Representations of the Amerindian in French literature and the Post-Imperialist literature of Québec

James Boucher
University of Iowa

Copyright 2016 James Boucher

This dissertation is available at Iowa Research Online: http://ir.uiowa.edu/etd/2050

Recommended Citation
http://ir.uiowa.edu/etd/2050.

Follow this and additional works at: http://ir.uiowa.edu/etd
Part of the French and Francophone Language and Literature Commons
Representations of the Amerindian in French Literature and the Post-Imperialist Literature of Québec

by

James Boucher

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in French and Francophone World Studies in the Graduate College of The University of Iowa

August 2016

Thesis Supervisor: Professor Michel Laronde
This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

James Boucher

has been approved by the Examining Committee for the thesis requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in French and Francophone World Studies at the August 2016 graduation.

Thesis Committee:

Michel Laronde, Thesis Supervisor

Anny Dominique Curtius

David Hagan

Roland Racevskis

Phillip Round
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Michel Laronde for his unwavering support before, during, and after the writing of this dissertation. His unique insights and suggestions have been invaluable to me on many levels. As a mentor, he has helped me to develop into the scholar that I am today. As a friend, he has helped me find the courage I needed to complete this long arduous journey.

I would also like to thank the members of my committee. All of your suggestions and criticisms have made this thesis the best that it could be. Thank you all for your time throughout this process. In particular, I would like to thank Anny Dominique Curtius for her advice in the context of writing this dissertation and beyond.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family. My wife Brandi Muller has stood by my side throughout the darkest days of dissertating. Without her love and loyalty this thesis would likely never have seen the light of day. I would also like to thank my parents Teresa and Kirk Boucher, who have always encouraged me to continue striving for success. Their sacrifices have made this dissertation a reality. I dedicate this thesis to my sons Donnelly, Seamus, and Finnegan Boucher.
ABSTRACT

My research traces the evolution of the French vision of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas by establishing a genealogy of mythic paradigms which frame how French and Quebecois authors understand the Amerindian from 1534 to present. Myth informs French visions of the Amerindian from the earliest periods of contact until the present day. My research reveals the existence of a mythic representational genealogy in the history of French (and Quebecois) letters. Through the written word, reiterations of mythologies of the Native lead to the creation of a crystallized French cultural imaginary of the Amerindian which circumscribes possibilities for reciprocal understandings between French (European) and Native peoples. The Noble and Ignoble Savage, the Ecological Savage (which I also refer to as the nexus of Nature and Native), the Vanishing Indian, and Going Native are the mythologies and narrative technologies that have mediated (and continue to mediate) French thinking about the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. Not only have these mythic paradigms determined literary representation, but they have also inordinately influenced the articulation of scientific truth about the Amerindian and the concretization of Native ontological difference from a Eurocentric perspective. The inextricable link between representation and praxis, confirmed by my insights into the mythic origins of scientific discourses (Buffon, Durkheim, Lévi-Strauss), cannot be underemphasized.

The original myths in that genealogy are the Ignoble and Noble Savage. The Ignoble Savage myth presents the Amerindian as non-human, animal, or monster, in both moral and physical descriptions. The Noble Savage is an idealized portrait of the purity and innocence of Native peoples that Europeans connect to a simpler time and way of life, often seen as belonging to the past. Texts written by Michel de Montaigne and Jean-Jacques Rousseau are instrumental
in the creation and propagation of this myth. An important consequence of the Noble and Ignoble Savage myths is an association of the Native with Nature in the French mind, what I refer to as the French cultural imaginary of the Amerindian. The link between the Indigenous peoples of the Americas and Nature is a recurring theme in French texts that represent the Amerindian. The mythologies of the Noble and Ignoble Savage, including the association of the Amerindian with the environment or world of the non-human animal, influence early modern philosophical, religious, scientific and literary images of the Amerindian in French.

In the nineteenth century, the mythic paradigm of the Vanishing Indian becomes the prevailing vision of the Amerindian. Originating in the Noble Savage, the myth of the Vanishing Indian presents the Native as extinct or nearing extinction; images are often characterized by nostalgia and guilt. The inevitability of the disappearance of the Amerindian is a logic that informs representations of the Native in Chateaubriand’s writing and in French Western novels.

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, French and Quebecois authors engage in the myth of Going Native. Following the metaphorical disappearance of the Amerindian according to the Vanishing Indian framework, French and French-Canadian characters undertake journeys of self-actualization that are catalyzed by contact with the (myths of the) Native. Through mythologized knowledge of the Native, non-Native characters are transformed into truer versions of themselves. Representations of androgynous and homosexual Native sexualities are significant elements in many narratives of Going Native, which I interpret through a queer critique.

In addition to literary forays, my dissertation focuses on how myths of the Native are presented in French texts that claim to produce scientific truth. In the eighteenth century, the
field of natural history uses images of the Native that echo the logic of the Ignoble Savage myth. In the nineteenth century, one of the foundational texts of the discipline of sociology utilizes images of Amerindian gender ambiguity to formulate a distinction between *primitive* and *modern* peoples. In my conclusion, I examine how the mythologies traced throughout the study influence the father of structural anthropology in his text *Tristes tropiques*. 
PUBLIC ABSTRACT

My research traces the evolution of the French vision of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas by establishing a genealogy of mythic paradigms which frame how French and Quebecois authors understand the Amerindian from 1534 to present. Myth informs French visions of the Amerindian from the earliest periods of contact until the present day. My research reveals the existence of a mythic representational genealogy in the history of French (and Quebecois) letters. Through the written word, reiterations of mythologies of the Native lead to the creation of a *crystallized* French cultural imaginary of the Amerindian which circumscribes possibilities for reciprocal understandings between French (European) and Native peoples. The Noble and Ignoble Savage, the Ecological Savage (which I also refer to as the nexus of Nature and Native), the Vanishing Indian, and Going Native are the mythologies and narrative technologies that have mediated (and continue to mediate) French thinking about the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. Not only have these mythic paradigms determined literary representation, but they have also inordinately influenced the articulation of *scientific truth* about the Amerindian and the concretization of Native ontological difference from a Eurocentric perspective. The inextricable link between representation and praxis, confirmed by my insights into the mythic origins of scientific discourses (Buffon, Durkheim, Lévi-Strauss), cannot be underemphasized.

The original myths in that genealogy are the Ignoble and Noble Savage. The Ignoble Savage myth presents the Amerindian as non-human, animal, or monster, in both moral and physical descriptions. The Noble Savage is an idealized portrait of the purity and innocence of Native peoples that Europeans connect to a simpler time and way of life, often seen as belonging to the past. Texts written by Michel de Montaigne and Jean-Jacques Rousseau are instrumental
in the creation and propagation of this myth. An important consequence of the Noble and Ignoble Savage myths is an association of the Native with Nature in the French mind, what I refer to as the French cultural imaginary of the Amerindian. The link between the Indigenous peoples of the Americas and Nature is a recurring theme in French texts that represent the Amerindian. The mythologies of the Noble and Ignoble Savage, including the association of the Amerindian with the environment or world of the non-human animal, influence early modern philosophical, religious, scientific and literary images of the Amerindian in French.

In the nineteenth century, the mythic paradigm of the Vanishing Indian becomes the prevailing vision of the Amerindian. Originating in the Noble Savage, the myth of the Vanishing Indian presents the Native as extinct or nearing extinction; images are often characterized by nostalgia and guilt. The inevitability of the disappearance of the Amerindian is a logic that informs representations of the Native in Chateaubriand’s writing and in French Western novels.

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, French and Quebecois authors engage in the myth of Going Native. Following the metaphorical disappearance of the Amerindian according to the Vanishing Indian framework, French and French-Canadian characters undertake journeys of self-actualization that are catalyzed by contact with the (myths of the) Native. Through mythologized knowledge of the Native, non-Native characters are transformed into truer versions of themselves. Representations of androgynous and homosexual Native sexualities are significant elements in many narratives of Going Native, which I interpret through a queer critique.

In addition to literary forays, my dissertation focuses on how myths of the Native are presented in French texts that claim to produce scientific truth. In the eighteenth century, the
field of natural history uses images of the Native that echo the logic of the Ignoble Savage myth. In the nineteenth century, one of the foundational texts of the discipline of sociology utilizes images of Amerindian gender ambiguity to formulate a distinction between primitive and modern peoples. In my conclusion, I examine how the mythologies traced throughout the study influence the father of structural anthropology in his text *Tristes tropiques.*
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: MYTHIC REPRESENTATIONS OF THE AMERINDIAN IN FRENCH

1. Thesis .......................................................................................................................... 1
2. Research Question and Methodologies ................................................................. 4
3. Chapter Previews .................................................................................................... 8
   Chapter 1 ................................................................................................................... 8
   Chapter 2 ................................................................................................................... 9
   Chapter 3 ................................................................................................................. 11
   Chapter 4 ................................................................................................................... 13
   Chapter 5 ................................................................................................................... 16
 Conclusion .................................................................................................................... 18

CHAPTER 1 ORIGINS OF THE MYTHS OF THE NATIVE: WRITING

THE INDIAN IN TRAVEL AND PHILOSOPHY ..................................................... 19

Introduction ................................................................................................................ 19
1. The Mythic Foundation of the Representation of the Amerindian:
   Giants Among Us, and the Myth of the Ignotle Savage ........................................... 22
2. Montaigne and the Myth of the Noble Savage ...................................................... 36
3. The Privative Mode .................................................................................................. 47
4. The Superlative Mode ............................................................................................. 57
 Conclusion .................................................................................................................... 73

CHAPTER 2 THE IGNOBLE AND NOBLE SAVAGE MYTHS:

OSCILLATION AND AMBIGUITY IN FRENCH TRAVEL

AND RELIGIOUS WRITING OF THE SEVENTEENTH
CENTURY..............................................................................................................75

Introduction...........................................................................................................75

1. Oscillation of the Armouchiquois in the Travel Writings of Samuel
   de Champlain ........................................................................................................78

2. Savage Ambiguity: Image of the Amerindian in Religious Texts
   in the Seventeenth Century ..................................................................................92

   Conclusion ............................................................................................................130

CHAPTER 3 THE ENLIGHTENMENT VISION OF THE NATIVE:

   REIFYING THE AMERINDIAN IN THE SIÈCLE DES LUMIÈRES ..........131

   Introduction .........................................................................................................131

   1. The Man of Nature and the Nature of Man: Mythic Ambiguity in
      Rousseau’s Discours sur l’inégalité ..................................................................134

   2. Oscillation in Voltaire’s Candide: The Oreillons and the Myth of
      Eldorado .........................................................................................................149

   3. The Science of Man and Buffon’s Systematizing of the Amerindian ..........179

   4. Protoethnographic and Protosociological Mythologies of the Native:
      Joseph-François Lafitau and Jean-Nicolas Démeunier .................................197

   Conclusion .........................................................................................................206

CHAPTER 4 THE MYTH OF THE VANISHING INDIAN:

   CHATEAUBRIAND’S LITHIC ROMANTICISM, THE FRENCH
   WESTERN NOVEL, AND THE SOCIOLOGY OF ÉMILE

   DURKHEIM ......................................................................................................208

   Introduction ......................................................................................................208
A MYTHIC JOURNEY OF GOING NATIVE.................................................................357

BIBLIOGRAPHY .................................................................................................366
Introduction: Mythic Representations of the Amerindian in French

1. Thesis

What happened? Europeans came and what happened? How could this genocide have happened? Why? Why does it continue to happen in the guise of settler colonialism throughout the western hemisphere? Although it may not seem a likely place to go looking for answers to questions about the horrifying consequences of contact between the Old World and the New World, I believe that literature can tell us something significant about just what did happen and what continues largely unchanged today. Texts that represent Native peoples inform European populations about what Amerindians and American geographies mean. Representations, and the epistemological choices inherent in narratives, greatly affect praxis. Taking this as a starting point, my inquiry leads me to discover that representations of the Amerindian from the period of the earliest contacts persistently shape French thinking (and writing) about the Amerindian. By examining texts from this early period and subsequent periods I seek to determine shifts in visions of the Native that nevertheless remain genealogically connected to earlier perspectives.

The dual mythic paradigms of the Noble and Ignoble Savage are the original binary epistemological and narrative technologies that French (European) writers and thinkers utilize in order to instrumentalize the mythic idea of the Native in (con)texts that engage with French readers to create meanings about French philosophical and existential questions. These modes are appropriative, reductive, and dehumanizing. The Noble Savage myth defines the Native as pure and innocent. This mythology idealizes and enfantalizes the Amerindian. Temporally, the Noble Savage paradigm typically situates the Indigenous peoples of the Americas in the past vis-à-vis the European. The mythology of the Ignoble Savage naturalizes an ontological difference of the Amerindian, placing him outside the normativity of European ontology. In short, the
Native is presented as non-human, animal or monster. Textually, the Ignoble Savage operates on two axes, physical and moral. Both the Noble Savage myth’s insistence on Native purity and innocence and the Ignoble Savage myth’s tendency to portray the Amerindian as animalistic lead to the correlative mythology that I refer to throughout the study as the nexus of Nature and Native, or the Ecological Savage. Nature, often the mutually exclusive binary opposite of Culture in Western Judeo-Christian epistemologies, is conflated with the Native in written accounts of the Amerindian. As natural resources are the primary source of wealth and capital accumulation which motivates the invasions of the Americas, a critical examination of the representation of Nature when that representation is enmeshed with epistemologies of the Amerindian is a recurring object of this study. Early writers entangle the Native with Nature, but as awareness of the ecological crisis grows in the twentieth century, this mythology shifts. The Ecological Savage is an appropriation of the (myth of the) Native as a source of environmental wisdom and ecologically-balanced lifeways. My analysis localizes the Ecological Savage as a correlate of the myth of Going Native (discussed below). The Noble Savage and Ignoble Savage mythologies evolve. In the nineteenth century the myth of the Vanishing Indian becomes a mythic lens through which French writers understand the Native.

Mythologies of the Vanishing Indian are genealogically linked to the Noble and Ignoble Savage myths which precede it. The persistent influence of these two original paradigms (and their correlate, the nexus of Nature and Native) does not wane. Rather, the Vanishing Indian myth constitutes a new articulation that further develops, but also echoes earlier perspectives on the Amerindian with which it shares features. The Vanishing Indian myth is primarily a development of the nineteenth century in French letters. Fraught with nostalgia and guilt, mythologies of the Vanishing Indian perpetuate a teleological image of the Amerindian as
extinct or nearly extinct, which coincides with military expansion of settler societies in the Americas. This performance of disappearing the Native textually precludes a viable future for the Indigenous peoples of the Americas within French epistemology. The final evolution of the original Noble Savage framework that I discuss is the emergence of narratives of Going Native in twentieth and twenty-first century French and Post-Imperialist Quebecois literatures.

The myth of Going Native is genealogically connected to the Vanishing Indian myth (and by extension to the earlier paradigms of the Noble and Ignoble Savage, and the nexus of Nature and Native) which continues to operate within the ideologies of Going Native, informing its particular creation of meaning around the idea of the Amerindian. Going Native mythologies (including the Ecological Savage) present the Amerindian as catalyst for the transformation or self-actualization of characters of European descent. Univocal and unilateral, French and Quebecois fantasies of Going Native reiterate the same appropriative epistemological techniques of the Noble Savage mythologies of the sixteenth century and beyond. Narratives of Going Native are often centered on representations of Native sexuality as a source of truth and liberation. I offer a queer critique of Going Native through the insights of Scott Lauria Morgensen’s Spaces Between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization. In addition to seeking Native knowledge via sexuality, environmentalist discourses appropriate myths of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas in ecologically-inflected representations of Going Native that include the Ecological Savage framework.

Thesis: This study demonstrates how mythic paradigms genealogically evolve from 1534 to 2001 in French and Post-Imperialist Quebecois representations of the Amerindian, elucidating

---

1 Or, in the case of Claude Lévi-Strauss’ Tristes tropiques, wherein an ethnographer performs a journey of Going Native to seek redemption and universal human truths understood as remedial for modern peoples.
inter textual and transdisciplinary mythologies in conversation in the genres of literature, travel writing, religious writing, philosophical texts, and scientific discourses.

This study represents a unique and novel approach by seeking to demystify myths of the Amerindian, integrating Native and Indigenous studies into the domains of French and Quebecois literary scholarship through settler and (post-)colonial and ecocritical perspectives. My research brings to light the influence of myth in the representation of the Amerindian, not only in texts that are traditionally labeled as “literature”, but also in scientific works which incorporate mythic understandings of the Native in order to produce scientific truth. Interdisciplinary and transhistorical, this study reveals the innerworkings of the creation of a collective French cultural imaginary that epistemologically naturalizes mythic conceptions of the Amerindian. Many non-European groups have a voice in Francophone Studies, yet the Amerindian does not. This study moves in a direction that aims at correcting that oversight in the North American academy. The genealogy of paradigms which correspond approximately to centuries in French and Post-Imperialist Quebecois literatures that I propose in this dissertation permit a deeper understanding of how narrative technologies define the other textually and contribute to violent practices politically. The critical analysis of this unique corpus in French and Quebecois literatures is a necessary first step that nonetheless allows one to understand how the same techniques and modes of thinking or writing continue to influence human relations today in many political theaters.

2. Research Question and Methodologies

My object in this study is to examine the representation of the Amerindian in French and Post-Imperialist Quebecois literatures. I will begin by delineating the parameters of the study and
defining how my research question takes shape in the dissertation. Temporally, the time period covered by my research begins in 1534 with Jacques Cartier’s first voyage to what would later become New France and Québec. The most recent text that I analyze is Rouge Brésil by Jean-Christophe Rufin, which won the Prix Goncourt in 2001. Therefore, I trace the evolution of the French (and Quebecois) vision of the Native over a span of four and a half centuries. Each chapter roughly correlates to a century, beginning with the sixteenth century in chapter 1 and ending with the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in chapter 5. Chapter 5 is the only chapter that includes an analysis of Post-Imperialist Quebecois literature, while the remainder of the thesis focuses on French works. It is necessary to define what I intend by literature in order to better understand my methodology and the choices that I have made concerning which texts to investigate. For this study, literature signifies nearly any written text in French. Therefore, I include traditional literary genres, but also examine travel writing, religious reports and correspondence, philosophical essays, and scientific writing.

I choose to employ this broad definition of literature, because discourses that may be sequestered in separate disciplinary domains in modern thinking (and in the academy) have not always been so cleanly categorized throughout the time period of the study. Discursive fluidity signifies that literary texts and récits de voyage can influence philosophical and scientific discourses, for example. In point of fact, my research confirms the ubiquity of this type of intertextual conversation between what might otherwise be considered distinct fields if taken from a twenty-first century academic perspective. By widening the net of my corpus, I am able to elucidate the interconnectivity of representational strategies and narrative technologies across generic lines. In addition to facilitating the recognition of these types of patterns, this approach also allows me to explore the creation and possible parameters of a collective French cultural
imaginary of the category Amerindian. In my analyses, I assume that through the advent of print media a collective semantics and semiology is created within the French (national) linguistic community. Through repetition and propagation, textual images of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas contribute to a specific, limited French epistemology of the Amerindian. The representations that are the object of this study serve to circumscribe the epistemological possibilities for envisioning and understanding Native ontologies. My broad definition of literature permits me to more fully grasp the ramifications of textual representations in the formation of the French cultural imaginary of the category Amerindian. In addition to the corpus, it is necessary to discuss the object of the representations I analyze, the Indigenous peoples of the Americas.

I choose to include a broad definition of Amerindian for the purposes of studying French (and Quebecois) representational techniques and paradigms. Any text that includes representations of the original inhabitants of the western hemisphere may be included in the study. From the earliest periods of contact, Europeans consider the inhabitants of the Americas as homogenous, in that they are non-European. The articulation of what Europeans often regard as an ontological difference is the focus of many of the representational strategies the French use when writing about the Native. The generalization of all the peoples of the Americas as indios by Columbus has unfortunately not been critically examined or revised to any great extent in Western popular culture. Therefore, it is necessary to form my corpus with the same generalities in mind, because they certainly shape French authors’ understandings of what constitutes an

---

2 My thinking here is influenced by the insights of Benedict Anderson in the monograph *Imagined Communities*, as well as Edward Said’s research in *Orientalism*.

3 It should be noted that any attempt at comprehensive coverage of such a vast corpus would be impossible and does not reflect the more limited nature of this study which seeks to designate general patterns by nonetheless exploring a wide variety of genres and historical periods.
Amerindian. A word on terminology: throughout this study I will employ Amerindian, Native, Indigenous peoples of the Americas, original inhabitants of the Americas (or western hemisphere) interchangeably. Whenever possible I use endonyms, but sometimes exonyms are used because of their ease of recognition. I refer to Native groups of Canada as First Nations in the fifth chapter which examines Post-Imperialist literature of Québec written in French. The same groups are referred to using the general terms above in earlier chapters because the term First Nations would be anachronistic. While it may seem self-evident, I will briefly touch upon what I understand by representation.

In its most general articulation, representation occurs whenever a French or Quebecois author writes about an Amerindian individual or group. However, in many of my analyses the presence of the Amerindian is not so clear. For example, when examining techniques of writing about Nature in the works of Jacques Cartier and Samuel de Champlain in the first chapter, I theorize a mode of discourse that I refer to as the superlative mode which is characterized by an abundant, at times suffocating, description of the natural environment. In the superlative mode, the author only represents the Native by silencing his presence in the landscape or by reducing it to marginality. To take another example, both Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Émile Durkheim theorize at length about the nature of primitive man (the state of nature in Rousseau’s philosophy) without consistently referencing specific groups. However, both instrumentalize representations of the Amerindian to exemplify their vision of primitiveness. Therefore, methodologically, I consider passages wherein Rousseau expounds on the state of nature as a representation of the Amerindian. I hope to dispel confusion by citing these particular instances which are redolent of the generalizing tendencies of Western epistemologies of the Native and of

---

4 An endonym is a name that a group uses to describe themselves. This is always preferable whenever possible, because exonyms, names given to groups by other groups, tend to be derogatory.
the appropriation of the *idea* of the Amerindian in French discourses. I will now explain what it is that I uncovered in my readings of such a compelling, and often disheartening, corpus.

3. Chapter Previews

*Chapter 1:*

The first chapter focuses on sixteenth century representations of the Amerindian. I establish how myth functions in written accounts of the Native in French through an explanation of the original mythic binary of the Noble and Ignoble Savage. Through an analysis of the reiteration of the tall tale of the Patagonian giants in André Thevet’s *Cosmographie universelle*, I demonstrate how mythic visions of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas frame French epistemologies of the category Amerindian. Thevet’s *Cosmographie universelle*, which itself claims to report knowledge, uses the legend of the Patagonian giants as a *framing* device to introduce the Americas to the reader. *Framing* circumscribes epistemological possibilities with regards to the Amerindian. Prescriptive and culturally-biased, the *framing* of Thevet’s discussion of the Americas with the Patagonian tall tale is indicative of the centrality of mythic visions of the Amerindian in French letters. In particular, Thevet’s Patagonian giants illustrate the dehumanizing and animalizing effects of mythologies of the Ignoble Savage. The Ignoble Savage presents the Native as outside of humanity from an ontological perspective. This paradigm situates the Amerindian as non-human animal or monster. Ignoble Savage narratives often dehumanize on the physical and/or moral levels. Next, I examine the opposite pole of the mythic binary, the idealized and appropriative Noble Savage myth in the essays “Des cannibales” and “Des coches” by Michel de Montaigne. In conjunction with the Ignoble Savage, the *bon sauvage*, or Noble Savage, is the most influential narrative technology and
epistemological framework for representing and understanding the Amerindian in the French cultural imaginary. The Noble Savage myth idealizes the Amerindian as representing a more original state of purity and innocence vis-à-vis (corrupt, decadent) European civilization. The Noble Savage in philosophical writing, such as Montaigne’s essays, is often instrumentalized in order to construct a critique of French or European society with little regard for living, breathing Native peoples. In the final sections of the chapter I discuss two discursive modes utilized by authors of the period to write about the Native and Nature. The privative mode is a descriptive mode that defines the Amerindian by that which he lacks as defined from a European perspective. The prototypical iteration is, “sans foi, sans loi, sans roi”. For many writers, Amerindian cultures are found to be lacking fundamental components of European society. This disparity leads to the hierarchical positioning of the Amerindian as inferior vis-à-vis the European which is exemplified by the narrative technology of the privative mode. The superlative mode, analyzed in the travel writing of Jacques Cartier and Samuel de Champlain, is a representational strategy that portrays the abundance of the American landscape while silencing, minimizing, or marginalizing the presence of living, breathing Natives on the land. Narratives that engage in the superlative mode juxtapose two elements of the western hemisphere that are irrevocably imbricated in the European epistemology of the period: Nature and Native. This narrative technology disappears the Amerindian, erasing his past, present, and future connection with the land. The disappearing performed in the superlative mode is echoed in the myth of the Vanishing Indian in my analysis in the fourth chapter.

**Chapter 2:**

In the second chapter I explore travel and religious texts of the seventeenth century that are primarily focused geographically on the French colonial venture in New France. In my
reading of these texts I introduce the theoretical concepts of *oscillation* and *ambiguity*. *Oscillation* is the term I use to designate the textual practice of presenting shifting images of Indigenous peoples to the reader. The most common instantiation of the technique involves a changing view of the Native, as exemplified in the first section’s discussion of the Armouchiquois in Champlain’s travel writing. They are first described by engaging in the myth of the Ignoble Savage. Champlain presents them as having monstrous, deformed bodies and thereby as morally depraved. Subsequently, after actual physical contact with the Armouchiquois, the author portrays them in the Noble Savage mythic paradigm. The second description is an idealized, Arcadian portrait of the agricultural society of the Armouchiquois. This change is what I refer to as *oscillation*. While similar, *ambiguity* denotes simultaneously engaging in positively and negatively-inflected representations of the Amerindian. *Ambiguity*, as the term suggests, remains vague and does not make the same distinctive judgments that characterize *oscillation*. Rather than presenting the Native as one, then another mythic variant, the narrative mode of *ambiguity* represents the Amerindian as possessing attributes of both mythic models simultaneously or concurrently. I explore a variety of religious writings associated with the establishment of New France in order to demonstrate how *ambiguity* functions in French letters. In the letters of Marie de l’Incarnation, the Ursuline mother superior who founded the Ursuline convent and school for Amerindian girls in Québec in 1639, the animalized images of innocence associated with reluctant neophytes (Noble Savage) are intermingled with panicked descriptions of the Iroquois threat to the fledgling colony (Ignoble Savage). The representation of the Amerindian in the writings of Marie de l’Incarnation illustrates mythic *ambiguity* in French letters of the seventeenth century. Both *oscillation* and

---

5 I examine the Jesuit Relations (in particular the writings of Jean de Brébeuf), the correspondence of the Ursuline Mother Superior Marie de l’Incarnation, and *L’histoire du Canada* by the Récollet friar Gabriel Sagard.
ambiguity are predicated on the mythic, because the shape-shifting, epistemological bending or deformation of the concept of the Native is central to both types of narration. Both narrative technologies continue to influence French writing on the Amerindian in subsequent periods.

**Chapter 3:**

In this chapter I examine eighteenth century discourses of the Enlightenment that engage with mythologies of the Native. I begin my discussion by signaling the practice of mythic ambiguity in Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Discours sur l’origine et les fondements de l’inégalité parmi les hommes*. After having situated the Amerindian as a central element in the development of the philosophe’s thinking about humanity, I demonstrate how the author associates contemporaneous Amerindian populations with his abstract conceptualizations of the state of nature. I deconstruct the major theses of the treatise, focusing on the paradoxes at the heart of Rousseau’s articulation of the state of nature and *l’homme sauvage*. I illustrate how elements of the myth of the Ignoble Savage occur in conjunction with the Noble Savage frame to create a narrative of mythic ambiguity. I conclude my discussion of Rousseau by signalling ways in which the author’s mythic representations of the Native participate in the genealogy of paradigms before and after Rousseau’s lifetime. Next, I investigate the practice of oscillation in Voltaire’s *Candide* by juxtaposing analyses of the animalized Oreillons, who are anthropophagous and are also represented as performing bestiality with primates (Ignoble Savage), and the author’s idealized utopic reiteration of the myth of Eldorado (Noble Savage). Representations of Native sexuality are important sites of truth in French writing. Practices that differ from accepted European normativities are *queered* and situated outside of humanity within the Ignoble Savage framework. In subsequent chapters, I develop my analysis of the centrality of Native sexuality as a vector for understanding the Amerindian in French literature, philosophy,
and scientific discourses. Voltaire’s depiction of Oreillons sexuality is mined from correspondence with the French scientist La Condamine. I introduce the concept of transferability in relation to this intertextuality in order to theorize how mythologies of the Native often cross discursive and generic lines. Furthering my discussion of transferability, I conclude the chapter by elucidating the mythic origins of representations of the Amerindian in scientific discourses, discourses which transform the assumptions of mythic paradigms of the Native, such as the Noble and Ignoble Savage, concretizing and naturalizing mythic images as scientific truth. My analysis explores the Histoire naturelle by the father of natural history Buffon, whose climate theory of biological variation is confounded by the very same mythic Patagonians that served as a framing device in Thevet’s Cosmographie universelle (discussed in the first chapter) when the author attempts to explain how the inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego, contiguous geographically to Patagonia, can produce small underdeveloped peoples. Foucault’s insights into the formation of the scientific discipline of Natural History in the Classical period, as articulated in The Order of Things, allows me to analyze the specific narrative technology employed by Buffon, what Foucault calls the “nomination of the visible”. Through the gaze and written ordering of the Amerindian as a specific human category with recognizable features Buffon transfers mythic meanings as established in French letters into scientific truth. In the fourth section, I delve into less familiar territory by interpreting the proto-ethnographic work, Mœurs des sauvages américains comparées aux mœurs des premiers temps (1724) by the Joseph-François Lafitau, a Jesuit who attempts to locate Amerindian origins in Greek and Christian traditions. In addition to his insistence on finding a Biblical connection as a vector to interpret the existence of the original inhabitants of the Americas, Lafitau seeks to create a discursive frame wherein the relatively more accepted (since the Renaissance) pagans of
Antiquity (primarily the Greco-Romans) are systematically linked via analogy and metaphor to the Amerindian, thereby establishing them as previous versions of current European peoples, theoretically and epistemologically opening up the road to their inclusion as human objects of proselytizing, with the goal being the eventual “improvement” and “salvation” of the Amerindian by transforming them through the praxis known as the mission civilisatrice into (nevertheless imperfect) copies of their White European models. I conclude by examining Jean-Nicolas Démeunier’s L’Esprit des usages et des coutumes des différens peuples, ou observations tirées des voyageurs et des historiens (1776) which offers a comparative model of primitive societies. Démeunier envisions the future of all peoples as teleologically adapting a European way of life. I locate the presence of nostalgia that is a prevalent feature of the subsequent development of the Vanishing Indian myth in the nineteenth century. The mythic origin of scientific discourses on the Amerindian in French is a theme that I continue to develop in the final two chapters of the study.

Chapter 4:

Nineteenth century images of the Amerindian, often articulated through the lens of the myth of the Vanishing Indian, are the object of inquiry of the fourth chapter of this study. I continue to explore how the original categories of Noble and Ignoble Savage are taken up and transformed in the works of one of the most influential early French romantic novelists, François-René de Chateaubriand. I introduce the concept of lithic romanticism as a theoretical matrix for better understanding the confluence of the Noble Savage myth and the Vanishing Indian myth in the author’s American texts. I assert that through nostalgic, guilt-ridden images that render the Native as lithic monument, the narrative strategy of lithic romanticism paradoxically erases Amerindian presence on the land, opening up the metaphoric, textual space
for its guilt-free appropriation by Europeans. Paradoxically, the *disappearing* of the Native is often accompanied by *monumentalization* in Chateaubriand’s writing. Using metaphors that consistently link the Amerindian to the architectural ruins of Antiquity (Greco-Roman and Egyptian metaphors predominate). The narrative technology of *monumentalization* presents the Native as extinct, present only as architectural ruin, not as living, breathing human being in American geographies. In conjunction with *monumentalization*, Chateaubraind’s *lithic romanticism* dehistoricizes the Native, uncoupling Amerindian culture and histories from the land with which they share an ontological connection. *Lithic romanticism* is a discursive mode that participates ideologically with the military expansion of settler states in the Americas during this period. The “emptying” of the land in Chateaubriand’s creates a metaphorical space for Euro-American invasion. In the second section, I examine a genre that is often ignored or relegated to the margins of scholarship within French and Francophone Studies, the French Western novel. Despite its supposed simplicity, the French Western is a space wherein cultural difference and conflict are resolved (if only apparently) through specific narrative technologies of representation that are important for understanding the evolution of the representation of the Amerindian in French letters and the *crystallization* of mythic significations of the Amerindian in the French cultural imaginary within the Vanishing Indian framework. It is through popular genre such as the French Western novel that meanings are created. My analysis references Benedict Anderson’s influential *Imagined Communities* as a valuable theoretical tool for understanding the propagation of Native mythologies in French literature and culture. I introduce the concept of *crystallization* to refer to the establishment of a lexicon of images and

---

6 I am referring specifically to French examples of the prototypically American genre of the Western novel, wherein “Cowboys” and “Indians” fight for ultimate control of the (American) West. Many French authors (Gabriel Ferry, Gustave Aimard, and Henri-Émile Chevalier will be the primary focus of my discussion) publish works that emulate the American genre in the second half of the nineteenth century.
representational techniques that allow authors to create authentic descriptions of the Native that are, in point of fact, reiterations of the mythologies that I have been discussing throughout the study. I link the French Western novel to the Vanishing Indian myth specifically. In addition, I introduce two typical stereotypes of the genre, elements of the crystallized lexicon of French representations of the Amerindian, the physical and emotional insensitivity of the Native, in order to demonstrate how narrative technologies participate in the dehumanization and disappearance of the Amerindian inherent in mythologies of the Vanishing Indian. I conclude the fourth chapter with an examination of one of the foundational articulations of sociology in Émile Durkheim’s *De la division du travail social*. My interpretation of the text zeroes in on the articulation of the central research question of the monograph and how the author instrumentalizes representations of Native sexuality in order to naturalize European superiority, both biologically and morally. I demonstrate how transferability functions in Durkheim’s text. Mythic images of the Native are critically linked to the truth claims made by the author. Supporting his argument with evidence taken from the hard science of biological racism of the late nineteenth century, Durkheim situates the site of ontological difference in what he refers to as primitive “sexual resemblance”. I examine the role of Native sexuality in Durkheim’s thinking by theorizing gender ambiguity via Scott Lauria Morgensen’s insights into *berdache* and the role of sexuality in modern European identity formation. While Durkheim does not directly reference *berdache* as a specially revered Native identity, the author’s articulation of Native sexuality utilizes the same narrative technologies as the more modern discourses targeted by Morgensen’s analysis. In particular, the “uniformity of sex, gender, sexuality, and indigeneity”

---

7 *Berdache* is a term that designates gender ambiguous, typically male homosexual, Indigenous individuals who were often conferred a certain social status associated with their sexuality. It was instrumentalized in anthropological discourses and in non-Native LGBTQ identity politics movements in the twentieth century in order to articulate universal truths about non-Natives and Natives alike. See Morgensen and chapters 4 and 5 of this study.
that the construction of berdache allows Westerners to claim, is precisely the way in which Durkheim employs Native sexualities in order to “represent principles of human nature and culture” (Morgensen 55). Not only does the father of sociology locate ontological difference in what he interprets as androgyny, but he utilizes that distinction as a founding site of scientific truth, namely European superiority over Indigenous peoples. I disentangle the rhetorical turns in De la division du travail social in order to reveal how the author’s discourse of scientific truth originates in the logics of the mythic paradigms of the Ignoble Savage and the Vanishing Indian.

Chapter 5:

In the final chapter I analyze twentieth and twenty-first century myths of Going Native in French literature and Post-Imperialist Quebecois literature. The myth of Going Native appropriates Noble Savage mythologies of the Native, instrumentalizing contact with Indigenous peoples of the Americas as catalyst for a transformative journey of self-actualization for characters or individuals of European descent. In narratives of Going Native, contact with the Amerindian allows non-Native characters to resolve identity crises and return to a more spiritually, ecologically, and sexually healthy lifestyle. First, I interpret rewritings of earlier mythic imaginations of the Native in Michel Tournier’s Vendredi, ou les limbes du Pacifique, a reboot of Defoe’s classic Robinson Crusoe, and Jean-Christophe Rufin’s Rouge Brésil, a historical novel that rethinks the France antarctique colonial expedition to coastal Brazil in the sixteenth century. I read these texts through the dual lens of an ecocritical and queer critique. Both authors single out differences between Native and non-Native ecological practices. As part of the mythology of Going Native, non-Native characters undergo apprenticeship with regards to the land. My analysis problematizes the facile association of the Amerindian with non-Native ecological “salvation”. I suggest that Tournier’s novel deconstructs the binaries of Western
epistemologies of the Native, but fails to transcend the identification of the problem by not providing a possible answer. Crusoe’s adventure of Going Native is ultimately a failed attempt to regain the purity so often linked to the Amerindian in the Western mind. In Rufin’s *Rouge Brésil*, the author directly cites extractive practices linked to the bourgeoning global capitalism of the sixteenth century associated with trade of brazilwood, deforestation, and the ecological limitations of the island ecosystem where Villegagnon elects to situate his camp. Rufin engages in the myth of the Ecological Savage, a paradigm that idealizes Amerindian ecological practices (in this way it is genealogically connected to the Noble Savage myth and narratives that emphasize the nexus of Nature and Native) while attempting to appropriate them as part of a discourse of Going Native more generally. In addition to ecocritical concerns, I analyze the androgonous character Colombe as a possible representation of *berdache* (see footnote 7) in a sexualized version of Going Native in Rufin’s novel. Colombe realizes sexual liberation through a gender ambiguous adoption of Native practices, such as nudity and warrior lifeways. Morgensen’s analyses vehicle my argument which situates Colombe’s transformation as problematic. In the next section, I widen the scope of this study by comparatively examining Post-Imperialist Quebecois texts: *Volkswagen Blues* by Jacques Poulin and *Le dernier été des Indiens* by Robert Lalonde. In both novels, mythic Native sexualities characterize the Amerindian characters as agents of change for the French-Canadian protagonists. I develop my thinking about Morgensen’s insights into *berdache* by employing it as the primary theoretical lens for understanding the mythology of Going Native in both French-Canadian novels. This sexualizing of the already well-established mythic literary *identity* of First Nations peoples is coupled with a particular iteration of the Going Native myth wherein Kanak and La Grande Sauterelle (the main Amerindian characters in the two novels, respectively) act as guides in order
to reveal crucial *truths* about the French-Canadian protagonists’ own identities. Through Morgensen’s theoretical insights of *berdache*, I offer deeper understandings of the connection between political discourses and literary narratives of Going Native in Post-Imperialist Quebecois literature.

**Conclusion:**

I conclude the study by exploring mythic Going Native in Claude Lévi-Strauss’ *Tristes tropiques*. I show how the author engages intertextually with the genealogy of mythologies of the Amerindian which constitutes the history which this dissertation traces. By presenting a text which subjectively attempts to reveal the personal motivations and ideological underpinnings of an ethnographic journey into the Amazonian rainforest of Brazil in search of *authentic*, *uncorrupted* Indigenous groups, Lévi-Strauss provides evidence for the inescapable influence of mythic paradigms for understanding the Native, even in discourses that seek to adhere to ideals of *scientific* objectivity.
Chapter 1

Origins of the Myths of the Native: Writing the Indian in Travel and Philosophy

Introduction

In the first chapter of this study I explore the mythic origins of the representation of the Amerindian in French literature. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the position of the Native in the collective French cultural imaginary, it is crucial to comprehend how myth, legend, and metaphor circumscribe French epistemology concerning the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. Representations of the Amerindian do not occur randomly, happening in a vacuum, without reference to intertextual and transhistorical influences. Each author does not independently conceive of the Indigenous of the Americas anew, in an archeological way. French visions of the Amerindian follow a historical, genealogical trajectory that can be traced and described. The origins of that historical trajectory emerge during the sixteenth century. This seminal period largely shapes and informs subsequent representations of the Native, up to and including French and Quebecois texts of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This study focuses on the evolution of the written representations of the Amerindian in French from 1534 to the present day. In this chapter, I concentrate on sixteenth century texts. Subsequent chapters cover roughly one century per chapter. In the final chapter, in addition to an examination of

---

8 In this dissertation, I will use Amerindian, Indigenous, and Native interchangeably to refer to the original inhabitants of the Americas. First Nations will be used specifically in the Canadian context (see chapter 5). Whenever possible I will refer to specific tribes.
9 Throughout this study I refer to literature in the broadest sense of the word. I include travel-writing, philosophical texts, religious reports, and scientific writing, as well as more traditional literary genres under the umbrella of this term.
10 I employ this term as Foucault does in *Archéologie du savoir*.
11 This is the date of Jacques Cartier’s first voyage to the Americas.
French literary examples of the twenty and twenty-first centuries, I include a comparative analysis of the representation of the Native in Quebecois literature.

