup de documents inédits, 3 vols. (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1895) vol 1, LIV. Rochemonteix offers no clues as to where the unpublished letter in question might be found, and I have not been able to locate it to compare its contents with Rochemonteix’s quotation and characterization of it. Still, as the clue he offers is consistent with the other indications of the reception of the Relations discussed here, there is no harm in provisionally trusting Rochemonteix’s contribution to this question.
\end{flushright}
Figure 2: frontispiece of the 1636 Relation
Now, we have a very Christian king [...] who is very persuaded that the Relations will be everywhere very useful to French colonies; they are insistently requested by all those who deeply desire progress in our colonies, the propagation of the Faith and the French name.\footnote{112 My translation.}

Although he could have been exaggerating for effect, the fact that the confessor wrote the letter at all suggests that the Relations were missed when their publication ceased. Though indirect and somewhat sparse, the available clues on the reception of the Relations indicate that the Jesuits’ message was heard loud and clear back in France.

Over the course of the forty years in which they were published, the Relations were signed by eight priests: Paul Le Jeune, Jean de Brébeuf, François Le Mercier, Jérôme Lalemant, Barthélemy Vimont, Paul Ragueneau, Jean de Quen, and Claude d’Ablon. Although studies have been dedicated to the work of particular Jesuits, especially Le Jeune,\footnote{113 See, for example, Dominique Deffain, Un Voyageur Français en Nouvelle-France au XVIIe Siècle: Etude Littéraire des Relations du Père Paul Lejeune (1632-1641) (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1995) and Réal Ouellet, ed., Rhétorique et Conquête Missionnaire: Le Jésuite Paul Lejeune (Sillery: Septentrion, 1993).} a brief review of the editorial process that produced the published Relations suggests that emphasizing the role of a particular author obscures the nature of the texts. The romantic notion of the lone Black Robe scratching his observations by firelight and sending them off to enlighten Europe is less than half of the story. Far from personal narratives dashed off to fulfill a bureaucratic duty, each Relation was carefully composed and revised, and then worked over by multiple people before reaching the
public. Wroth offers a good description of the process: “[…] reports in the form of letters or journals, coming fresh from the field of action and composed under circumstances of the greatest difficulty, provided the raw material only of the printed Relation.” The mission’s superior in New France edited those reports, eliminating all that was “impolitic or at best unessential to the purposes of the published series […] removing portions here, altering the language there, and welding the several pieces before him into a concise and comprehensive story of the year’s mission in Canada […]” The superior then sent his report on to the Order’s provincial in France, who, “with current European conditions in mind, gave it a final editing.” The first-person voice of the Relations is therefore somewhat misleading, as most of the texts were more carefully edited composites than the work of a single author. In light of the process by which the texts were produced, I have opted to treat the series holistically, without regard to differences in voice and the doctrinal, philosophical and personal differences that might have existed between members of the order. I am aware that this deprives the

---

114 Wroth 117-119. Clear evidence of the changes wrought in at least one of these stages can be found in volumes 57 and 58 of the Thwaites’ editions of the Jesuit Relations. The Relation for 1672-1673, which was not published for nearly a century, is “given in its original form as prepared roughly by one of the fathers acting for the superior. By means of italics and brackets, the modern editor has indicated the omissions, transpositions, and connective sentences through which the finished Relation was formed by father Dablon, at that time superior of the Society in Canada. The notable feature of this officer’s editing was the amount and character of the matter he removed from the document—wearied, tedious pages of parochial detail. If the same proportion of omission was attained in the editing of the other Relations, one is moved to applaud the critical judgment of the superiors” Wroth 118.

115 As Luca Codignola has pointed out, New France missionaries had their share of differences: “[…] even within an order usually deemed monolithic in the extreme, there were differences and jealousies. Barthélemy Vimont, who had problems with fellow Jesuit Paul Ragueneau, was recalled in 1659. Ragueneau himself
missionary authors of agency and individuality, but find it nonetheless appropriate due to the composite nature of the texts, and because the influence of the Relations across the centuries has not been limited to any one of their authors, but is instead attached to the series as a whole.

Another reason that I am reluctant to focus on particular authors is that the author function, as envisioned by the Jesuits, was not strictly linked to the actual act of writing. The author listed on the frontispiece of each installment was not always the same person who melded the various individual reports into the Relation. Instead, the texts usually bore the name of the New France superior, regardless of that person’s actual role in the production of the text. Though the superior often oversaw the editing process in New France, there are many exceptions. The 1641 Relation, for example, was attributed to Barthélemy Vimont, superior of the New France mission since 1639, but actually was composed by Le Jeune and Lalemant.116 The 1650 Relation, signed by Lalemant, was primarily assembled by Ragueneau and Le Jeune.117 The Relations for 1652 and 1653 were composed in Paris by Le Jeune, then procurer for the mission, the first on the basis of notes sent to him by Ragueneau, and the second to replace

---

116 Campeau 2.54-55.
117 Pioffet appendix 294.
Ragueneau’s Relation, which had been lost at sea. Le Jeune would repeat the bizarre task of ghostwriting reports on events in New France from his position in Paris several more times over the years. As these examples suggest, the name that appeared on the frontispiece of each Relation was not necessarily that of the person most responsible for its contents. Most installments were attributed to the mission superior, suggesting that the order wanted its annual reports to appear to come from the most authoritative voice possible, its leader in New France, and to maintain the appearance that each text was first and foremost a high-level official communiqué. The author function was, for the Jesuits, more a matter of preserving the semi-illusory image of the Relations as internal correspondence between important order officials than of giving credit where it was due. I therefore refer to the priests whose names are on the frontispiece of the Relations as their authors only to identify to which text I am referring, and because it is simpler to name a single person than to clog up my analysis with caveats and speculation about who actually composed each passage. When I identify Le Jeune, for example, as the author of a passage, it is only for the sake of convenience, and the reader should bear in

---

118 Campeau 8.277, 8.561.


120 An exception is the 1639 Relation composed by Le Jeune, who had recently been replaced as superior by Barthélemy Vimont. Despite no longer holding the post of Superior, Le Jeune was credited as author on the frontispiece. Campeau 4.262.
mind that I do not mean to suggest that the priest was an author as that role is commonly understood today.

1.4 Theoretical Orientation

As I already mentioned, the Jesuit Relations have been an indispensable source for scholars seeking to understand colonial encounters or reconstruct seventeenth century Amerindian cultures from the earliest days of scholarship on those subjects. My perspective is significantly different. Rather than a collection of documents to be mined for facts, I read the Relations as texts that are not only the product of Jesuit-Amerindian encounters on the ground, but also of the particular questions, debates, and anxieties that Amerindian Others, by their very existence, posed to European thinkers. To that end, I focus in this dissertation on the presentation of ethnographic “facts” in the Relations, the rhetorical devices that are commonly brushed aside by scholars in the service of counteracting Jesuit bias. In short, I investigate here how the Jesuits’ background, political agenda, and preconceived notions manifest themselves in their descriptions of Amerindian groups, with an eye to gleaning lessons about ethnographic writing in general and modern scholarship’s dependence on centuries-old texts.

This project is inspired by, but distinct from, currents in cultural anthropological thought that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century to challenge traditional conceptions of the discipline that featured the ethnographic fieldworker as a neutral,
detached, and authoritative figure. Bronislaw Malinowski is perhaps the archetype of the professional anthropologist that emerged in the early twentieth century. The previously distinct tasks of fieldwork—until then often conducted by amateurs—and armchair theorizing were now melded into a single profession, the authority of which rested both on its practitioners’ personal, direct experience of other cultures and interpretive skill. Similarly, the American brand of anthropology initiated by Franz Boas and cemented in place by his large generation of students emphasized intensive fieldwork conducted by university-educated scholars. In what is sometimes now called “salvage anthropology,” professional practitioners sought to thoroughly document cultures whose decline and eventual disappearance seemed inevitable to early twentieth century observers.

Later in the twentieth century, theorists began to insist on the reciprocal nature of ethnographic interpretation and distanced themselves from earlier models of

\[\text{equation} \]


123 As George Marcus and Michael Fischer described the project of “salvage anthropology” in their 1988 book *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*, “The ethnographer would capture in writing the authenticity of changing cultures, so they could be entered into the record for the great comparative project of anthropology, which was to support the Western goal of social and economic progress.” Marcus and Fischer 24.
ethnography that posited anthropologists as detached observers whose training and hard work in the field would allow them to gather all the necessary facts about the cultures they studied. In recent decades, many anthropologists have not only provided accounts of other cultures, but also of their own positions in relation to those cultures. As James Clifford eloquently put it,

[...] Ethnographers are more and more like the Cree hunter who (the story goes) came to Montréal to testify in court concerning the fate of his hunting lands in the new James Bay hydroelectric scheme. He would describe his way of life. But when administered the oath he hesitated: ‘I’m not sure I can tell the truth...I can only tell what I know.’

Instead of a set of discrete facts to be dutifully collected, culture has come to be seen, at least in Clifford’s view, as “always relational, an inscription of communicative processes that exist, historically, between subjects in relations of power.” Accordingly, personal experience and interpretive skill of the anthropologist—though certainly still important—have lost ground to “discursive paradigms of dialogue and polyphony”

---

124 Clifford, The Predicament, 41. Marcus and Fischer note, however, that “The salvage motif as a worthy scientific purpose (along with a more subdued romantic discovery motif) has remained strong in ethnography to the present” 24.

125 Marcus and Fischer 26.


127 In the work of salvage anthropologists, “Culture was construed as an ensemble of characteristic behaviors, ceremonies, and gestures susceptible to recording and explanation by a trained onlooker.” Clifford, The Predicament, 31.

128 Clifford, “Introduction” 15.

129 Clifford, The Predicament, 41.
as authorization for the ethnographic account. In the movement led by Clifford, George Marcus and their contemporaries, accounting for the position of the ethnographer in relation to the ethnographic subject became preferable to posing the writer as a detached, privileged observer.

Recent scholarly contributions in cultural anthropology demonstrate that this concern for the relationship between anthropologists and the cultures they study has not waned in the decades since Clifford, Marcus, Fischer and others brought it to the fore. Orin Starn’s 2004 Ishi’s Brain, for example, is as much an account of the author’s personal history with and investigation of the story of America’s so-called “last wild Indian” as it is a study of twentieth century American identity politics, the history of anthropology or any of the other subjects it touches on. Gananath Obeyesekere, at least as far as his rival Marshall Sahlins is concerned, went too far down this path in his 1992 Apotheosis of Captain Cook by “Pretending as a fellow ‘native’ to speak on behalf of Hawaiian people against the calumny that they mistook Cook for their own God Lono […]” on the basis of his own Sri Lankan heritage. Although the shift away from neutrality as a guiding principle has not been universally embraced and its results are sometimes still

---

questioned, it is clear that late twentieth century theoretical work on the relationship between anthropologist and subject has left an enduring mark on the discipline.

To go along with this new understanding of the anthropologist’s role, the discipline has developed new understandings of the ethnographic texts it produces. As Clifford Geertz lamented in his 1973 book *The Interpretation of Cultures*,

Anthropologists have not always been as aware as they might be of this fact: that although culture exists in the trading post, the hill fort, or the sheep run, anthropology exists in the book, the article, the lecture, the museum display, or, sometimes nowadays, the film. To become aware of it is to realize that the line between mode of representation and substantive content is as undrawable in cultural analysis as it is in painting […] 132

Ethnographers do not, after all, collect specimens of cultures in the same way lepidopterists capture butterflies for later study. Written ethnographic accounts, whether in the form of field notes or a finished monograph, are not morsels of the target culture, but versions of that culture as filtered through the beliefs, language and culture of the ethnographer. Regardless of how—or if—individual anthropologists have chosen to confront this challenge, the problem has been made clear in recent decades. As Clifford wrote, “[…] Ethnography is, from beginning to end, enmeshed in writing. This writing includes, minimally, a translation of experience into textual form. The process is complicated by the action of multiple subjectivities and political constraints beyond the

---

131 Writes Starn: “In the 1980s, the influence of postmodern theory introduced new doubts that anthropology could ever be more than a partial, subjective enterprise. It is still being debated even today whether anthropologists ought to embrace the ideal of neutrality or advocacy […].” Starn 140.

control of the writer.” Writing about culture has always required a method of asserting authority over the messy process of translating what one observes in the field into written form. As I have discussed in this brief sprint through anthropological theory, that authority, in the early twentieth century, was based largely on the intensive personal experience of the ethnographer in the field and on knowledgeable explanation of the lessons to be gleaned from that experience. Now, establishing authority in an anthropological study often is also a matter of accounting for the particular position of the individual anthropologist vis-à-vis the anthropological subject, and how their voices together produce the ethnographic account.

The Jesuit Relations have not been unaffected by these trends in anthropological thought. The best way to situate my own study theoretically is to briefly trace the modern history of anthropology’s relationship to the texts. Because hundreds of books and articles have drawn on the Relations, I will mention here only a few of the most influential. In the spirit of the anthropological efforts of his time to salvage “disappearing” cultures, historian Francis Parkman emphasized both the scholarly qualifications and firsthand experience of the Jesuits in labeling their texts a first-rate source of information on Amerindian cultures:

Though the productions of men of scholastic training, they are simple and often crude in style, as might be expected of narratives hastily written in Indian lodges or rude mission-houses in the forest, amid annoyances and interruptions of all

---

133 Clifford, The Predicament, 25.
kinds. […] With regard to the condition and character of the primitive inhabitants of North America, it is impossible to exaggerate their value as an authority.  

Writing in the middle of the twentieth century, Elisabeth Tooker similarly suggested in her classic book that the authors of her seventeenth century sources, the Jesuit Relations chief among them, possessed both of the qualities that distinguished the new anthropologist from nineteenth century amateur fieldworkers and armchair ethnologists: field experience and interpretive skill. Wrote Tooker,

[…] the period of intensive Jesuit missionizing in Huronia, 1634-1650, produced the most extensive collection of material on the Huron. […] In the Jesuit Relations, the Jesuits applied their almost intuitive devotion to scholarship to the study of the Huron, as in other writings they applied it to Western culture.

In introducing Gabriel Sagard, a Recollet Franciscan and her second major source, Tooker went so far as to call him a “participant-observer,” anachronistically applying “the classic formula for ethnographic work”  to the seventeenth century priest. Though she recognized the fundraising role of the Relations and Sagard’s text, Tooker nonetheless asserted that a faithful picture of Huron culture could be obtained “By omitting the obvious biases of the writer.” Tooker hedged by describing the priests “akin to informants whose descriptions must be weighed against the ethnographer’s knowledge of anthropology,” but the overall picture she offered fit the profile of the


professional ethnographer that emerged in the first half of the twentieth century. All that was left to do for the modern scholar, Tooker seemed to suggest, was to smooth the Relations’ rough edges and type them up into a modern monograph, which is precisely what her book amounts to.\textsuperscript{136}

That this understanding of the Relations has been durable is illustrated both by the 1991 reprinting of Tooker’s still oft-cited book,\textsuperscript{137} and by the similar suggestions of other prominent scholars that Jesuit bias simply can and should be edited out. In his 1991 neo-materialist study of seventeenth century New World colonial activity, sociologist and historian Denys Delâge addressed the “bias” problem in the Jesuit Relations and similar texts this way:

This omnipresent discourse effectively depreciates its subject and introduces a value judgment that makes any fair comparison between the beliefs and practices of Amerindians and Europeans impossible. On the other hand, insofar as no critique of colonialism existed in those days, this approach is obvious and explicit, and it is fairly easy to decode the narration in order to make an ethnohistorical analysis.\textsuperscript{138}

If Delâge admits that the Relations are more problematic than Tooker lets on, his solution is no more sophisticated. He advocates a simple “decoding” with the attitude of one separating the wheat from the chaff. To me, this method is more like throwing the baby


\textsuperscript{137} Tooker’s book was reprinted by Syracuse University Press in 1991.

\textsuperscript{138} Delâge 49.
out with the bath water. The “decoding” performed by twentieth century scholars who use the *Relations* often amounts, as will become clear over the course of this dissertation, to stripping the texts of obvious signs of bias, implicitly casting the authors as faithful recorders of fact and inadvertently supporting old stereotypes of the benevolent priest enlightening the static, brute natives he found in the New World. Such uses of the *Relations* distort the role of the Jesuits in colonial encounters, neglect the interpretive opportunities afforded by the Jesuits’ rhetorical strategies, and speak louder than any caveat an author might offer about the problematic nature of the texts.

If some prominent scholars have implicitly cast the authors of the *Relations* as early versions of the Malinowskian professional anthropologist, with only minor, simple corrections needed to compensate for bias, anthropology’s inward-turned gaze in recent decades has produced a more critical attitude in some quarters toward cultural descriptions penned by missionaries, explorers, and other colonial amateur ethnographers. Anthropologist Gananath Obeyesekere, for example, admonished that those drawing on colonial texts should be wary of “[...] observational data collected by naïve fieldworkers at a time when critical scholarship in ethnography was virtually nonexistent [and] must probe into the hidden agendas underlying the writing of these texts.”[^139] Nathalie Zemon-Davis has identified this approach as the “gaze strategy”:

“Describing European attitudes and images of non-European peoples and showing them

[^139]: Obeyesekere 66.
to be projections of European anxieties or elaborations from European categories of hierarchy or the pastoral.”

Taking a different tack, some scholars of Canadian history have been particularly interested in recent years in formulating strategies for understanding colonial contact in non-Eurocentric terms, a trend that is well illustrated by the recent collection of essays Decentring the Renaissance: Canada and Europe in Multidisciplinary Perspective 1500-1700, in which Zemon-Davis’ essay appeared. In that volume, and in other recent, similar efforts, the colonial record is re-examined in order to “[...] look not solely into the impact on Canada of people shaped by the European Renaissance and Early Modern periods, but to the impact of Canada on them.”

Both of these strategies for reading texts produced in the context of colonial encounter represent shifts away from the notion that European observers were capable of producing detached, neutral accounts of encounter. Whether complicated by the writer’s cultural baggage or by a failure to credit Amerindians with influence and agency of their own, texts produced by European colonists and explorers are now generally recognized to present an interpretive challenge that goes beyond filtering out bias.

---


As far as the Jesuit Relations are concerned, Carole Blackburn has gone perhaps further than anyone in “decentering the Renaissance” by reading descriptions of Amerindian cultures in the texts as the product of multiple voices, instead of as an authoritative account penned by a privileged observer. Instead of taking at face value signs of the Jesuits’ experience in New France and “scholarly attention to detail,” Blackburn proposes a much more complicated vision of the production of knowledge in and on New France. Drawing on colonial discourse studies and historical anthropology, Blackburn’s aim is “to cast the critical lens of ethnography on the Jesuits in a way that not only pursues the various meanings in their Relations, but also examines the ways in which they struggled with Native people over the creation of meaning in New France.” Her approach, in a reflection of the developments in anthropological theory I traced earlier, discards the notion of the scholarly Jesuit ethnographer relying on experience and interpretive prowess, and instead seeks to understand colonial interactions by examining how the Jesuits positioned themselves in relation to their subjects.142

While Blackburn’s work is a promising step forward in the study of texts produced in the context of colonial encounters in New France, I believe that half of the story remains inadequately accounted for. The Relations, I will argue, were as much about making meaning in Europe as they were about making meaning in New France. Instead of focusing on what the texts reveal about power relationships on the ground in

142 Blackburn 11.
New France, I examine here their role in producing seventeenth century Europe’s knowledge of the inhabitants of the New World and their continuing role in the study of Amerindian cultures. I explore how other European voices—in the form of questions about the origin and nature of Amerindian groups and disputes over mission politics and Jesuit methodology—shaped the information contained in the Relations. In this way, my project draws on both the “gaze strategy” and also on work that attempts to understand the Relations as the products of multiple voices and perspectives. Examination of the factors that influenced Jesuit accounts of their interactions with Amerindian cultures must not start and end with interactions in New France because Jesuit and Amerindian voices were not, I will argue, the only factors that influenced the missionary accounts. Although my project could justifiably be said to fall victim to a fundamental weakness of the “gaze strategy”—its failure to account for the agency of Amerindians—I hope to demonstrate that my approach is nonetheless useful in understanding the relationship between colonial ethnographic texts and Western knowledge. By focusing closely on descriptions of Amerindian customs, practices, and beliefs, I will explore how the ethnographic “facts” recorded in the Relations were distinctly shaped by the fact that they were written in the context of Europe’s attempts to grapple with specific questions, crises, and political debates in European thought that were provoked by the discovery of the non-Christian Amerindian “Other” in the colonial period, and the ensuing rush for the spiritual and material spoils.
Although this dissertation engages with ethnohistorical perspectives on the Jesuit Relations, it also has antecedents in literary studies. I see the present study as akin to recent work by Doris Garraway that casts a literary eye on texts normally noted for their ethnographic interest, and to Michèle Longino’s recent work on the classics of seventeenth century French drama, in which she traces “the connections between the staging of cultural ‘Other’ness and the construction of French collective identity.” Like Garraway, I perform a close reading on texts that are mostly known for their ethnographic richness. Approaching ethnographic passages this way rather than attempting to extract data from them allows me, in the spirit of Longino’s work, to investigate how public portrayals of the “Other” in seventeenth century France mirrored and shaped France’s discussion of the implications of the existence and characteristics of New World cultures. Stephen Greenblatt undertook a similar task in his study of travel writing throughout the Early Modern period, and my perspective on the ways Europeans represented the Amerindians they encountered has much in common with his. Although I would perhaps not apply the label “liar” to writers like the Jesuits, as Greenblatt does, I generally agree with him about the difficult relationship between “facts” in such texts and the point of view of those recording them. Wrote Greenblatt, 


\[\text{\textsuperscript{144}}\text{ Michèle Longino, \textit{Orientalism in French Classical Drama} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 9.}\]
But though they were liars, European voyagers to the New World were not systematic, so that we cannot have the hermeneutic satisfaction of stripping away their false representations to arrive at a secure sense of reality. Instead, we find ourselves going among a mass of textual traces, instances of brazen bad faith jostling homely (and often equally misleading) attempts to tell the truth.\textsuperscript{145}

While we share a general recognition of the tangled relationship between “facts” and perspective in European descriptions of Amerindians, Greenblatt focuses on the sense of “wonder” and “marvel” Old World observers experienced in contemplating the New World, whereas I have opted to focus more narrowly on their ethnographic descriptions and their role in forming Western knowledge about Amerindian groups.

This dissertation also has antecedents in works of scholarship that focus specifically on the \textit{Jesuit Relations}. Gilbert Chinard, in his influential 1913 book, mentioned the public nature of the \textit{Relations}—and the public pressure acting on their authors—and then proposed an avenue of inquiry that he did not himself pursue fully: “They were read, it cannot be doubted; now we are left to ask ourselves what one found in them, and what influence these picturesque \textit{relations} and descriptions of savage customs could exercise on contemporary readers and on the movement of ideas.”\textsuperscript{146}

More recently, Sara Melzer has argued that the \textit{Jesuit Relations} and other, similar texts “[...] provide us with a powerful lever to pry open the official view of the grand siècle

\textsuperscript{145} Greenblatt 7.

\textsuperscript{146} My translation. “On les lisait donc, nous n’en pouvons douter; il nous reste maintenant à nous demander ce qu’on y trouvait, et quelle influence ont pu exercer sur les contemporains et sur le mouvement des idées, ces relations pittoresques, ces descriptions des moeurs des sauvages [...].” Gilbert Chinard, \textit{L’Amérique et le Rêve Exotique dans la Littérature Française au XVIIe et au XVIIIe Siècle} (Paris: Hachette, 1913) 125.
which has dominated [...]” 147 While I share the interest of Chinard and Melzer in determining what the Jesuit Relations can tell us about seventeenth century France, I approach the subject with an eye fixed firmly on the Relations’ ethnographic qualities and their history as a source of data on Amerindian groups. In this, my project is in some ways similar to Yvon Le Bras’ L’Amérindien dans les Relations du Père Paul Lejeune (1632–1641). 148 Like Le Bras, I am interested in the Amerindian Other as created in the pages of the Jesuit Relations, but my project is both more specific and broader. While Le Bras paints the contours of one Jesuit’s perceptions of Amerindians in broad strokes, I focus closely on specific topics of ethnographic interest, and on the best-known passages on those topics attributed to several priests. And while Le Bras seems generally content to limit his analysis to the texts, I pose bigger questions about their role in the formation of ethnographic knowledge both in seventeenth century France and in our time. It is by closely examining particularly rich ethnographic passages in the texts that I seek to contribute to answering the questions laid out by Chinard and Melzer, and to

---


investigate how the *Relations* served as a vehicle for the Jesuits to intervene in and shape debates provoked by the entry of the Amerindian onto the European scene.

The issues with which the *Relations* engaged were not trivial. Indeed, the entire basis of Christian Europe’s understanding of the history and order of the world was at stake. As Paul Hazard put it in his classic study of Early Modern European thought, “It is perfectly correct to say that all the fundamental concepts such as Property, Freedom, Justice and so on, were brought under discussion again as a result of the [example of] far off countries […].”¹⁴⁹ In the first chapter following my comments here, I examine Amerindian creation myths in the *Jesuit Relations* to demonstrate how the missionaries confronted the intellectual problems posed by the very existence of the inhabitants of the New World, for which the Bible provided no immediate and clear explanation. If societies existed that could not be accounted for in the supposedly comprehensive scripture-based history of humankind and its surroundings, what guarantee could Europeans have that other aspects of their knowledge of the world were correct? As Dominique Deslandres recently remarked, making the existence of North American peoples fit within Christian traditional knowledge about the origins of mankind and the Earth was a challenge Europe could not fail to meet. “[…] by his very existence, this Other is disturbing, incongruous, out of place to the highest degree because he

corresponds to nothing, to no known model. If one accepts him as is, all of the authority of Scripture collapses, it is truly the end of the world,” she wrote.¹⁵⁰ I read passages in the Jesuit Relations that purport to record Amerindian beliefs about their own origins—some of which have been heavily relied upon by scholars attempting to reconstruct traditional Amerindian beliefs—to argue that the missionary authors framed those creation myths in ways that neutralized the challenge that competing beliefs about the origin of the world might otherwise have posed to Europe’s dominant, scripture-based knowledge system of mankind and its surroundings.

In the following chapter, I turn my attention to a related question that early modern thinkers were forced to contemplate when faced with the Amerindian Other: were the inhabitants of the New World fully rational people, violent sub-humans, or somewhere in between? Although a Papal Bull immediately following Columbus’ 1492 voyage declared them fully human and capable of embracing Christianity, the debate over their intelligence and capacity for conversion continued across Europe, fueled by the alternately pessimistic and optimistic assessments of Amerindian nature in traveler’s accounts. Perhaps not surprisingly, due to the grim subject matter, accounts of Amerindian torture and cannibalism of captured enemies often have been interpreted as

an argument by the Jesuits in support of negative theories about Amerindian nature. I reread those passages to demonstrate that the animalistic wildness the missionary authors sometimes attributed to Amerindian groups was as much a matter of the religious and political status of the tormentors and their victims in the eyes of these witnesses as anything else.

In the final chapter of this dissertation, I turn my attention to a more practical problem that also had important theological and political implications. If the Iroquoian and Algonquian groups that the Jesuits encountered in the New World were human, and were created in the same divine Edenic act as were Europeans, how was one to understand the exotic nature of Amerindian culture as compared to that of Europeans? How could two groups with shared heritage be so different? Amerindian languages, which European observers apparently found very difficult to learn, were a prime example of this puzzling cultural diversity. I will argue that the astounding differences between Amerindian and European languages appear in the Jesuit Relations not only as daunting obstacles, but also as arguments in support of Jesuit authority as sole missionaries in New France. Amerindian languages served, I will suggest, as a site for Jesuits to push back against their critics and to rhetorically close the mission door on potential Christianizing rivals while cementing their own authority and emphasizing their expertise on Amerindian cultures. In addition to the intellectual challenges posed to Europe by Amerindian cultures that are addressed in each chapter, political struggles
over access to New France and debates over missionary methodology also left their mark on the *Relations*, as will become clear over the course of this dissertation. Because I am concerned here not only with the writing practices of missionaries nearly 400 years ago, but also with their enduring legacy, I conclude each of the following three chapters with a discussion of a contemporary political or cultural phenomenon that illustrates my argument and demonstrates its current relevance.
2. “Leur Cognoissance n’est que Ténèbres”: Amerindian Creation Myths in the Jesuit Relations

The Beginning has long been recognized as an excellent place to start. As the prominent place of the book of Genesis in the Bible attests, the question of the origin of humankind and its surroundings has been of primary importance in Western thought for millennia, and the disputes over the teaching of evolution that periodically make headlines in the United States confirm that interest in the subject has not waned. Nor has the West been alone in this preoccupation. Creation myths are “The most basic myths in every civilization and therefore the essence of humanity,” claims Marie-Louise Von Franz in her psychoanalytic study of the phenomenon. “One may say that as far as the feeling and emotional mood which accompany them are concerned, creation myths are the deepest and most important of all myths.”

It is perhaps not surprising, then, that the origin of humankind was an urgent topic of discussion in seventeenth century New France, where missionaries faced the dual challenges of reconciling the existence of non-Christian Amerindian groups with the biblical tradition and of convincing those groups that Christian, European knowledge of humankind’s provenance was correct. This chapter examines how the authors of the Relations attempted to meet those challenges by retelling Amerindian

---

creation myths,² with an eye to what their rhetorical choices reveal about their agenda and assumptions. I contend that retelling indigenous creation myths to readers back home in France was not only a way for Jesuits to rhetorically subjugate newly discovered cultures, but also was part of a strategy to solve a crisis in European thought, caused by a relatively new awareness of the inhabitants of the New World, by attempting to reconcile the existence of Amerindians with Christian doctrine. Close readings of Jesuit accounts of these myths will reveal some of the missionaries’ fundamental religious assumptions about the groups they sought to convert in seventeenth century Canada, and will show how rhetorical strategies were employed in the Jesuit Relations to conquer indigenous populations with words and to assure European readers that Amerindians were God’s children and could perhaps be made to believe it one day. Retelling creation myths was, I will argue, a method of discrediting them as competitors to Christian doctrine.³

———

² I do not use the term “myth” here in its popular sense of fable or fiction. Instead, I share anthropologist Mircea Eliade’s understanding of the term: “Myth narrates a sacred history; it relates an event that took place in primordial Time, the fabled time of the ‘beginnings.’ In other words, myth tells how, through the deeds of Supernatural Beings, a reality came into existence, be it the whole of reality, the Cosmos, or only a fragment of reality—an island, a species of plant, a particular kind of human behavior, an institution. Myth, then, is always an account of a ‘creation’; it relates how something was produced, began to be.” Mircea Eliade, Myth and Reality trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper and Row, 1963) 5-6.

³ The Huron, at least according to their Jesuit interlocutors, disputed the notion that they were created in the same time and place as their European visitors on practical grounds: “Outre cela, souvent, ils nous avoient avoué qu’ils nous prenoient pour des menteurs et ne crojoient en façon du monde ce que nous enseignions, et que ce que nous disions n’estoit aucunement probable, qu’il n’y avoir auncune apparence que nous eussions, eux et nous, un mesme Dieu, créateur de leur terre aussi bien que de la nostre, et que nous eussions tous pris naissance d’un mesme père. ‘Comment, disoit un jour Sononkhaiconc; qui nous auront amené en ce pais ? Comment aurions-nous traversé tant de mers dans de petits canots d’escorce ? Le
The Christian account of the origin of the world and humankind was a focal point of Jesuit attempts to communicate their faith. The Relations record frequent references to the Christian creation myth by missionaries who sought to introduce their religion to potential converts. For example, Barthélemy Vimont’s Relation for the years 1640 and 1641 recounts the story of a French Christian, captured by the Iroquois, who answers a captor’s question about prayer by evoking creation:

L’un d’eux, voyant que son prisonnier prioit Dieu soir et matin et qu’il faisoit le signe de la croix devant le repas, luy demanda ce que signifioit ce signe, sacré. Ayant eu pour réponse que le Dieu qui a fait le ciel et la terre, les animaux et tous les bleds conservoit ceux qui l’honoroient et qui avoient recours à luy: ‘Je veux donc faire le mesme, respond-il, afin qu’il me conserve et qu’il me nourrisse.’

One of these, seeing that his prisoner prayed to God night and morning, and that he made the sign of the Cross before each meal, asked him what this sacred sign meant; having had for answer that the God who had made heaven and earth, the animals, and all the grains, preserved those who honored him and who had

moindre souffle nous auroit abysmez ou au moins serions-nous morts de faim au bout de quatre ou cinq jours. Et puis, si cela estoit, nous sçaurions faire des cousseaux et des habits aussi bien que vous autres” (‘Besides, they had often admitted to us that they took us for liars, and did not believe in the least what we taught; and that what we said was not at all probable,—that there was no likelihood that they and we had the same God, Creator of their earth as well as of ours, and that we had all descended from the same father. ‘Indeed,’ said Sononkhiaconc one day, ‘who would have brought us to this country,—how would we have crossed so many seas in little bark canoes? The least wind would have engulfed us, or we would at least have died of hunger at the end of 4 or 5 days. And then, if that were so, we would know how to make knives and clothes as well as you people.’” The Jesuit response to these arguments demonstrates that the opinion of the Huron did nothing to deter the Jesuits from trying to make their existence fit within Europe’s theologically limited worldview. Father François-Joseph Le Mercier, who recorded the above comments in his 1637 report from the Huron mission, curtly dismissed the Huron objections, suggesting to his readers that such questions were just more of the same old nonsense: “Je perdrois trop de papier, si je voulais entreprendre de coucher icy toutes leurs extravagances” (“I would waste too much paper if I were to undertake to set down here all their extravagances”). Campeau 3.751-752; Thwaites 13.219.

4 Campeau 5.128.
recourse to him, —“I wish then to do the same,” responded he, “that he may
preserve me and feed me.”

Vimont’s insistence on God’s role as creator is evidence of the central place the myth
occupied in the missionaries’ evangelical efforts, perhaps because pointing to the visible
evidence of God’s work was an easier method of explaining the deity to potential
converts than attempting to communicate its intricacies in Amerindian languages that
the priests, as I will discuss further in a later chapter, found resistant to the task, whether
due to their own inadequate knowledge or to the inherent differences of those tongues.
Whatever the reason, it is God’s role in creating mankind and the physical world that
they consistently pointed to in describing God.

Another instructive example is furnished the same year by Jérôme Lalemant in
his report from the Huron mission. At the request of an unspecified reader, Lalemant
provides the text of a prayer recited in the Huron language by convert Joseph
Chiouatenhoua, along with a French translation. The prayer begins: “Seigneur Dieu
enfin donc je te connois à la bonne heure maintenant je te connois; c’est toy qui as fait
cette terre que volà, et ce ciel que volà; tu nous as fait nous autres qui sommes appellez
hommes” (“Lord God, at last, then, I know thee, Happily now I know thee. It is thou
who hast made this earth that we behold, and this Heaven that we behold: thou hast

\footnote{Thwaites 21.29-31.}
made us who call ourselves men”]. The prayer, which covers four pages in the Campeau edition, begins with the identification of God as the creator of everything that exists. This aspect of the Christian God’s identity also is emphasized in Jesuit catechisms used to instruct potential converts in North America. One such document, published as an appendix to Samuel de Champlain’s Les Voyages de la Nouvelle France Occidentale (1632), was written by the Spanish Jesuit Diego Lesdesma and translated into Huron by Brébeuf. It contains the following question, and the answer potential converts were expected to give to demonstrate their knowledge of Christian doctrine: “Vous dites que vous croyez en Dieu, qu’est-ce que Dieu? [Réponse:] C’est le Createur du Ciel et de la terre, et le Seigneur Universel de toutes choses” (“You say that you believe in God, what is God? [Answer:] It is the Creator of Heaven and earth, and the Universal Lord of all things”). Question-and-answer sessions like those set out in the written catechism, in which Christian initiates demonstrated their rote mastery of the basics of Christianity, appear to have been a common tool of the Jesuits, and use of them is often recorded in the Relations.8

6 Campeau 5.210; Thwaites 21.251.

7 “Doctrine Chrestienne du R.P. LEDESME de la compagnie de Jesus traduit en langue canadois par le R.P. Breboeuf de la mesme Compagnie;” Samuel de Champlain, Voyages de la Nouvelle France Occidentale, Dicté Canada, Faitz par le Sieur de Champlain Xaîmctongeis, Captaine pour le Roy en la Marine du Ponant, & toutes les Descouvertes qu’il a faites en ce pais depuis l’an 1603 jusques en l’an 1639 (Paris: Claude Collet, 1632) appendix. The text can also be found in Campeau 2.238-257; My translation.

8 This particular catechism apparently was used to teach Huron children the tenets of Christianity every Sunday following mass, at least in the early days of the Huron mission. Trigger 508.
Written catechisms apparently proved a useful tool for instructing would-be converts in Christian doctrine, but replacing Amerindian beliefs about their own origins with the Biblical version of events necessarily also involved finding out what they already knew. The logic of the catechism is useful in thinking about this preliminary step in the Jesuit efforts to instruct Amerindians about the origin of the world and mankind. As the example I just cited from Brébeuf’s translation of the Lesdesma catetchism indicates—and as will be familiar to generations of American Catholic school children whose knowledge of doctrine was tested by the Baltimore Catechism⁹—such texts resemble written conversations in that they are made up of a series of questions to be posed by a religious instructor, and corresponding answers to be given by the student. In contrast to the kind of questioning that might be performed by an anthropologist attempting to elicit information from an informant, responses to a catechist’s questions are pre-determined.¹⁰ Asking questions is, in this context, not about

---

⁹ The Baltimore Catechism was written in the late 19th century in an effort to standardize Catholic religious instruction in America. It was “[…] the chief instrument for teaching Catholic doctrine to millions of lay people for more than 100 years. […] In 1994, the more sophisticated Catechism of the Catholic Church finally replaced the Baltimore Catechism, although many conservative Catholics still use the Baltimore text on an unofficial basis.” Frank K. Flinn, “Baltimore Catechism,” Encyclopedia of Catholicism (New York: Facts on File, 2007) 83.

¹⁰ Hans Robert Jauss made a similar point in his book on the subject of questioning, and distinguished between “impudent” questions—those which “[…] look beyond the horizon of the known and the secure”—and “didactic” questions like those of the catechism, which seek “a solid answer” and serve “to transmit some doctrine or, then again, to undermine it.” Hans Robert Jauss, Question and Answer: Forms of Dialogic Understanding, trans. Michael Hays (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989) 51-94.
seeking information, but inviting the respondent to demonstrate mastery or to reveal insufficient knowledge in matters of religion. Deviation from the script is not acceptable.

Even before they began using the catechism in the mission setting, the New France Jesuits would have been familiar with the use of questioning as a pedagogical tool, and not only as a means of obtaining information. As former students and teachers in France’s Jesuit colleges, the missionaries were formed by an educational tradition that emphasized questioning and argumentation. The 1599 Ratio Studiorum, a set of pedagogical instructions for Jesuit teachers throughout Europe, emphasized the use of “disputations,” in which students were required to defend points of doctrine from objections posed by other students.\footnote{Allan P. Farrell, S.J., trans, The Jesuit Ratio Studiorum of 1599 (Washington: Conference of Major Superiors of the Jesuits, 1970) 27-28.} As the 20th century Jesuit scholar George E. Ganss has pointed out, such activities not only helped students grasp newly acquired knowledge, but prepared them to defend their beliefs from objections raised by non-believers and Protestants.\footnote{Loyola 194, note 11.} As in the case of the catechism, questioning in this context—in which the Jesuits learned how to discuss religion with non-believers—was not about probing the unknown, but about testing the accuracy of existing knowledge.

Although the Jesuits, as I mentioned earlier, sometimes are understood as proto-anthropologists observing and interrogating Amerindians on points of culture, the very
nature of religious truth—understood by the Jesuits to be as unchanging as the words on the pages of the Bible or in a catechism—suggests that their interrogation of informants on religious matters is best understood as a process of revealing the inadequacy of Amerindian knowledge about Creation, instead of as an effort to obtain information. As Walter Mignolo has remarked, knowledge and writing were intricately bound up in early modern European thought:

The celebration of the letter and its complicity with the book were not only a warranty of truth but also offered the foundation of western assumptions about the necessary relations between alphabetic writing and history. People without letters were thought of as people without history, and oral narratives were looked at as incoherent and inconsistent.  

In contrast to the unchanging answers to the catechism and written scripture, Amerindian knowledge was passed down orally, and therefore varied widely, much as incorrect answers to a catechist’s questions might. As I will argue over the course of this chapter, the Jesuits approached Amerindian creation myths not as ethnographers gathering information about a unique belief system, but as catechists or pedagogues


14 The Vulgate was declared the only official, authentic version of the Bible at the fourth session of the Council of Trent in 1546. It is therefore this bible, or more precisely a corrected version from the 1590s, that the Jesuits most likely referred to. Although public access to scripture was generally through the intermediary of a priest or iconography, it is true that early seventeenth century Catholicism had a single standard version of scripture. For more on this question, see Olivier Millet and Philippe de Robert, Culture Biblique (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2001).
who already knew the correct answer about the origin of Amerindian people, and were seeking signs of that knowledge, as well as its absence, in potential converts.

The *Relations* contain two versions of the Huron creation myth, two accounts of what the Jesuits understood to be the Montagnais myth, and one fragmentary account of Algonquin beliefs on the subject. Students of Amerindian cultures have long drawn on these accounts in attempts to reconstruct the religious beliefs of the Jesuits’ missionary targets, particularly in the case of the Jesuit account of the Huron myth. The missionary accounts of Montagnais and Algonquin myths that I consider in this chapter have been used less frequently by scholars seeking to reconstruct the beliefs of those groups. Indeed, such uses have been few and far between, perhaps because their authenticity, particularly in the case of the Montagnais story reported by Le Jeune, has been called into question. Despite their relative lack of influence on modern understandings of Amerindian cultures, Jesuit accounts of Montagnais and Algonquin myths are interesting for the light they shed on the priests’ understanding of those cultures, their conception of the *Relations* themselves, and the ways in which their view of the nature of religious knowledge shaped their ethnographic writing. As I argue in the coming pages, the religious tension inherent in any discussion of Amerindian origins left its mark on Jesuit treatments of the subject, as did the pressure Jesuits felt to produce a story compelling enough to win the hearts and purses of their European readers.
Before proceeding to a discussion of the Huron, Montagnais, and Algonquin myths themselves, a brief discussion of the crisis caused by Europe’s new awareness of the inhabitants of North America is useful. As I mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, the entry of the Amerindian into European consciousness was not without tumult. While Jesuits were laboring in Canada to convert Amerindians to Christianity, a parallel struggle was taking place in the minds of European Christians over how to reconcile biblical truth with evidence from the New World that seemed to contradict it. And the challenge posed to Genesis by the existence of non-Christian Amerindian groups was perhaps the most significant site of conflict provoked by Europe’s new awareness of the New World. As Normand Doiron has put it,

[…] the simple existence of the savages turned the theological fabric on its head, upended the biblical principles of genealogy and universal history that gave a place in the world to men of the middle ages. The discovery of America represents from this point of view the biggest theological shock of the Christian era.16

---

15 A brief explanation of my use of the terms “conversion” and “baptism” is necessary. Baptism, along with confirmation and the Eucharist, is a “rite of initiation.” The word “baptism” itself refers to an event, the ritual dipping or immersing in water of a new Christian, a tradition dating to Jesus’ baptism in the river Jordan by John the Baptist. “Baptism inaugurated a journey, a spiritual journey of life in the Spirit which would come to its completion with the Coming of Christ.” Conversion, on the other hand, “[…] refers to the moment or process whereby one alienated from God is moved to a change from sinful choices and patterns of choices to a new life in friendship with God.” “Sacraments of Initiation” and “Conversion,” The Modern Catholic Encyclopedia, Ed. Michael Glazier and Monika K. Hellwig (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004). Because the Jesuits generally insisted that Amerindians understand and embrace the tenets of Catholicism before being baptized, my references to “conversion” in this dissertation can be understood to mean that both baptism and the change in lifestyle associated with “conversion” were claimed to have occurred. I use “baptism” in cases of those that received the sacrament immediately prior to death, to signal that impending death, whether accompanied by “conversion” or not, was the primary motivation for Jesuit intervention.

16 My translation. “[…] la simple existence des sauvages renversait tout l’édifice théologique, bouleversait les principes de la généalogie biblique et de l’histoire universelle qui donnait une place dans le monde aux
Finding an explanation that reconciled Christian doctrine with the existence of geographically isolated non-Christians was therefore a necessary defensive move for Europe, for if none could be found, the Bible would be proven wrong, surely an unacceptable outcome. One possible explanation, that Amerindians were not men, but animals, and therefore did not by their very existence imply the possibility of a second act of divine creation of man, had already been taken off the table by Papal pronouncements in 1493 and 1535. Once Amerindians were deemed human, Old World thinkers were left to grapple with the problem of how they were related to the inhabitants of the Old World.

Europe’s thinkers attacked the problem with vigor. In his 1609 *Histoire de la Nouvelle France* (1609), the French lawyer and historian Marc Lescarbot outlined four different theories under discussion at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and offered one of his own, making his book a useful indicator of European thought on the topic at the time. First, Lescarbot noted that interpretation of scripture had led some to

---


believe that either the Spanish or the Jews populated the New World. Others thought its inhabitants were descended from the biblical race of Ham, or more recently shipwrecked residents of the Old World who had forgotten their European ways. A fourth possibility, Lescarbot wrote, was that humans traveled to North America on foot as part of the normal spreading out of mankind after creation, “[…] car je tiens que toutes les parties de la terre ferme sont concatenées ensemble, ou du moins s’il y a quelque détroit, comme ceux d’Anian et de Magellan: c’est chose que les hommes peuvent aisément franchir” (“for I hold that all the parts of terra firma are joined together, or at least, if there is some strait, like those of Anian and Magellan, it is something that men can easily cross”). Finally, Lescarbot hypothesized that Noah could have built a second Ark and sent it to the New World after the flood. More than one hundred years later, Joseph-François Lafitau, himself a French Jesuit missionary, weighed in with his own chapter on Amerindian origins, starting from the premise that the inhabitants of the New World were of the “race of Adam,” and concluding that they were the descendents of “barbarians” who formerly occupied Greece.

---


20 “Mon sentiment est que la plus grande partie des Peuples de l’Amerique viennent originairement de ces Barbares qui occupèrent le Continent de la Grece et ses Isles, d’où ayant envoyé plusieurs Colonies de tous côtés pendant plusieurs siècles, ils furent obligé d’en sortir enfin tous […].” Joseph-François Lafitau, *Moeurs des Sauvages Ameriquains, Comparées aux Moeurs des Premiers Temps*, 2 vols (Paris: Chez Saugrain l’aîné, 1724) I.89. “My own opinion is, then, that the largest number of the American peoples came originally from those barbarians who occupied the continent and islands of Greece, whence, having, for many
The explanations proposed by Lescarbot, Lafitau and practically all others who weighed in on the question have at least one noteworthy trait in common: they all assume that the ancestors of North Americans were created in Eden, in the same single divine act of creation as Europeans. Indeed, it was generally held that Amerindians came from the same stock as the inhabitants of the Old World, but had for some unknown reason moved west centuries earlier.\(^{21}\) The possibility that God had created the inhabitants of the New World separately, which could have explained the absence of a clear biblical account of their origins, was not treated seriously until several centuries after Lescarbot’s time. Because the question was primarily a religious one in Early Modern Europe, intellectual attempts to determine the origin of the Amerindians were, at least until the eighteenth century, always limited by theological considerations.\(^{22}\)

The case of the dissenting view of Huguenot writer Isaac de la Peyrère demonstrates the power religious considerations had over the debate in the seventeenth century. In his 1655 *Prae-Adamitae*, de la Peyrère interpreted Genesis as accounting for centuries, sent out colonies in every direction. They were all, or almost all, at last forced to go out to spread over different countries. Joseph François Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times*, trans. William N. Fenton and Elizabeth Moore, 2 vols (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1974) vol 1, 79-80.

\(^{21}\) The question of the origins of the first Americans is still not settled. Scientists long believed that the Americas were first populated about 12,000 years ago when Asians crossed the Bering Land Bridge. Recent archaeological evidence, however, indicates that people may have been present in America before the bridge existed. Scholars disagree on where the earliest Americans came from, and how they got here. John Switzer, “Evidence shows humans were in America earlier than thought,” *Columbus Dispatch* 27 March 2005.

\(^{22}\) Huddleston 11-12.
two acts of divine creation. Man, he claimed, existed prior to Adam, and the products of this earlier creation spread out across the world, populating America and somehow escaping the Flood. This theory was not greeted with enthusiasm. According to historian Cornelius Jaenen, “[…] in the furious reaction aroused by his book, [he] was forced to convert to Catholicism, abjure his theory, and spend the remaining years of his life in a monastery.”