Myth is the foundation of representations of the Amerindian throughout the period of this study. Beginning in the sixteenth century in French texts, the Native is mythologized. The mythological bent of the depiction of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas is part of a long tradition of mythologizing various Others in the literary traditions of the West\(^1\). In this chapter, I identify key mythic models employed by French authors to describe the Native, illustrating how these seminal mythic paradigms are constructed and enumerating possible epistemological consequences of these frameworks. In the first section, I introduce the topic by showing how legend and hyperbolic exaggerations frame André Thevet’s written account of the Amerindian. By citing the tale of the Patagonian giants as prologue to his discussion of the Native, Thevet engages in mythologizing the Amerindian as a means to situate the Native vis-à-vis the European. Thevet’s Patagonian giants are redolent of one of the most ubiquitous myths in the tradition that this dissertation explores: the Ignoble Savage. The myth of the Ignoble Savage often presents the Amerindian as violent, animalistic, and non-human. I conclude the first section by investigating the specific theme of cannibalism as a paragon of the trope of the Ignoble Savage. A complimentary mythology utilized by French authors to represent the Amerindian is the myth of the Noble Savage.

\(^1\) For discussions of the varied histories of the influence of myth in the representation of the Other, and the transhistorical links between representations of earlier barbarians with the representational tropes employed by authors to portray Amerindian peoples see Montaigne et le mythe du bon sauvage: de l’antiquité à Rousseau by Bernard Mouralis, The Myth of the Savage: and the Beginnings of French Colonialism in the Americas by Olive Dickason, The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present by Robert Berkhofer Jr., and Cannibals: the Discovery and Representation of the Cannibal from Columbus to Jules Verne by Frank Lestringant.
In the second section, I discuss the archetypes of the figure of the Noble Savage in French literature: the essays “Des cannibales” and “Des coches” by the philosopher Michel de Montaigne. Delineating the parameters of the mythic figure via an examination of Montaigne’s writing, my analysis positions the Noble Savage myth as a primary epistemological point of reference in the representational history of the Amerindian in French and Quebecois literature. Central assumptions of the Noble Savage paradigm persist in subsequent iterations of the Native in French letters, evolving into new systematized ways of writing about and envisioning the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. The Noble Savage morphs into the myths of the Vanishing Indian\footnote{The Vanishing Indian myth is discussed primarily in the fourth chapter. In the Vanishing Indian myth, Amerindian peoples are portrayed as nearing biological and cultural extinction. Authors relegate the Native to the past, as already extinct, in some iterations of the trope. Accompanying the extinction element is a romanticized nostalgia concerning the demise of the Native.} and Going Native\footnote{The Going Native myth is the focus of the fifth and final chapter of this study. In this figure, self-realization or philosophical transformation is catalyzed by contact with the Amerindian. However, many narratives of Going Native are unilateral (include only the inner thoughts and observations of characters of European descent). Ideas of the Native are instrumentalized in much the same way Montaigne uses them in the early stages of the mythic representation of the Native, to address French philosophical concerns rather than represent living, breathing Amerindians. Some Quebecois authors offer a different perspective of the Going Native myth, attempting to transcend the unilateral in French literature.}. In addition, the myth of the Ecological Savage\footnote{I define the myth of the Ecological Savage as a framework wherein Nature and Native are imbricated or conflated. The Ecological Savage image is a part of the original Noble Savage myth. As such, I do not consider it as evolving from the Noble Savage myth in a genealogical perspective. Rather, the Ecological Savage is a fundamental element of the representation of the Amerindian in French that permeates the history I am analyzing. I include discussions of the Ecological Savage throughout all five chapters of the study.} develops in parallel with the Noble Savage image. Understanding the elemental position of the Noble Savage myth is crucial for a deeper comprehension of the construction of the written image of the Amerindian in the French cultural imaginary. The formative binary of the Noble and Ignoble Savage endures throughout the period of this study as the principal epistemological vectors for French conceptions of the Native.
In the third and fourth sections, I discuss two critical discursive modes of writing about the Amerindian in early French texts, the privative\textsuperscript{16} and superlative\textsuperscript{17} modes. My analysis develops an understanding of the Noble and Ignoble Savage elements of these techniques. However, I also focus on the epistemological consequences of framing Amerindian peoples specifically. Through negative descriptions and exaggerated, stilted portrayals of the natural environment authors open up a metaphorical space that epistemologically justifies and invites the dispossession of Amerindian territories.

In this first chapter, I introduce the reader to the mythic representation of the Native in French letters. The paradigms discussed in this initial foray into the subject will continue to be complicated and problematized throughout the remainder of this dissertation. There are echoes of the mythologies explored in this chapter in modern stereotypes and preconceptions of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas today. Insights into the origins of epistemological categorizations of marginalized groups is critical for designing ways to move forward globally with reciprocity and respect. The historical lessons of the invasions of the Americas and their representational counterparts in the literatures of the West are pertinent today and must not be ignored or forgotten.

1. The Mythic Foundation of the Representation of the Amerindian: Giants Among Us, and the Myth of the Ignoble Savage

André Thevet’s \textit{Cosmographie universelle}, published in 1575, intends to convey, as the title suggests, the most accurate knowledge available of the known world to French readers.

\textsuperscript{16} The privative mode is a negative description that elaborates cultural and technological components judged as lacking in Amerindian societies. It can be positively or negatively inflected, as part of the Noble or Ignoble paradigms.

\textsuperscript{17} The superlative mode is a manifestation of the Ecological Indian myth. Authors portray the abundance of Nature, employing a superlative tone, while the presence of living, breathing Amerindians is obfuscated.
Thevet repeatedly insists on the work’s value, due in large part to his self-positioning, which situates himself vis-à-vis the reader as an expert eye-witness of the marvels he recounts. Much of the pith of what is described in the work is never actually seen by the royal cosmographer and collector of curiosities, however. The fourth and final section of the text treats the newly found lands to the West, known now to be continents and not island stops on the way to the riches of Asia: the Americas. Despite the fact that Thevet is harshly criticized by his contemporaries, and nearly every subsequent generation of readers, his is an invaluable text at the root of the French vision of the Amerindian\textsuperscript{18}. Thevet’s \textit{Les singularitez de la France antarctique} (1557) and the \textit{Cosmographie universelle} (1575) are some of the earliest examples of French textual representations of the original inhabitants of the Americas. As such, Thevet’s depictions of Natives are fundamental in the framing and circumscribing of what the Amerindian will come to signify in the French cultural imaginary.

Before entering into the details of the images that emerge in Thevet’s writing, I will turn my attention briefly to the structure of the \textit{Cosmographie universelle}’s section on the New World. Thevet never hesitates to inveigh against the ignorance of earlier writers, especially the \textit{cosmographes de cabinet}, who never condescend, as Thevet points out, to suffer the difficulties of long, dangerous sea voyages, so vital in his own expert first-hand experience. Therefore, it is striking that the self-appointed French authority on the planet’s geography and peoples begins his discussion of the Americas with a tall tale that he borrows from the Portuguese: the description of the land of the infamous Patagonian giants.

\textsuperscript{18} Throughout this study I will use the terms Amerindian, Native, original inhabitants of the Americas, Indigenous, and First Nations or Aboriginals (in the Canadian context) interchangeably. Although no generalized term fully satisfies, recognizable shortcuts are needed to ease comprehension. This study’s object is the representation of the Amerindian, which forcibly trades in falsity and the general, rarely examining the specific. Whenever possible, of course, I will employ the names of particular groups.
It is essential not to contaminate a reading of Thevet’s writing with modern sensibilities that would anachronistically point to the absurdity of such fables. The early texts on the New World were deeply influenced by the Middle Age fascination with the monstrous and fantastical. As Gilbert Chinard notes:

"Il y a en réalité une extrême confusion dans les esprits, comme dans la science, et il semble qu’il soit presque impossible à cette date de faire un départ nettement délimité entre les nouvelles acquisitions [les découvertes au Nouveau Monde] et les vieilles légendes" (L’exotisme américain dans la littérature française au XVIe siècle, 26).

This confusion is a key feature of Thevet’s (and others’) writings about the Americas. The ambiguity between legend and reality will continue to shape French representation of the Native throughout the remainder of this study. Thevet begins his exposition of the Americas with the description of an alien race of giants and monsters (who are actually quite civil and hospitable until mistreated and goaded by the Portuguese sailors). However, as the narrative continues to cover the areas of modern Brazil that Thevet does see during his American adventure, a completely different image of the humanity of the Tupinamba emerges alongside the wild chimeras of the literate French cultural imaginary.

The oscillation of the varying epistemological domains of imagination and what might be labeled more objective observations are ubiquitous in French representations of the Amerindian from the very beginning. Copying and plagiarizing descriptions of far-flung peoples that read like bigoted science-fiction in the 21st century, is just one of the many topoi that define the genre of European travel-writing that begins the literary representation of the Indian in the French tradition. Europe’s vision of the Amerindian, as it appears in both travel writing and fiction,
engages in the same narrative practices as those employed to depict other non-European groups.

In *La conquête de l’Amérique*, Todorov draws a connection between myth and genocide:

> Au début du seizième siècle les Indiens d’Amérique sont, eux, bien présents, mais on en ignore tout, même si, comme on peut s’y attendre, on projette sur les êtres nouvellement découverts des images et des idées concernant d’autres populations lointaines. La rencontre n’atteindra jamais plus une telle intensité, si c’est bien le mot qu’il faut employer : le seizième siècle aura vu se perpétrer le plus grand génocide de l’histoire de l’humanité (13).

Todorov parallels the mythic in epistemological wrangling with the newly discovered inhabitants of the Americas with genocidal violence. I would add that the mythic in representation, especially in literary contexts, perpetuates that same violence. While it is not the focus of this study, extremely destructive imperial violence accompanies many of the textual images that I will analyze. It is crucial for gaining a deeper understanding of the particularity of the representation of the Native to recognize the importance of the mythical apparatus. Myth is never absent in the images and stories that are written about the original inhabitants of the Americas. During the early contact period, comparisons with and reiterations of mythic paradigms utilized in written accounts of other peoples regularly appear. Even after great shifts such as the Enlightenment and the evolution of thought that would become what we now call Science over subsequent centuries, the mythological origins of the representation of the Amerindian have never been wholly eradicated by rationalism and positivism. The mythic is omnipresent in the history of the representation of the Amerindian in French letters. It is the object of this study to examine the mythic component of the representation of the Amerindian

---

19 Todorov goes even farther, claiming that the clash between Western and Amerindian epistemologies and its consequences constitute the event that foreshadows and founds modern identity in the world today (13).
and trace the evolution of that representation from 1534 to the present moment in French literature, and in the fifth chapter, in the Post-Imperialist literature of Quebec.

Symbolism and the creation of myth are pervasive in texts that describe the exploration of the New World. In the context of discovery, the imaginary can bring about real change. One could, after all, claim possession of enormous swathes of territory merely by landing on a beachhead and planting a cross in the ground. The only role that local peoples would have been expected to play would be to have the new status quo explained to them, in a language that they likely did not understand, that they were now the subjects of a distant sovereign. The authorial claims of eye-witness accounts and first-hand experience painstakingly attached to meticulously described locales were anything but anodyne. For, as Thevet explains at the beginning of the tall tale about the Patagonians, recalling the preceding section written about Europe, his mission is to write about:

…[l’]ensemble des animaux, oyseaux, poissons, herbes, arbres, fruits, racines & autres singularitez desquelles j’ay peu avoir connoissance, & tout ce qui a esté produit pour le seul regard de l’homme, par la disposition divine : subjettes aux puissances de Dieu afin de ne rien obmettre des benefices de nature : ensemble l’ordre du ciel, cours des Astres & signes qui nous donnent à cognoistre la situation des lieux, &disposition du temps advenir…” (Cosmographie universelle, 903).

Thevet’s written project mirrors the colonial enterprise: both are inherently extractive. Thevet’s extraction happens on the linguistic plane, as opposed for example, to the material extraction of Brazil wood from the coastal forests and islands that Villegagnon, the leader of the expedition that took Thevet to the New World, oversees. However, both acts of removal are

20 See the fifth chapter for more discussion of the environmental consequences of Villegagnon’s venture, as portrayed in Jean-Christophe Rufin’s Prix Goncourt-winning novel, Rouge Brésil.
complicit, reinforcing one another systematically throughout the period discussed in this study. The slippage that happens when what Thevet sees (imagines might be a closer approximation of the actual process of textual representation of the Native in this particular context) becomes language through the process of writing and is thereafter disseminated to the literate French community is an act of appropriation. This appropriation occurs in a textual space that is constructed and circumscribed in the mythic mode. The representation of the Amerindian relies on mythic paradigms. In the tale of the Patagonian giants that serves as overture, an early form of the Ignoble Savage casts the subsequent descriptions of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas as monstrous, inhuman, uncivilized, *mythic* beings. Rationalism and objectivity are not characteristic of this mode of representation. It is equally worth noting the listing involved in Thevet’s description of his project. The list primarily addresses the natural world and its resources. Understanding and inventorying the non-human animals, natural *productions*, and peoples of the Americas structure many texts of exploration during the 16th century. Thevet’s text is exemplary in the way that he dissects elements of the environment, separating them textually by subdividing them into distinct chapters. Compartmentalization is an important feature of Western civilization. It operates both epistemologically and *textually*.

The New World is transformed through the act of writing. It is wrested from the chaos of the unknown and made to fit within a defined space. It is assigned to a specific position in the ordering of the world. Written compartmentalization reinforces the ordering of the newly found lands. Michel Foucault explains this concept of order as it relates to the visual and the written:

Order is at one and the same time, that which is given in things as their inner law, the hidden network that determines the way they confront one another, and also that which has no existence except in the grid created by a glance, an examination, a language; and it is only in the blank
Where does the Amerindian fit into the worldview of the French at this early date of exploration? What position does the Amerindian fill in the grid of the French cultural imaginary? At the moment of creation through the act of writing how do the French understand the Amerindian? Firstly, as we have seen by the example of Thevet’s recounting of the legend of the Patagonian giants, the Native is mythologized. Thevet could well have begun the fourth section of his work by discussing the coastal groups around modern day Rio de Janeiro with whom he had direct experience, having observed them personally for several weeks. Yet, he chooses to begin with the legendary, with the supernatural. After one reads the comparatively more detailed descriptions that follow this preliminary episode, the Patagonians appear as even more extraterrestrial. In the sixteenth century, this juxtaposition of mythical and ethnographical elements is not problematic. It is conventional. The mythical coexists with(in) the real and the objective infiltrates the realm of legend. This is a crucial aspect of the representation of the Amerindian that persists well after the mindset that brings it into being is no longer viable epistemologically or esthetically. In this study, my aim is to trace the evolution of the mythic structures of representation of the Amerindian in French letters. Following the history of mythic systems of meaning in French and Quebecois literatures, this study constitutes a unique endeavor in French and Francophone Studies to date.

Secondly, as relates to the ethnographical descriptions of practices, customs, and morays that are a salient feature of most writings that contain descriptions of Indigenous peoples of the Americas at the time, the Amerindian is an object of inquiry, study, observation, writing, and, ultimately, exploitation and subjugation. The acts of observation and writing are transformative
gestures. The framing of the Amerindian in this early period of exploration and travel-writing continues to exert a profound influence on current views of what the Amerindian is at the moment of contact and thereafter. This vision, created through the representation of the Native in writing, is couched under the guise of objectivity and accuracy, proposing a very specific interpretation as truth.

Thirdly, and this is directly related to the second paradigm, as one can see by the list provided by Thevet in the quotation above, the Native is part of Nature. The Amerindian is implicitly equated with that ensemble which includes the birds, fishes, trees, etc. This is evident to the reader, because immediately after having constructed the list of what it is in his purview to describe; he starts the tale of the Patagonians. After describing his project as an inventoring of the natural world, the Native appears as paragon of Nature. Thevet does not include the peoples of Europe as a part of Nature. Thevet refers here to the previous section of the Cosmographie universelle, written about Europe. The European is part of the group for whom the world has been created, designated by that slippery substantive: l’homme. It is his regard, his personal visual observation, which sets the ontological and epistemological measure. The Native’s position in that epistemological order is inferior and exploitable on the same level as the other natural resources that Thevet describes at length in the section. This is not an instance of what we might be tempted to anachronistically label as racism. The equation of the Amerindian with Nature is a fundamental aspect of the French understanding of the Amerindian Other. The imbrication of Nature and Native is a central component of the mythic representation of the Amerindian in French letters. Throughout this study, we will encounter narrative techniques that speak about Nature and the Native peoples of the Americas, if not as a single epistemological
category, then as two elements whose epistemologies in the French cultural imaginary of the western hemisphere are inseparably linked in the French (and European) mind.

Thevet states, as an introduction to the Patagonian episode:

…il ne me reste à poursuivre que la quatrième partie de l’univers, laquelle je commenceray au pays le plus esloigné de nous, & duquel les anciens n’ont eu connaissance, pour n’en avoir fait la recerche” (Cosmographie universelle, 903).

The spatializing of the land of the Patagonians in the Antipodes, serves equally as a means to position the giants of the tale as the opposite of civilized Europeans. This binary construction wherein the European occupies the positive pole and the Amerindian the negative one was typical of the period (Lestringant, Cannibals, 29). Such an opposition may seem misplaced to the modern reader. Alongside descriptions of the Ignoble Savage are sudden volte-faces wherein Indigenous are described as behaving quite differently than one might expect.

After recounting the extreme precautions that the Portuguese take upon landing, fortifying their position with light artillery at the ready to safeguard against any aggression at the hands of the so-called Savages, the giants are curiously peaceful:

Cependant les Geans ne feirent aucun signe de leur rien demander : seulement prenoient plaisir à les contempler, & voir la contenance qu’ils tenoient, radoubans le vaisseau : puis faisoient signe de loing, avant que vouloir venir vers nos gens, pour leur apporter quelque chose de nouveau (Thevet, Cosmographie, 904).

In the linear reading of the text this creates an effect of surprise. First, we’re told that they are, “si monstrueux en grandeur, & qu’ils estoient plus barbares que tous les autres, pour n’avoir encor esté frequentez de personne”(Thevet, Cosmographie, 904). Suddenly, they don’t
conform at all to their terrible image. They contemplate the ship’s crew from a safe distance, happily observing, turning an inquisitive gaze back onto the explorers. Moreover, the polarity of the description of the Patagonian as Ignoble Savage is inversely related to the frequency of their contact with real people. ‘People’ refers exclusively to Europeans, because Europeans are the only cultural group traveling and exploring in this New World. Along with the binary functioning of Thevet’s discourse, a specifically hierarchized spectrum of savagery is simultaneously introduced. Thevet implies that those who have had extensive contact with ‘people’ (i.e. Europeans) are inherently less barbarous than those who have not. This concept of the perfectibility of the Native is a representation that persists in the literary history of the Amerindian Other. What one sees at this early stage in the history of the representation of the Amerindian in French letters is the adaptability of the Amerindian, if not as living, breathing human subject, then as representation, as figure, as literary object. This is, of course, what entails a *mythic* representation. The framing of the Native encompasses extremes, between which textual images of the Amerindian oscillate. The representation of the Native can take on a supernatural or superhuman dimension, as in the tale of the Patagonian giants. Thevet’s reiteration of the tale is very pertinent in the scope of this study, because it is a clear and distinct illustration of the mythic foundations of the textual representation of the Amerindian in the French literary tradition.

As I stated above, the fantastic and the realistic, or observational, are not clearly demarcated in the early modern period. It is somewhat unsurprising then that Thevet begins his discussion of the Americas with the tale of the Patagonian giants. However, for the purposes of my research, it is important to explicate how the Patagonian tale functions in the broader history

---

21 The Noble and Ignoble Savage myths are prime examples of the epistemological ambiguity that the Amerindian represents in French texts. I discuss the Noble Savage in more detail in the next section.
of the mythic representation of the Native in French letters. Methodologically, *framing* refers to the epistemological consequences of a particular representation for the reader. For example, reading the tale of the Patagonian giants that Thevet presents as an introduction to the Americas and its peoples, the French reader is solicited to envision the Amerindian in a specific way. The specificity of the depiction (the fact that the Patagonians are written as dehumanized, supernatural monsters) frames French understanding of Native peoples. The specificity of the Patagonian tale precludes other epistemological possibilities regarding what the category *Amerindian* can evoke in the French cultural imaginary of the Indigenous of the Americas. In this way, when the early modern French writer mythically represents the Amerindian (as Thevet clearly does here), it is essentially an act of circumscription. It is not merely descriptive, but also prescriptive.

   Myth goes beyond description; it calls for belief in a different way than a realistic portrayal of a phenomenon can. Much has been written about the appropriative acts of writing or looking at the Other in deconstructionist and postcolonial theoretical discourses. However, mythic representation has not been adequately analyzed with regards to the epistemological grappling with human difference that is the textual representation of the Other. The history and evolution of the mythic representation of the Amerindian Other offers an ideal object of analysis, because the French cultural imaginary of the Native resounds with fantasy and fear. The Indigenous is the unknown. The unknown carries along with it (whether one is reading a travel piece from the sixteenth century or a novel from the twenty-first) the seeds of curiosity and panic. It is through myth that French writers imbue the Amerindian with this capacity to conjure wonder or anxiety, consequences that emerge from the beginning of the history I will be tracing, in the tale of the Patagonian giants that opens André Thevet’s description of the New World. The
legend of the Patagonian giants frames the Native in the mythic mode. The particular mythic
mode that Thevet engages with is one of the most prevalent images of the Native in French (and
other European literary traditions): the Ignoble Savage. In short, the myth of the Ignoble Savage
presents the Native as violent and non-human. Throughout the period covered by this study the
Ignoble Savage trope is a ubiquitous representational technique employed by French authors
when writing about the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. In the sixteenth century, written
depictions of the Amerindian practice of anthropophagy, or cannibalism, is the cornerstone of the
Ignoble Savage myth.

Cannibalism is perhaps the most sensational aspect of Amerindian culture for French
readers of texts describing the New World. Lestringant posits that:

Cannibalism is not susceptible to rationalization, even on the basis of sentiments or attitudes as
firmly rooted in the aristocratic and popular mind as the thirst for vengeance and the code of
honour. There is always something left over: an unassimilable horror, a condensation of the
unspeakable which attracts the most lively repulsion (Cannibals, 70).

The shock value that Lestrigant is signaling is certainly present in Léry’s descriptions of
Amerindian women licking the drippings from the boucan, an especially graphic case of just
how gruesome the depictions of anthropophagy can be (364-5). Lestringant asserts that the
French do try to accommodate cannibalism within their own epistemological perspective through
the ideas of honor and vengeance. Thevet, speaking about Indigenous warfare, tells us:

…ils ne sont point desireux d’autre chose que de vengeance : & estiment celuy là poltron, & lache
de cœur, lequel ayant le dessus de son ennemy, le laisse aller sans se venger, & sans le massacrer
& manger, ainsi qu’ils font ordinairement (Cosmographie universelle tome second, 909).
In this excerpt, the act of anthropophagy is linked to the tradition of warfare. Warfare is one of the principal activities of Amerindian men. A means often employed to both portray men as noble and to simultaneously discredit them as indolent, Léry claims that, along with hunting and fishing, war and preparation for war are practically the sole activities that Indigenous men actively take part in (430). The honor and glory associated with warfare are central to Native constructions of gender-based roles within their cultures. The warrior is an archetype, an ideal against which Indian men are judged and measured. By rightly inserting cannibalism into warrior culture, Thevet is showing how anthropophagy constituted an integral part of male identity. This insistence on cannibalism as connected only with war is one way of mitigating the shock effect linked to this violent practice. Earlier writers often claim that Amerindians cannibalized one another merely to satisfy base physical requirements for sustenance. The association of anthropophagy with warrior culture humanizes the practice in no small degree by linking it to French aristocratic martial practices. The warrior culture in Amerindian societies is, after all, one of the constitutive elements of the Noble Savage trope. Vengeance is the other vector by which cannibalism is represented in the passage. Vengefulness is a character trait that many authors attribute to Amerindians. Along with stealing and hospitality, violence and generosity, ferocity and kindness, vengeance is a theme that recurs throughout the history of portrayals of the Amerindian in French in the Ignoble Savage mode. The Ignoble Savage, as typified in representations of cannibalism, is redolent of what Lestringant refers to as “unassimilable horror”. I will focus less on the tradition of the Ignoble Savage in my analyses in this dissertation. However, it is crucial to remark that the Ignoble and the Noble Savage are often used interchangeably and concurrently to describe specific Amerindian groups. Ambiguity and ambivalence abound in the literary tradition that I am describing. The act of categorization
present in an author’s decision to employ the Noble or Ignoble Savage myths is a commonality across centuries and genres in French literature. Thevet’s prelude to the Americas is typical of a particular Western mindset that lends itself to categorization and dissection.

The tale of the Patagonian giants is the opening scene of Thevet’s discussion of the Americas and their inhabitants. Framing epistemological possibilities of understanding the Native and establishing a mythic component in the representation of the Amerindian, Thevet’s Patagonian interlude also relegates him to the realm of Nature and its beasts. These early images’ will be reencountered in shifting forms and transformations in the chapters that follow. The hold that early writers’ first fascination at the New World has exhibited throughout literary history is remarkable. Wole Soyinka, though discussing European analyses of African drama, describes the mental process whereby the French attempt to understand (and to write about) the Native. He situates the mythic component of the representation of the Other as an outcropping of the “Platonic-Christian” vision of the European:

[It] is a recognisable Western cast of mind, a compartmentalising habit of thought which periodically selects aspects of human emotion, phenomenal observations, metaphysical intuitions and even scientific deductions and turns them into separatist myths (or ‘truths) sustained by a proliferating super-structure of presentation idioms, analogies and analytical modes. I have evolved a rather elaborate metaphor to describe it; appropriately it is not only mechanistic but represents a period technology which marked yet another phase of Western man’s comprehensive world-view (Soyinka 37).

In this study, the technologies of understanding signaled by Soyinka, the “presentational idioms” are the mythic figures22, “or ‘truths’” that the French (and other European writers)

---

22 The most significant ‘presentational idioms’, or myths, that will be discussed in this study are the Ignoble Savage myth, the Noble Savage myth, the Vanishing Indian myth, the Ecological Indian myth, and the Going Native myth.
systematically employ to categorize the Amerindian in specific ways, in keeping with the compartmentalist bent of the Western mind. The paradigms established in the written accounts of the early period of first contacts continue to influence the positioning of the Amerindian in the French cultural imaginary as a unique, polyvalent object of knowledge today. In the next section, I introduce perhaps the most important mythic paradigm in the French tradition, the Noble Savage myth as it appears in the writings of the philosopher Michel de Montaigne.

2. Montaigne and the Myth of the Noble Savage

One of the most recognized and critically examined images of the Amerindian in European texts is that of the Noble Savage, or *bon sauvage* in French. This particular iteration of the representation of the Indigenous of the Americas will be a recurring theme throughout this study. Tracing the entire history of this motif in French literature, however, is not possible here. Berkhofer Jr. can help us contextualize the trope; he tells us that:

As information about the inhabitants of the New World became better known in the Old, Native Americans entered the literary and imaginative works of European writers, particularly the French. In this way the American Indian became part of the *bon sauvage* or Noble Savage tradition so long an accompaniment of the Golden Age or paradisiacal mythology of Western civilization (73).

In this section, I examine the most famous example of the *bon sauvage* tradition in French letters of the sixteenth century: Michel de Montaigne. The two essays he devotes to the New World, “Des cannibales” and “Des coches”, center the discussion on the evolving rhetorical treatment that the Native would receive in the *Essais*. Before entering into that analysis, however, it is crucial to understand what the Amerindian might signify in Montaigne’s work. Much of the critical discussion that these essays have engendered has attempted to analyze
Montaigne’s positioning vis-à-vis the Amerindian. Efforts to ontologically define the relative importance of the Indigenous of the Americas to the overall project of the *Essais*, have led many critics to the conclusion that the Amerindian constitutes nothing more than a case study. In short, the Amerindian is simply a random object that represents the terrain on which Montaigne’s broader philosophical exercise and *essaying* of reason itself are played out. Describing the image of the Amerindian as Other in the writings of Montaigne, Todorov posits that “the other is only an instrument of self-knowledge” (“L’Etre et l’Autre”, 127, my emphasis). The arbitrariness and paradoxical nature of the representation of the Natives becomes glaringly apparent, because, “the other is in fact never apprehended, never known” (Todorov, “L’Etre et l’Autre”, 125). While not pure imagination, Montaigne’s knowledge of the New World has many sources (written, as well as oral, despite the author’s insistence to the contrary); Montaigne instrumentalizes the Amerindian in specific ways, emphasizing the Native’s virtue, for example. In this technique, the Amerindian depictions are a *means* to construct a textual space that allows Montaigne’s philosophical *ends* to become visible through form, but decidedly divorced from any real, tangible entanglement with the content they examine (De Lutri, “Montaigne on the Noble Savage: A Shift in Perspective,” 207-8). Similarly, Duval places the two chapters on the New World in the greater context of pedagogy, claiming that the essays that address the topic of the Amerindian play a specific role, “as working exercises, as kinetic tests of the reader’s judgment”, in Montaigne’s Book of the World (112). Furthermore, Defaux deemphasizes the centrality of the Amerindians by unequivocally defining their position as secondary to Montaigne’s purpose:

…ces sauvages fraîchement issus de la main des dieux sont loin d’épuiser toutes les significations possibles du chapitre [« Des cannibales »]. Ils participent en fait d’une stratégie et d’un projet beaucoup plus vastes, d’une intention et d’une question qui les englobent et qui, elles, constituent véritablement l’essentiel, la substance – Rabelais dirait la “substantificque moëlle” – de tout ce
que Montaigne cherche à nous communiquer dans ces pages… …Montaigne se préoccupe bien davantage de la “manièr e” que de la “matière” du dire, que ce qui semble l’attirer vers tel sujet plutôt que vers tel autre – ou encore, pour parler son langage, ce qui explique que tout sujet lui soit également bon -, c’est moins ce sujet en soi que la réflexion philosophique à laquelle il donne lieu (921).

Defaux insists on the non-centrality of the Amerindian question. This critical choice of obfuscation underscores and corresponds with the imaginary nature of the representation of the Noble Savage in French literature. Employing the pure, naïve Amerindian as counterpoint to the corrupt, decadent European will be traced in the chapters that come. Despite the philosophical context of the Noble Savage image, the fact remains that the surface-level representation of the Amerindian in Montaigne’s essays have a profound impact on the development of the myth of the Native in French literature for centuries to come. Whether one considers the Indian to be an interchangeable pawn in Montaigne’s brilliant game of rhetoric and reason, or not, the paradigm of the bon sauvage shapes the French cultural imaginary of the original inhabitants of the Americas in a fundamental way. “Des cannibales” is the more influential of the two essays, spurring “the sociological revolution [that] became a distinctive feature of French intellectual life” (Richman, 27). “Des coches” may be considered less influential, but it is in this essay that Montaigne makes his most convincing points about a truly reciprocal, humanitarian vision of the Amerindian. Additionally, “Des coches” shows the evolution of Montaigne’s philosophy of the Native. The second essay highlights examples of Amerindian culture and society that aim at a more material exposition of their equality (artisanal skills and architecture). Therefore, “Des coches” can be seen as demonstrating in a much clearer way the importance of the Amerindian as philosophical object, rather than contemplative abstraction. I begin my analysis of the

---

23 Notable examples include the analysis of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s ‘state of nature’ in chapter 3 and my discussion of lithic romanticism in the American works of Chateaubriand in chapter 4.
articulation of the *bon sauvage* with the key concept of Native purity vis-à-vis European perversion. In the following passage, taken from the essay “Des cannibales”, Montaigne illustrates the privative mode\(^{24}\) of description:

> C’est une nation, dirais-je à Platon, en laquelle il n’y a aucune espèce de trafic ; nulle connaissance de lettres ; nulle science de nombres ; nul nom de magistrat, ni de supériorité politique ; nul usage de service, de richesse, ou de pauvreté ; nuls contrats ; nulles successions ; nuls partages ; nulles occupations, qu’oisives ; nul respect de parenté, que commun ; nuls vêtements ; nulle agriculture ; nul métal nul usage de vin ou de blé. Les paroles mêmes, qui signifient le mensonge, la trahison, la dissimulation, l’avarice, l’envie, la détruction, le pardon inouïes (320).

While the privative mode is typically wholly negative in its evaluation of the societal attributes of Native groups, deeming the Indian incapable of the superior achievements of true civilization, Montaigne’s privative description is innovative. As De Lutri has rightly surmised, “Des cannibales” has traditionally been read as a manifestation of the device of inversion (“Montaigne’s “Des cannibales”: Invention/Experience,” 77). This technique of reversal is at play in Montaigne’s iteration of the privative mode, wherein the very things the Amerindians lack are coded as negative, turning the unfavorable into an advantage. In keeping with the linguistic bent of the essay in general, the semantics of the terms *barbare* and *sauvage* largely shape Montaigne’s argument, the privileged site of the Tupinamba’s lexicon is where the inversion is most radical. The Amerindians lack terms for, “*le mensonge, la trahison, la dissimulation, l’avarice, l’envie, la détruction*” (Montaigne, 320). Of course, these lacunae are coded as positive in Montaigne’s text. Not having recourse to the words to describe these vices

\(^{24}\) The privative mode is comprised of a negative description, often a list of elements considered redolent of civilized society that are purportedly lacking in Amerindian society. The privative mode will be discussed in greater detail in the next section.
and indicators of moral decay, the lexical privative mode seeks to establish the Amerindian as radically pure and moral.

In the literary world of the *Essais*, the absence of the linguistic tools to conceive of immorality is an extreme device employed by Montaigne. Its nature is polyphonic. The Noble Savage myth speaks simultaneously about the Amerindian and the European, perhaps saying more about the latter than the former. It is polysemous, equally presenting an elegiac discourse in regard to the Tupinamba and a derisory one vis-à-vis the author’s European peers. In short, herein lies the crux of the myth of the Noble Savage, the *bon sauvage*: it is a comparative model that permits criticism of the author’s society while deflecting some of the consequences of a forthright critique by the transference of the message via the vehicle of the Amerindian Other, all in the guise of objectivity. Many critics, such as De Lutri and Defaux, have claimed that Montaigne is not concerned in the least with objective description, though the author does take some pains to create the illusion of adhering to the principle when discussing the opposition between his humble witness and published *récits de voyage*:

> Cet homme que j’avais, était homme simple et grossier, qui est une condition propre à rendre véritable témoignage : Car les fines gens remarquent bien plus curieusement, et plus de choses, mais ils les glosent ; et pour faire valoir leur interprétation, et la persuader, ils ne se peuvent garder d’alterer un peu l’Histoire” (317, my emphasis).

We know that despite his condemnation of the written sources, especially in the case of the royal cosmographer Thevet, Montaigne relies on the texts of Léry, Thevet, and the Spaniard Gomara to write “Des cannibales” (317, Boudou in Montaigne, 312-3). Therefore, Montaigne’s claim that his sources are pure of defect can be read as a thinly veiled admission that such purity doesn’t exist, even in the author himself, as Montaigne lies by volition not omission here. Could
this questioning of purity at the very source of Montaigne’s attempts to validate his discourse be a hint at the constructed, and therefore artificial, nature of the Noble Savage myth itself? It is quite possibly so.

As with the linguistic elements of the privative mode discussed above, lexical aspects of the representation of the Amerindian are central to Montaigne’s argument. Starting with Pyrrhus’ observation regarding the Roman army (notably the allusion to the Greek etymology of barbarian), Montaigne explicitly links the Amerindian to the Roman by concluding, “qu’il n’y a rien de barbare et de sauvage en cette nation [les Tupinambas], à ce qu’on m’a rapporté : sinon que chacun appelle barbarie, ce qui n’est pas de son usage” (318). Positioning the civilization of the Tupinamba in parallel with Roman civilization, Montaigne ostensibly hinges his own conclusions on his source, the lowly sailor who recounts his Brazilian adventures to the author, “à ce qu’on m’a rapporté”. The comparative model of the Amerindian as a contemporaneous reference to Greco-Roman Antiquity is an epistemological framework that will inform the representation of the Indigenous populations of the Americas throughout the time period of this study. Time and again, most notably in the comparative proto-ethnographical work of Lafitau in the eighteenth century, the Native is relegated to the hallowed world (especially for Montaigne) of Antiquity. In the Renaissance, when an historical understanding of what we now refer to as the Dark Ages began to emerge, Antiquity is associated with the Golden Age as alluded to in Berkhofer Jr.’s quote at the beginning of this section. Purity is linked to Antiquity in the Renaissance mind. Despite the virulent sectarian religious strife that characterizes the period, most scholars share a reverence for the pagan thinkers of the Greco-Roman tradition. Interestingly, this tolerance is theoretical and would likely not be extended to living, breathing Amerindians, as proselytization is the handmaiden of conquest and colonialism. Therefore, the
disconnect between theory and practice makes itself evident. One can philosophically admire what one objectively subjugates and dispossesses. Lip service to the idea of respect can accompany atrocity.

The rhetorical placement of the Amerindian within the temporal realm of Antiquity shapes the outcomes of contact between European and western hemisphere Indigenous in important ways. Firstly, it is not, in the end, a necessary mark of respect to be equated with the ancient civilizations of the Mediterranean. Certainly for Montaigne, whose texts are liberally peppered with allusions to the texts of the Ancients and the philosophy of the Stoics, there is a veneer of homage inherent in such a comparison. Some critics have cast doubt, however, on Montaigne’s sincerity, in “Des cannibales” in particular, with regards to his lavish praise of the Tupinamba. This is most clearly evidenced by the final quip of the Rouen meeting: the missing pants of the Amerindians. More importantly, the equivalency between Native of the Americas and Roman is only a comparison of rhetorical consequence, not one that implies true equality. While Montaigne goes to great lengths to insist upon the innocence and purity of the Tupinamba, he does not list the typical monumental societal achievements that are a part of his own nostalgic understanding of the Roman Empire. The comparison only claims equality between the two groups in a specific way. The nostalgic vision of Rome and its now defunct greatness forever lost in the annals and archives is the real opposite number of the Tupinamba barbarian-Roman barbarian juxtaposition. In short, the Tupinamba object is frozen in a past that never measures up to or reaches the plenitude of the present moment that the European subject occupies. Montaigne does make efforts to present architectural prowess on par with Antiquity in “Des coches”, specifically in his discussion of the sculptural garden of the Peruvian king and the impressive Inca royal road between Quito and Cuzco, however the temporality remains fixed in

42
the past (1424, 1431). The Inca examples are predicated on the fact that the Inca will no longer be able to create anything of this order again. The Amerindian as creator, as contemporaneous actor is sterilized and frozen. A fundamental monumentality is present in the examples presented by Montaigne in the essay. For my purposes here, it is important to note the emergence of a certain temporality that is associated with the Amerindian from the beginning of the representation of this group in French letters. The temporal is also closely associated with the moralistic in Montaigne’s portrayal of the original inhabitants of the Americas in comparison to the corrupted societies of the Old World, who inhabit a different temporal domain (i.e. the present moment, the moment of diegesis).