The harsh reaction to de la Peyrère’s hypothesis indicates just how important reconciliation of the Bible with the existence of Amerindians was to mainstream seventeenth century thinkers and religious authorities, and how resistant they were to any explanation that required revising biblical truth.

Given the high stakes of the question for Christianity, it is not surprising that Jesuit discussions of Amerindian origins were mostly aimed at demonstrating to European readers that Amerindians were, in fact, creations of God who had simply strayed from the Old World and forgotten their roots, and that their existence therefore did not pose a challenge to biblical authority. The emphasis placed on creation stories by Jesuits was not only a means of convincing Amerindians that they were created by God and thus were subject to his—and, by extension, the Jesuits’—authority, but also, I will show, of reassuring Europeans that this was the case. To illustrate this point, I turn now to missionary accounts of the Huron, Montagnais and Algonquin myths.

2.1 The Huron Creation Myth

The Huron creation story recorded by Jesuit missionaries is a version of the myth common to Iroquoian cultures. A woman named Aataentsic falls through a hole in the sky and plummets toward the Earth, the surface of which is entirely covered in water.

Birds\textsuperscript{25} spot her as she falls toward the water, and catch her on their backs. When they tire, a big tortoise takes over, and it is determined by the animals who have gathered that she will live permanently on its back. A series of animals dive deep into the water to try to retrieve some dirt with which to turn the tortoise’s back into an island. A toad

\textsuperscript{24} I draw here on five different versions of the myth. Four are contained in Marius Barbeau’s tome on Huron mythology, two of which were collected in the field by Barbeau himself. The other two were collected by H. Hale and W.E. Connelley. Marius Barbeau, \textit{Huron and Wyandot Mythology} (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1915). The fifth version comes from J.N.B. Hewitt and Jeremiah Curtin, \textit{Seneca Fiction, Legends and Myths} (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1918), and was collected in the field by Curtin. Like the \textit{Jesuit Relations}, these nineteenth and twentieth century accounts are problematic in that they reflect the cultural biases of the researchers who collected them at least as much as they capture traditional Huron beliefs. To cite just one example, some versions capitalize the names of the animals that play a part in the myth. This editorial intervention calls to mind the Christian practice of capitalizing all words that refer to God. While the tortoise that has a central role in the story is never explicitly identified as a god, the decision by some to refer to it as “the Tortoise” suggests its divinity to a reader accustomed to the conventions of Western religious writing. Although each version of the myth contains the same basic elements and follows the same storyline, no two are identical in their details. Some of these differences, no doubt, are due to modern interference and variation in the sources and methods of the individual researchers who collected them. But it is also known that variability in the myth is nothing new. As Elisabeth Tooker’s accounting of the variants of the myth makes clear, for as long as western observers have encountered the myth, they have encountered multiple versions of it (Tooker 153). My purpose in citing nineteenth and twentieth century versions of the myth is not to offer my summary as an authoritative, standard version, but merely to establish a general storyline.

\textsuperscript{25} In Connelley and Barbeau’s (first) accounts, the birds are swans. Hale identifies them as loons, while Barbeau’s second version calls them wild geese. In each of these accounts, the birds number two. In Curtin’s version, the birds are “waterfowl of many kinds.”
finally succeeds where others had failed. The animals spread the dirt around the tortoise’s back and it begins to expand, growing into the land mass that eventually became home to the Huron. The woman, who somehow became pregnant during these events, gives birth to two sons. Before they are born, she can hear them arguing inside her. One says he plans to be born through the normal channel; the other says he plans to exit elsewhere, over his brother’s protestations that doing so will result in their mother’s death. The first son is born in the normal way, but his brother bursts forth from his mother’s side, killing her. The first son is known as Iouskeha (translated as savior, good man, made of fire, the Good One, and little sprout by my nineteenth and twentieth century sources), and the second is called Tawiscaron (apparently meaning flinty, flint, made of flint, or the Evil One). When they grow up, the two brothers set about preparing the land for “the people” to come. Iouskeha makes plains and forests, while his brother makes mountains, swamps, thickets and other obstructions. Iouskeha makes useful plants and animals. Tawiscaron undoes what he can of his brother’s work and creates species designed to make life more difficult for the people. Each brother is powerful enough that neither can completely undo the other’s work. Tension grows

---

26 In Curtin’s version, Aataentsic gives birth to a girl, who later bears two sons. Tooker claims that this variation is particular to certain non-Huron Iroquoian groups. Tooker 154. The Jesuit account is ambiguously worded, and seems to allow for both possibilities. Campeau 3.347.

27 The spelling of Tawiscaron’s name, like that of his brother, varies widely. For consistency, I have adopted the spelling used by Bruce Trigger. In addition, the names themselves are sometimes different. Iouskeha is called Tse Sta’ or a variation thereof in Barbeau and Connelley’s accounts. Curtin gives the name Othagwenda in place of Tawiscaron.
between the brothers until they fight. Tawiscaron loses, and is killed, or perhaps flees to the west, which from then forward would be the home of the Huron after their death.

I am aware of the irony involved in retelling the creation myth as a prelude to a critique of another such retelling. Doing so was necessary to introduce the reader to the myth in question, to provide background for the point I make here: Although the Jesuits’ version of the myth closely resembles the composite summary above, it was crafted not to document a cultural belief of the Huron, but to rob that belief of its originality and uniqueness. The Jesuit account of the myth, published in the company’s 1636 annual report from New France, contains many of the same elements as other, more recently collected accounts of the myth: Aataentsic falls from the sky, takes up residence on a newly formed island on the tortoise’s back, and gives birth to two sons, who fight. My analysis of the Jesuit version will focus on the rhetorical strategies used in its telling, and

---

28 In Connelley’s version, the brothers never come to blows. Instead, they part ways to rule over separate parts of the Earth.

29 Tawiscaron’s death is explicit in Barbeau’s first version and in Curtin’s account. His flight to the West is particular to Hale’s version.

30 Barbeau notes that every version of the myth in his book—his two plus nine earlier accounts collected in an appendix—follow the same storyline, despite coming from diverse regions and being collected over more than three centuries. This, he claims, indicates a degree of stability in the myth: “These as well as other data make it clear that these cosmological myths are ancient, and have not been seriously altered since the advent of the Europeans.” Barbeau 37.

31 A much less complete version of the myth appeared in the 1635 Relation from the Huron mission, also penned by Brebeuf. I have opted to focus on the 1636 version, since the earlier one is no more than a fragment.
will give Brébeuf the benefit of the doubt as to the legitimacy of the details he claimed to have heard, some of which do not line up perfectly with the other versions I have examined. It is not so much Brébeuf’s particular version of the story that interests me here, but how he tells it.

There are three characteristics of the Jesuit account of the myth that I wish to explore in some detail in the coming pages because of the clues they offer about how missionary authors simultaneously discredited the Huron myth as historical knowledge that potentially rivaled Europe’s understanding of creation. First, Brébeuf reports pressing those from whom he heard the story on logical gaps in its plot, and emphasizes the inability of his Huron informants to explain certain details. Second, he emphasizes the variability of the Huron creation myth in order to undermine its credibility. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Brébeuf filters the Huron myth through the Christian creation story. He explicitly compares elements of the myth to events in the Christian tradition, and the reader is meant to understand that the Huron tale is just an errant version of Genesis, neutralizing the threat it potentially posed to European beliefs and bringing it under the domain of Christianity in the eyes of the European reader. This would have been music to the ears of seventeenth century thinkers and writers struggling to reconcile the existence of Amerindians with Christian doctrine.

32 For example, the Jesuit version of the story leaves out Aataentsic’s initial arrival in the world on the back of two birds. Her fall is instead broken by the tortoise’s back. Campeau 3.347; Thwaites 10.129.
Brébeuf begins telling the myth by pointing out what he sees as its logical shortcomings, and the inability of the Huron to explain its confusing or illogical parts. His opening assertion that the myth is built on suppositions, and has no clear basis in fact, combines with his closing statement, which I will discuss later, to form bookends to the myth, framing it with statements meant to undermine it. From the beginning, Brébeuf places the story under a sign of doubt, speculation and falsehood:

Or pour commencer par ce qui est comme le fondement de leur croyance, la pluspart se vantent de tirer leur origine du ciel, ce qu’ils fondent sur ceste fable qui passe parmy eux pour une vérité. Ils reconnoissent pour chef de leur nation une certaine femme qu’ils appellent Ataentsic, qui leur est disent-ils tombée du ciel. Car ils supposent que les cieux estoient longtemps auparavant ceste merveille et ne sçauroient vous dire ny quand, ny comment ces grands corps ont esté tirez des abysmes du néant. Ils supposent mesme que sur les voûtent des cieux, il y avoit et y a encor maintenant une terre semblable à celle-cy […] 33

Now, to begin with the foundation of their belief, the greater part boast of deriving their origin from Heaven, which they found on the following fable, which passes among them for a truth. They recognize as head of their Nation a certain woman whom they call Ataentsic, who fell among them, they say, from Heaven. For they [suppose] the Heavens existed a long time before this wonder; but they cannot tell you when or how its great bodies were drawn from the abysses of nothing. They suppose, even, that above the arches of the Sky there was and still is a land like ours […] 34

The repetition of the verb “supposer,” coupled with the assertion that the Huron were unable, when questioned, to provide details about the heavens, signals to readers

33 Campeau 3.346.
34 Thwaites 10.125-127. In Thwaites’ translation, the second instance of “supposer” was rendered as “think.” I have changed it back to the original verb to preserve the sense that the Huron opinion was not based on careful reflection and the repetition of the verb present in the original French.
accustomed to fundamental religious questions having definite and clear answers set out in scripture and catechisms that the story that followed gave an illogical, unstable, and necessarily incomplete account, reinforcing Brébeuf’s characterization of it as a fable. Later in his telling of the myth, Brébeuf claimed the Huron were unable to explain how Aataentsic came to be pregnant: “Si vous leur demandez comment, vous les mettez bien en peine; tant y a, vous disent-ils, qu’elle se trouva grosse” (“If you ask them how, you puzzle them very much. At all events, they tell you, she was pregnant”). This mysterious pregnancy no doubt would have called to mind the birth of Christ to a virgin mother for Brébeuf’s readers. I will return to this point later.

Brébeuf’s second strategy is to emphasize the myth’s variable nature by juxtaposing different versions, undercutting the story’s credibility in the eyes of a Europe that, as I mentioned earlier, associated the fixed nature of writing with the Truth. Jesuit missionaries in New France reported pointing to the supposed superiority of European methods of preserving knowledge while debating the relative merits of Christian and Amerindian accounts of history with potential converts. To cite just one example, the 1637 Relation recounts a conversation between Le Jeune and an Amerindian man on the subject of an ancient flood, of which both men had inherited knowledge:

Je luy fis entendre […] qu’ils avoient bien conservé la mémoire de ce déluge, mais par une longue suite d’années, ils avoient envelopé ceste vérité dans

35 Campeau 3.347; Thwaites 10.129.
mille fables; que nous ne pouvions estre trompez en ce point, ayant la mesme 
creance que nos ancestres, puisque nous voyons leurs livres. 36

I told him [...] that they had indeed preserved the account of this deluge, but 
through a long succession of years they had enveloped this truth in a thousand 
fables; that we could not be mistaken about this event, having the same belief as 
our ancestors, since we see their books. 37

For the Jesuits, the written word’s authority came from its invariability, and the 
uncertain nature of the Huron myth was a sure sign of its inferiority.

As Brébeuf hastened to emphasize, signs of the myth’s variability were 
abundant. Brébeuf began by telling two versions of the events leading to Aataentsic’s 
fall, drawing attention to the lack of consensus on the subject and the accidental nature 
of the events that set creation in motion: “Il ne s’accordent pas en la façon qu’arriva 
cestes cheute si heureuse” (“They do not agree as to the manner in which this so 
fortunate descent occurred”). 38 In the first version, “Les uns” report that Aataentsic’s 
dog chases a bear, which accidentally falls through a hole that opens onto the world 
below. The dog follows, and Aataentsic throws herself down the hole after them. She 
falls into the water, which slowly dries until habitable land appears. Brébeuf followed 
this account with another variation, reported by “les autres.” In this version, 
Aataentsic’s mate, who is sick, dreams that he must cut down a tree that provides food

36 Campeau 3.562-563.
37 Thwaites 11.153.
38 Campeau 3.346; Thwaites 10.127.
for the people in the sky, and that in eating all of its fruit, he will be cured. Aataentsic
goesto cut down the tree, but as soon as she strikes it with her hatchet, it falls down into
the earthly world. After telling her sick partner this news, she throws herself down the
hole.

Brébeuf also offers an alternative version of the entire myth, in which Aataentsic
is replaced by a nameless man. This version begins with the man on an island, and
offers no explanation for how he got there. The story is similar to the first one—an
animal fetches dirt from the ocean floor to enlarge the island—but it is unclear if this
second version is a variation of Aataentsic’s story or is a separate myth. It does not
appear in any other account of Huron creation mythology I have seen, and Brébeuf’s
brief mention of it seems mainly meant to demonstrate that the Huron were not even
sure of the gender of the first person on Earth. Juxtaposing different possibilities for the
creation story draws attention to the fact that it was told differently by different people
or groups, drawing an implicit comparison to the invariability of Catholic knowledge on
the subject.

Other rhetorical markers in Brébeuf’s account call attention more subtly to the
myth’s variability. Concerning Aataentsic’s pregnancy despite the absence of men on the
island, Brébeuf reports that “[…] quelques-uns en rejettent la cause sur quelques
estrangers qui abordèrent à ceste isle” (“Some throw the blame upon some strangers,

39 This alternate creation myth is found in Campeau 3.347-348.
who landed on this Island"). The use of “quelques-uns” as the subject of the sentence emphasizes the fact that this explanation was not a unanimous opinion, a technique that is repeated at the very end of the myth: “Voilà ce que la pluspart croyent de l’origine de ces nations” (“This is what the greater part believe concerning the origin of these Nations”). Brébeuf’s emphasis on the lack of consensus on these fundamental questions would have cast doubt on the myth in the eyes of a Europe accustomed to having a single truth fixed in writing and therefore theoretically invariable. The missionary’s rendering of the myth suggests that Huron knowledge is not really knowledge at all because of its variable nature. This understanding of the relative worth of Christian and Amerindian mythology would prove durable. It was without any trace of irony that Lafitau prefaced his detailed early eighteenth century account of the Iroquoian myth this way: “On ne peut rien tirer des Sauvages en general touchant leur origine. N’ayant point de Lettres, ils n’ont point aussi de fastes et d’Annales sur lesquelles on puisse compter” (“One cannot elicit anything from the Indians in general concerning their origin. Having no letters they have also no chronological tables and annals on which reliance can be placed”). A variable myth, one not fixed in writing, might as well have been no myth at all, by European, Christian standards.

---

40 Campeau 3.347; Thwaites 10.129.
41 Campeau 3.347; Thwaites 10.129.
42 Lafitau 92-93; Fenton 1.81.
Finally, and perhaps most interestingly, Brébeuf filters the Huron myth through the Christian tradition, a strategy that can only result in it appearing to be a distortion of Genesis. As I discussed earlier, Christian Europe assumed that New World inhabitants were the descendents of a group that had split off from the rest of humanity some time after God created man. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that missionary writers like Brébeuf would see traces of the Christian tradition in the beliefs of the non-Christians they encountered. Indeed, this tendency extended far beyond Jesuit remarks on the Huron creation myth. As Dominique Deslandres put it, “They ceaselessly recognize traces of Christian revelation—traces of the flood, traces of the incarnation of Christ—in the founding stories that they report, all the while judging them absurd, obscured by centuries of infidelity.” 43 The underlying belief in the common origins of Europeans and Amerindians acted as a powerful filter through which all aspects of Amerindian culture were understood. As I will argue, Brébeuf’s explicit mention of elements of Christian doctrine in telling the Huron myth distorts, fragments, and casts doubt on the myth even as he tells it, reinforcing the message that the existence of the Huron was not a challenge to the Christian worldview, and could be made to fit within it.

Brébeuf begins telling his second version of the events leading to Aataentsic’s fall by immediately framing the myth in terms of the Christian tradition. The myth has,  

he says, “[…] quelque rapport au fait d’Adam, mais le mensonge y a prévalu” (“[…] some relation to the case of Adam, but falsehood makes up the greater part of it”). He then proceeds with a description of how Aataentsic fell from the sky, came to live on an island on the tortoise’s back created for her by animals, and birthed two sons that essentially follows the storyline I traced above. In recounting the fight between the two brothers, Brébeuf evokes the biblical story of Cain and Abel. Mentioning these two stories from Genesis signals to the reader that direct comparisons can and should be drawn between the Huron myth and the Christian one. It is not surprising that the Huron myth ends up looking like an erroneous variant, all that was left after centuries of decay caused by wandering and exclusively oral preservation of knowledge. It is worth considering each of the above references in greater detail.

Aataentsic’s fall has at least two resonances with the biblical tradition concerning Adam. First, Brébeuf suggests that her arrival on Earth is a version of the creation of Adam. In the biblical creation myth, God creates a man and a woman on the sixth day of creation. God places Adam in the Garden of Eden and then makes Eve out of one of his ribs while he sleeps. God’s direct agency in the creation of the pair is unmistakable. In the Huron myth, however, the events leading to Aataentsic’s arrival in the world are determined by chance rather than direct intervention by a divine being. Although the

44 Campeau 3.346; Thwaites 10.127.
events leading to Aataentsic’s fall were reportedly in dispute, the priest’s informants for both versions apparently agreed that she departed the sky by her own choice after some mundane activity—chasing her dog or chopping down a tree—went awry. God, who purposely placed the first human on Earth in the Christian account, is entirely absent from the Huron myth, which is presented as a chain of events set in motion by chance, rather than divine design, and an unreliable story in any case since it was not preserved in writing but was instead handed down orally. The absence of a God who was pulling the strings surely would have been striking to the seventeenth century Christian reader. Read as a version of the biblical creation story, Aataentsic’s fall would look like a distorted fragment in which the gender of the first human was incorrect, and in which his partner never appeared on Earth.

Aataentsic’s departure from the sky also likely would have reminded a Christian reader of the transgression of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and their subsequent banishment. In the Huron myth recounted by Brébeuf, original sin—the transgression leading to Aataentsic’s departure (striking the tree or chasing the bear)—is brought about by practical, worldly concerns rather than the incitement of Satan. In both versions recorded by Brébeuf, Aataentsic’s expulsion is of her own volition: she throws herself through the hole in the sky after her dog or in dismay over the tree’s

46 Gen. 3.
disappearance, whereas Eve is turned out by an angry God. Also, this expulsion is incomplete in relation to the biblical tradition, since only Aataentsic, and not her mate, leaves their home in the sky. European readers most likely would have read the story of Aataentsic’s fall, then, as a conflation of two events in Genesis concerning Adam, distorted by the fact that the Huron myth was handed down orally. Brébeuf’s opening observation that the myth seems to have some relation to the story of Adam would serve to remind readers of this supposed shared heritage, and the mangled version of the story that followed would demonstrate the inadequacy of Huron knowledge on the subject, as well as the urgency of his order’s missionary work. The mention of Adam therefore paradoxically unites and divides Huron and biblical heritage and culture. Brébeuf signals to the reader that the Huron myth is the Christian myth, albeit distorted, fragmented, and in need of correction.

The second time Brébeuf explicitly compares the Huron myth to the events in Genesis comes when he discusses Aataentsic’s children:

Quoy que s’en soit, elle enfanta deux garçons, Taouiscaron et Iouskeha, lesquels estant devenus grands, eurent quelque pique par ensemble; jugez si cela ne ressent point quelque chose du massacre d’Abel. Ils en vinrent aux mains, mais avec des armes bien différentes. Iouskeha avoit le bois d’un cerf, Taouiscaron se contenta de quelques fruits de rosier sauvage, se persuadant qu’il n’en auroit pas si tost frappé son frère qu’il tomberoit mort à ses pieds. Mais il en arriva tout autrement qu’il ne s’estoit promis et Iouskeha, au contraire, luy porta un si rude coup dans les flancs que le sang en sortit en abondance.47

47 Campeau 3.347.
However that may be, she brought forth two boys, Tawiscaron and Iouskeha, who, when they grew up, had some quarrel with each other; judge if this does not relate in some way to the murder of Abel. They came to blows, but with very different weapons. Iouskeha had the horns of a Stag; Tawiscaron, who contented himself with some fruits of the wild rosebush, was persuaded that, as soon as he had struck his brother, he would fall dead at his feet. But it happened quite differently from what he had expected; and Iouskeha, on the contrary, struck him so rude a blow in the side, that the blood came forth abundantly.48

Brébeuf’s comparison of Tawiscaron and Iouskeha to Cain and Abel disassociates them from the creation of the world and instead casts them in a later, unrelated event in the biblical tradition. As I mentioned earlier, the brothers had a crucial role in the expansion of the island on the tortoise’s back and its preparation for the arrival of human inhabitants. They were as much creators of the Earth as any of the other actors in the story of Aataentsic’s fall, but by telling the story under the sign of Cain and Abel, Brébeuf places their altercation after the Earth was already created, robbing the brothers of their important roles in that event.

Given Brébeuf’s predisposition to read the Huron myth as a version of the Christian one, it is perhaps understandable that he saw a parallel to the story of Cain and Abel. Both, after all, are the stories of two brothers who come to blows. Additional support for the notion that Iouskeha and Tawiscaron were actually Cain and Abel might have been found in some of the details Brébeuf recorded. In the biblical tradition, Abel

was a shepherd, while Cain was a “tiller of the ground.”49 In light of these occupations, the French listener or reader may have been tempted to find significance in the weapons Tawiscaron and Iouskeha used in their fight. Iouskeha defeats his brother using deer antlers while Tawiscaron fights armed with fruits from a wild rose bush. A Christian reader—one who already was reading the story as a distortion of that of Cain and Abel—might have considered the weapons as related to the brothers’ respective métiers.50 One who tills the soil might well choose a plant as his weapon, while one who cares for animals might logically choose an animal part. The problem with this reading is that the weapon choices are backward. The winner of the fight—Cain/Iouskeha, probably thought of as a farmer by the Christian reader—uses deer antlers, while Abel/Tawiscaron, a shepherd, uses a plant. Like other examples I have discussed, this likely would have been interpreted as a simple confusion of the facts due to inferior record-keeping. Brébeuf’s explicit comparison of Iouskeha and Tawiscaron to Cain and Abel, along with the more subtle suggestion of confusion I just discussed, fragments and casts doubt on the Huron myth. The brothers are taken out of their original role as creators of the world, and are instead given parts in a drama that unfolded after the creation was over. Filtering the myth through Genesis, as Brébeuf does, robs it of its

49 Gen. 4:2.

50 In light of Brébeuf’s assertion of a link between the Cain-Abel and Iouskeha-Tawiscaron stories, the fact that the Christian tradition does not account for the weapon Cain used to smite his brother, and that their altercation was reportedly less a fight than a murder, would have provided further evidence for the notion that the Huron understanding of Genesis had been warped and corrupted by fables.
wholeness and suggests that it is no more than an errant version of the Christian tradition, and that its unique details were merely errors.

One pattern has emerged from my consideration of the Jesuit version of the Huron creation myth that is worth emphasizing. In all of the passages considered above, divine intervention is conspicuously absent. One could argue that any one of the actors in the Huron myth is a god, but it is clear that there is no single dominant deity. God’s absence would have been striking to Christians reading the story as a version of Genesis. As a version of Adam and Eve’s expulsion from the Garden of Eden, the story would seem to be missing a crucial actor, since Aataentsic’s departure is voluntary and the result of a chain of events set in motion by chance, not an instance of divine punishment. If the story is interpreted as a version of the creation of Adam, there is no clear creator who is responsible for Aataentsic’s appearance on Earth. God is similarly absent from Aataentsic’s inexplicable pregnancy. As a version of the Christian virgin birth, Aataentsic’s pregnancy would have to be the work of God, as in Mary’s case according to the biblical tradition. Viewed through this lens, the inability of the Huron to account

51 “But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.’ Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I am a virgin?’ The angel said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.’” Luke 1:29-35.
for Aataentsic’s pregnancy is tantamount to a failure to recognize divine intervention at work.

God is similarly conspicuously absent from the story of Iouskeha and Tawiscaron when it is read as a version of Cain’s murder of Abel. In the biblical account of Cain’s murder of his brother, the deity is an indirect cause of their fight, and intervenes directly to question Cain about what happened. The dispute between the biblical pair begins when Abel wins God’s favor with a superior offering. Cain kills him out of jealousy.\(^{52}\) The immediate cause of Iouskeha and Tawiscaron’s fight is not explicitly given; the fight appears to be the result of long-brewing tensions finally coming to a head. A Christian reading the story through the filter of the similar biblical one likely would conclude that the Huron simply were not aware of the role the Creator played in the argument. The Huron myth, then, appears in this reading as a version of Christian doctrine from which all traces of God have been erased, simultaneously justifying missionary activity and demonstrating that the existence of the Huron could be made consistent with Genesis, even by their own account.

In the absence of God, chance is the driving force in the Huron creation myth, and the chaos and uncertainty that chance produces in the lives of Aataentsic and her progeny mirrors the uncertainty the Jesuits saw in the myth itself. As I mentioned earlier, it was only unvarying written knowledge that the Jesuits, like other European

\(^{52}\) Gen. 4:1-16.
colonists, counted as religious truth. The Huron myth may have been recognizable as a distortion of the beliefs of Christians, but its inferiority was made clear by its failure to acknowledge the deity and by the fact that it credited to chance the beginnings of mankind and its surroundings. Because the Huron myth was variable and not fixed in writing, the ways in which it diverged from the biblical tradition could be dismissed as distortions, rather than unique knowledge that challenged the European understanding of the history of the world. As the above discussion suggests, the authors of the Relations were able, by presenting the “facts” in a specific light, to influence their meaning in relation to Old World traditions. A creation myth that appeared by itself to be discordant with Genesis was recast by its Jesuit tellers as a version thereof, albeit one not preserved in writing, and therefore not an adequate record of religious Truth. Framing the myth in this way allowed the missionary authors to address European concerns about the implications of the existence of Amerindians, demonstrate that it was no indictment of the truth of Europe’s scripture-based knowledge of the world, and suggest that Amerindians, already aware of elements of doctrine, could easily be made Christian.

I have opted to begin my analysis of ethnographic writing in the Jesuit Relations with the account of the Huron myth therein because it is the clearest example I have found of the problematic three-way relationship between Amerindian cultures, the texts,
and modern uses thereof. Although, as I have argued, the Jesuit version of the myth was specifically crafted to discredit it as legitimate and distinct knowledge, it has been used as exactly that by modern scholars who have sought to reconstruct the culture of the Hurons at the time of contact. The kinds of rhetorical moves that I just discussed have often been viewed as instances of bias to be suppressed rather than interpreted. Bruce Trigger, for example, apparently draws exclusively on Brébeuf’s 1636 telling of the myth in the summary he offers in his authoritative ethnohistory *The Children of Aataentsic*. The result is a version of the myth that closely resembles those collected by more modern anthropologists, but carries some unsavory ideological baggage. Similarly, an appendix to Marius Barbeau’s *Huron and Wyandot Mythology* reprints missionary accounts alongside those provided by professional anthropologists more recently. In an appendix to her oft-cited book, Elisabeth Tooker offers a detailed accounting of the variation in the details of several versions of the myth, apparently giving equal weight to the Jesuit account as she does to those collected by anthropologists, and without discussing how the *Relations* differ from these sources. Tooker and Trigger’s versions are cleansed of evidence that Brébeuf was using the myth to advance arguments about mankind’s origin and the nature of religious knowledge, and not merely preserving it

---

53 Trigger does not name his source, but his summary, for the most part, closely follows the structure of the Jesuit version, and includes many of its unique details. This strongly suggests that the *Jesuit Relations* were his primary—if not exclusive—source. The myth is found on page 77 of Trigger’s book.

for posterity. Barbeau’s placement of the Jesuit version alongside those collected by professional anthropologists suggests that Brébeuf’s account is just one among many of equal value. As the case of the Huron myth suggests, attempting to compensate for the bias of seventeenth century missionary sources does not always result in a more accurate understanding of French-Amerindian contact, and, in fact, obscures important clues about how the Jesuits perceived their Amerindian interlocutors, and responded to the intellectual and religious challenges posed by their very existence.

2.2 The Montagnais Myth

What was understood to be a Montagnais creation story is recorded twice in the Jesuit Relations, in the 1633 and 1634 installments. Both versions of the myth follow the same basic storyline. Le Jeune begins by briefly mentioning the possibility that a Montagnais mythical figure named “Atahocan” was the Christian God in disguise, and then recounts a story about “Messou,” who repaired the world after a catastrophic flood. In the myth, Messou goes hunting with his lynxes, which he kept instead of dogs. The animals fall into a lake and sink, and Messou searches everywhere for them. A bird flying overhead reports seeing the lynxes at the bottom of the lake. Messou enters the water to try to rescue his pets, but is thwarted by suddenly rising waters. The lake breaches its banks and inundates and drowns the whole world. Messou, stunned by this turn of events, abandons all thought of rescuing his lynxes, and turns his attention to re-
establishing the world. He sends a raven to fetch some dirt in the hopes of using it to restore the land. When the raven fails to find any, Messou sends an otter to dive for a piece of earth, but the water proves too deep. Finally, a muskrat dives and brings some back, which Messou uses to restore the world to its normal state. Messou marries the muskrat and they repopulate the world with their children.\textsuperscript{55}

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the myth recounted by Le Jeune has been regarded with skepticism. Anthropologist Frank G. Speck reported finding no trace of it while conducting his work among the Montagnais in the twentieth century and specifically questioned the authenticity of Le Jeune’s account.\textsuperscript{56} Perhaps due to its unclear provenance, the missionary account of the Montagnais myth has not been frequently cited by students of Amerindian cultures at the time of contact. Whether the Jesuits’ apparently poor grasp of the subject was due to the “nebulous and confused” nature of Algonquian cosmogony compared to that of Iroquoian groups,\textsuperscript{57} the Jesuits’ own imperfect mastery of the Montagnais language in the early 1630s, or the alleged

\textsuperscript{55} Campeau 2.433-435 and 2.564-565.

\textsuperscript{56} Wrote Speck: “I have frequently asked narrators for the Earth Diver story, but have never found that it was known to any one in the Montagnais territory. […] No sign of the tale has been discovered in northern New England or in eastern Canada, except for one reference in the Jesuit Relations, the authenticity of which may be doubted.” Frank G. Speck, “Montagnais and Naskapi Tales from the Labrador Peninsula” The Journal of American Folklore 38.147 (1925): 2.

rapid disappearance of traditional beliefs from Montagnais culture upon the implantation of Christianity\textsuperscript{58} is a debate best left aside for the time being.

More interesting for my purposes is the fact that despite a lack of corroborating sources, Le Jeune’s versions of the myth have not been wholly without influence on modern scholarship. Hartley Burr Alexander used parts of Le Jeune’s first account of the myth for discussions of “The Great Spirit” and “the Flood” in Amerindian cosmology, and interpreted the tale as a version of other known Algonquian tales.\textsuperscript{59} Alfred G. Bailey then cited Alexander’s work as evidence of Montagnais beliefs, in effect relying on the uncorroborated account offered by Le Jeune but lending it the weight of a twentieth century source.\textsuperscript{60} Alain Beaulieu’s 1990 book on Jesuit efforts among Algonquian peoples makes brief reference to Le Jeune’s account of the story, but only as evidence that Le Jeune was aware that the Montagnais had some knowledge of God,\textsuperscript{61} prudently avoiding the details of Le Jeune’s problematic accounts. In his Croyances et Rituels Chez les Innus, 1603-1650, Jean-Louis Fontaine, an historian of Innu extraction,\textsuperscript{62} quotes Le

\textsuperscript{58} Campeau 2.93 (introduction).

\textsuperscript{59} Alexander 20, 42.

\textsuperscript{60} Alfred G. Bailey, The Conflict of European and Eastern Algonquian Cultures 1504-1700, 2nd ed’n (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969) 155.

\textsuperscript{61} Beaulieu 32.

\textsuperscript{62} As a reminder, Innu is the term generally preferred by modern members of the group that is often referred to as the Montagnais. In accordance with the decision about nomenclature outlined in the introduction to this dissertation, I am using Innu here instead of Montagnais because I am referring to a modern member of the group who identifies himself as Innu.
Jeune’s 1633 version of the myth as indicative of the beliefs of his ancestors.\textsuperscript{63} Despite these exceptions, twentieth century scholars seem to have been justifiably reluctant to rely as heavily on the Jesuit version of the Montagnais myth as they have on the priest’s account of the Huron myth. It is a testament to the degree to which the \textit{Relations} have long been regarded as a first-rate source of ethnographic information that Le Jeune’s versions of the Montagnais myth are ever cited at all.

And yet, the suspicious contents of the priest’s accounts of the myth do not make them wholly unworthy of consideration for the present study. As I will argue in the coming pages, the Jesuit versions of the Montagnais myth are valuable for the insights they provide as to how the missionaries’ writing was influenced by awareness of their audience. As I already mentioned, Le Jeune recounted the myth twice, with the second version coming just one year after the first. Luckily for the modern observer, Le Jeune’s two versions of the myth straddle a pivotal moment in the history of the \textit{Relations}. The priest only became aware that his words were being published as he was putting the finishing touches on his 1633 installment.\textsuperscript{64} Perhaps not coincidentally, he adopted a more reader-friendly format the following year, organizing the report into thematic

\begin{flushright}

\textsuperscript{64} Deffain 139. According to Campeau, it is not clear if Le Jeune knew in 1633 that his 1632 \textit{Briève Relation} had been published. If he did know, that information would only have arrived in New France when it was too late to rewrite the 1633 installment with a wide readership in mind. Accordingly, writes Campeau, “En 1633, il écrit encore sans apprêts une lettre qui n’est pas destinée à la publication.” 2.403.
\end{flushright}
chapters instead of a long, rambling letter.\textsuperscript{65} The change in format suggests that the missionary authors understood, upon learning that their work was being published, that the \textit{Relations} had a broader purpose than originally thought. As Léon Pouliot has remarked, “For the history of the collection, this text is important: it tells us that the annual report no longer was addressed only to the Provincial\textsuperscript{66} in Paris or only to Jesuits; in the thoughts even of its author, it was now in the public domain […]”.\textsuperscript{67} No longer was Le Jeune writing an internal memorandum, but a book destined to educate the public and convince them to contribute to the mission.

The \textit{Relations} of 1633 and 1634, then, are fundamentally different, both in their organization and in the role their author envisioned for them. It is interesting to note, however, that although Le Jeune prepared the 1634 \textit{Relation} with a new awareness of his public readership, he nonetheless framed it as if it were still a strictly internal report.

\textsuperscript{65} Le Jeune himself indicates in his 1633 \textit{Relation} that he was already realizing the limits of the letter format: “Mais il est tantost temps de m’aviser que je n’escry plus une lettre, mais un livre, tant je suis long; ce n’estoit point mon dessein de tant escrire. Les feuillets se sont multipliés insensiblement et m’ont mis en tel point qu’il fault que j’envoie ce brouillard pour ne pouvoir tirer et mettre au net ce que je croirois debvoir estre présenté à Vostre Rêverence. J’escriray une autre fois plus précisément et plus asseurément” (“But it is about time for me to reflect that I am no longer writing a letter, but a book, I have made it so long. It was not my intention to write so much; the pages have insensibly multiplied and I am so situated that I must send this scrawl, as I am unable to rewrite it and to make a clean copy of it, such as I think ought to be presented to Your Reverence. I shall write another time more accurately, and with more assurance”). Campeau 2.484; Thwaites 6.29.

\textsuperscript{66} A “Provincial” is the head of a territorial division of a religious order of the the Roman Catholic Church. The New France Mission was under the authority of the Paris Province at the time the \textit{Relations} were published. “Province” and “Provincial,” \textit{Modern Catholic Encyclopedia}.

\textsuperscript{67} My translation. “Pour l’histoire de la collection, ce texte est important: Il nous apprend que le rapport annuel ne s’adresse plus au seul Provincial de Paris ou aux seuls jésuites; dans la pensée même de son auteur, il est désormais de droit publique […]” Pouliot 18.
Like the 1633 *Relation*, which was not prepared with publication in mind, the 1634 installment opens and closes with direct references to the “Révérend Père” who served as Jesuit provincial in Paris. In both *Relations*, Le Jeune occasionally addressed his official correspondent directly, as “Vostre Révérence.” And, as in the example cited in the introduction to this dissertation, both sender and receiver are explicitly mentioned in the full title of each of the two *Relations*. Despite Le Jeune’s new awareness that his words were public and the corresponding shift to a more reader-friendly format, it is clear from these details that Jesuits in New France and the Paris authorities charged with publishing the *Relations* sought to encourage their readers to continue to perceive the texts as if they were internal, official communiqués, rather than texts destined specifically for non-Jesuit readers. This framing of the *Relations* could be one reason they have long been treated more as historical documents than as literary texts.

Despite the continued official appearance of the *Relations*, Le Jeune’s new awareness of his audience had important consequences for his treatment of the Montagnais myth. Le Jeune justified telling the myth twice, in successive years, by claiming to want to correct and complete the record on Montagnais beliefs: “Je touchay l’an passé cette fable, mais désirant rassembler tout ce que je sçay de leur créance, j’ay

---

68 Campeau 2.406, 485, 538, 740.
69 Examples are abundant, including Campeau 2.411, 578, 649, etc.
70 Campeau 2.405, 537.
usé de redittes” {“I touched upon this fable last year, but, desiring to recapitulate all I know about their beliefs, I have repeated many things”}. As I will argue in the coming pages, the ways that Le Jeune went about the summarizing and correcting that he claimed motivated him to repeat the story are revealing in light of the fundamental change in the nature of the texts that occurred between 1633 and 1634.

Le Jeune began his 1633 discussion of Montagnais beliefs about their own origins with a protestation against European opinions that Amerindians had no knowledge of God and claimed that outward appearances were deceiving on that question.

Je confesse que les sauvages n’ont point de prières publiques et communes, ny aucun culte qu’ils rendent ordinairement à celuy qu’ils tiennent pour Dieu, et que leur cognoissance n’est que ténèbres. Mais on ne peut nier qu’ils ne reconnoissent quelque nature supérieure à la nature de l’homme.72

I confess that the Savages have no public or common prayer, nor any form of worship usually rendered to one whom they hold as God, and their knowledge is [but shadows]. But it cannot be denied that they recognize some nature superior to the nature of man.73

This assertion sets the tone for the account of Montagnais beliefs that follows by suggesting that the Montagnais had at least some knowledge of God, even if it was “but

---

71 Campeau 2.565; Thwaites 6.159.
72 Campeau 2.433.
73 Thwaites 5.153. Thwaites translates “Leur cognoissance n’est que ténèbres” as “their knowledge is only as darkness.” I have corrected this to restore the suggestion present in the original that the Montagnais had some understanding of a higher power, albeit on that was not clearly defined or well understood. A shadow, after all, preserves the bare outline of the object that casts it.
shadows” in comparison to Christian doctrine preserved in writing. Le Jeune’s introduction of “Atahocan” makes the message explicit:

Parlant un jour de Dieu dans une cabane, ils me demandèrent que c’était que Dieu. Je leur dis que c’ estoit celuy qui pouvait tout et qui avoit fait le ciel et la terre. Ils commencèrent à se dire les uns aux autres: ‘Atahocan, Atahocan; c’est Atahocan.’ 74

Talking one day of God, in a cabin, they asked me what this God was. I told them that it was he who could do everything, and who had made the Sky and earth. They began to say one to the other, ‘Atahocan, Atahocan, it is Atahocan.’ 75

Thus establishing that the Montagnais knew the Creator and that they called him Atahocan, Le Jeune moved on to muddy the waters by introducing another figure who could also have been the Christian God in disguise, Messou. As noted earlier, Le Jeune reported that Messou repaired the world after it was destroyed by a flood.

Taken together, the stories of Atahocan and Messou indicate that the Montagnais were aware of God, Le Jeune claims: “On voit par ces contes que les sauvages ont quelque idée d’un Dieu” (“You see by these stories that the Savages have some idea of a God”). 76 But their knowledge would also have appeared deeply flawed, and in need of correction. The existence of two candidates for the office of God suggests that the Montagnais had mistakenly fragmented God, and assigned his various roles to different figures. Such a fracture would surely indicate to the European reader that the

74 Campeau 2.434.
75 Thwaites 5.153-155.
76 Campeau 2.434; Thwaites 5.157.
Montagnais, though they had some knowledge of God, were not wholly acquainted with the truth. Le Jeune reinforces the message in the same way Brébeuf would later undermine the Huron myth, by labeling it a “fable” and a “conte.” 77 In fact, Le Jeune finds the story too flawed to be bothered to write down all its details, despite the promise it shows for the potential of the Montagnais to be converted.

Ce seroit une longue fable de raconter comme il répara tout, comme il se vengea des monstres qui avoient pris ses chasseurs, se transformant en mille sorte d’animaux pour les surprendre. Bref, ce beau Réparateur, estant marié à une soury musquée, eut des enfants qui ont repeuplé le monde.78

It would be a long story to recount how he reestablished everything; how he took vengeance on the monsters that had taken his hunters, transforming himself into a thousand kinds of animals to circumvent them. In short, this great Restorer, having married a little muskrat, had children who repeopled the world. 79

The dismissive way in which Le Jeune ends the story suggests that he knew more details about it than he cared to record. And his mocking reference to Messou as a “great restorer” signals his general disdain for the tale, the only value of which was the indication it gave that the Montagnais had some knowledge of the Creator, even if they were laughably wrong about the details. For the priest, there was no point in discussing the minute details of the myth that did not demonstrate rudimentary knowledge of the biblical God.

77 Campeau 2.434.
78 Campeau 2.434.
Le Jeune’s 1633 suggestion that he knew more details of the myth than were worth mentioning stands in marked contrast to the reasons he gave for telling the story again in 1634. The second time around, Le Jeune recounts the myth in the context of an entire chapter on what he terms Montagnais “beliefs, superstitions, and errors,” and professes a desire to offer a complete record of the subject. Despite his apparent change of opinion regarding the importance of completeness in documenting Montagnais beliefs, the version of the story of Messou recounted by Le Jeune in 1634 for the most part mirrors his earlier version, and includes only a few new details. The reader learns that Messou’s wife was responsible for unleashing death in the world, and that Messou was the “big brother” of all animal spirits. It is unclear if these are the same details that Le Jeune purposely omitted in his first version of the story or if he only learned them in the intervening year. In either case, the content of the two versions is nearly identical.

And yet, subtle differences in the way Le Jeune told the story in 1633 and 1634 reflect the change in his understanding of the purpose of the Relations. As noted earlier, Le Jeune indicated in 1633 that his purpose in telling the story was to rebut claims that the Montagnais were not aware of God, and bookended his account with comments indicating that the stories of Atahocan and Messou were proof of imperfect knowledge thereof. In 1634, however, the stories are deployed for precisely the opposite purpose. Le Jeune opens his second account of the story by claiming to have learned in the
intervening year that Atohocan was not as important to Montagnais mythology as he previously thought:

J’ai interrogé là-dessus ce fameux sorcier et ce vieillard, avec lesquels j’ai passé l’hiver, ils m’ont respondu qu’ils ne sçavoient pas qui estoit le premier Autheur du monde, que c’estoit peut estre Atahocam, mais que cela n’estoit pas certain, qu’ils ne parloient d’Atahocam que comme on parle d’une chose si esloignée qu’on n’en peut tirer aucune asseurance [...].

I have questioned upon this subject the famous Sorcerer and the old man with whom I passed the Winter; they answered that they did not know who was the first Author of the world,— that it was perhaps Atahocham, but that was not certain; that they only spoke of Atahocam as one speaks of a thing so far distant that nothing sure can be known about it [...].

Le Jeune’s report in 1633 of the Montagnais’ enthusiastic identification of Atahocan as the Creator is replaced in 1634 by a far more tentative acknowledgement of that possibility, and an assertion that the Montagnais had no certain knowledge of the “first author” of the world. Although he suggested in 1633 that both Atahocan and Messou proved that the Montagnais knew something about God, Le Jeune went out of his way to avoid that implication just one year later. Significantly, the word “Dieu” does not even appear in his second account of Montagnais beliefs about Atahocan and Messou. In both texts, the need to instruct the Amerindians on Christianity is implied. But in the second version of the myth—the one Le Jeune knew would be read by potential donors in France—Le Jeune trades his glass-half-full rhetoric for a glass-half-empty analysis,

80 Campeau 2.564. The difference between the spelling of “Atahocan” from one year to the next is present in the original.

81 Thwaites 5.157.
and downplays any knowledge of God the Montagnais might already have had. Indeed, viewed through the lens of the Jesuit and Catholic tradition of pedagogical questioning instead of as an attempt to procure information, Le Jeune’s interrogation of the “sorcerer” and the old man serves to demonstrate the inadequacy of his interlocutor’s pre-existing knowledge, and clears the way for the introduction of Catholic doctrine. In the second telling of the myth, Atahocan is just a character in a fable and Messou, a mere repair man.

It would be unfair to wholly discount Le Jeune’s explanation for these changes, that he learned more about the tale during a long winter spent in the company of a nomadic Montagnais group. But it seems unlikely that increased knowledge is solely responsible for the differences between the two versions, particularly since those differences are mostly rhetorical. The second version of the Montagnais beliefs paints a bleaker picture of the spiritual situation in New France, giving stronger justification and greater urgency to the missionary project. In 1633, Le Jeune’s account suggested that missionaries merely needed to flesh out the Montagnais’ understanding of God and teach them how to honor him. The 1634 version of the tale implied a void at the position of God and therefore a more urgent challenge for the missionaries and their backers in France.
It is worth briefly discussing the contents of the Montagnais myth in greater detail, since the way individual characters and events are characterized therein recalls the filtration of the Huron myth through Genesis that I discussed earlier. The similarity in the way Le Jeune and Brébeuf’s texts describe the myths suggests that the tactics discussed in my analysis of the Huron myth do not only reveal the beliefs and strategies of a single priest, but rather the missionaries’ broader understanding of the relationship between Christianity and Amerindian religions. After the comments on Atahocan that open both versions of the myth, Le Jeune tells the story of Messou who, in both accounts, repaired the world after a flood. In both versions, Le Jeune immediately evokes the Biblical flood, signaling to his readers that what followed was nothing but a distortion of the Christian tradition, in need of correction: Wrote Le Jeune in 1633: “Vous voyez qu’ils ont quelque tradition du deluge, quoÿ que meslée de fables, car voicy comme le monde se perdit, à ce qu’ils disent” [“You see that they have some traditions of the deluge, although mingled with fables. This is the way, as they say, that the world was lost”].

In 1634, the priest repeated his suggestion of a link:

Pour le Messou, ils tiennent qu’il a réparé le monde qui s’estoit perdu par le déluge d’eau, d’où appert qu’ils ont quelque tradition de cette grande innondation universelle qui arriva du temps de Noé, mais ils ont rempli cette vérité de mille fables impertinentes.

__________________________

82 Campeau 2.434; Thwaites 5.155.
83 Campeau 2.564.
As to the Messou, they hold that he restored the world, which was destroyed in the flood; whence it appears that they have some tradition of that great universal deluge which happened in the time of Noë, but they have burdened this truth with a great many irrelevant fables.84

Linking the Montagnais myth to the story of Noah would have sent confusing signals to Le Jeune’s Christian readers in France. Given that Genesis explicitly says that all men aside from Noah and his family were killed in the flood,85 readers would be left to speculate whether Messou was Noah, a member of Noah’s family, or God—the only remaining possibilities—in the Montagnais’ warped version of the Christian myth.86 I will now briefly explore these possibilities. My purpose is not to repeat at length the points made earlier, in my discussion of the Huron myth, but rather to highlight the consistency of Jesuit attitudes toward Amerindian beliefs about the creation of the world, and of their strategies for neutralizing the threat they posed.

Le Jeune never explicitly equates Messou with Noah or a member of his family, but some of the details of his version of the myth might have led his readers to the conclusion that Messou was a passenger on the ark. Like Noah, Messou employs a raven in his efforts to cope with the aftermath of the flood. The raven is the first of three animals Messou sends in search of a piece of earth, and for reasons that are not entirely

84 Thwaites 6.157.
85 Gen. 7:21-23.
86 The Christian reader likely would not have seriously entertained the possibility that Messou was just a man caught off guard when God flooded the earth, since his survival would conflict with the biblical account.
clear, Noah sends a raven forth from the ark forty days after it settles on the mountain of Ararat. The ends to which Messou and Noah employed their ravens are related: both concern determining or ensuring the habitability of the earth. The Montagnais belief that the raven’s role was to search for a piece of dirt with which to remake dry land likely would have been regarded by Europeans as an absurd literalization of the bird’s limited role in reestablishing the world, since the biblical tradition makes clear that God was responsible for making the earth dry. Christian readers tempted by Le Jeune’s comments to read Messou as Noah would find an explanation for these inconsistencies in Le Jeune’s caveat in each of his two versions that the biblical flood story had been corrupted by fables. Despite the clues Le Jeune provided that Messou might have been Noah, the Montagnais figure is in some ways a wildly imperfect fit for that role. Messou does not have prior warning of the flood, as Noah did in Genesis. Indeed, he appears to be caught completely by surprise: “Le messou bien estonné quitte la pensée de ses loups, pour songer à restablir le monde” (“The Messou, very much astonished, gave up all thoughts of his lynxes, to meditate on creating the world anew”). In addition,

87 “At the end of forty days, Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made and sent out the raven; and it went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth.” Gen. 8:7. The goal of this action is not entirely clear, but after sending the raven out, Noah sent a dove to see if the earth was dry. Genesis seems to suggest that the raven had a role in verifying the post-diluvial inhabitability of the world.

88 Gen. 8:1-5.

89 Gen. 6:13-7:5.

90 Campeau 2.434; Thwaites 5.155.
Messou builds no ark, collects no animals, and apparently has no family that rides out the flood with him, all features of Noah’s ordeal.

Reading Messou as a God figure is no less problematic. Readers could have been tempted to do so by the fact that Messou, in the Montagnais myth, is responsible for repairing the world, a task performed by God in Genesis. But many elements of Messou’s story seem to disqualify him for the role. In the myth, Messou is present on earth during the flood, and did not intentionally cause it or even know it was coming. His candidacy for God would have been further damaged by Le Jeune’s repeated insistence that Messou merely repaired the world, as opposed to creating it. Accordingly, as noted earlier, Le Jeune mockingly referred to Messou as “ce beau Réparateur” in his 1633 version of the myth and a year later ends his telling of the myth by emphasizing the restorative, as opposed to creative, role of the mythical figure: “[...] voilà comment le Messou a tout restabli” (“So this is the way in which the Messou restored all things”).

The Montagnais myth told by Le Jeune likely would have been regarded by his readers, who were tipped off early that they should look for traces of the Flood in it, as a distortion of that story to be mocked rather than feared as a potential competitor to the biblical creation tradition. For readers following the priest’s cues, Messou’s puzzling role in the tale could be interpreted as a conflation of the roles of God and Noah, since any other option would contradict the Biblical account of a flood in which “everything on

---

\(^91\) Campeau 2.565; Thwaites 6.159.
dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died.” Apparent contradictions would have been seen as yet more evidence that the Montagnais myth was taken from Genesis, but corrupted by fables because of faulty Amerindian preservation of knowledge.

Both versions of the myth reported by Le Jeune employ rhetorical strategies that are familiar from Brébeuf’s treatment of the Huron myth. In both accounts, Le Jeune opens and closes the tale by labeling it a fable, thus framing it with characterizations that undercut its credibility as a competitor to the Christian myth. Le Jeune then proceeds, as Brébeuf would do a few years later, to identify the myth as a version of Genesis and make plain its inferiority. The consistency of this strategy between the texts of Le Jeune and Brébeuf is a symptom of the necessity surely felt by Jesuit missionaries, and by Catholic Europe more generally, of making new and unfamiliar information fit within a Christian framework. The differences between Le Jeune’s two versions of the myth reflect the influence that awareness of an audience had on the ways the priests articulated their position for maximum effect on readers and potential donors. As Jesuit accounts of the Huron and Montagnais myths demonstrate, discussion of religion was a delicate balancing act for the authors of the Relations. It was necessary to uncover traces of the shared history and religious heritage of Europeans and Amerindians in order to neutralize the threat to traditional biblical knowledge that was posed by the existence of

---

92 Gen. 7.22,
people not explicitly accounted for in Genesis, while still putting the need for missionary work in the most urgent terms possible.

### 2.3 The Algonquin Myth

Le Jeune’s 1636 *Relation* contains an account of what missionaries believed were Algonquin beliefs about the creation of the world. The brevity of the passage and the fact that there is only one version to contend with allows me to quote it here in full:

Le Père Buteux, entrant dans une cabane avec le sieur Nicolet, qui entend fort bien la langue algonquine, un Algonquin qui fait du docteur les invita de s’asseoir auprès de lui, ce qu’ils firent. Et là-dessus, il leur dit que les sauvages recoignoissent deux manitous mais pour luy qu’ils en reconnoissoit un troisième qui présidoit aux guerres. Que l’un de ces trois avoit fait la terre, du moins celle de son pays; car pour celle du pais des François, qu’il n’en estoit pas bien asseuré. Ayant fait la terre, il produisit les animaux et toutes les autres choses de son païs. Il luy donoit un grand lac ou un sault d’eau pour résidence, comme on donne la mer à Neptune. Ce bon créateur de la terre, tirant certain jour sur un castor pour le chasser bien loing, afin d’en peupler le païs, il le manqua et la flèche rencontrent un arbre, elle le rendit beau et fort poly; et que cela ne fût vray. 3 J’ay, disoit-il, cognu des vieillards, lesquels ont veu cet arbre.’ Il rapporta mille autres baddineries. Le Père luy fit demander où estoit ce Dieu, devant qu’il créast la terre: ‘Dans son canot, répond-il, lequel flottait sur les eaux.’—S’il avoit un canot, luy dit-on, il faulloit qu’il y eust des arbres, car il est fait d’écorce des arbres; s’il y avoit des arbres, il y avoit de la terre, si la terre estoit, comment l’a-[t]-il crée ?”— ‘La terre, répart-il, avoit esté auparavant, mais elle avoit esté inondée par un déluge’.—Et devant ce déluge, qui avoit crée la terre ?’— ‘Je n’en sçay rien; vous avez plus d’esprit que moy. N’en demandez pas davantage’.— ‘Puisque tu l’ignorez, presté-nous l’oreille, luy dit on’.—‘Si j’estois jeune, vous auriez raison de me vouloir instruire, mais estant déjà vieil, vous perdrez vos

---

3 Campeau speculates in a footnote that this nonsensical fragment is the result of the type-setter of the original Cramoisy edition skipping a line of the manuscript. 3.248.
peines, car je n’ay plus de mémoire’.—C’est pour autant que tu es âgé, dit le truchement, qu’il te faut haster d’apprendre ces vérités, car si tu ne les crois, tu seras très malheureux après ta mort’. Là-dessus, il luy toucha quelque chose de la création du monde et de la rédemption, des peines et des récompenses de l’autre vie. ‘Je n’ay pas, répart-il, l’esprit de pouvoir retenir tant de choses. Enseignez les aux enfants qui ont bonne mémoire’. Néantmoins, cette doctrine fit quelque chose sur son esprit, car du depuis il enseignoit à quelques malades ce qu’il avait retenu.  

Father Buteux entering a Cabin with Sieur Nicolet, who understands the Algonquin tongue very well, an Algonquin, who acts the part of a [savant], invited them to sit down near him, which they did. And thereupon he told them that the Savages recognized two Manitous; but, for his part, he recognized a third, who presided over war. That one of the three had made the land, at least, that of his country; as to that of the French, he was not entirely certain. Having made the land, he produced the animals and all the other things of his country. The narrator gave him a great lake, or a Waterfall, for his home, as we give the sea to Neptune. This worthy Creator of the earth, drawing his bow one day upon a Beaver, to chase it far away, in order to people the country with them, missed it; and the arrow, lodging in a tree, had made it very beautiful and smooth; and as for this not being true, "I have," said he, "known old men who have seen this tree." He related a thousand other foolish tales. The Father had him asked where this God was before he created the earth. "In his Canoe," he replied," which was floating upon the waters. "If he had a Canoe," was said to him," there must have been trees, for it is made of the bark of trees; if there were trees, there was land; if there was land, how has he created it?" "The land," he replied, "was there before, but it was flooded by a deluge." "And before the deluge, who created this land?" "I know nothing about it; you have more intelligence than I have, do not ask me anything more." "Since thou dost not know it, listen to us," was said to him. "If I were young, you would be right in wishing to teach me; but as I am already old, you would lose your pains, for I have no longer any memory." "It is because thou art old," said the interpreter," that thou must hasten to learn these truths; for, if thou dost not believe, thou wilt be very unhappy after thy death." Thereupon he outlined for him the creation of the world, redemption, and the punishments and rewards of the other life. "I have not," said he, "the mind to be able to retain so many things; teach them to the children, who have a good memory." Nevertheless, this doctrine made some

94 Campeau 3.248.
impression upon his mind; for since then he has taught some sick persons what he could remember of it.95

Le Jeune’s treatment of the Algonquin myth includes many elements that are familiar from the accounts of the Huron and Montagnais myths discussed earlier. The priest dismisses the tale as mere “badineries,” much the same way the Huron and Montagnais myths were reduced to fables. The comparison drawn between the Algonquin creator of the earth and Neptune links the Amerindian myth to Old-World traditions, and the mention of three “manitous” would suggest to the reader that the Algonquin failed to acknowledge a single, omnipotent God, in the same way the Huron and Montagnais myths fractured the role of God by attributing his work to several distinct individuals. Le Jeune also suggests that the Algonquin myth is not a creation myth at all, but a version of the biblical flood tradition. The admission of Buteux’s interlocutor that he does not know what happened before the flood would emphasize the superiority of Christianity’s scripture-based knowledge of the history of the world, since it goes back further in time than the Algonquin myth, to an era for which the Algonquin could not account. And the inferiority of Algonquin knowledge on the topic was signaled from the start by Le Jeune’s opening assertion that his interlocutor was merely “playing savant,” only pretending he knew what he was talking about. In short, Le Jeune’s treatment of

95 Thwaites 9.125-127. Thwaites originally rendered “fait du docteur” as “acts the part of a wiseacre.” I have corrected the quote to preserve the idea that Buteux’s interlocutor was pretending to be knowledgeable, not pretending to be a wiseacre.
the myth follows the pattern I have already established in Jesuit strategies for discrediting competing creation stories.

But Le Jeune also employed a new weapon that is worth discussing briefly here. The ultimate condemnation of the brief myth committed to paper by Le Jeune came not from the priest himself, nor from the missionary who reported hearing the myth and who then related it to Le Jeune, but from the mouth of the Algonquin man who reportedly told the story to the Jesuit priest Jacques Buteux through the intermediary of a translator. Le Jeune followed his telling of the myth with a series of direct quotations that purported to reflect the actual conversation between Buteux and his informant. This technique serves to lend additional credibility to the final condemnation of the myth and demonstrate the efficacy of Jesuit mission methodology, and the results of Buteux’s questioning also stand in stark contrast to the unvarying answers produced in the catechization of new converts or to be found in scripture. Apparently coming to recognize the inadequacy of his own answers, the Algonquin informant, who apparently set out to teach Buteux about the history of the world, is ultimately convinced, it is implied, that the priest’s understanding of the creation of mankind and its surrounding is correct.

The direct quotation of Amerindian speeches apparently was a favored strategy of outside observers who, like the Jesuits, used their writings at least partially to promote their own colonial interests. Réal Ouellet has commented on the manipulation
of dialogue by colonial writers, which, he argues, often results in Amerindians themselves appearing to support colonial projects. Normand Doiron has noted that such quotation is a common feature of New France travel writing, and that authors frequently projected ideals of classical rhetoric onto Amerindian speakers. “They pursue the Ciceronian quest of the Optimus Orator, of the perfect orator, and, discovering a new continent, they invent an extraordinary eloquence,” Doiron wrote. Jesuit writers apparently were particularly adept at projecting Old World ideals of eloquence onto Amerindian speakers in the service of mission goals. According to Doiron, “[…] Le Jeune seems very early alert to the theoretical stakes of Amerindian eloquence, to the arguments that one can deduce from the discourses that he ‘translates’ and delivers to his audience […]. It’s as if all of a sudden missionaries and barbarians pursued a common cause.” As Doiron also pointed out, ascribing classical eloquence to Amerindian speakers links New World inhabitants to Old World traditions, thereby

---


providing yet more support for the notion that Europeans and Amerindians shared a common origin and history.\textsuperscript{99}

More specifically, quotations of Amerindian speeches in the \textit{Relations} were an important part of making the case for the potential of converting Amerindians and the efficacy of Jesuit strategies. The debates on these topics that marked the seventeenth century discussion of Amerindian nature will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter of this dissertation. For the time being, it is sufficient to remark that the words of new believers were often cited as proof that conversion was possible and that the Jesuits were capable of making it happen. Barthélemy Vimont, in his 1644 installment, cited the many speeches by Amerindian converts to Christianity to be found in the \textit{Relations} as proof of the humanity and capacity for faith of the Amerindians:

\begin{quote}
Je finirai ce chapitre par le raisonnement d’un sauvage qui peut-estre désabusera quelques personnes de France qui veulent faire passer nos sauvages pour des hommes qui n’ont rien d’humain que la face. D’autres, qui en font un peu plus d’estat, les comparent à certains bons paisans qui demeurent muets lorsqu’on parle d’autre chose que de leurs beuufs et de leur charrue. Nous avons couché dans cette relation et dans les précédentes plusieurs de leurs discours et harangues qui tesmoignent le contraire.\textsuperscript{100}
\end{quote}

I shall conclude this Chapter with the reasoning of a savage which will perhaps undeceive some persons in France who seek to make our savages pass for men who have nothing human about them except their faces. Others, who think a little more highly of them, compare them to certain good peasants, who remain mute when one speaks to them of anything besides

\textsuperscript{99} Doiron, “Rhétique Jésuite,” 393.

\textsuperscript{100} Campeau 6.157.
their oxen and plows. We have reported in this Relation, and in the preceding ones, several of their speeches and harangues, which prove the contrary.\textsuperscript{101}

By Vimont’s own account, many of the utterances that the missionaries claimed to reproduce in the Relations were deployed to serve as evidence of the capacity of Amerindians to intelligently embrace Christianity and of the winning track record of Jesuit methods.

But the case of the conversation recorded by Le Jeune is somewhat different from the long, eloquent speeches that have been studied by Doiron, Ouellet, and others. The short sentences in the rapid-fire exchange recorded in the Relations in no way resemble the monologues whose beauty was often cited as proof of Amerindian capacity for faith, and are better understood in relation to the common Jesuit pedagogical tools that I have invoked regularly throughout this chapter: catechization and disputation. Le Jeune’s account of the conversation between a priest and an Algonquin man is not a portrait of a Jesuit seeking information, but of one attempting to introduce religious proof, and taking the preliminary step of discrediting, through incisive questioning, his interlocutor’s preexisting beliefs. The conversation produced by Le Jeune can be seen, then, as another part of the Jesuit project I have traced throughout this chapter, the attempt to reconcile Amerindian traditions with Christian ones in order to defend Europe’s scripture-based history of humankind against the challenges posed by distant

\textsuperscript{101} Thwaites 26.125.
non-Christians with their own more vague beliefs about the creation of the world. The very fact that Buteux’s interlocutor apparently admitted that his knowledge was inferior to that of the Jesuits would have been reassuring to a Europe anxious about how biblical truth would hold up to challenges posed from the New World.

Particularly convincing would have been signs that the Algonquin man experienced a change of heart concerning what he considered to be the truth about the beginning of the world. According to Le Jeune’s account, the man closed his recitation of Algonquin beliefs with what he apparently considered proof of its veracity: “J’ay, disoit-il, cognu des vieillards, lesquels ont veu cet arbre” [“I have,’ said he, ‘known old men who have seen this tree’”].102 This claim amounts to a personal testimony to the truth of the story: the Algonquin man trusts the myth at least partly because of the personal knowledge of his acquaintances of one of its elements, and there could be little doubt for the European reader that the speaker sincerely believed in its truth. The suggestion at the end of the passage that the Algonquin man had been convinced of his error would have been all the more striking for coming on the heels of his statement of belief. In the face of Buteux’s seemingly air-tight logic, the Algonquin informant moves to end the conversation: “Je n’en sçay rien; vous avez plus d’esprit que moy. N’en demandez pas davantage” [“I know nothing about it; you have more intelligence than I have, do not

102 Campeau 3.248; Thwaites 9.125.
ask me anything more”). Doiron suggests that this oft-used formula was viewed by the Jesuits as a frustrating act of evasion, but in the context of the conversation recorded by Le Jeune, it seems more like complete capitulation, admission that the Jesuit knowledge of the creation of the world is superior, and that, by extension, the myth he had just finished telling was inferior to the Christian one and therefore posed no challenge to biblical authority. And Le Jeune’s closing assertion that the Algonquin man had started repeating what he had retained of Christian doctrine to sick people reinforces the message that the biblical creation story had replaced the traditional one in at least one prominent Algonquin’s understanding of the history of the world.

It is significant that the exchange between Buteux and his interlocutor is presented as direct quotation. Le Jeune claims to reproduce their actual conversation, and yet, it is unlikely that such a conversation, in the exact form written by Le Jeune, ever took place. Jesuit missionaries, following the directions of Ignatius Loyola, conducted their work in indigenous languages. In this case, as Le Jeune’s account indicates, Buteux used a “truchement”—an interpreter—to communicate with his Algonquin interlocutor. Le Jeune’s version, then, represents his understanding of

103 Campeau 3.248; Thwaites 9.127.
104 Doiron, “Rhétorique Jésuite,” 379.
105 Wrote Loyola in the Constitutions, “They will exercise themselves in preaching and in delivering sacred lectures in a manner suitable for the edification of the people, which is different from the scholastic manner, by endeavoring to learn the vernacular well, to have, as matters previously studied as ready at hand, the means which are most useful for this ministry.” Loyola 201.
material that had already passed through the filters of an interpreter and Buteux. Those facts, coupled with what Bruce Trigger called “[…] the general tendency of European authors of the time to embellish and to fabricate whole addresses,”\textsuperscript{106} make the direct citations following Le Jeune’s account of the myth suspicious indeed. But for European readers who presumably read the Relations with a desire to see proof there that mission work was progressing, Le Jeune’s ultimate dismissal of the myth likely would have been more convincing for apparently having come directly from the mouth of one who previously professed belief in it. The rapidity with which Buteux apparently changed the man’s mind would have served as proof, like other examples of Amerindian speech, that the inhabitants of the New World were capable of conversion. It also would reflect positively on Jesuit methodology and, above all, progress, and reconcile the existence of the Algonquin with biblical truth by demonstrating that their knowledge of creation, potentially a competitor to Genesis, was an easily exposed and not deeply held error. Like the Montagnais and Huron myths, the Algonquin man’s tale is discredited by its perceived logical flaws and its apparently errant interpretation of the Christian tradition. The difference this time is that the ultimate judgment of the myth’s inferiority comes “directly” from the mouth of one who previously believed it.

\textsuperscript{106} Trigger 17.
2.4 Conclusion

On May 28, 2007, the Creation Museum in Petersburg, Kentucky opened its doors to the public. With animatronic dinosaurs, collections of fossils, and realistically recreated prehistoric plant life, the museum in some ways resembles a more traditional natural history museum. But in the Creation Museum’s displays, dinosaurs frolic among human children, the Grand Canyon was created in a matter of days during Noah’s flood, and dinosaurs, like all other animals, were created 6,000 years ago on the sixth day of Creation. In presenting these and other subjects, the $27 million museum interprets evidence that casts doubt on a literal reading of Genesis in such a way that the threat is neutralized. According to the New York Times’ review of the project, “It is a measure of the museum’s daring that dinosaurs and fossils—once considered major challenges to belief in the Bible’s creation story—are here so central, appearing not as tests of faith […] but as creatures no different from the giraffes and cats that still walk the earth.” 107 Like the Jesuits almost four hundred years before them, the modern young Earth creationists who are behind the museum seek to dismiss challenges to biblical Truth by reconciling potentially damaging evidence with scriptural accounts that it appears to contradict. As the Times’ reviewer astutely pointed out, that move might be...

---

more useful in reassuring believers in creationism than in changing the minds of those who seek scientific answers to questions about natural history.

Not only is the very existence of the Creation Museum evidence of the durability of the tactics for coping with challenges to settled and deeply-held knowledge that I have explored in this chapter, it serves nicely to illustrate the larger point I have been trying to make about the Jesuit Relations as a source of knowledge about Amerindian groups. The Creation Museum contains fossils and other objects of legitimate scientific interest. And yet many scientists understandably view the entire enterprise as an affront to science. Upon visiting the museum on opening day, Lawrence Krauss, a Case Western Reserve University physicist, was dismissive of the museum’s attempt to bridge science and religion. “It’s really impressive—and it gives the impression that they’re talking about science at some point. I’d give it a four [out of five] for technology, five for propaganda. As for content, I’d give it a negative five,” he told the Associated Press.¹⁰⁸ Like the fossils in the Creation Museum, the descriptions of Amerindian creation myths in the pages of the Jesuit Relations appear in a context that recasts them as support for the version of the history of the world found in Genesis. The Jesuits, like the curators of the Creation Museum, collected information only in order to explain it in a way consistent with doctrine. Attempts to use the “facts” in the Relations in scientific efforts to understand Amerindian cultures therefore must either carefully consider the influence

of the context in which the facts appear, or attempt to remove them from that context. Not surprisingly, many scholars have opted for the latter strategy, which represents, at least superficially, the easier route. All that has been judged necessary in many cases, as I mentioned earlier, is a simple “decoding,” a filtering out of Jesuit bias.

If only it were so simple. Although the fossils on display at the Creation Museum could theoretically be removed from that context, studied, and used to advance a scientific rather than religious understanding of the world, the “facts” in the Relations remain forever tied to their source through footnotes, bibliographies and the glowing praise of those who mine them for ethnographic data. Attempts to de-contextualize those facts by cleansing them of bias have the distasteful side-effect of suggesting that the Jesuits were more neutral and careful ethnographers than they actually were. Studies of colonial encounters that proceed in this way are therefore doomed to take small, dubious steps forward while simultaneously stepping back, perhaps enlightening one side of French-Amerindian encounters while distorting the other. Jesuit prestige as ethnographers can only grow each time a vivid description of Amerindian life, cleansed of signs of how the priests understood it, is attributed to the Relations.

This leaves only the second option—the careful consideration of context and how it shapes content—as a recommendable strategy for using the “facts” contained in the Relations. In this chapter, I have explored the ways in which the authors of those texts used Amerindian creation myths to shore up the authority of their own beliefs on the
subject. The results of my analysis could be taken by students of Amerindian cultures at the time of colonial contact as an indication of what awaits them should they opt to confront, rather than edit out, the interpretive challenges posed by the Relations. The fact that such myths appear in the Relations as fragments of Genesis to be corrected, instead of as Amerindian beliefs that are interesting in their own right, should give scholars of colonial contact pause in their meditations over how to use the facts in the Relations to increase knowledge of Amerindian cultures without inadvertently distorting the role of the Jesuits. Although they may be an important source on French-Amerindian contact on the ground in seventeenth century, they reveal just as much about the concurrent struggle in the hearts and minds of Europeans.

Few aspects of the descriptions of Amerindian cultures in the Jesuit Relations are as sensational to modern readers as the brutal torture, often followed by cannibalism, that various groups meted out to their enemies. From Le Jeune’s 1632 Briève Relation on, scenes of brutal attack, physical torment of captors that could last for days, and consumption of human flesh were staples of the Jesuits’ annual reports. Many modern scholars have drawn heavily on the texts to reconstruct the torture rituals of the Iroquoian and Algonquian groups that the Jesuits wrote about, and the extreme violence that the priests recorded has been seen by some as an argument that Amerindians were little more than wild animals in the debate over the nature of the inhabitants of the New World that was sparked by Europe’s exploration and colonization of North America. As Cornelius Jaenen noted, “The ultimate proof for many of the devilish nature of the land and its people was their general resistance to conversion, their practice of scalping enemies and subjecting captives to barbaric platform torture,” and their supposed

1 In his influential 1940 article on the torture practices of Amerindian groups in Eastern North America, Nathaniel Knowles labeled Iroquoian methods “platform torture.” Characteristics that distinguish platform torture from the practices of other Amerindian groups include, according to Knowles, the victim’s freedom of movement during the ordeal, his death by knife or bludgeoning (as opposed to during the torture itself), and a cannibalistic element. “Platform torture” is so named for the outdoor platform on which victims were put to death after enduring torture through the night inside a war chief’s dwelling. Nathaniel Knowles, “The Torture of Captives by the Indians of Eastern North America,” Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society 82.2 (1940) 194.
In this chapter, I read descriptions of Amerindian torture and consumption of their enemies in the *Relations* to argue that they often are not the clear examples of animalistic wildness that one might assume from the way they have been used and analyzed by modern scholars, and that when they are, religious and political factors often account for the barbarity attributed to Amerindian perpetrators. Jesuit descriptions of torture and cannibalism are much more than contributions to a strain of European thought that held Amerindians to be wild, irrational creatures. Modern uses of such descriptions that aim solely to reconstruct cruel traditional practices obscure the positive message about Amerindian intellectual and spiritual capacities that, as I will argue, many of them contain.

Among the many questions posed to European thinkers by a new awareness of the American continent was the nature of its inhabitants. Were Amerindians human beings, or humanoid animals? In a sign that the question was regarded as an urgent one by Europeans anxious to determine how New World related to Old, a papal pronouncement just one year after Columbus’ 1492 voyage, and another in 1535, affirmed that Amerindians “were indeed ‘truly men’ who should not ‘in any way be

---

enslaved’ and who were ‘capable of understanding the Catholic faith,’” according to Cornelius Jaenen.³ Wrote Jaenen:

Great debates in Spain had determined, at least for the intelligentsia who paid heed to such arguments, that the native peoples of the Americas were fully human according to two criteria: first, they were reasoning creatures, therefore qualified according to Aristotle to be called human; secondly, they seemed capable of understanding the Christian gospel and receiving divine grace, therefore were part of the Adamic family in need of redemption and salvation. Finally, there was the observation that unions with Europeans did produce fertile offspring.⁴

Although early papal interventions and successful breeding may have established the humanity of Amerindians, the earliest explorers and commentators on the New World unanimously found its people deficient in matters of religion and civilization.⁵ As Robert Berkhofer put it in his book on the subject,

[…] Spaniards found the Indian wanting in a long list of attributes: letters, laws, government, clothing, arts, trade, agriculture, marriage, morals, metal goods, and above all religion. Judgments on these failures might be kind and sympathetic or

⁵ Indeed, the very word used by many early French commentators, including the Jesuits, to designate their New World interlocutors bears the traces of this pessimistic understanding of Amerindian nature. Originally associated with the medieval European Myth of the “wild man,” the term “sauvage” unavoidably suggested a lack of civilization in those to whom it was applied. Writes Robert Berkhofer: “According to medieval legend and art, the wild man was a hairy, naked, club-wielding child of nature who existed halfway between humanity and nature. Lacking civilized knowledge or will, he lived a life of bestial self-fulfillment, directed by instinct, and ignorant of God and morality.” Robert F. Berkhofer, The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present (New York: Knopf, 1978) 13. And yet, even in this term, the line between civilization and its absence was not so clear. As Carole Blackburn put it, “Savagery signified a condition of absence and degeneration, in contrast to a condition of civilization; in this way the two terms defined opposing states that were nevertheless dependent on each other for meaning.” Blackburn 46.
harsh and hostile, but no one argued that the Indian was as good as the European in this early period.6

From this early recognition that the Amerindian other was human but inferior to his European counterpart and in need of education, correction, and civilization, the debate over how to colonize and convert newly encountered peoples quickly organized itself along two conceptions of Amerindian nature, one negative and pessimistic about the prospects for voluntary conversion, and the other positive and optimistic that Amerindians could be convinced through education and evangelization to embrace European customs and religion.7 Berkhofer nicely summarized the two perspectives and their accompanying philosophies of colonization: “[...] was the nature of the Indian so bestial as to demand force and ultimately enslavement to accomplish his conversion to

---

6 Berkhofer 10.

7 Although generally useful in delineating lines of European thought about Amerindian nature, the “good Amerindian” and “bad Amerindian” visions are often not as clearly separated in travel literature as they were in academic debates on the subject in Europe. As Jaenen has noted, popular understandings of the Noble Savage motif as growing out of earlier primitivistic understandings are mistaken, and the two images have long existed side by side. “There is no single, consistent or coherent image presented in the primary sources. [...] even within the writings of an author or compiler, many different attitudes and organizational frameworks are indicated, some of them quite contradictory of each other.” Jaenen, “The Image,” 170. As Réal Ouellet has pointed out, European conceptions of Amerindian nature covered a range of possibilities. “Europeans developed diverse images of the Native peoples of the New World. These representations ran the full range from child of Eden to descendant of Cain. In between were descriptions of behavior found useful and exploited by some explorers and deplored by others.” Réal Ouellet and Mylene Tremblay, “From the Good Savage to the Degenerate Indian,” in Decentering the Renaissance: Canada and Europe in Multidisciplinary Perspective 1500-1700, eds. Germaine Warkentin and Carolyn Podrucny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001). While I recognize that the dichotomy between “good native” and “bad native” lines of thought is perhaps simplistic in some cases, it is a generally accurate and useful depiction of European thought on Amerindian nature at the time.
Christ and Spanish ways, or was the Indian sufficiently rational and human to achieve these goals through peace and example alone?”

Perhaps not surprisingly, alleged brutality toward enemies was a fixture of negative conceptions of Amerindian nature—and therefore also a justification for a more aggressive stance toward potential converts—from the earliest days of contact. Christopher Columbus described the people he encountered as kind and intelligent, inaugurating a line of positive conceptions of Amerindians, but also described fierce, man-eating pillagers, a first negative image from which “came the line of savage images of the Indian as not only hostile but depraved,” according to Berkhofer. In a well-known 1550 debate at Valladolid against Bartolomé de las Casas, Juan Ginès de Sepúlveda cited the cruelty of Amerindians toward their enemies and their much-discussed cannibalistic practices in refuting his opponent’s positive portrait of the inhabitants of the New World:

And don’t think that before the arrival of the Christians they were living in Quiet and the Saturnian peace of the poets. On the contrary they were making war continuously and ferociously against each other and with such rage that they considered their victory worthless if they did not satisfy the monstrous hunger for the flesh of their enemies [...].

---

8 Berkhofer 11.
9 Berkhofer 6-7.
10 Las Casas, for his part, emphasized the gentle, virtuous, and obedient nature of the New World’s inhabitants, painting them as ideal candidates for conversion: “Surely these people would be the most blessed in the world if only they worshipped the true God.” Berkhofer 11.
11 Berkhofer 12.
Both Columbus and Sepúlveda portrayed Amerindians engaged in violence as reflexively ferocious, killing and eating their enemies impulsively, to satisfy hunger for human flesh. In such descriptions, violence cannot be understood as a rational act meant to carry out justice, but only an animalistic one driven by base instinct. Thus, the earliest European portraits of the inhabitants of the New World established their violent practices as an argument for pessimistic assessments of Amerindian nature, and in support of the theory that efforts to “civilize” them would have to be more coercive than convincing.

French debates about the nature of the New World’s inhabitants followed the example of their Spanish predecessors in organizing themselves along positive and negative lines, and according to Jaenen, “Most Frenchmen who showed any interest in America quickly became either indiophiles or indiophobes.” Translations of Spanish works on the subject by Oviedo and Gomara, published in Paris in 1555 and 1558, respectively, “introduced French readers to the view of the Amerindians as sub-human beings possessing ni foi, ni roi, ni loi.” Later in the same century the essayist Michel de

---

12 As Berkhofer notes, Spanish thought likely directly influenced French perceptions of the Amerindian Other, but even if it did not “[…] French and English explorers saw Native Americans in light of the Christianity and civilization they knew and valued and therefore made the same comparisons as had the Spanish adventurers and settlers earlier.” Berkhofer 13.

13 Jaenen, *Friend and Foe*, 16.

14 The French also would have been influenced by the opportunity to contemplate Amerindians brought home by travelers and put on public display in the decades before French exploration of the New World.
Montaigne would offer a much more positive assessment of the inhabitants of the New World. According to Jaenen,

His essay, ‘Des Cannibales,’ unmistakably indicated Montaigne’s belief in the myth of a Golden Age metamorphosed into that of the bon sauvage, and his acceptance of the relativity of customs and mores, which were to his mind grounded ultimately in human opinions and prejudices.15

In Montaigne’s reading, even the supposed horror of Amerindian torture was not proof of intellectual and spiritual inferiority to Europeans. Although he admitted that cruelty toward prisoners was perhaps “contre la raison,” Montaigne, in contrast to many other thinkers of his time, was not willing to count Amerindians incapable of rational thought on those grounds.16

By the time the authors of the Relations began intervening in the discussion, French economic activity and missionary efforts far to the north of Spanish colonies had begun in earnest, and the debate over whether Amerindians were rational, spiritual creatures of God fully capable of embracing Christianity or reflexively violent,

15 Jaenen, Friend and Foe, 147.

instinctual humanoids who could not be converted often broke down along political and religious lines. The Jesuits, holders of a monopoly on missionary work in New France, claimed that reasoned argumentation and long conversation resulted in genuine and heartfelt conversion. Their detractors, spurned would-be Recollet missionaries to New France in particular, spitefully claimed that no such conversion was possible. The Baron de Lahontan summarized the differences between Jesuit and Recollet characterizations of Amerindian nature and the political factors behind them in his 1703 *Nouveaux Voyages de M le Baron de Lahontan dans l’Amérique Septentrionale*:

Les Recollets les traitent de gens stupides, grossiers, rustiques incapables de penser et de réfléchir à quoi que ce soit. Les Jesuites tiennent un langage très différent, car ils soutiennent qu’ils ont du bon sens, de la mémoire, de la vivacité d’esprit, mêlée d’un bon jugement. Les premiers disent qu’il est inutile de passer son temps à prêcher l’Evangile à des gens moins éclairés que les Animaux. Les seconds prétendent au contraire, que ces Sauvages se font un plaisir d’écouter la Parole de Dieu, et qu’ils entendent l’Ecriture avec beaucoup de facilité. Je sçai les raisons qui font parler ainsi les uns et les autres; elles sont assez connues aux Personnes qui sçavent que ces deux ordres de Religieux ne s’accordent pas trop bien en Canada.

The Récollets brand the Savages for stupid, gross and rustick Persons, uncapable of Thought or Reflection: But the Jesuits give them other sort of Language, for they intitle them to good Sense, to a tenacious memory, and to a quick Apprehension season’d with a solid Judgement. The former allege that ’tis to no purpose to preach the Gospel to a sort of people that have less knowledge than the Brutes. On the other hand the latter (I mean the Jesuits) give it out, that these Savages take Pleasure in hearing the word of God, and readily apprehend the

---

17 For a concise discussion of Recollet attitudes toward Amerindians, see Axtell, *The Invasion*, 49-53.

meaning of the scriptures. In the meantime, ‘tis no difficult matter to point to the Reasons that influence the one and the other to such Allegations; the Mystery is easily unravell’d by those who know that these two Orders cannot set their horses together in Canada.\(^\text{19}\)

For their Recollet critics, conversions performed by the Jesuits amounted to training Amerindians to parrot the Jesuits’ religious behavior with no real understanding of its significance.\(^\text{20}\) Indeed, some Recollet authors suggested that the Amerindians of New France were naturally incapable of the reasoning necessary to embrace Christianity.

Louis Hennepin, for example, described Amerindians in his 1697 *Nouvelle Découverte d’un très grand pays situé dans l’Amérique* as

\[\ldots\] nations barbares qui n’ont aucune nature de Religion vraie ou fausse, qui vivent sans regle, sans ordre, sans loix, sans Dieu, et sans culte, dont la raison est absolument ensevelie dans la matière, et incapable des raisonnements les plus communs de la Religion et de la foi. Tels sont les Peuples du Canada \[\ldots\].\(^\text{21}\)

\[\ldots\] barbarous nations who have not any regard of any Religion true or false, who live without Rule, without Order, without Law, without God, without

\(^{19}\) Baron de Lahontan, *New Voyages to North America, Giving a full account of the Customs, Commerce, Religion, and strange opinions of the savages of that Country. With Political Remarks upon the Courts of Portugal and Denmark, and the present State of the Commerce of those Countries* (London: H Bonwicke, 1703) vol 2, 3.

\(^{20}\) Chrestien Le Clercq wrote that Amerindians were “cut off from intercourse, living in the Indian way, incompatible with real Christianity, giving no signs of religion but the chants of hymns and prayers, or some exterior and very equivocal ceremonies.” Chrestien Le Clercq, *Premier Etablissement de la Doy dans la Nouvelle-France: contenant la publication de l’Evangile, l’histoire des colonies françaises; les fameuses découvertes depuis le fleuve de Saint Laurent, la Louisiane; le fleuve Colbert jusqu’au Golphe Mexique, achevées sous la conduite de feu monsieur de la Salle: avec les victoires remportées en Canada par les armes de sa majesté sur les anglois et les iroquois en 1690* (Paris: Amable Auroy, 1691) I.31-36. (Cited in George R. Healy, “The French Jesuits and the Idea of the Noble Savage,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 15.2(1958) 154).

Worship, where Reason is buried in Matter, and incapable of reasoning the most common things of Religion and Faith. Such are the people of Canada [...].

Accordingly, claims that the Jesuits had not truly converted anyone were staples of complaints by spurned rivals of the Jesuits in the seventeenth century. Christien Le Clercq mockingly called Jesuit claims to progress “ces grands succez prétendus, que l’on vante sans apparence mesme de vérité” (“Those grand so-called successes that they brag about without any appearance of truth”), and Recollet Historian Sixte Le Tac similarly derided Jesuit publications as “[des] livres farcis des contes que l’on fait d’eux pour tromper le public [...]” (“Books stuffed with stories that they make up to fool the public”). Under the pen of spurned Recollet missionaries, familiar negative images of men too simple and backward to be converted to Christianity by evangelization alone became a weapon with which to discredit the supposed successes of a rival missionary group.

Naturally, the Jesuits protested that the conversions they reported were genuine and that Amerindians were indeed capable of thoughtfully embracing Christianity. That the Amerindian groups described in the Jesuit Relations later came to loom large in the

---


23 Le Clercq vol. 1, 546; My translation.

noble savage” myth of Enlightenment France “[...] must be ascribed to the voluminous Relations of the Jesuits [which] often provided flattering descriptions of Native Americans and their ways of life in order to gain contributions for missionary work from the faithful and to prove points against their Jansenist and atheistic opponents,” claimed Berkhofer.25 I will argue in this chapter that descriptions of Amerindian cruelty in the Relations participate fully in the Jesuit project of asserting the capacity of New World inhabitants to embrace Christianity and defending their own claims of progress from skeptics in France, and also were influenced by the position of missionary authors in Amerindian political relations. Although it is certainly true, as Berkhofer acknowledges, that the Relations contain many depictions of Amerindians as wild, violent, and uncivilized,26 I will argue that those analyzing torture scenes in the Relations have been too quick to read them as straightforward accounts of Amerindian cruelty, perhaps influenced by the long tradition of associating violence with negative

25 Berkhofer 74.
26 Berkhofer 74. Assessments of the positive or negative overall tone of portraits of Amerindians in the Relations have differed. In the early years of the Relations, as far as George Healy was concerned, the Jesuits found more bad than good in New France, dwelling on the “depravity and horror” of the Amerindians, with more positive characterizations coming toward the end of the series. Although the fact that the Jesuits apparently vacillated between positive and negative images of Amerindian nature is often acknowledged, the logic governing their vacillation has been inadequately analyzed, although Healy did point out, in passing, that positive characterizations of Amerindians in the Relations are usually descriptions of converts whose excellence is only a result of newfound faith, an insight that is key to my argument in the next section of this dissertation. Healy 149. Healy’s assessment, of course, is not the only opinion on the subject. Gilbert Chinard, for example, saw the Relations as overwhelmingly positive on the subject of Amerindian nature, despite occasional exceptions. Chinard 147.
understandings of Amerindian nature that I briefly traced earlier. George Healy, for example, remarked in his influential 1958 article that

[…] the documents do contain some remarkably laudatory comments on the Indian; but they are much more copiously filled, and especially in the early accounts, with tediously detailed descriptions of the cruelty, lust, gluttony, thievery, polygamy, sodomy, cannibalism, filth, superstition, lying, blasphemy, and general barbarity of the Jesuits’ reluctant neophytes.27

For Healy, brutal torture was one item in a long list of unsavory topics that added up to a negative portrait of Amerindians in the early Relations, to be replaced gradually in later years by a more positive assessment. More recently, Carole Blackburn claimed that torture and cannibalism in the Relations were signs of “savagery” for the Jesuit writers,28 Yvon le Bras has asserted that even the normally relativistic Paul Le Jeune condemned torture practices as contrary to civilization,29 and Réal Ouellet and Mylene Tremblay have placed the torture scenes in the Relations in a tradition of depictions of Amerindians as “diabolical savages.”30

Despite the longstanding and seemingly logical tradition of understanding descriptions of torture and cannibalism as part of a pessimistic assessment of the intellectual and rational faculties of Amerindian potential converts, I will suggest in the

27 Healy 149.
28 Blackburn 63-64.
29 Wrote Le Bras: “[…] quand il s’agit d’évoquer un sujet aussi choquant que celui de la torture, l’attitude toute relativisant du missionnaire fait place à la dénonciation de pratiques si contraires, selon lui, aux mœurs des civilisés.” Le Bras 35.
30 Ouellet and Tremlay 162.
coming pages that torture stories in the Relations just as often convey a positive message about the capacity of Amerindians to embrace Catholicism. Although such passages often have been understood to depict the routine brutality of Amerindian groups toward their enemies, restoring the Jesuits’ accounts to their original context often reveals that the cruelty in question is inextricably linked to a favorable assessment of the capacity of Amerindians to change, or to the Jesuits’ political relationship to the group whose violent behavior is being described.

As Georges Sioui—himself a Huron-Wendat—has pointed out, much was at stake in the Jesuit descriptions of torture:

[...] evoking the Amerindians’ bloody cruelty was a powerful means used by the colonial (mainly religious) authorities to attract the favour, sympathy, and financial support of their country’s upper classes. Aside from this self-seeking attitude, some sources, particularly oral accounts, indicate that torture and its corollary, cannibalism, never had the importance attributed to them.31

Sioui argues that colonial writers exaggerated torture and cannibalism in their haste to titillate readers and spur them to action in support of the colonial and missionary enterprise, and that modern scholars basing their assessments on accounts such as those found in the Jesuit Relations have been duped into giving Amerindian violence more cultural importance that it actually had at the time of contact. I will leave to others more qualified than me the task of judging the importance of torture and cannibalism in early

contact Amerindian cultures,\textsuperscript{32} but I join Sioui in suggesting that Jesuit chroniclers of Amerindian cruelty were motivated by more than a concern for careful documentation of the cultures they encountered. Here I focus on the agendas and assumptions behind Jesuit accounts of torture and cannibalism, and how the information they provided would have been received by their readers. Reading passages that describe Amerindian violence from this perspective reveals that there is more to them than modern scholars have typically made clear, and contributes to the argument I began developing in the previous chapter of this dissertation about the relationship between Jesuit ethnography and the political and intellectual questions that gripped Europe during the colonial period, and its consequences for modern efforts to understand the Amerindian groups the Jesuits wrote about. As in the case of scholarly uses of the Jesuit versions of Amerindian creation myths treated in the first chapter of this dissertation, selective

\textsuperscript{32} Particularly with regard to cannibalism, the question has been hotly debated in recent decades. William Arens touched off this debate in his much-discussed 1979 book The Man-Eating Myth by expressing doubt that any culture ever practiced ritualistic cannibalism. Arens argued that anthropologists had relied uncritically on accounts of such rituals, and had accepted their truth without adequate reflection. William Arens, The Man-Eating Myth: anthropology and anthropophagy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979) 10. Arens’ book prompted a flurry of indignant responses. Some scholars argued that the evidence supporting the existence of ritual cannibalism was conclusive. (See, for example, Thomas S. Abler, “Iroquois Cannibalism: Fact not Fiction,” Ethnology 27.4(1980): 309-316.) Other discussants blasted Arens for his argument, comparing it to holocaust denial. (For an examination of these charges, see Peter Hulme, “Introduction: The cannibal scene,” Cannibalism and the Colonial World, eds. Francis Barker, Hulme, and Maraget Iversen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 6-16.) Largely lost in the dispute over the existence of ritual cannibalism was a not-meritless question Arens posed in his book: was anthropology, as a discipline, being careful enough in its use of centuries-old writings by colonizers? I do not intend to intervene here in the debate over whether ritual cannibalism ever existed, which seems settled in the affirmative to me. Instead, I intend to heed Arens’ call for a more critical reading of colonial texts describing cannibalism and the violence that often preceded it.
summarizing and quotation have resulted in features of Jesuit torture accounts that were originally deployed in the service of a religious argument or in light of a particular political situation being invested with traditional cultural significance, turning on its head the message Jesuits attempted to convey in recounting the violent practices of various Amerindian groups.

My argument in this chapter follows two threads, corresponding to the two sections that follow my introductory comments here. First, contrary to interpretations of torture scenes in the Relations as evidence of a pessimistic Jesuit attitude toward Amerindian nature, such stories almost always convey optimistic messages about the capacity of Amerindians to embrace Catholicism and to remain true to their new religion. Events that might reasonably be considered steps backward for the fledgling mission—the torture and death of some of the precious few converts and of some of the missionaries themselves—serve as are consistently rhetorically transformed into victories by the authors of the Relations. Converts who are tortured to death are depicted as having

---

33 Eight missionaries who were tortured and killed during the Jesuits’ tenure in New France were beatified in the 20th century. I have opted to focus here on Jesuit descriptions of torture of and by Amerindians, since the torture of priests had obvious and immediate religious significance. As Carole Blackburn has noted, “Many Jesuits thought that martyrdom was necessary in order to plant the faith in New France. [...] the ‘Blood of the Martyrs’ was ‘the seed and germ of Christians,’ not least because the Jesuits believed that their willingness to die would impress people with the truth of their teaching” Blackburn 65. And Guy Lafleche has pointed out that accounts of Jesuit martyrdom are not necessarily accurate, but were, in Blackburn’s words, “manipulated in order to achieve the impression of martyrdom” (Blackburn 150 n14). See also Guy Lafleche, Les Saints Martyrs Canadiens: Histoire du Mythe (Laval, Québec : Singulier, 1988). Perhaps because of their clear and specific religious significance, accounts of the torture and execution of Jesuits have not played the same role as accounts of Amerindian-on-Amerindian violence in the reconstruction of torture rituals by modern scholars. It is for this reason that I have opted not to dwell on such passages here, fascinating though they may be.
survived hell on earth without losing faith, reinforcing the Jesuits’ message that Amerindians were capable of embracing Christianity and that Jesuit methods were effective in leading them to do so, and pushing back against the competing European viewpoint that Amerindians were too brutish, savage and unreasonable to convert—the very viewpoint that is sometimes alleged to be supported by the torture scenes Jesuits described. In the context of Jesuit arguments about the sincere religious conversions of torture victims, I will argue, the extreme violence Jesuits reported serves primarily to amplify the credibility of missionary claims about conversions. Uses of such passages in attempts to reconstruct the normal behavior of Amerindians therefore often miss the point, and ascribe traditional cultural significance to behavior that the Jesuits described explicitly as Christian.

The second part of my argument in this chapter traces Jesuit depictions of those engaged in torture and cannibalism with regard to the missionaries’ political position in New France. Although, as I will demonstrate in the first part of my argument, the stoicism of victims of torture and the ferocity of their tormentors work together to bolster the missionaries’ point about Amerindians’ capacity for faith, it is also true that the missionary authors characterized cruel and cannibalistic acts differently depending on whether they were carried out by allies or enemies of the French. Here again, the notion that Amerindian violence in the Jesuit Relations fits neatly on one side or the other of European debates over the nature of potential converts breaks down. French allies
engaged in violence often are depicted as constrained to torture and eat their enemies by
custom, regardless of whether they enjoy it, and readers are reminded that even France
has its share of unsavory customs. Enemies of the French, on the other hand, reportedly
pounce on whoever happens to cross their paths, apparently motivated purely by
bloodlust, and are said to relish eating human flesh. Though always distasteful, torture
and cannibalism are depicted as carefully observed rites or instinctive violence
depending on the perpetrators’ political relationship to the Jesuit authors. This
difference, easily explained by the Jesuits’ alliance with some groups and adversarial
relationship to others, had consequences for the West’s understanding of various
Amerindian groups that are still discernible in both scholarship and pop culture, and
across modern political divides.