In “Des coches” Montaigne clearly explains how the temporal dimension functions in his philosophical understanding of the two cultural groups. His discourse takes the metaphorical shape of a description of an individual’s personal timeline. Life stages are the imagery employed to visualize and philosophize his overarching ideas of purity and corruption vis-à-vis the New and Old Worlds. The New World is coded as child:

Notre monde vient d’en trouver un autre (et qui nous répond si c’est le dernier de ses frères, puisque les Démons, les Sibylles, et nous, avons ignoré cettui-ci jusqu’à cette heure ?) non moins grand, plein, et membru, que lui : toutefois si nouveau et si enfant, qu’on lui apprend encore son a, b, c : Il n’y a pas cinquante ans, qu’il ne savait, ni lettres, ni poids, ni mesure, ni vêtements, ni blés, ni vignes. Il était encore tout nu, au giron, et ne vivait que des moyens de sa mère nourrice (Montaigne 1423).

25 Lithic monumentality, or what I refer to as lithic romanticism, in the American works of Chateaubriand is analyzed in the fourth chapter. The presence of a fixed temporality in Montaigne’s work, although the image is often associated with later movements (linked to the Vanishing Indian myth) demonstrates the oscillation that can occur between distinct mythic paradigms in the history of the representation of the Amerindian in French letters.
The infantilization of the Amerindian, a common feature in the representation of the Native in French, takes a different direction here in contradistinction to Montaigne’s overall portrayal of the innocence of the Indian. The privative mode makes another appearance, but it is not the innovative reversal of the previous example discussed above, wherein what the Amerindian lacks are precisely the negative components of European civilization. Here, the privative mode takes its original form and is truly negative. The negative is most readily evident in the culinary examples of wheat and wine. French readers might find it difficult to admire a breadless, wineless world. The Noble Savage myth, as well as many other mythic paradigms discussed in this study, is prone to what I will refer to as oscillation. Oscillation is the tendency of the images used by French authors to shift from positive to negative, negative to positive, and even from a more objective discourse to a mythological one. Within Montaigne’s articulation of the Noble Savage in the essays “On Cannibals” and “On Coaches”, there is an oscillation between privative mode descriptions that are positively-inflected (the excerpt wherein the philosopher signals the lack of vice and economic inequality in Native societies) and those that are negatively-inflected (such as the example above that focuses on positive aspects of European culture judged to be missing in Indigenous cultures).26

One of the most ubiquitous representational models employed in descriptions of the Amerindian throughout literary history is the amalgamation and conflation of Nature and the Native in the French imaginary of the Indigenous of the Americas. The particular form that the

26 A similar oscillation occurs in the Jesuit Relations, which alternate between positive and negative images of the ancestors of the First Nations peoples (see chapter 2). Rousseau’s ‘state of nature’ represents another example of oscillation. The ‘state of nature’ is both violent and idyllic (see chapter 3). The use of oscillation as a technique in the representation of the Amerindian in French and Quebecois contexts underscores the mythic component of the tradition. Oscillation mythologizes because it presents the Native as shapeshifter. This capability to take on an attribute and its opposite transcends typical human experience. The Amerindian becomes a multifunctional rhetorical tool that can be instrumentalized in any number of ways depending on the exigencies of a particular text.
Native-Nature nexus takes in this example is the suckling infant (Amerindian) and the nurturing mother (Nature). In conjunction with the rudimentary level of development that the privative mode of this passage suggests, a specific relationship with Nature is privileged in the imagery Montaigne chooses to employ in this passage. Far from more modern conceptions of the idealized, deeply knowledgeable symbiosis associated with the Indigenous in relation to the environment, Montaigne proposes a hierarchical relationship of dependence. The defenseless newborn ("tout nu, au giron") is the metaphorical characterization of the Indigenous. Agency and understanding are precluded. The intimate store of information about the plants and animals that the Amerindian possesses about the world they inhabit is silenced. Epistemologically, Montaigne defines civilization as inherently capable of manipulating Nature. Couched within the author’s praise of Native innocence is a naturalization of French agricultural and economic praxis. Within the apparently positive portrayal of the Noble Savage is a hierarchy that inevitably situates the Amerindian as inferior, as incapable of acting on/in the world as the European can. In another passage from “Des cannibales” Montaigne depicts the Native as lacking agency:

*Ils ne sont pas en débat de la conquête de nouvelles terres : car ils jouissent encore de cette uberté naturelle, qui les fournit sans travail et sans peine, de toutes choses nécessaires, en telle abondance, qu’ils n’ont que faire d’agrandir leurs limites. Ils sont encore en cet heureux point, de ne désirer qu’autant que leurs nécessités naturelles leur ordonnent : tout ce qui est au-delà, est superflu pour eux* (Montaigne 326).

The abundance of natural productions implies an elementary level of interaction with the natural world, and, by extension, an elementary, infantile level of cultural achievement. Montaigne’s Noble Savage resembles the gatherer of anthropology’s hunter-gatherer society

---

27 Throughout my readings of the enormous corpus that was the object of this study, I was struck by the relevance of aspects of representations of the Amerindian that were passed over in ‘silence’. What is not said can often be as significant as actual, textual images.
definitions. Everything that one could possibly need (“uberté naturelle”) is there for the taking (“sans travail et sans peine”). Silenced in such simple formulations are the elaborate systems of knowledge developed over generations that the Indigenous employ to navigate their environments and thrive there. Rather than constituting an open, humanistic vision of the Native, Montaigne privileges Western economic archetypes. Surface-level nostalgia concerning an ‘earlier stage of development’ that does not entail the same necessary desires does not imply that Montaigne has any intention to return to Nature, or that he espouses Going Native28. If one unwittingly obfuscates the extensive know-how required as to what, where, and when to gather resources and how to process plant materials after having acquired them, an even larger, more significant omission (that Montaigne mentions obliquely later when discussing the Tupinamba versions of bread and beer, derived from manioc root) is the existence of agriculture. The depiction of Nature as superabundant and facile and the representation of the Amerindian as living in a state of childlike dependency on this bounty are reductive. Denying the history of the independent development of agriculture in the Americas is one way that the Noble Savage myth supports epistemological, evolutionary hierarchies that mark the Amerindian as inferior.

The presupposed superiority of the European and the ineluctable exploitation of the natural resources of the Americas is an intrinsic part of the discursive formation wherein the trope of the Noble Savage is most influentially articulated in French literature in the 16th century, in the essays “Des cannibales” and “Des coches” by Michel de Montaigne. The identity of the Amerindian in these texts is coterminous with the natural environment. According to Montaigne’s mythology, exploitation of Nature erodes purity, the defining characteristic of the

28 The fantasy of a return to Nature, or its identity-related correlate the Going Native myth are later manifestations of the Noble Savage myth in both French and Quebecois literature. I discuss the Going Native myth in the chapter 5 of this dissertation.
bon sauvage metaphor. This concept of contagion is equally present in the section of “Des coches” that contains Montaigne’s most direct exposition of his linear, teleological understanding of the history and evolution of human civilizations. The essayist tells us that, “Bien crains-je que nous aurons très fort hâté sa déclinaison [Amerindian society] et sa ruine, par notre contagion: et que nous lui aurons bien cher vendu nos opinions et nos arts” (Montaigne 1424). Military conquest and representation are reciprocal. In the history of the invasions of the Americas, the innocence and simplicity of the Native incites the violent excesses that make up that difficult chronicle. This corruption or destruction of the Amerindian is not merely a historical fact, but also a defining feature of the bon sauvage representational technique that will become such an important epistemological strategy for categorizing and conceiving of the Indigenous of the Americas in the centuries to come. The Noble Savage myth is a starting point in the history of the representation of the Amerindian in French and Quebecois literature. Originating at virtually the same time as the Ignoble Savage (exemplified above by Thevet’s Patagonian giants, described as violent and non-human), the foundational trope of the bon sauvage evolves, morphing into new forms. In the coming chapters, I will trace the genealogy of the primary legend of the Noble Savage myth as it transforms into the myths of the Vanishing Indian, the Ecological Indian, and Going Native.

3. The Privative Mode

When Europeans come face to face with the Indigenous populations of the Americas, the mythical stories of Antiquity are a decidedly more literary and, strangely to a modern reader, a more scientific or historical model for interpretation. The most striking comparison is not,

---

29 I borrow the label for this particular metaphorical technique from the journal article “L’Etre et l’Autre: Montaigne” by Tzvetan Todorov.
however, with the images of monstrous beings that are purported to inhabit the Antipodes. The most readily available vector of analysis of the Native is certainly the cultural, religious, and political practices and norms of High Renaissance Europe. For most writers, Amerindian cultures are found to be lacking fundamental components of European society. This disparity leads to the hierarchical positioning of the Amerindian as inferior vis-à-vis the European. This perspective brings about the establishment of the privative mode of description as a means to describe the peoples of the New World. Rather than a portrayal of positive characteristics, the privative mode is constructed of negative features. This rapidly becomes a topos, primarily in the Spanish tradition. “Using the twin criteria of Christianity and “civilization”, 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” (Berkhofer Jr. 10).30

André Thevet is quick to fall in line with this already dominant form of representation. He tells us that the Tupinamba Indians are:

…gens merveilleusement estranges et sauvages, sans foy, sans loy, sans religion, sans civilité
aucune, mais vivans comme bestes irraisonnables, ainsi que nature les a produits, mangeans
racines, demeurans toujours nuds tant hommes que femmes, jusques à tant, peut estre, qu’ils
seront hantez des Chrestiens, dont ils pourront peu à peu despouiller ceste brutalité, pour vestir
d’une façon plus civile et plus humaine” (Thevet, Les singularitez, 134-5).

This privative definition of the Amerindian can be shocking for today’s reader. However, this is not merely an example of what one might be tempted to call ethnocentrism (which can be loosely defined here as considering one’s own cultural morays as superior to others). The

30 A cursory comparison of this ‘Spanish’ articulation immediately recalls Montaigne’s iteration of the privative mode discussed in the last section. It is important to note the inherent translatability and intertextuality of the mythic in European literary history with regards to the representation of the Amerindian. Authors often copy and repeat images found in other texts, thereby perpetuating a particular epistemology.
privative mode goes beyond ethnocentrism, because the European observer is unable to even recognize the humanity of the Native (‘bestes irraisonnables’). This representation of the Amerindian is radically exclusionary. Despite possible critiques that one can raise regarding Thevet’s recounting of the Patagonian giants tale, Thevet does have some first-hand experience with the Tupinamba of the bay of Rio de Janeiro in modern Brazil. In the construction of his narrative, this citation comes at the moment the expedition has landed and is in contact with the local population for the first time. One mustn’t forget that the act of writing, however, takes place after a period of living in close proximity with this particular group of Amerindians. Thevet’s text appears at a considerable temporal remove from the occurrence of the actual events. Analyzing the privative mode, not as a hackneyed image thrown in by way of convention, but as a personal observation and conclusion after long experience with a people (or non-people, as it were), sheds an entirely different light on the meaning of such a description. What exactly are the Tupinamba lacking?

Traditionally, the privative mode of the representation of the Amerindian is composed of three elements that conveniently rhyme in French: “sans foi, sans loi, sans roi”. One has to wonder if the neatly packaged esthetic attraction of the formulation had something to do with its promulgation and perseverance. At any rate, it is this basic prototype that Thevet invokes here, simultaneously adding some diverse components. Religion is always an important feature of the privative representation, as noted by Berkhofer Jr. above. Thevet was a Catholic friar and an almoner of Catherine de Medici (Cardozo, 15). His perspective is not informed only by the traditions of the Roman faith, however. The devastatingly contentious religious wars about to erupt in France are clear evidence of the central position of theological matters in European life and thinking during this period. The internecine divisions within Christendom led to what would
be called today civil war in France shortly after the failure of the France Antarctic project in Brazil. This contextualizing serves to point out that even another “Christian” of the Reformed faith, such as the Huguenot, Jean de Léry who would arrive later as part of Villegagnon’s colonial venture, would be doomed to an eternity in hellfire to the thinking of Thevet. Given this reality, the Amerindian’s spirituality is understood as nonexistent, because wholly unassimilable to any form of religion recognized as such in the Christian worldview of the period. One is left with the impression, however, that our author has a rather short memory, when reading Les singularitez de la France antarctique, because on the page that follows the negative portrayal quoted above begins a chapter titled ‘De la Religion des Ameriques’ wherein Thevet expounds at length on the beliefs of the Tupinamba (as he does in the Cosmographie universelle, as well). Inconsistencies and contradictions abound in Thevet’s writing and are recognized and censured during the author’s own lifetime. Not only is his denial of the existence of any discernable religion in Tupinamba society quickly countermanded by a lengthy exposition of their cosmogony, but many of the other privative accusations Thevet attaches to their culture are subsequently put into question by Thevet’s own attempts to understand and record what he sees in this strange New World (Assaf 247). Despite the limited understanding and acceptance that the privative descriptions in Thevet’s writing seem to advocate, one cannot neglect the necessary epistemological underpinnings of any European author’s inevitably unsuccessful efforts to assimilate the Amerindian through writing. Francis Assaf characterizes the evolution of Thevet’s writing in Les Singularitez de la France antarctique from the privative to the assimilationist as a narrative strategy that seeks to minimize alterity (250). He further posits that the structural divisions of the text (short chapters that take on different aspects of Native life separately, as well as chapters that describe distinctive features of the flora and fauna specifically) can be
metaphorically linked to a form of literary cannibalism, in itself an extreme example of assimilation, wherein the dissected elements of Amerindian culture and the Brazilian environment become easier to swallow than the overwhelmingly totalizing experience that contact with the Amerindian evokes (Assaf 252). Only after the Amerindian has been presented as a non-entity (the privative mode), however, does Thevet proceed to positively construct a representation of the Native through the lenses of a Catholic (pseudo)scientist, or savant.

It is not exclusively Catholics that view the spiritual practices of the Amerindian as lacking. A French Calvinist, the Huguenot, Jean de Léry, pens one of the most popular accounts of France’s Brazilian colonial adventure, *Histoire d’un voyage faict en la terre du Brésil* (1578). It is a valuable document for the purposes of the study of the representation of the Amerindian. Appearing nearly two decades after the failure and destruction of *la France antarctique*, Léry’s text claims to rectify fundamental errors and mistruths present in Thevet’s writings on the subject of Brazil and its inhabitants. Léry explains that in order to “repousser ces impostures de Thevet, j’ay esté comme contraint de mettre en lumiere tout le discours de nostre voyage” (63). Léry then proceeds by inserting quotations of Thevet’s texts and roundly refuting them, basing his authority to do so, as Thevet did, by positioning himself as an eye-witness expert. Lauded for his open-mindedness, Léry has been considered by some (including the father of structural anthropology, Claude Lévi-Strauss) as a sixteenth century example of an ethnographer avant la lettre (Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes tropiques*, 90). Despite the combative stance of Léry vis-à-vis Thevet and the former’s efforts to distance himself from the latter, he uses Thevet’s published accounts as source materials for his own work, also imitating Thevet in many ways (Lestringant, *Cannibals*, 68). Critiquing while simultaneously copying preceding authors are strange, but often common, bedfellows in the genre of travel literature of the Renaissance. It is a salient feature of
Thevet’s writings, as well. Léry does not offer a fresh perspective on the question of religion where the Tupinamba are concerned. He follows suit with Thevet, readily engaging in the privative mode. Léry tells us that:

…selon qu’il sera veu en ceste histoire, au regard de ce qu’on nomme Religion parmi les autres peuples, il se peut dire tout ouvertement que, non seulement ces pauvres sauvages n’en ont point, mais qu’aussi s’il y a nation qui soit et vive sans Dieu au monde, ce sont vraiment eux (92).

Léry’s negative judgment of the Tupinamba on the point of religion goes even farther than Thevet’s. Léry singles out the Amerindian in comparison to ‘les autres peuples’. These non-Europeans and non-Christians (Léry makes reference here to all the non-Christians known to Europe before the discovery of the Americas), are deemed to exercise at least some form of religion that could be recognized as such. Therefore, Léry is capable of a certain level of theological relativism, but it stops short, however, of including the Amerindian. Calvinistic ideals of predestination and the elect nature of salvation are likely an important influence on Léry’s estimation of the Tupinamba’s ‘lack of a’ spiritual life. The expression ‘sans Dieu’ nearly implies willful abandonment by God, which certainly would be interpreted by the strict Protestant sect as a sign of the irredeemable nature of the naked Indigenous. As for the question of laws, the second component in the privative triptych of ‘sans foi, sans loi, sans roi’, is addressed most directly by Montaigne, who pays less attention to the religion of the Amerindian in his writings on the subject.

In his famous essay “Des Cannibales”, Montaigne provides one of the most comprehensive and extensive examples of a description of the Amerindian in the privative mode. Lamenting the fact that the great philosophers of Antiquity missed the opportunity to be
confronted with what Montaigne designates as living examples of their theories regarding the primary nature of man, he states:

C’est une nation, dirais-je à Platon, en laquelle il n’y a aucune espèce de trafic ; nulle connaissance de lettres ; nulle science de nombres ; nul nom de magistrat, ni de supériorité politique ; nul usage de service, de richesse, ou de pauvreté ; nuls contrats ; nulles successions ; nuls partages ; nulles occupations, qu’oisives ; nul respect de parenté, que commun ; nuls vêtements ; nulle agriculture ; nul métal nul usage de vin ou de blé. Les paroles mêmes, qui signifient le mensonge, la trahison, la dissimulation, l’avarice, l’envie, la détraction, le pardon inouïes (320).

Many of the elements that Montaigne focuses his attention on are related to what one may broadly consider under the umbrella of law (loi). The term cannot be reduced to matters of jurisprudence solely, but must be considered in a much wider perspective. We might use the term rules or structures today to better encompass what ‘sans loi’ meant as part of the privative trio ‘sans foi, sans loi, sans roi’. The more strictly legal instantiations are ‘nul nom de magistrat’, ‘nuls contrats’, with their connotative extensions in the realm of property, such as ‘nulles successions, nuls partages’. Montaigne chooses to present what could be called a positive version of the negative description, a positive iteration of the privative mode. Not all of the lacunae that Montaigne singles out in the Amerindian culture are things that a Frenchman would necessarily miss, such as the constraints associated with the legal system on one’s individual freedoms, or economic inequality. Positive and negative aspects of the privative are juxtaposed in the conspicuous absence in Native society of ‘richesse’ next to ‘pauvreté’. While one may, of course, aspire at least to the possibility of acquiring wealth, one would be spared the specter of misery, hunger, and indigence that hang over much of European society of the period. While a lack of any knowledge of letters and numbers would resoundingly be marked down on the
negative side for Montaigne, a renowned lover of his *librairie*, the freedom of having ‘*nulles occupations, qu’oisives*’ would be a paradisiacal fantasy to most Frenchmen of the day.

One of the most striking characteristics of Montaigne’s prolix negative list is the topos of *linguistic* inferiority associated with Amerindian languages. Apart from the obvious technological gap that would account for Amerindian lexicons’ want of certain terms that would have been commonplace in many European languages, Amerindian languages are often condemned for lacking complex and abstract concepts. In its typical form, this example of the privative is inflected exclusively as a negative and deemed undeniable evidence of the Amerindian’s inferiority and ignorance vis-à-vis the more linguistically endowed European. Montaigne’s focus is on the ethical or moral rather than the abstract here, however. Through the technique of inversion, which has been an important theoretical framework for understanding “Des Cannibales” as a whole, Montaigne transforms the disadvantage into a philosophical golden age portrait of a society deprived of vice (De Lutri, Invention/Experience, 77). ‘*Le mensonge, la trahison, la dissimulation, l’avarice, l’envie, la détrection*’ are all sins at the root of human economic strife and competition. The ironic inclusion of ‘*pardon*’ as the last element in the list of lexical absences is positive, as well. The innocence of the Amerindian implies that he has done nothing for which he might conceivably need to ask forgiveness.

In keeping with the modus operandi of inversion that underpins Montaigne’s rhetorical stance in “Des Cannibales”, the lack of ‘*supériorité politique*’ is not inflected explicitly toward either the positive or negative end of the spectrum. Here we have a direct reference to the third component of the traditional privative formulation ‘*sans foi, sans loi, sans roi*’. Any surface reading of the essay, however, can lead one to the interpretation that the entire system (or lack thereof) is contingent on the lack of political authority invested in any one individual or group.
The author mentions three commentaries by Amerindians in France in the essay. A pragmatic egalitarian outlook is the clear emphasis of two out of the three comments (the third one suspiciously forgotten by Montaigne). The philosopher records the two remembered statements toward the end of “Des Cannibales”. Presented as true, this passage is supposedly based on the long conversation Montaigne has with visitors from Brazil in Rouen in 1550. The second item the Natives question is the appalling disparity in France between the few abundantly wealthy members of society and the masses of the destitute, but I focus here on the first Indigenous criticism of the French quoted by Montaigne, as it relates to monarchical rule and politics (Montaigne, 332-3). This is a privileged moment in the essay. The voice of the Amerindian is finally heard. Or is it? Can we assert with any level of certainty that we are not simply hearing the omnipresent voice of Montaigne once again? Could this be merely an act of authorial ventriloquism, instrumentalization, and appropriation of the idea of the Amerindian? At any rate, the first thing that the Natives consider most ‘admirable’ is that they find it “fort étrange, que tant de grands hommes portant barbe, forts et armés, qui étaient autour du Roi (il est vraisemblable qu’ils parlaient des Suisses de sa garde) se soumissent à obéir à un enfant” (Montaigne, 332). The obvious conclusion: the soldiers could (and, perhaps, should) kill the prepubescent king at any moment. Paradoxically, how would the kingless (sans roi) Amerindians who have no experience with any form of ‘superiorité politique’, be in any position to make such a remark. The possible consequences of these remarks about the ridiculous nature of the French monarchy, according to Montaigne, comments allegedly made in the very presence of Charles IX himself, force them to be couched in the mouth of the Tupinamba, but the subterfuge is not very convincing. Montaigne’s appropriation of the Amerindian as philosophical fodder is a tempting vector of analysis here. Rather than a long description of the Amerindian in the privative mode,
perhaps we are faced with a long description of what an ideal (European) society should reject. Tzvetan Todorov seriously questions Montaigne’s good faith by asking, “Where does this enumeration of negative traits come from, since it obviously cannot have been provided by observation? Could it come from the analysis of our own society?” (L’Etre et l’Autre, 122). Even though Montaigne’s list may be partially based upon Thevet and Léry’s texts (which he certainly read), Todorov denies the possibility that these negative descriptions could be anchored in reality (Boudou in Montaigne, 312-3). He frames them as pure flights of fancy in the mythical mode, concluding that, “Montaigne follows in fact a rhetorical topos: the golden age is traditionally evoked in negative terms, precisely because it is only the reverse description of our reality” (Todorov, L’Etre et l’Autre, 122). This would certainly be in keeping with the overarching narrative strategy of inversion that characterizes the essay globally. It is important to note that the related acts of appropriation and instrumentalization are integral to the mythic paradigms that frame literary representations of the Native in French.

In examining the privative mode, I have shown how the early writers of the Amerindian in French subscribe to a prevalent narrative tactic in order to describe, and perhaps attempt to assimilate, the Native. The examples I have chosen are among the most well-known texts that include depictions of the Amerindian in sixteenth century French letters. Additionally, I have focused the reader’s attention on the triad that is a typical formulation of the Amerindian’s lack of ‘true, human’ culture: ‘sans foi, sans loi, sans roi’. There are many other examples that I could have explored; lack of clothing is one privative aspect of Native societies that is

31 I define ‘appropriation’ as the willful decision of an author to present his written accounts or descriptions of the Amerindian as authentic, valid, or true as part of a Eurocentric philosophical questioning or esthetics.
32 I define ‘instrumentalization’ as an author’s use of the myths and preconceptions to advance his own philosophical arguments or to vehicle texts in specific ways, such as the Going Native myth discussed in the final chapter of this study.
sensational to many European readers. Culinary differences are another locus of privative discourse. Particularly the staples of wine and bread are deeply missed by French travelers. Moreover, also in the realm of food and eating, the silence that many Amerindians observe at mealtimes, typically an opportunity for conversation and conviviality in the European context, is a practice that Europeans find curious and antisocial. Overall, the privative mode purports to describe, yet tends to circumscribe. The privative mode limits and shapes the possibilities of interpretation of the Amerindian. In the examples I have discussed, we find that the Native is positioned in the extremes of animal-like inhumanity (Thevet’s ‘bestes irraisonnables’) or idealized innocence (Montaigne’s Noble Savage of the Golden Age). In both instances the middle ground of humanity and reality, the space the French author himself occupies and from which he writes, is restricted to a European subjectivity alone. Whether portrayed as angel or monster, the privative representation of the Amerindian ensures that he is not the image of Man.

As Robert Berkhofer Jr. states:

As with images of other races and minorities, the essence of the White image of the Indian has been the definition of Native Americans in fact and fancy as a separate and single other. Whether evaluated as noble or ignoble, whether seen as exotic or degraded, the Indian as an image was always alien to the White (xv).

4. The Superlative Mode

Context is essential when analyzing any written work, but especially texts of this early period which claim a certain truth value, such as travel accounts. When explorers Jacques Cartier and Samuel de Champlain write about the world they are discovering along the Atlantic coast, up the St. Lawrence River valley, and elsewhere in the interior of North America, the ideology of colonization and exploitation is a defining feature of the texts they produce. Writing this New
World is not simply what one might call today an objective recording of first-hand observations. For both Cartier and Champlain, their continued support, (whether from the monarchy or from the various trade companies that funded expeditions and colonial infrastructure in the region that would eventually become New France), depends on reports that paint the chances of the economic success of their endeavors in a favorable light. The justification of future expeditions and spending to continue and strengthen the effort to establish and exploit the colony is one of the main *raisons d’être* of the texts penned by these purported founding fathers of Canada.

The political and economic tensions that underwrite these works are further complicated by personal considerations of prestige and reputation. One must not underestimate the authority of the writer. The explorer is in a privileged position, allowing him to silence failures and inflate successes. It would be self-destructive folly to do anything but take full advantage of the authority of the discoverer *en place* vis-à-vis their superiors at home in France. Given these two factors, the macro-dimension of political economy and the micro-considerations of personal grandeur, the text becomes conflated with the author himself in a way that is not typical of works of fiction. The truth value of the text is commensurate with the estimation of the value of the colonial project embodied by the very person of the author. These are defining characteristics of the *récits de voyage* written by Cartier and Champlain. Rather than a clear image of the New World, the image is twisted and deformed by these contextualizing aspects. One of the recurring forms that this phenomenon takes is what I call the superlative mode.

The superlative mode is a representative technique that juxtaposes two elements of the western hemisphere that are irrevocably imbricated in the European epistemology of the period:

---

33 I chose the ‘superlative mode’ as a label in contradistinction to the privative mode discussed in the previous section and because of the exaggerated nature of the descriptions that engage in this narrative technique.
Nature and Native. The dovetailing of these two elements is typical of early modern travel writing in French. Thevet and Léry’s texts are structured and divided by the concepts of Nature and Native, for example. The superlative mode is characterized fundamentally by a laudatory depiction of the natural world, often employing (but not exclusively) hyperbole, exaggeration, and prolix lists of species of flora and fauna. The superlative mode can occur independently from any explicit textual allusion to the Amerindian inhabitants of the landscape under discussion. In this instantiation, the superlative mode assumes implicitly the absence of the Amerindian, giving the impression of empty land by silencing the existence of the Native. This narrative technology disappears the Amerindian, erasing his past, present, and future connection with the land. The examples most readily illustrative of the figure combine the superlative portrayal of Nature and a privative description of the Amerindian that often engages with the myth of the Ignoble Savage, however.

This articulation of the relationship between Nature and the Native will be examined throughout this study, evolving in specific ways in conjunction with political changes and literary movements, the Amerindian’s relationship to Nature is a fundamental way in which French writers appropriate the Native in order to instrumentalize him in European discourses about Man and Nature, society and progress, or morality and ethics. To illustrate the superlative mode in the writings of Cartier and Champlain, I turn now to some examples of this narrative technique. The first passage, taken from Cartier’s travelogues, recounts a trading exchange, also including a description of the coastal region nearby. The second example is a detailed portrait of

---

34 In this way, the superlative mode foreshadows the *disappearing* of the Native which characterizes the prevailing mythology of the nineteenth century concerning the Amerindian, the myth of the Vanishing Indian. See the first two sections of chapter 4 for a detailed analysis of this paradigm.
a landscape taken from Champlain’s account of an expedition to an archipelago of coastal islands.

On one of his shore explorations during the first voyage, Cartier encounters a group of Amerindian traders eager to establish contact and procure European goods for their pelts. A commonplace encounter of the period, the following passage typifies the superlative mode, wherein the abundance of the land is juxtaposed with the Native inhabitants. The Indigenous are written in a particular way that places them outside of the bounty of Nature, however. Though the citation is lengthy, it is necessary, in order to analyze the double image of Land and Native, to examine the entirety of Cartier’s description of both.

Et voyons une partie des femmes qui ne passèrent, lesquelles étoient jusques aux genoux dans la mer, sautans et chantans. Les autres qui avoient passé là où étions venoient privément à nous frottans leurs bras avec leur mains, et après les haussoient vers le ciel, sautans et rendans plusieurs signes de rejoyissance, et tellement s’assurèrent avec nous qu’enfin ils trafiquoient de main à main de tout ce qu’ils avoient, en sorte qu’il ne leur resta autre chose que le corps tout nud, par ce qu’ils donnèrent tout ce qu’ils avoient, qui étoit chose de peu de valeur. Nous connusmes que cette gent se pourroit aisément convertir à notre Foy. Ils vont de lieu en autre, vivans de la pêche. Leur païs est plus chaud que n’est l’Espagne, et le plus beau qu’il est possible de voir, tout egal et uni, et n’y a lieu si petit où n’y ait des arbres, combien que ce soient sablons, et où il n’y ait du froment sauvage, qui a l’épic comme le seigle, et le grain comme de l’avoine, et des pois aussi épais comme s’ils y avoient semés et cultivés, du raisin blanc et rouge avec la fleur blanche dessus, des fraises, mures, roses rouges et blanches, et autres fleurs de plaisante, douce et agréable odeur. Aussi il y a là beaucoup de belles prairies, et bonnes herbes et lacs, où il y a grande abondance de Saumons (Cartier, Voyages, 15-6).

The women in the description are a spectacle of joy and desire. The dancing and jumping in the ocean is a performance orchestrated especially for the French ("privément"). The French
are drawn in to trade with the Amerindians by this display (“tellement s’assurèrent avec nous”). The women are portrayed in the text as sirens of a sort, singing the ship to shore, seducing the wary Frenchmen to do business with their people. This gendering of the exchange as feminine, with the concurrent sexual metaphor that shapes the writing of the incident, is significant. The ease of exploiting the naïveté of the Amerindian in bartering is not so subtly echoed by the image of the ‘easy’ women that beseech the French to land. Once the trading has begun, the Amerindians quickly give over all they have (“tout ce qu’ils avoient”). Here the privative mode is in full force. Trading away all of one’s possessions to the extreme point of nudity constitutes a privative description. The Native is depicted as lacking the fundamental attributes of reason or common sense. Decency, modesty, and reserve are also absent in the trading scene, nudity being visual proof of immorality. The mistake they make in trading away all of their belongings is further denigrated by Cartier as he denounces the whole lot as “chose de peu de valeur”. Cartier concludes his remarks on the Amerindians he meets that day by pronouncing that they would be ‘easy’ converts to the Christian faith. Coming as it does after the exchange that leads to their nudity and the judgment that everything the Amerindians owned is worth next to nothing, the statement that they would be quick converts reads like another insult. As the final piece of evidence of their inferiority, this is the privative mode par excellence. How could Cartier know they would be easily converted to Christianity? Because he deems them so inferior that they will clearly have no other choice but to blindly accept the Frenchmen’s superiority and their religion, as well. This is the negative description of the Amerindian group that Cartier encounters on the shore of the Baie de Chaleur. Once Cartier has painted this rather unflattering portrait of the Native, he turns his eye to Nature.
The contrast is immediately evident. The land where these Amerindians of ‘peu de valeur’ are discovered is breathtakingly beautiful. The superlative mode employs many techniques. The grammatical superlative is one common feature, wherefrom I derive the name. Not only is the land warmer than Spain (Cartier visits in the summer, prompting the humorous appellation of Baie de Chaleur to designate a region that is quite cold throughout most of the year), but it is “le plus beau [pays] qu’il est possible de voir”. It is the most beautiful place one could ever possibly hope to see and it is all the same, equally awe-inspiring, no part of the landscape being less desirable than another. From this point onward in Cartier’s description, the technique is one of accumulation or listing. The superlative mode is often characterized by lists of flora and fauna. The natural abundance is particularly dense in this excerpt. Every square inch of soil is filled with trees. They cover the land like grains of sand on a beach (“n’y a lieu si petit où n’y ait des arbres, combien que ce soient sablons”). The effect is sharpened by the addition of the copious presence of other plants. There is “froment sauvage” which Cartier describes as having the stem of barley and the grain of oats (transforming the ‘wild’ into something known through comparison to familiar European crops). Our author’s characterization of peas reiterates the image of a landscape blanketed with vegetation. The peas are so thick that they appear to have been planted and cultivated rather than being ‘sauvage’\(^\text{35}\). Strawberries, blackberries, and grapes of two different varieties round out the comestible portion of the list, positioning the land in a certain familiarity, as well, as these crops are typically grown in France. As if this veritable cornucopia of edibles is not enough, there are also roses (again of two kinds) and other flowers providing olfactory stimulation to round out the idyllic picture of the area’s flora. For modern

\(^{35}\) It is a common for French travel texts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that include descriptions of the area that would eventually become New France to include the judgment that plants appear to have been planted in an organized way, as in agriculture. The First Nations peoples of the area did engage in agriculture. The French did not always recognize the connection between the Indigenous and the plants they observed, however.
readers accustomed to being able to purchase produce from all over the world at their neighborhood supermarket, grocery store, co-op, or farmer’s market, this extensive list may seem banal. However, in the sixteenth century (and at most other times in most other places) the ability to get food is not so ubiquitous. Read in a Europe racked by periodic famine and harvest shortfalls, this list represents a lavishness that can confidently be characterized as extraordinary. The cumulative aspect of the list is buttressed by the repetition of the conjunction “et”, which is repeated no less than ten times in the final two sentences where the superlative mode completely takes over. As an addendum that reads like an afterthought, Cartier includes paradoxical grassy meadows that are flanked by salmon-filled lakes.

Juxtaposing the privative mode and the superlative mode, this passage illustrates one of the prevailing representations of the Amerindian in early travel writing. An implicit comparison is happening here. The Amerindian is written as impoverished and depraved. The privative mode is redolent of the myth of the Ignoble Savage. The Ignoble Savage myth often frames the Native as animalistic and acultural. Cartier’s negative assessment goes so far that even the evaluation of being easily convertible appears as opprobrium. Simultaneously, Nature abounds in incredible fecundity. The superabundance of plant life creates a stifling and exclusionary effect. The focus on the dizzying number of species and the way they cover all the available space (excepting the grassy meadows already discussed, whose very emptiness also rejects human activity) serves to obfuscate the presence of the Amerindian. Cartier’s description of the landscape employing the superlative mode leaves no room that the Indigenous can occupy. In fact, according to the author, they don’t really live there at all. Instead, they move from place to place surviving on fishing ("Ils vont de lieu en autre, vivans de la pêche"), an endeavor relegated to liminal spaces, narrow strips of shoreline, thereby opening up the vast interior to European exploration and possession.
This minimalizing of the Native and maximizing of Nature invites exploitation. The implication is that there are wonderfully productive lands that are being wasted on horribly unproductive people. While one can certainly read the description as a propagandistic exaggeration meant in part to offset the lack of precious metals that Cartier does not find on his voyages, the superlative mode is at the same time a representational foundation or precursor for the physical displacement of the Amerindian. The Amerindian’s presence being slighted and undermined in Cartier’s writing foreshadows the ever-advancing frontier of the settler state and the actual supplanting of the Amerindian in the imperial and post-imperial period. Representations shape reality, and can, in part, determine actual modes of praxis. Narrative is inherently ideological. When one group represents another, images are informed by hierarchical power structures. The dominance of the European is expressed throughout by the very act of writing about the Amerindian, most simply because the Amerindian did not write in a recognized European fashion. Here, the representation of the Amerindian in the French imaginary can be seen to lead directly to a certain praxis that will continue for centuries to come: European natural resource extraction and profiteering dominating (and often terminating completely) proprietary claims and land-use rights for Amerindians. The desires linked to exploration, and later to empire, are unconsciously expressed in this passage. In Culture and Imperialism, Edward Saïd states that:

…the power even in casual conversation to represent what is beyond metropolitan borders derives from the power of an imperial society, and that power takes the discursive form of a reshaping or reordering of “raw” or primitive data into the local conventions of European narrative (99).

36 Informative analyses of typical Amerindian writing systems can be found in Les Sauvages Américains: Representations of Native Americans in French and English Colonial Literature by Gordon M. Sayer (pp. 179-217) and in 1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus by Charles C. Mann (pp. 393-402).
The superlative mode orders space and situates the Amerindian outside that space, functioning thereby as an overt imperialist discourse. Many examples of the superlative mode do not contain an explicit comparative structure that simultaneously employs the privative mode like the one just discussed. The texts relating Cartier’s first two voyages to the New World are peppered throughout with allusions to the unparalleled beauty and utility of the land (Voyages, 5, 7, 15, 27, 34, 54, 55). However, these descriptions are often autonomous utterances, not accompanied by any explicit mention of the Amerindian. This is not surprising. The total absence of the Amerindian is an even more effective narrative strategy than a privative/superlative combination. It permits Cartier to present the world he is discovering as empty and free, a concept foreign and alluring in the extreme in an early modern French context wherein feudal institutions that held land in the white-knuckle grip of the nobility and clergy are only just beginning to transition into the global networks of burgeoning capitalism.

One particular example of the superlative mode demonstrates the self-aggrandizing that is a typical feature of Cartier’s texts. After establishing communication with the crew of a fishing vessel from La Rochelle bobbing nearby in the North Atlantic, Cartier tells us:

Nous nous accostames d’eux, et nous mîmes ensemble en un autre port, qui est plus vers Ouest, environ une lieuë plus outre que le susdit fleuve de Saint Jacques, lequel j’estime être un des meilleurs ports du monde, et fut appelé le Port de Jacques Quartier (Voyages, 5).

Engaging in one of the explorer’s most characteristic practices, naming, Cartier exemplifies the conflation of author and propagandistic mission that I mentioned above. That is to say, by naming one of the most beautiful ports in the world after himself (superlative mode) Cartier attempts to ensure that any royal reader, for example, will conflate the marvels that the
author depicts with his very person, thereby making it that much more likely that he will be awarded the captaincy of another voyage.37

This representation (or lack thereof) of the Amerindian is distinct from the one analyzed in the preceding example. In that passage, the Amerindian’s presence in the land is minimized and systematically obviated through the techniques of the privative mode and the presentation of an exclusionary bounty of plant life. Here, Cartier, who is just passing by, claims the area for himself and France through the act of christening. This further reinforces my analysis of the imperial ideological framework of writing and, more specifically, naming (itself a form of geographical or topographical writing directly related to and constitutive of cartography). Superseding any local geographical epistemologies or etymologies, summarily dehistoricizing a place he does not have time to fully comprehend, Cartier erases the entire historical and contemporaneous presence of the Native and attempts to replace it by eternalizing his ephemeral presence there through his name. It is not successful, however. The port is known today as the Baie de Shecatica on the coast of Labrador (Voyages, 5). Furthermore, one of the ironies that strikes any reader of Cartier’s first voyage in particular, is the presence or proximity of other Frenchmen at many of the locales that Cartier claims to discover. He is led, after all, to the port that he honors with his patronym by Rochelais fishermen who would necessarily have a certain level of familiarity with the region’s geography prior to Cartier’s historic arrival there. Again, the acts of writing and naming make a claim to authority and truth that takes precedence over other types of travel and exploration (such as commercial voyages to the Great Banks, as in this

37 In his study on the exploration of the Americas, referring to Colombus, Tzvetan Todorov tells us the following about naming: “Colon sait donc parfaitement que ces îles ont déjà des noms, naturels en quelque sorte (mais en une autre acception du terme) ; les mots des autres l’intéressent peu cependant et il veut renomer les lieux en fonction de la place qu’ils occupent dans sa découverte, leur donner des noms justes ; la nomination, de plus, équivaut à une prise de possession” (La conquête de l’Amérique : La question de l’autre, 39-40). Cartier’s naming practices closely echo those of Columbus.
example). Several decades later, another Frenchman would write about Native and Nature in what would become modern Canada: Samuel de Champlain. I now examine some examples of his extensive writings to show how the superlative mode continues to function and evolve in French texts, establishing itself as a topos of representation of the Amerindian, shaping the French vision of the original inhabitants of the Americas as marginalized subaltern subjects.