Before turning my attention to scenes of torture in the Relations, a brief word
about the context in which they would have been read is instructive, since it is likely that
they have grown more scandalous with age. As Carole Blackburn has noted, public
torture as a form of punishment was not uncommon in Europe at the time the Relations
were first published.34 It was not so much the execution of a prisoner as a means of

34 Blackburn argues that “Although Le Jeune associated it with savagery, this association belies the fact that
in Europe as well as North America torture was never simply an expression of “lawless rage,” such as
would be associated with the absence of law and order; it was the result of premeditated and often carefully
controlled technique—planned, regulated, sanctioned.” Blackburn 63. It is with this kind of neat
categorization of Amerindian cruelty that I take issue in this chapter. As I will argue, the missionary authors
did not uniformly associate torture with savagery, but sometimes, I will argue, it was indeed a simple
expression of “lawless” and animalistic rage.
exacting justice that the Jesuits found remarkable, but what they saw as the excessive cruelty that preceded death. François Le Mercier draws a clear distinction between European and Amerindian practices in a conversation with a Huron man in his 1637 Relation from the Huron mission, during a brief pause in the torture scene that is considered in the following section of this chapter: “Nous en faisons mourir, mais non pas avec ceste cruauté. […] Le feu n’est que pour les crimes énormes et il n’y a qu’une personne à qui appartienne en chef ceste exécution. Et puis on ne les fait pas languir si longtemps” (“We kill them, but not with this cruelty. […] fire is only for enormous crimes, and there is only one person to whom this kind of execution belongs by right; and besides, they are not made to linger so long”). Despite the differences that the priest claimed existed between French and Amerindian practices, there is reason to believe, as Cornelius Jaenen has pointed out, that the seemingly chaotic violence of a large group against a single person would not have been so unfamiliar to French readers. Wrote Jaenen,

[…] judicial torture and capital punishment were just as vicious and cruel in contemporary European societies. Heretics, for example, like people accused of sorcery, could be gnawed by starving rats or torn by raging swine; they could be made to endure the most refined tortures of rack and wheel and other devilish devices, and later beaten with rods in public, hanged, have their entrails burned before their yet living eyes, and their corpses dragged away to the dung heap. That was the measure of mercy and justice of French society

35 Campeau 3.706; Thwaites 13.75.
against which evaluations of comments about Amerindian barbarism and cruelty should be measured.\textsuperscript{36}

With public torture, execution and widespread wartime atrocities more familiar to French readers than they are to contemporary commentators, it is not unreasonable to believe that seventeenth century readers of the \textit{Relations} would have been less fixated on the gruesome details of Amerindian torture practices than modern readers often are, and therefore less likely to lose sight of the religious and political significance with which the Jesuits, as I will now argue, invested their accounts.

3.1 Torture and Conversion: the case of Joseph the Iroquois Captive

François Le Mercier’s 1637 account of the torture and execution of an Iroquois prisoner at the hands of his Huron captors is one of the most detailed accounts of Amerindian violence in the \textit{Jesuit Relations} and is, for this reason, a favorite source for scholars who study that aspect of the cultures the Jesuits encountered.\textsuperscript{37} The victim, one of seven men taken prisoner following a Huron raid on a group of Iroquois fishermen, was given to an influential Huron leader as a replacement for a nephew who had been captured by the Iroquois. Such replacement reportedly could involve adoption, in which case the captive would fulfill the role in family and village affairs of the deceased.

\textsuperscript{36} Jaenen, \textit{Friend and Foe}, 121.

\textsuperscript{37} The account that I summarize here can be found in Campeau 3.694-708.
nephew, or violent death, in which the nephew’s death would be offset by the death of an enemy. The captive in Le Mercier’s account was selected for the second fate. At the time of his arrival in the Huron village where he would ultimately be put to death and where Le Mercier first encountered him, the prisoner showed the signs of an arduous journey. One hand, which had been crushed by a rock, was missing a finger. The other hand was missing the thumb and a finger, and the joints of the captive’s arms were burned and deeply cut. The Jesuit witnesses reportedly wasted no time reaching out to the captive to begin trying to convert him, promising him eternal happiness in heaven. The captive, according to Le Mercier, listened with pleasure and understood so well that he was able to recite back to the priests what he had learned about heaven, hell, and the immortality of the soul.

Over the course of several days, the Iroquois man was treated with kindness by his captors, behavior that Le Mercier cynically viewed as intended to make the torture to

---

38 It seems, at least according to outside observers, that captured enemies were always assigned by village leaders to replace specific individuals who had been killed by enemies, as a means of offsetting the loss. According to Trigger, “Every prisoner was adopted by the family to whom he had been given. Almost invariably, enemy women and children were integrated into these families and lived the rest of their lives with them [...] If the appearance, personality, or skills of an adult male were pleasing to his adoptive family, they might decide to spare his life. So long as he behaved well, he would be treated kindly and might be given the rank and titles of the dead man he replaced. Like the women and children, he would gradually become a loyal member of his new family and in time he might go to war against his own people. This transformation was psychologically motivated by the captive’s knowledge that the majority of male prisoners were condemned by their adoptive parents to death by torture. This was the most satisfying revenge that a family could take for the loss of one of its own members” (Trigger 72). Male captives, then, were meant to offset the loss of a dead loved one, whether by living the life of the deceased, or by dying to compensate for his death. The Jesuits apparently understood that adoption and torture were therefore two sides of the same coin in dealing with prisoners, but, as I will soon show, nonetheless invested Amerindian torture practices with very different meaning.
come more unbearable.\textsuperscript{39} Meanwhile, the Jesuits continued to instruct him in the Catholic faith, baptizing him and naming him Joseph on his first night in the village when they found themselves sharing a cabin with him. As Le Mercier hastened to point out, the successful conversion of Joseph made him the very first convert among the Onondaga nation of the Iroquois league, a doubly-significant event heralding not only the gain of a single soul to Christianity, but also the potential opening of an entire nation to conversion. The following day brought more opportunities to instruct the new convert, and more chances for him to reaffirm his faith, since the Jesuits once again found themselves sharing sleeping space with Joseph, this time in a nearby village where the prisoner has been taken for reasons that are not explicitly given in the text. On the third day, when the prisoner’s torture was set to begin, Joseph again was approached by the Jesuits and instructed in Catholic faith, and affirmed once more his desire to die a Christian and to go to heaven. With his execution imminent, the priests told him once more about the happiness that awaited him after death, gave him absolution for his sins, and then watched as his captors took him away.

The torture that ultimately cost Joseph his life began at sundown on the third day. Le Mercier painted a frightening image of the torture scene prepared for Joseph.

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{39} “Tous ceux qui estoient autour de luy avec leur douceur estudiée et leurs belles paroles estoient autant de bourreaux, qui ne luy foisaient bon visage que pour le traitter par après avec plus de cruauté” (“All those who surrounded him, with their affected kindness and their fine words, were so many butchers who showed him a smiling face to treat him afterwards with more cruelty”) Campeau 3.696; Thwaites 13.41-43.
\end{quote}
Eleven fires ringed the interior of the cabin belonging to Atsan, the village war captain. The cabin was so full of eager would-be tormentors that they were practically stacked one on top of the other, gleefully shouting and preparing embers with which to burn Joseph. The captive was made to run around the fires in the cabin, while spectators burned him with fiery pokers on his way by. Joseph often was stopped at the end of the cabin, where bones in his hands were broken and his ears were pierced with sticks, among other torments. After each trip around the cabin’s fires, he was allowed to catch his breath while standing in a bed of hot coals. Finally, on his seventh trip around the cabin, the victim’s strength failed him. The fires were extinguished and Joseph was given water to revive him. But the respite was short. What followed was so terrible that Le Mercier and his companions found themselves unable to watch, and therefore reported only what they overheard: Joseph’s remaining fingers were broken, and the burning of his skin with hot pokers was resumed, with each tormentor reportedly striving to outdo his comrades in cruelty. The torture continued through the night.

At daybreak, the villagers began preparations for Joseph’s death by building fires outside the village. Once again, Jesuit onlookers managed to speak alone to the captive, giving him absolution after a hasty lesson on sin and divine forgiveness. Joseph was led outside, where he was burned even more cruelly than before. Whereas previous instances of burning focused mostly on his legs, Joseph’s tormentors this time left no part of his body unburned, targeting even his eyes. Finally, when Joseph no longer
appeared able to move, his hand and foot were cut off, immediately followed by his head, which was preserved for presentation to a war captain. His torso was, Le Mercier implies, destined to be eaten the same day.

It is surely due to the unsurpassed detail of the plight of Joseph the Iroquois prisoner that the incident described above has become a standard account of Iroquoian torture practices for students of Amerindian cultures at the time of contact with Europeans. Bruce Trigger used Le Mercier’s account as the basis for a general description of Huron torture rites in his authoritative ethnohistory The Children of Aataentsic. Elizabeth Tooker offered a detailed summary of the incident as an example of typical Huron torture practices in her Ethnography of the Huron Indians, as did Peggy Reeves Sanday in a wider discussion of Iroquoian torture and cannibalism in her book Divine Hunger. Nathanial Knowles quoted Reuben Gold Thwaites’ translation of Le Mercier’s account of the incident at great length (although, as I will discuss later, selectively), and claimed that the incident was “reasonably typical of the tortures inflicted by Iroquoian speaking peoples of upper New York State and Canada” and also a good indication of the practices of some Algonquian groups, since the Montagnais,

40 Trigger 73-75, FN #45 p441.
41 Tooker’s blow-by-blow version of Le Mercier’s account appears on pages 34-38 of her book.
Knowles claimed, imitated Iroquoian torture and cannibalism practices. Not only has Joseph’s ordeal come to be regarded as the standard account of Huron torture practices, it has been taken by some to represent Iroquoian—and sometimes even Algonquian—practices more generally. In the coming pages I will argue that such readings of the scene ignore the fact that it also served as the account of a doubly significant religious milestone, a successful conversion that also marked the first success story among a previously uninitiated group. The message that the captive embraced Christianity, I will argue, is inextricably linked to the extreme violence Jesuits depicted, and attempts to separate the violent details of the incident from the Jesuits’ religious message have led to missionaries’ comments on the stoicism displayed by captives facing physical torment to be incorrectly interpreted as a depiction of romantic Amerindian courage, rather than the sign of newfound Christian faith that the missionary writers suggested it was.

Summaries of Le Mercier’s 1637 report offered by Trigger, Tooker, Knowles and Sanday, although very detailed, fail to account for its role as a tale of religious conversion. One need look no further than the titles of Le Mercier’s account and the summaries and excerpts of it offered by modern scholars to see what has been edited out. Le Mercier told the story in a chapter entitled “Les excessives cruautez des hommes et les grandes miséricordes de Dieu sur la personne d’un prisonnier de guerre, Iroquois de nation.” The title indicates that the priest’s graphic account of physical torture was not motivated

---

43 Knowles 181, 190.
solely by macabre curiosity or a desire to inform. A soul was clearly at stake. Twentieth-century scholars, in contrast, have placed their versions of the story under headings that reflect only their own understandable interest in the ethnographic data on torture provided by Le Mercier’s account. Tooker includes the story in a section of her book titled “Torture of Prisoners,” Trigger’s summary comes under the heading “Prisoner Sacrifice,” Sanday’s version is in a chapter called ‘the Faces of the Soul’s Desires: Iroquoian Torture and Cannibalism in the Seventeenth Century,” and the title of Knowles’ article—“The Torture of Captives by the Indians of Eastern North America,”—similarly avoids reference to the religious message of Le Mercier’s version. In the coming pages, I will first analyze Le Mercier’s account in order to discern how its religious message is related to the details of the Iroquoian torture ritual. I will then reflect on the consequences of the selective reading of the passage that has been performed by students of Amerindian cultures. In the same way that Jesuit interrogations of Amerindian beliefs about Creation are—as I argued in the previous chapter—best understood through the lens of Jesuit pedagogical practices of questioning, the torture of Joseph can be profitably understood in relation to the Jesuit pedagogical tradition of theatre.\textsuperscript{44} As I hope to make clear, Joseph’s ordeal is presented

\textsuperscript{44} The use of theatre in Jesuit pedagogy can be traced to Ignatius Loyola himself, who called for the use of “dialogues” in the order’s schools. The 1599 Ratio Studiorum specifically called for the occasional staging of tragedies and comedies with edifying themes in the Jesuit colleges (Farrell 17), and such presentations were common both in European schools and in Jesuit missions in the 16th and 17th centuries. Subjects including the original sin in the Garden of Eden, the Passion of Christ, and the martyrdom of saints were
not as a straightforward account of Amerindian cruelty, but as a staging of the Passion of Christ, an edifying scene that assured not only Joseph’s conversion, but also was an effective tool for teaching onlookers about Catholic doctrine.

As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the capacity of Amerindians to embrace Christianity—and of the Jesuits to inspire them to do so—was a matter of debate in seventeenth century France. The story of Joseph the Iroquois captive who endured brutal torture while adhering resolutely to his newfound faith would have assured readers that heartfelt conversions on the part of Amerindians were indeed possible. Le Mercier insists throughout his account that Joseph’s conversion was genuine. As should be clear from my summary of the story, Joseph reportedly was an attentive and enthusiastic student of Catholicism, and quickly mastered the priests’ lessons. After an initial lesson on heaven, hell, and the immortality of the soul, the prisoner demonstrated his receptivity, Le Mercier claimed: “Vostre Révérence eust eu de la consolation de voir avec quelle attention il escouta ce discours. Il y prist tant de plaisir et le comprist si bien qu’il le répéta en peu de mots et tesmoigna un grand plaisir d’aller au ciel” (“Your reverence would have felt consolation in seeing with what attention he

listened to this discourse. He took so much pleasure in it and understood it so well that he repeated it in a few words, and showed a great desire to go to Heaven”). By prefacing his comments on Joseph’s reaction to the message with speculation about the favorable impression he expected it to make on readers in Europe, Le Mercier indicated that he was aware that more was at stake in Joseph’s conversion than a single soul in New France. The story also, he suggested, was important for the message it would send to readers in France who were hungry for news of progress, and perhaps were even skeptical that such conversions were possible.

Later, after a lesson on God’s universal love, to which, the reader is told, the captive listened attentively, the priests found him so well disposed to conversion that they opted to baptize him immediately, naming him Joseph. Repeated insistence on the attentiveness with which the Iroquois prisoner listened to their message, and the pleasure and comprehension he displayed, suggests that the conversion described in the passage is no mere mimicry of Jesuit behavior, but a profound spiritual change. Reinforcement of that message comes as the new convert affirms his faith at least three more times, including after suffering brutal torments at the hands of his captors.47

45 Campeau 3.696; Thwaites 13.43.
46 Campeau 3.697-698; Thwaites 13.47.
47 Campeau 3.699, 3.701, 3.706.
Readers additionally would have been reminded that the captive had converted each time he was referred to by his new Christian name\(^{48}\) or as “nostre nouveau Chrétien.”\(^{49}\)

If these explicit reminders of the captive’s conversion were not enough to convince the reader of his faith, Le Mercier’s account frames Joseph’s plight as an enactment of a foundational Christian scene of suffering, that of Jesus’ crucifixion. Much the same way Jesus was turned over to the governor Pontius Pilate who then delivered him into the hands of his executioners,\(^{50}\) Joseph reportedly was given to “une des grosses testes du pays,”\(^{51}\) who decided his fate and then turned him over to his Huron compatriots to be tortured. And just as Jesus was dressed by his captors and adorned with a crown of thorns,\(^{52}\) Joseph was dressed in a beaver robe and made to wear a crown of Pourcellaine.\(^{53}\) After recounting a brutal round of torture, Le Mercier makes the comparison explicit: “Néantmoins, une âme bien unie avec Dieu eust eu là une belle occasion de méditer les mystères adorables de la passion de Nostre-Seigneur, dont nous

\(^{48}\) See Campeau 3.699, 3.700, 3.701, etc.

\(^{49}\) See, for example, Campeau 3.705.

\(^{50}\) See, for example, Matthew 27.1-2. The gospels of Mark, Luke and John contain similar accounts.

\(^{51}\) Campeau 3.695; “One of the chief men of the country” Thwaites 13.39.

\(^{52}\) Matthew 27.29.

\(^{53}\) Pourcellaine, sometimes translated as wampum (see Tooker 8 and Trigger 198, for examples), refers to the decorative shell beads that apparently were traded among Amerindian groups at the time of contact. Recollet missionary Gabriel Sagard described the beads thus in his 1632 book: “Ces porcelains sont des os de ces grandes coquilles de mer qu’on appelle vignoles, semblables à des limaçons, lesquels ils découpent en mille pièces, puis les polissent sur un grès, les percent et en font des colliers et bracelets avec grand-peine et travail.” Gabriel Sagard, Grand Voyage du Pays des Hurons, ed. Réal Ouellet (Montréal : Bibliothèque Québécoise, 1990) 225-226.
avions quelque image devant nos yeux” (“Yet a soul closely united to God would have here a suitable occasion to meditate upon the adorable mysteries of the Passion of our Lord, some image of which we had before our eyes”). Suggesting that the suffering endured by the Iroquois captive was more a passion play than a typical scene of Amerindian cruelty was perhaps the highest praise Le Mercier could bestow on the dying convert, and the most persuasive argument he could muster that Joseph’s conversion was genuine. As Howard Harrod has remarked, the imitation of Christ was a particularly esteemed sign of faith for the Jesuits. In Le Mercier’s account, the captive was clearly no mere captured wild man superficially imitating the actions of friendly Jesuits while being tortured as custom dictated, but a devoted Christian following in the footsteps of Christ.

If Joseph’s tale is to be read as an example of sincere conversion and steadfast adherence to newfound Christian faith, the torments described by Le Mercier cannot be interpreted as Amerindian business as usual, for they unavoidably have religious

54 Campeau 3.705; Thwaites 13.71.

55 Wrote Harrod, “[.] The motif of the imitation of Christ is a fundamental and originating theme of Jesuit spirituality and asceticism [.].” Howard L. Harrod, “Missionary Life World and Native Response: Jesuits in New France,” Studies in Religion 13.2(1984): 183. As Carole Blackburn has pointed out, drawing on Harrod’s argument, the importance Jesuit spirituality accorded to the imitation of Christ made martyrdom an especially desirable fate for a Jesuit missionary. Blackburn 66. Frank Lestringant made a similar point with regard to the travails of martyred French Jesuits in his influential literary study of cannibalism: “Cannibalism may well have been part of a vengeance ritual, but to the Jesuit historiographer it acquired perforce another meaning. It is one stage of a Passion, an imitation of the sufferings of Christ on the cross” Frank Lestringant, Cannibals: The Discovery and Representation of the Cannibal from Columbus to Jules Verne, trans. Rosemary Morris (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) 134).
significance. Le Mercier himself described in religiously loaded terms the scene that awaited Joseph in the cabin where his torture was to take place: “Il falloit estre là pour voir une vive image de l’enfer” (“One must be there to see a living picture of hell”). The tormentors, shrouded in smoke, packed so tightly into the space that they were practically stacked one on top of the other, and brandishing hot pokers, were said to resemble demons, and the cabin itself seemed to be consumed by fire, calling to mind biblical descriptions of hell as a fiery place. Joseph himself “crioit comme une âme damnée” (“shrieked like a lost soul”) as his tormentors burned him as he ran past them. As Blackburn has rightly pointed out, such descriptions of torture in the Relations often appear “as a visible manifestation in this world of the consequences of the absence of belief and the abandonment of and by God.” Indeed, Jesuits elsewhere reported the use of comparisons between torture and hell to frighten the Huron into converting. In Jérome Lalemant’s 1643 Relation from the Huron mission, for example, a convert addresses the crowd assembled to torture a captive:

[…] le temps de tout son bonheur est passé et maintenant qu’il brûle dans les flammes, la seule mort peut mettre fin à ses misères. Mes compassions sont pour vous-mesmes. Car je crains pour vous, infidèles, des malheurs mille fois

56 Campeau 3.702; Thwaites 13.63.
57 In Matthew 13:41-42, for example, hell is referred to as “the furnace of fire.”
58 Campeau 3.702; Thwaites 13.63. Campeau’s edition mistakenly gives the end of this quote as “une âme damnée.” The original Cramoisy edition confirms that “une âme damnée” is correct.
59 Blackburn 63.
plus terribles et des flammes plus dévorantes, à qui vostre mort donnera le commencement et qui jamais n’auront de fin.  

[…] the time of all his happiness is past, and, now that he burns in the flames, death alone can put an end to his miseries. My compassion is for yourselves; for I fear for you, infidels, woes a thousand times more terrible, and flames more devouring—for which your death will furnish a beginning, and which will never have an end.

Although comparisons between visibly excruciating torture and hell may well have been a useful threat for winning converts, this insight does not explain why the missionary authors would use this tool in a text destined for French Catholic readers. The inclusion of hell imagery in a text designed to win material support for the Jesuits missionary efforts is better explained, I would argue, by a desire to convince readers of the sincerity of Joseph’s conversion. In the context of the prisoner’s instruction, conversion, and repeated protestations of faith, Le Mercier’s observation that the torments endured by the new Christian resembled those that occur in hell serves to amplify the severity of the test of Joseph’s faith. The more hellish his ordeal, the more convincing his reported conversion would have been to French readers.

In addition to the religious implications of the cruelty displayed by Joseph’s torturers, it also likely would have fostered a sense of connection to events in New France in readers. As Mary Baine Campbell observed in her analysis of torture scenes in

60 Campeau 6.643.
61 Thwaites 29.265.
Lafitau’s *Moeurs des Sauvages Américains*, the exhaustive and graphic nature of Lafitau’s descriptions of torture—traits that, to my mind, are shared by Le Mercier’s account—impose on the reader an invitation to engagement, whether in the pain of the victim or in the sadistic gratification or the tormentor:

They force upon us the impression of the victim’s subjectivity. We may repudiate that victimization, but if we do then we share the weaker sensations of the torturers and flesh eaters, who are also Americans, and at their most ‘sauvage.’ Either way we are sharing a virtual experience with American persons, rather than coolly observing a systematic pattern of lineage [...].

I have argued in this section that readers were invited to recognize Joseph as a Christ figure, but as Campbell points out, rejection of that invitation would entail identifying with his tormentors, and their zeal for public punishment of an enemy that, as I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, would have been recognizable to seventeenth century readers. Whether drawn to Joseph as a Christian acting out the Passion or to the sadistic cruelty of his tormentors, then, readers could have seen something of their own beliefs and customs in Le Mercier’s account. Far from marking the horrifying difference of Amerindian cultures, then, torture scenes like that involving Joseph the Iroquois captive can be understood to bridge the gap between Old and New World, and to render the exotic familiar.

As the preceding discussion suggests, there is much more at stake in the torture of the Iroquois captive than the documentation of traditional cruelty of Iroquoian groups

---

62 Campbell 304.
toward their enemies. The scene constitutes a potentially persuasive reply to the doubts about mission progress and about the capacity of Amerindians for spiritual change that were raised during the seventeenth century. Potentially grim news about Amerindian cruelty and torture practices was transformed into good news through Le Mercier’s insistence on the positive outcome of the scene: proof that conversions were genuine and the expected entry of a convert into heaven.63 As a pedagogical passion play, Joseph’s ordeal reportedly had its desired effect on uninitiated observers. While preparing the captive for baptism, the priests also instructed others in Catholic faith, since those attending to and guarding Joseph inevitably heard what Jesuits said, Le Mercier claimed.64 In fact, the forum that the torture scene provided was the best opportunity yet for Jesuit attempts to spread their message, the author claimed:

Je ne pense pas que les véritéz chrestiennes ayent esté jamais preschées dans ce pays en une occasion si favorable [\.\.]. Outre cela, Dieu fit naistre trois ou quatre belles occasions au Père Supérieur de prescher son sainct nom à ces barbares et leur expliquer les véritéz chrestiennes.65

63 As Carole Blackburn has remarked, Jesuit accounts of the apparent martyrdom of some of their colleagues transformed bad news into good in the same way. “Indeed, martyrdom makes a triumph out of what one’s enemies may have reasonable considered their own victory. In this way, Vimont could present the events taking place in North America as the unfolding of a Christian drama between good and evil, where ‘the rage of our enemies augments our merit, and their fires, our glory.’” Blackburn 66.

64 Wrote Le Mercier: “Une bonne troupe de sauvages, qui estoient là présens, non seulement ne l’interrompoient point, mais mesme l’escoutèrent avec beaucoup d’attention [\.\.]” [“A good band of Savages who were present, not only did not interrupt him, but even listened to him with close attention].” Campeau 3.697-698; Thwaites 13.47.

65 Campeau 3.698-705.
I do not think that Christian truths have ever been preached in this country on an occasion so favorable [...]. Let us add this, that God furnished to the Father Superior three or four excellent opportunities to preach his Holy name to these barbarians, and to explain to them the Christian truths.66

Not only did the Jesuit methods work wonders in Joseph’s case, but others who happened to hear their preaching and witness the spectacle of Joseph’s Christ-like suffering also showed interest in Catholicism. In Le Mercier’s version of events, then, Amerindian torture practices were a particularly advantageous context in which to preach Christianity. In addition to a stomach-churning scene of the slow destruction of a human life, Le Mercier’s account depicts an especially effective missionary tactic, and sends an optimistic message about Amerindian nature, the order’s progress in the very new Huron mission, and the potential for future successes.

Twentieth century scholars mining Le Mercier’s account for ethnographic details have either missed or dismissed the religious message of the account. One consequence of the separation of the contents of Le Mercier’s account from his message is clear enough in Sanday’s book, in which the author cleanses Le Mercier’s account of its religious significance and then draws conclusions based on the details of the account that the priest included for specifically religious reasons. Sanday rightly points out that the Jesuits were impressed with Joseph’s stoicism: “The Jesuits remarked that during this ordeal the captive bore the pain with patience and that not one abusive or impatient

66 Thwaites 13.49-71.
word escaped his lips in the midst of the taunts and jeers."\(^67\) For Sanday, the captive’s
courage had cultural significance dating back as far as the power struggle between the
twin brothers in the Iroquoian creation myth that I discussed in the first chapter of this
dissertation:

The behavior of the captive during the ritual—his patience, tolerance, courage,
and passive acceptance of the torture—makes him a model of and for the stoic
endurance of great pain. In this behavior, he reflects the power of the Evil Twin,
who promised to give people power, through the masks, to endure pain.
Throughout the torture, the captive endeavors to stand up to his captors, to be
their equal. The competition between the captor and their captive is reminiscent
of the competition between the Good and Evil Twins for mastery.\(^68\)

The flaw in Sanday’s analysis is that it attributes traditional cultural meaning to
behavior that Le Mercier specifically cited as evidence of the victim’s steadfast Christian
faith. Joseph’s stoicism is not, for the priest, a symptom of his Amerindian nature or of
the durable influence of Amerindian mythology, but proof that he has changed, that he
is no longer a typical Iroquois non-believer, but a child of God. The priest makes this
point explicitly in the midst of a long description of Joseph’s torment: “Je ne scay pas ce
que nous fussons devenus, n’eust esté la consolation que nous avions de le considérer,
non plus comme un sauveage du commun, mais comme un enfant de l’Eglise […]” \(\text{“I do}
not know what would have become of us had it not been for the consolation we had of

\(^{67}\) Sanday 142.

\(^{68}\) Sanday 143.
considering him, no longer as a common savage, but as a child of the church […]”.

By omitting from her summary the editorial and religious commentary that Le Mercier included in his account of the incident, and then seeking meaning in the cleansed version, Sanday mistook a prized Christian convert for a typically-stoic Amerindian captive.

Tooker similarly highlighted the captive’s bravery, citing his own words, as reported by Le Mercier and translated by Thwaites: “My brothers, I am going to die; amuse yourselves boldly around me; I fear neither tortures nor death.” In the context of Tooker’s version of Le Mercier’s account—purged of all references to the victim’s conversion—the speaker appears to be a defiant member of a rival Amerindian group facing his death with courage so as not to lose face in front of his enemies. Restored to its original context, however, the profession of courage comes after a priest assures the victim that the torment he will endure at the hands of his captors will be of short duration in comparison to the eternal pleasures that await him in heaven, and after the captive proclaims that he no longer fears death, now that he has been baptized:

On attendait encore le capitaine Saouandaouascouay […] pour arrester le jour et le lieu de son supplice, car ce captive estoit tout à fait en sa disposition. Il arriva un peu après et dès leur première entrevue, nostre Joseph, au lieu de se troubler dans la crainte et l’appréhension de la mort prochaine et d’une telle mort, luy dit

69 Campeau 3.702; Thwaites 13.63.
70 Tooker 36.
They were still waiting for the Captain Saouandaouascouay, who had gone trading, to fix upon the day of his torment; For this captive was entirely at his disposal. He arrived a little later; and, at their first interview, our Joseph, instead of being disquieted from fear and apprehension of his approaching death, and of such a death, said to him in our presence that the Father had baptized him, “haiatachondi;” he used this expression as showing he was very glad thereat.

By explicitly linking Joseph’s calm in the face of death to his pleasure at being baptized, Le Mercier left no doubt that the captive was not to be regarded simply as a typically brave Amerindian man. After the above exchange, the Iroquois captive learns that his death will come by fire, in response to which he utters the proclamation of fearlessness cited by Tooker. Immediately afterward, the captive invites a priest to sit with him and talk more about heaven, hell, and salvation. Coming between reports of conversations in which the priests assured the convert of the rewards that awaited him in heaven, Joseph’s bravado in the face of impending death reads more like the comments of a zealous convert with his eyes on the celestial prize than of an Amerindian acting out a cultural prescription for stoicism in the face of torture and death.

Even Knowles, who quoted Thwaites’ translation of the account at great length rather than attempt his own summary of it, managed to suggest that Joseph’s stoicism was included as a feature of Amerindian culture rather than a result of his Christian

---

71 Campeau 3.699.
72 Thwaites 13.53.
faith by omitting, through well-placed ellipses, all references to the captive’s status as a convert and the priests’ efforts to instruct him and bystanders in Catholic doctrine. The result is a version of the tale that includes the victim’s bravery in the face of torture, but omits its supposed religious source, leaving the reader to conclude that either personal or cultural bravery accounted for Joseph’s endurance of pain. Bruce Trigger similarly omitted the Jesuits’ religious interventions from his summary of Huron torture, which was based largely on Le Mercier’s 1637 account, and claimed that the stoicism of captives was an important part of the ritual. “[…] throughout the gruesome ordeal that followed a prisoner was expected to display the primary virtues of a warrior: courage and the ability to suffer without complaining.” I do not dispute the possibility that bravery in the face of death was indeed considered a virtue in Amerindian cultures, but it seems odd to cite Le Mercier’s text as evidence that such was the case, since the bravery displayed by Joseph is clearly represented as Christian in nature. Separating the details of the torture ritual from the argument they were originally deployed to support, as Tooker, Trigger, Knowles and Sanday have done by editing out Le Mercier’s religious message, makes it appear that the author’s sole aim was to faithfully record a torture scene, and, as I have shown, can lead to traits that were originally cited as examples of Christian fervor being assigned instead traditional cultural significance.

---

73 Trigger 441 n45.
74 Trigger 73.
Although Le Mercier’s account of Joseph’s demise is certainly the most well-known torture scene in the Jesuit Relations, it is far from the only such description. Some scholars, notably Roland Viau and Cornelius Jaenen, have prudently drawn on more than one account of torture to reconstruct the practices of the groups the Jesuits wrote about. But even such composite summaries do not escape the pitfalls that plague scholars who draw exclusively on Le Mercier’s account. Many of the victims of torture whose torments were chronicled in the Relations are depicted, like Joseph, as devout Christians bravely facing their impending demise, secure in the knowledge that their suffering will be compensated after death. Le Jeune reported in his 1636 Relation, for example, that the Jesuit Antoine Daniel instructed and baptized an Iroquois man who was being held captive by the Huron. One night while the priest was ministering to the new convert, his captors reportedly commenced their torture, binding and burning the victim, who endured the pain “avec une constance digne d’étonnement” (“With a firmness worthy of admiration”). Coming on the heels of comments about the victim’s conversion, his stoicism, like that displayed by Joseph, reads more like an act of faith than traditional Amerindian bravery in the face of torture. Jérome Lalemant claimed in his 1639 Relation that the stoicism routinely displayed by newly-converted captives in


76 Campeau 3.229-230; Thwaites 9.67.
the face of torture led Huron leaders to consider banning the baptism of prisoners, as the failure of steadfast Christians to cry out in pain made the affair less satisfying for their tormentors.\textsuperscript{77} Some newly converted Iroquois captives, Lalemant wrote,

ont fait paroistre tant de constance dans leur tourmens que nos barbares prirent résolution de ne plus souffrir qu’on baptisast ces pauvres infortunez, réputans à malheur pour leur pais, quand ceux qu’ils tourmentent ne crient point ou fort peu.\textsuperscript{78}

displayed so much fortitude in their torments that our Barbarians resolved no longer to allow us to baptize these poor unfortunates, reckoning it a misfortune to their country when those whom they torment shriek not at all, or very little.\textsuperscript{79}

After clearly linking baptism to bravery in the face of death, Lalemant followed up with a detailed account of the torture of an Iroquois captive named Pierre, who endured the torments of his Huron captors with courage before dying with his eyes cast heavenward.

Wrote Lalemant:

Quelques sauvages ont rapporté, avec admiration et quelque espèce de conviction des véritez que nous leurs preschons, qu’un peu devant qu’il receût le dernier coup qui luy apporta la mort, il leva les yeux au ciel et s’escria avec joye: “Allons, donc, allons”\textsuperscript{.} Comme s’il eust respondu à une voix qui l’invitoit. Certes, il semble qu’il ne s’agissoit d’autre voyage que de celuy du ciel, où sans distinction le captif, s’il le veut, a autant de droict et d’accez que celuy qui est en liberté.\textsuperscript{80}

\textsuperscript{77} Trigger concludes that a failure to make a captive cry out in pain was regarded as a bad omen by the Huron. “If the Huron could not make a prisoner weep and plead for mercy, this was believed to indicate misfortune for them in future wars.” Trigger 73.

\textsuperscript{78} Campeau 4.388.

\textsuperscript{79} Thwaites 17.65.

\textsuperscript{80} Campeau 4.390.
Several savages have reported with wonder, and a sort of conviction of the truths that we preach to them, that, shortly before he received the last blow which caused his death, he raised his eyes to Heaven and cried out joyfully, “Let us go, then, let us go,” as if he were answering a voice that invited him. Surely it would seem that he had in mind no other journey except that to heaven, to which, without distinction, the captive, if he so will, has as much right to admission as he who is free. 81

In closing his tale this way, Lalemant, like Le Mercier before him, explicitly related Pierre’s bravery in the face of severe torture to his newfound faith and the expectation that he would go to heaven after death. Although this tale, like Le Mercier’s, is frequently cited in accounts of Amerindian torture practices, its clear religious significance has been entirely overlooked.

More examples could easily be cited to demonstrate that the dynamic I have observed in Le Mercier’s account of Joseph’s torture—of bravery, steadfast endurance and repeated protestations of faith serving to prove the legitimacy of religious conversions—is at work in many, if perhaps not all, accounts of torture in the Jesuit Relations. Many of the victims described in the Relations turn out upon careful reading to be converts to Christianity. 82 Equally significant, to my mind, is that there are to my

81 Thwaites 17.71.

82 In addition to the examples cited above, the intersection of torture and conversion can be found in Campeau 4.401, 5.179, 6.174, 7.77-79, etc. Although it is certainly true, as I will discuss in the next section of this chapter, that torture and Amerindian stoicism sometimes come up outside the context of religious conversion (see, for example, Campeau 2.305 and 3.67), it is clear that the Christianizing mission of the Jesuits and the violent practices of potential converts are frequently depicted as working in harmony to ensure the salvation of new Christians.
knowledge no examples in the Relations of a convert failing the test of faith posed by torture. Although it is certainly possible that converts renounced their faith and cried out in pain when tortured, such cases are not surprisingly absent from Jesuit accounts that served to raise funds for the mission and report on its progress, and in which torture of converts consistently serves to prove the capacity of Amerindians to sincerely and permanently convert. Although composite accounts like those offered by Viau and Jaenen are laudable for prudently declining to allow a single episode to define Amerindian torture rituals, they nonetheless generally support the same conclusion as accounts based exclusively or nearly so on Le Mercier’s 1637 account. One cannot escape the interpretive difficulties posed by the case of Joseph the Iroquois convert and torture victim simply by drawing on other passages in the Relations, since most of them pose exactly the same problem. It is no accident that torture scenes in the Relations frequently double as tales of religious conversion, and the Jesuits, to judge from their comments in later Relations, came to view the phenomena as intimately related. In his 1648 Relation, for example, Ragueneau commented on the spiritual bounty that Amerindian torture practices brought to the mission:

Nous ne désirons pas ny les souffrances, ny les malheurs à nos chrestiens, mais toutefois je ne puis m’empescher de bénir Dieu dans ceux qui leur arrivent, l’expérience m’ayant fait reconnoistre que jamais leur foy n’est plus vive, ny leur cœur jamais plus à Dieu qu’au temps qu’envisageant les choses d’un œil trop humain, nous avons plus de crainte et plus de compassion pour eux. Je n’en ay veu aucun de ceux qui sont tombez entre les mains de l’ennemy et se sont sauvez par après qui ne m’ayent avoué que dans le plus fort de leur mal ils n’y eussent esprouvé un courage plus chrestien, une
consolation plus douce et un recours à Dieu plus entier qu’ils n’avoient ressentty toute leur vie passé et que mesme ils n’en ressentoient après leur délivrance. Ainsi nous ne sçavons que désirer à nos Chrestiens et à nous-mesme; et quelques grandes pertes que puisse recevoir cette église nous en bénirons Dieu, voyans à l’œil qu’il en tire sa gloire plus avantageusement que nous n’eussions osé l’espérer par aucune autre voye.\textsuperscript{85}

We desire neither sufferings nor misfortune for our Christians; but still I cannot refrain from praising God for those that happen to them, because experience has shown me that their faith is never livelier, nor do their hearts belong more fully to God, than when, considering matters with too human vision, we have most fear and compassion for them. All those whom I have seen who have fallen into the hands of the enemy, and have afterward escaped, have admitted that, at the height of their misfortunes, they felt more Christian courage and sweeter consolation, and had more complete recourse to God, than at any time in the whole of their past lives, or even after their deliverance. Thus we know not what to wish for our Christians and for ourselves; and, however great may be the losses that this church may suffer, we shall praise God therefore, because we see clearly that he derives his glory from these to greater advantage than we could have hoped for by any other means.\textsuperscript{84}

So effective were captivity and torture in securing converts that Ragueneau claimed to be torn between wishing for new converts to be tortured in order to solidify their faith, or for them to live peacefully and contribute to a supposedly growing community of Christian converts. In any case, the value of Amerindian torture in spreading the faith was clear to Ragueneau, for whom the practice was nothing short of the most effective means of ensuring the salvation of new converts. Lalemant was even more explicit in his 1660 Relation:

\textsuperscript{85} Campeau 7.379-380.

\textsuperscript{84} Thwaites 33.97-99.
Qui croiroit que les tourmens du feu, qui jettent souvent dans le desespoir, et qui font quelquefois brèche à la constance des meilleurs christiens, ouvrent le chemin du ciel à des Iroquois et que ces feux soient les moiens les plus certains [...] Ils sont si certains, que nous n’avons presque point veu brûler d’Iroquois, que nous ne l’aions jugé dans le chemin du paradis, et nous n’avons jugé aucun d’eux estre certainement dans le chemin du paradis, que nous ne l’aions veu passer par ce supplice. 85

Who would believe that the torture by fire—which often overwhelms the victim with despair, and sometimes shakes the constancy of the best Christians—opens to some of the Iroquois the road to heaven, and that these fires are the surest means [...]? So sure are they, that we have scarcely ever seen an Iroquois burned without regarding him as on the way to Paradise; nor have we considered a single one as certainly on that road whom we have not seen pass through this torture. 86

With endurance of torture coming to serve in the Relations as the ultimate proof of the new faith of Iroquois converts—a test that assured salvation and without which salvation could not be assured—descriptions of the prolonged torture of captives in the texts cannot be read solely as accounts of traditional cruelty of Amerindian groups toward captured enemies.

Contrasting Jesuit accounts of Amerindian stoicism and torture with one recorded by a non-missionary observer illustrates the specific nature of Jesuit ethnographic writing that I have been attempting to illuminate in this dissertation.

Samuel de Champlain recounted the treatment of an Iroquois prisoner at the hands of his Montagnais captors in his 1632 Voyages de la Nouvelle France. Champlain’s account

85 Campeau 9.498.
86 Thwaites 46.85.
resembles later Jesuit descriptions in its details, including the burning of the captive with hot pokers and the ripping out of his fingernails. Champlain notes, but does not explain, the captive’s bravery in the face of these torments: “Ce pauvre miserable jettoit des cris estranges, et me faisot pitié de le voir traitter de la façon; toutesfois il estoit si constant qu’on eust dit qu’il ne sentoit parfois aucune douleur” (“This poor wretch uttered strange cries, and I pitied him when I saw him treated this way; and yet he showed such endurance that one would have said that, at times, he did not feel any pain”). Absent from Champlain’s account are the explicit comparisons to the Christian tradition and the insistence on the religious instruction and conversion of the victim that mark Jesuit treatments of Amerindian torture. Whereas Champlain described Amerindian torture practices and judged them to be cruel, Jesuits went further, giving religious significance to behavior that Champlain had seen as merely a cruel act of revenge. Description of torture was not, for the Jesuits, a mere matter of noting and expressing disgust at a particularly distasteful feature of Amerindian cultures, but of explaining them in ways that reinforced the Jesuits’ message about the capacity of Amerindians for faith. The vexing challenge to the notion that Amerindians were human and therefore capable of conversion that was posed by their apparently barbaric and cruel behavior was resolved by drawing a relationship between Amerindian customs

and Europe’s Catholic traditions. Shocking and prolonged violence reportedly motivated by revenge was reframed as a literally hellish test of faith, with the victim’s suffering cast as an edifying performance of the Passion of Christ. This rhetorical move simultaneously responded to claims that the inhabitants of the New World were incapable of conversion and recast their seemingly animalistic cruelty as a harsh but ultimately useful step in the process of converting Amerindian to Christianity. Like the Amerindian creation myths treated in the previous chapter, then, torture scenes in the Relations were a tool for establishing links between Amerindian cultures and European, Christian knowledge and traditions, rather than marking their difference. That so many scholars have focused on the shocking details of the Jesuits’ torture accounts without accounting for the message that they were deployed to support underscores the danger of treating sources like the Jesuit Relations as specimens of culture that can be extracted from their context without changing their meaning.

3.2 The Blood-thirsty Iroquois: Torture, Cannibalism and Politics

Although descriptions of torture in the Jesuit Relations often double as conversion stories in which captor and captive collaborate to reinforce the notion that Amerindians were willing and able to embrace Christianity, it is also true that depictions of cruelty in the texts sometimes seem to participate in the tradition of more pessimistic assessments of Amerindian nature. Indeed, one group stands out as particularly cruel in the missionaries’ accounts. The Iroquois—enemies of the Jesuits’ Huron and Algonquian
protégés and allies of Dutch protestant traders—are depicted in the Relations as a constant, invisible menace, threatening at any moment to burst from the woods to capture, torture to death, and eat the Jesuits and their Amerindian allies, motivated, it seems, mostly by bloodlust. Despite the apparent inclination of most Algonquian and Iroquoian groups to torture their enemies in similar fashion, the Iroquois, at least as depicted by the Jesuits, were particularly dangerous. Here I examine the relative barbarity that Jesuit authors saw in various Amerindian groups and find that practically identical behavior on the part of Jesuit allies and enemies was characterized in very different ways, supporting both positive and negative assessments of the nature of Amerindians, depending on who was doing the torturing. I will argue that the distinction between intelligent, reasonable potential convert and animalistic brute often was made along political lines, with torture and cannibalism carried out by Jesuit allies shown to be rational and understandable—if still distasteful—and the same actions by Iroquois enemies characterized as the instinctive violence of beasts. It is my contention that a longstanding perception of the Iroquois as exceptionally cruel, sometimes still to be found in both scholarly and popular works, is best explained by their political relationship to the Jesuits, rather than an actual surfeit of barbarism on the part of that group. Once again, as in the case of Le Mercier’s 1637 account of the torture of a

88 As Yvon le Bras has remarked, “Plus proches de l’animal que de l’homme, [les Iroquois] deviennent sous la plume de Le Jeune les plus barbares des sauvages […]” (“Closer to animals than to men, the Iroquois become under Le Jeune’s quill the most barbaric of the savages […]”) Le Bras 62; My translation.
converted Iroquois prisoner, the violent behavior of Amerindians proves to be inextricably linked to questions that are not strictly ethnographic. In the coming pages, I will analyze how Jesuits rhetorically transformed the Iroquois into a particularly violent and animalistic group, and the still-discernible consequences of Jesuit assessments of the Iroquois relative to other Amerindians they encountered.

As I already suggested, the cruelty with which various groups treated each other was often understood as a normal, if distasteful, element of Amerindian culture. To return to my principal example from the previous section of this chapter, Le Mercier identifies torture like that suffered by Joseph as a fixture of Huron custom: “Car c’est l’ordinaire que, lorsque quelque personne notable a perdu en guerre quelqu’un de ses parens, on luy fasse présent de quelque captif pris sur les ennemis, pour essuyer ses larmes et appaiser ses regrets” {“For it is customary, when some notable personage has lost one of his relatives in war, to give him a present of some captive taken from the enemy, to dry his tears and partly assuage his grief”}. Later, at the end of his chapter, Le Mercier again attributes the Hurons’ violence toward the captured enemy to old superstitions and customs, expressing hope that the cruelty will stop once Christianity is adopted by the Huron, but also acknowledging the power of engrained practices, even in the Old World. Wrote Le Mercier,

\[\text{Campeau 3.695; Thwaites 13.37-39.}\]
[...] les vieilles coustumes ne laissent pas toujours d’avoir leur cours et il y a bien de l’apparence qu’elles règneront jusques à ce que la foy soit receue et professée publiquement. Des superstitions et des coustumes envieillies et autorisées par la suite de tant de siècles ne sont pas si aisées à abolir [...].

[...] the old customs thus far continue to be in vogue, and there is much probability that they will reign until the faith is received and publicly professed. Superstitions and [engrained customs], and authorized by the lapse of so many centuries, are not so easy to abolish.

Although distasteful and unreasonable, Le Mercier suggested, the Hurons’ treatment of their prisoners was at least understandable, authorized as it was by a long tradition of using torture to exact justice. The Hurons’ devotion to tradition—even a bad tradition—was at least evidence that something more than primitive instinct drove their behavior, and in this the Hurons resembled residents of the Old Country, Le Mercier suggested:

“[...] Souvent il arrive dans les meilleures villes de France qu’une troupe d’enfans, mettant à se battre à coups de fronde toute une ville, ses magistrats ont bien de la peine d’empescher ce désordre” [“It often happens in the best cities of France that when a troop of children get to fighting with slings, a whole town with its Magistrates has considerable difficulty in quelling this disorder”]. By insisting on its longstanding use in a system of righting past wrongs and comparing it to what he regarded as bad and childish behavior in France, Le Mercier cast the Hurons’ treatment of their prisoner in

90 Campeau 3.707.

91 Thwaites 13.79. Thwaites translated “coustumes envieillies” as “customs grown old.” I have corrected this to reflect the common meaning of the adjective “envieilli.”

92 Campeau 3.707; Thwaites 13.79-81.
terms that humanized it, casting it as an errant and immature behavior to be outgrown and corrected instead of a frenzy of impulsive violence. The violence of the Huron was to be understood, in Le Mercier’s analysis, as similar to the bad behavior of unruly children—not easy to stamp out, but ultimately correctable and no fateful indication of the character of grown men. In the same way that Amerindian creation myths were framed as a version of Genesis in need of correction, Huron torture practices, the Jesuits suggested, could be understood as a primitive system of justice, one that only needed the corrective influence of European, Catholic missionaries to grow into a mature, civilized form.

The differences on this score between Le Mercier’s 1637 account and one penned 10 years later by Jérome Lalemant concerning Iroquois violence are revealing. Lalemant opens his 1647 Relation with a chapter entitled “La perfidie des Hiroquois” (“Of the treachery of the Iroquois”),93 in which he tells the story of a Huron convert named Jean, who is burned all night long by Iroquois captors, from the bottom of his feet to his waist. The following day, he is again tormented until he finally loses strength in the evening. Then, his entire body is thrown on the fire. The account resembles the behavior attributed to the Huron by Le Mercier both in its mechanics and in the spiritual

93 Campeau 7.72-82; Thwaites 30.227-253.
significance attributed to it.\footnote{94} As in the case of Joseph the Iroquois convert that Le
Mercier described in 1637, Lalemant’s account insisted on the victim’s newfound faith.

Wrote Lalemant,

\begin{quote}
Jamais, au rapport d’une personne qui le veind dans ses souffrances, il ne jetta
aucun cry ny ne donna jamais aucun signe d’un cœur abattu. Il levoit les yeux au
ciel du milieu de ces flammes, regardant fixement le lieu où son âme aspiroit.\footnote{95}
\end{quote}

Never, according to the report of a person who saw him in his sufferings, did he
utter any cry, or give any sign of a dejected heart. He raised his eyes to Heaven in
the midst of his flames, looking fixedly at the place whither his soul was
aspiring.\footnote{96}

It seems, then, that Christian victims of torture are consistently depicted in the Relations
as steadfast and unwavering in their new faith, regardless of who their tormentors are,
bolstering arguments about the capacity of Amerindians to embrace Christianity and
contributing to positive understandings of the American nature.

And yet, the context in which Le Mercier and Lalemant told their stories of
conversion and torture are very different, and send divergent messages about

\footnote{94} To judge from the information in the Relations and the conclusions of modern scholars, Iroquois torture
rituals were actually quite similar to those of other groups that the Jesuits wrote about, notably the Huron
and Montagnais. Nathaniel Knowles, in his study of the torture practices of many Eastern Amerindian
groups, distinguished the basic features of Iroquoian torture, and claimed that Montagnais ritual followed a
similar pattern. According to Knowles, the basic features of torture carried out by these groups, which he
termed “platform torture,” were the following: The captive was free to move at all times, the torture was
carried out overnight in the cabin of a war chief and then on a platform outside at dawn. Torture lasted
many hours, and was preceded by continuous, more minor abuse, and was inflicted by men in the chief’s
cabin and the entire village population at dawn. The captive was generally not tortured to death, but was
killed with a knife or a blow to the head. Scalping was part of the torture process, and cannibalism was
customary. Knowles 194.

\footnote{95} Campeau 7.78.

\footnote{96} Thwaites 30.243.
Amerindian nature. While Le Mercier offered Joseph’s abuse as an example of
distasteful but understandable custom that ultimately contributed to the missionary
cause, Lalemant portrayed Jean’s ordeal as just one incident in a series of seemingly
random Iroquois acts of violence. The chapter begins with an act of treachery by the
Agnier Iroquois, with whom the French had recently concluded a peace treaty. That
group, according to Lalemant, went back on its word because of the “humeur guerrière”
of its members, the glory and profits they reap from war, and their hatred of
Christianity. Their thirst for violence, the author writes, leads them to engage in as much
cruelty as possible: “[...] ils se respandirent en divers endroits pour prendre, tuer et
massacrer autant de François, d’Algonquins et de Hurons qu’ils pourroient. Suivons-les
dans leurs courses et marquons les temps de leurs attaques et de leur chasse aux
hommes” “[...] they spread themselves about in various places in order to capture, kill
and massacre as many French, Algonquins, and Hurons as they could. Let us follow
them in their raids, and mark the times of their attack and of their [hunt for] men”). 97
Labeling the Iroquois hunters of men, Lalemant details a series of seemingly random
acts of violence. The carnage described in the chapter starts with the murder of the Jesuit
missionary Isaac Jogues and Jean Lalande, a young Frenchman who was accompanying
him on his mission to the Iroquois, and the rest of the chapter details one violent,

97 Campeau 7.74; Thwaites 30.229. Thwaites’ original translation reads “chase after men.” I have corrected
this to preserve the notion present in the original that the Iroquois were hunting prey, not merely chasing
enemies.
unprovoked attack after another. No one is immune: Algonquin, Huron and Frenchmen fall victim to the marauding Iroquois. Even a young child is mercilessly massacred: “On nous a assuré que ces tyrans crucifièrent un petit enfant baptisé, aagé de trois ou quatre ans, luy estendant le corps sur une grosse escorce et luy perçant ses petits mains et ses petits pieds avec des battons pointus” (“We have been assured that those Tyrants crucified a little baptized child, aged three or four years, by stretching its body upon a great piece of bark and piercing its little hands and feet with pointed sticks”). In contrast to the Huron cruelty described in the last section, Iroquois violence, in Lalemant’s estimation, is not a focused act of revenge that seeks to offset one specific death with another, but a machine that aims to consume everything in its path. Although the notion that murdered converts were bound for heaven—in this case represented by the converted child’s Christ-like crucifixion—is constant regardless of who is doing the torturing, the Jesuits put Iroquois cruelty in a context that suggested that their violence was the result of their very nature.

Even this rapid comparison of Le Mercier and Lalemant’s respective chapters on Huron and Iroquois violence reveals the rule that governs violence throughout the Relations. When carried out by Jesuit allies, torture is disgusting, but understandable and correctable behavior. Iroquois violence, on the other hand, is much more animalistic, coming in sneak attacks motivated by “humeur guerrière” or, as I will discuss shortly, a

---

98 Campeau 7.78; Thwaites 30.241.
taste for human flesh. The message that Iroquois cruelty was reflexive and random is not restricted to actual descriptions of torture. As others have already pointed out, Jesuits said as much with the various epithets they used to name the Iroquois. In the same Relation in which he detailed the torture of Joseph the Iroquois prisoner at the hands of the Huron, Le Mercier called the Iroquois “ferocious beasts,” “tigers,” and “wolves.” 99 Blackburn cites the comparison of the Iroquois to animals as evidence of Jesuit “fear and anxiety” over the Iroquois threat, 100 and Le Bras has commented that such characterizations attribute the traits of wild animals to the Iroquois and suggest that they have more in common with wild beasts than with men. 101 I would go further than Le Bras’ somewhat tentative analysis to say that using words like “tiger” and “wolf” to describe the Iroquois reduces them to animals, robbing them of their humanity and suggesting that their predatory nature was the very essence of their existence. It is instructive to briefly consider the meaning of the word “loup” around the time of Le Mercier’s text. Antoine Furetière’s Dictionnaire Universel defined it thus: “Animal farouche demeurant dans les bois, et fort dommageable au bestial, parce que c’est le plus goulu, le plus carnassier, et le plus fin des animaux” (“Ferocious animal that lives in the woods, and is very damaging to livestock, because it is the most gluttonous, the most

99 Campeau 3.787-798.
100 Blackburn 62.
101 Le Bras 62.
carnivorous, and the sharpest of the animals”). It is the essential ferocity of the wolf that Furetière underlined in describing the animal, and the string of superlatives he employed in its definition emphasizes that the animal represented an extreme form of violence. Tigers were similarly known primarily for their brutality, according to Furetière. Referring to the Iroquois as beasts like wolves and tigers, then, reduces them to particularly dangerous and cruel animals that thrived on killing. And calling the Iroquois wolves also marked them as a threat to the Jesuits’ religious mission, for, as Blackburn points out, “[...] the wolf is figuratively used in the Bible to refer to the enemies of the Christians.”

If the names that the Jesuits used to designate the Iroquois firmly suggested they were predatory by nature and therefore a threat to the nascent Catholic Church in America, the missionaries’ Amerindian allies were just as clearly set up as the Iroquois’ helpless and harmless prey. New converts to Christianity are often referred to in the Relations as “lambs,” a name that links them to both Christ and his flock and also signals their vulnerability to the lupine Iroquois. Christ himself is referred to as the “Lamb of


103 “Animal féroce et cruel […] se dit figurément d’un home méchant furieux et cruelle” Furetière, “Tigre.” “Ferocious and cruel animal […] said figuratively of a mean, furious and cruel man” (my translation). It is also worth noting that the Jesuit authors sometimes varied the metaphor to include other violent big cats. Jérome Lalemant’s 1647 Relation, for example, referred to the Iroquois as “lyons” and “léopards” in recounting the violent treatment of the missionary Isaac Jogues at their hands. Campeau 7.99, 101.

104 Blackburn 62.
God” both in the Bible\textsuperscript{105} and in the \textit{Relations}.\textsuperscript{106} Applying the same name to new converts suggests the same kind of emulation of Christ that Joseph the Iroquois prisoner displayed while being tortured. Indeed, religious conversion itself was sometimes expressed in the \textit{Relations} in terms of a transformation from wolf to lamb. As Jean Dequen wrote in his 1656 \textit{Relation}, for example,

\begin{quote}
Ces nations ne sont composées que de fourbes et toutefois, il faut se confier à leur inconstance et s’abandonner à leur cruauté. Le Père Isaac Jogues fut assommé de ces perfides lors qu’ils luy témoignoient plus d’amour, mais puisque Jésus-Christ a envoyé ses apostres comme des agneaux entre des loups, pour faire d’un loup un agneau, nous ne devons pas craindre d’abandonner nos vies en semblables rencontres, pour mettre la paix et la foy, où la guerre et l’infidélité ont toujours esté dans leur règne.\textsuperscript{107}
\end{quote}

These nations are composed only of rogues, and yet we must trust ourselves to their fickleness, and surrender ourselves to their cruelty. Father Isaac Jogues was killed by those traitors while they were showing him the most love. But since Jesus Christ sent his Apostles as Lambs among Wolves, to convert them into lambs, we should not fear to lay down our lives in like circumstances, for sake of establishing Peace and the Faith where war and infidelity have always held sway.\textsuperscript{108}

\textsuperscript{105}See, for example, John 1:29.

\textsuperscript{106}Of the likelihood that Jesuits would be martyred in New France, Jérôme Lalemant wrote in his 1646 \textit{Relation} that “Le dessein toutesfois principal de cette denomination est que cette mission soit assistée du crédit et faveur de ces sainctes et sacrées victimes qui ont l’honneur d’approcher de plus près l’Agneau et de le suivre partout” “[…] the principal design of this denomination is that this mission may be assisted with the influence and favor of those blessed and consecrated victims who have the honor to approach nearest to the Lamb, and to follow him everywhere.”] Campeau 6.569; Thwaites 29.45.

\textsuperscript{107}Campeau 8.836-837.

\textsuperscript{108}Thwaites 42.39-41. A year later, Dequen included the other name sometimes applied to the Iroquois in the metaphor, writing that the Jesuits hoped to “[…] changer ces loups et ces tyges en agneaux pour prendre leur place dans le bercaill de Jésus-Christ” “[…] change these wolves and Tigers into Lambs, and bring them into the fold of Jesus Christ]”. Campeau 9.128; Thwaites 44.57.
If the Iroquois were by nature predatory, brutal, and extremely cruel, other groups that had befriended the Jesuits were their prey, and were, the priests suggested, naturally predisposed to follow Christ. It is interesting that Dequen, through his application of the lupine metaphor to the missionary task, holds out the possibility that the Iroquois may yet be converted. It is important to note, however, that converting the Iroquois would require changing their very nature, transforming them from predatory beasts into docile lamb-like followers of Christ. Conversion of allies, on the other hand, was understood to involve the apparently simpler task of replacing old customs with new ones. The already sheep-like allies of the French Jesuits were, according to the logic of the wolf-sheep metaphor, predisposed both to follow Christ and to be victimized by vicious enemies of the faith.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the rhetorical reduction of the Iroquois to hunters of men who were motivated by nothing but their hunger for flesh is sometimes accompanied in the Relations by accusations of actual cannibalism. The practice of eating human flesh sometimes appears in the Relations as the finale of the torture spectacle, but reports of such practices are far from the only mentions of anthropophagy in the Relations. The authors also reported instances of cannibalism for nutrition and as an apparent healing rite, and the act also is mentioned when no consumption of human flesh seems to be taking place. As in the case of more routine violence, Jesuits treated cannibalistic practices differently depending on who committed them. Iroquois
cannibalism is often depicted in the Jesuit Relations as random violence, indiscriminate and reflexive, rather than the prescribed end of customary torture. Barthélemy Vimont’s 1644 Relation from New France describes the events leading to the murder and consumption of a traveling companion of Joseph Bressani, another Jesuit priest:

Les ennemis mettent pied à terre avec leurs prisonniers, rompent tous les paquets où estoient les nécessitez de nos Pères, qui n’ont rien receu depuis trois ans, deschirent les lettres qu’on leur envoyait, partagent le butin également et se jettent sur le corps de celuy qui fust tué, luy arrachant le cœur et la poitrine, luy enlevant la chevelure, luy coupent les lèvres et les parties les plus charnues des cuisses et des jambes, les font bouillir et les mangent en présence des prisonniers.109

The enemies landed, with their prisoners; broke open all of the packages containing the articles needed by our Fathers, who have received nothing for three years; tore up the letters that we sent them; and equally divided the spoils. They then threw themselves on the body of the man whom they had killed; they tore his heart out of his breast, and scalped him; they cut off his lips, and the most fleshy parts of his thighs and legs, which they boiled and ate in the presence of the captives.110

Eating human flesh is, in this scene, the last step in a frenzy of destructive Iroquois behavior. After ripping open packages, shredding letters, and dividing up the loot, the attackers threw themselves on the fleshiest morsels of the victim’s corpse.

Conspicuously absent from Lalemant’s account is any indication that the Iroquois’ actions were in any way linked to a customary wartime ritual of vengeance. Instead, greed for loot and hunger for human flesh seem to motivate the attack. Indeed, the

109 Campeau 6.126.

110 Thwaites 26.33.
Iroquois are sometimes depicted as actually enjoying eating human flesh. In his 1647 Relation, Lalemant recounted the story of a prisoner who overheard her Iroquois captors talking about their appreciation for enemy flesh:

Elle avoit aussi ouy à son départ quelques jeunes gens qui, ne croyans pas qu’elle entendît leur langue, se demandoient l’un à l’autre quelle partie du corps ils trouveroient plus friande. L’un d’eux la regardant respondit que les pieds cuits sous la cendre estoient fort bons.111

She had also heard, at her departure, some young men, who, not supposing that she understood their language, were asking one another which part of the body they would find the most dainty. One of them, looking at her, answered that the feet roasted under the ashes were very good.112

Instead of an obligatory part of the torture ritual, the anticipated consumption of human flesh is in this account a rare treat, and the captive herself is clearly marked by her captor’s gaze as an intended victim. The fact that the source of this account was an enemy of the Iroquois who may or may not have understood perfectly the language of her captors goes unexamined by the missionary author.

So great was the Iroquois’ taste for human flesh, at least under the Jesuit pen, that this characteristic was sometimes used to identify them. If appellations such as “wolves” and “tigers” reduce the Iroquois to prowling, hunting beasts intent on catching and killing their prey, labeling them cannibals similarly allows one small part

111 Campeau 7.83-84.
112 Thwaites 30.259.
of their culture to stand in for their entire identity.\textsuperscript{113} As Carole Blackburn put it, “Cannibalism received its greatest elaboration in the context of Iroquois aggression, where it was represented as the act of a ruthless predator, a human animal that failed to distinguish the humanity of its victims.”\textsuperscript{114} In some cases, the term is used in reference to the Iroquois in situations where no flesh is actively being consumed. For example, Jérome Lalemant’s 1650 \textit{Relation} contains an account of the capture by the Iroquois of an Amerindian man who had been resisting the missionaries’ attempts to convert him.\textsuperscript{115} Lalemant presumes that the man was tortured and killed, but allows that God’s “miraculous grace” could have spared him. Apparently, no details of the captive’s treatment or what happened to his body afterward were available to Lalemant. The missionary author nonetheless identifies the man’s captors as eaters of human flesh, as if to say that the Iroquois were cannibals in essence, regardless of their behavior in any specific situation. Wrote Lalemant: “On remarqua avec estonnement que tous ceux qui l’accompagnoient se sauvèrent et que luy seul et sa famille furent la proye de ces anthropophages” {“It was observed with awe that all who accompanied him were

\textsuperscript{113} The Iroquois are explicitly called flesh-eaters in multiple places in the \textit{Relations}. For example, see Campeau 9.260, 7.188, 7.755, etc.

\textsuperscript{114} Blackburn 64.

\textsuperscript{115} In light of my argument in the previous chapter, it is interesting that the priest did not offer more details of this captive’s plight. Having failed to convert, it seems that this torture victim’s tale did not merit recounting in the \textit{Relations}, a fact that further underscores the necessity of considering conversion and cruelty together.
saved, and that he alone, and his family were the prey of those anthropophagi”\textsuperscript{116}.

Evoking cannibalism in a situation in which a captive’s fate is not known for sure reinforces the message that the Iroquois were fundamentally different from other Amerindian groups. They were man-eaters in essence, to such a degree that the term “anthropophage” could stand in for their proper name.

In contrast to the enthusiastic and ravenous cannibalism of the Iroquois, at least some of the Huron participating in the torture and ritual consumption of an Iroquois prisoner were, according to Brébeuf’s 1636 \textit{Relation}, barely able to choke down pieces of the captive’s heart: “[…] Quelques-uns ne goustent de ce mets qu’avec beaucoup d’horreur. Il y en a qui mangent avec plaisir” (“[…] some taste of this part, or of all the rest of the body, only with great horror. There are some that eat it with pleasure”).\textsuperscript{117} The Huron in Brébeuf’s account are expected to participate in the ritual regardless of the pleasure or disgust they feel upon doing so, which seems to be a matter of personal preference rather than an in-born hunger. Although Jesuits expressed disgust at cannibalism in all circumstances, the Huron practice, like their torture ritual, was regarded as somewhat less horrifying than the instinctive, unmeditated practices of the Iroquois, since it was performed, as noted earlier, as part of a ceremony for exacting revenge that could, the missionaries hoped, be displaced by European practices.

\textsuperscript{116} Campeau 7.755; Thwaites 35.239.

\textsuperscript{117} Campeau 3.378-379; Thwaites 10.229.
In contrast to the animalistic fury with which the Iroquois pounced on and ate their enemies, Huron treatment of their prisoners is often portrayed in the Relations as being deliberative and directed by custom. In the same Relation as cited above, Vimont described the governor of New France’s attempts to persuade the Huron to turn an Iroquois prisoner over to him in the hopes of using the captive as a political bargaining chip. The Huron resist, citing their culture’s rules for the disposition of prisoners, which they claimed required that the captive be turned over to elders. Protests a member of the group and Christian convert named Charles,

Tu ne voy icy que de la jeunesse. Les anciens de nostre païs déterminent des affaires. […] Nous avons donné Parole aux capitaines des Hurons que si nous pouvions prendre quelques prisonniers, que nous les leur remettrions entre les mains. Tout de mesme que ces soldats qui t’environnent te rendent obéissance, aussi faut-il que nous autres rendions nos devoirs à ce de qui nous dépendons.¹¹⁸

Thou seest here but young men; the elders in our country govern its affairs. […] We have given our word to the Captains of the Hurons that, if we succeeded in capturing any prisoners, we would deliver them into their hands. Just as those soldiers around thee obey thee, so must we perform our duty to those who are over us.¹¹⁹

Although Charles and his companions reportedly were in agreement with the governor that peace with the Iroquois should be sought, the question of what to do with the prisoners could not be settled immediately without compromising the honor of the Huron, Charles argues: “[…] on nous regardera comme des gens sans esprit d’avoir

¹¹⁸ Campeau 6.137.
¹¹⁹ Thwaites 26.65.
determiné d’une affaire de telle conséquence sans avoir consulté les anciens du païs”

[“[…] we shall be looked upon as persons without sense for having decided a matter of such consequence without consulting the elders of the country”].

Charles’ reluctance to deviate from his plan is motivated in the Jesuit account by custom and a promise he made and intended to keep. This deliberative and reasonable approach and the convert’s comparison of his obligation to his elders to the obligation French soldiers had to obey their superiors clearly marks his practice as a matter of discipline, duty, and honor that would be familiar and comprehensible to the French—vastly different from the frenzy of violence and immediate roasting of the Huron captive at the hands of the Iroquois that Vimont described the same year.

In fact, it is fair to say that instances of cannibalism by allies of the French are practically always depicted as having a cause that is, in some way, understandable and probably corrigible. The very first mention of cannibalism in the published Jesuit Relations came, as I already mentioned, in 1632, in the description of the torture of an Iroquois prisoner at the hands of the Montagnais:

En fin, pour dernière catastrophe, ils les mangent et les dévorent quasi tout crus. […] Ils sont si enragez contre tout ce qui leur fait du mal qu’ils mangent les poux et toute autre vermine qu’ils trouvent sur eux, non pour aucun goust qu’ils y ayent, mais seulement, disent-ils pour se vanger et pour manger ceux qui les mangent.\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{120} Campeau 6.138; Thwaites 26.67.

\textsuperscript{121} Campeau 2.305-306.
At last, as a final horror, they eat and devour them almost raw [...]. So enraged are they against every one who does them an injury, that they eat the lice and other vermin that they find upon themselves,—not because they like them, but only, they say, to avenge themselves and to eat those that eat them. 122

By classifying cannibalism as an act of vengeance akin to eating a parasitic insect, Le Jeune placed the act squarely in the realm of justice and custom, in contrast to acts of cannibalism carried out by the Iroquois, which, as I have argued, are portrayed as being motivated mostly by that group’s predatory nature, depravity, and craving for human flesh. As Brébeuf wrote in 1635, “c’est estre bien cruel, mais nous espérons, avec l’assistance du ciel, que la cognoiissance du vray Dieu bannira tout à fait de ce pais cette barbarie” [“This is certainly very cruel; but we hope, with the assistance of Heaven, that the knowledge of the true God will entirely banish from this Country such barbarity”]. 123 The missionaries’ interpretation of cannibalism as a rite of vengeance in which some participated only reluctantly led them to believe that it was a behavior that could be unlearned, at least in the case of their allies.

It is also interesting to note that the practice of cannibalism, once again, suggested a relationship between Catholic and Amerindian traditions, drawing parallels while suggesting deficiency on the side of Amerindian cultures. Eating the flesh of an especially courageous enemy was thought by the Huron, at least according to the Jesuits,

122 Thwaites 5.31.

123 Campeau 3.377; Thwaites 10.229.
to transfer the bravery of the deceased to his tormentors,\textsuperscript{124} a belief that may have called to readers' minds the Catholic practice of consuming the blood and flesh of Christ, in the form of the Eucharist, as a means of entering into communion with him.\textsuperscript{125} Cannibalism could be understood in this context as yet another sign that Amerindian beliefs resembled those of Christian Europe, but that they were seriously flawed, simultaneously pointing to the necessity and likelihood for success of the missionary project and drawing parallels between Amerindian and Catholic European beliefs.

The lessons gleaned from the differing treatment of torture and cannibalism in the \textit{Relations} add nuance to the conclusion about Jesuit ethnography and Amerindian cruelty that I drew at the end of the previous section of this chapter. Although descriptions of Amerindian violence often, as least in the case of the Huron, served to prove their capacity for sincere conversion, and therefore also their essentially good and human nature, it is also true that the texts contain depictions of unmeditated wildness, expressed through impulsive cruelty. It has often been remarked that the \textit{Relations} contain both positive and negative depictions of Amerindian nature, and it is now possible to add that the distinction often was made along political lines, with allies of the French and potential converts cast as Christ-like lambs, and enemies of the French

\footnote{\textsuperscript{124} See, for example, Campeau 3.376; Thwaites 10.227.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{125} “Sacraments of Initiation,” \textit{Modern Catholic Encyclopedia}.}
represented as enemies of the faith, wild and impulsive lupine threats to the nascent New France church.

The influence of the Jesuits’ descriptions of the Iroquois’ animalistic wildness relative to other groups continues to this day, and competes in scholarship and pop culture with a contradictory tradition that originated among allies of the Iroquois. The consequences of the Jesuits’ repeated depictions of the Iroquois as uniquely blood-thirsty predators in contrast to other, more restrained and reasonable groups were immediately clear in France’s understanding of the two groups. The Jesuit priest Joseph-François Lafitau, himself a missionary among the Iroquois from 1712 to 1717, confirmed the status of the Iroquois as the most dangerous of Amerindian groups in the eyes of Europeans about 50 years after the Jesuit Relations ceased to be published in his 1724 *Moeurs des Sauvages Ameriquains, comparés aux moeurs des premiers temps*, a work that drew on the writings of his missionary predecessors. Wrote Lafitau, "Les Iroquois, si redoutables aux François par le grand nombre de ceux qu’ils ont fait perir dans ces tourmens affreux, se sont fait une réputation parmi nous encore plus mauvaise que toutes les autres Nations" ("The Iroquois, so redoubtable to the French by the great

---

number of those whom they have caused to perish in these frightful tortures, have
gained an even worse reputation with us than all the other tribes”].

As Michèle Duchet has pointed out, negative portrayals of the Iroquois and
contrasting favorable depictions of the Huron survived in French literature well into the
eighteenth century, with the Huron coming to serve as a public face of the
Enlightenment “Noble Savage” myth, and the Iroquois representing all that was
frightening about Amerindians. Wrote Duchet:

L’Adario de Lahontan n’est pas un ‘sauvage’ quelconque, mais un Huron, […]
“un Machiavel né dans les forêts […] le sauvage le plus intrépide, le plus ferme
et le plus éclairé qu’on ait trouvé dans l’Amérique septentrionale.” Huron encore
l’Arlequin Sauvage de Delisle, Huron à demi l’Ingénu de Voltaire, un des fils
spirituel d’Adario. Mais Iroquois l’Igli de Maubert de Gouvest, et non sans doute
par simple souci de variété, mais parce que les Iroquois, ennemis acharnés des
Français, manifestent mieux que toute autre nation l’hostilité latente du monde
sauvage.

Lahontan’s Adario is not just any “savage,” but a Huron, […] “a Machiavelli
born in the woods […] the most intrepid, the most firm, and the most
enlightened savage found in northern America.” Also a Huron is Delisle’s
Arlequin Sauvage, and Voltaire’s Ingénu, one of the spiritual sons of Adario, is half
Huron. But Maubert de Gouvest’s Igli is Iroquois, and probably not out of a
simple concern for variety, but because the Iroquois, fierce enemies of the French,
illustrate better than any other nation the latent hostility of the savage world.

127 Lafitau 2.287; Fenton 2.161. To give credit where it is due, Lafitau at least acknowledged the possibility
that the Iroquois’ bad reputation was a matter of perspective: “Cependant, à entendre les Iroquois, ils
prétendent être moins cruels que les autres, et ils n’en usent ainsi que par représailles” (“To hear the
Iroquois speak, however, they claim to be less cruel than the other and treat the captives thus only by
reprisal”). Lafitau 2.287; Fenton 2.161.

128 Duchet 32.

129 My translation.
To Duchet’s list, one could add Jean-François Marmontel’s 1768 comedy-ballet *Le Huron*, in which the title character is described thus: “Il est vaillant, honnête; il pense avec noblesse, l’ombre du mensonge le blesse [...]” (“He is valiant, honest; he thinks nobly, the shadow of a lie injures him”). Marmontel’s *Huron*, like the Huron characters of many other eighteenth century texts, further reinforced the positive associations established in the *Relations* between Amerindian allies of the French and the qualities admired in Enlightenment France.

The Iroquois continued in the twentieth century to at least sometimes be portrayed in scholarship as exceptionally and intrinsically cruel, especially in works that drew heavily on the French record of colonial North America, particularly the *Jesuit Relations*. Francis Parkman’s influential *Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth Century*, for example, maintained the Jesuit thesis that the Iroquois were superlatively cruel:

> Among all the barbarous nations of the continent, the Iroquois of New York stand paramount. [...] A geographic position [...] gave the ambitious and aggressive confederates advantages which they perfectly understood, and by which they profited to the utmost. Patient and politic as they were ferocious, they were not only conquerors of their own race, but the powerful allies and dreaded foes of the French and English colonies [...].

---


131 Francis Parkman, *The Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth Century* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1901) xlvii. It is a testament to the importance and influence of Parkman’s work that it has often been reprinted. First published in 1867, the book has been reprinted many times, including in 2007, 2005, 2002, and 1997. As Ingo Schröder remarked in a 1999 review article of ethnohistorical books about religious missions, “Parkman’s book is, of course, seriously flawed [...] because of his racist view of Indians as savages basically unfit for civilization, his open disdain of French colonialism as the product of an absolutist state, and his nineteenth century perspective that ‘men make history’ [...]. Yet these obvious and historically explainable shortcomings aside, Parkman has left a legacy of a Eurocentric approach that continues to haunt
Although he appears to have abandoned the Jesuit conclusion that the Iroquois were simply less human and susceptible to conversion than other groups, Parkman upheld the premise on which the missionary authors based their assessment, that the Iroquois were the most “ferocious” and prone to war of the New France Amerindians. In the mid-twentieth century, J.H. Kennedy cited the Relations in affirming that among the Amerindian groups the Jesuits encountered “[…] the Iroquois were the most assiduous and committed the worst atrocities.” More recently, Peggy Reeves Sanday has uncritically repeated the Jesuit portrait of the Iroquois as inherently violent, ready to pounce on any non-Iroquois that crossed their path. Wrote Sanday: “Apparently, the Iroquois were indiscriminate in their search for torture victims to appease their war god and their own rage at the mounting losses they experienced in the chronic warfare of the seventeenth century,”

This tradition of painting the Iroquois as exceptionally cruel also has passed into popular culture. Bruce Beresford’s 1991 film Black Robe, based on Brian Moore’s novel of the same name, follows the lead of the Jesuit Relations in depicting the cruelty of the Iroquois relative to other groups with which the fictional hero, Father La Forgue, comes

---

132 Kennedy 129.

133 Sanday 126-127.
in contact during a voyage to Huron country in the company of a band of Algonquins. As in the Relations, groups other than the Iroquois are shown to have cruel streaks. For example, the priest’s traveling companion, a young Frenchman named Daniel, narrowly escapes death at the hands of the Algonquin with whom the pair is traveling. A specific reason for the threat to his life is clear, as is the reason he is ultimately spared: a member of the band, led by a man named Chomina, nearly kills Daniel with an arrow to prevent him from following Chomina’s daughter, with whom he has struck up a love affair, after the Algonquin band abandons the two Frenchmen to pursue their own interests. Daniel is spared by Chomina himself, whose conscience ultimately will not allow him to abandon the Frenchmen after promising to accompany them to Huron country. Chomina’s decision reflects his concern for honoring his commitments. Violence is not, for Chomina, an uncontrollable urge, but a potential solution to a problem that is ultimately discarded as dishonorable.

Huron violence in the film follows a similar pattern. Upon his arrival in the Huron village where he is to take up residence and help two priests already there, the fictional Father La Forgue finds one of his fellow missionaries dead in the chapel, brutally murdered with a hatchet. Again, a specific reason for the violence is provided to viewers. La Forgue arrives just as an epidemic has swept the village, taking a heavy toll

---

on its Huron inhabitants. The surviving missionary explains the murder to La Forgue:

“The Indians thought that he brought [the fever] to punish those who would not accept
the faith. […] one man who lost his child killed Fr. Duval.”¹³⁵ Although still a tragedy
and grounds for disapproval, the fictional murder is at least explained, and can be
partially sympathized with as the action of a desperate but misguided person
attempting to protect his family and village.

In contrast, the Iroquois in the film are portrayed as violent by nature. As the
Frenchman Daniel remarks at one point, “The Iroquois are not men. They are animals.”
When Chomina’s band returns to the spot where they left La Forgue after their aborted
abandonment, an Iroquois band, invisibly hidden in the underbrush, strikes without
warning, killing several of them and taking others prisoner along with the priest and his
French companion. No motivation is apparent for the brutal assault on Chomina’s group
other than the Algonquin band’s misfortune to find themselves in the same place as a
group of Iroquois.¹³⁶ Later, when La Forgue and what remains of Chomina’s band arrive
at the home village of their captors, they are exposed to one act of cruelty after another.

---

¹³⁵ Bruce Beresford, Black Robe (Santa Monica: Metro Goldwyn Mayer, 1991).

¹³⁶ I do not mean to suggest that Chomina’s band was attacked for trespassing on Iroquois territory, but
rather that the film suggests that the violent Iroquois were in the habit of pouncing on anyone who crossed
their paths. Indeed, although Amerindian groups could be said to have had territories in that they often
stayed close to the land inhabited by their ancestors (Viau 187, 63), there were no clear borders and the
various groups did not fight each other for possession of land. Instead, wars apparently were motivated by
revenge against enemies (Trigger 68, 103) and, later, by the desire to disrupt the trading activities of rivals
(Trigger 223).
The men are forced to run through a gauntlet of villagers who beat them mercilessly with clubs, La Forgue’s finger is cut off with an oyster shell by a village leader who visibly enjoys watching his enemies suffer, and Chomina’s young son’s throat is slit while his father watches helplessly. In each violent act, the Iroquois tormentors appear to be enjoying themselves. Violence appears in these scenes as a sport for the Iroquois, a reflexive part of their nature carried out for no rational purpose. Thus more than 250 years after the Jesuits first characterized the relative violence of Amerindian groups in terms sympathetic to their allies and disparaging of their enemies, the dynamic can still be found today in pop culture depictions, testifying to the enduring influence of the *Relations*.

But it is also possible to discern another tradition of depictions of Iroquois nature and their ferocity relative to other groups, one influenced by the alliance of English colonists and early Americans with the Iroquois in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and their associated dislike of France’s Huron allies. As Gordon Sayre has remarked in his study of French and English representations of Amerindians during the colonial period, “[…] for the English colonists, hyperbolic tales of Indian cruelty generally involved the Huron, Abenaki, or Algonquin allies of the French.” A prime example is James Fenimore Cooper’s *Leatherstocking Saga*, particularly his 1826 *Last of the Mohicans*, in which a Huron man is the villain and an attack on the English fort by

---

137 Sayre 262.
Amerindian allies of the French is the most gut-wrenching scene of violence.\textsuperscript{138} The Iroquois also became, for some American writers, a favorite example of Amerindian virtue. Henry Lewis Morgan, for example, imagined the Iroquois in romantic terms as the foundation of an American literary culture. As Philip J. Deloria wrote in a remarkable essay on Morgan’s work, “[…] Morgan concocted a mythic usable past for his new Indian fraternity, a distinctly American history that he proffered hopefully as the scene of a national literature.”\textsuperscript{139} Although his choice of the Iroquois as the basis of this romantic vision of Amerindian culture surely stemmed at least in part from the fact that Morgan’s home in New York was in the former territory of the Iroquois Cayuga nation,\textsuperscript{140} is it reasonable to ask whether a French Canadian living in Iroquois country on the other side of the U.S. border would have made the same choice. Though perhaps driven by proximity to the former home of an Iroquois group, Morgan’s choice was surely facilitated by a British and early American tradition of thinking of that group in more favorable terms than the French had.

A more recent commercial phenomenon continues the tradition in the United States of understanding the Iroquois in romantic and favorable terms. Cleaning products company Seventh Generation has represented the Iroquois as early environmentalists in

\textsuperscript{138} Sayre 262.


\textsuperscript{140} Deloria 72-73.
claiming to draw its environmental philosophy from traditional Iroquois knowledge:

“The company derives its name from the Great Law of the Iroquois that states, ‘In our every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations.’”\(^{141}\) The “Great Law” referenced in company literature was produced in various versions in the early twentieth century by anthropologists in collaboration and sometimes in contest with members of the Iroquois nations themselves.\(^{142}\) The favorable image of the Iroquois that Seventh Generation attaches to its product line, then, derives from the Iroquois’ own understandably positive view of their heritage, and from anthropological accounts that, in the tradition of early American salvage anthropology, saw Iroquois culture as noble, disappearing, and worthy of preservation. Had the company consulted the Jesuit Relations for information about the Iroquois instead of a document produced by the Iroquois and American anthropologists at a moment when the culture was viewed particularly favorably, it is unlikely that the Iroquois would be used today to sell environmentally friendly paper towels.

The continuing existence of competing positive and and negative assessments of the nature of specific Amerindian groups suggests that the political relationships between the authors of early ethnographic accounts and their subjects have left an enduring mark on popular and scholarly understandings of various Amerindian groups.

\(^{141}\) From Seventh Generation company website: www.seventhgeneration.com/about.

\(^{142}\) Snow 187-191.
Unlike some of the other problems associated with using the colonial texts as a source of ethnographic information that I have discussed so far in this dissertation, this problem seems relatively easy to diagnose and compensate for, but not, apparently to stamp out, given its continued prevalence. Dean Snow prudently drew on French, English and Dutch sources in his study of the Iroquois, and was therefore able to remind his readers that “[…] the world of the seventeenth century was everywhere a violent place. Torture, slavery, and death were not the special attributes of the Iroquois.” As the preceding discussion shows, however, the perspective of one group of colonists or the other endures in scholarship and pop-culture, illustrating the continuing influence of colonial political perspectives, even in an age of sophisticated theories of anthropology.

3.3 Conclusion

It is difficult to engage in a prolonged reflection on centuries-old depictions of the ritual torture and consumption of human beings without wondering how the lessons gleaned might illuminate discussions of harsh treatment of prisoners in our own time. In the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks, the question of how one should treat one’s enemies gained new prominence as vehement criticisms of the practices of the United States government and equally vehement justifications have competed in the

143 Snow 116.
media to win the hearts and minds of the American public. Critics of American policy at Guantanamo Bay, Abu Ghraib prison, and elsewhere have expressed concern that harsh treatment of detainees will cause only an escalation in violence, as enemies of the United States resort to similar practices against captured Americans in retaliation, and as friends and families of detainees—as well as the detainees themselves—adopt more extreme positions in response to perceived abuse. Of the results of detainment of terror suspects at the American prison in Cuba, an anonymous former White House official told journalist Seymour Hersh, for example, that “[…] if we captured some people who weren’t terrorists when we got them, they are now.”¹⁴⁴

Proponents of harsh interrogation measures, on the other hand, have often suggested that potentially cruel treatment of prisoners serves a higher purpose—that of national security—and is therefore acceptable. President George W. Bush himself has on these grounds resisted congressional attempts to ban the controversial practice of waterboarding, in which the subject of interrogation is restrained and then doused in the nose and mouth with water to simulate drowning. Upon vetoing a bill prohibiting the practice in March 2008, Bush justified the technique by saying that “Al Qaeda remains determined to attack America again,” and called techniques like waterboarding “one of the most valuable tools in the war on terror,” in some ways echoing the sentiments of

seventeenth century missionaries who found torture distasteful, but nonetheless asserted its usefulness in assuring the salvation of new converts.145

Even the question of how to refer to the rough treatment some detainees have received while in American custody depends on whether one supports such practices. Apologists of the harsh interrogation techniques authorized by the CIA in March 2002 sometimes refer to them as “enhanced interrogation techniques,” a euphemism that seems designed to counter any suggestion of impropriety and remind listeners and readers that such methods are used in the context of interrogation that is supposed to yield life-saving information.146 Opponents of rough interrogation techniques have labeled them torture,147 clearly marking them as illegal and ethically problematic.148 Like the relative brutality of the Iroquois as compared to Amerindian allies of the French, it


146 For an example, and also an informative summary of six such techniques, see Brian Ross and Richard Esposito, “CIA’S Harsh Interrogation Techniques Described: Sources Say Agency’s Tactics Lead to Questionable Confessions, Sometimes to Death,” ABC News Nov. 18, 2005 http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/Investigation/story?id=1322866.


148 Federal law and treaty obligations make torture and other “cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment or punishment” illegal when carried out by the United States (Hersh 3-4). It is for this reason that proponents within government of practices like waterboarding have sought to define them as something other than torture. As Hersh points out, “[…] the senior legal officers in the White House and in the Justice Department seemed to be in virtual competition to determine who could produce the most tough-minded memoranda about the lack of prisoner rights [in the wake of the September 11 attacks]” (Hersh 4).
seems that the labels applied to current American practices are largely a matter of perspective.

One does not have to delve very deeply into news coverage of the subject to see that American readers are faced with two competing arguments about the appropriateness of the United States government’s treatment of alleged terrorists. Are we to understand harsh treatment of detainees as a useful tool, likely to enhance our safety, or as an abuse of human rights, a national disgrace that harms our standing in the world and only encourages our enemies to treat Americans more badly than they otherwise might have? In this regard, the current debate over American practices resembles the conflicted discussions of torture in the Jesuit Relations. There are certainly many differences between debates over the treatment of prisoners in the context of the “War on Terror” and in colonial New France, and accounting for them all would be the work of a separate project. 149 Nonetheless, the current debate and seventeenth century Jesuit writings have in common the fact that they both offer two possibilities for understanding harsh treatment of prisoners. It is therefore tempting to see in my analysis here of the way Jesuit missionaries described the Amerindian cruelty they witnessed—and more importantly, how their accounts have been understood in the

149 To mention only the most obvious difference, “enhanced interrogation techniques” and “torture” are used to refer to the same incidents, whereas Jesuits were sympathetic toward some tormentors and critical of others. There are not, in the current situation, two sets of actors, one considered cruel and inhumane and the other considered to be serving the greater good, through their common cruelty.
intervening centuries—clues about how American interrogation of enemies might be perceived seven generations from now. Although the current debate focuses on short term consequences—as exemplified by proponents’ fear of an imminent attack and opponents’ concern that cruelty toward enemies soon will be repaid in kind—it is worthwhile to wonder how physically and mentally harsh treatment of captured enemies might look 250 years from now. Will American practices be regarded as a heroic response to a threat to national security, or a counterproductive abuse of human rights? Although direct comparisons are clearly difficult, the case of torture in the Jesuit Relations suggests that attempts to rhetorically frame such practices in terms that make them acceptable are not necessarily durable across centuries, but become increasingly transparent with passage of time.

As I have argued in this chapter, scenes of torture and cannibalism in the Jesuit Relations are more complicated than the straightforward ethnographic accounts or arguments for negative understandings of Amerindian nature for which they have often been taken. I have shown how the Jesuits rhetorically framed Amerindian cruelty as abhorrent and animalistic, disgusting but customary, or unduly harsh but ultimately in the best interests of the Christian church in the New World depending on the political and religious status of those involved. The fact that these nuances have largely been ignored by modern scholars who have mostly focused on the details of torture accounts instead of the positive message about Amerindian nature and missionary progress that
many of them contain should give pause to those who seek to justify harsh American interrogation practices by claiming that the ends of national security justify the means. Although these arguments might resonate with some Americans in the turbulent present, one might legitimately wonder if future readers of accounts of the treatment of American prisoners in the “War on Terror” will be swayed by euphemisms like “enhanced interrogation techniques” and by protestations that such practices are necessary for national security purposes, or if they will, like modern scholars drawing on the Jesuit Relations, focus instead on the gruesome details. It is also interesting that the one aspect of Jesuit rhetorical framing that has survived into our time—the supposed particular ferocity of the Iroquois—amplifies rather than mitigates the horrifying details of Jesuit torture accounts. More careful scholarly readings of torture scenes in the Jesuit Relations could have shown that torture was sometimes seen by colonial observers as useful to evangelical efforts, but instead the lesson most commonly drawn from them is that Amerindians were brutal toward their enemies, the Iroquois above all others. Will the long-term legacy of American interrogation techniques follow this pattern, leaving future readers, viewers and listeners only the details of specific techniques and condemnations of American brutality upon which to pass judgment? Or will the

---

150 A CNN poll in late 2007 found that 69 percent of respondents thought that waterboarding constitutes torture. Nonetheless, in the same poll, 40 percent of respondent said the government should be allowed to use the practice to extract information from detainees. “Poll results: Waterboarding is torture,” CNN 11/6/07 http://www.cnn.com/2007/POLITICS/11/06/waterboard.poll/index.html
euphemism “enhanced interrogation technique” and the “ends-justify-the-means” argument—already questionable in our time—sway future observers judging the legacy of American conduct toward prisoners in the War on Terror? It is surely too soon to tell, but the example of the Jesuit Relations shows that rhetorical moves that make rough treatment of prisoners at least marginally acceptable to the public in the present will not necessarily secure a long-term legacy of acceptability, though they might result in enduring prejudices.
4. “La Foy Entre Par l’Oreille:” Amerindian Languages and Missionary Authority

From the earliest days of European contact with the New World, explorers, traders, and missionaries sought ways to communicate with the Amerindian groups they encountered. Whether the goal was extraction of precious minerals, trade, or evangelization, “The key to the continent was information—reliable, unambiguous, and digestible—and the quickest and best source of it was the Indians,” writes historian James Axtell.¹ Knowledge of Amerindian languages was, in this context, jealously guarded in the early days of New France as various actors on the colonial stage sought to protect their advantage over rivals. To mention just one example, Recollet missionaries seeking language lessons sometimes encountered resistance from trading company interpreters who cited an oath to preserve the company’s monopoly in all things as grounds for refusing to share their knowledge.² Jesuit missionaries thrived in this competitive environment, amassing data that have since formed the basis of modern linguistic studies of Iroquoian and Algonquian languages,³ and “are superior to any

² Axtell, The Invasion Within, 82.
comparable material about the English language (though not the French language) during the same period,” according to ethnolinguist John Steckley. The Jesuits’ unpublished materials reflect their relatively sophisticated and rigorous approach to learning Amerindian languages, and the missionaries may have resembled modern ethnographic fieldworkers more in their approach to Amerindian languages than in any other area. As linguist Victor Hanzeli pointed out, the dictionaries and grammars written by Jesuit missionaries are quite precise in their transcription of Amerindian words and in morphology, and their field methods resembled current procedures, despite the lack of a modern theory of linguistics to inform their efforts. The Jesuits themselves sometimes, although rarely, characterized their linguistic work in ways that call to mind twentieth century ethnographic methods. In one oft-cited passage, for example, François Le Mercier wrote that he and his colleagues were actively collecting Huron words like “autant de pierres précieuses” (“so many precious stones”), a formula.


4 Steckley, Words of the Huron, xiii.

5 Hanzeli 51, 100-101.

6 Campeau 3.768; Thwaites 14.11.
that evokes the collection of discrete facts that early anthropologists viewed as their task.\footnote{Bronislaw Malinowski, for example, wrote that one should “be an active huntsman” in the search for “concrete data.” Bronislaw Malinowski, \textit{Argonauts of the Western Pacific} (1922) (Long Grove, Ill: Waveland Press, 1984) 8, 14.}

And yet, as I will argue in this chapter, much more was at stake in passages of the \textit{Relations} pertaining to languages than the methodical and precise study of Amerindian tongues. At least as important to the missionaries would have been accounting for the relationship between Amerindian and European languages. One question posed to European thinkers by the existence of the Amerindian Other was how to account for the startling differences between Amerindian and European cultures.\footnote{Berkhofer 33-34.} If, as I have discussed in the two earlier chapters of this dissertation, Amerindians were presumed to share a common origin, history, and humanity with Europeans, how could their cultures be so different? Amerindian languages, it seems, were a prime example of this puzzling diversity. As Paul Le Jeune remarked of the Montagnais language, “Je ne croy pas avoir ouy parler d’aucune langue qui procédast de mesme façon que celle-cy” \footnote{Campeau 2.419; Thwaites 5.115.} (“I do not think that I have ever heard [of] any language which is formed in the same manner as this”). This intellectual challenge and the status of Amerindian languages as politically valuable tools to be jealously guarded left clear marks on Jesuit discussions of
them in the *Relations*, where the unfamiliar tongues appear not only as a body of knowledge to be mastered, but as a mechanism for asserting Jesuit authority and reconciling Amerindian and European cultures. As I hope to show in this chapter, the ways Jesuits characterized their encounter with Amerindian languages adds nuance to their reputation as rigorous linguists, and suggests that they did not merely preserve the unfamiliar tongues for posterity, but framed and altered them in ways that served their own political and religious aims.

Although the value of the Jesuits’ linguistic work is clear enough to modern scholars who have access to the missionaries’ unpublished works, the picture would have been very different for seventeenth century readers whose only information on the priests’ linguistic work came from the *Jesuit Relations*. As Hanzeli remarked in his study of New France missionary linguistics, “The little we have seen published was too fragmentary to stimulate anyone, even in a linguistically more sophisticated age, to use these materials for comparative or general linguistic studies.” Although the Jesuit linguists now are recognized as generally meticulous and careful within the limits of their seventeenth century understanding of language, I argue here that they cultivated

10 Many of these manuscripts are housed in the Fonds d’Archives du Séminaire de Québec at the Musée de la Civilisation. Others are scattered in various archives. For a list of known manuscripts and their locations, see Hanzeli Appendix D.

11 Hanzeli 63.
an image of themselves as far less sophisticated and efficient at acquiring knowledge of Amerindian languages than one might guess from perusing the detailed and authoritative modern studies that have been based on their work. The vast distance between Jesuit knowledge of Amerindian languages as demonstrated in their private, internal documents and in texts crafted for public consumption has been attributed to at least three causes since the seventeenth century. Hanzeli blamed the priests’ failure to recognize the intellectual value of their work for the fact that they did not publish dictionaries and detailed grammatical descriptions of Amerindian languages, Brébeuf attributed it in 1636 to the rapidly changing state of Jesuit knowledge on the subject, and historian Edward G. Gray pointed to the lack of a printing press in New France as the cause.

---

12 Hanzeli 101.

13 Wrote Brébeuf, “[...] tous les jours nous allons descouvrans de nouveaux secrets en ceste science, ce qui nous empesche d’envoyer rien à imprimer pour le présent. Nous en saurons, grâces à Dieu, tantost suffisament, tant pour entendre que pour estre entendus, mais non encore pour mettre au jour” (“[...] for every day we discover new secrets in this science, which for the present hinders us from sending anything to be printed. We know now, thank God, sufficient to understand and to be understood, but not yet to publish”). Campeau 3.323; Thwaites 10.55. Brébeuf, who died in 1649, apparently did not manage to complete his grammar, nor his dictionary. Wallace Chafe, “The Earliest European Encounters with Iroquoian Languages,” in Decentering the Renaissance: Canada and Europe in Multidisciplinary Perspective 1500-1700, eds. Germaine Warkentin and Carolyn Podruchny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001) 258.