The superlative mode is equally prevalent in the works of Champlain. Champlain, more so than Cartier, was intent on writing, based solely on his prolific publishing. The sheer volume of pages that he produces during his voyages attests to his assiduous recording of his experiences in the New World. A cartographer and adventurer, Champlain’s texts were widely known in France during his lifetime and served to inform the French public about the region that became New France in large part due to Champlain’s own personal efforts and persistence, earning him the moniker of Canadian founding father (Litalien, Champlain: The Birth of French America, 11-2). The nineteenth-century editor and compiler of his complete works, Charles-Honoré Laverdière, remarked in the notice biographique that precedes the numerous tomes of Champlain’s oeuvre, that:

…on commence à remarquer en notre auteur une qualité infiniment précieuse, celle d’observateur scrupuleux et intelligent, qui ne manque aucune occasion de servir la louable ambition de la science, aussi bien que les intérêts de la patrie. Non-seulement il tient journal comme s’il était déjà chef de l’expédition ; mais encore il note sur son passage la position des lieux, les productions du pays, les mœurs et les coutumes des habitants (xv).

The editor’s characterization is pertinent to the analysis that follows. Laverdière positions Champlain’s writing in a specific way. Part interpretation and part simple description, the preceding quotation suggests a map on how to read the explorer and colonizer’s texts. Although
Laverdière anachronistically attributes Champlain’s merits as a faithful observer to a more modern notion of *science* than would have been epistemologically possible for Champlain at the time, he rightly places his loyalties in the camp of kin and country. As stated above, writers of Champlain’s ilk are beholden to impress their supporters in their reports, the political question being intimately entangled with the mercantile one in the early ventures on the Northern Atlantic seaboard and in the St. Lawrence River valley. The implicit consequence of this reality would have been the deformation of the message. Champlain’s texts are innately propagandistic.

Though Champlain is often touted as being an unbiased recorder of *truth* (largely due to the impenetrable impersonality of his writing), he is nevertheless self-interested and, above all practical. The “*intérêts*” of the fatherland are presented in a way which dovetails nicely with Champlain’s own personal interests through the very act of writing his *récits de voyage*. The objective of Champlain’s mission is primarily to discover lands to claim and open up sources of wealth to exploit. Champlain’s cartographical skills are redoubtable. The written word is complimentary to the many maps that he produces. Frank Lestringant tells us, “his narration started out as a land survey; his accounts built a land registry and methodically advanced to cover a territory” (*Champlain: The Birth of French America*, 234). As discussed above, the requirement for accurate and painstaking spatial positioning of the explorer’s *discoveries* is an essential aspect of the works of Cartier, Champlain, and many other colonial enterprisers. In short, due to the scattered physical presence of early colonial establishments and the nature of relations between the European colonial powers in the New World, it is absolutely necessary to locate the colony in space. Champlain’s texts are filled with measurements of distance, depth soundings of waterways, and topographical specificities. The premium placed on positioning is
represented in Laverdière’s ordering of Champlain’s priorities, beginning with “la position des lieux”.

The superlative mode becomes a central aspect of Champlain’s writing when considering the second element in Laverdière’s assessment of Champlain, “les productions du pays”. How novel this concept of land autonomously producing things must have been to Europeans with an understanding of land and agriculture that relied solely on human toil and enormous effort to wrest subsistence from the too often avaricious Earth! Nature is epistemologically reshaped in the Old World by the New World voyages and their accompanying texts. This constitutes a large reason for the draw that the new lands have for investors, adventurers, and, eventually, colonizers. As in Cartier, listing plays a central role in the articulation of this new Nature:

Je me meis dans un canot à la bande du Su, où je veis quantité d’îles, lesquelles sont fort fertilles en fruicts, comme vignes, noix, noysettes, & une manière de fruict qui semble à des chastaignes, cerises, chesnes, trembles, pible, houblon, fresne, érable, hestre, cyprez, fort peu de pins & sapins. Il y a aussi d’autres arbres que je ne cognois point, lesquels sont fort agreables. Il s’y trouve quantité de fraises, framboises, groizelles rouges, vertes & bleues, avec force petits fruicts qui y croissent parmy grande quantité d’herbages. Il y a aussi plusieurs bestes sauvages comme orignas, cerfs, biches, dains, ours, porcs-espics, lapins, regnards, castors, loutres, rats musquets, & quelques autres fortes [sic] d’animaux que je ne cognois point, lesquels sont bons à manger, & dequoy vivent les sauvages (Champlain 100).

The list inventories a vast array of flora and fauna punctuated with terms that underscore their prodigious fertility, such as “fort”, “aussi”, “autres”, “quantité de”, “avec”, “force”, “parmy”, and “plusieurs”. These repeated insertions in the passage produce the same suffocating effect as Cartier’s landscape where plant life is compared to grains of sand on a metaphorical beach. The length and diversity of the menu Champlain proposes to his reader is even more
bewildering than his predecessor’s, however. Much more concerned with the prospects of permanent settlement than Cartier, Champlain’s insistence on the superlative description of the abundance of animal and plant life is directly linked to fertility. He begins by claiming that the numerous islands are “fort fertilles” and proceeds to enumerate what the land is capable of producing \textit{without human intervention}. This is the key epistemological framework of the passage: \textit{without human intervention}. Agriculture and cultivation are primary concerns of Champlain personally and are inextricably linked to the success of the colonial project that will be his life’s work. Immediately preceding the passage quoted above Champlain writes, \textit{“Le premier jour de juillet, nous costoyasmes la bande du Nort, où le bois y est fort clair, plus qu’en aucun lieu que nous eussions encore veu auparavant, & toute bonne terre pour cultiver”} (100). The comparison between the “bande du Nort” and the “bande du Su” is introduced implicitly by Champlain. What represents the optimal landscape? One that is already cleared and ready for planting. The woods being clear and open more than in any other place the expedition has visited to that point (note the superlative) is the embodiment of Champlain’s ideal land.

How does the description of the southern part of the island group compare with its northern counterpart? How can we understand the superlative mode and Champlain’s list in light of this comparison? What narrative choices does Champlain make to represent Nature and the Native? I will address each question in turn. First, even though the southern islands do not constitute an easy conquest for agricultural exploitation (they are covered with vegetation and a menagerie of animal life rather than being already cleared), they certainly are of interest. After all, Champlain does write much more extensively about these islands than he does about the northern ones, which are given short shrift despite their preferential status. Though the northern islands are portrayed as useful, the southern islands are Champlain’s focus because they
represent a greater potential that the writer attempts to convey by adopting the techniques of the superlative mode. Second, to understand how this comparison might affect our reading of Champlain’s list one needs to ask what the list does, what role it plays. The list is not just about bounty in the present tense. As with all writing of this type, it is firmly anchored in the future (specifically the possibilities that the land represents, in this example). The list functions as proof of the land’s profitable transformation in the future. In other words, if all the myriad of “productions” of the land in its current, abandoned state are any indication, once hard-working French farmers arrive the yields will surely be enormous. Temporally contextualizing the superlative mode as a narrative of the future is essential to understanding the epistemological place of the Amerindian in the French imaginary at this time vis-à-vis Nature and French extractive economic designs. Third, Nature and the Native are coterminous spatially and ontologically. They are connected in Champlain’s writing. In keeping with Laverdière’s ordering of importance that states position first, productions second, and, last (and least) Amerindian in Champlain’s writing and mission, Champlain barely mentions the Indian and only just at the end of the passage. However, he is coterminous with all of this fecund Nature, because it is the Amerindian that lives off of its abundance (“dequoy vivent les sauvages”). The Native’s presence is obfuscated, but not eliminated. The Amerindian is there collecting the numerous plants and hunting the teeming animals. Given Champlain’s vision of land, agriculture, and colony-building, what is the future of Nature and Native in this passage? The Amerindian poses a problem that is not one at all, if the Amerindian is one and the same as his natural environment. The items on Champlain’s prolix list are not lasting features of a colonial landscape. Collected and removed, the plant life will be replaced in all its thriving diversity, by European staples in neat rows protected from the wild by fenced fields. This requires the
supplanting of the trees and the animals that live in the protection of their density. Where is the Amerindian’s place in the future transformation of the southern islands into the northern ones (the idealized open spaces ready for planting)? Hidden in the writing of the land is the future of both the land and the Amerindian. Indian removal faced with the advancing of the frontier and the increase of colonial population is already foreshadowed here. Buried in the semantic unconscious of the writer is the ontological connection between Native and Nature, I am referring here to Champlain’s lexical choice to introduce the fauna of the list: “bestes sauvages”. Reading this passage, the inclusion of the “sauvages” as part of the other “bestes sauvages” is an inevitable interpretation. The animals live from the “productions” of the islands, the plants and other animals, just as the “sauvages” do. It would be inaccurate to assert that Champlain is entirely dismissive of the Amerindian. He seeks Amerindian assistance and alliance for military, financial, and exploratory reasons (his expeditions to locate the Northwest Passage, to take a well-known example). What I am positing here, is that within the writing about Nature and Native, a certain colonial mindset and project frames the representation of the Amerindian. Epistemological frameworks determine how the French see the land and the original inhabitants of that land. The replacement of Nature by French Culture is an assumption that simultaneously presumes the replacement of the Native by the French. A later manifestation of the doom and disappearance of the Amerindian, also associated with an ontological connection with Nature as perceived by the European, is the topos of the Vanishing Indian.38

In my analysis, I have demonstrated how a particular way of writing about Nature, what I have called the superlative mode, concurrently shaped textual representations of the Amerindian. The Amerindian is inextricably associated with the land. Whether marginalized to the liminal as

38 For a detailed discussion of the myth of the Vanishing Indian see chapter 4.
in the nomadic fishermen of Cartier’s landscape covered entirely by flora, or classified as eventually sharing the same fate as the biodiversity of a flourishing ecosystem to be replaced by an agricultural land-management system in keeping with French norms in the Champlain example, the Amerindian Other is never portrayed as an autonomous and sovereign entity, understood and valued as subject. The shadow of the privative mode (the representation of the Amerindian through negative attributes) is present in the superlative writing of Nature even when the Amerindian is not mentioned explicitly. Both the privative and superlative modes serve to justify the colonial projects of the French in the Americas. The Amerindian’s displacement and dispossession is often validated, or justified, in the minds of the French because of their non-French relationship to land. In the examples I have chosen the Native peoples are groups that do not practice sustained agricultural exploitation of the land in a way that the French readily recognize. For the French, this places them outside of full humanity and culture. Instead, they are “(bestes) sauvages”\textsuperscript{39}.

\textbf{Conclusion}

In this chapter, I have explored the foundations of mythic representation of the Amerindian in the French literary tradition. The mythic components of the Ignoble and Noble Savage and the Privative and Superlative modes continue to influence subsequent generations of French writers. Understanding how myth and legend inform French epistemologies concerning the Amerindian is fundamental for critically examining the function of writing in the creation of a collective French cultural imaginary of the Native. In the second chapter of this study, I will

\textsuperscript{39} See Olive P. Dickason and her explanation of the \textit{terra nullius} argument for dispossession based on principles of nomadism and the conceptualization of land possession in European law, (\textit{Canada’s First Nations}, 146).
demonstrate how the myths that pervade sixteenth century writings about the Indigenous peoples of the Americas continue to permeate seventeenth century French texts.
Chapter 2

The Ignoble and Noble Savage Myths: Oscillation and Ambiguity in French Travel and Religious Writing of the Seventeenth Century

Introduction

Myth continues to frame French visions of the Amerindian in the seventeenth century. Although my analysis in this chapter will focus primarily on travel writing and religious texts that portray the Natives of what becomes New France and later Quebec, I will begin by referencing the French novel *Voyage dans la lune* by Cyrano de Bergerac, published in 1655. In the first chapter which covered the sixteenth century, I opened my discussion of the mythic representation of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas in Thevet’s *Cosmographie universelle* by underscoring the importance of framing. In Bergerac’s fictional *Voyage dans la lune*, the author employs a similar technique in order to situate his reader in the realm of the fantastic. The protagonist Drycona’s voyage to the moon takes as its point of departure, the colonial space of New France. The positioning of the Amerindian is key in the author’s introduction of the wondrous and extraordinary journey that constitutes the majority of the narrative. A hybrid text, *Voyage dans la lune* contains elements of materialist philosophy marking it as a precursor of eighteenth century philosophes’ thinking40, the comic novel41, and scientific writing42. The situation of the text as emanating from contact with the Native demonstrates how the Amerindian

40 For a discussion of connections between Bergerac’s novel and Enlightenment thought see Laugaa’s introduction to the GF-Flammarion edition, 1970.
41 For a cogent discussion of *Voyage dans la lune* as a converge of philosophical literature and the seventeenth century comic novel see Joan DeJean’s article “Method and Madness in Cyrano de Bergerac’s Voyage dans la Lune”, *French Forum*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (September 1977).
42 See Perfetti’s article “L’hypothèse atomistique dans "L’Autre Monde" de Cyrano de Bergerac”, *Revue d’histoire des sciences*, T. 55, No. 2, Études sur l’atomisme (XVIe — XVIIe siècles) (AVRIL-JUIN 2002). Perfetti argues that the novel claims rhetorical spaces more usually reserved for scientific texts, claiming that Bergerac’s text would be more accurately categorized as cultural artefact rather than work of fiction.
evolves as a part of the French cultural imagination of the seventeenth century. Building on sixteenth century representations and assumptions about Native peoples, Bergerac introduces the lunar world which he instrumentalizes to critique French society via an introduction of the Indigenous peoples in the Americas. Although the representation of the Amerindian in *Voyage dans la lune* occupies a liminal locus, the French imagination of the Native and the space of the New World function as a *framing* device to catalyze the burlesque adventure of the text. I begin my introduction by alluding to Bergerac’s novel, because it is a clear example of the centrality of myth in the French vision of the Amerindian. Additionally, the structural and generic hybridity of *Voyage dans la lune* is echoed in the varied representations of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas that the seventeenth century reader encounters in travel writing and religious reports of the period.

In this chapter I examine how myths of the Native discussed in the first chapter are articulated through the narrative modes of *oscillation*[^43] and *ambiguity*[^44]. In the first section, I examine the case study of the Armouchiquois, a coastal group that Samuel de Champlain meets in the early seventeenth century as part of his colonial surveying missions of what would eventually become the state of Maine. Champlain’s descriptions of the Armouchiquois are significant for this study, because they demonstrate how myth can pervade the practical in imperial ventures. Political and military factors serve to distort the image of these Native

[^43]: *Oscillation* is the term I use to designate the textual practice of presenting shifting images of Indigenous peoples to the reader. The most common instantiation of the technique involves a changing view of the Native, as exemplified in the first section’s discussion of the Armouchiquois in Champlain’s travel writing. They are first described by engaging in the myth of the Ignoble Savage. Subsequently, they are portrayed in the Noble Savage mythic paradigm. This polar change is what I refer to as *oscillation*.

[^44]: *Ambiguity* is similar to *oscillation*, but nonetheless distinct. Rather than presenting the Native as one, then another mythic variant, the narrative mode of *ambiguity* represents the Amerindian as possessing attributes of both mythic models simultaneously or concurrently. Both *oscillation* and *ambiguity* are predicated on the mythic, because the shape-shifting, epistemological bending of the concept of the Native is central to both types of narration.
peoples. In the early stage of coastal exploration the Armouchiquois are depicted as monstrous, deformed bodies in the same rhetorical vein as the Thevet’s Patagonian giants. The accounts that lead Champlain to pen this exaggerated mythic portrait are linked to mining and the extractive colonial economy: the Armouchiquois inhabit land that some Frenchmen believe contain copper deposits. Subsequently, when Champlain actually meets living, breathing Armouchiquois people, the author performs a volte-face and engages in an idealized, romanticized representation of the Armouchiquois that squarely falls into the category of the myth of the Noble Savage. My analysis seeks to show how political economy shapes changing images of the Native in seventeenth century French letters.

In the second section, I focus on religious texts of the period, in particular the Jesuit Relations (including the writings of Jesuit Jean de Brébeuf), the epistles of Ursuline Mother Superior Marie de l’Incarnation, and the historical work L’histoire du Canada by the Récollet friar Gabriel Sagard. My discussion emphasizes the importance of ambiguity in these representations of the Amerindian in French. Both the myths of the Ignoble and Noble Savage vie in the textual conceptualizations of the Indigenous in these works. While the missionaries who wrote these reports spent considerable time living alongside Native peoples, their writings continue to be largely framed by the mythic. Cementing the position of the Amerindian in French epistemology, the seventeenth century uniquely attaches French visions of the Native to myth and fantasy, while coupling that connection with claims of a certain truth for these representations.

45 See chapter 1 section 1 for a complete discussion.
1. Oscillation of the Armouchiquois in the Travel Writings of Samuel de Champlain

In the first chapter I launched my discussion of the images of the original inhabitants of the Americas by analyzing the tall tale of the Patagonian giants as recounted in André Thevet’s *Cosmographie universelle*. The mythic elements that such representations employ are a foundational aspect of the way in which early writers conceive of and present the Amerindian in narrative form. The combination of first-hand eye witness accounts alongside fantastical portrayals is a characteristic feature of the Renaissance epistemological viewpoint. The mélange of observational and mythological does not end with the close of the sixteenth century, however. One can find examples of a continuation of this tendency in the writing of French explorer and Canadian founding father, Samuel de Champlain.

I would like to begin the second chapter by exploring the ways in which mythological images are created in two specific passages of Champlain’s writings, his initial mythically inflected discussion of the Armouchiquois and the subsequent rewriting of the Armouchiquois based on Champlain’s eye-witness reports. These examples are informative. They demonstrate the existence of continuity in the use of fantastical imagery seen in the legend of the Patagonian giants in the writing of the Amerindian in French in the seventeenth century. The connection between Thevet’s giants and Champlain’s Armouchiquois is originally linked to the myth of the Ignoble Savage. The Ignoble Savage paradigm situates the Native outside the purview of civilization and humanity. The myth of the Ignoble Savage presents the Indigenous peoples of the Americas as animalized object, rather than humanized subject. The tendency to represent the Amerindian as (Ignoble) Savage is a universal feature of European constructions concerning the original peoples of the western hemisphere, while the Noble Savage motif is more limited (Dickason, *Myth of the Savage*, xv). It is important to recall that representations of the Native as
Ignoble Savage have hefty real-world consequences in political praxis, not only in the realms of art and philosophy. Olive Dickason states that:

The fact that such views [portrayals of Natives that engage with the myth of the Ignoble Savage] had little to do with reality did not mitigate their fundamental importance in colonization. By classifying Amerindians as savages, Europeans were able to create the ideology that helped to make it possible to launch one of the great movements in the history of western civilization: the colonization of overseas empires (Myth of the Savage, xiii).

In Dickason’s formulation, she astutely associates written representation with political violence and dispossession. In this section, I will examine an illustrative example of the Ignoble Savage trope in the writings of Champlain. This example is especially pertinent because of the subsequent revisionist turn Champlain takes after actually meeting and observing the Armouchiquois (the people in question). The colonial mindset is baked into both the Ignoble and Noble Savage myths. It is significant, moreover, how easily images of Amerindians are subject to what I refer to as oscillation. Oscillation refers to the common narrative practice of code-switching that depicts the Native as first positive then negative, first in an ethnographical mode then in a mythological one, or vice versa. As Dickason reminds us, whether Noble or Ignoble, or categorized more loosely through oscillation, dispossession is the end result of many French textual and political initiatives. Champlain’s representation(s) of the Armouchiquois constitute(s) an informative case-study in the history of ambiguity and the mythic in the French literary tradition of imagining the Native.

The Armouchiquois tribe occupied parts of what is now coastal Maine in the United States. A French name for the Abenaki, they were a prominent group in the region at the time of Champlain’s first voyages in the area (Dickason and McNab, Canada’s First Nations, 88).
Before delving into the representation of the Armouchiquois, however, I would like to call the reader’s attention to the second-hand nature of the information that leads to Champlain’s first written account of the group, an iteration of the Ignoble Savage. Champlain pens this image according to the report of an associate in the colonial enterprise named Prévert. Prévert goes on a reconnoitering expedition, typical of the New France ventures of the time, to look for copper. The conditions of the creation of the portrait of the Armouchiquois are fundamental to understanding the transformation of this people in Champlain’s text. It is unknown whether or not Prévert ever laid eyes on living, breathing Armouchiquois people, or if he simply relied on the descriptions of his Souriquois guides. One thing is certainly clear: the Micmac and the Armouchiquois are not on the friendliest of terms with one another. The Souriquois fear the Armouchiquois as formidable adversaries. To better understand the creation of this particular image of the Armouchiquois, a brief explanation of some aspects of French alliances and how those alliances affect the representation of different Native groups is appropriate.

The system of alliances that develops almost immediately upon contact is influential in the discourse that will be created about Amerindians in French texts (specifically in the North American context). Alliances are not typically based on any identifiable cultural affinity with a particular group (an exception is the Jesuit and Récollet missionaries’ stated preferences for sedentary, agricultural tribes, such as the Huron, as opposed to nomadic ones, such as the Montagnais). In other words, the French do not create alliances with groups because they are “less savage” than other groups. The alliance system is not built upon inherent qualities of docility or amenability that might “objectively” be attributed to any particular tribe in

---

46 Mining was an imperial design from the beginning for the French. Dazzled by the Spanish harvests of silver and gold, French colonial adventures devoted many resources to replicating their rival’s success.

47 The Souriquois are the ancestors of today’s Micmac peoples.
comparison with others. The practical necessities associated with the extraction of resources determine which Native groups are French allies and which fall on the other side of the line, and are ultimately cast as enemies.

The most glaring evidence of the random quality of the Franco-Indian alliance system is the French engagement with the Iroquoian group that occupies the St. Lawrence River valley during Cartier’s voyages of exploration. Though Cartier is not a very successful diplomat, the French seek alliance with the Iroquoians they encounter. The specific Iroquoian group inhabiting the St. Lawrence River valley in Cartier’s time subsequently abandons the region for reasons unknown. When Champlain returns in the beginning of the seventeenth century, they have been replaced by Algonquin tribal groups. The Iroquois, who were the allies of the French in the sixteenth century, become their inveterate enemies in the seventeenth century, and throughout much of the rest of the colonial history of New France, in no small part due to Champlain’s initial military forays against the Iroquois at the behest of the Algonquin who are thereby confirmed as allies. There is little but expediency (military and, above all, territorial in scope) that decides who will be accepted in alliance with the French.

This brief sketch of the alliance system is meant to point out that allies are only allies by convenience as determined by resource extraction, which implies that no reasoning exists a priori that could be characterized as attempting to define one Indigenous group as “better” or “worse” than another. Allies are written as, if not good, at least better than the enemies of the French. In short, representations of allies are typically more positive and humanizing (closer to the Noble Savage end of the spectrum), whereas representations of enemies are often negative, vilifying, and demonizing (nearer the Ignoble Savage pole of the binary). In the portrayal of the Armouchiquois, Prévert is guided by Micmac Indians who are inimical to the Armouchiquois.
The desire to extract copper motivates the French to seek guides, who are the Amerindians nearby, the Micmac, to take them to the locations where copper deposits can be found, an area occupied by the Armouchiquois. This contextualization can inform our reading of the excerpt by highlighting how the desires of the groups involved interact and compete with one another. The convergence of the French desire for copper and the Micmac desire for the defeat of the Armouchiquois is an essential factor in the creation of the myth of the Armouchiquois monster. After all, if the geographical affiliations of the Micmac and the Armouchiquois had been opposite, we might be reading about the myth of the Micmac monster. While it is an evident backdrop to any written description, the preceding discussion emphasizes the constructed nature of all representations of the Amerindian in European texts, whether those images are redolent of the mythic or can be contextualized as more “objective”.

The following passage is Champlain’s initial description of the Armouchiquois, based on the account of the reconnaissance mission undertaken by Prévert:

…les Armouchicois, lesquels sont hommes sauvages du tout monstrueux pour la forme qu'ils ont; car leur teste est petite, & le corps court, les bras menus comme d'un schelet, & les cuisses semblablement, les jambes grosses & longues, qui sont toutes d'une venue; & quand ils sont assis sur leurs talons, les genoux leur passent plus d'un demy pied par dessus la teste, qui est chose estrange, & semblent estre hors de nature. Ils sont neantmoins fort dispos & determinez, & sont aux meilleures terres de toute la coste d'Arcadie: aussi les Souricois les craignent fort (Champlain 122).

This representation of the Armouchiquois tribe, similar to the tale of the Patagonian giants in Thevet’s text, is mythic because it situates the Native in the realm of the supernatural. As in the first chapter, we are dealing with deformed or unusual bodies. A common way to
represent difference is through somatization. To render the object of difference through a physical and concrete corporeal manifestation is to concretize an ontological difference. The Armouchiquois body is deformed in precise ways. As in a funhouse mirror, some features are grotesquely shortened and some are exaggeratedly elongated. The upper half of the Armouchiquois body is portrayed in miniature (leur teste est petite, & le corps court, les bras menus comme d’un schelet). The shrinking of the upper body continues through the thighs, typically the most substantial portion of the leg (& les cuisses semblablement). By contrast, the Armouchiquois’ lower body is stretched (les jambes grosses & longues, qui sont toutes d’une venue). The precision of the description is remarkable. To insist upon the elongation of the lower limbs, Champlain poses the Armouchiquois body in a simian posture. This construction with long legs, seated on its heels, evokes the bizarre visualization of knees looming impossibly over the head of the seated figure (quand ils sont assis sur leurs talons, les genoux leur passent plus d’un demy pied par dessus la teste).

The accumulative effect of the warped body segments and animalized bearing disqualifies the Armouchiquois, dehumanizing and mythologizing the Amerindian body (qui est chose estrange, & semblent estre hors de nature). The adventurer’s determination of the Armouchiquois as outside of the purview of the natural world emphasizes this representation’s opposition to the seminal mythic paradigm of the Noble Savage. In the Noble Savage frame, the Native is imbricated with Nature. The myth of the Ignoble Savage, by contrast, often places the Native either outside of nature, as here, or closer to non-human animals than to “civilization” or “culture” as defined from a Eurocentric perspective. Champlain’s description also implies a sliding scale of savagery or humanity. Though the Armouchiquois body may be portrayed in this way due to motivational factors of both their Micmac and French enemies, yet there is no neat
and clean division between the Armouchiquois and the Micmac, or other Indigenous peoples of the Americas. Champlain presents a discourse that inherently stains all Amerindians with at least a touch of the Armouchiquois monstrousness. One of the insidious aspects of the Ignoble Savage myth is its slippery attribution to all Amerindians generally. Within the most Noble of Savages is the potential of the monstrous and violent. This is the primary condition of possibility for the phenomenon of oscillation.

The localizing of the Armouchiquois speaks to the motivations behind this specific representation of the Amerindian. The Armouchiquois occupy the most beautiful area of coastal Arcadia; the obvious implication is that, as monsters, they do not deserve to remain there (sont aux meilleures terres de toute la coste d'Arcadie). The mutual desire of the French and their Micmac allies is to expel the Armouchiquois. The Micmac wish to leverage their new found European friends militarily against their old enemy in the region. The French value copper ore in opposition to the monstrous forms described here by Champlain. As in the first chapter, a mythologizing discourse represents Amerindian bodies in exaggerated forms in order to expel those bodies outside of the realm of humanity. Thevet’s Patagonians are the cruelest and most savage, because they have never before been frequented by people (i.e. Europeans). The Armouchiquois similarly fall outside of humanity, because of the precisely enumerated deformities of their bodies. They are hors de nature.

Another lesson provided by the example of the Armouchiquois monster image is the ever shifting nature of the representation of the Amerindian in French texts. One cannot over emphasize the importance of ambiguity as it emerges in images of the Indigenous of the Americas in French letters. On the one hand, the instability of the image is produced by the indefinability of the Amerindian. The Amerindian escapes the epistemological categorizations of
the European, leading him/her to be cast out as monster. On the other hand, and perhaps this is equally as influential in the creation of representations of the Amerindian, is the appropriation and exploitation of the image of the Indigenous of the Americas to pursue goals that are political (the Micmac’s political aims against their enemies, the Armouchiquois), commercial (the Armouchiquois monster’s relation to Prévert’s copper mining project), or philosophical (Montaigne’s *bon sauvage*) and more or less ignore the living, breathing Amerindians that are being *described* 48. Marc Lescarbot, in his *Histoire de la Nouvelle-France* explains how Champlain is misled by Prévert (and by extension by the Micmac). Champlain eventually recognizes the inaccuracy of the Armouchiquois monster depiction:

> Ainsi ledit Champlein s’étant fié au recit du sieur Prevert de Saint-Malo, qui se donnoit carriere, a écrit ce que nous venons de rapporter touchant les Armouchiquois, & le Gougou, comme semblablement ce qui est de la lueur de la mine de cuivre. Toutes léquelles choses iceluy Champlein a depuis reconu étre fabuleuses (Lescarbot, *Livre III, Chapitre XXIX*).

> The motivations behind the creation of the Armouchiquois monster myth are referred to explicitly by Lescarbot who states that it is the glimmer of copper that drives Prévert (and political reasons may have identically pushed the Micmac in that direction) to present the Armouchiquois in such a grotesque light to the explorer Champlain. Furthermore, Lescarbot turns the mythologized portrait on its head by insisting on the beauty of the Armouchiquois,

> “*Car quant aux Armouchiquois ils sont aussi beaux-hommes (souz ce mot je comprens aussi les femmes) que nous, bien composés & dispos…* (Livre III, Chapitre XXIX). The reversal of the image is completed here by Lescarbot, turning beast into beauty. This is an illustration of

48 The multiple motivating elements sketched here are typical examples of the deforming factors that can be linked to the mythic in French representations of the Amerindian. Ambiguity and indefinability are redolent of the phenomenon of *oscillation*. Objectivity rarely outweighs the interests (military, political, economic, religious, philosophical) of French authors present as conditions of creation of their texts.
oscillation. The shape-shifting, code-switching potentiality inherent in images of the Amerindian is a mythological inflection. Europeans are epistemologically compartmentalized as largely immutable in contrast to the malleable Native. In this comparison the superhuman or subhuman essence of the representational points of reference from which French authors compose images of the Amerindian is highlighted. Although “merely” representative, these images do influence political praxis. The example of Champlain’s Armouchiquois monster exemplifies this important fact in any investigation of the representation of Others from a Western viewpoint. I would now like to focus on the image of the Armouchiquois that emerges in Champlain’s subsequent writings.

Thus far, we have been discussing Champlain’s textual Armouchiquois monster as inspired by the would-be miner Prévert’s individual interests and the collective political maneuvering of the inimical Micmac. Later, Champlain has first-hand contact with the Armouchiquois. During exploratory forays in the coastal regions of modern day Maine in the United States, Champlain gains extensive knowledge of the Armouchiquois. The Ignoble Savage monster myth is later recanted, as Lescarbot states above. Why does Champlain change his mind? What impression do the living, breathing Armouchiquois make on Champlain’s imagination of their tribe in order to solicit such a turnaround? One of the key factors is their physical appearance. Previously, the deformed, twisted funhouse body image of the Armouchiquois is central to the mythological monster that Champlain initially creates. Dehumanized and positioned closer to the beast than the human, the Armouchiquois body is the concretization of potential violence. Grotesquely exaggerated simian qualities and a pronounced virility are combined to instill the text with panic and fear. What does Champlain write when he beholds the Armouchiquois for himself?
Ces peuples démonstraient estre fort contens: leur chef estoit de bonne façon, jeune & bien dispost: l'on envoya quelque marchandise à terre pour traicter avec eux, mais ils n'avoient rien que leurs robbes, qu'ils changèrent, car ils ne font aucune provision de pelleterie que pour se vestir. Le sieur de Mons fit donner à leur chef quelques commoditez, dont il fut fort satisfait, & vint plusieurs fois à nostre bort pour nous veoir. Ces sauvages se rasent le poil de dessus le crasne assez haut, & portent le reste fort longs, qu'ils peignent & tortillent par derrière en plusieurs façons fort proprement, avec des plumes qu'ils attachent sur leur teste. Ils se peindent le visage de noir & rouge comme les autres sauvages qu'avons veus. Ce sont gens dispost bien formez de leur corps: leurs armes sont piques, massues, arcs & flèches, au bout desquelles aucuns mettent la queue d'un poisson appelé Signoc, d'autres y accommodent des os, & d'autres en ont toutes de bois. Ils labourent & cultivent la terre, ce que n'avions encores veu. Au lieu de charuês ils ont un instrument de bois fort dur, faict en façon d'une besche. Ceste riviere s'appelle des habitans du pays Chouacoet (Champlain 200-1).

The first member of the Armouchiquois tribe that Champlain actually sees is their young chief. This strapping young man is diametrically opposed to the monstrous creatures of the previous description. He is endowed with positive attributes, both physical and moral. When Champlain comments that the Sagamo (another term designating chief that is common in this region and time period) is “de bonne façon”. In short, the chief makes a good impression on the Frenchman, which connotes a moral, character-based judgment that no doubt has also been reinforced by the chief’s bodily vim and vigor. In fact, the moral dimension is infused everywhere in Champlain’s second attempt to sketch the Armouchiquois people, although the author also focuses on physical attributes and cultural artifacts. The material “poverty” of the Armouchiquois is not given the same treatment as in the Cartier example. The Armouchiquois have nothing to trade but their clothing, which they do exchange. Champlain offers no negative

49 See the first chapter of this study.
commentary (quite the opposite of the monster myth), rather he continues to code the interaction with this Amerindian group as wholly positive. The lack of pelts, other than for clothing suggests that the Armouchiquois do not have established trade relations with Europeans at the time of Champlain’s expedition. By contrast, in the Cartier example, the Amerindians that he encounters are already equipped with furs for trade. The Armouchiquois may not have been previously contacted, or contacts may not have occurred with sufficient frequency to greatly alter their original pre-contact lifeways. Civility and hospitality characterize the young Armouchiquois Sagamo. The initial exchange, which would have likely been understood more as a ritualized mutual gift-giving ceremony in Armouchiquois epistemology than a market transaction, leads to the establishment of a relationship between the chief and the Frenchmen, including regular visits to the French vessel. There is no evidence of conflict, only trading and social calls aboard the ship. I would like to focus now on the physical descriptions of the Armouchiquois body as portrayed by Champlain in this passage.

If their young chief is any indicator of the Armouchiquois tribe, then Champlain would have been highly disposed to write glowingly of his people as well, which, in fact, the explorer does. Describing their hair style, he proclaims that they tie up their long locks quite neatly. The twisted deformed bodies of the Armouchiquois in their first, Ignoble Savage iteration are now portrayed as objects of great care in outward appearance, something a Frenchman of Champlain’s status would have certainly appreciated. It is their hair that is now twisted and contorted into various forms, as a sign of culture. By contrast, in the explorer’s first account of the Armouchiquois, their bodies are deformed as a sign of inhumanity, animality, and monstrousness. Champlain quickly passes over their facial paint, the red and black typical of the Amerindian groups he has already encountered on his many travels in the region. The shock that
might occur for a reader of the time when faced with this colorful decoration of the skin, is already a commonplace for our author. Furthermore, the Armouchiquois are depicted as generally healthful and well-proportioned. From a physical standpoint, Champlain’s representation creates a positive effect in relation to the Armouchiquois body. This extends beyond the bodies of the Armouchiquois to include aspects of their material culture.

It is interesting to note the way in which the weapons of the Armouchiquois are textually linked to the Armouchiquois body. The description of the body leads directly to the enumeration of the weapons that the warrior carries. This metonymy is significant. The two domains are connected via a colon in the text (“Ce sont gens disposts bien formez de leur corps: leurs armes sont piques...etc.”). The use of the colon attaching the list of weapons to the representation of the body is a rhetorical move that makes a certain claim of logic. Champlain describes the accoutrements of the Armouchiquois warrior in some detail. The interest that Champlain has in their weaponry is indicated by the amount of detail present in this section of the excerpt. The metonymy that connects the Armouchiquois male body and the weapons of war epistemologically is characteristic of one particular vector of the Noble Savage myth. The classical conception of the medieval nobility of France (as elsewhere throughout Western Europe) as a class associated intrinsically with the practice of warfare is a formative feature of the articulation of the Noble Savage trope. The bravery and courage of the Amerindian warrior that Montaigne emphasizes in “Des cannibales” and the final episode of “Des coches” (wherein the brave Inca warriors replace one another with dizzying rapidity as they are slaughtered by the Spanish in order to insure that the Inca emperor’s coach does not touch the ground) are ideologically fundamental to the essayist’s archetypal metaphor of the bon sauvage. The Savage is the Noble Savage, largely due to the ease of comparability with European epistemological
conceptions of medieval nobility. The three constitutive practices associated with the classical conception of nobility in Europe and the Amerindian warrior class are warfare, hunting, and leisure. The relative liberty of the Indigenous American warrior vis-à-vis the majority of French society and his primary functions as portrayed in written texts of waging war and hunting leads to the analogy between the Savage and the Noble, greatly influencing the creation of the symbolism of the mythic Noble Savage. Here, the positive coding of the passage coupled with the emphasis on martial equipment provides a concrete example of the transference of European conceptions of nobility to the image of the Amerindian. A novelty for Champlain in his observations of the Natives of the northern Atlantic seaboard that appears in this passage is the practice of agriculture.

As we have seen with the physical and moral descriptions of the Armouchiquois chief and his people, as well as the discussion of Indigenous weaponry, Champlain’s text presents the reader with an idealized portrait of the Armouchiquois. The contrast between this representation and that of the Armouchiquois as monster could not be more pronounced. The narrative technology of oscillation is linked epistemologically to what becomes articulated as the mission civilisatrice through the concept of perfectibility. Perfectibility is a motif of many representational models in the history of representing the Amerindian in French. It is especially characteristic of texts that engage in oscillation, because one of the primary patterns consists in an initial negative depiction in the Ignoble Savage mode which is followed by a revisionist turn to a positive, Noble Savage representation. In the forcibly linear world of the text, and in the linear, historical bent of the European mind, this type of change is associated with progress. When images of Natives change from monster to ideal, this does not however reverse or slow

---

50 Of course, the pattern can move in the opposite direction, as well, wherein initial positive images of Natives shift to negative ones.
down the violent, exploitative imperial interactions between European invaders and Indigenous peoples. As time marches on, the perfectibility of the Amerindian as it emerges from oscillation and increasingly more refined notions of the mission civilisatrice is typically accompanied by more invasive, draconian policies which aim to erase Native culture, lifeways, and history. Agriculture is a marker of perfectibility and progress according to European conceptions of societal evolution.

As such, the final component of the excerpt that solidifies the idealized character of this second depiction is Champlain’s description of the practice of agriculture. Agriculture serves as a certain measure of civility to the French exploring North America at this time. The fact that the Armouchiquois practice agriculture serves as evidence of the other positively coded aspects of Champlain’s representation of the group. As it were, the practice of agriculture is the culmination of the idealized, Noble Savage image that Champlain produces here. The cumulative effect of physical well-being, civility and hospitality in social relations, a finely equipped warrior class, and the practice of agriculture creates an iteration of the Noble Savage in a more objective, yet nonetheless mythic, form. Far from the philosophical considerations of the Montaigne, Champlain observes and describes. What emerge in the description of the Armouchiquois in this passage are many of the features of the Noble Savage without philosophical reflection back onto French society. If the Armouchiquois as monster can be traced to the convergence of the desire of the French for copper-mining opportunities and the quest for political and military advantage by the French allies, the Micmac, what can be the motivation for the Noble Savage version of the Armouchiquois here?