14 Wrote Gray, “[...] Recollets and Jesuits produced grammars, dictionaries, prayer books, and catechisms in various indigenous languages. But, significantly, they were never able to do this on a large scale. Although Jesuits had asked for a printing press in 1665, the request was never granted.” Edward G. Gray, New World Babel: Languages and Nations in Early America (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999) 33. I do not find this explanation entirely convincing. If the missionaries and their superiors had deemed the widespread diffusion of their accumulated linguistic knowledge truly important and desirable, they could have simply sent copies to France for publication, as they did with the Relations.
Although the precise reason for the Jesuits’ failure to publish detailed linguistic works may remain unknown, I argue in this chapter that the treatment in the Relations of Amerindian languages is bound up in seventeenth century disputes about missionary access to New France, and influenced by the role language was understood to play in effecting religious conversion. Just decades after Sir Francis Bacon famously characterized knowledge as a kind of power in his 1597 Meditationes Sacrae, that idea manifested itself in the Jesuit Relations, where knowledge of Amerindian languages appears as an exclusionary principle that suggests that the Jesuits alone were capable of bringing Catholicism to New France. Far from disciplined linguists toiling away in the field and carrying out orders handed down directly from the Pope, the Jesuits more commonly, at least in the early years of their mission monopoly, cast themselves in ways that excused their early difficulties in learning languages, suggested ever-increasing control over them, and suggested that the power to effect widespread conversion in New France was theirs alone. My emphasis in this chapter, therefore, is on Jesuit power in New France at what Michel Foucault termed its “capillary” point—as exercised and enacted in texts by the New France Jesuits, and not as handed down to them by a

---

15 Bacon’s well-known characterization appears in the essay “Of Heresies:” some heretics, Bacon writes, “ [...] make and set down and appoint larger limits of the knowledge of God than of his power, or rather of that part of God’s power, (for knowledge itself is a power whereby he knoweth,) than of that by which he moveth and worketh [...].” Francis Bacon, The Works of Francis Bacon, Lord Chancellor of England, 3 vols, ed. Basil Montagu (Philadelphia: A. Hart, 1852) 71.

16 As Carole Blackburn has put it, “Language was the key to the interior consciousness—the mond and hearts [...] of Aboriginal people.” Blackburn 101.
central Church or order authority. I argue here that with access to New France at stake, writing about Amerindian languages was a delicate balancing act in which Jesuits had to appear knowledgeable in order to encourage the perception that they were qualified and capable without giving away too much information and thereby ceding their advantage.

This chapter participates in a tradition of reading passages in the Relations that describe Amerindian languages and Jesuits’ attempts to learn them with an eye to what they tell us about the colonial encounter and the questions posed by it. In this vein, Peter Dorsey has argued that the admiration that Jesuits expressed in the Relations for the languages they encountered was the motivation for their accommodation of certain elements of Amerindian religion, and that the link the missionaries drew between language and theology made them rigorous and culturally sensitive students of Amerindian life. Margaret Leahey has used Jesuit accounts of their experience with Amerindian languages to describe the communicative challenges that missionaries faced in New France. And historian Edward G. Gray has drawn on the Jesuit Relations, among other sources, in tracing the emergence of the notion that linguistic differences

---


could be attributed to differences in human character, and the implications of that idea for nation formation.\textsuperscript{20} I share the interest of Dorsey, Leahey, and Gray in what passages in the \textit{Relations} about Amerindian languages have to tell us aside from linguistic data, and it is in this spirit that I consider such passages here.

As I mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, physical access to New France was controlled in the early years of the Jesuits’ missionary monopoly by the \textit{Compagnie de la Nouvelle France}, the 1627 charter of which ordered the company to populate the colony with French Catholics and to exclude all others.\textsuperscript{21} Although Jesuit missionaries were not in a position of direct control over who could travel to the colony,\textsuperscript{22} their annual publications gave them a near monopoly on the flow of information across the Atlantic during their tenure as exclusive spiritual stewards of New France. As the public’s almost only source of news from the colony and the mission, the authors of the \textit{Relations} were well-positioned to rhetorically set the terms for missionary access to New France’s spiritual riches, and to define for French and religious authorities, as well as potential financial backers of any missionary effort, what it would take to successfully bring Christianity to the Amerindians. As I will argue over

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{20} Gray, already cited.
\textsuperscript{21} Edict du Roy pour l’Establissement de la Compagnie de la Nouvelle-France (Paris: Sébastien Cramoisy, 1657) 5.
\textsuperscript{22} On the other hand, as “silent partners” in the trading company (Axtell, \textit{Invasion}, 39), the Jesuits may have been able to exert some influence in the matter.
\end{quote}
the course of this chapter, discussion in the *Relations* of Amerindian languages and of their efforts to learn them was one mechanism by which the Jesuits positioned themselves as the religious order best qualified to extract maximum spiritual benefit from the mission. The lack of usable linguistic information in their texts, coupled with rhetorical devices that would have suggested to readers that Jesuit knowledge of the local languages could not be rivaled, would have implied that potential competitors, without language skills and therefore powerless, were not qualified to serve as missionaries in New France. At a time when Jesuit legitimacy as the sole spiritual stewards of the colony was being publicly questioned, discussions of Amerindian languages in the *Relations* served to suggest that the Jesuits were in possession of the key to New France and also to rhetorically lock others out. 23

23Michel Foucault made a similar point in his 1967 address “Des Espaces Autres.” A “Heterotopia of compensation,” Foucault said, is a place that amounts to an effectively enacted utopia, an actually existing place that reflects and perfects another place. Among the examples cited by Foucault are Paraguayan Jesuit colonies in which life, he says, was perfectly ordered and regulated by pious devotion to religion, and upon which the New France Jesuits consciously modeled portions of their own mission strategy (Jetten 15-33). A defining characteristic of such places, according to Foucault, is that they always feature a mechanism of opening and closing that simultaneously permits and prohibits access. My argument can be understood in these terms. In the pages of the *Relations*, I contend, Amerindian languages are presented as the mechanism that confer legitimacy on the linguistically-skilled Jesuits, and preclude from the mission order with less skill. Michel Foucault, *Dits et Ecrits: 1954-1988* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994) 752-762.
4.1 Jesuit vs. Recollet

Before turning to an analysis of the treatment of Amerindian languages in the Relations, a brief discussion of the political climate surrounding the Jesuits' monopoly on the mission following the colony’s return to French control in 1632 is useful, as it is in this context that Jesuit comments on Amerindian languages can be understood as a mechanism for shoring up their own claim to the mission while undermining rivals. The reasons for the exclusion of the Recollets from the New France missionary field still are not entirely clear. 24 From the seventeenth century to the present day, the blame has been laid at the feet of Cardinal Richelieu and his confidant Père Joseph—a Franciscan Capuchin priest who apparently first tried to secure a monopoly for his own order before supporting the Jesuits 25 —officials in the Compagnie de la Nouvelle France, 26 and the Jesuits. 27 The Recollets, for their part, claimed to have planned all along to return to New France, and actively prepared to do so after English and French authorities began taking steps to transfer the colony back to France in 1631. 28 Indeed, it seems that the order had


27 Blackburn 30. Blackburn claims that Jesuits actively pursued exclusive rights, and gained the complicity of Jean de Lauson, superintendent of the Compagnie de Cent Associés.

good reason to believe that its return to New France was imminent. A 1618 Papal ruling, supported by King Louis XIII, had granted the Recollets exclusive stewardship of New France for as long as they cared to stay there, giving them what they believed to be an unshakable hold on the mission.29 According to capuchin scholar John M. Lenhart, “Expectations ran so high that the Recollets thought it advisable to apply to the Congregation of Propaganda in Rome in the spring of 1631, for the erection of a bishopric in Canada.”30 That the Jesuits were transported to New France in 1632 apparently came as a rude surprise to the Recollets, who had no prior knowledge that their former collaborators were preparing to return—alone—to the mission.31

Undeterred by this initial setback, the Recollets mounted a vigorous campaign throughout the 1630s, ‘40s, and ‘50s to secure passage to the colony, 32 but were denied by officials of the trading company every year except 1633. In that year, trading company superintendent Jean de Lauson reportedly agreed to transport Recollet priests to the mission, but only when the ships that were to carry them were about to depart, leaving the would-be missionaries no time to make the necessary arrangements. Both

30 Lenhart 279.
31 Lenhart 281.
privately, in memoranda to royal, papal and trading company authorities, and publicly, in books and pamphlets, the Recollets pleaded their case. They argued that they were the rightful owners of the New France infrastructure, and that royal and papal support, evidenced in letters that were reproduced in texts destined for public consumption, should be enough to break down whatever barriers were preventing the order’s return to New France. The order took its case directly to the public as well, seeking and gaining the support of wealthy benefactors to counteract the perception, cited by some as a reason for the Recollets’ exclusion, that the colony was too small, young, and fragile to support a mendicant order—one emphasizing poverty and frugality, and normally refusing to seek fixed revenues to support their communities.

Although it is not at all clear that the Jesuits had a hand in keeping their former colleagues out of New France, the order’s presence there alone elevated suspicions of

---

33 Chinard 151. I have so far been unable to consult the pamphlets Chinard refers to. Doing so is a goal for the future development of my argument here.

34 Campeau 3.170.


36 Lenhart 285.

37 More specifically, mendicant orders like the Franciscans or Dominicans are “[…] congregations of religious who beg. In fact, they were founded as begging friars, but in the course of time the emphasis was on poverty and frugality as a personal way of life and on the refusal of fixed revenues for the communities. Even this last proved impracticable if the members were to study and teach and preach. […] They were intended to be itinerant preachers, able to follow apostolic needs wherever they arose. […] They saw Jesus as living an itinerant life and identifying with the poorest, and they committed themselves in discipleship to do likewise.” “Mendicant Order,” *The Modern Catholic Encyclopedia*. 
treachery. Yet the dispute seems to have been more of a cold war than an overt, hard-fought battle. The two orders appear to have been generally cordial and respectful toward each other, both prior to and during the Jesuits’ tenure as sole missionaries in New France, perhaps because the potential for inter-order squabbling was sometimes cited as a reason for the Recollets’ continued exclusion.38 Instead of resorting to public feuding, each order subtly undermined the other while promoting itself as the missionary outfit best equipped to convert the New France Amerindians.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, one way the Recollets sought to undermine their rivals was by questioning the legitimacy of the conversions the Jesuits claimed to have performed among the Amerindians. Another was emphasis on their own long experience in the colony, inevitably casting the Jesuits as inexperienced neophytes. Recollet Gabriel Sagard, for example, wrote in his 1636 *Histoire du Canada* that his order had believed its rights in New France to be so unassailable39 that they never bothered to completely move out when evicted by the English:

38 Although the potential for distracting conflict between the two orders was one reason given for the exclusion of the Recollets, both sides, at least publicly, dismissed those concerns. “[...] the friars answered that they had worked side by side with the Jesuits in Canada for five years, and that harmony had always been maintained,” writes Lenhart (285).

39 Other authors similarly characterized the Recollet claim to the mission as well-established. Chrétien Le Clercq, for example, summed up the Recollet claim to New France this way: “Nous préparions nôtre retour dès l’année 1631 et nous ne pensions pas, que l’affaire dût avoir la moindre difficulté, puisque nous avions nos établissemens formez, les patentes de Rome et de France en bonne forme, et qu’une possession de 14 à 15 années, avec des travaux infatigables que nous y avions soutenus, rendoit nôtre droit incontestable [...]” [“We were preparing for our return from the year 1631, and we did not think that the affair would pose the slightest difficulty, since we had our establishments formed, the licences of Rome and of France in good
[…] ils se contentèrent de passer seulement deux coffres, et de cacher le reste de leurs ustenciles et emmenceulment en divers endroits sous la terre et emmy les bois, le surplus de nos ornemens fut serré dans une caisse de cuir en un lieu à part […].

 […] they contented themselves to bring only two trunks, and to hide the rest of their implements and furniture in various places under ground and in the woods, the greater part of our ornaments were enclosed tight in a leather box in a separate place […].

By Sagard’s account, his order understood its departure from New France to be only partial and temporary. In addition to signaling the Recollets’ intention to return, the author’s claim that the missionaries had left much behind when leaving New France would have reminded the reader of the order’s long history there—long enough, in any case, to have accumulated possessions that were easier to stash than to transport. The order’s claim to the status of the most experienced and established missionary organization would remain a fixture of Recollet comments on their exclusion from New France, continuing even after the order finally was allowed to return in 1670. Recollet historian Sixte Le Tac, for example, similarly emphasized that the Jesuits arrived in New France 10 years after the Recollets, and asserted that they found themselves in the shadow of the already established and successful missionaries. “[…] on auroit crû que les Peres Jesuites […] auroient esté reçûs avec toute la reconnoissance possible, et
[...] les PP Recollets servoient seuls le pays depuis dix ans avec beaucoup de zelle et d’édification; ils avoient essuyé les premières et très grandes difficultés qui se trouvent à établir la Religion Catholique dans une nouvelle colonie [...] ils n’avoient besoin que d’estre un peu soutenus et assistés pour pouvoir continuer leurs saints employes.43

[...] The Recollet fathers served the land alone for ten years with much zeal and edification; they had cleared the first and very large difficulties of establishing the Catholic Religion in a new colony [...] they only needed to be supported a little and assisted to be able to continue their holy work.44

In Le Tac’s retrospective version of events, the Recollets’ efforts had already met with success in eliminating the most daunting of obstacles to the Christianization of the colony.45 Seeking support for the continuation of their work, Le Tac claimed, the Recollets appealed to Henri de Lévis, Duc de Ventadour and viceroy of New France, who unexpectedly sent the Jesuits.46 By emphasizing their long experience in New France, the Recollets attempted to position themselves as the order best-equipped for the

même avec agrément; mais bien loin de cela, il ne se trouva personne ny des chefs, ny des habitans qui n’y temoigna de la repugnance” (“[…] one would have believed that the Jesuit Fathers […] would have been received with all possible gratitude, and even approval. But far from that, there was no one, neither chief, not inhabitant who did not show repugnance for them”). Le Clercq I.309-310; my translation. Le Clercq goes on to suggest that the reason for the Jesuits’ cold reception was that their right to presence in the colony was doubted, because they had received only oral permission from the king. Although they were able to stay due to Recollet generosity in providing shelter, their legitimacy was in doubt, the author suggests.

43 Le Tac 122.
44 My translation.
45 Modern scholars looking back on the tenure of the Jesuits and the Recollets have concluded that the Recollet missionaries, perhaps naturally due to their shorter time in New France, produced fewer converts than the Jesuits (Axtell 20).
46 Le Tac 122-123.
missionary task, implying but not directly saying that the Jesuits were unqualified at best and usurpers at worst.

Some Recollet writers claimed that the order had invited the Jesuits to join the New France mission in the first place, a claim that would make the Jesuits’ elevation to exclusive spiritual stewards of the colony all the more unseemly. A 1636 memorandum produced by an unnamed Recollet, for example, claimed that the Jesuits only participated in the mission at the invitation of their predecessors: “Ils vous prient de considérer s’il est juste de les avoir empeschez de retourner audict pays et y ayant demeuré les premiers, et sy longtemps après y avoir appelé les Pères Jésuistes” (“They implore you to consider if it is just to have prevented them from returning to said country, having been there first and so long before having called the Jesuit Fathers there”). 47 Although this claim has been repeated often since the seventeenth century, 48 Jesuit scholar Lucien Campeau has dismissed as a fable the characterization of the Jesuits as mere assistants to an already well-oiled missionary machine, and reported finding no trace of any invitation from the Recollets that precipitated his order’s arrival. 49 Whether true or not, the claim circulated by the Recollets that the Jesuits had

---

47 Campeau 3.169. The document’s original purpose is not made explicitly clear, but it appears to be addressed to the Cardinal de Richelieu, the head of the Compagnie de 100 Associés, who opposed the Recollets’ efforts to return to New France (Campeau, preface to the Mémoire des Récollets demandant de Retourner au Canada, 2.159), My translation.


begun their careers in New France as mere adjuncts to an already successful mission inevitably cast the newcomers as the less qualified of the two groups.

Although the two orders seem to have been careful to keep overt tensions at a low boil during the decades in which the Jesuits worked alone in New France, Recollet complaints about the Jesuits occasionally took the form of explicit accusations of underhanded dealings. In the 1636 memo cited above, the author accuses Jesuit priests of redirecting material support meant for the Recollets to themselves during their earlier stint together in New France: “Néantmoins, sous main les Jésuistes avoient fait retrancher la nourriture de deux récollectz pour se l’appliquer, ce que monsieur de Ventadour, vice-roy, ayant appris le fit rétracter” (“Nevertheless, the Jesuits had secretly had the food of two Recollets redirected to themselves, which monsieur de Ventadour, the viceroy, reversed upon learning of it”). 50 Sagard repeated the charge in his 1636 book. 51 Though the charge does not seem to have been made explicitly at the time, the Recollets at least suggested, by citing a small example of Jesuit treachery, that their rivals were capable of the self-interested machinations that would have been required to unjustly exclude the Recollets. It was only decades later, after the Recollets had been granted a new role in New France, that members of the order dared to directly accuse the Jesuits of purposely and maliciously shutting them out, and even then the

50 Campeau 3.165; my translation.

51 Sagard, Histoire, 866.
accusation was apparently deemed too scandalous for publication. Le Tac, looking back on decades of Recollet struggles to gain access to New France from his late seventeenth century perspective, was explicit in his accusation of Jesuit treachery, reflecting the decades of frustration his order had endured in attempting to loosen the Jesuit stranglehold on the New France mission:

Je scay que c’est une chose inconcevable en France que des Jesuittes [...] passent la mer pour bander tout leur zelle à perdre une petite communauté de Religieux de Saint-François. C’est néantmoins ce qui se fait avec les plus belles apparences d’amitié du monde.52

I know that it is inconceivable in France that the Jesuits [...] are crossing the sea to apply all of their zeal to ruin a small community of friars of Saint Francis. That is nonetheless what is happening under the greatest guise of friendship in the world.53

Not only did the Jesuits steal the rightful place of the Recollets, Le Tac claimed, they purposely set out to destroy their predecessors. Although it may never be known for certain why Le Tac’s book was not published until 1888, the author of the preface to the first edition, the journalist and lawyer Eugène Réveillaud, suggested that it was due to a continuing desire among Recollet authorities to maintain at least an appearance of civil relations with the Jesuits.54 Whatever the reason, it is clear from Le Tac’s book that at

---

52 Le Tac 6.

53 My translation.

54 Wrote Réveillaud, “Il écrit son livre tout chaud du feu intérieur qui couve en son coeur, et parfois,—quand il touche au sujet scabreux des Jésuites et de leur trames secrètes pour supplanter les Récollets,—tout bouillant de lave, tout frémissant des grondements d’une colère mal contenue. Il dira à son supérieur général à qui son livre est d’abord soumis, il dira à ses frères les Récollets de France, il fera savoir au grand
least some members of his order were furious with the Jesuits and believed that they had stolen the rightful place of the Recollets in New France. Although their anger was generally not publicly expressed, it is clear that the Recollets had a motive to undermine the Jesuits whenever the opportunity arose.

Despite being under what could be perceived as attack by the Recollets—albeit generally subtle attack that took care to preserve the possibility that the two orders could work together in New France if given the chance—the authors of the Relations did not address the controversy directly. As Claude Rigault and Réal Ouellet have remarked, the texts are absolutely silent on the topic of the rivalry between the two orders. And according to some sources, the Jesuits actively supported the Recollets’

---

55 Geoffroy Atkinson, for example, had the following to say about the conflict between Recollets and Jesuits over the New France mission: “Dès leur arrivée au Canada, les Jésuites s’étaient trouvés en conflit avec les Récollets, qui faisaient sonner bien haut leurs droits de premiers occupants et qui ne voyaient pas sans crainte de puissants et dangereux rivaux s’établir à côté d’eux” (“From the time of their arrival in Canada, the Jesuits found themselves in conflict with the Recollets, who loudly asserted their rights as first occupants and who did not see without fear the powerful and dangerous rivals set up shop next to them”). Geoffroy Atkinson, Les relations de voyages du XVIIe siècle et l’évolution des idées; contribution à l’étude de la formation de l’esprit du XVIIe siècle (Paris: Champion, 1924) 151; my translation. Axtell remarks that the Jesuits’ presence in New France drew nothing but “carping jealousy” from the Recollets. The Invasion Within, 50.

efforts to regain access to the colony. In his 19th century account of Jesuit activity in New France, Camille de Rochemonteix, himself a member of the order, cited to that effect three letters from Jesuit missionaries to Recollet authorities in which “[...] les Jésuites de Québec leur mandèrent le désir qu’ils avaient de les revoir” {“[...] the Jesuits of Québec sent them the desire that they had to see them again”}.\(^{57}\) But even such statements in support of the Recollet campaign to return to New France were interpreted in ways that contributed to a climate of suspicion around the Jesuit presence in the colony. The Recollet Chrétien Le Clercq, for example, characterized the Jesuit outreach as a defensive move calculated to counter perceptions that the Jesuits had conspired to steal the mission from the Recollets:

\[\ldots\] les Reverents Peres Jésuites cependant se virent soupçonnez de traverser le retour des Recollets; ils vouluient bien s’en disculper par un certificat, par des protestations, par des lettres authentiques que j’ay luës, l’une du Reverend Pere le Jeune Superieur de la mission [...] une autre du Reverend Pere Charles Lallemant [...] et une troisième du mêmre Pere Lallemant au Frere Gervais Mohier, dans laquelle il se plaint fort de ce qu’on soupçonnait en France et en Canada les Peres de sa compaignie, d’estres contraires à nostre retour.\(^{58}\)

\[\ldots\] The reverend Jesuit Fathers, however, found themselves suspected of preventing the return of the Recollets. They wanted badly to exonerate themselves by a certificate, by assurances, by some authentic letters that I have read, one from the reverend Father Le Jeune, Superior of the mission, [...] another from the Reverend Father Charles Lalemant [...] and a third from the same Father Lalemant to the brother Gervais Mohier, in which he complains

\(^{57}\) Rochemonteix 187, my translation.

\(^{58}\) Le Clercq 464-465.
strongly that the fathers of this company are suspected in France and in Canada of being opposed to our return.\textsuperscript{59}

I have been unable so far to locate the letters mentioned by Le Clercq to evaluate his interpretation, but their contents are, in any case, irrelevant here. Le Clercq either accurately represents a level of public suspicion that necessitated Jesuit outreach, or invents it, casting aspersions even as he pretends to applaud the good will between the two orders. Both possibilities suggest that the Jesuits were viewed with suspicion over the exclusion of their predecessors from New France.

Whether the Jesuit missionaries fully supported Recollet aspirations regarding New France or secretly undermined them may remain undecidable, but the circumstances leading to the order’s mission monopoly and the climate of suspicion it produced posed challenges to its legitimacy in New France. Even if the Jesuits did nothing to obstruct the Recollets, their presence in the colony and the resistance encountered by their predecessors left them vulnerable to the perception—apparently actively but carefully encouraged by their former colleagues—that they had usurped the rightful place of the more experienced order that claimed to have invited their participation in the first place. Asserting its authority and demonstrating its capacity to effect change in the New France mission were therefore necessary moves if the order was to be accepted as a legitimate force for bringing about the conversion of Amerindian

\textsuperscript{59} My translation.
groups, and if the information in their Relations was to be taken seriously by readers and potential financial backers in France. As I will argue in the rest of this chapter, asserting control over Amerindian languages was one way for Jesuits to enact a measure of rhetorical control over the mission.

Indeed, the Jesuits’ apparent relative success in acquiring language skills had been a point of emphasis in the missionaries’ efforts to distinguish themselves from other groups from the earliest years of their presence in New France, before regular publication of the Relations began. Upon arriving in Acadia in 1611, the Jesuit Pierre Biard reported that Jessé Fleché, a secular priest—one focusing on ministering to believers but not a member of a religious order—a had baptized about 100 Micmacs, despite the fact that they apparently possessed no knowledge of Christianity. Biard lashed out in a letter to his superior: “Le mal est qu’il ne les a peu instruire comme il eust désiré, faute de sçavoir la langue et d’avoir de quoy les entretenir […]” (“The trouble is, he has not been able to instruct them as he would have wished, because he did not know the language, and had nothing with which to engage them […]”). Although he admitted that the Jesuits who replaced Fleché had not yet managed to completely translate their message into the local language, Biard followed his criticisms

---

60 Secular Clergy “are engaged for the most part in pastoral work and […] are not members of a religious institute. They are not bound by a vow of poverty or community life. But their celibacy, in the Latin Church, is under solemn oath and they promise obedience to a bishop as their immediate supervisor under the Pope.” John A. Harndon, S.J., Modern Catholic Dictionary (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980) 496.

61 Campeau 1.140; Thwaites 1.161.
of Fleché with an account of conversations with some of the Amerindians that Fleché had baptized, as if to demonstrate that although imperfect, his knowledge was at least better than that of his predecessor. The word that Biard chose to register his disapproval of Fléché’s actions also is significant. Instead of the more neutral “problème” or “défaut,” Biard opted for the synonym “mal,” a word that has moral connotations and highlights not only the practical problem posed by Fléché’s poor grasp of the language, but also the absence of virtue in the “conversions” it produced. Although the Jesuits would temper their direct criticism of other missionaries in their published comments in the following decades, Biard’s letter suggests that linguistic ability was a point of emphasis in Jesuit portrayals of themselves as uniquely qualified missionaries well before regular publication of the Jesuit Relations began.

The Recollets, although less liberal dispensers of baptisms than Fléché had been, apparently were only slightly more adept at acquiring the tools necessary for proper conversion, a point that Jesuits were quick to bring to the attention of the French reading public. In a 1627 published letter to his brother Jérome, later to become a prominent missionary author in his own right, Charles Lalemant boasted of succeeding where the Recollets had failed by convincing trading company interpreter Nicolas Marsolet to

62 The word “mal” “se dit figurément en choses morales, de tout ce qui est contraire à la vertu […]” (“said figuratively in matters of morality of all that is contrary to virtue”). “Mal,” Dictionnaire Universel; my translation.
share his knowledge of Montagnais, a coup that Le Jeune would trumpet anew in 1633.\textsuperscript{63}

Wrote Lalemant,

\textit{[\ldots] ce truchement n’avoit jamais voulu communiquer à personne la\n
cognition qu’il avoit de ce langage, non pas mesme aux reverends Pères\nRécollects, qui depuis dix ans n’avoient cessé de l’en importuner. Et cependant, à\nla premiere prière que je luy fis, me promist ce que ja vous ay dit et s’est acquité\ fidèlement de sa promesse pendant cet hyver.}\textsuperscript{64}

This Interpreter had never wanted to communicate his knowledge of the\nlanguage to any one, not even to the Reverend Recollect Fathers, who had\nconstantly importuned him for ten years; and yet he promised me what I have\ntold you, the first time I urged him to do so, and he kept his promise faithfully\nduring that Winter.\textsuperscript{65}

Gloating that he had accomplished in one conversation what the Recollets had not been\nable to achieve in ten years, Lalemant drew a sharp comparison between the two orders’\nlinguistic prowess, all to the Jesuits’ favor. The publication of Gabriel Sagard’s Huron\ndictionary in 1632—about eight years after his departure from New France and in the\nsame year his order found itself unexpectedly shut out of the mission—could be seen as\nan effort to bolster his order’s credentials in an area that Jesuits had long been claiming\nas their own strength. This single effort to establish the Recollets as language experts in\ntheir own right was not likely to be more convincing than the case that the Jesuits, as I

\textsuperscript{63} Campeau 2.418.
\textsuperscript{64} Campeau 2.147-148.
\textsuperscript{65} Thwaites 4.211.
will argue in the coming pages, made in a variety of ways over the course of many years.

With access to the New France mission in dispute, and with skill in languages already established as a strong point of Jesuit strategy, it is perhaps natural that descriptions of Amerindian languages and Jesuit attempts to learn them would serve as assertions of the order’s authority and legitimacy. As I mentioned earlier, as sole spiritual stewards of New France after 1632, the priests were well-positioned to define for the French public in the pages of their Relations what it took to be an effective missionary. As I will now argue, the authors of the Relations positioned Amerindian languages as the privileged entry point to Amerindian souls. Fluency in the languages of potential converts would, they suggested, give the speaker power to effect spiritual change, and the ways the priests described their efforts to attain fluency asserted rhetorical control over the languages, reminding readers that the Jesuits—and only the Jesuits—were in possession of the most important tool for bringing Christianity to the Amerindians.

4.2 Des Langues Fortes Pauvres et Fortes Riches: Amerindian Languages in the Jesuit Relations

The earliest accounts of French-Amerindian contact contain sometimes amusing descriptions of the myriad ways newcomers sought to communicate with the groups
they encountered. French explorer Jacques Cartier, for example, described the frantic and sometimes fruitless gestures he used with the Iroquoian group he encountered during his first voyage to New France in 1534. The inadequacy of that method of communication revealed itself in an incident in which Cartier and crew ended up using a cannon to make a point that gestures had failed to convey:

[…] nous ne voulûmes pas nous fier à leurs signes, et leur fimes signe de se retirer; ce qu’ils ne voulurent point, et ramèrent de si grande force qu’ils entourèrent incontinent notre barque, avec leurs sept barques. Et comme malgré les signes que nous leurs faisions ils ne voulaient pas se retirer, nous leur tirâmes deux passe-volants par-dessus eux.67

[…] we did not want to trust their signs, and made signs to them to withdraw, which they did not want to do, and rowed with such force that they surrounded our boat forthwith, in their seven boats. And since, despite the signs that we made, they did not want to withdraw, we shot two cannons over their heads.68

Perhaps recognizing that gestures alone—whether by hand or cannon—would not suffice, Cartier also compiled wordlists for Amerindian languages, aiming not at complete knowledge of the subtleties of Amerindian tongues, but at acquiring a few basic expressions only to facilitate navigation, trade, and the procurement of sustenance.69 Similarly, the Recollet missionary Gabriel Sagard’s Huron dictionary,

66 The people Cartier encountered are known to scholars only as the “St. Lawrence Iroquoians.” What became of them in the decades between Cartier’s voyages and the arrival of missionaries is a subject still under debate (Trigger 177-183).


68 My translation.

69Hanzeli 17.
published as an appendix to his 1632 *Grand Voyage du Pays des Hurons*, is in the form of a phrasebook, and his purpose in compiling it was to create a guide for rudimentary communication, rather than an exhaustive and detailed record of the language’s intricacies. Sagard steered clear of discussing Huron grammar in his texts, and the few statements he did make on the subject are incorrect, according to Hanzeli.

The beginning of the Jesuit tenure in New France marked a turning point in the study of Algonquian and Iroquoian languages. Heeding Ignatius Loyola’s prescription

---

70 Sagard wrote the dictionary was “[...] pour la commodité et utilité de ceux qui ont à voyager dans le pays, et n’ont intelligence de ladite langue [...]” (“[...] for the convenience and use of those who have to travel in the country and do not have knowledge of said language”). Gabriel Sagard, *Le Grand Voyage du Pays des Hurons, suivi du dictionnaire de la langue huronne*, ed. Jack Warwick (Montréal: Les presses de l’Université de Montréal, 1998) 344; my translation. Pidgins also had their place in the early days of encounter, when conversations largely concerned navigation, trade, and the procurement of sustenance. The blending of various languages into a crude lingua franca was so advanced that early seventeenth century colonists in Acadia reported that the language of the Amerindian groups of that region was “half-basque” due to decades of contact with Europeans (Axtell, “Babel of Tongues,” 21-40). Le Jeune remarked on the same phenomenon in his 1633 *Relation*. “J’ay remarqué, dans l’estude de leur langue, qu’il y a un certain barragoin entre les Français et les sauvages, qui n’est ny françois ny sauvage; et cependant, quand les François s’en servent, ils pensent parler sauvage, et les sauvages en l’usurpent croyent parler bon français” (“I have noticed in the study of their language that there is a certain jargon between the French and the Savages, which is neither French nor Savage; and yet when the French use it, they think they are speaking the Savage Tongue, and the Savages, in using it, they are speaking good French”). Campeau 2.419; Thwaites 5.113-115. The negative terms in which the priest describes these rudimentary attempts at communication—“barragoin”—attest that even at this early stage in his long tenure in New France, the priest recognized the limitations of the methods of communication relied on prior to the arrival of his order. Indeed, he was beginning to discover what he claimed were errors made by those who had previously studied Amerindian languages. The word “Sagamo,” for example—long thought to be a Montagnais word—turned out to have originated with Amerindian groups in Acadia. Campeau 2.419; Thwaites 5.115.

71 Chafe 258.

72 Hanzeli 55-56.

73 Rather than focus individually on Jesuit attempts to learn each of the languages they encountered, this chapter treats their efforts more holistically, as a single project. Although it is certainly true that Iroquoian and Algonquian languages posed different challenges to the Jesuits, the reader should bear in mind that my intent here is not to analyze these languages, but Jesuits’ comments about them. In any case, there are signs
that missionaries should be trained to carry out their work in local languages,\textsuperscript{74} the priests undertook a major effort to analyze, document, and learn to speak well the languages of the peoples they hoped to convert in New France. The emphasis of earlier visitors on the process of communication—even if rudimentary—was replaced by the Jesuits with an emphasis on acquiring Amerindian languages as if they were objects, mastering their intricacies and developing authoritative written versions of their grammars and vocabularies.\textsuperscript{75} A desire to master the Montagnais language reportedly was a primary motivation for the arduous winter Le Jeune spent following a wandering band in 1633 and 1634.\textsuperscript{76} In 1635, the priest reported that a part of the Jesuit contingent in New France had been devoted to studying “\textit{fort et ferme}” the Montagnais language, and

\footnotesize

\textit{in the Relations} that the priests viewed the challenges posed by various languages as similar. In 1633, to cite just one example, Le Jeune remarked that Algonquin differed from Montagnais only in pronunciation, and that Huron “\textit{est d’une mesure} oeconomie.” Campeau 2.419; Thwaites 5.115.

\textsuperscript{74} Wrote Loyola, “When a plan is being worked out in some college or university to prepare persons to go among the Moors or Turks, Arabic or Chaldaic would be expedient; and Indian would be proper for those about to go among the Indians; and the same holds true for similar reasons in regard to other languages which could have greater utility in other regions.” Loyola 214.

\textsuperscript{75} As Walter Mignolo remarked, this perspective on language itself would have contributed to the Jesuits’ rhetorical project of asserting control over Amerindian languages: “[... when you write grammars and vocabularies of a complete set of languaging processes among a given population, you convert the process into an object and you own, you possess that process that you call language. Language becomes then an object, with a grammar and vocabulary that you have and regulate. It also becomes the point of reference to measure and rank languaging practices that do not comply with the regulatory force of language.” L. Elena Delgado and Rolando J. Romero, “Local Histories and Global Designs: An Interview with Walter Mignolo,” \textit{Discourse} 22.3(2000): 16-17.

\textsuperscript{76} Wrote Le Jeune in his 1634 \textit{Relation}: “Voilà peut-estre mon traittement pour l’hyver prochain. Car si je veux sçavoir la langue, il faut de nécessité suivre les sauvages” (“This is the treatment that I shall perhaps have next winter; because, if I wish to learn the language, I must necessarily follow the Savages”). Campeau 2.439; Thwaites 5.171.
Brébeuf reported in the same year a similarly rigorous group effort to learn Huron.⁷⁷ So important was the study of languages deemed to be that Le Jeune, in a 1634 letter to the provincial in Paris, expressed reluctance to move into a new residence under construction at Trois-Rivières lest the priests’ language studies be disrupted.⁷⁸ The fruits of these efforts, as I mentioned earlier, were dictionaries and grammars, the later versions of which continue to this day to be authoritative sources on the languages that the Jesuits studied in seventeenth century New France. And indeed, it seems that the Jesuits’ linguistic project was understood to require not only the acquisition of speaking skills, but the taming of the confusing and complicated oral tongues into a set of written rules. As Le Jeune himself put it in 1633, “Il m’a fallu, avant que de sçavoir une langue, faire des livres pour l’apprendre […]” (“Before knowing a language, it was necessary for me to make the books from which to learn it”).⁷⁹ In this approach to Amerindian languages, it is possible to see traces of the Jesuits’ pre-missionary linguistic training.

The Ratio Studiorum, the 1599 Jesuit treatise on pedagogy, called for Latin to be spoken at all times in the Jesuit colleges where missionary priests received their training and

---

⁷⁷ Wrote Brébeuf: “Premièrement, nous nous sommes employez en l’estude de la langue, qui à cause de la diversité de ses mots composez est quasi infinie. On ne peut néantmoins rien faire sans cet estude. Tous les Français qui sonticy s’y sont ardemment portez” (“In the first place, we have been employed in the study of the language, which, on account of the diversity of its compound words, is almost infinite. One can, nevertheless, do nothing without this study. All the French who are here have eagerly applied themselves to it […]”). Campeau 3.108; Thwaites 8.131.

⁷⁸ Hanzeli 48.

⁷⁹ Campeau 2.418; Thwaites 5.113.
served as professors before being sent to New France, and the order’s Constitutions called for students to attain “a good foundation” in Latin above all other subjects. The Latin texts used in Jesuit schools that likely would have served as models for the book Le Jeune envisioned making for himself—and indeed for the Jesuits’ general approach to Amerindian languages—were characterized by what Hanzeli has called “dogmatism,” a care to clearly state rules and demonstrate the rational ordering of the Latin language. Jesuit school Latin textbooks, with their rules and preoccupation with order, “[…] constituted the hard core of the Jesuits’ approach to language,” according to Hanzeli.

It is clear that the Jesuits’ intense effort to master and preserve in writing the languages of potential converts was not motivated solely by scholarly curiosity or practical challenges. Instead, language learning was “a means of cooperating in the divine plan of salvation,” according to Hanzeli. As Le Jeune himself put it in his 1633 Relation, “La foy entre par l’aureille. Comment peut un muet prescher l’évangile?” “[…] faith enters by the ear. How can a mute preach the Gospel?” Particularly in the

---

80 Farrell 15.
81 Loyola 191.
82 The 1599 Ratio Studiorum specifically names the grammar of Emmanuel Alvarez as the preferred text for Jesuit Colleges. Farrell 9. French Jesuit colleges apparently preferred texts by Jean Behourt and Charlees Pajot. For more on these three grammars and their shared perspective on language as a set of clear and orderly rules, see Hanzeli 36-43.
83 Hanzeli 43.
84 Hanzeli 45.
85 Campeau 2.447; Thwaites 5.191.
apparent absence, at least in some cases, of Amerindian ability to learn French,\textsuperscript{86} learning to speak well in local languages was viewed as an essential step in the quest for converts.\textsuperscript{87} As Le Jeune remarked in his 1636 \textit{Relation},

\begin{quote}
S’il ne falloit que proposer en bégayant quelques véritez pour convaincre les sauvages plainement, ce serait bientost fait; mais il faut interroger et répondre, satisfaire aux demandes, obvier aux objections, disposer son auditeur.\textsuperscript{88}
\end{quote}

If nothing else were needed than to propose a few truths stammeringly, in order to fully convince the Savages, this would soon be done. But one must question and answer, satisfy inquiries, dispose of objections, and prepare one’s hearers.\textsuperscript{89}

That speaking well was deemed necessary to effect conversions reinforces a point I made in the previous chapter, that the Jesuits understood their Amerindian allies to be susceptible to being convinced through reasoned debate, logic and proof, and were therefore good candidates for conversion to Catholicism. Accordingly, Jesuits took note of the conventions of Amerindian oratory and sought to adapt them to their own purposes, focusing on the discursive strategies associated with authority.\textsuperscript{90} Wrote Le Jeune in 1635, “Que si on sçavoit haranguer comme eux et qu’on se trouvast en leurs

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{86} Brébeuf in 1636 wrote that priests at the Huron mission always recited religious lessons in the Huron language because their interlocutors had “une ineptitude naturelle d’en apprendre une autre.” Campeau 3.311.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{88} Campeau 3.236-237.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{89} Thwaites 9.89.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{90} Blackburn 88-89.
\end{flushright}
assemblées, je croy qu’on y seroit bien puissant” (“Yet if we could make speeches as they do, and if we were present in their assemblies, I believe we could accomplish much there”). Learning Amerindian languages was not, for the Jesuits, an exercise in academic research, but an activity that was expected to give them real power. And rudimentary knowledge of the kind on display in Sagard’s dictionary would not be enough to secure the Jesuits the respect that apparently came, in Amerindian societies, with speaking well.92

The prize for learning to speak Amerindian languages well was expected to be direct access to the souls of thousands of potential converts. As Le Jeune remarked in his very first Relation, “En vérité, qui sçauroit parfaitement leur langue seroit puissant parmy eux. […] Il n’y a lieu au monde où la rhétorique soit plus puissante qu’en Canadas” (“Secondly, he who knew their language well would be all-powerful among them […]. There is no place in the world where Rhetoric is more powerful than in Canada […]”).93 The priest’s repetition of the word “puissant” reinforces the message that skill in local languages was, for the Jesuit authors, no mere tool for tourists, but a means of obtaining the power to effect change. Bathélémy Vimont literalized the transformative power of God’s word in his 1640 Relation:

---

91 Campeau 3.53; Thwaites 7.275.
92 Blackburn 88-89.
93 Campeau 2.319; Thwaites 5.195.
Il n’y a coeur si dur que la Parole de Dieu n’amolisse à la longue. Un esprit rude et superbe me disoit, il y a quelque temps: ‘Je me suis mocqué cent fois des discours du Père de Quen […] mais maintenant, vos paroles me semblent bonnes. Elles descendent petit à petit dans mon cœur, Je croy que mes oreilles se feront à les écouter.’

There is no heart so hard that the word of God does not soften it in time. A rude and haughty fellow said to me some time ago, “I have a hundred times made sport of the speeches of Father de Quen […] But now your words seem good to me; they are going down little by little into my heart; I believe my ears will get accustomed to hear them.

It is the words themselves, in Vimont’s account, that convince the Algonqian interlocutor of the validity of the Jesuit message, entering by the ear and wending their way to the heart. By emphasizing the words themselves as the cause of progress toward conversion—as opposed to the message—Vimont foregrounds the importance of language in conveying religious truth. Speaking to a potential convert in his own language, the author suggests, was key to securing a change of heart.

The Jesuits’ belief in the transformative power of language in general and Amerindian languages in particular is rooted in two key tenets of the Christian tradition. The first is an explicit link between religion and language. As Peter Dorsey points out, the term “author” and its French and Latin equivalents signified, in the seventeenth century, both “originator,” in a general sense, and producer of a written text. God is

---

94 Campeau 4.610.
95 Thwaites 18.207.
96 Dorsey 404, 416.
sometimes referred to as an “author” in the Jesuit Relations and in the Bible,97 an appellation that refers to the deity’s role as the creator of mankind and its surroundings, but also to textual authorship. The biblical gospel according to John begins thus: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [...] And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.”98 Belief in God and his son, then, is fundamentally also receptivity and attention to a message, a divine communication. And it is also through this “Word”—Christ—that man is understood to communicate with God. Wrote Jesuit scholar Walter J. Ong, “As a human being with his human name, Jesus Christ is thus the Word whereby man addresses God the Father: Per Ipsum et cum Ipso et in Ipso, the church prays, ‘through him and with him and in him.’”99 Christ is, in the Christian tradition, not only a God to be worshipped, but a medium, a language through which God’s will is transmitted to man and through which man responds to God. Christianity is therefore simultaneously belief in and worship of the Christian God and participation in a conversation that is carried out in the divine language of Christ— receptivity to the “Word made flesh” and response to God through prayer to Christ. The New France Jesuits themselves frequently drew a link between belief in God and

97 See, for example, Acts 3:15, Campeau 2.564, 3.574, 7.421, and Thwaites 6.157, 11.191, 33.225.
language, pointing to a transcendent “Parole du cœur” or “Parole de Dieu” that they claimed moved Amerindians to convert.\textsuperscript{100} As father/author of a son/Word, God was understood to be the creator of language. And language, by virtue of its divine origin, was understood by the Jesuits as an authoritative medium between the worlds of grace and nature, one that could put man in communication with God.\textsuperscript{101}

The relationship between belief in a Christian God and the understanding of language as a divine medium was also thought in the seventeenth century to manifest itself in the world’s various tongues. Amerindian languages, like the more general “Word” from the Bible, were understood to be as powerful a tool for religious change as any other language, owing to the biblical account of the origin of linguistic difference. The story of the tower of Babel, contained in Genesis, claims that early man shared a single tongue, but that God found it necessary to “confuse their language […] so that they will not understand one another’s speech” because a project by humans to build a tower to reach heaven convinced God that as long as humans had a common language, “nothing that they propose will be impossible for them.”\textsuperscript{102} Since God had deliberately

\textsuperscript{100} For examples, see Campeau 4.610, 5.708, 6.600, 6.649, 7.329. It is also worth noting that the concept of God as “author” likely was behind the Jesuits’ insistence, noted in the first chapter of this dissertation, that their written knowledge was superior to the oral knowledge of the Amerindians they encountered. Observed Dorsey, “Continuing to conceive of language as being essentially written, the Jesuits believed the mystery of the divine “Author” could best be understood by those who resembled God in their capacity to write.” Dorsey 417.

\textsuperscript{101} Dorsey 404-405, 410.

\textsuperscript{102} Gen 11.1-9.
scrambled the world’s languages, differences between them were understood by the Jesuits as beautiful, and evidence of God’s work, instead of as distortions caused by straying and poor record keeping, as in the case of the Amerindian creation myths discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation.\textsuperscript{103} As divinely created languages, Amerindian tongues were thought to be as suitable to effecting spiritual change as any other language. And the Babel incident also provided a central motivation for missionaries in the New World, reunification of the groups that had diverged culturally and religiously in the wake of God’s linguistic intervention.\textsuperscript{104}

Although biblical understandings of the Word/Son of God and of the origin of linguistic difference assured the suitability of Amerindian languages to convey Christianity, Jesuits characterized them as posing a two-fold challenge to those who would use them in a mission setting. The authors of the Relations found Iroquoian and Algonquian languages to be simultaneously “rich” and “poor.” Wrote Le Jeune of the Montagnais language in his 1633 Relation:

Elle est pauvre, pour autant que n’ayans point de cognoissance de mille et mille choses qui sont en l’Europe, ils n’ont point de noms pour les signifier. Elle est

\textsuperscript{103} Cf Gray 27.

\textsuperscript{104} As Gray wrote on the subject, "Medieval and Renaissance writers generally assumed that in felling the Tower of Babel, God transformed the world from a place unified by a single language to one divided into seventy-two distinct mother tongues, scattered across the globe and correlating with seventy-two distinct nations. This deep and lasting reprimand brought with it the burden of reunifying humanity in the community of God through the universal language of prayer—an imperative that [...] was very much central to the early modern Christian missionary impulse." Gray 21.
riche, pource qu’es choses dont ils ont connaissance elle est foconde et grandement nombreuse.  

It is poor; because, having no knowledge of thousands and thousands of things which are in Europe, they have no names to indicate them. It is rich, because in the things of which they have a knowledge, it is fertile and plentiful [...].

Three years later, Brébeuf concluded his remarks on the Huron tongue’s complexity and prefaced his comments on its deficiencies in similar terms: “Cela est riche. Voicy qui ne l’est guères” “[…] that is copious. Here is one which is not so”. The “richness,” or complex grammar and complicated vocabulary of the languages, was interpreted as a sign of God’s handiwork, but also as an obstacle to rapid language learning. Similarly, their “poverty” — perhaps more accurately described as their lack of the vocabulary needed to explain Christian concepts and ignorance of European referents coupled with the limitations inherent in the Jesuits’ perspective and training when it came to adapting their message to the languages — slowed missionary progress, but also illustrated the

105 Campeau 2.419.
106 Thwaites 5.115.
107 Campeau 3.343; Thwaites 10.119.
108 As Gray has pointed out, the difficulties that the Jesuits encountered cannot be attributed solely to the Amerindian languages themselves: “While the Jesuits were inventive in their strategies for affecting souls, as linguists they actually tended to be rather rigid in their assumptions. When they complained that native peoples lacked the words needed to convey Christian abstractions, they were as much asserting seeming indigenous linguistic failures as they were registering a profound intellectual dilemma of their own. Aside from the simple fact that Jesuits were often dependent on Indians for both sustenance and translation, their intensive training in classical language and literature was almost useless in North America. Indeed, little that they brought from Europe prepared them to learn Native American languages.” Gray 41.
necessity of the Jesuits’ missionary work to readers. It is worth briefly elaborating on both of the characteristics that Jesuits attributed to Amerindian languages.

For the authors of the Relations, the “richness” of Amerindian languages was a sure sign of their divine nature, and proof that the languages could be used effectively in carrying out the missionary task. Accordingly, descriptions of Amerindian languages are often written in glowing terms of admiration. In Brébeuf’s 1636 description of the Huron language, for example, a particularly complicated grammatical structure is called a “marvel,” verb forms and proverbs are “remarkable,” and gendered verb conjugations are “de plus rare,” in the eyes of the enthusiastic priest. Jérome Lalemant went so far in his admiration of Amerindian languages as to cite them in 1646 as proof of God’s existence:

Leurs compositions sont admirables et je puis dire que quand il n’y aurait point d’autre argument pour montrer qu’il y a un Dieu que l’oeconomie des langues sauvages, cela suffiroit pour nous convaincre. Car il n’y a prudence ny industrie humaines qui puisse rassembler tant d’hommes pour leur faire tenir l’ordre qu’ils gardent dans leurs langues toutes différentes de celles d’Europe. C’est Dieu seul qui en maintient la conduite.110

Their compounds are admirable; and I may say that, though there should be no other argument to show that there is a God than the economy of the Savage languages, that would suffice to convince us, For there is no human wisdom nor skill which can unite so many men, so as to make them observe the order which

109 Campeau 3.343-345; Thwaites 10.117-123.

110 Campeau 6.631.
they maintain in their languages, wholly different from those of Europe; it is God alone who holds the guidance thereof.\(^{111}\)

The complexity and order that Jesuits saw in Amerindian languages could not possibly be the product of human effort, Lalemant suggested, proving again God’s intervention in the history of the New World’s inhabitants.\(^{112}\)

Although it was offered as another sign of a long-forgotten link between Amerindians and residents of the Old World, the complex beauty of Amerindian languages also had practical consequences. Based on the assumption of the existence of a universal grammar, an idea that “had wide currency in European linguistics of the early modern period,”\(^{113}\) Amerindian tongues were thought to be comprehensible in terms of European ones. Le Jeune commented in 1634 that Montagnais nouns were conjugated like Latin impersonal verbs.\(^{114}\) Brébeuf reported that the Huron language resembled French and Greek in its complexities.\(^{115}\) Mastering the unfamiliar tongues was therefore

\(^{111}\) Thwaites 29.225-227.

\(^{112}\) The Jesuits’ opinion on the divine authorship of language was not universally shared in seventeenth century Catholic circles. Writes Dorsey, “[…] the [jansenist] authors of the Port-Royal Grammar described language as an internal and arbitrary system of representation based on universal, yet entirely human, rules of logic.” 410.

\(^{113}\) Dorsey 409.

\(^{114}\) Campeau 2.647.

\(^{115}\) Campeau 3.343; Thwaites 10.117. Unique aspects of the languages were also be expressed in terms of more familiar languages. The Montagnais language, Le Jeune reported, required different verbs for the same action, depending on the object being acted upon. The actions of seeing a man and seeing a tree, for example, required different verbs. But French, Latin and Greek all use the same verb to express seeing a person or anything else, wrote Le Jeune. Campeau 2.647; Thwaites 7.23. It seems that Le Jeune was not entirely correct on this point. As Hanzeli points out, the verbs the priest cites are “different verbs inasmuch
less a matter of investigating the particularities of the languages than of figuring out how they had been scrambled by God in the Babel incident.\footnote{As Hanzeli remarked, the Jesuits were not alone in making the assumption that unfamiliar languages could be understood in terms of old world languages: “Most seventeenth century language studies assume implicitly or explicitly the existence of a single ideal grammar which reflected or was based on logical categories, the purest manifestation of which was thought to be Latin.” 33.} Due to the stunning complexity of Amerindian languages, this unscrambling would not be an easy task. In his 1634 discussion of the Montagnais language, Le Jeune reported that the tongue contained “an infinity” of proper nouns, complicated verb structures that existed in no other known language, and other features that made its mastery difficult. According to Le Jeune, “[…] la difficulté de ceste langue, qui n’est pas petite […] n’a pas esté un petit obstacle pour empescher une pauvre mémoire comme la mienne d’aller bien loing” ([“[…] the difficulty of this language, which is not slight […] has been no small obstacle to prevent a poor memory like mine from advancing far”].\footnote{Campeau 2.650; Thwaites 7.33.} His difficulties with Montagnais, he suggested, were more a matter of his own poor memory than any inherent deficiency of the language. The Recollet Gabriel Sagard, in contrast, offered a less optimistic assessment of the Huron tongue, highlighting in his 1632 Grand Voyage du Pays des Hurons what he viewed as the flawed and unstable nature of the language. He described it as “[…] une langue sauvage, presque sans règle, et tellement imparfaicte, qu’un plus habile que moy se trouveroit bien empesché […] de mieux faire” [“[…] a
wild language, almost without rules, and so imperfect than one more able than myself would be hard put to do better”). Sagard’s complaints about the difficulty he encountered—that the language was wild, imperfect and devoid of rules—suggest that the problem was with the language itself, not the inadequacy of his own skills. Even someone with a better memory than his, he asserted, would struggle. Though Le Jeune acknowledged that the challenge was daunting, his comments suggest that Amerindian languages were a problem with a solution, a complex set of information that would require an impressive feat of memory to master, or an enigma that, once unlocked, would allow missionaries unfettered access to the souls of the people they sought to convert. Where Sagard saw a mess without any rules, the Jesuits saw an intellectual challenge. Its difficulty might slow progress in the short term, but emphasizing the challenge would only make their progress and eventual success more impressive.

Gray has suggested that the Jesuits sought and remarked on parallels between Amerindian and European languages solely for practical reasons, but the links the priests sought to discern between familiar and unfamiliar tongues take on greater significance in their published Relations. In the same way that Amerindian creation

---


119 According to Gray, “The impetus for applying a European grammatical standard to American tongues, it should be emphasized, was only indirectly related to the conversion process. Jesuits were little interested in teaching Indians the grammatical interstices of their own languages. Rather, efforts to codify Indian tongues according to a Latin standard had no other purpose than to facilitate language teaching among the Jesuits themselves—and, in turn, liberate missionaries from their dependence on Indian teachers.” Gray 42.
myths were framed in ways that drew North American cultures into the European, scripture-based understanding of the world and simultaneously suggested that missionary intervention was needed, the languages the Jesuits studied in New France were often described in terms of other, “divinely authored” languages, lending further support to Jesuit attempts to minimize the distance between European and Amerindian cultures. And just as the priests’ written versions of Amerindian creation myths altered them and took possession of them as least as much as they preserved them, Amerindian languages, I will soon argue, were not merely recorded, but were adapted as tools for Jesuit arguments about access to New France and to integrate Amerindians into Europe’s scripture-based understanding of the world.

The other characteristic that the Jesuit authors observed in Iroquoian and Algonquian tongues—their “poverty”—ensured that even priests who managed to master the languages would struggle to convey their message to potential converts. According to Gray, “While communication on even the simplest level was difficult, the communication of abstract religious concepts proved a particular frustration. Time and again, French missionaries complained that the Native American lexicon was not fit for Christian discourse.” 120 In a 1634 chapter on the Montagnais language, for example, Le Jeune reflected on the many deficiencies that made preaching in that tongue difficult:

120 Gray 35.
Tous les mots de piété, de dévotion, de vertu, tous les termes dont on se sert pour expliquer les biens de l’autre vie, le langage des théologiens, des philosophes, des mathématiciens, des médecins, en un mot de tous les hommes doctes, toutes les paroles qui concernent la police ou le gouvernement d’une ville, d’une province, d’un empire, tout ce qui touche la justice, la récompense et le châtiment […] tout cela ne se trouve point dans la pensée, ny dans la bouche des sauvages, n’ayant ny vraie religion, ny royaume, ny république, ny sciences, ny rien de tout ce que je viens de dire.121

All words for piety, devotion, virtue; all terms which are used to express the things of the other life; the language of Theologians, Philosophers, Mathematicians, and Physicians, in a word, of all learned men; all words which refer to the regulation and government of a city, Province, or Empire; all that concerns justice, reward and punishment […] all these things are never found either in the thoughts or upon the lips of the Savages. As they have no true religion nor knowledge of the virtues, neither public authority nor government, neither Kingdom nor Republic, nor sciences, nor any of those things of which I have just spoken […].122

Due to an apparent complete absence of signifiers relating to abstract European concepts, religious matters were difficult to convey in Montagnais. And, as Lalemant lamented in 1640, even the simplest bible stories proved difficult for the Jesuits to express in Huron: “[…] mesme les paraboles et les discours plus familiers de Jésus Christ leur sont inexplicables. Ils ne sçavent ce que c’est que sel, levain, chasteau, perle, prison, grain de moutarde, tonneaux de vin, lampe, chandelier, flambeau” […] even the parables and the more familiar discourses of Jesus Christ are inexplicable to them. They know not what is salt, leaven, stronghold, pearl, prison, mustard seed, casks of

121 Campeau 2.645.
122 Thwaites 7.21.
wine, lamp, candlestick, torch”). Without such basic vocabulary, how could one explain the fate of Lot’s wife, the parables of the mustard seed and the yeast, or any other of Christianity’s classic stories?

Although the Jesuit linguists cast this challenge as an inherent deficiency of Amerindian languages—“poverty”—it is more useful for the present discussion to conceive of the problem as a result of the missionaries’ position between languages. Key to my thinking is Walter Mignolo’s discussion of “languaging” in his book *Local Histories/Global Designs*. Languaging, Mignolo writes, involves “thinking and writing between languages,” a process that forces one to “[move] away from the idea that language is a fact (e.g. a system of syntactic, semantic, and phonetic rules), and moving toward the idea that speech and writing are strategies for orienting and manipulating social domains of interactions.” Although, as I have already suggested, Jesuit authors may have viewed Amerindian languages as a tool to acquire, their attempts to use local languages to express European and Christian ideas are better understood, in my view, as a process that unavoidably put them between languages, attempting to use the “signifiers” of one language to express another’s “signifieds.” The next two sections of this dissertation are devoted to analyzing ways in which the Jesuits attempted to meet

123 Campeau 4.736; Thwaites 20.71.
the challenge of expressing concepts from one culture in the language of another, challenges the missionaries characterized as due solely to the extreme “richness” and “poverty” of the non-European tongues. Though Amerindian languages described in the Relations represented a promising spiritual point of entry, challenges had to be overcome. Their “richness” was a sign of their divine authorship, and therefore their suitability for conveying the Jesuits’ message, but also was an impediment to learning and therefore also to rapid conversion of Amerindians. Their “poverty,” more accurately described as their failure to correspond directly to the cultural data conveyed in more familiar languages, left the missionaries struggling to find ways to express themselves. As I will argue in the coming pages, the ways the missionary authors reported confronting these two challenges suggested that if language was a spiritual entry point to the colony, the Jesuits were gaining control over it, not only mastering it, but altering it and rhetorically asserting their possession of it.

4.3 “Maistre et Escolier”: The Jesuits as Language Learners

Even with a concentrated, intensive effort to unravel and systematically account for the “richness” of Amerindian languages under way, it would be years before missionaries would be able to meet the lofty goal of oratorical skill they had set for themselves. When Le Jeune disembarked in 1632, he had only a small hand-written
Montagnais dictionary on which to rely, which he claimed was full of errors.\textsuperscript{125} Even the gifted Jesuit linguist Jean de Brébeuf, who had demonstrated such aptitude for learning Montagnais during his first stint in New France starting in 1625 that he was soon sent to learn the Huron language,\textsuperscript{126} was not yet ready to speak eloquently in the earliest years after his second arrival in the colony in 1633. As the priest himself wrote in 1635, “Pour moy qui y fais leçon à nos François, si Dieu ne m’assiste extraordinairement, encor me faudra-t-il aller longtemps à l’école des sauvages, telle est la fécondité de leur langue” [“As for me, who give lessons therein to our French, if God does not assist me extraordinarily, I shall yet have to go a long time to the school of the Savages, so prolific is their language”].\textsuperscript{127} Reducing himself to a mere écolier, Brébeuf suggested that he still had much to learn, and was therefore in no position to bring about large-scale conversion. The priest’s self-infantilization is typical of Jesuit characterizations of their own attempts to acquire language skills in the early years of the mission. Although it has been suggested that the Jesuits were “humiliated” by their position as mere schoolchildren in relation to their Amerindian teachers,\textsuperscript{128} I will argue here that this

\textsuperscript{125} Campeau 2.408. According to Campeau, this dictionary was composed by priests Charles Lalemant and Enéomonde Massé during an earlier stint in New France.

\textsuperscript{126} Hanzeli 48.

\textsuperscript{127} Campeau 3.108; Thwaites 8.133.

\textsuperscript{128} Wrote Gray, “For Jesuits, many of whom had served as teachers of Latin in their native France, to find themselves abandoned to the whims of Indian teachers must have been to experience the deepest humiliation and confusion. […] This instructional relationship represented a total reversal of usual channels of authority in Jesuit education.” Gray 35.
characterization framed the linguistic enterprise in terms that would suggest ever-increasing mastery and control over Amerindian languages, and therefore over the mission field. At the same time, highlighting the difficult nature of Amerindian languages would make even rudimentary knowledge all the more impressive to readers—a marvelous feat that would enhance the reputation of the Jesuits as capable and qualified missionaries.

Perhaps not surprisingly, progress in converting Amerindians to Christianity was extremely slow in the years immediately following the start of the Jesuits’ missionary monopoly. During the forty-year period in which the Relations were published, the Jesuits claimed to have baptized more than 16,000 Amerindians, mostly Huron.\(^\text{129}\) But only 55 conversions were reported in the first five years after the Jesuits’ arrival in 1632, 49 of which were deathbed baptisms.\(^\text{130}\) Comments in the Relations suggest that readers and financial backers in France were beginning to question the slow pace of conversions in New France, and the missionary authors pointed to continuing struggles with language as the culprit. To cite just one example, Le Jeune in 1636 counseled patience to readers:

Bref, nos véritez […] leur devroient presque faire oublier leur langue, quand nous en servons pour les leur expliquer […]. Et puis on demande d’où vient

\(^\text{129}\) Axtell, Invasion, 122.

\(^\text{130}\) Beaulieu 98-101.
qu’on ait si peu avancé en la conversion de ces barbares. Les grandes affaires ne se font que dans un grand temps pour l’ordinaire. [...].

In short, our truths [...] must almost make them forget their own language, when we use it to explain these to them [...]. And then they ask why it is that we have advanced so little in the conversion of these Barbarians. Great affairs are usually concluded only in a long time.

According to Le Jeune, the slow progress missionaries reported was due to their lack of ability to make Amerindians “forget their language” when listening to religious arguments. Indeed, it seems that poor use of Amerindian languages distracted from their message in the early years, and drew ridicule from potential converts. Resistant interlocutors reportedly sometimes also feigned incomprehension to avoid cooperating with Jesuit requests. For example, Le Jeune reported in 1636 the result of a colleague’s attempt to convince the Montagnais to allow a dead relative to be buried in the Christian manner:

Un sauvage lui répart: ‘va‐t’en, on ne t’entend pas.’ C’est une réponse que nous font parfois les sauvages quand on les presse de faire une chose qui ne leur agrée pas. Il est vrai que nous ne parlons encore qu’en bégyant, mais néantmoins, quand nous leur disons quelque chose conforme à leurs désirs, jamais ils ne nous font ces reproches.

[...] a Savage answered him, "Go away, we do not understand thee." This is an answer that the Savages occasionally make to us, when we urge them to do

131 Campeau 3.237. Biard, writing before regular publication of the Relations began, had also cited deficient language skills as a reason for slow progress in converting the Micmacs with whom he lived. Leahey 111.

132 Thwaites 9.89-91.

133 Leahey 111.

134 Campeau 3.201.
something that does not suit them. It is true that, as yet, we speak only stammeringly; but, still, when we say something which conforms to their wishes they never use these reproaches.\textsuperscript{135}

As long as their skills remained rudimentary, it seems, use of local languages did not guarantee success in the pursuit of missionary goals. And the linguistic resistance that the priests reported sometimes encountering suggests that the priests were not the only ones who viewed Amerindian languages as a point of access that would open the door to religious and cultural change. As Gray noted, citing the \textit{Jesuit Relations},

Perhaps because they perceived the language barrier as a defense against European cultural intrusion, Indian teachers proved impatient and uninterested. They would provide nothing ‘unless their stomachs were first liberally crammed,’ and ‘being very impatient of even a short delay, would often be distracted and drawn away from one by earnest inquiry about any subject.’\textsuperscript{136}

Feigning incomprehension and cooperating only when it was clearly in their best interests to do so could be interpreted as an effort by Amerindians to slow the Jesuits’ linguistic progress, and thereby to keep them at arms length and limit the changes they could introduce to Amerindian cultures.

While language barriers—whether naturally existing or purposely placed in the Jesuits’ way by reluctant informants—might have been an acceptable excuse for disappointing results, Jesuit missionaries still were under pressure, as I argued earlier, to justify their presence in New France in response to Recollet claims that they were the

\textsuperscript{135}Thwaites 8.253-255.

\textsuperscript{136}Gray 33-35.
rightful stewards of the mission, due to both experience and legal rights. Since the authors of the *Relations* framed languages as the point through which Christianity would enter Amerindian life, the priests were left with the delicate task of justifying the slow progress by pointing to their lack of full facility with the language, while simultaneously justifying their position as sole New France missionaries by suggesting that the needed skills would soon be acquired, and that they knew more than anyone else. The authors openly acknowledged the flawed state of their linguistic knowledge, and the resultant slow pace of conversions, but also cast success as inevitable. Jesuits had their foot in the door, so-to-speak, and suggested that before long they would have unfettered access to Amerindian souls. It is revealing to briefly consider the ways this point was expressed in the *Relations*.

As I briefly mentioned earlier, the authors of the *Relations* sometimes characterized the Jesuit-Amerindian relationship, at least as far as language learning was concerned, as one of master and student, two roles with which each missionary was already intimately acquainted. As Hanzeli noted, “All missionary priests received a long and intensive training in Latin and its grammar. Before going into the missions, the Jesuits […] spent two years of their early career teaching Latin and various subjects to youngsters in Europe.” 137 Having already graduated from pupil to master in Europe, the Jesuits cast themselves in the less powerful of the two positions upon their arrival in the

137 Hanzeli 33.
colony. To the example cited at the beginning of this section could be added Jérome Lalemant’s 1639 comment that the Hurons who came to visit him in his cabin were there to both teach and learn, and were “Maistres, dis-je, pour l’usage de la langue; escoliers pour les affaires de leur salut et du christianisme” ["Masters, I say, in the use of the language; Pupils, as regards their salvation and Christianity”].\(^{138}\) Le Jeune similarly cast himself as a pupil under the guidance of a master in a 1633 passage that recounted the extreme difficulty of learning:

\[\text{[\ldots]} \text{Je me mets à travailler sans cesse. Je fay des conjugaisons, déclinaisons, quelque petite syntaxe, un dictionnaire, avec une peine incroyable; car il me falloit quelquefois demander vingt questions pour avoir la cognoissance d’un mot, tant mon maistre, peu duit à enseigner, variot.}\(^{139}\)\]

\[\text{[\ldots]} \text{I begin to work incessantly. I make conjugations, declensions and some little syntax, and a dictionary, with incredible trouble, for I was compelled sometimes to ask twenty questions to understand one word, [because my master, unaccustomed to teaching, varied].}\(^{140}\)\]

Casting the relationship between missionary and potential convert as one of master and pupil—as opposed to enlightened European and brute native, or participant-observer and anthropological subject—suggests relative weakness on the part of the

---

\(^{138}\) Campeau 4.361; Thwaites 16.241.

\(^{139}\) Campeau 2.418.

\(^{140}\) Thwaites 5.111. The portion of this quote in brackets appears in Thwaites’ translation as “so changeable was my master’s way of teaching.” I have altered it here to preserve the idea that the master’s “variation” was due to his lack of familiarity with teaching.
missionaries, but also implies that their place in the less powerful role was only temporary. Pupils, after all, do not remain forever under the control of their master. As the Jesuits would themselves have known well from their own formation and early careers, it is through long study that one becomes a master, and one can hardly blame a pupil for not equaling his teacher’s status immediately upon beginning to study, or even quickly, if his master is not a gifted teacher.

Similarly, Jesuits sometimes cast themselves as children in matters of language, left to observe and learn from adults—Amerindians who spoke the way priests hoped they would, one day. Of the missionaries’ understandably shaky language skills in 1633, Le Jeune wrote “En effet, il faut parler pour estre entendu; c’est ce que nous ne pouvons encore faire qu’en enfans” (“Certainly, one must speak in order to be understood; and this is what we cannot do yet, except as children”). Four years later, the priest again characterized himself this way after reporting that a new convert had recounted the Christian creation and flood stories to other Amerindians in better terms than the priest could have done it himself: “O quelle différence entre un homme qui parle et un enfant qui bégait!” (“Oh, what a difference between a man who talks and a child who only

---

\[141\] As Gray has pointed out, it seems that the missionaries truly were in a position of weakness in relation to Amerindian potential converts: “During the initial decades of the Jesuit mission, missionaries commonly lived within native communities, at great distances from European settlements, and almost entirely at the mercy of the Indian flock for the basics of life. They were, in a certain sense, captives. Food, protection, shelter—for all these things they depended on the goodwill of the Indians.” Gray 31.

\[142\] Campeau 3.236-237; Thwaites 9.89.
stutters!”} By portraying himself as a stammering child, Le Jeune admitted his linguistic incompetence, but again suggested that the condition was not permanent. Just as a student through long study becomes a master, a child grows into an adult over time. François le Mercier’s 1637 description of the short speeches on Catholic doctrine given to inhabitants of a Huron village similarly infantilized the Jesuits: “Il faut apprendre à mettre un pied devant l’autre avant que de marcher. Nous estions bien consolez de voir qu’on nous entendît et qu’un sauvage prist quelquefois la parole et répétast ce que nous avions dict” {“[…] one must learn to put one foot before the other, before he can walk. We were greatly consoled to see that we were understood, and that a Savage occasionally took up the conversation and repeated what we had said”}. Describing the study of languages as akin to learning how to walk suggests inevitable, natural progress: In the same way that a child taking its first step will naturally begin to walk, the Jesuits, through a “first step” of their own—giving very short religious lessons in Huron—would gain proficiency in the language.

In addition to suggesting inevitable progress—that the Jesuits would learn to speak in the same way that pupils gain mastery through prolonged study under the guidance of their master, or children learn to walk by taking a first step—the characterizations discussed above shift responsibility for the slow pace of conversions

---

143 Campeau 3.654; Thwaites 12.173.
144 Campeau 3.686; Thwaites 13.11.
and their still imperfect knowledge of local languages away from the Jesuits. At the mercy of maistres who were not particularly gifted at teaching, Jesuits could hardly be blamed if their language learning was not swift, and their language skills were not yet advanced enough to bring about mass conversions. Though they could not yet boast of conversions of large numbers of Amerindians, reducing themselves to mere school children simultaneously explained the poor results of their missionary efforts and suggested that the future was bright. And casting their efforts to learn Amerindian languages as a course of study that, once completed, would confer the status of master on the student also suggested that the tongues were a body of knowledge that could be possessed rather than a process of negotiation and communication. Rhetorically objectifying Amerindians languages and then asserting control over them was, as I have been arguing in this chapter, a means of asserting Jesuit legitimacy in New France and of further reconciling Amerindian and European cultures that may have seemed too divergent to have shared a common origin.

It is also worth noting that the metaphors discussed above provide an alternative to the common characterization of the Jesuit missionaries as soldiers debarking to conquer the continent in the name of God. The description of the Society of Jesus as a militaristic organization is as old as the order itself, and is likely at least partly due to the personal history and writing habits of its founder. As Axtell noted “Ignatius Loyola […] had been an audacious officer in the Spanish forces of Navarre before his conversion to
the religious life [...]. A noble son of Spanish chivalry, he fell naturally into the language of war when he penned the Institutes for his new Society of Jesus.”  

And Pope Julius III reinforced Loyola’s militaristic vision of the fledgling order by referring to its members as “soldiers of God” in his papal Bull authorizing its creation. Modern scholars have often embraced the metaphor as a way of insisting on the highly organized, hierarchical, and zealous nature of the order’s missionaries. Axtell, for example, began a chapter on Jesuit missionary work in New France this way: “From the first coastal assault on Acadia, the Jesuit invasion of pagan America was suitably cast in a military mold.” And it is true that the New France Jesuits sometimes characterized their enterprise in these terms. As Carole Blackburn has remarked, the authors of the Relations made much use of the rhetoric of conquest, and “a key feature of this rhetoric was the Jesuits’ representation of themselves as soldiers of Christ, engaged in the liberation of a country ruled and oppressed by Satan.” Hanzeli has applied the metaphor directly to the order’s linguistic pursuits, calling knowledge of Amerindian languages a “machine de guerre” for the missionaries, and historian Alain Beaulieu discussed the Jesuits’ linguistic efforts under the heading “Des Armes Necessaires A La Guerre” (“Of the

145 Axtell, The Invasion, 91.

146 Blackburn 123.

147 Axtell, The Invasion, 91.

148 Blackburn 123.

149 Hanzeli 45.
Weapons Necessary for War"}, and wrote that mastery of Amerindian languages permitted the missionaries to “attack” their religious systems.\textsuperscript{150} Le Jeune himself in 1638 referred to languages as a weapon in describing missionary strategy: “Premièrement, nous faisions des courses pour aller attaquer l’ennemy sur ses terres par ses propres armes, c’est-à-dire par la connaissance des langues montagnèse, algonquine et hurone” ("First, we make expeditions to go and attack the enemy upon their own ground, with their own weapons,—that is to say, by a knowledge of the Montagnais, Algonquin, and Huron tongues").\textsuperscript{151} It is interesting to note that Le Jeune’s characterization of the missionaries as troops brandishing arms and advancing on the enemy—as opposed to helpless school children—came only as the Jesuits’ linguistic efforts were beginning to bear fruit in the final years of the 1630s, an achievement that, as I have suggested, would have considerably increased their power.\textsuperscript{152}

Although it is true that militaristic rhetoric is to be found in the Relations, embracing the metaphor as a defining characteristic of the order carries the risk of reducing Jesuits missionaries to mere robots who only had power to influence life in New France and reception of Amerindian cultures in Europe inasmuch as they were the instruments of Rome, and the Catholic Church’s authority. As the preceding discussion

\textsuperscript{150} Beaulieu 61-65; my translation.

\textsuperscript{151} Campeau 4.77; Thwaites 14.125.

\textsuperscript{152} Hanzeli 50-51.
demonstrates, the missionaries were powerful in their own right, and used their texts to further their own interests in struggles with representatives of other branches of the Church. Although derived from the writings and life of Loyola himself, the description of the Society of Jesus as a troop of religious soldiers taking and carrying out orders from the Pope is, as others have argued in other contexts, in need of revision. At least on the subject of language, it is clear that the Jesuits characterized themselves in the early years less as a dominant force than as children and students who eventually would grow into positions of authority from which they could effect conversions.

Simultaneously suggesting current weakness and future strength through self-infantilization would have bolstered Jesuit claims to the mission while excusing disappointing early results. Functioning in the Relations as an assertion of increasing control over Amerindian languages and therefore the missionary field, this was power exercised at the local level by Jesuits, and not handed down by Rome.

In spite of the emphasis the authors of the Jesuit Relations placed on the difficulty of Amerindian languages and their struggles to learn, there are frequent reminders throughout the Relations that the priests had at least some linguistic knowledge. In addition to occasional bilingual prayers and letters, Amerindian expressions appear on

---

153 See, for example, John W. O’Malley, The First Jesuits (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993) 34.
nearly every page of some installments in the Campeau edition, in passages on topics ranging from food to accusations of lying to Amerindian defense of local custom. Examples abound, and typically appear alongside French translations. To cite just one representative example, Le Jeune in 1633, describing a gift of food to the Montagnais, wrote: “Le bon pour eux fut que le capitaine de Nesle leur fit donner du ‘Cascaracona’ et du ‘toutouch pim’: c’est ainsi qu’ils appellant le biscuit et fromage” (“The best of all for them was that Captain de Nesle gave them some ‘Cascaracona,’ and some ‘toutouch pimi;’ it is thus they call biscuits and cheese”). The inclusion of Amerindian words was surely unnecessary to convey the author’s point to a French-language audience, and therefore would serve only to remind the reader that the Jesuits knew some words in the languages of the people they hoped to convert, and that the conversations they reported in the texts were carried out in Amerindian tongues. Confronted at every turn with unfamiliar terms that were only understandable via the translations provided by the Jesuits, readers inevitably would have been reminded that they were excluded from the

154 As Hanzeli notes, these words and phrases appear with increasing frequency throughout the 1630s and 1640s. Hanzeli 23.
155 Campeau 2.456.
156 Campeau 2.709.
157 Campeau 3.311.
158 Campeau 2.456; Thwaites 5.213.
system of communication that Jesuits were using to converse with potential converts, and that they were reliant on Jesuit intermediaries.

4.4 “Je Forge des Mots Approchans de Leurs Langues:” The Jesuits as Inventors of Amerindian Languages

Although the Jesuits often described themselves as students of complicated, unfamiliar tongues, the second characteristic of Amerindian languages mentioned in the early Relations—their alleged deficiency in vocabulary pertaining to Christianity—necessitated a different approach. Instead of merely studying the languages of potential converts, the Jesuits suggested that they were also, at least to some degree, inventors of the languages. And the way the missionary authors characterized their efforts to compensate for the incommensurability of the two cultures as encoded in French and Amerindian languages—what the priest’s termed the “poverty” of the latter—ensured that although the missionaries had a found a way “in” to Amerindian souls, others, without benefit of language skills, would be kept “out.”

Before Amerindians could be converted to Christianity, the priests suggested, their vocabularies would have to be enriched. More precisely, signifiers would have to

159 This suggestion would later be made explicit by Lafitau, himself a former Jesuit missionary, in his 1724 Moeurs des Sauvages Amérindiens. Wrote Lafitau, “[...] il leur fallut encore une étude plus particulière, et bien plus pénible pour tirer du fonds de ces Langues même, comme un nouveau langage, qui servit à leur faire connoître les choses de Dieu, et les vérités abstraites” (“[...] they have had to make a more individual and much more painful study to draw from the very depths of these languages, as it were, a new language, which serves to make known to the Indians, matters pertaining to God and abstract truths.” Lafitau 2.48; Fenton 2.264.
be introduced to Amerindian languages before they could be used to discuss European and Christian concepts. The Jesuits’ unpublished linguistic materials contain many clues about how priests went about doing so, but there are also examples to be found in the *Relations*. Amerindian languages would have to be supplemented with neologisms if they were to be used to preach Christianity, and the divine nature of language and its close relationship to the Christian religion ensured that even imperfect missionary inventions would be sufficient to convey religious meaning. One oft-cited example is Brébeuf’s 1636 request for approval of a translation of the Trinity, a concept that apparently was difficult to express in Huron. According to Brébeuf,

> Un nom relatif parmy eux envelope toujours la signification d’une des trois personnes du pronom possessif, si bien qu’ils ne peuvent dire simplement: père, fils, maistre, valet, mais sont contraincts de dire l’un des trois: mon père, ton père, son père [...] Suivant cela, nous nous trouvons empeschez de leur faire dire proprement en leur langue ‘au nom du Père et du Fils et du Saincte-Esprit.’ Jugeriez-vous à propos, en attendant mieux, de substituer au lieu: ‘au nom de nostre Père et de son fils et de leur Saint-Esprit? Certes, il semble que les trois personnes de la très saincte Trinité seroient suffisamment exprimées en ceste

160 Missionary inventiveness concerning naming the Christian deity is a good example. Jesuits employed a Huron term—*haβendo*, which literally means “he is great or large in voice” (Steckley, personal communication 4/18/2006)—to name God, and also introduced a French word—*Dios*—into the language. The symbol “8” in these terms corresponds to the phoneme [w] before a vowel and [u] before a consonant (Steckley, *Words*, vii). Both strategies were used often and, it seems, interchangeably in bilingual dictionaries from the period. The fact that two terms were used suggests that Jesuits were aware that neither solution was adequate by itself. The obvious problem with borrowing a pre-existing term to express a foreign concept is, as Steckley has noted, that the term’s original meaning might be durable, potentially causing “cognitive dissonance between communicative intent and result.” Steckley, “Bréfeuf’s presentation of Catholicism in the Huron Language,” *University of Ottawa Quarterly* 48.1-2 (1978) 94. Simply borrowing a word from French does not mean, of course, that all the meaning of the French term would be transferred automatically along with it. Translating God into Huron was clearly an imprecise affair in seventeenth century New France. Steckley provides several more examples of how Jesuits introduced Christian concepts like soul, the Trinity, and spirit into Huron in his introduction to *De Religione*. 270
façon [...]. Oserions-nous en user, jusqu’à ce que la langue huronne soit enrichie ou l’esprit des Hurons ouverts à d’autres langues? Nous ne ferons rien sans conseil.  

A relative noun with them includes always the meaning of one of the three persons of the possessive pronoun, so that they can not say simply, Father, Son, Master, Valet, but are obliged to say one of the three, my father, thy father, his father. [...] On this account, we find ourselves hindered from getting them to say properly in their Language, *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost*. Would you judge it fitting, while waiting a better expression, to substitute instead, *In the name of our Father, and of his Son, and of their holy Ghost*? Certainly it seems that the three Persons of the most holy Trinity would be sufficiently expressed in this way [...] Would we venture to employ it thus until the Huron language shall be enriched, or the mind of the Hurons opened to other languages? We will do nothing without advice.

Catholic faith holds that the three entities of the Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—are “one Being, three Persons.” Changing the formula to “Our Father, His Son, and Their Holy Spirit” might adequately express the three persons of the Trinity, as Brébeuf said, but it does not capture their unity in a single being. Brébeuf himself acknowledged the inadequacy of the translation with the phrase “en attendant mieux,” suggesting that he hoped that the imperfect solution would only have to be used until the Huron language could be “enriched” with new signifiers and their culture

---

161 Campeau 3.343-344.

162 Thwaites 10.119-121.


164 Gray 36.
supplemented with corresponding concepts to facilitate a more faithful translation. In a move telling of the Jesuit missionaries’ motivations in collecting information on Amerindian languages and cultures, Brébeuf cast the peculiar grammatical characteristics of the Huron language that he encountered when attempting to translate the Trinity as obstacles to be overcome rather than a sign of the language’s profoundly relational nature that could reveal how the Huron viewed and situated themselves in the world.

Le Jeune similarly admitted to the need for creativity in preaching to the Montagnais in 1633, but did not explicitly reveal his inventions. Wrote Le Jeune, “Je forge des mots approchans de leur langue, que je leur fais entendre” (“I coin words approximating to their language, which I make them understand”). Learning to preach Christianity in Amerindian languages, it seems, was as much about inventing new expressions and teaching them and their corresponding concepts to potential converts as about de-coding the complicated tongues. Like the “richness” of Amerindian languages, their “poverty” would require hard work on the part of the Jesuits, and slow

---

165 Indeed, it appears that Jesuits used a different translation later in the seventeenth century. In De Religione, a document explaining the nature of Christianity that was composed in Huron in the late 1660s or 1670s, a different rendering is suggested, as Steckley pointed out in the introduction to his recent translation of the text. “The Father is sa,je/en, “he has them (indefinite) as children”; the Son is honaen “they (masculine plural) have him as child”; and the Holy Ghost is hoki data hoatato,eti “he is a spirit, the very, he is the true one.” Steckley, De Religione, 26. This alternate translation is no less problematic than the first, as it similarly suggests a hierarchical relationship between the three figures and does not seem to adequately capture their unity. As Carole Blackburn has noted, “It is doubtful that this accommodation would have been either acceptable to the Jesuits’ supporters or defensible if subjected to the scrutiny of their critics.” 7.

166 Campeau 2.446; Thwaites 5.187.
mission progress could be at least partly blamed on what the Jesuits cast as the deficiencies of the tongues. As Cornelius Jaenen put it, “If the Amerindians did not readily accept the gospel brought by the missionaries, the explanation that the simple barbarians did not possess a sufficiently developed vocabulary to grasp spiritual truths [...] might be accepted by dévot readers.” And the very fact that invented words and expressions were acknowledged to be necessary, but were not systematically accounted for in the Relations, would have reinforced the message that the Jesuits, as inventors as well as students of the languages, possessed a deeper understanding of them than anyone else possibly could. Furthermore, the changes that the Jesuits introduced to Amerindian languages were codified in their dictionaries, becoming a part of the language as it exists today. Once put in writing, as noted earlier, the processes of communication used by Amerindians and European colonizers became fixed, including the inventions imposed from outside, demonstrating the degree to which the Jesuit linguistic project was not just a matter of rigorous study, but also of invention and conversion of languages into objects possessed and jealously guarded to protect a political and spiritual advantage.

It is also worth noting that the Jesuits’ position between languages had consequences in the other direction as well, when Jesuits attempted to use French signifiers to convey their experiences with Amerindian cultures and make the words of

---

Jaenen, Friend and Foe, 78.
potential converts comprehensible to readers. The disclaimers that the priests sometimes attached to their translations of Amerindian expressions indicated that the languages’ differences from French prevented them from telling readers precisely what an Amerindian word, expression, or speech meant. Just as Christian parables were hard to explain in Amerindian languages, local customs, it seems, did not always translate well into French, since the languages and cultures were as lacking in Huron concepts and their corresponding signifiers as Huron was in French ideas and terms. In his 1637 Relation, for example, Le Jeune acknowledged the imperfection of his translations of Amerindian concepts into French. Of the Montagnais religious figures he called “sorciers,” Le Jeune wrote

Ce n’est pas que le diable se communique à eux si sensiblement qu’il fait aux sorciers et aux magiciens d’Europe. Mais nous n’avons points d’autre nom pour leur donner, veu mesmes qu’ils font quelques actions de vrays sorciers, comme de se faire mourir les uns les autres par sorts ou désirs et imprécations, par provocations du manitou, par des poisons qu’ils component.168

Not that the Devil communicates with them as obviously as he does with the Sorcerers and Magicians of Europe; but we have no other name to give them, since they even do some of the acts of genuine sorcerers,—as, to kill one another by charms, or wishes, and imprecations, by the abetment of the Manitou, by poisons which they concoct.169

For lack of a better word, Le Jeune found himself constrained to call Montagnais healers “sorcerers” when writing about them for his francophone audience, even while

168 Campeau 3.600.
169 Thwaites 12.7.
admitting that the translation was not entirely accurate. Readers would have to be content with an approximation, since their lack of knowledge of the language prevented them from grasping the true meaning of the Montagnais word. Nor was “sorcerer” the only example of this kind. In his 1634 chapter on the Montagnais language, the priest claimed there were many such terms: “[…] je trouve une infinité de noms propres parmy eux, que je ne puis expliquer en nostre françois que par circumlocution” (“[…] I find an infinite number of proper nouns among them, which I cannot explain in our French, except by circumlocutions”). Because the priests conducted missionary work in Amerindian languages, they were in a unique position to understand and change the cultures of the groups they encountered in New France. But by the same token, they were unable, they suggested, to perfectly explain all they knew to European readers without pressing French terms into the service of an ill-fitting message in the same way they used Amerindian languages in novel ways. Just as Amerindian languages were forever altered by this process and their simultaneous codification in written form, the example of the New World as reported in texts like the Jesuits Relations left an enduring mark on the French language, as new terms were introduced and the meaning of existing words stretched to accommodate the unfamiliar experiences of European

170 Campeau 2.645; Thwaites 7.21-23.
travelers far from home.\textsuperscript{171} In the context of ongoing debates about which orders should be allowed to work as missionaries in New France, the Jesuits’ growing skills and suggestions that they were altering the languages made them Europe’s authorities on Amerindian tongues, and also, they suggested, precluded anyone else from rivaling them in knowledge or carrying out missionary work as effectively as they could.

Bilingual letters, prayers and speeches included in the \textit{Relations} would have reinforced the message that readers’ only access to the thoughts and beliefs of the Amerindian inhabitants of New France was through the Jesuits. Le Mercier’s 1654 \textit{Relation}, for example, contains a letter the priest reportedly wrote on behalf of some Huron converts who wished to thank mission supporters in Paris.\textsuperscript{172} The page-long letter reproduced in the text, of course, would have been incomprehensible to most European readers, whose only access to the words and thoughts of the Huron authors would have come through the French translation that follows the letter in Le Mercier’s text. The incomprehension readers would have experienced upon encountering the letter in Huron and their need to rely on the translation would have reminded readers that the actual words uttered by the Huron were inaccessible to practically everyone except the Jesuits. In the same vein, a prayer reportedly uttered by the Huron convert

\textsuperscript{171} As Sara Melzer has observed, citing the appearance of terms such as \textit{castor}, \textit{Emir}, and \textit{pogode} in Furetière’s \textit{Dictionnaire Universel}, “Selon Furetière, une des tâches qui incombrait au \textit{Dictionnaire} était de traduire les nouveaux mots qui entraient dans l’usage à la suite des \textit{relations}.” Sara E. Melzer, “Le Nouveau Monde et La Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes dans le Furetière,” \textit{Littératures Classiques} 47(2003): 133-148.

\textsuperscript{172} Campeau 8.713-715.
Joseph Chiouatenhou and recorded in Lalemant’s 1641 Relation and two Montagnais language prayers recorded and translated in Le Jeune’s 1634 Relation similarly would have reminded the reader of the indispensable place of the Jesuit intermediary.

Even the Amerindian speeches recorded in the Relations, which, as I argued in the first chapter of this dissertation, were cited as a means of proving that the Jesuit strategy was working, were sometimes presented as imperfect, if faithful, renditions of actual utterances. Le Jeune, for example, closes his long quotation of a speech by a Montagnais “capitaine” in his 1633 Relation with a disclaimer of the accuracy of his account: “Voilà à peu près la response de ce sauvage, qui estonna nos François […]” {“This is about the answer of this Savage, who astonished our French people”}. In 1638, Le Mercier similarly suggested that something had been lost in his account of a speech by a Huron elder, prefacing his translation with a disclaimer: “l’un d’eux parla quasi en ces termes” {“One of them spoke about in these terms […]”}. The following year, Le Jeune cited a speech made by an Algonquin convert, and suggested again that his translation failed to capture the beauty of the speech he heard: “Il nous tint ces discours en meilleurs termes en sa langue que je ne les rapporte en la nostre” {“He made

---

173 Campeau 5.209-214.
174 Campeau 2.702-704.
175 Campeau 2.455; Thwaites 5.211.
176 Campeau 4.144; Thwaites 15.43.
this speech to us in better terms in his own language than I can report in ours”). In 1642, Vimont similarly pointed to the inadequacy of his translation of a speech: “A cette harangue, plus éloquente en Algonquin que je ne l’ay couchée en français, [l’autre] répartit encore plus élégamment en son langage” (“To this harangue — which was more eloquent in the Algonquin tongue than I can render it in French — [the other] replied still more eloquently, in his own language […]”). Not only were readers reliant on Jesuit translations, but those translations, it was often suggested, were only approximate. Readers could get the general idea, but truly intimate knowledge of Amerindian cultures, it seems, was reserved for the Jesuits, who spoke the local languages.

The Jesuit linguistic enterprise involved, then, not only hard work as pupils under the direction of unskilled masters, but also creativity. Iroquoian and Algonquian languages would have to be altered in order to accommodate the expression of concepts from another culture, and French terms would have to be expanded beyond their usual meaning in order to relate the Jesuits’ observations about Amerindian cultures. Both cases, as I have argued, suggested that languages were a body of knowledge to learn, alter, and possess. The way the authors of the Jesuit Relations characterized their methods of dealing with their “richness” and “poverty” suggested that the Jesuits were gaining control over the media they claimed were indispensable to the missionary

177 Campeau 4.314; Thwaites 16.117.
178 Campeau 5.420; Thwaites 22.149.
enterprise. The readers of the Relations, frequently reminded of the complexities of Amerindian languages and the need to alter them but never presented with details of the Jesuits’ solutions to those challenges, would inevitably have found themselves on the outside of a system of which the Jesuits claimed increasing mastery. Insisting on their growing language skills while failing to share their knowledge with readers made clear the message that the Jesuits had exclusive access to Amerindian souls.

4.5 Conclusion

Driving into the Huron-Wendat réserve Wendake near Québec City in the summer of 2007, I encountered a sure sign that contact between European and indigenous languages had left an enduring mark on the town. In this case, the sign was of the literal variety—a bilingual stop sign on the Rue du Loup at its intersection with the Rue Chef Stansislas-Koska that interrupted my progress toward a tourist site where visitors can stroll through a reproduction of a traditional Iroquoian village, complete with longhouse and protective palisades. The sign—reading “arrêt” in French and “seten” in Huron-Wendat—was a stark reminder of the linguistic encounter between French colonizers and Amerindian groups centuries earlier, and its very existence illustrates the points I have attempted to make in this chapter regarding the linguistic work of the Jesuits. Jesuits suggested that as divine media, French and Amerindian languages must have been directly related to each other, in the same way the stop sign I
found myself contemplating suggested an exact equivalence between the two words painted on it. The richness and beauty of Amerindian languages were taken as further proof that the existence of Amerindian groups could be explained in terms of the Bible, and that their languages eventually could be comprehended in terms of Latin, Greek, French or any other language, albeit with great difficulty and only after long, hard work. But at the same time, drawing Amerindian languages into a direct relationship with European ones required invention. Without the intervention of the Jesuits, and to a lesser extent other early observers like Sagard, it would have been impossible for “seten” to be painted on a sign—or written at all, for that matter.

Proceeding on from the stop sign, I joined a tour at the cultural site, conducted by a French-speaking tour guide who proudly informed us that a linguistic renaissance was under way among the residents of Wendaké, that despite the fact that the language is no longer spoken,179 children were learning its written form in school. Although it is certainly laudable that modern descendants of the Jesuits’ missionary targets today have stop signs and school texts in their traditional language, it is important to note that the language as it exists today is the one perceived, altered, and preserved for posterity by outsiders. Not only did the priests introduce new words into the languages they studied, they fixed their versions of the languages in writing, rendering permanent their

179 According to Steckley, the last speaker of the language died in Oklahoma in the mid-20th century. Words, xii.
understanding of the languages and their relationship to more familiar European tongues and ensuring that their influence would be durable. And the example of the revival of the Huron-Wendat language poses a question similar to the one I raised in the introduction to this dissertation about Tlingit use of ethnographic works by outsiders to learn past cultural practices. Is the language that the descendents of the Huron now study in school and write on road signs the tongue of their ancestors, or a version thereof filtered through a western culture and passed through the sieve of orthographic encoding? The answer is surely both. As I have argued throughout this chapter, the Jesuits were not wholly disinterested students of language and their treatment thereof in the Relations bears the marks of the political and intellectual challenges that the missionaries confronted when considering the Amerindian other. And yet, the language clearly was not altered so much as to lose its distinction from other tongues, since writing “stop” in French and Wendat still requires two separate words.

Amerindian languages, then, paradoxically function in the Relations to mark the difference between inhabitants of Old World and New, but also to frame the challenging nature of the unfamiliar tongues as an initially puzzling symptom of cultural diversity that could, over time, be made to fit within Christian Europe’s worldview. In confronting the challenges posed by Amerindian languages, the missionary authors described themselves in ways that add nuance to their modern image as rigorous linguists and the popular stereotype of the Jesuit as a soldier, brandishing arms and
doing battle in the name of God. By casting themselves simultaneously as children struggling to be understood but constantly learning and as inventors adding to and modifying Amerindian languages to make them suitable for expressing European ideas (and vice versa), the authors of the *Relations* developed and enacted rhetorical control over the languages of the peoples they hoped to convert to Christianity, a move that, in the context of struggles with the Recollets over access to New France, can be read as an assertion of control over the mission itself and that equated knowledge of Amerindian cultures and languages with power.
5. Conclusion: Jesuits in Space

It was predictable, in hindsight. Everything about the history of the Society of Jesus bespoke deft and efficient action, exploration and research. During what Europeans were pleased to call the Age of Discovery, Jesuit priests were never more than a year or two behind the men who made initial contact with previously unknown peoples; indeed, Jesuits were often the vanguard of exploration. The United Nations required years to come to a decision that the Society of Jesus reached in ten days. In New York, diplomats debated long and hard [...] whether and why human resources should be expended in an attempt to contact the world that would become known as Rakhat when there were so many pressing needs on Earth. In Rome, the questions were not whether or why but how soon the mission could be attempted and whom to send.

--Mary Doria Russell, The Sparrow

It is with a reference to the long history of Jesuit missionary activity that Mary Doria Russell begins her science fiction novel The Sparrow, set in the mid-21st century, about a future Jesuit mission to a newly discovered planet. Russell’s remarkable novel follows Puerto Rican Jesuit Emilio Sandoz and a small band of colleagues and friends as they depart Earth to establish a mission on the fictional planet of Rakhat in Alpha Centauri, the solar system closest to the Earth’s sun. After Sandoz’s friend Jimmy Quinn, an astronomer, discovers music emanating from the distant solar system, the Society of Jesus immediately decides to send missionaries to find and reside with the extra-terrestrial musicians. Sandoz and his companions arrive on the planet years before any governmental organization is able to plan a voyage of its own, and the priest
immediately begins an intensive effort to learn the languages of Rakhat’s inhabitants. The intelligent beings that Sandoz and the others encounter on the fictional planet are divided into two species, one comprising docile and somewhat dull vegetarians, and the other comprising sometimes cruel carnivores that prey on their peaceful neighbors, attacking without hesitation and nearly killing Sandoz on first encountering him. The mission ends in tragedy, with Sandoz’s colleagues dying at the hands of unfriendly residents of Rakhat or succumbing to mysterious illnesses, and Sandoz returning alone to Earth, physically disfigured and emotionally shattered due to mistreatment suffered while held prisoner on the faraway planet. Despite the heavy human toll, Russell’s imaginary mission produces reams of knowledge on the languages of Rakhat’s two sentient species, their customs, and the planet’s flora and fauna that add up to the sum of earthlings’ knowledge about Rakhat and its inhabitants.