The Noble Savage, in the hands of Montaigne, is a rhetorical weapon. The essayist’s weapon is turned back against the decadent European. In the hands of a colonizer with
commercial and military gains in mind, the Noble Savage is a much more practical weapon. The characterization of the Armouchiquois as pure and simple farmers and warriors (with wooden weapons that are described as more decorative than dangerous) inhabiting a beautiful region also suspected of harboring copper ore is actualized in the machinations of exploitation formulated by Champlain as plans for the placement of a French fortress in the region. The shifting perspectives on the Armouchiquois in Champlain’s writings are significant. They allow us to question representations, both negatively and positively coded images, in specific ways. The representations of the Amerindian in these examples are equally driven, motivated depictions. They are not objective, as modern science would understand that term. This is evident in the practice of oscillation, wherein representations transform Natives from monsters to angels. The “truth” messages about Amerindians convey is squarely emanating from the author, by which I mean the message speaks more about the author than the object being observed. These images are not essentially related directly to any living, breathing Indigenous peoples of the Americas. Mythologizing the Amerindian has concrete advantages for authors, especially those who are actively promoting trade and colonization, such as Champlain, but more innocuous contexts profit from the utilization of the mythic Native, as well. Religious texts also construct mythological representations of the Amerindian.

2. Savage Ambiguity: Images of the Amerindian in Religious Texts in the Seventeenth Century

The Jesuit Relations, recounting the numerous missions to North America in order to convert the various Amerindian tribes living in the regions where the French are led by the lucrative fur trade, the thirst for the discovery of new lands, and the legendary quest for the Northwest Passage, are the most important written source of contact between the French and the
original inhabitants of the Americas in the seventeenth century. The Relations “helped to fix seventeenth-century conceptions of the Indians and still constitute our best source of information about the missions of the period” (Grant 6). The Jesuit’s mission in the New World is practically of a military nature. As the historian John Webster Grant tells us, “Loyola’s intention was to shape a body of men who could serve as shock troops of the church against indifference, Protestantism, and, above all, heathenism” (5). The Jesuit in North America takes advantage of many different weapons in his battle against the religious beliefs in place in the Amerindian societies that he encounters. Images of the holy mysteries, linguistic prowess, and scientific knowledge, what the Fathers considered as reason or logic, and their written accounts are instrumental in the proselytization on the ground and the propaganda battle back in France (Grant 25).

Before exploring the Relations directly, I will first discuss some methodological issues. The corpus of the Relations is vast and varies widely both temporally and geographically. Dating from 1610 to 1791, the Relations begin with the missionary efforts in what will eventually become the Maritime Provinces and take their readers inland to the St. Lawrence Valley, to the Great Lakes region, into the Pays d’en-Haut (the upper Midwest), the Pays des Illinois, down the Mississippi River, ending in modern day Louisiana. Faced with such a cornucopia of Amerindian groups and geographies, one must decide which texts to include in one’s study. I have narrowed my focus to concentrate on earlier texts. As decades pass and the Jesuits become more familiar with the Amerindian societies that they seek to convert, the nature of the Relations necessarily evolves. There is a shift away from what one might qualify as proto-ethnographic writing towards a detailing of the practical matters of running the mission from an administrative point of view. Another reason for my predilection for the texts from the earlier period of contact is to
attempt to examine French representations of the Amerindians before the ravages of disease, changes in economic structures, and French material and cultural influence alter Amerindian lifeways significantly. What Mary Louis Pratt refers to as the ‘contact zone’ is the preferred textual space that I will attempt to examine in this section of the study. Pratt defines the contact zone as “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination—like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths…” (4). Rather than concentrate on well-established interactions of dominance or varying degrees of cooperation or dependence, I have chosen to limit my focus to initial or early contact and the ‘grappling’ with difference that occurs in these privileged moments and spaces. While the later Relations are invaluable sources of information and representations of Amerindian peoples, later Jesuit writers often build upon the early writings of their predecessors. Copying and repetition are a fundamental characteristic of any imperialist discourse (Pratt 2). I seek to discover the onset of images and tropes in this quasi-hermetic corpus; therefore the early Relations will constitute the primary source of my analysis.

I will begin by exploring the initial Jesuit missions on the Northern Atlantic seaboard, the territory of the Micmac, Abenakis, and Malecites. The most informative Relations that deal with this particular aspect of the Jesuit mission in North America are associated with the leadership of Father Pierre Biard. These early Relations date from the period of 1610-13. A subsequent text that proves critical to my analysis is Jean de Brébeuf’s Relation de ce qui s’est passé dans le pays des Hurons en l’année 1636. Brébeuf’s text retells his experiences with the Huron in the Great Lakes region. The Jesuits placed high aspirations in the mission to Huronia, specifically because of the sedentary lifestyle of those peoples. Agricultural and sedentary peoples are seen as more likely to convert to Catholicism. Conversion entails not only acceptance of spiritual
dogma and ritual, but ideally, connotes the abandonment of traditional Amerindian lifeways (mobile camps, feasts, gambling, sexual practices, vestimentary practices, hunting, etc.). The Jesuits believe that sedentary populations will be more easily convinced to give up their culture. Many of the Relations lament how quickly Amerindians who show great promise (often recent neophytes) while in the purview of the Jesuit brethren, quickly revert back to Amerindian ways when no longer in the immediate presence of the missionaries. Therefore, the mission to Huronia is particularly significant to the mission more generally, from an ideological perspective. Assumptions regarding nomadic and sedentary Amerindians shaped the representation of those groups and the missionary attention and effort afforded them by the Jesuits. While I could have included the writings of Father Le Jeune recounting his first wintering with the nomadic Montagnais, I have chosen to concentrate on the Huron, because they allow for direct comparisons with other non-Jesuit writers of the time.

A justification for the choice of the Jesuit description of Huronia as a primary source of investigation in this study is the opportunity it provides to compare Jesuit written accounts of the Wyandots (the Huron’s name for themselves) vis-à-vis Gabriel Sagard’s historical text *Histoire du Canada*. Sagard’s travels precede the Jesuits’ arrival in Huronia. Sagard is a Récollet friar and, as such, can represent a different philosophical position on the Amerindian. The Récollet are a Franciscan brotherhood that espouses ideals of poverty and self-abnegation. The worldly interests and extensive education of the Society of Jesus make the two viewpoints interesting for this study. An analysis of Sagard’s *Histoire du Canada* will be included later in this section. Another methodological justification for placing an emphasis on the Jesuit accounts of Huronia is the possibility to examine Jesuit representations against the analysis of modern Wyandot scholarship. In this study, I focus primarily on the European or Quebecois representation of the
Amerindian. The work of historian Georges E. Sioui, himself a descendant of the Wyandot peoples, is illuminating because he explicates and clarifies Amerindian cultural traditions in conversation with the Jesuit sources on Huronia. Sioui’s *Les Wendats: Une civilisation méconnue* offers a point of comparison that enriches the study by including the voice of a modern Amerindian scholar with a unique perspective on the representation of the Huron people in the texts of the seventeenth century. The Jesuit Relations are key in any discussion of the evolution of the representation of the Amerindian in French, because of their popularity and valence in continental France.

Reuben Gold Thwaites, the editor of the most complete bilingual edition of the Relations, tells us:

*The Relations* at once became popular in the court circles of France; their regular appearance was always awaited with the keenest interest, and assisted greatly in creating and fostering the enthusiasm of pious philanthropists, who for many years substantially maintained the missions of New France (Vol. 1, General Introduction, 41).

Two significant pieces of information can be gleaned from Thwaites’ citation. Firstly, one must recognize the purpose and function of the Relations: “creating and fostering the enthusiasm of pious philanthropists”. The primary *raison d’être* of the Jesuit Relations is to ensure continued economic support. The Jesuits, in order to expand their efforts and maintain what they have already built in the various missions, need to paint the chances of conversion of Native populations in a favorable light. In addition to relying on donations from wealthy sponsors, the Jesuit Fathers make pleas to their ecclesiastical superiors to send more clergy, laborers, and materials to help meet their objectives. Therefore, the nature of the Relations as documents of propaganda cannot be minimized or omitted from an informed reading of the texts.
Despite these contextual factors, the Relations remain an invaluable source. Secondly, the Jesuit Relations are a popular source of information on the New World in France, in general. The anticipation which surrounded the Relations is evidence that the French are curious about the original inhabitants of the Americas. The Relations help to circumscribe the significance of the New World’s peoples epistemologically in France. They are one of the main sources for the propagation of the Noble Savage myth in French, inspiring eighteenth century writers to portray the Amerindian, such as the Huron, by employing this representational model (Berkhofer Jr. 74). One notable example of a reader of the Relations who will digest and reshape the images and representations of the Amerindian he finds there is the philosophe Voltaire. The Relations are influential in the creation of the collective French cultural imaginary of the Amerindian. In addition, the religious source of the Relations gives them a certain truth value in a society largely dominated by Catholic orthodoxy. Supplying the seventeenth century demand for true or authentic accounts of the Amerindians, the Relations are also a crucial source for any study that aims to explore how the image of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas is articulated in French in conversation with preceding and subsequent formulations. What one encounters in the Jesuit Relations are iterations of the same mythic paradigms discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation. From a historical standpoint, this is significant because the Jesuits who pen the accounts contained in the Relations and analyzed here live for long periods in contiguity with living, breathing Amerindians. However, the mythic element of textual representation does not disappear, rather it becomes entrenched as a characteristic feature of French epistemological understandings of what Natives of the Americas signify for them.

The privative mode continues to influence the written representation of the Amerindian in the seventeenth century as it did in the sixteenth. In the case of the Jesuit Relations, the privative
model that was established early on in the age of discovery is adopted largely unchanged in some instances. However, the Fathers of the Society of Jesus did expand some aspects of this narrative strategy as it is discussed in the first chapter. While the practice of repeating the first instantiations of the privative mode (sans foi, sans loi, sans roi) continues to have purchase in the Relations, along with a more detailed privative representation, the appearance of ambiguity within the descriptions of Amerindian cultures begins to characterize the Jesuits’ written accounts of their missions. This ambiguity is an essential transhistorical component of the representation of the Amerindian in French and other European traditions. It constitutes a thread of continuity that clearly demonstrates the fundamental importance of early mythic configurations for later epistemological regimes.

The following passage illustrates how the privative mode remains a feature of the representation of the Amerindian while changing and evolving to include a more ambiguous tone:

Aussi ne voit-on gueres de changement en eux après le baptisme. La mesme sauvagine et les mesmes mœurs demeurent, ou peu s’en faut, mesmes coustumes, ceremonies, us, façons et vices, au moins à ce qu’on en peut sçavoir, sans point observer aucune distinction de temps, jours, offices, exercices, prieres, debvoirs, vertus ou remedes spirituels (Thwaites, Vol. 1, 164).

Father Pierre Biard is criticizing the neophytes of the mission for their inconsistency regarding the tenants of Catholicism. Conversion with its concurrent ritual officialization in the form of baptism is not enough in the eyes of the Jesuit Fathers. The Amerindian converts are ideally expected to abandon the entire cultural apparatus that has governed their lives before the arrival of the Europeans. This is a very demanding approach, yet remains less coercive than the
Spanish variant as practiced via the *requerimiento* of 1512, to take just one famous example\(^5\). French Jesuits tend to lament the lack of staying power of the *conversions* they so desperately need to ensure continued support from France, while not taking violent or extreme action to remedy the waywardness of their flock. Conversion is not necessarily seen as a permanent agreement to the Amerindians. What may have just been humoring a stranger, an element of the reputed and stereotypical hospitality of many Indigenous groups, is interpreted as having much more permanent significance by the first Jesuit missionaries to North America. Linguistic barriers make it difficult to ascertain how much of the liturgical meaning of conversion and baptism is accurately transmitted into the language of the Micmac inhabiting what comes to be known as St. John’s, the tribe and region described in this excerpt.

Two perspectives are expressed simultaneously in the passage, though both are negatively inflected as is Biard’s opinion of Micmac culture, generally. Firstly, Biard does recognize the existence of societal and religious elements in Micmac society. He refers specifically to the customs, ceremonies, habits, and ways of the Micmac people (“*coustumes, ceremonies, us, façons*”). This recognition, however fleeting, is in opposition to the prevailing assumptions of the privative mode. This is the ambiguity of this Amerindian representation. Biard mixes an awareness of Micmac religion and culture with the disavowal of that civilization from a Eurocentric perspective. Though Biard does minimally concede that the Micmac do possess some of the components of a true society, he does so reluctantly and while

---

\(^{5}\) J.H. Elliot explains: “Since a favourable reaction of the indigenous population to such a take-over could hardly be taken for granted, their willingness to submit peacefully came to be tested by the formal reading aloud to them of the *requerimiento*, the notorious legal document drawn up in 1512 by the eminent jurist Jean López de Palacios Rubios, and routinely used on all expeditions of discovery and conquest, including that of Hernán Cortés. The document, after briefly outlining Christian doctrine and the history of the human race, explained that Saint Peter and his successors possessed jurisdiction over the whole world, and had granted the newly discovered lands to Ferdinand and Isabella and their heirs, to whom the local population must submit, or face the waging of a just war against them” (*Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830*, 11).
simultaneously discounting their culture. The simultaneity of savagery and civilization is expressed most clearly when Father Biard equates savage inclinations with Micmac culture or lifeways. Admitting that they are not living without any morals or customs whatever, Biard distances his discourse from the typical, foundational discourse of the privative mode, while still retaining its overall timbre. The privative mode is articulated primarily around the concept of lack, of being without certain elements of European societies and cultural formations. However, Biard represents the culture that he concedes to the Micmac as corrupted and inferior. In this way, Biard’s Micmac representation partakes of both the Noble and Ignoble Savage myths. While they may be constricted by a system of morays, those morays are savage (Ignoble) in nature and thereby disqualified. If they do practice customs and ceremonies, these are contaminated by vice and immorality. After these qualified and ambiguous characterizations of Micmac society, Biard’s description shifts towards something that more closely resembles the classical privative mode.

After commenting upon the religious and cultural elements of the Micmac world, Biard proceeds to deny them, falling unambiguously into the privative mode. He insists on the unknowability of what he professes, while going ahead and professing it anyway. The conjectural nature of his discourse functions ironically as a means to further strengthen Biard’s positioning of Micmac culture as inherently inferior to its French Catholic counterpart. Using dismissiveness as a rhetorical strategy, the unknowability of Micmac cultural realities is evidence of their lack of value and importance. This is the ideological framework that informs the privative mode: dismissiveness and conjecture. Biard tells his readers that no distinction can be made in relation to defined temporalities or to spiritual practices typical of Catholic

---

52 This is a common feature of early writings on the Amerindian in French.
conceptions of ritual and religious services and devotions. As in the writings of Thevet and Léry, the factor that ultimately determines the religiosity of the cultural practices of the Amerindian are outwardly evident exercises of faith as seen through the lens of Catholic orthodoxy. The Amerindian schedule of spiritual life is not recognized as such because it does not conform to structures that govern the Catholic liturgical calendar. This goes some way towards explaining how the Jesuits can detail at great length the spirituality of the Amerindian groups they encounter while they are simultaneously unable to see that Native religion is as complete and complex as their own. This is redolent of the ambiguous nature of much of the religious discourse the French generate during the seventeenth century concerning Amerindian societies and religions. Representations of the Amerindian in the privative mode often recognize religious and culture systems at work in the very Native societies that Jesuits seek to portray as lacking these very social structures.

In the writings of Pierre Biard as part of the early missions to what becomes Acadia, there are many elements of representation of the Amerindian that echo the mythic paradigms that I introduced in the first chapter of this study. However, tactics for writing about the Native do change and evolve, as well. Concluding a document addressed to Father Christophe Baltazar in Paris, reporting on conditions on the ground in the fledgling mission, Biard breaks with some of the representational models of the past while simultaneously employing some established techniques of portraying the original inhabitants of the Americas. In many of the writings of what one might call commercial or political explorers, such as Cartier and Champlain, one finds descriptions of the land that concentrate on fertility and abundance. This is a central aspect of Amerindian representation as related to the natural environment in my discussion of the superlative mode. As we see in the example of the superlative mode taken from Cartier’s account
of his first voyage in 1534, the privative mode is often an accompanying component of that
particular articulation of the natural environment of the Americas. Specifically, concerning
religion, Cartier concludes that the Amerindian traders he encounters will be easily converted to
the Christian faith as a logical conclusion of his articulation of the privative description. In short,
Cartier sees the Savage as so abject that they will surely accept French society and religion
wholesale. In this formulation, the ease with which the Amerindian will be converted to
Catholicism is also portrayed as part and parcel of the negative privative description, yet another
proof of their inferiority. In the writings of Biard there is a shift away from the image of
Amerindian peoples as easy converts.

In the early stages of the mission, Biard adopts the practice of group baptisms or
conversions. However, as we have seen in the preceding example, the Native quickly reassumes
his role in Amerindian society without the abandonment of his lifestyle, a criterion that the Jesuit
missionaries consider as requisite for true conversion. Jesuit perceptions of the readiness to listen
respectfully and to nominally accept what the priests propose, itself a part of the image of the
Amerindian as welcoming and hospitable, may simply be the Amerindians being kind to their
strange, new guests. In other words, the Natives likely do not see conversion as anything more
than respecting another’s vision or explanation of the cosmos. The linguistic question is another
factor that must be considered. It is hard to assess how much intelligible intercommunication is
actually happening during these early stages. Biard, for example, repeatedly makes illusions to
his own linguistic incompetence, raising doubts about the accuracy of his accounts in general.
What happens when the Jesuits realize that these large scale conversions aren’t really

---

53 For the full discussion of the superlative mode and my analysis of Cartier’s iteration thereof see chapter 1
section 3.
54 Respectful hospitality is a recurring image of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas throughout the period of
this study.
conversions at all? They adopt a new strategy. They begin to insist that the neophyte have a certain level of knowledge of Catholic dogma and beliefs, as well as a demonstrated willingness to live their lives differently from the lifestyles that their fellow Amerindians continue to embrace. The shift away from Cartier’s image and the early practice of large scale conversions, takes shape for the first time in Biard’s writings (Thwaites, Vol. 1, 170). In relation to the Jesuits’ mission, the difficulty of converting the Amerindian becomes a tool of propaganda. After all, if converting the Amerindians requires so little effort, the ecclesiastical hierarchy, as well as other European sponsors and patrons, will be much less likely to grant requests for further funding and material support. Continuing the tradition of imbricating Nature and the Native epistemologically, Biard makes a parallel between the cultural difficulties of converting the Amerindian and the environmental challenges associated with that conversion, “si nous considerons le pays, ce n’est qu’une forest, sans autre commodité pour la vie que celles qu’on apportera de France” (Thwaites, Vol. 1, 170, 172). Here the need for monetary aid is explicitly alluded to and Biard goes on to describe this particular Native nation as a part of the forest, “Elle est, dis-je, sauvage, courant les bois” (Thwaites, Vol. 1, 172). Situating the Native as element of the forest is not anodyne. Throughout my discussion I have been highlighting the foundational valence of myth as an epistemological and textual strategy for understanding the original inhabitants of the Americas. Forests are a primordial site of myth in the Western mind. Robert Pogue Harrison, in his perspicacious monograph *Forests: Shadows of Civilization* establishes a fundamental connection between forest and fear in European thought:

…many untold memories, ancient fears and dreams, popular traditions, and more recent myths and symbols are going up in the fires of deforestation which we hear so much about today and which trouble us for reasons we often do not fully understand rationally but which we respond to on some other level of cultural memory. In the history of Western civilization forests represent an
outlying realm of opacity which has allowed that civilization to estrange itself, enchant itself, terrify itself, ironize itself, in short to project into the forest’s shadows its secret and innermost anxieties (Preface).

The tradition of the liminal position of forest haunting the Western cast of mind as articulated by Harrison is readily transferred to the Amerindian. Biard’s fears and anxieties about the wooded coastal lands of Acadia are enmeshed with his (mis)understanding of the Native peoples he encounters there. Harrison’s use of the concept of opacity to characterize the symbolic signification of the forest in the West is also pertinent for my analysis here. Because Jesuits live in such close proximity to Amerindians often over long periods of time, the frames of Noble and Ignoble Savage become blurred without entirely losing their essential mythic qualities. Slightly different from oscillation which implies a shift from one paradigm to another, ambiguity plays an important role in the articulation of the Native in the religious reports of the seventeenth century. Ambiguity highlights the uncertainty of the French author faced with the Indigenous, while simultaneously underscoring the polysemousness of the Native in the French cultural imaginary. The imbrication of the Amerindian and the American forest is not benign, rather it constitutes a typical feature of colonial discourse. As Deloughrey and Handley rightly assert in Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment, “to deny colonial and environmental histories as mutually constitutive misses the central role the exploitation of natural resources plays in any imperial project” (Introduction). Biard and the Jesuits are, of course, complicit in France’s imperial project in the Maritime Provinces and beyond. Deloughrey and Handley insist on the violent nature of the decoupling of Native histories attached to the land and colonial representation of Indigenous peoples and the environment. Biard’s linking of the Native to the mythic forest designates both as future victims of colonial violence at the hands of the French.
Change and stasis are reflected in Biard’s texts. Native and Nature are equated as in preceding works, however, textually and at the level of practice, large scale easy conversions (in keeping with the image created by Cartier’s *récits de voyage*) give way to harder won individual cases, from both the theological and financial points of view. What effect might this change have on the overall image of the Amerindian in the French cultural imaginary? The representations just discussed engage with the two prevailing archetypes associated with the Amerindian in French literature: the Noble and the Ignoble Savage.

The two images are constantly repeated in texts that deal with the Natives of the Americas. Additionally, in the same description elements of both are often present. For instance, in the trope of easy convertibility to the Christian faith, there is simultaneously a reference to the innocence and depravity of the Amerindian. On one side of this formulation, the Amerindian is portrayed as an innocent child awaiting the kind and wise European parent figure to guide them to salvation. This is the Noble Savage, the innocent child. On the other side of this formulation, the Amerindian is depicted as desperately in need of salvation and European guidance because of their lack of morality. This is the Ignoble Savage, or the wild man. I am referring once again to the ambiguity that becomes prevalent Jesuit accounts of Indigenous peoples. I will now examine specific examples of this phenomenon in the *Relations*. In the Biard example under discussion above the negative inflection, or the myth of the Ignoble Savage, takes the traditional form of the privative mode:

La nation est sauvage, vagabonde, mal habituée, rare et d’assez peu de gens. Elle est, dis-je, sauvage, courant les bois, sans lettres, sans police, sans bonnes mœurs ; elle est vagabonde, sans aucun arrest, ni des maisons ni de parenté, ni des possessions ni de patrie ; elle est mal habituée, gens extremement paresseux, gourmans, irreligieux, traitres, cruels en vengeance, et adonnés à toute luxure, hommes et femmes, les hommes ayant plusieurs femmes et les abandonnant à autrui.
et les femmes ne leur servant que d’esclaves qu’ils battent et assomment de coups, ans qu’elles osent se plaindre ; et après avoir esté demy meurtries, s’il plaist au meurtrier, il faut qu’elles rient et luy fassent caresses (Thwaites, Vol. 1, 172).

As we have seen in the first chapter of this study, the articulation of the Amerindian takes place via a listing of negative features, or societal elements perceived to be lacking from a Eurocentric perspective. In the first chapter, the nomadism of the Amerindian was referred to in an oblique fashion. Here, Biard explicitly makes a reference to the Native’s non-sedentary lifestyle as an integral element of his iteration of the privative mode. Reflecting European land usage norms, Biard includes the idea of personal possessions into the list regarding stable, stationary homes. The lack of personal possessions is a motif that reemerges with regularity in the literary history of the representation of the Amerindian. Of course, this image of the Amerindian as someone who does not have personal possessions is simply erroneous. Ironically, in the Biard text, in the section immediately preceding the citation quoted above, the author explains how the Micmac burn all of the personal possessions of the deceased as part of their mortuary rituals. As is often the case with early travel writers and missionaries, coherence and consistency are lacking. Having established personal property as an integral part of a religious practice (another element that Biard attacks in the privative discussion above), Biard then claims that it is absent in Micmac society.

Ambiguity arises when there are inflections of the Noble and Ignoble Savage mythic systems vying in the same (con)text. Not only does the author present the concept of personal property and then immediately deny its existence in Micmac culture, but the movement of inconsistency can also occur in the opposite direction. For example, elements that Biard wishes

55 See my discussion of the superlative mode in the third section of chapter 1.
to show as lacking in regards to the Amerindian group under discussion in this passage are the notions of family and country. Asocial descriptions are another recurring motif in the history of the literary representation of the Amerindian\(^56\). In this particular example, the privative description of the Amerindian as lacking familial and societal connections with other members of the group is immediately refuted by the author himself. In a subsequent section of Biard’s text situated immediately after the citation above, the Jesuit Father mocks the Micmac for their pride and, according to him, faulty assumption of their own superiority vis-à-vis the French. One of the most salient features of Biard’s diatribe regarding Micmac pretentions centers on the notion of social solidarity:

Ils s’estiment meilleurs : « Car, disent-ils, vous ne cessez de vous entrebattre et quereller l’un l’autre ; nous vivons en paix. Vous estes envious les uns des autres, et détractez les uns des autres ordinairement ; vous estes larrons et trompeurs ; vous estes convoiteux, sans liberalité et misericorde : quant à nous, si nous avons un morceau du pain, nous le partissons entre nous. »

(Thwaites, Vol. 1, 172).

The Indians ridicule the French for quarrelling with and stealing from one another. The Micmac, in contrast, live in peace and communion with one another. The Amerindians, who are quoted in this excerpt, a not uncommon occurrence in religious and travel writings of the period, continue to criticize the French for being envious of each other as well as speaking badly about their compatriots. In an interesting reversal, the Natives turn one of the most ubiquitous images of the Amerindian around and denounce the French as thieves and liars. One can read the reference made by the Micmac to the Frenchmen’s lack of generosity and charity as a direct

\(^{56}\) One of the most influential examples is Rousseau’s *Discours sur l’inégalité* which portrays the Amerindian in the state of nature as leading a solitary life similar to that of a wild animal. Rousseau’s representations of the Native will be an important part of my analysis in the third chapter of this study.
reference to the tropes regarding Amerindian hospitality and cruelty, as well. Here it is the French who are presented as savage and unforgiving. Finally, the Micmac claim that they themselves share everything they have with one another and support other members of the group, while it is the French who lack any social cohesiveness.

*Ambiguity* is created by this passage because it directly refutes the author’s own claims in the previous section of the text, creating a blurred image of the Native. The writer asserts that the Indigenous have no family (“sans parenté”) and no country (“ni patrie”). However, in the subsequent excerpt, the reality of a strong social bond and solidarity emerges even though the author wishes to present the Amerindian point of view in an ironic, mocking fashion. As in the first chapter (I am referring here to the final part of Montaigne’s “Des Cannibales” essay), criticisms of French society often find their expression via quoting the Native. In the Biard example, the Jesuit Father seeks to discount the Native perspective. Recording and reproducing the Amerindian point of view can be interpreted as undermining this objective, however. Therefore, a critique of internecine French greed and violence emerges alongside an affirmation of Amerindian social cohesion and solidarity. Interestingly, this notion of social solidarity is often repeated in the Jesuit Relations when speaking about the Montagnais or Huron peoples, becoming a stereotyped image of the Native in its own right. The coexistence of opposing images, the archetypal example being those of the Noble and Ignoble Savage, creates *ambiguity*. The Amerindian, as he emerges in written texts in French, is in many ways undefinable. Changing inflections of the Native lead to an imaginary of the Amerindian that is constantly shifting shape and form. *Ambiguity* is also a defining feature of the letters of Marie de

---

57 One is tempted to see the privative mode inversed and wheeled at the French in the mouths of the Micmac quoted by Biard. The Micmac assert that the French lack solidarity and brotherliness toward one another. The reversals apparent in this passage point to the agency and resistance of Native peoples against Western epistemologies.
l’Incarnation, one of the founding Sisters of the Ursuline monastery and seminary of Québec, recently canonized by Pope Francis in April of 2014.

Marie de l’Incarnation is one of the most important sources for the early period of colonization and proselytization of New France. One of the few women writers who have left behind an extensive corpus of texts dating from the seventeenth century, she is comparable to her Hexagonal contemporary, Madame de Sévigné in her prolificacy. Marie de l’Incarnation’s letters gravitate around at least two major axes: religious matters and what one might qualify as practical matters. She is a great administrator and sees to the management of the Ursuline house with quite a bit of success during her tenure there as Mother Superior. Editors of her letters traditionally divide them according to the large divisions already mentioned: les lettres spirituelles and les lettres historiques. One can glean much information about historical information from the spiritual letters and vice versa, however.

The specific example of ambiguity that I will now discuss concerning the letters of Marie de l’Incarnation centers on the representation of the young Amerindian girls resident at the Ursuline convent in comparison with the representation of the Iroquois peoples. A common practice of authors when describing Amerindian peoples involves a distinction between different Indigenous groups, often taking a binary form wherein one group is positively depicted while the other is inflected negatively. In New France during the seventeenth century, the primary group that played the role of Amerindian enemy for the French is the Iroquois Confederacy.

The Iroquois presence in the letters of Marie de l’Incarnation is aleatory but never forgotten or completely absent. While the Iroquois aren’t necessarily the sole focus of any of the letters individually, taken collectively, they are a reoccurring liminal presence, as they are in
military relation to the colony itself. In other words, the Iroquois presence in the letters of Marie de l’Incarnation functions as a periodic menace and source of fear, one that never entirely disappears from the conscience of the reader who addresses the letters as one comprehensive text rather than as separate epistles. Before the Great Peace of Montreal in 1701, the Iroquois are, in point of historical fact, the most implacable enemy of the French colonial project in New France. What is significant for the current study are the differences in the techniques for representing the Iroquois in comparison with the representation of groups that are seen as more “civilized”. Here, more “civilized” often means more tractable or already involved in a relationship of (inter)dependence vis-à-vis the French, either through trade or the missionary efforts of the Catholic Church in Quebec. To illustrate a positive image of the Amerindian in the letters of Marie de l’Incarnation, I will take the example of the young female seminarians that the Ursulines seek to educate, a transformation which entails the abandonment of their families and lifeways in favor of French religious and cultural practices.

One of the reasons why Marie de l’Incarnation’s letters are of such interest is that they provide one of the only examples of sources that speak at length about young Amerindian girls and women. In travel accounts and Jesuit texts, the young female Amerindian is usually not as salient a part of the narrative. Therefore, the letters offer unique insights, as well as a different perspective from most representations of the Native in the other texts and genres that have been examined thus far in this study. Once again, the realities of the production of the letters are a crucial contextual factor that determines how one understands and interprets the Sister’s portrayal of young Amerindian women.

---

58 Gabriel Sagard’s *Histoire de Canada* is a notable exception to that generalization.
In order to convey a positive message to her ecclesiastical superiors and to potential financial sponsors of the Ursulines’ efforts, Marie de l’Incarnation opts to represent the young Amerindian women she seeks to convert in the seminary by employing the established trope of the myth of the Noble Savage. As a part of that representational model, the young girls from the various tribes that the author herself lists as the Algonquin, Montagnais, Abenaki, and peoples of the Saguenay region are primarily portrayed as pure and innocent (Marie de l’Incarnation, 344). Within Marie de l’Incarnation’s articulation of both the Noble and Ignoble Savage frames the author relies on a variety of animal comparisons to create impressions of simplicity, docility or, sometimes, wildness, or what she qualifies as barbarism. The use of animal imagery to represent the Amerindian is not new in the seventeenth century. From the wild man of the forest and cynocephalic (literally, “dog-head”) to the Patagonian giants and the Armouchiquois, animalizing the Native is an important part of the history of the representation of the Indigenous of the Americas in European letters (Dickason, *The Myth of the Savage: And the Beginnings of French Colonialism in the Americas*, 63-84, Lestringant, *Cannibals: The Discovery and Representation of the Cannibal from Columbus to Jules Verne*, 11-32). The ontological connection between the Amerindian and the animal kingdom that animal comparisons presuppose is yet another feature of the intertwining of the Native with the non-human natural world in the epistemological cultural imaginary of the French. In the religious texts of the seventeenth century (as well as in other genres in other time periods), the overlapping of the Amerindian and his natural environment takes principally two forms. Correlations with animal species constitute one of the main articulations of this motif. The Native can be directly juxtaposed vis-à-vis a particular non-human animal, a move that careens in the opposite direction of the anthropomorphizing inclination that has been such a dominant paradigm in the description
of animals, or described as living in the same material conditions as an animal. The second form that the interweaving of the original inhabitants of the Americas and the natural world often takes is that of situating the Amerindian in spaces that are determined to be wild and uncivilized themselves. Two terms that one encounters recurrently are forest and desert. Both the “forêt” and the “désert” in the French texts of the early modern period (and beyond) are geographies that can elicit fear and uncertainty. Localizing the Amerindian in these places of panic and solitude establishes textually an ontological link between the inhabitants of these areas and the reductive signifiers that signify emotional and epistemological categories that are void of any objective truth value. In short, the code evoked by employing “forêt” and “désert” in conjunction with the peoples that live in these regions, to take only two of the most common and illustrative examples, is shorthand for a hierarchizing discourse that situates the Amerindian outside of the space of humanity that the French occupy. In both of these forms, the dovetailing of the Amerindian and Nature is typically inflected as a negative, seeking to present the Native as inherently inferior and wild. However, in the letters of Marie de l’Incarnation animalized images of the Amerindian are commonly employed to signify purity rather than savagery.

Except for a rare example wherein Marie de l’Incarnation refers to the possibility of transforming the Iroquois from wolves into lambs, this particular author uses animal comparisons chiefly to evoke the innocence of Amerindian girls (70). In point of fact, the sheep is the metaphor most commonly used by Marie de l’Incarnation to describe the Amerindian seminarians she seeks to francize in the Ursuline monastery of Quebec. For the Mother Superior, the innocence associated with the image of the sheep is often linked semantically and symbolically with the prevailing metaphor of Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God:
Il y a des filles sauvages qui n’ont rien de la barbarie. Elles perdent tout ce qu’elles ont de sauvage si tôt qu’elles sont lavées des eaux du saint baptéme en sorte que ceux qui les ont veües auparavant courir les bois comme des bêtes sont ravis & pleurent de joye de les voir douces comme des brebis s’approcher de la sainte table pour y recevoir le véritable agneau (Marie de l’Incarnation, 338).

Not only does the designation of sheep, or more specifically ewes in this instance, share a genealogical relationship with Jesus, referred to here as the real lamb, at the semiotic level, but another important feature of Marie de l’Incarnation’s idiosyncratic use of the sheep metaphor also emerges in this example. The purity of the sheep is linked in her mind to the neophyte specifically. In this citation, it is the cleansing baptismal waters that make this transformation possible. The author lays out the same epistemological framework implying that only through acceptance of the Catholic faith and teachings can the Amerindian be understood as clean and good in other representations of seminarians throughout her letters (Marie de l’Incarnation 323-4, 325, 330, 332). Through conversion, nearly always alluded to via the synecdoche of baptism in the religious texts of New France of the seventeenth century, the Amerindian seminarians lose their essentially savage character. This raises an important question regarding the representation of the Amerindian in Marie de l’Incarnation’s letters: While one can see a connection with the tradition of the Noble Savage myth in the portrayal of young Amerindian women as pure and innocent sheep, what purpose does the utilization of the model actually serve? In Marie de l’Incarnation’s letters, the sheep metaphor functions as a signifier in the religious language of the Catholic Church signifying the success of the proselytizing mission. In other words, the sheep or lamb imagery is that of the tamed or Noble Savage. The Ignoble Savage is described in this example through the ontological intertwining of Native and Nature. The Ignoble Savage state of the Amerindian girl is linked both to the geography of the forest and to the animals that inhabit that space. Here, the two archetypal narrative strategies used by authors of the early modern
period are employed by Marie de l’Incarnation to create textual ambiguity. Evoking several French and Catholic signifying codes concerning the Amerindian simultaneously, the passage places the Amerindian girls, first outside of humanity and, then, through the conversion sign par excellence of baptism, situates them in that privileged state of the *Bon Sauvage*, characterized by an enviable innocence and malleability. The image serves the purpose of the Ursuline’s letters by presenting the mission as recording immediate and total success. The once wild animal, or Ignoble Savage Amerindian girl, is instantaneously transmogrified into the docile (a term Marie de l’Incarnation uses *ad nauseum* to describe the neophytes) sheep. One needn’t be an expert on the histories of contact, missionary efforts, colonialism, settler states, immigration, or the *mission civilisatrice* to know that the Sister’s claims are undoubtedly exaggerated and deformed in order to assure continued financial and material support from France. Given the qualified nature of many of the instantiations of the Noble Savage myth in the letters, it is unsurprising to note that within the system of animalizing the Amerindian in Marie de l’Incarnation’s writing, there are conspicuous divergences in the ways in which the author portrays Amerindian groups depending on those groups’ relationship with the French colony and missionaries.

The central issue that brings Marie de l’Incarnation to North America is proselytization. Her sole purpose in New France is the conversion of the Amerindian peoples. She repeatedly expresses her willingness, if not ardent desire, to die and be martyred in order to win souls for the Catholic Church. As I demonstrated above, the overarching importance of conversion

---

59 The concept of malleability is an important marker of the Amerindian in the religious texts of the seventeenth century. It continues to have valence in subsequent representations of the Amerindian, as well. What I will refer to in this study as potentiality is a necessary philosophical premise that undergirds the *mission civilisatrice*’s ideology of assimilation and cultural genocide. Potentiality emerges as a direct consequence, and in conjunction with, the narrative modes of oscillation and ambiguity. It is important to note that Native potentiality is an illusive quality that is essentially defined as never being realized. Perpetually confined to a frustrated state of never quite becoming fully European or White, Indigenous peoples are ensconced in the logics of paternalism and dependency typical of settler colonial politics.
becomes a part of her epistemology regarding the Amerindian, only after baptism can the Native be described as pure (as sheep). The Iroquois, however, are often vilified and demonized in the letters. I’ve already mentioned the use of the wolf to metaphorically signify the violence that the Iroquois represent for Marie de l’Incarnation and her fellow colonials (70). The image of the Iroquois that the author creates in her letters is not one of forgiveness and inclusion, as one might reasonably expect of a devoted proselytizer; rather, it is an image of ferocity and unpredictability.

As I mentioned above the Iroquois are the most inveterate enemy of the French during the time period covered in the letters. Allied with the English, they constitute a buffer state between the two colonial powers if one subscribes to the typical Eurocentric historiographical point of view. The Iroquois, however, likely see themselves as an independent nation which has no truly binding relationship with either the English or the French. The Iroquois Confederacy does maintain a more long-lasting and amicable relationship with the English, despite the fact that they do not conceive of the relationship in the same, narrow way that the English do (according to European conventions of treaty and military alliance). For Marie de l’Incarnation, the Iroquois are a threat. The military, political, and economic enmity that existed between the French colonists and the Iroquois Nations inform how the Iroquois are represented textually. Shifts in the representational model used to describe Amerindian groups along binary lines is a common feature one encounters in the history of writing about the Native in French texts. The preference of authors for groups they are in contact with and have more experience with (it is noteworthy that these familiar groups often were the only reason that the French were able to survive from an alimentary and, sometimes, military point of view, especially in earlier periods) is an almost universal aspect of the representation of the Amerindian in French literature.
Though an obvious outcome of concrete political realities, the shifting representations of the Native constitute an axis and division that one must deal with when analyzing the image of the Amerindian in French.

In addition to the passage that squarely equates the Iroquois with wolves, one of the important ways in which Marie de l’Incarnation singles out the Iroquois as more redolent of the Ignoble Savage mythic paradigm than the Algonquin converts she is directly involved with at the monastery is to portray them as an obstacle to Christianity and the missionary efforts that collectively embody her theological ideals concerning any Franco-Amerindian cultural reciprocity:

Et enfin les empechemens que les Hiroquois aportent au christianisme, ne nous permettant pas d’avoir comme auparavant des filles sauvages… …à vous dire la vérité ce point est extrememement penible & abattant… …Si ces hostilités devoient durer peu de temps, l’esprit feroit un effort pour vaincre cette repugnance ; mais la mort viendra peut-être avant la paix (Marie de l’Incarnation 156-7).

In this excerpt, two of the most prevailing images of the Iroquois in the letters are presented together. Certainly the violent menace the Iroquois represented to the author is her most consistent complaint in the portrayals of the Confederation, indicated here as fear associated with her very survival. Depictions of the Iroquois as a looming menace threatening the continued viability of the New France colonial project are repeated throughout the letters. In one extreme example of panic, Marie de l’Incarnation even claims that without aid from France or divine intervention the colony will surely be lost, emphasizing the seriousness of what she reports by insisting that what she says is far from an exaggeration (130). Another role that the Iroquois play in the French colonial setting, according to the passage above, is to act as a
hindrance to the spread of the Catholic faith among the indigenous population (it is, after all, at this time that the Iroquois nearly destroy a large number of the Huron peoples living in the Great Lakes region and the mission to Huronia is effectively terminated). Any force that impedes the missionary effort would surely conjure images of the Devil and his terrestrial influence, a motif invoked invariably in the religious texts of the period. The cumulative image of the Iroquois that surfaces from a reading of the letters of Marie de l’Incarnation is a group whose violence and anti-Christian activities situate them outside of humanity and civilization. One of the conceptualizations that has underscored representational and epistemological visions of the Native from the period of early contacts to the present day is exemplified in Marie de l’Incarnation’s image of the Iroquois as road block to progress. Many critics have dismantled the neoliberal, extractive capitalist underpinnings of liberal ideologies of progress in relationship with Indigenous peoples. In the context of Amerindian representation in French, it is common practice to present Native groups who resist progress as nonredemptible, as Ignoble Savage, while portraying Indigenous peoples who might appear more tractable and willing to accept the power differentials imposed by colonial regimes in the mythic Noble Savage mode.

One of the techniques employed to signify the difference between the Iroquois and more acceptable Amerindian groups is a lexical distinction. I refer here to the use of the word barbare. In short, all Amerindians are typically included in the blanket term sauvage. However, some authors, including Marie de l’Incarnation, insert barbare, or its nominal form barbarie, to differentiate between the Noble (often connoted by sauvage) and the Ignoble (denoted by

---

60 Glen Sean Coulthard’s Red Skin, White Masks offers important insights into the insidious quality of liberal practices of ‘recognition’, for example. Scott Lauria Morgensen’s “The Biopolitics of Settler Colonialism: Right Here, Right Now” suggests that the ‘elimination’ of Indigenous peoples is part and parcel of amalgamation and ‘inclusion’ in the political economy of the West.

61 It should be noted that the appearance of submissiveness is, of course, subjective and emanates from the French author. It should not be assumed that any judgment can be made as to Native viewpoints from a reading of European categorizations that do not take Indigenous perspectives into account.
barbare and its various inflections) Savage. Additionally, Marie de l’Incarnation does choose different animal species to characterize the non-Christian Amerindians who are not members of the Iroquois peoples. As discussed above, the sheep image is reserved primarily for neophytes, indicating their new, clean identity which only materializes after completing the rite of baptism, the marker for true conversion. When describing the non-Iroquoian Natives, the Ursuline Sister typically compares the Amerindian to innocuous non-human animals. Two examples are the squirrel and the deer (Marie de l’Incarnation 258, 355). In comparison to the wolf, the squirrel and the deer are hardly threatening. Therefore, to conclude the discussion of the letters of Marie de l’Incarnation and the representations of varying Amerindian groups one finds therein, the shifting metaphors that this particular author employs are illustrative of narrative strategies that serve to discriminate between peoples that are epistemologically distinct from both the Catholic and French perspectives. One can explore the shifting nature of the representation of the original inhabitants of the Americas in the writings of a single author. However, these changing motifs also occur metatextually, or intertextually when one examines the writings of several authors about one people at roughly the same period. I will now address representations of the Huron peoples in the writings of the Récollet Gabriel Sagard in *L’histoire du Canada* and the Jesuit Jean de Brébeuf over twenty years later in the Jesuit Relations in a text titled, *Relation de ce qui s’est passé dans le pays des Hurons en l’année 1636*.

One of the most salient points of divergence that one finds in Sagard and Brébeuf’s texts is simply a fundamental difference in each author’s overall attitude toward Amerindian peoples in general. Brébeuf remains inveterately attached to an epistemological framework that places the Amerindian in a permanent subaltern relationship vis-à-vis the Christian. Brébeuf admits, at times, that the Natives he is living with are of sound mind and capable of reason; however, he
never allows himself to slide into outright admiration of the Indigenous groups he seeks to convert (11, 85, 145, 148-9). One exception may be what Brébeuf describes as the eloquence of the Amerindian peoples with whom he was in contact (164-70). While both Brébeuf and Sagard travel to North America in order to win souls to the Catholic faith, the two authors have opposite visions of the task at hand. In Brébeuf’s *Relation de ce qui s’est passé au pays des Hurons en l’année 1636*, the reader is left with a rather pessimistic impression of the mission and the relations between the French missionaries and the Wyandots. The following passage illustrates Brébeuf’s perspective on Amerindians and the obstacles facing the assimilation of the Native:

> Ce n’est pas qu’il n’y ait parmi ces Peuples beaucoup d’erreurs, de superstitions, de vices, & de tres-mauvaises coustumes à déraciner, encore plus que nous ne nous estions figurez au commencement, ainsi qu’il se verra au cours de ceste Relation (3).

As we have already seen in the discussion of the Relation of Pierre Biard, the Jesuit vision of conversion is not merely linked to the acceptance of certain dogma or theological principles. Rather, a process of total assimilation is presumed, catechesis and baptism being only a first step in the expected complete disavowal of Amerindian lifeways. This point of view is made explicit by Brébeuf here, notably through the verb “déraciner” (to eradicate) employed in reference to the knowledge (“erreurs”), religion (“superstitions”), and cultural practices (“vices et tres-mauvaises coustumes”) of the Wyandot. As my interpretation of the passage suggests, the epistemological framework espoused by Brébeuf leads to a plenary inversion of the entire Amerindian *Weltanschauung*. Georges E. Sioui, a Wyandot writer and historian, in his...

\[62\] Wyandot is the group’s endonym (the name they use to designate their own group), whereas Huron is the French exonym (a name attributed to a group externally) for this particular Indigenous group. I will use both terms in this study.
monograph *Les Wendats: Une civilisation méconnue*, describes the Jesuit portrayal of his people, as embodied by the Brébeuf example, in the following (very personal) terms:

Très tôt dans ma vie, mon esprit, pourtant naturellement porté au rêve, s’éveilla au devoir qui m’incomberait d’aller à la découverte et à la défense de la dignité de mon peuple, que d’héroïques et saintes mains avaient, surtout au XVIIe siècle, jetée au détritus de la civilisation européenne et chrétienne (1).

Sioui’s work seeks to debunk what he refers to as the myth of cultural evolutionism that places Native peoples who envision the world in a circular, universally connected manner in a position of inferiority vis-à-vis a linear, progressist Eurocentric epistemological model (7). One of the central points that Sioui seeks to establish is the higher level of environmental sustainability of the circular, animistic Amerindian view in comparison with the extractive, accumulative perspective of the French and other European colonial powers (42). From a moralistic viewpoint, the trenchant distinctions that characterize Brébeuf’s negative judgment of the Amerindian in the excerpt above are in keeping with European monotheism which prizes moral absolutes (39-40). Wyandot society differs remarkably from this extreme type of purism. The Wyandot people fully recognize and incorporate the frailties and inconsistencies of human existence into their outlook. They do not adhere to a rigidity associated with the binary moral code of Catholicism. The world, from the Wyandot point of view, “n’est donc, ni ne doit être, ni bon ni mauvais” (Sioui 335). The division of the moral sphere into the clearly drawn opposing camps of Good and Evil does not make practical sense to the Huron people. Therefore, the self-righteous denunciation of their knowledge, religion, and practices that emerges in Brébeuf’s writing is nonsensical from the perspective of those he writes about. Georges E. Sioui’s work offers a uniquely invaluable voice that can speak to the characterizations of the Wyandot in the
French texts of the seventeenth century. While one can find echoes of a negatively inflected vision of the Huron in the writings of Sagard, his attitude towards Indigenous peoples can be qualified as more open and respectful than that of Brébeuf⁶³.

Gabriel Sagard is most well-known as the author of the texts *Grand voyage du pays des Hurons* and *L’histoire du Canada*. I take my examples here from the latter, because it is a much longer, more detailed account of the same time period and the same Wyandot peoples. Sagard is a Récoclet friar. The Franciscan Order of the Récollets is quite different from the Society of Jesus founded by Ignatius of Loyola. Understanding the differences associated with the institutions that produced the two authors I am comparing can help to elucidate the philosophical differences that one encounters in their narratives, although some contradictions do exist based on individual idiosyncrasies. Although the Récollets did not ultimately win their battle with the Jesuits to gain hegemonic control of missionary efforts to the Indigenous populations of what becomes New France, they were influential in the early period of the colony, notably before the Kirke Brothers’ invasion and the brief English occupation of Quebec (1629-1632). The Récollets are excluded from participating in missionary expeditions to Huronia and the rest of the interior after the colony is once again under French control in 1632, until they are eventually allowed to establish a base of proselytizing operations in Acadia in 1670 (Dickason and McNab, *Canada’s First Nations*, 101-2, Grant 26, 50). One of the reasons the Récollets have trouble gaining support for their mission is their inflexibility toward the merchant class, who represent from a practical standpoint, the *raison d’être* of the nascent colony. The Récollets are unable to remain tight-lipped about the greed of the traders and the abuse the Amerindians face at their hands (Grant 8).

⁶³ It should be noted that I do not wish to imply that Sagard’s discourse is free from mythic inflections, nor from what would be described today as racist presumptions. Sagard may be more open-minded at times, yet he still espouses a hierarchical view of the Native, which necessarily places European culture above that of Indigenous peoples. Sagard wishes to replace Native culture with his own Christian way of life.
The Franciscan Orders are governed, after all, by a strong adherence to ascetic principles concerning personal property and the accumulation of terrestrial riches. This system of belief is largely inspired by their thirteenth century founder St. Francis of Assisi (Grant 7). While a disdain of material wealth opens some avenues for reciprocal understanding between the Récollets and the Amerindian peoples they seek to convert, the disadvantage of shunning worldly goods is an inability to meet Native expectations of gift-giving, a common element of most intercultural relations for many of the Indigenous groups of Northeast North America during this time period (Grant 8). Albeit financially sound and unopposed to dealing with the economic practicalities of running mission stations, including the accumulation of wealth, the Jesuits eventually are suspected themselves of “putting missionary before national objectives”, i.e. of putting conversions before profits (Grant 227). The conflict between religious initiatives and mercantile ones is a common feature of the history of the French imperial experience in Canada. In the end, however, “as the missionaries labored to transform Amerindians into Christians and Frenchmen, practical politics demanded that Frenchmen adapt to the ways of the Amerindians” (Dickason, The Myth of the Savage, 277). Economics wins out in French imperium. Religious indoctrination is forced to take a secondary role in comparison with the imperatives of the fur trade.

For Sagard, his idealized vision of piety and poverty, as based on the influence of the teachings of St. Francis of Assisi and the Récollet friars, make him a more open-minded, relativistic writer in his descriptions of the Wyandot (Grant 7, Sioui 261). Sagard does not disdain the material realities of Amerindian life in the same way that many Jesuit writers do, notably Brébeuf who characterizes the life that those he wishes to catechize in the following
terms, “La barbarie, l’ignorance, la pauvreté & la misere, qui rend [sic] la vie de ces Sauvages plus déplorable que la mort” (77).

As we have seen in the passages above from the Relation de ce qui s’est passé au pays des Hurons en l’année 1636 by Jean de Brébeuf, the author adopts a harsh view towards Native societies and practices. In some ways, this is antipodal to the Jesuit missionary credo generally. One of the reasons for the success of the Jesuit missionaries during the early modern period, not only in the Americas, but all over the globe, is their willingness to accept the modulation of certain Christian principles based on the beliefs and customs of the peoples they wish to convert (Dickason, The Myth of the Savage, 267). Tolerance of syncretism is one of the defining characteristics of Jesuit missionary deontology, whereas the Récollet mission is more rigid in its approach to Native lifeways (Grant 38). Inconsistencies do arise, however. Sagard is quite receptive and broad-minded given the Récollet’s stereotypical strictness. In addition, although the Jesuit was reputed to be somewhat more tolerant of Indigenous cultures, because of a perceived tendency to permit syncretic assimilation, this image of leniency is not entirely accurate. One of the roles intended for the Society of Jesus was to act as soldiers for Christ, at home in Europe and in the foreign missions. The founding Father of the order, St. Ignatius of Loyola’s “intention was to shape a body of men who could serve as shock troops of the church against indifference, Protestantism, and above all, heathenism” (Grant 5). Their mission in Canada is one of complete transformation of the Amerindian into a francized, Christianized version of him or herself (Dickason, The Myth of the Savage, 274). As I have already mentioned above, acceptance of theological precepts and the rite of baptism are not enough; the missionaries expect a wholesale change from Amerindian to French from their neophytes.
The military metaphor, as in the description of the Jesuit as a shock troop in a holy war, is apparent when one looks at the description Brébeuf gives of how one Wyandot describes conversion, “...renverser le Pays, c’est ainsi qu’ils appellent le changement de leur vie Payenne & Barbare, en une vie civile & Chrestienne...” (16). From the perspective of the Wyandot, the cultural violence with which they are threatened at the hands of the Jesuit missionaries is comparable to a military invasion, because their lifeways are facing a challenge that it is difficult to combat. Brébeuf considers the theological as inhabiting an even plain with the commercial, political and military aspects of colonization by referring to the reaping of souls for the Catholic Church as a form of conquest in its own right, describing the mission’s goal as “de les conquerter à Dieu” (54). The Wyandot are forced, however, to cede some ground in this theological, cultural conflict because they do recognize the superior technology of the Europeans, which many Natives attribute to the strength of the Frenchmen’s God (Sioui 41). However, the Wyandot do maintain a strong faith in their own spirituality that differs from Catholicism chiefly by its positioning of the human within nature rather than outside or above it, as in European epistemologies64 (Sioui 9, 41). Despite a social system that is weakened by epidemics, traditional beliefs are not overwhelmed or eradicated as is the hope of Brébeuf and his fellow proselytizer (Crosby, The Columbian Exchange, 36-7, Dickason and McNab, Canada’s First Nations, 102, Sioui 41). Even in comparably recent scholarship, there are assumptions made based on the eventual triumph of the Western model over the Amerindian peoples (triumph being a relative term, if one considers the current environmental crisis that has largely been precipitated by that so-called victory, to take only one important example).

64 For one of the most perspicacious articulations of the Amerindian worldview concerning their place in Nature (what Sioui refers to as a circular vision of the world) and how their outlook differs from linear, modernist European perspectives see Coulthard’s discussion of what he refers to as “grounded normativity” (Red Skins, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition, Introduction).
John Webster Grant, in his monograph, *Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter since 1534*, argues that religious and cultural inflexibility, such as that of the Récollet, in conjunction with the new technological regimes imposed by the French, notably through the fur-trade, overwhelmed “fragile” Amerindian societies (46). However, particularly in the case of the Wyandot (Huron, the primary group discussed by both Brébeuf and Sagard), but equally exemplified by innumerable Amerindian peoples throughout the Western Hemisphere, they exhibit a remarkable resiliency in the face of difficult social and political change, including the terrible violence of European colonialism. Georges E. Sioui, reflecting on the quincentenary of Columbus’ *discovery* of the Americas in 1992, tells us this about the survival of the original inhabitants of the Americas, in opposition to what Grant qualifies as their Aboriginal fragility:

Même s’il paraît certain que nous aurions dû disparaître, si certain même qu’une grande majorité d’Euro-Américains croient que c’est chose faite ou virtuellement accomplie, très rares sommes-nous, Amérindiens, à penser que notre survie est quelque sorte de miracle, ou d’accident. Plutôt, nous croyons que comme le Cercle de la Vie elle-même, notre existence et notre pensée circulaires sont indestructibles (368).

Sioui and, according to his appraisal of the attitude of other Amerindians in the contemporary world, the vast majority of Natives of the Americas roundly reject the inherent “fragility” of their social structures as well as any notion of intrinsic inadaptability. Sioui insists on the vitality and indestructability of what he refers to as the Circle of Life, an epistemological model and praxis diametrically opposed to the linear, progressist one he attributes to the European in his research. In the particular history of the Wyandot people, it is important to remember that it is, in point of fact, other Amerindians (the Iroquois) that are largely responsible for the dispersal (*not* the destruction) of their villages in the 1640s. In this particular case, it is the
unrelenting war waged on the Wyandot by the Iroquois Confederacy that leads to their decimation.

Opposed to Brébeuf’s predominantly negative vision of Natives is the relativistic approach that sometimes defines Sagard’s textual representations of the Huron peoples in *L’histoire du Canada*. The following example is illustrative of the novel ways in which Sagard engages with the dominant discursive modes of portraying the Native discussed thus far in this study:

…l’humanité de mes sauvages qui se manifestoit assez dans la compassion qu’ils avoient de moy & à l’assistance qu’ils m’apportoient, mais ce qu’ils pouvoient estoit bien peu de chose, sinon leur bonne volonté qui me contentoit fort, & m’encourageoit à la patience, laquelle j’apprenois d’eux mieux qu’en Eschole du monde, de manière que je peu dire avec verité que j’ay trouvé plus de bien en eux que je ne m’estois auparavant imaginé, ny moy, ny beaucoup d’autres: car vous diriez icy parlant d’un Sauvage que c’est parler d’une beste brute, d’un loup ravissant, ou d’une personne sans esprit, sans raison & sans humanité, comme un tas de meschans coquins qu’on laisse impunement vivre entre les Chrestiens, ce qui n’est point entre les Sauvages qui ont tous de l’humanité envers ceux qui ne leur sont point ennemis, soient estrangers ou autres (Chapitre 6).

Even a cursory glance at this passage makes apparent that Sagard is not presenting the Huron to the reader in the same way as other religious writers choose to depict the Amerindians they encounter. Sagard’s argument for the humanity of the Native takes shape through his insistence on their generosity and hospitality, two images of the Amerindian which are, in fact, present in the early travel texts of the sixteenth century, such as those penned by Thevet and Léry. However, in Sagard’s text, we are faced with perhaps one of the most radically relativistic representations of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas to date in the tradition of French letters. The Récollet friar provides the reader with a well-documented and cogently articulated
case for a reciprocal imagining of the humanity of the original inhabitants of the Americas. Sagard presents the mythic paradigm of the Ignoble Savage, as illustrated by allusions to Native animality and the author’s employment of the privative mode, as inadequate to a true understanding of the Wyandot. The hierarchical reversal that Sagard operates vis-à-vis the Amerindian is redolent, however, of an iteration of the Noble Savage myth. Admirative of the Amerindians, Sagard transforms the negative Ignoble Savage into the Noble Savage by presenting the Wyandot as a model of Christian patience that is more instructive than others that the Récollet has encountered, “laquelle[la patience] j’appenois d’eux mieux qu’en Eschole du monde”. What Sagard refers to as patience here, is repeated in many other texts under various guises. One of the recurring images of the Amerindian, it often takes the form of impassibility or imperturbability. As with many representational models, this quality is often ambiguous when represented by the French. In short, it can be inflected at times towards the negative pole of the Noble/Ignoble Savage mythic frame, as a sign of animal-like imperviousness to pain, cold, distress, etc.; or, it can be positively charged, as in the above example wherein this quality emerges as a marker of fortitude and solidarity. At any rate, many authors comment on this trait, creating a stereotype that is repeated in each subsequent generation of authors, with or without any actual experience with living, breathing Natives. Sagard’s objective is to create an epistemological space that will allow for the recognition of a mirror image of the humanity of the French in the cultural practices of the Wyandot peoples. This does not, of course, mean that Sagard does not criticize and denigrate aspects of Amerindian cultures. He is particularly harsh when speaking about nomadic lifeways or the alimentary traditions of the Native peoples he encounters (Chapitre 4, Chapitre 5). However, Sagard’s efforts to humanize the Indian can be categorized as engaging in the Noble Savage myth that shapes much of the French cultural
imaginary of the Amerindian. Sagard does realize that his representations of the original inhabitants of the Americas in *L’histoire du Canada* will be interpreted as subversive, because he actually apologizes to the reader and explains that if he portrays the Native in a more favorable light than his French readers might expect it is surely only out of respect for his duty to record what he sees truthfully (Au Lecteur). The relativistic impulse in Sagard’s writing is largely countered by the imperial and theological epistemologies that govern the author’s thinking, however. The two messages coexist side by side, a common feature of travel writing in the early modern period, as we have seen with the Armouchiquois example in the texts of Champlain discussed at the beginning of this chapter. There are many other examples, as well, in Thevet, Léry, Lescarbot, the Jesuit Relations, etc. Oscillation and ambiguity characterize the French epistemological frame that attempts to grapple textually with the difference embodied by the Amerindian. Sagard makes imperialist claims that make explicit the dovetailing of the missionary and colonial efforts, even though he attempts to portray the Amerindian in the most relativistic terms since the writings of Jean de Léry. For example, Sagard characterizes the conversion of the Amerindian as *reducing them*, a necessary component of the larger transformation of the country from its wild state into something more productive, from a European economic perspective. The language Sagard uses is very clear, “*reduire ces peuples et rendre le païs florissant*” (Chapitre 8). Much more explicit than the imperial messages embedded within travel discourses, known as “anti-conquest” in the theoretical paradigm of Mary Louis Pratt, Sagard admits the collusion of religion in the imperial project categorically.

Returning to the passage above, the humanity of the Amerindian is articulated via a resounding renunciation of the privative mode and its entailed Ignoble Savage mythology. Attempting to raise the Huron above an animalized state, Sagard refutes the negative definition
of Amerindian culture directly. The author unequivocally insists upon the universal humanity of the original inhabitants of the Americas, discarding what is already the establish French cultural imaginary of the Amerindian. Brébeuf also echoes the non-animalized, anti-privative view expressed in Sagard’s writing, despite some of his more acerbic comments regarding Amerindian cultures. In the following excerpt the Jesuit positions the Amerindian on a comparative continuum vis-à-vis other groups:

Je ne pretends pas icy mettre nos Sauvages en parallele avec les Chinois, Japonnois, & autres Nations parfaitement civilisées ; mais seulement les tirer de la condition des bestes, où l’opinion de quelques-uns les a reduits, leur donner rang parmy les hommes, & faire paroistre qu’il y a mesme parmy eux quelque espece de vie Politique & Civile (Brébeuf 145).

In this formulation, Brébeuf wishes to situate the Native as exhibiting some of the qualities of true civilization, but not all. Raising them above the animal condition where some have reduced them, Brébeuf denies them a comparable rank alongside the peoples from the Far East, the Chinese and the Japanese, who Brébeuf would have been familiar with via the writings of other Jesuit missionaries working in those regions. It is interesting to note the use of the verb reduce (reduire in French). It is a common lexical term that one encounters in religious writings of the period; it signifies conversion or assimilation to French and Catholic lifeways (as in the Sagard example above, “reduire ces peuples & rendre le païs florissant”). Here, Brébeuf uses it differently, referring, of course, to the privative mode’s stereotyping of the Amerindian as lacking the constitutive features of the human race. The position on the continuum proposed by Brébeuf is the lowest rung of the social evolutionary ladder, however. The Amerindian needs to be in this relative abjectness in order to be considered as needing the missionaries’ attention. In many ways, even when professing a certain level of relativism, the Noble and Ignoble Savage
myths actively participate in the cultural, epistemological, and ontological reduction of the Amerindian.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how oscillation and ambiguity employ the mythic paradigms of the Noble and Ignoble Savage in new ways in travel writing and religious reports of the seventeenth century in French literature. The epistemological ambivalence of the French vis-à-vis the Amerindian is significant in that it does not preclude a predominantly mythic lens for understanding the Native.

In the next chapter, I examine how myths of the Native inform Enlightenment thought in works of fiction, philosophical texts, and scientific writings. The capacity of the mythic Amerindian to cross generic lines, moving easily from fantasy to fact in the French mind, is concretized in the eighteenth century. The Indigenous peoples of the Americas become a source of philosophical abstraction and scientific truth. However, both instrumentalizations of the Amerindian are firmly grounded in the realm of myth and have little to do with living, breathing Native peoples.
Chapter 3

The Enlightenment Vision of the Native: Reifying the Amerindian in the Siècle des Lumières

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the development of the mythic representation of the Native in the eighteenth century in French letters. The period of the Enlightenment is a turning point in Western history where the seeds of modernity germinate and emerge. In the history of the representation of the Amerindian, French Enlightenment authors, such as Rousseau, Voltaire, and Buffon, instrumentalize the Indigenous peoples of the Americas in different ways in their philosophical, fictional, and scientific texts respectively. I argue that the mythic images and techniques discussed in the first two chapters of this study, the myths of the Noble and Ignoble Savage, the nexus of Native and Nature, and the narratives of oscillation and ambiguity continue to frame French epistemologies of the Amerindian, even in the period of “rational” thinking. With the surge of scientific positivism as a site of veridiction, the mythologies of the Amerindian are imbued with a veneer of truth, giving more than ever credence to the myths of the Native in the French cultural imaginary.

In section 1, I begin my analysis with a discussion of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s influential philosophical treatise, *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (1755). After having situated the Amerindian as a central element in the development of the philosophe’s thinking about Man, I demonstrate how the author associates contemporaneous Amerindian populations with his abstract conceptualizations of the state of nature. I deconstruct

---

65 I intend the term as Foucault employs it.
the major theses of the treatise, focusing on the paradoxes at the heart of Rousseau’s articulation of the state of nature and *l’homme sauvage*. The creation of Rousseau’s iteration of the Noble Savage myth participates in the technique of *ambiguity*\(^{66}\). Engaging narratives that echo the mythologies of the Ignoble and Noble Savage that preceded the *Discours sur l’inégalité*, the mythic *ambiguity* of the representation of the Native in Rousseau’s text underscores the malleability of the Amerindian as object\(^{67}\) of philosophical inquiry and of writing. To conclude my reading of the *Discours sur l’inégalité*, I suggest connections between Rousseau’s thought and later developments in the representation of the Amerindian in French letters, namely the myths of the Vanishing Indian and Going Native.

In section 2, the *oscillation*\(^{68}\) of images of Indigenous peoples and geographies in *Candide* by Voltaire (1759) is demonstrated through a comparative analysis of the depictions of the Oreillons and the myth of Eldorado in the novel. In the case of the Oreillons, it is through the vectors of anthropophagy and bestiality that the author presents the group within the parameters of the mythic paradigm of the Ignoble Savage. First, I consider the implications of the intertextual connections between the Oreillons descriptions in *Candide* and the sensationalized accounts of the scientist La Condamine that inspire Voltaire’s writing of the Oreillons. I introduce the concept of *transferability* to explain the capacity of the mythologies of the Native to cross generic and discursive lines. When scientific discourse becomes source for fiction, when myth leaves the realm of fiction and enters the discursive fields of science and philosophy, this exemplifies *transferability* (also a focus of my analysis of the writings of Buffon in the third

---

\(^{66}\) See chapter 2, section 2 for a detailed discussion of *ambiguity* in religious writings of the seventeenth century.

\(^{67}\) Significantly, mythic *ambiguity* relegates the Native to undefinable object, but never presents the Amerindian as agentive subject.

\(^{68}\) See chapter 1, section 1 wherein I explain the concept of *oscillation* in relation to the representations of the Armouchiquois in the travel writings of Samuel de Champlain.
section of the chapter). I argue that Voltaire’s adherence to the philosophical position of polygenism is critical for correctly reading *Candide* and the spatializations of the Oreillons as well as Eldorado. Linking geography and human ontology, Voltaire’s polygenism allows me to interpret the mythic space of Eldorado as outside of the Americas, and therefore severed from the Amerindian. I assert that the author engages with his readership in his discussion of Oreillons anthropophagy by employing literary ventriloquism in the comic mode, an appropriation of the voice of the Amerindian that permits the writer to critique one of his favorite targets, the Jesuits. Homi Bhabha’s concept of mimicry, which insists on a rapprochement between the colonizing subject (Voltaire) and the colonized object (the Oreillons) that is never complete, informs my interpretation of the narrative technique of ventriloquism in the scene. Ventriloquism relies on connivance between author and reader that evidences the existence of a French cultural imaginary of the Amerindian that has naturalized the mythologies of the Ignoble Savage. My analysis of the depiction of the bestiality of the Oreillons includes a *queer* critique of the passage, largely inspired by the work of Scott Lauria Morgensen, which situates sexuality as an important epistemological lens through which French writers *queer* the Amerindian. In my discussion of the myth of Eldorado, I focus on geographies of the Amerindian in *Candide* to show how Eldorado is marked as outside of the Americas spatially. In Voltaire’s polygenism, the geography of Eldorado is problematic because of the author’s insistence on an ontological connection between the land and its *products* or people. I argue that in conjunction with the spatial and ontological severing of the myth of Eldorado from the Inca, Voltaire positions the utopia as a discourse of the future, thereby signaling it as French and not Amerindian. After examining the representation of the Amerindian in French literature with the example of *Candide*, I explore scientific discourse.
In the third section, I deconstruct scientific discourse of the Native in Buffon’s Histoire naturelle. I discuss how sexuality operates in the author’s textual representations of the Amerindian as an object of queering, allowing the scientist to situate the Native outside of normativity, closer to animality than humanity. I build on the queer critique of the bestiality of the Oreillons in Candide, to include broader understandings of queer as any divergence from sexual practices sanctioned in Buffon’s French, Judeo-Christian frame of reference. As in the section on Voltaire, I pinpoint transferability as a central feature of the image of the Amerindian that emerges in the naturalist’s writings. The myth of the Patagonian giants reappears in the scientific writings of Buffon to complicate the author’s dogmatic attachment to the climate theory of race. In the fourth section of the chapter, I interrogate the premises of the literary projects of proto-ethnographer Joseph-François Lafitau, a Jesuit who attempts to locate Amerindian origins in Greek and Christian traditions, and Jean-Nicolas Démeunier whose L’Esprit des usages et des coutumes des différens peuples, ou observations tirées des voyageurs et des historiens (1776) offers a comparative model of primitive societies from around the globe, which the author categorizes as disappearing.

1. The Man of Nature and the Nature of Man: Mythic Ambiguity in Rousseau’s Discours sur l’inégalité

In this section, I examine the representation of the Amerindian in Rousseau’s Discours sur l’inégalité. I argue that Rousseau employs a tactic similar to the representational strategies encountered in my discussion of the religious writings of the seventeenth century, namely mythic ambiguity. Informed by elements of both the Ignoble and Noble Savage myths, Rousseau’s Native is a composite fraught with paradox. I begin by establishing a link between Rousseau’s philosophical articulation of the state of nature and the Indigenous peoples of the Americas.
Along with other *savages*\(^{69}\), Amerindian peoples as portrayed in written accounts in the literary tradition I have been analyzing here and in other European texts constitute the primary source for Rousseau’s conjectural state of nature. Next, I will discuss one of the many underlying contradictions at the heart of Rousseau’s thinking on the Native and the state of nature. In particular, I am alluding to the fact that Rousseau simultaneously admits that his exposition of the state of nature is little more than an abstraction, yet he asserts that his guesswork contains a certain *truth* value. This is an important feature of not only Rousseau’s representations of the Amerindian in the philosophical context of the *Discours sur l’inégalité*, but also in other discursive domains, such as scientific writing\(^ {70}\). My argument will then turn to Rousseau’s iteration of the Noble Savage myth as it emerges in comparison to what the author posits as the decadence of (European) civilization. In this section, I explore how the *philosophe* instrumentalizes the myth of the Noble Savage in order to construct a critique of French immorality. In addition to the self-criticism that the myth(s) of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas afford Rousseau, I draw connections between Rousseau’s mythic representations and the genealogy that I have been tracing of similar phenomena in French letters in previous chapters. After addressing the Noble Savage myth specifically, I investigate how elements of the myth of the Ignoble Savage occur in conjunction with the Noble Savage frame to create a narrative of mythic *ambiguity* in the *Discours sur l’inégalité*. Lastly, I conclude the section by suggesting how Rousseau’s text intersects with subsequent mythic paradigms of the Native in French literature, i.e. the myths of the Vanishing Indian\(^ {71}\) and Going Native\(^ {72}\).

---

\(^{69}\) The Hottentots are mentioned in conjunction with the state of nature in the *Discours sur l’inégalité*, as well.

\(^{70}\) See section 3 of this chapter for a discussion of the *transferability* of mythic images of the Native in discourses that make *truth* claims, such as scientific discourse, the focus of my analysis in section 3.

\(^{71}\) See chapter 4 of this study for a detailed discussion of this mythic framework in the American novels of Chateaubriand.
The New World and its Indigenous peoples constitute a formative element of the philosophy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau throughout his lifetime. The idea of the Americas and its original inhabitants holds a particular fascination for Rousseau from an early point in his writing career. One of the very first creative works completed by the author is the tragedy, *La découverte du Nouveau Monde* (1740). Though the text is never published during the author’s lifetime, this short dramatic piece foreshadows things to come in his œuvre.

In the first two chapters, I have discussed at length the parameters that characterize the myth of the Noble Savage. Rousseau adopts many aspects of both Montaigne’s innocent Brazilians and elements that one can situate as emerging from the profound sympathy created by the Black Legend of Spanish cruelties in the conquest of the Caribbean and South America. Bartolomé de Las Casas, more than any other writer was responsible for the dissemination of the Black Legend throughout Europe. His indictment of his own countrymen’s genocidal violence toward the Indigenous peoples they encountered is expressed in excruciating detail in *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, first published in 1552. Jean-Jacques Rousseau places his play, *La découverte du Nouveau Monde* at the very moment of the first discovery of the Amerindian peoples of the Caribbean Sea, as the title suggests. Rousseau displays what one might call a nostalgic optimism or an optimistic nostalgia. *La découverte du Nouveau Monde* is a reflection on the missed opportunity of the New World, all the more poignant considering the fact that the Old World has fully acknowledged long before 1740 that the population of the Americas has largely been destroyed as a direct result of their contact with Europeans. This collective guilt, which is a salient characteristic of the work of Las Casas (with whose work Rousseau engages intertextually without directly referencing the Spanish Friar), is crucial to

---

72 See chapter 5 for a comparative analysis of this particular vision of the Native in French and Quebecois novels of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.
Rousseau's attempts to undo, in the realm of the imaginary, the wrong that all know can never be undone. In this context, Rousseau engages intertextually with Montaigne as well, specifically with his essay “Des coches”, where Montaigne equally attempts to reimagine a different possible outcome for the meeting of the European and Amerindian cultures. Interestingly, neither author, nor any other author that I have encountered for that matter, suggests allowing the Amerindian to continue to exist in autonomy, retaining land rights and sovereignty. The impossibility of reimaging a contact experience that doesn’t lead to hegemonic control of the Americas in the hands of Europeans circumscribes the limits of Enlightenment humanism and relativism. Economic and scientific progress is privileged at the expense of the self-determination of Indigenous peoples, a problem that continues to play itself out all over the Americas today.

As I mentioned above, La découverte du Nouveau Monde is not published during Rousseau’s lifetime. The play certainly lacks the esthetic qualities of his later work, which might explain its unpublished status. However, I discuss it here, because it is fundamental for understanding the position of the New World and the Amerindian in Rousseau’s philosophy. Fifteen years before Discours sur l’origine et les fondements de l’inégalité parmi les hommes, Rousseau takes up the original inhabitants of the Americas in much the same way that he does in that celebrated philosophical treatise: as a privileged site for imagining and reimagining our collective human past. It is critical to note the influence of the Native in the French cultural imaginary as it becomes firmly established in the French mind in the early modern period. Previous examples such as the Noble Savage of Montaigne in the essays “Des cannibales” and “Des coches” and the framing of fantasy via an allusion to Amerindian peoples in the colonial

73 I will refer to this text by the abbreviated title of Discours sur l’inégalité.
74 See section 2 of chapter 1.
space of New France as an overture of Bergerac’s *Voyage dans la lune*\(^{75}\) demonstrate how the Amerindian becomes symbolically linked to philosophical and esthetic abstractions in French literature. Rousseau’s attempts to write a comprehensive history of cultural evolution constitute another instantiation of this mythic tradition in French letters.

The Indigenous peoples of the Americas are the primary source for Rousseau’s philosophical state of nature. They function as a contemporaneous case study of what Rousseau posits as the initial stage in his conception of a universal human history (Duchet, 335)\(^{76}\). While Rousseau references the influence of living, breathing Natives in the creation of his thinking on the state of nature numerous times throughout the *Discours sur l’inégalité*, the following citation firmly establishes the connection between the writer’s state of nature and the original inhabitants of the Caribbean Sea:

> Le spectacle de la nature lui devient indifférent, à force de lui devenir familier. C'est toujours le même ordre, ce sont toujours les mêmes révolutions ; il n'a pas l'esprit de s'étonner des plus grandes merveilles ; et ce n'est pas chez lui qu'il faut chercher la philosophie dont l'homme a besoin, pour savoir observer une fois ce qu'il a vu tous les jours. Son âme, que rien n'agite, se livre au seul sentiment de son existence actuelle, sans aucune idée de l'avenir, quelque prochain qu'il puisse être, et ses projets, bornés comme ses vues, s'étendent à peine jusqu'à la fin de la journée. Tel est encore aujourd'hui le degré de prévoyance du Caraïbe : il vend le matin son lit de coton, et vient pleurer le soir pour le racheter, faute d'avoir prévu qu'il en aurait besoin pour la nuit prochaine (51).

In this excerpt the author naturalizes a certain temporalization of the state of nature as pertaining to the current moment for the Native peoples of the Caribbean, while he implicitly

---

\(^{75}\) See the introduction of chapter 2.

\(^{76}\) In her seminal study on anthropological thought during the French Enlightenment, Michèle Duchet demonstrates how contemporaneous peoples, she specifically mentions the Amerindians of the Caribbean and the Hottentot of South Africa.
situates this stage of human development as a feature of the distant past vis-à-vis his own French society. The geographical and tribal specificities of the passage are ironic when read in the context of Rousseau’s wildly inventive and baseless philosophizing on the history of humanity. I include this long citation because it not only confirms my assertion that Rousseau is inspired by accounts of Amerindians when writing the *Discours sur l’inégalité*, but because it also demonstrates many aspects of the instrumentalization of the Native in constructing hierarchical structures that signal the superiority of the European in comparison with the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. Significantly, Rousseau contends that one should not go looking for philosophical truth in the Caribbean Native population, because the foresight required to attain such intellectual heights is purportedly incommensurate with the Amerindian’s lack of the necessary mental capacity to plan ahead. This description engages, of course, with the tradition of the privative mode. Most importantly, however, Rousseau appropriates the idea of the Native as built within the French cultural imaginary through mythic representations in French literature in preceding centuries to make claims about universal humanity in what is essentially a European philosophical discussion that has more to do with continental political economy than with living, breathing Amerindians. Similar to the appropriation performed by Montaigne, Rousseau seizes on extreme aspects of written accounts of Amerindian peoples to create an abstract space that allows the author to simultaneously idealize and ridicule Indigenous peoples and to criticize European societies in specific ways. It is important to note in this excerpt how Rousseau situates the Native in relation to Nature. The imbrication of these two epistemological categories has been one of the emphases of this study. Here, Rousseau places the Amerindian in

---

77 See chapter 1 section 3 for a detailed analysis of the privative mode, a negative narrative technique that highlights elements of Indigenous societies perceived to be lacking from a Eurocentric perspective.
78 See chapter 1 section 2 for a complete discussion of Montaigne’s literary appropriation of the Native and his articulation of the myth of the Noble Savage.
Nature but as incapable of learning anything from his intimacy and familiarity with the natural environment. The temporality of the Native, according to Rousseau, is a continual renewal of a primary experience of the world. Unable to learn from previous experiences, Indigenous peoples are portrayed as seeing Nature for the first time, a *tabula rasa* wiped clean at each instant. Rousseau’s imagination of the state of nature is linked directly to Amerindian peoples (the original inhabitants of the Caribbean Sea in this example). Keeping that in mind, I will continue my discussion of the state of nature by examining how Rousseau’s state of nature is cast by the *philosophe* as both conjecture and truth.