If the bare outline of Russell’s tale resembles the Jesuit experience in New France, it is surely no accident. Russell, an anthropologist by training, stocks her tale with direct allusions to the Jesuits’ historical ventures into the unknown “for the greater glory of God,”¹ and specifically invokes the Jesuit Relations and the travails of the New France missionaries in placing her hero Sandoz in the order’s long tradition. The Jesuits who welcome Sandoz home in his troubled state explicitly compare him to New France Jesuit martyrs like Isaac Jogues, who, like Sandoz in Russell’s sequel to The Sparrow, returned

to the site of his torment during a second mission. Indeed it was precisely the example of priests like Jogues, Le Jeune, Brébeuf and others that led Russell to make her fictional explorers Jesuits instead of Franciscans, Protestants, secular explorers, or diplomats.

It would be easy to enumerate dozens of ways in which the experiences of Russell’s fictional priest resemble the encounters with Amerindians described in the Relations, but it is more interesting for the present purpose to reflect on how her vision of the Jesuit mission confirms and illustrates many of the points I have made in this dissertation, and facilitates the drawing of larger conclusions about the mission, the texts it produced, and their role in the formation of knowledge about Amerindian cultures. By projecting the history of the Society of Jesus into the future, Russell allows today’s readers to imagine themselves in a position similar to that of early modern Europeans confronted with the Amerindian other, at a time when the likelihood of discovering unknown cultures on earth is greatly diminished (if not reduced to zero), and when mention of the Society of Jesus is more likely to conjure images of university and high school educators than fearless explorers breaking trail in uncharted territory. Linking the long Jesuit history of departing into the unknown to a hypothetical future discovery of alien life casts the seventeenth century New France mission in a light that illustrates

---

2 The similarity between Sandoz and Jogues ends with their respective returns to the sites of their torture. Unlike Jogues, Sandoz is not tortured and killed by those who harmed him during his first visit. Russell, Children of God (New York: Villard, 1998).

3 Russell herself claimed to have chosen the Jesuits because “[...] they have a long history of first contact with cultures other than their own.” “A conversation with Mary Doria Russell,” appendix to The Sparrow.
for modern readers—for whom the existence of culturally different non-Christians is no longer news—the audacity, courage, and faith that were necessary for such an undertaking. Although I have not emphasized the point in this dissertation, departing France for the New World could be thought of as the early modern equivalent of blasting off for another solar system. Both involve a radical departure from what is familiar and arrival in a wholly foreign, unpredictable place, the example of which may force the reexamination of received knowledge. The New France Jesuits had the advantage of following on the heels of earlier explorers and missionaries, but much was still unknown and frightening about the colony at the time of their arrival, and, as Russell herself mentions, Jesuit missionaries’ journeys into the interior of the New World in the seventeenth century resemble Sandoz’s journey into space in that they were conducted in entirely virgin territory.

By reminding modern readers for whom the concept of first contact is now easiest to imagine in the context of future space travel of the discovery and learning that were necessarily involved therein, Russell’s novel pushes the reader to consider the exact nature of a religious mission made under such circumstances. It is fruitful to dwell briefly on the various meanings of the term “mission,” to which Russell herself alludes in *The Sparrow*. Although the term has been used throughout this dissertation primarily in the sense of the sending forth of religious representatives to spread the faith, the word

---

4 Russell 134-135.
also can be used to mean a political or diplomatic undertaking. More specifically, the term can designate a journey of discovery, especially, in our time, to outer space. Russell playfully points to the term’s several possible meanings as her characters first contemplate the possibility of a voyage to make contact with the newly discovered life. “Do you mean a mission or a mission? Are we talking science or religion?” asks a skeptical friend of Sandoz. “Yes,” replies the would-be missionary, suggesting that a religious mission to an unfamiliar worlds must unavoidably also involve an intellectual confrontation with the unknown. Because of the unfamiliar nature of Rakhat, much like New France in the seventeenth century, any religious mission there was unavoidably also a journey of discovery. Missionaries could not attend to the spiritual life of the people they encountered without also learning about their languages, cultures, and pre-existing beliefs, whether the accumulation of knowledge was identified as an end in itself or a mere byproduct of close contact with potential converts. Sandoz’s one-word witticism, then, summarizes the argument I have been advancing throughout this dissertation: the Jesuits’ religious goals and the collection of information about Amerindian cultures were, although superficially different kinds of “missions,” so closely related that a single term suffices to express both tasks. The question becomes,


\[\text{6 Russell 96.}\]
then, how the two parts of the Jesuit mission were related and how they influenced each other.

The role of the Jesuit accumulation of knowledge about Amerindian groups in relation to their religious mission is neatly illustrated by another key moment in Russell’s tale. Upon discovering strange music emanating from the vicinity of Alpha Centauri, Quinn exclaims his surprise in blasphemous terms that Russell loads with significance for the confrontation to come between the familiar and the exotic: “‘Jesus Christ,’ Jimmy breathed, meeting the future by turning to the ancient past. ‘Holy Mother of God.’”7 It is precisely the act of turning to the familiar past as a strategy for meeting the future that I have explored in this dissertation. Ultimately, the ways in which the New France Jesuits framed the knowledge they had gained about Amerindian creation myths, recounted horrifying torture and cannibalism, and discussed unfamiliar languages and their efforts to master them can all be understood as part of a single strategy for confronting the unknown. Upon encountering Amerindian cultures that unavoidably challenged Europeans’ understandings of themselves, the world, and history, the authors of the Jesuit Relations sought answers in their own traditional knowledge, staving off political and intellectual chaos by integrating the unfamiliar into the familiar. As I have argued in each of the three preceding chapters, the New France Jesuits who penned the Relations were concerned not only with exposing the

7 Russell 88.
particularities of the cultures they encountered in New France, but also with organizing the new information into an acceptably familiar form and codifying it in ways that would provide lasting solutions to the theological and intellectual difficulties posed by the example of the Amerindian other and would simultaneously underscore the necessity and potential for success of the Jesuits' work.

It is true, then, that the Jesuits' "missions"—whether to New France or Rakhat—could be said to unavoidably involve the collection of knowledge, but the ways the authors of the Relations wrote about what they learned makes clear that knowledge was not pursued in a disinterested fashion, for its own sake. Although the work of Jesuit missionaries has often been thought of as the preservation and transmission of knowledge, usually acknowledged to involve at least some degree of easily detectable and correctable alteration, I have argued throughout this dissertation that what the missionary authors actually did was more akin to the silencing of Amerindian voices and the suppression of their particular beliefs by speaking on their behalf in ways that tended to erase rather than mark cultural differences. The authors of the Relations, I have argued, did not merely expose the beliefs and practices of their Algonquian and Iroquoian interlocutors. They also redirected Amerindian knowledge to their own religious and political ends.

Beyond the specific examples of rhetorical framing that I have examined in this dissertation, it is also important to recognize that in the very process of collecting,
shaping and disseminating their versions of Amerindian beliefs and practices, the missionary authors altered their organization and meaning in ways that have been durable, to judge from the continuing importance of the Relations in ethnohistorical scholarship. As Walter Mignolo has pointed out, a similar principle is at work in studying indigenous languages and in writing down Amerindian oral knowledge:

[… ] grammars take the place of the native implicit organization of languages [and] writing histories takes the place of native explicit organization of past oral expression and nonalphabetic forms of writing. In the first case, an implicit knowledge is ignored; in the second, an explicit knowledge is being rewritten. 8

Whether the subject was creation myths, torture practices or unfamiliar languages, the New France Jesuits not only drew parallels to European traditions, but translated Amerindian oral knowledge into written form, making it conform to European expectations that knowledge was written and invariable. The very act of writing accounts of creation myths and torture practices and grammars, then, contributed to the project of fending off the intellectual and religious challenges posed by new cultures by showing that—like Old World beliefs, languages, and practices—their myths varied too much to count as knowledge even when committed to paper, that the purpose and nature of Amerindian torture practices could be reduced to an indictment or an endorsement of Amerindian nature, whatever the circumstances of an individual case,

8 Mignolo, Local Histories/Global Designs, 259.
and that a divinely beautiful grammar could be distilled from oral Amerindian languages.

Although recognition of the fact that Jesuit activity in New France involved two intertwined “missions”—religious instruction and the collection of information about the unknown—is helpful in thinking about the relationship between the European Jesuit point of view and the information presented in the Relations, it must also be recognized that the texts are a rich source of information on the cultures that the Jesuits encountered in New France. Despite the priests’ work to minimize differences and emphasize a shared heritage and religious future, they also collected and preserved Amerindian knowledge that is still recognizable as distinct from their own culture’s practices and beliefs. Marius Barbeau’s multiple versions of the Iroquoian creation myth that were collected in the early twentieth century and that resemble Brébeuf’s account, Champlain’s seventeenth century description of cruel treatment of prisoners that is similar to passages in the Jesuit Relations, and the bilingual stop sign in Wendaké that I mentioned in my concluding remarks to the previous chapter are all clues that despite the parallels Jesuits drew between their own language, customs, and beliefs and those of their interlocutors, unique elements of cultures were recorded and passed down to posterity in their Relations. Although I believe that the evidence that I have laid out in this dissertation is compelling that the Jesuit accounts are less expositions of differences between the cultures than attempts to draw them into a relationship, it cannot be denied
that the texts also mark the differences between European and Amerindian cultures. The texts, then, can be understood to have simultaneously recorded cultural differences and explained them in terms that were palatable to European thinkers grappling with the implications of contact.

The challenge that must be confronted by students of Amerindian cultures, then, is the extraction of information from a system of representation that does as much to obscure and alter it as it does to expose it. As I have argued in this dissertation, simply separating the facts from their context is a problematic method that can result, as in the case of Joseph’s stoicism in the face of torture, in Jesuit rhetorical choices being mistaken for descriptions of traditional practices. Even when details of cultural beliefs or practices appear to have survived unscathed, editing out the religious commentary that surrounds them can only enhance the Jesuits’ reputation as rigorous and meticulous students of culture, early participant-observers in the Malinowskian mold, further obscuring the ways in which the Jesuit ethnographic and religious missions influenced each other. And the notion that Amerindian traditions could survive “unscathed” is itself problematic, since inherently variable oral traditions and complex grammatical structures were tamed by the Jesuits, reduced to single versions that conformed to European expectations and then fixed in writing. Context and content, I have argued, work together in the Jesuit Relations to advance political and religious arguments and to signal the capacity for faith of potential converts and the necessity and effectiveness of
the Jesuits’ work. How, then, are social scientists to reconstruct Amerindian cultures on
the basis of texts like the Relations? The question is vast and complicated, and I do not
pretend to have answered it completely here. Instead, I have added my voice to that of
anthropologists like Carole Blackburn in suggesting that any attempt to do so must
consider—rather than edit out—the rhetorical strategies employed by the Jesuits, their
religious and political point of view, and the cultural baggage they brought with them
from the Old World. Rather than something to be filtered out, the Jesuits’ efforts to
explain and comprehend Amerindian cultures should be understood as part and parcel
of their descriptions thereof.

Although headway in this project certainly has been made by scholars like
Blackburn and the contributors to the excellent collection Decentring the Renaissance, it is
clear that the Jesuits’ reputation primarily as rigorous collectors of data continues to
endure. As I noted earlier, Russell signals in her contemporary novel the unavoidable
double nature of the Jesuits’ mission. But she focuses almost exclusively on the
missionaries’ scientific work in her novel, testifying to the degree to which Jesuit
missionary activity has come to be synonymous with the collection of knowledge, not
necessarily complicated by religious work. Although the previously mostly agnostic
Sandoz undergoes a belated spiritual awakening when confronted with the beauty of
the unfamiliar planet and its inhabitants, neither the priest nor any of his colleagues
attempt to convert the sentient beings they encounter there. Instead, they focus on
gathering linguistic, anatomical, and botanical data and writing hundreds of articles for submission to learned journals back on Earth. Sandoz’s linguistic work is informed by his status as a renowned linguistics professor and researcher on earth, and there is no hint of the religious or political stakes seventeenth century French Jesuits saw in their linguistic project. Sandoz studies the alien languages because he is a linguist, not because there is a clear religious or political upside to it. The origins of the two intelligent species Sandoz and his colleagues encounter, and the violent practices of one group and docility of the other, appear in the text as intellectual puzzles eventually explained in the novel by evolutionary factors, rather than cultural elements that reveal the particular cultural beliefs and practices of the inhabitants of Rakhat and their relationship to the earthlings’ own culture and beliefs. Like many of the scholars of history and anthropology with whose work I have engaged in this dissertation, Russell focuses on the scientific part of the Jesuits’ “mission,” excludes its evangelical element, and does not account for the degree to which the two were entirely intertwined, in spite of her playful recognition of the multiple meanings of the word “mission.” Russell selected the Society of Jesus specifically for its long history of contact with unfamiliar cultures, and that contact, in her imagination as well as in many of the scholarly works considered in this dissertation, was more scientific than religious, testifying to the degree to which Jesuit missionary history has passed in the scholarly and popular imagination from a primarily religious task to a scientific one.
There is one more pattern that has emerged from my examination of ethnographic writing in the *Relations* that is worth comment. As I have argued throughout this dissertation, the simultaneous difference and similarity that the missionary authors saw in Amerindian and European cultures was a useful rhetorical tool not only for quelling European anxieties about the origin, humanity, and diversity of Amerindian populations, but also for justifying the missionary project and illustrating its urgency. In this way, the ensemble of Jesuit activities—preaching, collecting information, and writing about their experiences in New France—can be thought of as the colonization of Amerindian knowledge. The “richness” of Amerindian languages, the resemblance of their creation myths to Genesis and the imitation of Christ to be found in the suffering of torture victims were all signs of the potential of Amerindians to be converted and to truly embrace and understand Christianity. But at the same time, the “poverty” of their languages, the corruption by fables of their myths, and the astounding and in some cases instinctive cruelty of Amerindian groups were signs of the inferiority of potential converts, justifying missionary activity. In this regard, Jesuit accounts of Amerindian cultures mirror broader European understandings of Amerindians and the New World that date to Columbus, who saw them as “[…] deficient in everything […] but paradoxically rich in everything the Spaniards were avidly searching for.” ⁹ It was this double understanding of Amerindians that licensed

⁹ Ouellet and Tremblay 162.
their exploitation by European colonial powers, whether it was economic exploitation, the seizure of their land, their enslavement, or any of the other unsavory elements of colonial history. The New World and its inhabitants were consistently described in favorable terms that demonstrated that they possessed something worth exploiting, and in negative terms that justified their exploitation by positioning them as less civilized, less intelligent, and less religious than Europeans, and therefore not worthy of the same kind of respect that French Catholics, for example, might have accorded their Italian or Spanish counterparts in diplomatic or religious settings.\(^\text{10}\)

In this way, the Jesuit project in the *Relations* can be understood as a form of exploitation of Amerindian cultures, but not the kind of colonialism of which the order has sometimes been accused. From the seventeenth century onward, the New France Jesuits have occasionally been suspected of focusing more on the extraction of material wealth than in converting Amerindians. In 1672, the Comte de Frontenac, governor of New France, icily declared that the Jesuits were more interested in converting beavers than souls, and George T. Hunt’s influential 1940 book *The Wars of the Iroquois* labeled the priests mere “clerks of the fur trade.”\(^\text{11}\) Although these charges appear to be generally specious, the broader idea that the Jesuit authors acted as colonizers—

\(^{10}\) For a good discussion of the ways dualistic descriptions of Amerindians licensed colonial exploitation, see Berkhofer 113-134.

\(^{11}\) For a good discussion of the history of Jesuit involvement in commercial enterprises in New France as well as the history of perceptions thereof, see Bruce G. Trigger, “the Jesuits and the Fur Trade,” *Ethnohistory* 12.1(1965): 30-53.
extracting information for Europe’s enrichment rather than merely chronicling Amerindian cultures from a particular point of view—has merit. In the same way that the New World’s material riches were carried back to Europe and fashioned into useful and prized products by Europeans who felt justified in extracting wealth from the continent by their own sense of superiority, the Jesuits shaped Amerindian beliefs and practices into something useful to Europe’s thinkers, and sent the colonized knowledge across the ocean in its new, written form, their religious certainty justifying their work.
Appendix: Comments on Critical Editions of the Jesuit Relations, with Concordance

The two critical editions of the Relations on which scholars have most often relied are Reuben Gold Thwaites’ 73-volume Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents and the late Canadian Jesuit Lucien Campeau’s Monumenta Novae Franciae. My decision to rely primarily on the less well-known Campeau edition—available in just 100 libraries worldwide compared to about 700 for the Thwaites edition and its 1959 reprint—requires brief explanation. The differences between the two editions are striking. Thwaites’ edition appeared over the course of just 65 months from 1896 to 1901. This swift pace of publication could not stand in starker contrast to Campeau’s much larger collection of documents that began appearing in 1967, and, with its ninth volume in 2003, included the published Relations from their beginning to 1661. As Luca Codignola demonstrated in his optimistically-titled 1996 article “The Battle is Over: Campeau’s Monumenta vs. Thwaites’ Jesuit Relations, 1602-1650,” Thwaites’ work leaves much to be desired in scholarly rigor, due perhaps to his limited formal training and the short timeline for preparation of each of his 73 volumes.12 Although Thwaites is to be thanked for making the Relations widely accessible both in French and in facing-page English translation, he “[…] was by nature and temperament much more the entrepreneur than

the scholar,” according to Joseph Donnelly. This shortcoming led to sloppiness in regard to the sources Thwaites used to establish his edition, Codignola asserts: “Despite a pledge to ‘go to the sources, never depending upon a printed version whenever the original manuscript could be obtained,’ Thwaites never did so.” Of the documents Thwaites published for the period 1610-1650, “none [were] taken from their original source. They all derive from other books, contemporary copies, modern reproductions, modern translations, or modern transcriptions.” Campeau, in contrast, was a trained, professional historian. He relied on the original Cramoisy editions of the Relations, making his collection a more reliable reproduction of the texts as French readers experienced them in the 1600s.

In spite of the clear superiority of the Campeau edition on this score, Codignola’s 1996 declaration that the “Battle is Over” has proved to have been premature. Although Campeau’s work is now often cited, many scholars still routinely rely on the older edition. The fact that Thwaites’ edition is bilingual, with English translations to be found on pages facing the original texts, is likely a major factor in its continuing popularity, as it gives access to the Relations to scholars who read only English or write

13 Donnelly 19.
14 Codignola 7 (cites Thwaites 72:10.)
15 Among the numerous books that have appeared in the years since Codignola’s article that draw solely on Thwaites’ edition are Blackburn, Harvest of Souls (already cited) and Viau, Enfants du Néant et Mangeurs des Ames (already cited). Other recent books, such as the already-cited work of Pioffet and Campbell, have included both editions in their bibliographies.
for an Anglophone audience. But the translations provided by Thwaites’ team might be more of a hindrance to good scholarship than a help. As Donnelly put it,

Much of the translation found in the first twenty volumes, except that from Latin, is not always sound. One has the feeling that the translators were people who did not know French or Italian well, who certainly knew very little history, and who knew practically nothing about the Society of Jesus.¹⁶

Codignola’s assessment is more charitable: “We can conclude that Thwaites’s translations could be better but are substantially sound.”¹⁷ My own experience has taught me to be cautious in relying on Thwaites’ translations, as imprecise renderings sometimes rob key passages of meaning. To cite just one example, in the 1633 discussion of Montagnais beliefs about their own origin discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation, Le Jeune wrote, according to the Campeau edition, “Je confesse que les sauvages n’ont point de prières publiques et communes, ny aucun culte qu’ils rendent ordinairement à celuy qu’ils tiennent pour Dieu, et que leur cognoissance n’est que ténèbres.”¹⁸ Thwaites’ edition translates the sentence as “I confess that the savages have no public or common prayer, nor any form of worship usually rendered to one whom they hold as God, and their knowledge is only as darkness.”¹⁹ The inexplicable translation of “ténèbres” as “darkness” rather than “shadows” substantially alters the

---

¹⁶ Donnelly 22.
¹⁷ Codignola 6.
¹⁸ Campeau 2.433.
¹⁹ Thwaites 5.153. In brackets: my correction for “only as darkness.”
meaning of the sentence. A shadow bears traces of the object that casts it, and preserves, at a minimum, its bare outline. “Darkness” carries no such suggestion of an imperfect, obscure version of something else. The importance of this distinction is clear in light of the argument I made in the chapter on Amerindian creation myths. Though convenient, the translations that are unique to Thwaites’ edition should only be used after careful scrutiny and, in many cases, revision. The bilingual nature of the edition is therefore an insufficient justification for continued preference in some quarters of Thwaites over Campeau, since the translations, I believe, should not be accepted without checking them against Campeau’s edition or the original Cramoisy texts.

The convenience of the facing-page translations is likely not the only reason Thwaites’ edition has retained its popularity. Codignola speculates that the practical difficulty of transitioning to Campeau’s edition might be a factor. “One might also suspect that, having compiled their notes from Thwaites, [scholars] often refrain from looking up the new references in Campeau.” 20 My own attempt to make this transition less daunting and encourage adoption of Campeau’s edition is the concordance, by chapter, that follows my comments here. Page numbers of the original Cramoisy editions are embedded in the text of each edition. I have found that passages in one edition can be found in the other very rapidly by using my concordance to locate the

20 Codignola 3
appropriate volume and range of pages, and then using the Cramoisy page numbers in each edition to further narrow the search.

Campeau’s edition is not without its faults, which probably accounts for the fact that several scholars acknowledge its existence, but nonetheless decline to use it. Beaulieu cites from Campeau’s edition only to provide evidence of the religious bias that he claims taints it. Campeau was himself a Jesuit, and his religious perspective manifests itself clearly in his footnotes and introductions. According to Beaulieu, “Among those who continue to carry the torch for their predecessors, Lucien Campeau is certainly the most significant example.”

To the examples of Campeau’s religiously-biased interpretation cited by Beaulieu, one could add his explanation for the scant details Jesuits provided of Montagnais religious beliefs: “The rapid adoption of Christianity by the same Montagnais then relegated to oblivion their religious traditions,” he claimed.

This explanation reflects Campeau’s belief—misguided, I think—that the Montagnais were quick to realize the superiority of Christianity and wholly abandon their own traditions. I am not alone in my suspicion of this view. Anthropologist Anne Doran recently studied modern Montagnais religious life and argued that traditional beliefs and Christian principles taught by the Jesuits and later missionaries have combined to


form the uniquely Montagnais form of Christianity that is currently practiced by members of that group. It would be easy to offer more examples of the ways in which Campeau’s interpretation of the Relations is out of step with that of scholars who, unlike the editor, do not view colonial contact primarily through a religious lens, but is perhaps more instructive for the present purpose to simply summarize the various shortcomings of the edition. As Codignola put it,

Undoubtedly, Campeau’s commentaries and annotations are often intended, one suspects quite deliberately, to irritate his critics and throw the readers off balance. Seldom does he cite current historians, whom he knows very well, and when he does it is most often to contradict them. He is especially keen on attacking the ethnohistorians of the [Bruce] Trigger school, who explain the conversion phenomenon solely in terms of economic dependence within a market framework. He also likes to intersperse his scholarly annotations with statements of a moral nature which betray his providential vision of human history.

In spite of the sometimes objectionable interpretation that surrounds the Relations in Campeau’s edition, the texts themselves, as I noted earlier, are soundly and carefully edited, and represent progress from the less scholarly work of Thwaites.

A third option exists for scholars who reject both of the above-mentioned editions. The 1972 reprint of a mid-nineteenth century edition produced by the Canadian government has been the source of choice for Denys Delâge and Georges

23 Anne Doran, Spiritualité Traditionnelle et Christianisme Chez les Montagnais (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2005).

24 Codignola 8.
Sioui, his student. Like that of Campeau, the Côté edition is in French only, which likely accounts for its lack of popularity in English-language scholarship. If Campeau’s primary fault is that his own religious zeal sometimes manifests itself in the historical interpretations in his footnotes and introductions, the Côté edition errs in the other direction. There are no supporting scholarly materials to speak of. The editor dutifully informs us of his sources, in most cases the Cramoisy editions, but fails to account for which seventeenth century variant he relies on. The inclusion in Campeau’s edition of precise details of the editions he used to establish his text and the publication history of each Relation are features that set it apart from its predecessors. For all of these reasons, I have opted to rely on Campeau’s meticulously established versions of the Relations, and urge others to do the same. Confined as they are to notes and introductions, Campeau’s objectionable interpretations are easily ignored, and do not outweigh the many fine aspects of his edition.

---

Campeau-Thwaites Concordance by Chapter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Campeau</th>
<th>Thwaites</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Briève Relation du voyage de la Nouvelle-France (1632)</th>
<th>2. 296-323 (doc. 109)</th>
<th>5.8-73</th>
<th>Le Jeune</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1633</td>
<td>2.402-486 (doc. 127)</td>
<td>5.88-6.29</td>
<td>Le Jeune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1634</td>
<td>2.531-740 (doc. 145)</td>
<td>6.98-7.235</td>
<td>Le Jeune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter</td>
<td>538-539</td>
<td>6.98-101</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>539-541</td>
<td>6.102-107</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>542-558</td>
<td>6.108-143</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>558-563</td>
<td>6.144-155</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>563-595</td>
<td>6.156-227</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>595-601</td>
<td>6.228-241</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>601-613</td>
<td>6.242-269</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>613-618</td>
<td>6.270-277</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>618-625</td>
<td>6.278-293</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
<td>625-636</td>
<td>6.294-317</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 10</td>
<td>636-644</td>
<td>7.6-19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 11</td>
<td>644-650</td>
<td>7.20-33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 12</td>
<td>650-663</td>
<td>7.34-65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 13</td>
<td>663-740</td>
<td>7.66-235</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Pages</td>
<td>Volume Numbers</td>
<td>Author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1635</td>
<td>3.42-129 (doc. 26)</td>
<td>7.251-8.193</td>
<td>Le Jeune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 1 - Letter</td>
<td>45-47</td>
<td>5.254-261</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>47-52</td>
<td>7.262-273</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>52-61</td>
<td>7.274-303</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>61-64</td>
<td>8.8-15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>64-83</td>
<td>8.16-67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 2 - Letter</td>
<td>85-115</td>
<td>8.68-153</td>
<td>Brébeuf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 3 - Cape Breton</td>
<td>116-119</td>
<td>8.156-167</td>
<td>Julien Perrault</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 4 - Letters</td>
<td>120-129</td>
<td>8.168-193</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1636</td>
<td>3.182-404 (doc. 64)</td>
<td>8.203-10.317</td>
<td>Le Jeune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 1 - Letter</td>
<td>186-189</td>
<td>8.214-221</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>190-197</td>
<td>8.222-243</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>197-210</td>
<td>8.224-281</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>210-220</td>
<td>9.6-35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>220-230</td>
<td>9.36-67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>230-235</td>
<td>9.68-85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>235-243</td>
<td>9.86-109</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>243-250</td>
<td>9.110-131</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>250-255</td>
<td>9.132-149</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>Pages</td>
<td>Sections</td>
<td>Brébeuf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
<td>256-266</td>
<td>9.150-183</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 10</td>
<td>266-269</td>
<td>9.184-191</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 11</td>
<td>269-306</td>
<td>9.192-303</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 2-1 –Letter</td>
<td>307-308</td>
<td>10.6-9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>308-316</td>
<td>10.10-33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>316-333</td>
<td>10.34-85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>333-342</td>
<td>10.86-115</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>343-345</td>
<td>10.116-123</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 2-2</td>
<td>345-404</td>
<td>10.124-10.317</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>345-350</td>
<td>10.124-139</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>350-355</td>
<td>10.140-157</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>355-360</td>
<td>10.158-173</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>360-365</td>
<td>10.174-191</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>365-371</td>
<td>10.192-209</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>371-383</td>
<td>10.210-249</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>384-388</td>
<td>10.250-263</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>388-392</td>
<td>10.264-277</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
<td>392-404</td>
<td>10.278-317</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1637</td>
<td>3.520-797 (doc. 114)</td>
<td>11.27-14.111</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Le Jeune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 1- Letter</td>
<td>524-525</td>
<td>11.39-43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>526-532</td>
<td>11.44-61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>532-538</td>
<td>11.62-79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>539-561</td>
<td>11.80-147</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>561-567</td>
<td>11.148-165</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>567-572</td>
<td>11.166-183</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>572-584</td>
<td>11.184-219</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>584-589</td>
<td>11.220-237</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>590-597</td>
<td>11.238-263</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
<td>598-600</td>
<td>11.264-269</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 10</td>
<td>600-605</td>
<td>12.6-23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 11</td>
<td>605-610</td>
<td>12.24-37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 12</td>
<td>610-617</td>
<td>12.38-59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 13</td>
<td>617-624</td>
<td>12.60-83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 14</td>
<td>624-637</td>
<td>12.84-123</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 15</td>
<td>637-673</td>
<td>12.124-233</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing Letter</td>
<td>673-684</td>
<td>12.234-267</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 2-Chapter 1</td>
<td>684-694</td>
<td>13.6-35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>694-708</td>
<td>13.36-83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Le Mercier
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>708-717</td>
<td>13.84-111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>718-727</td>
<td>13.112-143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>728-782</td>
<td>13.144-14.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>782-787</td>
<td>14.56-75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>787-798</td>
<td>14.76-111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1638</td>
<td>4.73-180 (doc. 52)</td>
<td>14.117-15.134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le Jeune</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 1- Letter</td>
<td>76-77</td>
<td>14.117-123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>14.124-129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>79-86</td>
<td>14.130-149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>86-89</td>
<td>14.150-159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>89-93</td>
<td>14.160-169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>93-100</td>
<td>14.170-189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>100-105</td>
<td>14.190-203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>105-111</td>
<td>14.204-217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>111-116</td>
<td>14.218-229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>116-119</td>
<td>14.230-241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>119-125</td>
<td>14.242-259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>125-133</td>
<td>14.260-279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 2-Letter</td>
<td>133-134</td>
<td>15.12-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le Mercier</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>Pages</td>
<td>Reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>134-141</td>
<td>15.16-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>142-147</td>
<td>15.36-51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>148-153</td>
<td>15.52-67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>153-156</td>
<td>15.68-75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>156-159</td>
<td>15.76-85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>159-164</td>
<td>15.86-99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>165-168</td>
<td>15.100-109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>168-174</td>
<td>15.110-127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>174-176</td>
<td>15.128-133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>176-180</td>
<td>15.134-141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1639</td>
<td>4.261-441 (doc. 107)</td>
<td>15.207-17.215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 1</td>
<td>265-266</td>
<td>15.216-217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>266-273</td>
<td>15.218-237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>274-285</td>
<td>16.8-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>285-293</td>
<td>16.36-57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>293-299</td>
<td>16.58-73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>299-312</td>
<td>16.74-111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>313-320</td>
<td>16.112-133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>321-326</td>
<td>16.134-147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>16th Century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>326-333</td>
<td>16.148-167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
<td>333-340</td>
<td>16.168-189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 10</td>
<td>340-347</td>
<td>16.190-207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 11</td>
<td>348-352</td>
<td>16.208-219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 2-Letter</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>16.222-223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>353-359</td>
<td>16.224-237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>359-366</td>
<td>16.238-253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>366-372</td>
<td>17.8-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>372-385</td>
<td>17.24-57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>385-395</td>
<td>17.58-85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>395-405</td>
<td>17.86-111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>405-417</td>
<td>17.112-143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>418-441</td>
<td>17.144-215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1640</td>
<td>4.554-742 (doc. 173)</td>
<td>18.50-20.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 1- Letter</td>
<td>557-558</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>558-564</td>
<td>18.64-81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>565-567</td>
<td>18.82-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>568-578</td>
<td>18.90-117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>578-584</td>
<td>18.118-135</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Jérome Lalemant**

**Le Jeune**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>584-590</td>
<td>18.136-153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>591-599</td>
<td>18.154-177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>600-606</td>
<td>18.178-195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>606-611</td>
<td>18.196-211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
<td>612-616</td>
<td>18.212-225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 10</td>
<td>617-627</td>
<td>18.226-249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 11</td>
<td>627-636</td>
<td>19.8-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 12</td>
<td>636-644</td>
<td>19.36-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 13</td>
<td>645-650</td>
<td>19.60-73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 2- Letter</td>
<td>651-652</td>
<td>19.76-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>652-656</td>
<td>19.80-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>656-665</td>
<td>19.90-119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>666-670</td>
<td>19.120-131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>670-681</td>
<td>19.132-165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>682-687</td>
<td>19.166-181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>687-696</td>
<td>19.182-207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>697-705</td>
<td>19.208-231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>705-717</td>
<td>19.232-267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
<td>717-726</td>
<td>20.18-41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jérome Lalemant
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 10</td>
<td>726-741</td>
<td>20.42-85</td>
<td>Vimont</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1641</td>
<td>5.54-214 (doc. 34)</td>
<td>20.110-21-265</td>
<td>Vimont</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 1- Letter</td>
<td>60-62</td>
<td>20.118-123</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>62-68</td>
<td>20.124-141</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>68-75</td>
<td>20.142-163</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>76-82</td>
<td>20.164-183</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>82-93</td>
<td>20.184-213</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>93-99</td>
<td>20.214-231</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>100-109</td>
<td>20.232-257</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>109-117</td>
<td>20.258-279</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>117124</td>
<td>20.280-299</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
<td>124-133</td>
<td>21.20-41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 10</td>
<td>133-139</td>
<td>21.42-59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 11</td>
<td>139-146</td>
<td>21.60-79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 12</td>
<td>146-156</td>
<td>21.80-105</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 13</td>
<td>156-164</td>
<td>21.106-125</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 2- Letter</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>21.128-129</td>
<td>J. Lalemant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>166-169</td>
<td>2.130-139</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>169-171</td>
<td>21.140-145</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>171-178</td>
<td>21.146-167</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>179-181</td>
<td>21.168-175</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>182-185</td>
<td>21.176-185</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>185-204</td>
<td>21.186-237</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>204-209</td>
<td>21.238-265</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1642</td>
<td>5.373-554 (doc. 87)</td>
<td>22.22-23.233</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 1- Letter</td>
<td>376-378</td>
<td>22.30-37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>378-382</td>
<td>22.38-45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>382-391</td>
<td>22.46-71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>391-399</td>
<td>22.72-91</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>399-407</td>
<td>22.92-113</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>407-414</td>
<td>22.114-133</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>414-421</td>
<td>22.134-153</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>421-429</td>
<td>22.154-177</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>429-437</td>
<td>22.178-201</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
<td>437-447</td>
<td>22.202-217</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 10</td>
<td>447-457</td>
<td>22.218-245</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 11</td>
<td>457-472</td>
<td>22.246-285</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 12</td>
<td>473-476</td>
<td>22.286-297</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Vimont**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 2- Letter</th>
<th>477</th>
<th>22.302-303</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>477-480</td>
<td>22.304-311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>480-487</td>
<td>23.18-37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>487-588</td>
<td>23.38-41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>488-493</td>
<td>23.42-57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>493-498</td>
<td>23.58-73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>498-506</td>
<td>23.74-99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>506-512</td>
<td>23.100-115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>512-517</td>
<td>23.116-131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
<td>518-524</td>
<td>23.132-149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 10</td>
<td>524-534</td>
<td>23.150-177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 11</td>
<td>535-543</td>
<td>23.178-203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 12</td>
<td>544-553</td>
<td>23.204-233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1643</strong></td>
<td>5.638-795 (doc. 129)</td>
<td>23.258-25.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter</td>
<td>641-642</td>
<td>23.266-269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>643-651</td>
<td>23.270-289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>651-655</td>
<td>23.290-301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>655-662</td>
<td>23.302-319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>662-671</td>
<td>24.20-43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>Pages</td>
<td>Section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>671-678</td>
<td>24.44-65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>679-691</td>
<td>24.66-101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>691-699</td>
<td>24.102-121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>699-712</td>
<td>24.122-155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
<td>712-724</td>
<td>24.156-189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 10</td>
<td>725-735</td>
<td>24.190-219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 11</td>
<td>736-756</td>
<td>24.220-269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 12</td>
<td>756-771</td>
<td>24.270-307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 13</td>
<td>771-780</td>
<td>25.18-41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 14</td>
<td>780-794</td>
<td>25.42-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1644</td>
<td>6.54-235 (doc. 43)</td>
<td>25.92-27.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 1-Letter</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>25.94-97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>58-62</td>
<td>25.104-115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>62-68</td>
<td>25.116-133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>68-77</td>
<td>25.134-159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>77-81</td>
<td>25.160-173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>82-88</td>
<td>25.174-191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>88-98</td>
<td>25.192-221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>98-107</td>
<td>25.222-245</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Vimont
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>107-119</td>
<td>25.246-281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
<td>120-132</td>
<td>26.18-51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 10</td>
<td>133-140</td>
<td>26.52-73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 11</td>
<td>140-149</td>
<td>26.74-101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 12</td>
<td>149-157</td>
<td>26.102-127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 13</td>
<td>157-166</td>
<td>26.128-153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 14</td>
<td>166-169</td>
<td>26.154-163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 2- New letter</td>
<td>169-170</td>
<td>26.166-167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original letter</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>26.170-173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>172-180</td>
<td>26.174-199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>180-186</td>
<td>26.200-215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>186-199</td>
<td>26.216-257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>200-210</td>
<td>26.258-291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>211-218</td>
<td>26.292-313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>218-221</td>
<td>27.20-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>221-223</td>
<td>27.28-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>223-226</td>
<td>27.36-45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
<td>226-231</td>
<td>27.46-61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter</td>
<td>231-235</td>
<td>27.62-71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lalemant
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Range of References</th>
<th>Vimont</th>
<th>J. Lalemant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1645</td>
<td>6.323-413 (doc. 77)</td>
<td>27.126-28.101</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Letter</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>27.134-135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>326-329</td>
<td>27.136-141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>329-333</td>
<td>27.142-153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>333-337</td>
<td>27.154-169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>338-340</td>
<td>27.170-179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>341-347</td>
<td>27.180-201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>347-353</td>
<td>27.202-219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>354-456</td>
<td>27.220-227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>357-362</td>
<td>27.228-245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
<td>363-373</td>
<td>27.246-273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 10</td>
<td>373-380</td>
<td>27.274-291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 11</td>
<td>380-385</td>
<td>27.292-305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 12</td>
<td>385-390</td>
<td>28.22-37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lettre des Hurons</td>
<td>391-413</td>
<td>28.38-101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1646</td>
<td>6.543-694 (doc. 140)</td>
<td>28.256-30.183</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>549-554</td>
<td>28.274-289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>555-559</td>
<td>28.290-303</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Vimont

J. Lalemant
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>560-568</td>
<td>29.16-43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>568-576</td>
<td>29.44-63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>576-585</td>
<td>29.64-93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>586-594</td>
<td>29.94-121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>595-602</td>
<td>29.122-143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>602-616</td>
<td>29.144-183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
<td>617-626</td>
<td>29.184-211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 10</td>
<td>626-636</td>
<td>29.212-239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 2- Letter</td>
<td>636-637</td>
<td>29.242-245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>637-640</td>
<td>29.246-255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>640-642</td>
<td>29.256-261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>642-652</td>
<td>29.262-291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>652-659</td>
<td>30.18-41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>659-672</td>
<td>30.42-83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>673-680</td>
<td>30.84-107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>681-686</td>
<td>30.108-125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>687-693</td>
<td>30.126-143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1647</td>
<td>7.67-201 (doc. 35)</td>
<td>30.208-32.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter</td>
<td>70-72</td>
<td>30.218-225</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ragueneau**

**J. Lalemant**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Volume</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>72-82</td>
<td>30.226-253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>82-90</td>
<td>30.254-279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>90-95</td>
<td>30.280-297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>96-108</td>
<td>31.16-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>108-114</td>
<td>31.52-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>114-121</td>
<td>31.70-91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>121-127</td>
<td>31.92-109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>127-136</td>
<td>31.110-137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
<td>137-151</td>
<td>31.138-181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 10</td>
<td>151-160</td>
<td>31.182-207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 11</td>
<td>160-167</td>
<td>31.208-229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 12</td>
<td>167-176</td>
<td>31.230-255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 13</td>
<td>176-187</td>
<td>31.256-287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 14</td>
<td>187-193</td>
<td>32.18-33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 15</td>
<td>194-201</td>
<td>32.34-55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1648</td>
<td>7.290-431 (doc. 77)</td>
<td>32.116-33.249</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 1- Letter</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Volume</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part 1- Letter</td>
<td>293-294</td>
<td>32.126-129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>294-298</td>
<td>32.130-141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>299-308</td>
<td>32.142-171</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

J. Lalemant
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page Range</th>
<th>Call Number</th>
<th>Ragueneau</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>309-315</td>
<td>32.172-191</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>315-322</td>
<td>32.192-211</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>322-331</td>
<td>32.212-237</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>331-338</td>
<td>32-238-257</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>338-345</td>
<td>32-258-281</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>346-354</td>
<td>32-282-305</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
<td>354-360</td>
<td>33.18-35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 10</td>
<td>360-366</td>
<td>33.36-55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 2- Letter</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>33.58-59</td>
<td>Ragueneau</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter 1 | 367-370    | 33.60-67    |           |
<p>| Chapter 2 | 370-371    | 33.68-73    |           |
| Chapter 3 | 372-373    | 33.74-79    |           |
| Chapter 4 | 374-377    | 33.80-89    |           |
| Chapter 5 | 377-380    | 33.90-101   |           |
| Chapter 6 | 381-385    | 33.102-115  |           |
| Chapter 7 | 385-389    | 33.116-127  |           |
| Chapter 8 | 389-392    | 33.128-137  |           |
| Chapter 9 | 392-396    | 33.138-147  |           |
| Chapter 10| 396-401    | 33.148-159  |           |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 11</td>
<td>401-410</td>
<td>33.160-187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 12</td>
<td>410-413</td>
<td>33.188-197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 13</td>
<td>413-417</td>
<td>33.198-209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 14</td>
<td>417-419</td>
<td>33.210-215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 15</td>
<td>419-421</td>
<td>33.216-223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 16</td>
<td>421-423</td>
<td>33.224-227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 17</td>
<td>423-430</td>
<td>33.228-249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1649</td>
<td>7.570-625 (doc. 131)</td>
<td>34.70-235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters</td>
<td>572-574</td>
<td>34.78-85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>574-578</td>
<td>34.86-99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>579-586</td>
<td>34.100-121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>586-591</td>
<td>34.122-137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>591-597</td>
<td>33.138-157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>597-609</td>
<td>33.158-195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>609-619</td>
<td>33.196-221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendixes</td>
<td>619-624</td>
<td>33.222-235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1650</td>
<td>7.700-783 (doc. 160)</td>
<td>35.68-36.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>35.74-77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>703-706</td>
<td>35.78-85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ragueneau
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>Page Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>706-712</td>
<td>35.86</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>712-725</td>
<td>35.106</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>725-730</td>
<td>35.146</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>730-733</td>
<td>35.162</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>733-735</td>
<td>35.172</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>735-736</td>
<td>35.178</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>736-744</td>
<td>35.182</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>744-747</td>
<td>35.206</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>747-754</td>
<td>35.216</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>754-763</td>
<td>35.236</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>764-769</td>
<td>35.266</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>769-777</td>
<td>36.20</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lettres</td>
<td>777-782</td>
<td>36.46</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1651</td>
<td>8.101-157 (doc. 40)</td>
<td>36.154</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>36.160</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>104-108</td>
<td>36.164</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>109-115</td>
<td>36.176</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>116-156</td>
<td>36.192</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1652</td>
<td>8.277-37 (doc. 94)</td>
<td>37.124</td>
<td>38.165</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ragueneau
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Call Number</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>279-283</td>
<td>37.134-145</td>
<td>Ragueneau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>284-291</td>
<td>37.146-167</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>291-296</td>
<td>37.168-181</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>296-305</td>
<td>37.182-209</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>306-312</td>
<td>37.210-231</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>313-315</td>
<td>37.232-239</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>315-323</td>
<td>37.240-261</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>324-333</td>
<td>38.16-43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
<td>333-342</td>
<td>38.44-67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 10</td>
<td>343-375</td>
<td>38.68-165</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1653</td>
<td>561-627</td>
<td>40.72-247</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter</td>
<td>562-563</td>
<td>40.74-77</td>
<td>Le Mercier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>564-566</td>
<td>40.78-83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>566-571</td>
<td>40.84-95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>571-580</td>
<td>40.96-117</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>580-593</td>
<td>40.118-155</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>594-607</td>
<td>40.156-193</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>608-613</td>
<td>40.194-209</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>614-616</td>
<td>40.210-217</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>617-618</td>
<td>40.218-221</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
<td>618-626</td>
<td>40.222-247</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1654</strong></td>
<td><strong>8.666-725 (doc. 139)</strong></td>
<td><strong>41.28-203</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter</td>
<td>668-670</td>
<td>41.36-41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>671-673</td>
<td>41.42-49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>674-678</td>
<td>41.50-65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>679-682</td>
<td>41.66-75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>682-685</td>
<td>41.76-83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>685-687</td>
<td>41.84-89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>687-693</td>
<td>41.90-107</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>693-700</td>
<td>41.108-129</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>701-703</td>
<td>41.130-135</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
<td>703-706</td>
<td>41.136-145</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 10</td>
<td>706-715</td>
<td>41.146-175</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 11</td>
<td>716-725</td>
<td>41.176-203</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1655- Two letters</strong></td>
<td><strong>8.763-772 (doc.161)</strong></td>
<td><strong>41.208-233</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1656</strong></td>
<td><strong>8.831-900 (doc. 199)</strong></td>
<td><strong>42.20-245</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter</td>
<td>833-835</td>
<td>42.30-35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>835-839</td>
<td>42.36-47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Le Mercier</th>
<th>Jean Dequin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>Pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>839-842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>843-850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>850-852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>853-855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>855-859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>859-863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>863-868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
<td>868-876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 10</td>
<td>877-878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 11</td>
<td>878-880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 12</td>
<td>881-885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 13</td>
<td>885-891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 14</td>
<td>891-893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 15</td>
<td>893-896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 16</td>
<td>896-900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1657</td>
<td>9.53-135 (doc. 36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter</td>
<td>53-55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>57-58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>59-61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Le Jeune
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>61-64</td>
<td>43.114-125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>65-73</td>
<td>43.126-155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>74-82</td>
<td>43.156-185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>82-85</td>
<td>43.186-197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>85-88</td>
<td>43.198-207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>88-91</td>
<td>43.208-219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>91-95</td>
<td>43.220-235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>95-100</td>
<td>43.236-255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>101-102</td>
<td>43.256-261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>103-106</td>
<td>43.262-273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>106-108</td>
<td>43.274-281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>108-112</td>
<td>43.282-295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>112-115</td>
<td>43.296-305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>115-118</td>
<td>43.306-317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>118-120</td>
<td>44.20-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>120-121</td>
<td>44.28-33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>122-124</td>
<td>44.34-43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>125-126</td>
<td>44.44-51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>127-131</td>
<td>44.52-67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

327
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1658</td>
<td>9.250-304 (doc. 87)</td>
<td>44.136-317</td>
<td>Not signed. Includes two letters signed by Ragueneau and a journal of composite authorship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>253-259</td>
<td>44.148-171</td>
<td>J. Lalemant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>260-263</td>
<td>44.172-183</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>263-268</td>
<td>44.184-201</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>269-278</td>
<td>44.202-233</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>279-286</td>
<td>44.234-257</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>287-292</td>
<td>44.258-275</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>292-301</td>
<td>44.276-309</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>301-303</td>
<td>44.310-317</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1660</td>
<td>9.452-510 (doc. 182)</td>
<td>45.172-47.123</td>
<td>J. Lalemant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>453-460</td>
<td>45.180-201</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>460-465</td>
<td>45.202-215</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>465-473</td>
<td>45.216-239</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>473-479</td>
<td>45.240-261</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>480-492</td>
<td>46.22-63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>492-498</td>
<td>46.64-83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>498-503</td>
<td>46.84-101</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>503-510</td>
<td>46.102-123</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1661</strong></td>
<td>9.571-628 (doc. 215)</td>
<td>46.194-47.115</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter</td>
<td>572-573</td>
<td>46.196-199</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>573-578</td>
<td>46.200-221</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>579-585</td>
<td>46.222-245</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>586-600</td>
<td>46.246-295</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>600-603</td>
<td>47.22-33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>603-607</td>
<td>47.34-47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>607-612</td>
<td>47.48-65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>612-613</td>
<td>47.66-115</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Le Jeune**
Works Cited


---. Nouveaux Voyages de M. Le Baron de Lahontan dans l’Amérique Septentrionale. La Haye: Les Frères L’Honoré, 1703.


Biography