The state of nature in the *Discours sur l’inégalité* is a paradoxical philosophical proposition at best. Fraught with contradiction, the state of nature is nonetheless a pillar in Rousseau’s legacy as father of political thinking that leads to the French Revolution, a mere eleven years after the author’s death. In the scope of this study, one inconsistency in particular deserves our attention. I am referring to the dual status accorded to the state of nature in the *Discours sur l’inégalité* as both hypothetical abstraction and legitimate scientific fact. In the following passage the first of these premises is illustrated as Rousseau concedes that the state of nature is largely guesswork and fantasy:

Que mes lecteurs ne s’imaginent donc pas que j’ose me flatter d’avoir vu ce qui me paraît si difficile à voir. J’ai commencé quelques raisonnements ; j’ai hasardé quelques conjectures, moins dans l’espoir de résoudre la question que dans l’intention de l’éclaircir et de la réduire à son véritable état… Car ce n’est pas une légère entreprise de démêler ce qu’il y a d’originaire et d’artificiel dans la nature actuelle de l’homme, et de bien connaître un état qui n’existe plus, qui n’a

---

79 I will discuss later in the section specific examples wherein Rousseau insists on the animality of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas.
Rousseau insists on the conjectural quality of the state of nature while contending that this historical reality, so hard to actually comprehend with any certainty, is critical to a proper understanding of natural law\(^8\) in the contemporaneous European context. While Rousseau admits that he has not seen the state of nature in action, he positions himself as the expert capable of distinguishing which elements of contemporary Native societies reflect the state of nature (the examples the author provides in the *Discours sur l’inégalité* are thereby confirmed as typifying the state of nature). The contradiction of the state of nature as a philosophical premise for Rousseau’s political agenda can be situated in the tension between the conjectural nature of the author’s theorizing about the state of nature and the self-positioning of Rousseau who nonetheless claims expertise in deciphering the true from the false in regards to universal human history. The temporalities that Rousseau’s argument attempts to naturalize must be critically examined and questioned. The word *history* as I have employed it here refers to the distant past for the Frenchman, but is presented as the present moment for living, breathing Amerindians. Rousseau *universalizes* the story he tells about the state of nature while asserting it as *truth* in the following passage:

\[
\text{O homme, de quelque contrée que tu sois, quelles que soient tes opinions, écoute. Voici ton histoire telle que j'ai cru la lire, non dans les livres de tes semblables qui sont menteurs, mais dans la nature qui ne ment jamais. Tout ce qui sera d'elle sera vrai. Il n'y aura de faux que ce que j'y} \]

\(^8\) In this way, Rousseau establishes the connection between his discussion of the state of nature and the political situation in the Europe of his time. The political character of the author’s argument about the state of nature demonstrates how Rousseau instrumentalizes the Native to vehicle his own stance in a controversial period of upheaval. The appropriation of knowledge about Amerindians mirrors the colonial project’s extractive nature more generally.
aurai mêlé du mien sans le vouloir. Les temps dont je vais parler sont bien éloignés. Combien tu as changé de ce que tu étais! (Discours sur l’inégalité, 33).

The generalization of the state of nature to the entirety of the human experience is effectuated by a turn to captatio benevolentiae wherein the author engages with the reader directly by employing a pleading, informal address. Ironically when Rousseau claims that he reads the truth in Nature, it is precisely in the condemned books of his peers where he finds the written accounts of savages that inspire his theories. The passage concludes with the problematic temporalizing that I mentioned above. The state of nature is firmly situated in the distant past, yet the examples that Rousseau uses to justify his hypotheses are taken from contemporaneous descriptions of Amerindian peoples. The universal turn and its concurrent temporalities couch a hierarchy that presumes the superiority of the European and the inferiority of the Native. Furthermore, this hierarchy is paradoxical in light of Rousseau’s scathing critique of (European) civilization as seething with moral decay. Rousseau’s iterations of the myth of the Noble Savage often take the form of a comparison between corrupt Europeans and pure Indigenous peoples.

By producing a comparative version of the Noble Savage myth in the Discours sur l’inégalité, Rousseau is reifying the original articulations of this mythology as seen in Montaigne’s essays “Des cannibales” and “Des coches”81. Both authors attack Western society through the instrumentalization of the mythology of the bon sauvage. In Rousseau’s case, the comparative model emerges as a central, explicit feature of his philosophical narrative. The following example demonstrates how the author constructs a conceptualization of the Native in contradistinction to the author’s vision of the European culture of his time:

81 See chapter 1 section 2 for a complete discussion of these specific examples.
Or je voudrais bien qu'on m'expliquât quel peut être le genre de misère d'un être libre dont le cœur est en paix et le corps en santé. Je demande laquelle, de la vie civile ou naturelle, est la plus sujette à devenir insupportable à ceux qui en jouissent ? Nous ne voyons presque autour de nous que des gens qui se plaignent de leur existence, plusieurs même qui s'en privent autant qu'il est en eux, et la réunion des lois divine et humaine suffit à peine pour arrêter ce désordre. Je demande si jamais on a ouï dire qu'un sauvage en liberté ait seulement songé à se plaindre de la vie et à se donner la mort ? Qu'on juge donc avec moins d'orgueil de quel côté est la véritable misère. Rien au contraire n'eût été si misérable que l'homme sauvage, ébloui par des lumières, tourmenté par des passions, et raisonnant sur un état différent du sien. Ce fut par une providence très sage, que les facultés qu'il avait en puissance ne devaient se développer qu'avec les occasions de les exercer, afin qu'elles ne lui fussent ni superflues et à charge avant le temps, ni tardives, et inutiles au besoin. Il avait dans le seul instinct tout ce qu'il fallait pour vivre dans l'état de nature, il n'a dans une raison cultivée que ce qu'il lui faut pour vivre en société (64-5).

In this long passage Rousseau juxtaposes the two concepts that vehicle his philosophical discourse, his experience of Western society and his hypotheses about the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. For Rousseau, in this excerpt, the state of nature where the savage lives every day anew is a space free from the complications of modern European life. Two examples structure the philosophe's argument here. Firstly, the less convincing allusion to complaints distinguishes civil society from the state of nature. According to the author, the Native has no room to complain, because he lacks the mental capacity to imagine a different world. Therefore, it would never occur to the Amerindian to dream of things about which he might complain. Resonant with Rousseau’s assumptions about the near total isolation of Indigenous peoples and the Native’s lack of personal property (crucial elements in the abstract philosophical edifice that the writer attempts to build in the Discours sur l’inégalité), this condemnation of the imagination of the Amerindian echoes the citation above wherein Rousseau asserts that imagination is the sole
burden of the European. Yet, the most poignant argument advanced in defense of his comparative model in this example is the reference to suicide. The proof that Rousseau offers his readers of the inferiority of European society is the existence of suicide in Europe and its absence in the Americas. He emphasizes self-destruction as the key for positing the Amerindian as having a superior existence. This line of argumentation favors an oblique vision of European society, which continues to reflect some of its inherent complexities in Rousseau’s analyses, but not all. In other words, Rousseau posits European society as negative in reference to one of the most lamentable phenomena associated with that culture (suicide) without providing a complete picture of Western life. This choice allows the author to set up the two pillars of his philosophy of man as a reductive, simplified binary by positioning the Amerindian at the opposite pole of the spectrum, as a people having none of the complexity that he partially reveals in his discussion of Europe. However, barely hidden behind Rousseau’s articulation is the presumed superiority of the author himself and by extension that of Europe vis-à-vis the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. This hierarchy is an integral part of the mythic paradigms of the Amerindian in French letters. Despite gestures toward relativism, nostalgic guilt, or even supposed assimilation of Native lifeways, the instrumentalization of the Amerindian is ensconced in an ideological framework that never questions the ultimate superiority of Western epistemologies. In the two last two citations the author presents the European’s burden as that of imagination. Elsewhere in the Discours sur l’inégalité, Rousseau contends that, “L’imagination, qui fait tant de ravages parmi nous, ne parle point à des cœurs sauvages” (76). In the first example, imagination is positively-inflected as the ability to philosophize. In the second, the

---

82 I am alluding to the myth of Noble Savage’s comparative framework from its earliest formulations and beyond.
83 I am referring here to the myth of the Vanishing Indian which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.
84 The Going Native myth is a textual appropriation of the myths of the Native object that serves as a catalyst for self-realization of the European subject. This phenomenon will be analyzed in the fifth chapter of this dissertation.
analogy turns negative and imagination is shown as potentially dangerous, leading to suicide. However, despite the code switching from positive to negative, imagination denotes superiority in comparison with the Amerindian in Rousseau’s thinking about the history of Man. In short, whether imagination leads the lowliest, most abject European subject to suicide or its more enlightened individuals (such as Rousseau himself) to pen philosophical treatises, the inherent superiority of Western epistemologies is never critically examined or questioned. In fact, Rousseau is unable to eradicate the trace of European superiority in his discourse, even though the premise of his entire argument is predicated on the opposite being true, namely that the Amerindian way of life (the state of nature) is superior to the French way of life (civil society). This creates ambiguity in Rousseau’s articulation of the Noble Savage myth, because the trace of the Ignoble Savage is never absent from the *Discours sur l'inégalité*.

Rousseau’s state of nature is a paradoxical place. It is at once idyllic and violent, innocent and brutal. The negative component of the author’s personal version of the Noble Savage myth is critical precisely because it ensures the superiority of the European throughout the argument. A correlate of European imagination is the ability to change and evolve. As seen above, Rousseau posits the Amerindian as living every moment anew without the possibility of learning from past experiences. Rousseau critiques the decadence of European society through the metaphor of the state of nature, because his text wants to illicit change. However, the goals and objectives of the author along with the instrumentalization of the Amerindian can only be allowed to go so far. The author cannot represent the Indigenous of the Americas in a way that would seriously question the superiority of the European. This is why Rousseau’s Amerindian is fraught with ambiguity, the narrative technique that imbricates elements of the Noble and Ignoble mythic

---

85 See chapter 2 section 2 for a discussion of *ambiguity* in the religious writings of the seventeenth century.
paradigms to create a fluid portrayal of the Native, allowing for just the type of
instrumentalization I am discussing in regards to the Discours sur l’inégalité. The following
passage illustrates the mythic ambiguity of the Native in the text:

Seul, oisif, et toujours voisin du danger, l'homme sauvage doit aimer à dormir, et avoir le
sommeil léger comme les animaux, qui, pensant peu, dorment, pour ainsi dire, tout le temps qu'ils
ne pensent point. Sa propre conservation faisant presque son unique soin, ses facultés les plus
exercées doivent être celles qui ont pour objet principal l'attaque et la défense, soit pour subjuguer
sa proie, soit pour se garantir d'être celle d'un autre animal : au contraire, les organes qui ne se
perfectionnent que par la mollesse et la sensualité doivent rester dans un état de grossièreté, qui
exclut en lui toute espèce de délicatesse ; et ses sens se trouvant partagés sur ce point, il aura le
toucheur et le goût d'une rudesse extrême ; la vue, l'ouïe et l'odorat de la plus grande subtilité. Tel
est l'état animal en général, et c'est aussi, selon le rapport des voyageurs, celui de la plupart des
peuples sauvages (45).

In this excerpt Rousseau exposes the state of nature as an isolated, violent existence
similar to how a naturalist of the period might describe the life of an animal. It is the animality of
the state of nature that firmly establishes Rousseau’s mythic Amerindian as ambiguous. At once
the remedial counterpoint to the woes of European decadence and a temporally and mentally
fixated object of speculation, the Amerindian in the Discours sur l’inégalité is imbued with
mythic ambiguity. The Native represents an exception, neither entirely inside or outside of the
human species as Eurocentrically defined by Rousseau. To return to earlier analyses in this
study, one of the formative features of the myth of the Ignoble Savage is the tactic of portraying

---

86 For an interesting analysis of the Native as exception in modern biopolitics see Mark Rifkin’s “Indigenizing
Agamben: Rethinking Sovereignty in Light of the “Peculiar” Status of Native Peoples”, Cultural Critique, No. 73, Fall
2009, pp. 88-124. Read in conjunction with my analysis of Rousseau, Rifkin and Agamben’s conceptualizations of
the Indigenous exception, similar to what I refer to here as ambiguity, demonstrates how mythic significations
attached to the Amerindian textually can be transferred to what Agamben refers to as “sovereign violence” in the
political realm in the present day.
the original inhabitants of the Americas as animal. Exemplified in Thevet’s iteration of the tale of the Patagonian giants[^87], Champlain’s depiction of the Armouchiquois[^88], and (in the next section of this chapter) Voltaire’s representation of the Oreillons, all rely on images of animality, thereby engaging with the long history of othering integral to the myth of the Ignoble Savage. Rousseau makes the animality of the Amerindian clear when he signals the preoccupation of the Native with not becoming the prey of another animal. Indolence is also a significant element of Rousseau’s vision of the animality of the Amerindian. When not procuring food, engaging in sexual activity, or fighting for survival (all of which can be considered as animalistic) the Native is presented as inhabiting a perpetually dormant state. This dormancy echoes Rousseau’s visions of the (a)temporality of Amerindian existence and the absence of Indigenous imagination. Additionally, the indolence of the Native is implicitly asserted as opposite the industriousness of the West. Through the presentation of the Amerindian as both pure and innocent, but also as brute animal, Rousseau utilizes ambiguity in his representation of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas.

In Rousseau’s *Discours sur l’inégalité*, mythic ambiguity is an important structural and structuring element of the text. The Amerindian must be shown to belong to the universal human history that Rousseau claims to be explaining, but must also remain ever outside the progressive politics that motivate the creation of the text to begin with. Fixed in time and space as an object simultaneously foreign and integral to a deeper understanding of Man, Rousseau’s Native is the very definition of myth as I intend it in this study. Rousseau’s articulation does not appear surreptitiously, however. He engages with a long literary tradition of the myths of the Noble and Ignoble Savage and with the textual practice of ambiguity. Rousseau establishes the link between

[^87]: See chapter 1 section 1.
[^88]: See chapter 2 section 1.
that French literary tradition (the travel accounts mentioned at the end of the passage) and the mythic apparatus he employs in the *Discours sur l’inégalité*, thereby confirming the unique position of the Amerindian in the author’s conception of the state of nature and his intertextual reference to that tradition. Rousseau marks an important moment in the history of the representation of the Native in French.

The *Discours sur l’inégalité*, in many ways, constitutes a culmination of the mythologies of the Noble and Ignoble Savage in French philosophy. A careful unpacking of the text is required to disentangle the vying mythologies referenced to create the textual ambiguity inherent in the treatise. That being said, Rousseau does not only repeat and revise representational strategies he inherits from the past. He is a precursor of things to come, as well. In his revisionist take on the discovery of the New World by Columbus in his early play *La découverte du Nouveau Monde* (1740), the nostalgic elements of his reimagining of the conquest of the Americas are redolent of the emerging myth of the Vanishing Indian, a new paradigm for thinking about the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. Another mythic legacy in French literature may originate in Rousseau’s comparative model of the idealized state of nature and corrupt civil society. I am referring here to the European fantasy of a return to Nature and a simpler way of life catalyzed by contact with the Amerindian, a narrative mode that becomes prevalent in the twentieth century: the Going Native myth. Rousseau’s imagination of the state of nature and the Indigenous peoples of the Americas represents a foundational moment for the modern French cultural imaginary of the Amerindian. In the next section, I examine how Voltaire’s representations of the Native echo earlier tactics of oscillation.

---

89 The myth of the Vanishing Indian will be discussed in detail in chapter 4 of this study.
90 The Going Native myth is the focus of chapter 5 of this study.
2. Oscillation in Voltaire’s *Candide*: The Oreillons and the Myth of Eldorado

In each of the first two chapters, I begin my discussion of the representation of the Amerindian in French by looking at ways in which authors mythologize the original inhabitants of the Americas. In the sixteenth century, André Thevet chooses to begin his purportedly *true* eye-witness account of the Americas in the *Cosmographie universelle* (1575) by repeating the legendary tall tale of the Patagonian giants. Descriptions that incorporate difference by deformation are inscribed onto Amerindian bodies; thereby various exaggerated forms become linked ontologically to the Amerindian via the myth of the Ignoble Savage. In the second chapter, the trope of the monstrosity of the Native body is equally, if not more, readily apparent in the initial textual depiction of the Armouchiquois in the travel writings of Canadian founding father Samuel de Champlain. Animalized through the elongation or shortening of body parts and described in a simian posture, the representation of the Armouchiquois is a typical example of narrative techniques that function as markers of difference in order to dispossess Native groups. In Champlain’s text, the monstrous portrait of the Armouchiquois appears in direct correlation with French desires to exploit copper deposits located in Armouchiquois territory. The narrative strategy that undergirds these representations of the Amerindian in French letters continues to influence writers in the eighteenth century, notably Voltaire. I begin my discussion of the mythic representation of the Amerindian in the novel *Candide* by Voltaire (1759) by examining another portrayal of Native *animality* that falls squarely under the umbrella of the Ignoble Savage framework: the description of the Oreillons. It is the supposed sexual practices of the Amerindian that become a source of deformation in *Candide*. The elongated ears of the

---

91 See chapter 1 section 1.
92 See chapter 2 section 1.
93 As will be discussed in this section, Oreillons women are depicted as engaging in sexual activity with primates in *Candide*. 
Oreillons are related to traditional practices and are not a deformation of the body as such by the French writer. It is Native sexuality that functions as a site of distinction and the creation of an ontological difference between the European and the Amerindian. In Thevet and Champlain, the body is altered by the author, in Voltaire it is the culture and total being that undergoes deformation. As seen in the previous section with Rousseau, Voltaire also leans on written accounts to construct a mythology of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas that categorizes the Native outside of European epistemologies of the human. In the particular example of the Oreillons, Voltaire consults the writings of La Condamine who traveled to the Orinoco and Amazon basins and shared his findings with the author of Candide. A renowned scientist of the period, La Condamine’s contribution to Voltaire’s mythology of the Amerindian is significant because it indicates a transfer of mythologies and representations of the Native between scientific texts and literary texts. This phenomenon of transferability is an important element in the history of Amerindian peoples in French. Although Voltaire does not explicitly reference La Condamine in the text of Candide itself, the author’s representation of the Oreillons in the tradition of the Ignoble Savage figure appropriates a veneer of truth by associating its discourse with that of the renowned scientist and his sensationalized story which would likely have been recognized as an intertextual connection between Voltaire’s Candide and La Condamine’s written accounts by educated readers of the time. Voltaire’s philosophical adherence to the theory of polygenesis equally undergirds the philosophe’s ontological separation of

---

94 The absurdity of the claim of bestiality should be kept in mind, of course.
95 In this instance, I intend literary in the narrow sense of the term.
96 The concept of transferability, specifically between mythic and scientific discursive fields, is an integral component of my analysis of the representation of the Amerindian in the writings of Buffon, Démeunier, and La Condamine in the third section of this chapter, as well as my discussions of Durkheim and Lévi-Strauss in chapters 4 and 5 respectively.
97 Polygenesis is the belief that human races have separate origins. This theory is opposed to monogenesis which posits a singular point of origin for all human races.
Amerindian and European peoples. After analyzing the Ignoble Savage in *Candide* by discussing the representation of the Oreillons, I will turn to the myth of the Noble Savage in the author’s (re)imagining of the Myth of Eldorado. By alternating between the mythic paradigms of the Ignoble (Oreillons) and the Noble (Myth of Eldorado) Savage, Voltaire reifies the narrative technology of *oscillation* that code switches between negatively and positively-inflected mythologies of the Native in a context of literary appropriation that erases any trace of resemblance with living, breathing Amerindian peoples⁹⁸. Mythic representations of the Native that shift from Ignoble to Noble Savage perspectives, thereby performing *oscillation*, are ideologically motivated and instrumentalize existing paradigms to specific rhetorical, philosophical ends. I decipher the utopic vision present in Voltaire’s iteration of the Myth of Eldorado by demonstrating how the author separates Eldorado geographically and culturally from the space of Indigenous South America, situating it in a fantastical space that transcends *representation* of Amerindian peoples. Voltaire offers a distinct case in the history of the representation of the Native in French.

One of the *philosophes* who typifies the spirit of the Enlightenment in eighteenth century French letters is François-Marie Arouet, *dit* Voltaire (1694–1778). He is perhaps the French author of the period who writes the most prolifically about non-European peoples across the genres of theater, fiction, philosophy, and history within his oeuvre. One advantage of studying the image of the Native in the writings of Voltaire is the (relative) specificity that characterizes Voltaire’s references to Amerindian peoples. In the tragedy, *Alzire ou les Américains* (1736), the play is localized in Lima and the Inca people are identified as the Native group. In the *conte philosophique*, *L’ingénue*, the main character is presented to the reader as culturally Huron, yet

⁹⁸ See chapter 2 section 1 for a discussion of *oscillation* in the travel writings of Samuel de Champlain.
genetically French. The representations of the Amerindian in the novel Candide are accompanied with very precise references. In contrast to Voltaire’s specificity, in Rousseau’s Discours sur l’inégalité, the Amerindian, posited as a contemporaneous example of the state of nature, occupying the same temporality as Rousseau, is pure abstraction with no affinity with living, breathing Indigenous peoples. Voltaire, in comparison, anchors his Native characters in specified ethnic contexts, indicating a study of these peoples by the author that is more referentially and intertextually explicit for the literary critic examining Voltaire’s work. Unsurprisingly, my analysis will demonstrate that despite Voltaire’s specificity the Amerindian is a mythic object in the author’s texts, not a subject.

One of the most salient features of the vision of the Amerindian in the writings of Voltaire is the ideology of perfectibility\(^9\). From the beginning of the contact period, the capacity of the Native to change forms or to be transformed constitutes a ubiquitous trope in travel and philosophical writing generally. During the age of Enlightenment, this concept is developed in a more concentrated fashion by authors such as Voltaire and Rousseau. Faith in the power of Reason as a means to tame the physical and moral world through “understanding”, in conjunction with an optimistic vision of the possibility to improve the world based upon the new intellectual vitality of the time transform the concept of perfectibility as it relates to the Amerindian. Oscillation can often be characterized as participating in the propagation of the association of the Amerindian with the concept of perfectibility, because when images shift from negative, Ignoble Savage mythologies to positive, idealized, Noble Savage ideologies,

\(^9\) The concept of perfectibility is echoed in the mythic oscillation of Voltaire’s Amerindian representations in the novel Candide. In this text, the author begins with an animalistic portrayal of the Oreillons that leads to an idealized vision of the Myth of Eldorado. This linear, diachronic structure is resonant with Voltaire’s philosophy of perfectibility, the ideology of the mission civilisatrice, and the narrative strategy of oscillation. Perfectibility is redolent of Champlain’s descriptions of the Armouchiquois, as well (see chapter 2 section 1).
perfectibility is implicitly at work. Through the linear movement of the text, which is a part of its function as technology, the transformation from animalistic to utopic which occurs in instances of oscillation that also perform perfectibility, the notion of progress at the center of Enlightenment epistemology is affirmed. In the colonial and imperial relation, the power of discourse is linked to the power of imagination. The French author’s ability to (re)write the Amerindian is intermingled with the philosopher’s desire to imagine the Amerindian. Voltaire addresses the perfectibility that is at the heart of the philosophical imagination of the Amerindian in French letters in an idiosyncratic manner. I now turn my attention to the bases of Voltaire’s vision of humanity in his philosophy in order to more properly contextualize the author’s particular articulation of the perfectibility of the Amerindian.

One critical concept associated with Voltaire’s understanding of the original inhabitants of the Americas that is formative in relation to the philosopher’s vision of the perfectibility of that Native is polygenesis. Polygenism posits that human diversity is a result of separate origins. Voltaire perceives the Amerindian as ontologically severed from Europe. According to the philosophe, the Amerindian is a natural production of the American continents and not the result of a prehistoric migration out of Asia (Duchet 286-9). One important ramification of polygenesis is linked to the natural world. All peoples, regardless of their geographical place of

---

100 According to the tenets of polygenism, different ethnic groups are not of the same species; rather they derive from distinct progenitors. The discovery of the Americas represents an epistemological break without historical precedent in the European mind. The Christian worldview is destabilized by the apparent incompatibility that the existence of the Amerindian peoples represents vis-à-vis the universalizing historicism of the West. Many writers attempt to answer the question of the Amerindian, in order to patch over the fissures caused by the discovery of the Western Hemisphere. The work that most clearly illustrates this tendency is Moeurs des sauvages américains comparées aux moeurs des premiers temps by Lafitau (1724). In this voluminous text, the Jesuit Lafitau systematically presents an argument for the common ancestry of the Amerindian and peoples of Antiquity, specifically the Jewish tribes of Israel. I analyse Lafitau’s contribution to a proto-scientific vision of the Amerindian in section three of this chapter. Lafitau’s work affirms the European anxiety concerning the Americas. The epistemic shift associated with the confrontation of two radically divergent epistemologies continues to reverberate today.
origin, are ontologically connected to the environment that *produces* them. A critical consequence of the polygenic vision of ethnic difference is the imbrication of Native and Nature. The ontological identification of the Amerindian with his natural environment leads directly to an argument about land and who is capable of properly occupying, owning and exploiting it. Olive P. Dickason, in *Canada’s First Nations*, explains that the French qualify Indian territory as uninhabited land, attributing to all Native groups a certain nomadism (whether their societies are agricultural or not), in order to assert their own proprietary claim to lands that Natives see as their home. The term for this conceptualization and justification for the displacement of the Amerindian (and other groups in other colonial contexts) is *terra nullius* (Dickason, *Canada’s First Nations*, 146). The judgment invariably falls in favor of the European. Voltaire tells us that, “le même pouvoir qui a fait croître l’herbe dans les campagnes de l’Amérique y a pu mettre aussi des hommes [mais] ce système nu et simple n’a pas été écouté” (qtd. in Duchet 287). The nudity and simplicity of the theorem echo two of the commonplaces in the history of the representation of the Amerindian. Voltaire presumes that the logical, reasonable mind cannot deny the veracity of the tenants of polygenism, echoing the cultural arrogance of the *truth* claims in Rousseau’s abstract philosophy in the *Discours sur l’inégalité* discussed in the preceding section. Voltaire’s insistence on the inherent *truth* value of polygenesis as a means of explaining the peopling of the world implicitly endorses the intrinsic superiority of the European vis-à-vis the Amerindian. Inseparable from this epistemological vision of the Indigene is a patent claim on the territorial dispossession of the Native. Polygenism allows an ideologiy of European

---

101 This consequence of a polygenic stance leads to the imbrication of Native and Nature that constitutes a major theme of the representation of the Amerindian in French and other European literary traditions. In the case of Voltaire’s *Candide*, the enmeshment of Nature and Native is reflected (in part) in the sexual relationship that the author depicts between Oreillons women and primates.

102 For a perspicacious discussion of the history of *terra nullius* and its continued purchase in Settler-Indigenous relations in modern Canada today see Glen Sean Coulthard’s *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (100-102).
superiority to be developed and entails the dispossession and displacement of the Amerindian. The connection that I am positing between *terra nullius*, polygenism, and the textual mythic oscillation present in the representations of the Native in Voltaire’s *Candide* illustrates the concept of transferability. All of these seemingly disparate discursive fields\textsuperscript{103} envision the Amerindian in a mythic mode that incorporates mythic conceptualizations of the Native into their epistemologies and ideologies. These mythic conceptualizations originate in travel writing, philosophical treatises, religious texts, and in literary forms. The transfer of the myths of the Amerindian to the realms of political praxis and scientific truth\textsuperscript{104} is an ideological and epistemological technology intimately associated with European imperialism and capitalist accumulation. The ontological separation presumed in the theory and praxis of *terra nullius* is epistemologically similar to the philosophical premises of polygenesis. The same mythic assumptions emerge in Voltaire’s fiction, as well.

Voltaire’s works that present images of the Amerindian (primarily the play *Alzire, ou les Américains*, the novel *Candide*, the novella *L’ingénû*, but also the *Essai sur les moeurs et l’esprit des Nations*) typically employ both overtly hegemonic discourses and utopic imaginaries of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. Both discourses, however, can be categorized as mythic. In the novel *Candide*, the images of the two principal Amerindian groups in the text, the Oreillons and the inhabitants of Eldorado, exemplify the complexities of Voltaire’s vision of the Native in comparison with dominant epistemologies and discursive practices of imagining and writing the Amerindian. The representations of these two Indigenous peoples in *Candide* allow me to

\textsuperscript{103} I intend this term in the Foucauldian sense.

\textsuperscript{104} The transfer of myths of the Native to the discourse of science under the guise of truth is the subject of the next section.
explore extremes of the Ignoble and Noble Savage mythologies as they are articulated via the narrative phenomenon of oscillation.

In the history of the representation of the Amerindian in French literature (but also in other European traditions), the dichotomous image of the Amerindian as simultaneously the Noble and the Ignoble Savage\textsuperscript{105}, or as alternatively the Noble or the Ignoble Savage\textsuperscript{106} can be identified as functioning to attain distinct rhetorical objectives. Generally, the Noble Savage, or *bon sauvage*, framework portrays the Native in idealized and nostalgic terms, linking the Indigene inextricably to notions of original purity. The Noble Savage myth can be a means to open up a space that permits auto-criticism (at times, this also equates the shifting of the discourse, instrumentalizing the Amerindian as ersatz mouthpiece of the author’s critical discourse). The authorial situating of the Amerindian at the pole of purity and backwardness allows authors to criticize the decadence and corruption of their own (French) contemporary society, which is always presumed to inhabit the civilized space at the opposite end of the spectrum. The Ignoble Savage, on the other hand, tends to serve as justification for dispossession, displacement, exploitation, and genocide by focusing on certain cultural practices that are considered to be especially sauvage from a moralistic viewpoint. Both discourses fixate the Native as an object incapable of subjectivity à la Française. The mythic paradigms of the Ignoble and Noble Savage presume European superiority as *truth*. The apparent relativism associated with the Noble Savage frame does not change its essential nature as an imperialist discourse of dispossession. This leads me to investigate Voltaire’s vision of the Oreillons and the

\textsuperscript{105} This is what I refer to as *ambiguity*.
\textsuperscript{106} This is what I refer to as *oscillation*. 
land\textsuperscript{107} in relation to the mythologies of the Ignoble and Noble Savage. In addition, I explore the utopic inflection of the fantasy of the Americas represented by the author’s articulation of the Myth of Eldorado. These two representations of the Amerindian in \textit{Candide} typify the narrative technique of oscillation and echo the perfectibility of the Native inherent in the ideologies of the \textit{mission civilisatrice}.

The Oreillons are a South American Amerindian group that becomes sensationalized in French representations of the eighteenth century. The Oreillons are so-called due to the elongation of their earlobes caused by ornamentation that they wear attached to their ears (\textit{oreilles} in French). A source that largely informs Voltaire’s writing of the sixteenth chapter of \textit{Candide}, the section of the novel that contains descriptions of the Oreillons, is the travel writings of Charles Marie de la Condamine (1701-1774). La Condamine, an explorer and scientist, as well as a member of the \textit{Académie Française}, is known for his travels to Peru and the basins of the Amazon and the Orinoco Rivers. In the latter region, La Condamine meets the Oreillons and writes that Oreillons women copulate with primates. La Condamine and Voltaire are acquaintances and the two authors share a correspondence at the time. La Condamine sends Voltaire a copy of the relation of his voyage to Amazonia (1743-44) some fifteen years before the publication of \textit{Candide} in 1759 (Duchet 44). La Condamine’s account is likely the source for Voltaire’s scene that includes two Oreillons women engaging in sexual activity with primates.

This sourcing of the Oreillons scene is a rare example of a specific reference being made to specific Amerindian groups. Copying and repeating images of the Amerindian from earlier writers and hypotexts is a prevalent practice in French letters in the history that I am tracing in

\textsuperscript{107} In Voltaire’s polygenic philosophy, the Indigenous peoples of the Americas are inseparable from the land that \textit{produces} them. Therefore, examining the spatial, environmental aspects of Voltaire’s writings with regard to the land is an important methodologically when dealing with Voltaire’s fiction.
this study. Often, visions of the Native are not anchored by any documentation, such as La Condamine’s travel writings. In this way, the Amerindian in French texts often plays the role of blank canvas whereupon theoretical ideologies are grafted onto the bodies and societies of the original inhabitants of the Americas. Voltaire, on the contrary, is one of the only writers of fiction of the period who precisely identifies the tribes he describes (particularly in the case of the Oreillons, the Inca reference in *Alzire*, and the Huron reference in *L’ingénu*). Specificity of this type is, however, a more common feature of the proto-scientific discourses of Lafitau, Démeunier, and Buffon that I examine in the next section of this chapter. In the Oreillons example, the specificity of the name does not constitute scientific or ethnographic exactness or rigor, of course. Rather, Voltaire chooses extreme examples of mythic representations from existing literature written about the Native that engage with the frameworks of the Ignoble Savage (the *bestiality* of the Oreillons) and the Noble Savage (his retelling of the Myth of Eldorado) to convey images that function in the structure of the novel as a whole. Voltaire instrumentalizes the coded messages in the mythologies of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas as established in the French cultural imaginary of the epoch to vehicle his philosophical and comedic novel in specific ways. The code switching from the negative Ignoble Savage paradigm to the positive Noble Savage paradigm is what I have referred to as oscillation. I begin by examining the representation of the Oreillons in the mode of the mythic Ignoble Savage.

Candide and Cacambo’s arrival in Oreillons territory represents a spatial shift in the novel’s geography. The protagonists move from a *civilized* space to a *savage* one (the space that the Oreillons inhabit). From the moment they disembark at Buenos Aires, they are continually confronted with the corruption of European society (the Governor who kidnap...
Jesuit slave colony in Paraguay). In order to escape any possible consequences resulting from the murder of Cunégonde’s brother, Candide dons a Jesuit’s costume and lights out for the unknown, accompanied by Cacambo. The radical separation between the civilization they leave and the Oreillons space that Candide and Cacambo enter is explicit. The two travelers, thanks to Cacambo’s foresight, carry with them all of the necessary ingredients to eat in a civilized way (bread, chocolate [ironically, chocolate originates in South America], ham, fruit, and wine)\textsuperscript{108}. The Frenchness of the food they bring along functions as an implicit comparison with the anthropophagy practiced by the Oreillons. The refinement of their food echoes, and is metonymically and ontologically associated with, the superiority of French culture, despite the fact that Cacambo is a Métis of Spanish and Amerindian descent.

The following sentence reveals the sauvage framing of the Oreillons scene, “Ils s’enfoncèrent avec leurs chevaux andalous dans un pays inconnu, où ils ne découvrirent aucune route” (Voltaire, 96). The qualification of the region as unknown situates European epistemology in hierarchized superiority in comparison to Indigenous knowledge systems. After all, the emptiness and ahistoricity implied in this designation categorizes the Native as non-entity, nearer to animality than humanity, vis-à-vis the land they occupy. The absence of roads equally denotes an absence of civilization, further inscribing the space as wilderness. What Voltaire’s epistemological assumptions elide are the systems of knowledge and reciprocity that characterize Amerindian lifeways in Nature. The silencing of Native epistemologies is a typical feature of hegemonic colonial discourses. The Eurocentrism in Voltaire’s text, while couched in satire and humor, remains nonetheless mythologized and symbolically violent representations of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. As I mentioned above, it is important to examine the ways

\textsuperscript{108} The lack of the use of wheat and wine were an important part of Montaigne’s privative description of the Amerindian in one of the first articulations of the Noble Savage myth in the essay “Des cannibales”.

159
in which Voltaire represents the land in his images of the Amerindian precisely because of the author’s adherence to polygenesis as an explanation of human history. In Voltaire’s cosmogony, Native and Nature are inseparably enmeshed, because the Native emerges from the specific geography where the European discovers him. Having spatialized the land of the Oreillons outside of civilization, Voltaire turns his pen to the Oreillons themselves.

The two images that Voltaire employs to describe the Oreillons depict acts of anthropophagy and bestiality. In keeping with the characterization of the land that they inhabit as situated outside of human civilization, Voltaire chooses to describe practices often cited to exclude the Native from the ranks of humanity. A common textual technique that European writers utilize when describing cannibalism focuses narrowly on the violent aspects of the act of anthropophagy itself without contextualizing the practice in any way. Rather than including the highly ritualized, cultural, and spiritual meanings of cannibalism in his representation of the Oreillons, Voltaire situates cannibalism as resonant with the humoristic tone of Candide generally. The Oreillons are eager to cook Candide, because of the Jesuit outfit he wears, crying out “It’s a Jesuit! It’s a Jesuit!” as they make preparations to cook the strangers (Voltaire, 98). Rather than welcoming the proselytizers as agents of the mission civilisatrice, their reputation in the region, due in no small part to their colonial and missionary experiments in Paraguay has envenomed the Indigenous population against them. Voltaire instrumentalizes Amerindian ritual cannibalism in order to sneer at the Jesuits, a common target of ridicule in his writings. In addition, their reputation as well-fed may also inspire the Oreillons to look favorably upon the possibility of such a copious meal.

Voltaire’s description of the Oreillons lacks specificity beyond the citing of the sensationalized tribal name. There are no details that situate the Oreillons in relation to other
Amerindian groups and nothing to differentiate them from the diverse Indigenous peoples of the region. What Voltaire does tell the reader is that the Oreillons are, “tout nus, armés de flèches, de massues et de haches de caillou : les uns faisaient bouillir une grande chaudière ; les autres préparaient des broches, et tous criaient : ‘C’est un jésuite, c’est un jésuite!’” (98). The passage is centered on technology and material culture. As we have seen in Champlain’s second description of the Armichiquois in the first section of chapter two, violence is not necessarily explicitly imprinted on the bodies of the Amerindian, but is implied by the objects that they carry. Here, as I mentioned above, Voltaire appropriates the idea of the Oreillons to comedic effect, in order to poke fun at the Jesuits, a group particularly despised by the philosophe. The cultural artefacts that Voltaire mentions aim to echo the earlier description of the land as wilderness. Having rendered the landscape uncivilized, the generic sketch that Voltaire gives of the Oreillons resonates with the same wildness. Voltaire’s portrayal of Nature and the Native is reminiscent of Montaigne’s etymological discussion of sauvage in “Des cannibales”. Montaigne employs inversion to question what the meaning of wildness is in “Des cannibales” by proposing that domesticated species (for Montaigne, this includes civilized humanity in this particular instance) are less natural and therefore closer to his conception of wildness. As part of the edifice of the Noble Savage mythic paradigm, this conflation with the Native and Nature (animals and plants) echoes elements of the Ignoble Savage myth’s comparative model that equates the Amerindian with animalistic tendencies. The intricate intimacy of both the Noble and Ignoble Savage myths is a defining characteristic of the mythic representation of the Amerindian in

109 While Voltaire’s allusion to specific tribe names may arguably be more specific than the philosophical abstractions that one encounters in Rousseau’s Discours sur l’inégalité discussed in the previous section, the Amerindian is a composite of mythic associations, not a fictionalized account of a living, breathing Amerindian group. This mythic vagueness is a common feature defining the representation of the Native in French literature throughout the time period examined in this study. Every individual Native is imbued with the general mythologies that I have deconstructed in this dissertation.
French. It is this narrative mode that Voltaire uses in his portrayal of the Oreillons. Their location in a wild place, their nudity, and their primitive technology conjoin to present the reader with a privative framework for understanding the Oreillons. Ironically, however, they are able to quickly ascertain the best course of action when faced with a Jesuit: anthropophagy. Voltaire’s humorized take on cannibalism decontextualizes the social significance of the act of anthropophagy. As we have seen previously, the French (and other Europeans) often seek to diffuse the alterity of anthropophagy by linking it to vengeance and an Amerindian code of honor associated with warrior culture. Disassociating anthropophagy from the simple practice of nourishment and insisting on the ritualized aspects of cannibalism, French writers more accurately convey the cultural significance of eating other humans in Amerindian societies. Inimical groups are often described as eating people as nourishment, or eating raw, uncooked human flesh, in opposition to groups that are more favored due to military or commercial alliance or, simply because the French are more familiar with them (Lestringant, Cannibals, 69)110. Using cannibalism, easily the most shocking aspect of Amerindian culture from a European perspective, as comedy is a novel technique employed by Voltaire in Candide. What consequences does the comic cannibal entail?

110 In his study Cannibals, Frank Lestringant draws this conclusion from a comparison between the Ouetacas and the Tupinamba in the writings of Jean de Léry by pointing out the following: “The Ouetacas are considered as homophagous vampires: they eat their own kind for food. The Tupinambas cook their meat: they are taking vengeance. Cooking banishes the spectre of the Barbarian; it repels, from within the sphere defined by cannibalistic practice, the divergence between nature and culture, human reason and unreasoning bestial rage” (69). While I don’t agree that more favorable judgments of the Tupinamba necessarily entail a crossing of the French epistemological threshold from “nature to culture” or the erasure of “the spectre of the Barbarian”, the important point here for my study of the mythology of the Native in French letters is the capacity for meanings to be arbitrarily propagated based on economic relations, familiarity, proximity, distance, or military alliances or enmities with specific Indigenous groups. This narrative technology, established in the 16th century in the writings of Jean de Léry, continued in the letters of Marie de l’Incarnation (among others) in the 17th century, continues to have purchase in 18th century texts of the Enlightenment. It is a central feature of the French Western novel in the 19th century, as well. As such, it may be considered one of the epistemological lenses through which mythic visions of the Amerindian must pass through before emerging textually as written representations.
Voltaire appropriates the Amerindian as mouthpiece of his own sarcastic discourse about the Society of Jesus. The Oreillons are merely another tool with which Voltaire pronounces his denunciation of the evils of the Jesuits. Fundamentally, Voltaire’s technique (and, more generally, any other author’s use of the Amerindian as philosophical tool) operates via a correlation between the author and the Amerindian on one hand, and on the other hand an insistence more or less explicit on an insurmountable ontological difference, hierarchized with the writer in a position of dominance in relation to the Native. At once, the Amerindian is similar, yet always remains different. One can recognize Homi Bhabha’s theoretical concept of mimicry operating here. The metropolitan author subject appropriates the colonized object in order to represent him as near to the European (in this case, the Oreillons share the same opinion of the Jesuits) in some ways. However, the merger of the colonized object with the colonizing subject is never complete, (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, ch.4). In the Oreillons example, the merger occurs on the level of the sarcastic or comedic.

In the two essays “Des cannibales” and “Des coches” by Montaigne and in the *Discours sur l’inégalité* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the merger occurs on the level of the abstract and idealized. In the fourth chapter, I will explain how this type of merger occurs in the writings of

---

111 In the fourth chapter of Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture*, titled “Of Mimicry and Man”, he explains this foundational concept in postcolonial studies as follows, “…colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same but not quite… [...]mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is, thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which ‘appropriates’ the Other as it visualizes power… [...]it coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to the both ‘normalized’ knowledges and disciplinary powers” (ch. 4). The ambivalence or slippage described by Bhabha as inherent to this type of discursive regime is similar to both my concepts of ambiguity and oscillation, in that they perform similar functions. While Bhabha’s focus is on a specific colonial context, the same ideologies are revealed in both the political situations he analyzes and the representational ones I have been examining throughout this study.

112 The meaning that I intend when employing this term seeks to encompass simultaneously an epistemological and ontological rapprochement and the commercial sense of the word, meaning take over or assume control over an ontologically differentiated other.
Chateaubriand. Briefly, Chateaubriand forces the Amerindian into the merger with the author via a certain type of imaginative nostalgia that I call lithic romanticism. The merger is always situated or coded in a specific literary register (philosophical idealization, comedy, romanticized nostalgia, etc.) that precludes bridging the ontological gap between the authorial European subject and the objectified Amerindian. This cultural coding permits the reader to digest the merger as literary and decidedly non-ontological. Perhaps the most obvious symbol of this ontological gap is the text itself. The author’s French identity and superiority is incarnated in the object of the text itself. After all, the Amerindian has no voice other than the one provided to him by the French author\textsuperscript{113}. While the Natives prepare the pots for boiling, it is only Voltaire who cries out “It’s a Jesuit! It’s a Jesuit!” Through the act of appropriation, the author erases the Amerindian’s capacity to attain complete humanity, subjectivity, or Frenchness. This is the unbridgeable representative gap that cannot be overcome and is in some ways a direct conclusion or correlation of the linguistic privative (a common European epistemology wherein the inferior status of Amerindian languages, especially their lack of any recognized written forms, from a European perspective, situates them as inherently inferior due to their orality). Literary appropriation is dehumanization despite any merger that an author may present. As in Bhabha’s conceptualization of mimicry, the Native is never French and the Native never appropriates French discourses of power and hegemony (ch. 4). In short, the Native never writes. The representation of the Amerindian, the literary appropriation and instrumentalization of the cultural imaginary of the Native of the Americas, is always an act of ventriloquism. Intelligence, speech, and agency are solely attributed to the ventriloquist, never to the dummy (a term related etymologically to the term dumb, meaning unintelligent, but also lacking the power of speech).

\textsuperscript{113} Often the Amerindian is voiceless, of course. The Native is a marginal presence that is more characterized by its absence than its own agency.
Importantly, the literary form, register, and the cultural coding of the discourse operate in the same way as a ventriloquist’s act. The audience knows who is speaking and never believes that the speech act is actually produced by the dummy. This connivance between author and reader indicates the establishment of a general French cultural imaginary of the Amerindian. The mythic code of the Native must be known for the performer (the author, Voltaire, in this case) to utilize it to comic effect in the act (the text Candide). While the ventriloquism analogy is perhaps most evidently relatable to the Voltaire example which interpellates the audience in the comedic vein, the philosophical, romantic, or even scientific appropriations of the Amerindian employ the same basic format. In all of these epistemological registers the audience incorporates the representation of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas in the same epistemological empty space. That is, the Native is recognized by the mythic code, not by any ontological or epistemological similarity to any living, breathing Amerindian peoples. An evident conclusion to the ventriloquism metaphor is the dehumanization and inevitable caricaturing and stereotyping of the Native that literary instrumentalization enjoins. Another conclusion, perhaps less evident, is an awareness of how the creation of a French cultural imaginary of the Amerindian through the construction of certain mythic registers and codings that are recognizable to readers can shape French conceptions of their own identity. Benedict Anderson’s definition of the nation as an “imagined community” that is naturally “limited” and exclusionary is a useful concept for understanding the ventriloquist metaphor I have proposed for theorizing the representation of the Amerindian vis-à-vis French identity constructions (6). As spectator (reader) to the act of ventriloquism, a sense of community is created on two different levels. Firstly, on the individual level there is a connection and an identification with the person of the author. The ventriloquist speaking to the reader creates a space of inclusion, inviting the reader to agree with or recognize
the writer’s image of the Native. Considering Voltaire’s *Candide* specifically, the novel is a propitious site for beginning to imagine national identity in the eighteenth century (Anderson 25). The second level of identification that occurs in the (written) ventriloquism I have been discussing is essentially linguistic in nature. The convergence of burgeoning world capitalism, a flourishing print industry, and what Anderson refers to as the “fatality of human linguistic diversity” prepare an ideological terrain wherein national identities can be “imagined” (44). The French language is the binding element of the literary appropriation of the Amerindian. Not only does the reader understand that it is Voltaire speaking and not the Oreillons, but a collective imagination of the objectified Amerindian as a category, and by extension the Self (subject) is evoked by the commonality of the use of the French language in the written representations of the Natives of the Americas. Mary Louise Pratt, as we have seen elsewhere, rightly insists upon the centrality of colonial peripheries in the creation of national, metropolitan identities, however, she also focuses, in alignment with Anderson, on the epistemological role of capitalism as a framework for understanding the *others*. The culinary items carried into the *wild* space occupied by the Oreillons are telling in this respect. The food commodities of bread, chocolate, ham, fruit, and wine are indicative of the global economy, already well-established by the middle of the eighteenth century. The act of bringing these foodstuffs into the *uncivilized* space of the Oreillons functions to create identification with Candide (and perhaps to a lesser degree Cacambo), contrasting a capitalist, economically integrated diet presented as *naturalized* and *civilized* with the *savagery* of cannibalism. The extreme example of anthropophagy goes beyond what Pratt describes as capitalist discourses’ penchant for “making a mystery of subsistence and non-accumulative lifeways” by caricaturing and simultaneously vilifying the Oreillons (151). While certain articulations of what I have referred to here as merger can be perceived as
containing positive elements (the most obvious being idealized reifications of the Noble Savage mythologies), they are clearly and irrefutably acts of dehumanization and caricature, i.e. ventriloquism. The representation of the Amerindian in French letters rarely attempts to explore the Native beyond the practice of literary appropriation and ventriloquism. In the example of the Oreillons, Voltaire attempts to merge the Native with himself via the shared negative opinion of the Jesuit; however, the Amerindian is essentially dehumanized, not only through the act of ventriloquism in itself, but through the double images of anthropophagy and bestiality.

Bestiality, like anthropophagy, is a marker of extreme difference. Sexuality is a central epistemological vector of difference in French (and European) discourses that engage in the myth of the Ignoble Savage. In short, European writers often seize upon sexuality as a site of ontological difference, thereby justifying categorizations of the Native as animal-like and inferior. My thinking on sexuality and hegemonic discourses of normativity in this matter has largely been influenced by the work of Scott Lauria Morgensen whose queer critiques of settler colonialism can be applied to the mythic representational models that I examine here. While Morgensen’s argument in Space Between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization focuses more specifically on twentieth and twenty-first century movements wherein non-Native queer groups appropriate Native sexual identities, practices, and histories to gain access to settler citizenship, his insights into the importance of sexuality and normativities that center on sexuality as defining spaces of European (settler) self-definition in contrast to Native practices can deepen understandings of eighteenth century representations of the Amerindian in French. In my use of Morgensen, I understand *queer* more broadly than it is typically understood in queer criticism. In texts written about the Amerindian in French from the sixteenth century to the present day, differences in sexual practices, which may include what
generally is termed queer (LBGTQAI, or the term Two-Spirit\textsuperscript{114}), but is not limited to those designations. Not only are practices that are traditionally labeled as queer instrumentalized in the creation of the myth of the Ignoble Savage, but \textit{any} deviation from French (European) sexual normativity is subject to being \textit{queered} by authors. Nudity, polygamy, communal bathing, \textit{promiscuity}, offering wives and daughters as sexual partners to visitors to the community, etc. are \textit{queered} as well as LBGTQAI or Two-Spirit ways of loving. It is in this broad sense that I include Morgensen’s insight into the centrality of sexual difference in (settler) colonial ideologies as they manifest in French literature. Morgensen states that, “…colonial heteropatriarchy first redefines embodiment, desire, and kinship to eliminate Native culture, control racialized populations, and secure, in Sherene Razack’s term, a “white settler society” (2). This redefinition of Native sexuality is key to my analysis. This representational model is \textit{queers} Indigenous sexual lifeways, \textit{in general}. It is through the generalized \textit{queering} of Native sexuality \textit{and} lifeways that the Civilized-Savage binary crucial for the (self-)definition of the West\textsuperscript{115} becomes operational. \textit{Queering} the Native is, therefore, a condition of possibility for colonial praxis and the representational models that I have been discussing in this study. I see \textit{queering} as a technology of elimination, I use the term as employed by Morgensen who coopts the usage from Patrick Wolfe, that functions through rhetorical and metaphorical techniques, such as the mythology of the Ignoble Savage, to create an ontological divide between the French (and other Westerners) and Native peoples, thereby opening up an epistemological space within

\textsuperscript{114} Two-Spirit refers to “gay, lesbian, transvestite, transsexual, transgender, drag queens, and butches, as well as winkte, nádleeh, and other appropriate tribal terms (qtd. in Morgensen 81).

\textsuperscript{115} I speak about self-definition here with Pratt’s crucial concept of definition of the center by the periphery, that is the phenomenological aspect of colonizers defining themselves against their opposite number, the colonized: “...the entity called Europe was constructed from the outside in as much as from the inside out... While the imperial metropolis tends to understand itself as determining the periphery..., it habitually blind itself to the ways in which the periphery determines the metropolis... (4).
the cultural imaginary for the praxis of colonialism and genocide as naturalized. Voltaire (and La Condamine’s *scientific*) account of Oreillons bestiality is an illustrative example.

Mined from the relation of La Condamine’s voyage into Amazonia which was sent directly to Voltaire by La Condamine himself, the *philosophe* includes a sensational scene wherein two Oreillons women are represented engaging in sexual relations with primates (Duchet 44). While the practice of cannibalism had long been a popular topic in representations of the Amerindian, this is the most well-known example of a representation of bestiality imputed to Amerindians in French letters. In the economy of inversion that characterizes Voltaire’s America in the novel *Candide*, the bestiality of the Oreillons women (in conjunction with the anthropophagic tendencies of the Oreillons more generally) represents the extreme limit of the Ignoble Savage myth, whereas the description of the mythical space of Eldorado calls the reader to imagine the opposite pole of mythologies of the Native, the myth of the Noble Savage.

The scene that describes Candide’s encounter with two Oreillons women is marked with Voltaire’s typical dose of humor. The murder of the two primates is portrayed as a Samaritan act, wherein Candide saves the women from what he perceives as an animal attack. The *queering* of the Native is clear. While the bestiality of the Oreillons is a sensationalized fiction, it does not function as such for the French readership. The sensationalism associated with La Condamine’s report, which is itself buttressed by La Condamine’s position as scientist, is a reification of the *fait divers* as fact. The humor of the scene dissimulates the real ontological divide being created between the French and the Oreillons in the French cultural imaginary of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas more generally. In short, engaging in sexual acts that are *queer* (such as the bestiality of the Oreillons women, but other behaviors that diverge from Eurocentric normativies as well) dehumanizes, situating the Native closer to animality than humanity. The
misunderstanding of the sexuality of the Native as violence (Candide shoots the primates because he believes they are attacking the Oreillons women), later the Voltaire informs the reader that the attack was merely foreplay to sexual activity, is typical of instantiations of sexuality as markers of difference in conjunction with the mythology of the Ignoble Savage, whereby European ignorance is rebranded as moral superiority. Voltaire comically situates saving the women from their animal pursuers opposite his previous sins of killing an Inquisitor and a Jesuit as a morally commendable action. Another comedic element of the scene occurs when, after having described them as running naked through the forest being nipped on the derrière by monkeys, Candide wonders aloud if they might be “femmes de condition”. This comparison of the Oreillons women to French noblewomen, while meant to generate laughter, deepens the furrow of the ontological divide between French and Native that is at the heart of the episode. While the scene is framed in the comic mode, the representation of Amerindian women engaging in sexual relations with primates is quintessentially dehumanizing, functioning primarily to put into question the status of the Amerindian as human through the technique of queering.

The shock value of both anthropophagy and bestiality as portrayed in Candide, creates an ontological separation between the fully human French author Voltaire and the non-human Amerindian. The distance created by satire permits one to laugh at what is considered abhorrent to decency. The use of comedy is another system of reference, such as the ventriloquism that I’ve already discussed, that is recognized by the reader through the special and specific messaging that relates to the Amerindian as construed in the epistemological framework of the French cultural imaginary of the Native. One cannot laugh at the terrible except in the comic register. Passing the practices of anthropophagy and imputed bestiality through the crucible of satire does
not eliminate the epistemological consequences for French understandings of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas, however. Arguably, the relegation of these actions to the comic functions to insist all the more emphatically on their immoral, uncivilized character, precisely because of the demand for them to be presented comically. Satire, the stylistic mode most readily identified with Voltaire’s *Candide*, takes as its object the supposed bestiality of Native peoples in order to put into question the inherent ideologies of the Ignoble Savage. The Native as comedic object may be instrumentalized in order to criticize French gullibility and the mythic system of understanding the Other typical of European attempts to comprehend non-Europeans in Voltaire’s acerbic irony. Yet, Voltaire’s propagation of the image of Native bestiality serves nonetheless to reinforce Ignoble Savage epistemologies. The fact that Native bestiality is a lie matters little in either the discourse of literary fiction (*Candide*) or the discourse of science (La Condamine’s account). In consequence, the negative extreme of the spectrum of Amerindian representation, the myth of the Ignoble Savage, is taken as a credible starting point for comprehending the philosophical and esthetical object of the Native, even if it is used ironically to question French thinking about non-Europeans. This is what I intend by the term *queering*, and it participates in the promotion of the mythologies of the Ignoble Savage. The vision of the Amerindian that emerges in Voltaire’s description of the myth of Eldorado does not localize its whimsical meanderings in a space that might be confused with a site of veridiction, however.

Voltaire’s version of the Noble Savage myth in the novel *Candide*, the author’s reiteration of the myth of Eldorado, situates the idea of the Native squarely in the realm of fantasy and speculation. Eldorado remains consigned to the incredible. I employ this term in opposition to the posited *credibility* of the accounts of Oreillons anthropophagy and bestiality, which are imbued with *truth* values that cannot be applied equally to the mythic space of
Eldorado, including the supernatural valence of the inhabitants of that space. A pattern of intertextuality and repetition becomes evident when researching the creation and maintenance of the underlying myths of the Native in French letters. At the beginning of this study, I turned to the example of André Thevet’s *framing* of his cosmographic explanation of the Americas by recapitulating the legend of the Patagonian giants. Voltaire inscribes *Candide* with a dual *framing* of the Native. First, the author engages in the mythification of the Oreillons through comic visions of anthropophagy and bestiality. Second, Voltaire shifts to the opposite pole of the epistemological spectrum by establishing a correlation between the mythic imaginings of the Amerindian (the myth of the Noble Savage) and fabled, storied Eldorado. The capacity to be imputed with both Ignoble and Noble Savage meanings alternately is what I have referred to as *oscillation*. As a narrative and epistemological technology for categorizing and defining the Amerindian, both *oscillation* and *ambiguity* underscore the mythic status of the Native. Despite attributions linked to primitiveness and immobility, the Native is capable of change, but only in representational contexts, not as living, breathing subjects, but as moldable objects of reflection and writing. The Eldorado scene exemplifies the mythic nature of the Amerindian in the French cultural imaginary. This passage from the frameworks of the Ignoble to the Noble Savage is what I refer to as *oscillation*. *Oscillation* reinforces my analysis which situates myth as the primary epistemological technology in French representations and imaginations of the Native.

Eldorado is an imaginary geography that has a long history in the representation of the Americas and of Amerindians in European travel writing and fiction. In one of its original iterations the myth of Eldorado is ontologically linked to the Amerindian body. Alès and Pouyllau explain how the myth takes its roots in:
...l’existence supposé d’un Indien se baignant, peint de poudre d’or, dans un lac où l’on jetait
objets d’or et pierres précieuses, de cet « Indio dorado » que l’on va dès lors appeler « el
dorado » : « l’homme doré ». Sur cette trame se construit le « mythe de l’El Dorado » qui acquiert
statut paradigmaticque pour rendre compte des multiples attentes des conquérants de ces terres
inconnues (275).

The ontological separation between the geography and the peoples of the Americas and
Europe in Voltaire’s Candide is initially represented spatially. As in the Oreillons scene, the
space the Amerindian inhabits is codified in specific ways. In the Eldorado scene, another spatial
break occurs when Candide and Cacambo pass into the realm of Eldorado. The ordeal that leads
them there, the rapids and underground passage, serve as a sign of the mythic geography of the
space the two characters are entering. This is Voltaire’s technique for signaling a transition from
the known to the unknown, from the imaginary to the mythic (Alès and Pouyllou 281). The
difference between the space inhabited by the Oreillons and the mythic space of Eldorado is
directly related to Voltaire’s critical vision of both the Amerindian (specifically the Oreillons)
and the American landscape:

Quand ils furent aux frontières des Oreillons : « Vous voyez, dit Cacambo à Candide, que cet
hémisphère-ci ne vaut pas mieux que l’autre ; croyez-moi retournons en Europe par le plus
court… (101).

As discussed above, the representation of the Oreillons is part of the act of textual
ventriloquism wherein the Amerindian loses his identity as human on an equal plane with the
author. An echo of this technique is present here, because it is Cacambo who denounces the
Americas as no better than the Old World. In Voltaire’s polygenetic vision of the human race,
the land and the people who inhabit it are inseparable ontologically. In keeping with both
polygenism and the strategy of ventriloquism Voltaire places this hierarchical judgment of the
Western hemisphere into the mouth of Cacambo. While, seeming to indicate parity between the two, the imperative to return to Europe clearly indicates which space is superior. Further establishing the inferiority of the Oreillons space, Candide expresses fear of falling victim to cannibalism at any moment if the two decide to stay in the Americas; this statement comes directly after Cacambo’s declaration (101). Paradoxically, this verbal exchange between the two men serves as an opening for the Eldorado scene, which reiterates an idealized, mythologized understanding of American space that Cacambo’s estimation would appear to repudiate. This moment, when Candide and Cacambo cross over from Oreillons space into Eldorado space is a site of oscillation in Candide. Voltaire signals this transition by referring to the debunking of the utopian, Arcadian mythologies, before he engages with it in the subsequent section by reifying the myth of Eldorado. Understanding Voltaire’s polygenism is critical to understanding the possible significations of the Native in Candide, but also for comprehending the importance of spatial distinctions in the articulation of the author’s representations of the Amerindian.

Voltaire’s instantiation of the bon sauvage is an exercise in philosophical abstraction wherein images are proposed in absolutes that lack any resemblance to the societies of living, breathing Amerindian peoples. The geographic isolation that defines the mythic space of Eldorado and the Eldorado Indians is a problematic aspect of Voltaire’s utopic vision that echoes the author’s distancing from Amerindian realities. Montaigne and Rousseau may lament the lost opportunity of the Americas and dream of a more clement imperialism, a perspective which constitutes an important starting point for the ideology of the mission civilisatrice in the specific spatial context of the Americas. In contrast, Voltaire’s reimagining of the possibility represented

---

116 Voltaire had knowledge of Amerindian societies gained through reading. The philosophe’s library contained many travel pieces that dealt explicitly with the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. For a listing of works in Voltaire’s library and analysis see Michèle Duchet’s Anthropologie et histoire au siécle des Lumières (68-9).
by the discovery of the Western hemisphere, his Eldorado utopia, is severed geographically from the rest of the Americas, separated from the ontologies of a real geography and imbricated with the fantastical. The idyllic Eldorado is on the road to Cayenne, a tropical location that remained relatively unknown at the period that Voltaire writes *Candide*. Voltaire offers a polygenetic-inspired, climate theory of race-inspired description of the *indolence* of Amerindians that is based on the tropical environment in the following passage taken from *Esprit sur les mœurs et l’esprit des nations*:

En général, l’Amérique n’a jamais pu être aussi peuplée que l’Europe et l’Asie ; elle est couverte de marécages immenses qui rendent l’air très malsain ; la terre y produit un nombre prodigieux de poisons ; les flèches trempées dans les sucs de ces herbes venimeuses font des plaies toujours mortelles. La nature enfin avait donné aux Américains beaucoup moins d’industrie qu’aux hommes de l’ancien monde. Toutes ces causes ensemble ont pu nuire beaucoup à la population (ch. 8).

Voltaire insists on the contamination of American landscapes, in particular tropical ones, such as the region of Cayenne where Eldorado is discovered by Cacambo and Candide. The existence of deadly, venomous poisons is linked by the philosophe to Native *indolence*. Poison, as an emblematic and symptomatic marker of inferiority vis-à-vis the Old World, is an obstacle to advancement and reason, which are the consequences of the superior industry of the European. Therefore, when Voltaire describes the wonders of Eldorado, the mythic spaces he invokes are ontologically incommensurate with the tropical American environment. The connection between the land and its *productions* is broken. Tropical Guyana could not have *produced* Eldorado any more than Amerindian peoples could have, because, according to Voltaire’s polygenetic outlook, they are intrinsically linked ontologically to the land. The protagonist’s fears regarding immanent anthropophagy in the area indicate that in the world of *Candide*, the Native is equated
with the dangerous poisons that Nature produces. The geography of Eldorado does not belong to the American geography. The unique transition from Oreillons (tropical) space to the land of Eldorado takes the characters on a twenty-four hour journey on an underground river before they emerge in a space that has little resemblance to the poisonous space they leave behind.

Through the ontological connection that subsumes the Amerindian within the space that he occupies (Voltaire’s polygenism), the idealized civilization of the Eldorado myth functions as an exclusionary discourse, as well. That is to say, Voltaire’s vision of the Native indicates that the Amerindian could not have attained to the enlightened cultural space of Eldorado.

The distinctions between Oreillons space and Eldorado space are evident. It is clear that Voltaire is making definite spatial and ontological separations between the two. Above, I quoted Voltaire’s description of his characters entrance into Oreillons space, “Ils s’enfoncèrent avec leurs chevaux andalous dans un pays inconnu, où ils ne découvrirent aucune route” (96). In contrast, when Candide and his valet enter Eldorado space the narrator tells the reader, “Les chemins étaient couverts ou plutôt ornés de voitures d’une forme et d’une matière brillante, portant des hommes et des femmes d’une beauté singulièr, traînés rapidement par de gros moutons rouges qui surpassaient en vitesse les plus beaux chevaux d’Andalousie, de Tétuan et de Méquinez” (102). The distancing from Oreillons space could not be more explicit. Whereas in Oreillons space there are no roads, the roads of Eldorado are populated with amazing vehicles with equally beautiful passengers. The physical description of the residents of Eldorado contrasts sharply with the portrait the author offers of the Oreillons, whose name is linked to their deformity. In this particularity, the monstrous ontology of the Amerindian in Voltaire’s account of the Oreillons is resonant with earlier examples, such as Thevet’s Patagonian giants and Champlain’s first depiction of the Armouchiquois. Not only are the Eldorado peoples dissimilar
to the Oreillons, the animal life of the region is judged superior to the most prized horses of the Old World. Cacambo asserts at the beginning of the chapter that they must return to Europe, because American space is *poisonous*. However, after the description of the roads, vehicles, peoples, and sheep just cited, Candide makes an opposite appraisal of Eldorado space, “*Voilà pourtant, dit Candide, un pays qui vaut mieux que la Vestphalie*” (103). These markers of difference between Oreillons space and Eldorado space constitute a site of *oscillation*. Voltaire indicates to the reader that a shift from the mythology of the Ignoble Savage model is taking place in favor of a Noble Savage framework. It is important to note, however, that Voltaire’s polygenism does not allow for the same landscape *producing* such disparate peoples or mythologies. Therefore, the author goes to some pains to situate Eldorado in the realm of fantasy by squarely removing it from the geography of the Americas. Although the host that Candide and Cacambo meet recounts the genealogy of Eldorado as an isolated element of classical Incan society, the specificity of the distinctions made between Oreillons and Eldorado space supports my reading of the myth of Eldorado as fantasy (106). Voltaire’s polygenism also reinforces my reading, because of its stubborn insistence on the unbreakable ontological link between land and people. Consequently, although Voltaire performs *oscillation* by shifting the mythic significance of the Native in *Candide*, he does not attribute the wonders of Eldorado ontologically to the Amerindian. Voltaire’s myth of Eldorado, which engages in the myth of the Noble Savage, nevertheless maintains racial hierarchies that are evident in the *philosophes* non-fiction, such as the *Essai sur les mœurs et l’esprit des nations*, which positions Europeans at the apex of the

---

117 The distinction between Oreillons and Eldorado spaces is echoed in the realms of food, “*On servit quatre potages garnis chacun de deux perroquets, un contour bouilli qui pesait deux cents livres, deux singes rôtis d’un goût excellent, trois cents colibris dans un plat, et six cents oiseaux-mouches dans un autre ; des ragoûts exquis, des pâtisseries délicieuses…*” (Voltaire, *Candide*, 104). With this Rabelaisian list employing superlative and exaggeration, the author nonetheless distinguishes these *exotic* foodstuffs from the morally reprehensible act of cannibalism.
human pyramid, while the Native (and other groups, such as those of African descent) are firmly established as inferior.

In Voltaire’s utopic description of Eldorado, there is a departure from the classic motif of the Noble Savage myth that emphasizes the ontological separation between the idealized inhabitants of Eldorado and real, living Amerindians. Rather than highlight notions of innocence and purity, Voltaire performs an entirely different act of ventriloquism. The society of Eldorado represents the enlightened principles espoused by the philosophe, and not a supposed golden age of the past. Voltaire’s philosophical and literary works are systematically progressive, working to reshape the future. To Voltaire’s mind, this transformative, transcendental bent of Enlightenment thought applies only to the French, not to the Native who is temporally and culturally fixed and immobilized in the correlation between hierarchized judgments of incomplete Amerindian humanity and the extreme, sensationalized representations of Oreillons anthropophagy and bestiality. Eldorado is contemporaneous and forward-looking, an imaginary space infused with the ideologies of the Enlightenment that does not abide the practices described as typical of the Oreillons, and by extension, all Indigenous peoples of the Americas. Rather than representing the past, Eldorado is a portrait of an ideal future that the Europeans have yet to discover. In this way, it differs considerably from other instantiations of the myth of the Noble Savage which can be identified by their obsession with the purity of origins and the unsullied dream of the past. The fact that Candide and Cacambo do not take away the philosophical and administrative ingenuities of Eldorado, but attempt to steal away with as much gold as the idiosyncratic red Eldoradan sheep can carry (their red fleece being an allusion to the

---

118 The transformative nature of Voltaire’s Eldorado myth is inherently imaginary, yet it does contain elements of another prominent mythology of the Amerindian that becomes more prevalent in twentieth century French letters, namely the Going Native myth. The Going Native myth is the focus of the fifth chapter of this study.
“red” skin of the Amerindian peoples). As in the historical examples mentioned in Montaigne’s “Des coches” (the loss of Spanish galleons at sea), the spoliators do not retain the fortune of precious metals they extract from Eldorado. They lose the majority of the booty. Voltaire satirizes greed and avarice by showing the folly and futility of accumulation in the case of Candide and Cacambo. In addition, he ironizes utopic visions in general, suggesting that Europeans would be incapable of profiting from being exposed to truly enlightened societies. In the next section, I examine how the mythic frameworks established from the early period of first contacts by French authors are transferred to discourses that claim a certain truth value in the domain of science.

3. The Science of Man and Buffon’s Systematizing of the Amerindian

During the eighteenth century different types of discourses emerge that claim certain truth values. One of the discourses that directly engages the Amerindian as object, a discursive field that will become increasingly hegemonic, is what I will refer to here as scientific discourse. The categorization of the texts that I will discuss as scientific may be, in fact, anachronistic. Science, in contemporary society, has a narrower meaning than it did during the Enlightenment. However, as part of the trajectory of the evolution of the sciences, the Enlightenment is a formative period wherein the transformation from the broader all-inclusive conceptualization of sciences begins to more closely resemble our modern notion of this particular discursive field. The truth value that will increasingly be attributed to scientific discourse in favor of other ways of knowing requires examination at this early stage, because the vision of the Amerindian espoused by Science will have a profound effect on colonial and settler praxis. Science continues to exert a heavy influence on the ways in which Indigenous populations are perceived and dealt with by governments and other international organizations. I will argue that the same paradigms
that characterize previous discourses (travel narratives, philosophical writing, religious reports and literary representations of the Amerindian) are constitutive of the new scientific discourse’s reworking of the image of the original inhabitants of the Americas.

One of the most striking features of the study of the representation of the Amerindian in French letters diachronically over such a long span of time is the virtually unaltered lens through which the French envision the Native. While subsequent generations of authors offer new insights in some cases, the vast majority of works regurgitate old stereotypes and images without critically examining their provenance, or more importantly, their validity. Different claims and arguments about the Amerindian are put forth in diverse discursive fields; however, the representation of the Native generally vacillates around a core set of preconceptions and judgments (the Noble/Ignoble Savage myths, the nexus of Nature and Native, the myth of the Vanishing Indian\textsuperscript{119}, and the myth of Going Native\textsuperscript{120}). Paradoxically, the aims and objectives of the individual authors, long considered a determining factor in any just, objective analysis of the portrayal of cultural Others in literary criticism, appear, at times, to matter little in the overall configuration of the Amerindian. To give an example, the positive inflection of the core set of conceptions about the Amerindian (the myth of the Noble Savage) that one encounters in the \textit{Discours sur l’inégalité}\textsuperscript{121}, differs little in its final conclusions regarding living, breathing contemporaneous Amerindian populations and individuals from Buffon’s (proto)scientific, (proto)racist, and predominantly negative characterizations of the natural productions of the American hemisphere, i.e. the original populations of the Americas conveniently thrown ontologically together in Buffon’s scientific analysis with the flora and fauna of the Western

\begin{footnotes}
\item[119] The myth of the Vanishing Indian will be the focus of the fourth chapter of this study.
\item[120] The Going Native myth will be the focus of my analysis in the fifth chapter of this dissertation.
\item[121] See section 1 of this chapter.
\end{footnotes}
The irony emerges when the Noble Savage of Rousseau’s philosophical treatise and the Ignoble Savage of Buffon’s scientifically sanctioned *Histoire naturelle* are recognized as being virtually indistinguishable in their theoretical, analytical, and mythic articulations. The form of the representation may vary, yet the content remains nearly the same. This surprising (or, perhaps, not so surprising at all) phenomenon points to a larger truth about the representation of the Amerindian in French: the original dehumanizing judgments and categorizations of the Amerindian are difficult to eradicate or sidestep epistemologically even when the author’s objectives appear to be a positive, relativistic portrayal of the Native (as in the examples of the Noble Savage myth already encountered in this study). The ineluctability of the dehumanized Amerindian evidently functions initially as a handmaiden to dispossession and colonialization. However, the epistemological framework that creates this unique vision of the Native manifests itself most notably in efforts to transform the Amerindian (the *mission civilisatrice*). My analysis shows the ways in which more accredited discourses such as those discourses that begin to emerge in the biological and social sciences during the eighteenth century (such as Buffon, Lafitau, and Démeunier, authors I will discuss in this section) are chiefly inspired by the same epistemological frames of reference, simply inserting hackneyed images into their own discipline’s vernacular.

In the new discursive field of Science, one major shift that takes place in the representation of Amerindians is an overt attempt to include the moral sphere into the new domain of biology. In short, the moral judgments made by previous generations of writers become more firmly anchored in the biological being of the Amerindian. In this way, the mythic discourses that shape French philosophical and literary visions of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas in earlier periods are objects of *transferability*, these images are imbued with *truth*.
value via their integration into a scientific discourse. While the immorality of the Amerindian as perceived by the French authors describing them in travel writing examples from the sixteenth century imply a certain contiguity between immorality and biological inferiority, in Buffon’s *Histoire naturelle* these claims are buttressed with a systematic knowledge that seeks to firmly implant the White European at the apex of what will, a century later, with Darwin, become the evolutionary pyramid. Inferences made about the perceived shortcomings of Amerindian societies are often coded as unnatural, if not self-evidently immoral. These differences become inscribed as part of the evidence of European racial superiority in the *Histoire naturelle*. The assertion of an inherent hierarchical paradigm of race in Buffon’s *Variétés dans l’espèce humaine* is based on moral and esthetic judgments presented as scientific truth. Later, social scientists will take up the same hierarchies and expound their theories in accordance with the assumptions presented by Buffon. One example that illustrates this phenomenon concerns Amerindian sexual practices, specifically the practice of offering wives and daughters to strangers as sexual partners. In the sixteenth century, Thevet depicts the practice as pandering by the parents, using the term prostitution to denounce the custom from a moralizing standpoint (929-934). Buffon takes a similar position in the following passages, but with some significant differences:

> Ils n’ont, pour ainsi dire, aucune idée de religion ni d’un être suprême, la plupart sont idolâtres, et tous sont très-superstitieux, ils sont plus grossiers que sauvages, sans courage, sans respect pour soi-même, sans pudeur : ce peuple abject n’a de mœurs qu’assez pour être méprisé. Ils se baignent

---

122 My discussion here focuses on the initial transfer of myth from the discursive domains of literature, philosophy, and travel writing into scientific discourse. In my analysis of nineteenth century representations of the Amerindian in French, I argue for the existence of a profound connection between representations of Native sexuality and the foundational claims of sociology in *De la division du travail social* by Émile Durkheim (see chapter 4, section 3). In the conclusion of this study, I turn my attention to the twentieth century. The genealogy of the transferability of myths of the Amerindian to scientific discourse will be traced by examining Claude Lévi-Strauss’ *Tristes tropiques* in conversation with its hypotext *Histoire d’un voyage fait en la terre du Brésil* by Jean de Léry (see chapter 5, section 3).
nuds et tous ensemble, filles et garçons, mère et fils, frères et sœurs, et ne craignent point qu’on les
voie dans cet état ; en sortant de ces bains extrêmement chauds, ils vont se jeter dans une rivière
très-froide. Ils offrent aux étrangers leurs femmes et leurs filles, et tiennent à grand honneur qu’on
veuille bien coucher avec elles… (Tome Troisième, 375-6).

Les Samoïédès, les Zembliens, les Borandiens, les Lappons, les Groenlandois, et les Sauvages du
Nord au-dessus des Esquimanux, sont donc tous des hommes de même espèce, puisqu’ils se
ressemblent par la forme, par la taille, par la couleur, par les mœurs, et même par la bizarrerie des
coûumes ; celle d’offrir aux étrangers leurs femmes, et d’être fort flattez qu’on veuille bien en
faire usage, peut venir de ce qu’ils connoissent leur propre difformité et la laideur de leurs
femmes, ils trouvent apparemment moins laides celles que les étrangers n’ont pas dédaignées…
(Tome Troisième, 377).

Buffon connects the moral and the biological in ways that defy the positivity that
allegedly constitutes the basis of his method and exposition. He begins by making some
sweeping claims regarding the inherent inferiority of Amerindian religion and morays. Sexuality
(in conjunction with nudity) enters the discussion as evidence in support of the author’s
overarching statements. Beginning with what Buffon sees as an overall lack of decorum
(communal bathing and nudity), the discussion quickly shifts to take up the practice of sexual
liaisons prodded by Amerindian men coupling their women with visitors. Buffon’s discourse
descends into derisive irony with the author’s final commentary in the first passage. The
naturalist implies the ridiculousness of feeling honored by others deigning to engage in sexual
relations with one’s wife or daughter. The implication is, of course, that Amerindian sexual

differentiation in the lives of the Amerindian population, as described by Buffon, is
manifested in the way they interact with visitors, particularly in terms of their practices and
views on relations with visitors.

---

123 In point of fact, sexuality is a vector of difference that is often instrumentalized in travel, philosophical, religious
and scientific writing to queer the Amerindian in comparison to the European. I use the verb queer to indicate the
hegemonic discursive apparatus that promotes a monolithic sexuality (such as heterosexual practices as
determined by Judeo-Christian tradition, in this case) as normative, thereby excluding other sexualities or
embodiment practices as abnormal or queer. More generally, Europeans queer Native lifeways that they do not
understand, cannibalism exemplifies a practice that is marked as queer even though it is not related to sexuality.
morality is so abhorrent that it does not even register with the Native that when another man has sexual relations with one’s wife or daughter one should be offended. The epistemological difference is so great that Buffon feels that he can safely turn to explicit mockery of the practice because it is simply unassimilable to any French understanding of honor in sexuality. Rather than make any relativistic attempt at comprehending why the Amerindian might be honored to have his wife or daughter sleep with the visitor (it has often been suggested that the practice was a way in which Amerindian groups attempt to bring strong blood lines into the community; therefore, it is ultimately an act of respect and biological adoption or assimilation of the visitor into the community), Buffon presents this particular representation of this precise sexual practice to buttress his own assumptions about the intrinsic moral and, therefore, biological inferiority of the Amerindian vis-à-vis himself (i.e. the French). Scott Lauria Morgensen’s *Spaces Between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization* pinpoints articulation and persecution of differences in sexual practices as a site of creation (and development) of settler colonial power and the promotion of settler normativities. Morgensen’s analysis posits framing of Native minority sexualities, one of the most iconic of which is berdache, as a key feature of the power apparatus of colonialism and settler colonialism. Although the practice of offering one’s wife or daughter as a sexual partner to a visitor might be marked as heterosexual (and therefore outside of what might typically be labeled as ‘minority’ sexuality), European moral judgments of the practice queer these practices, marking them nevertheless as abnormal from a Foucauldian perspective (1-54).

In the second passage, Buffon introduces another element into his representation of the Amerindian practice of offering one’s wife or daughter to a visitor as a sexual partner. The second quotation begins by assigning a certain racial continuity and conformity with all peoples
of the North (While Buffon recognizes that the peoples of the North are racially distinct from the Amerindian groups to the South, the French often write about both groups indistinctly as Amerindians, without regard to the staggering amount of physical and cultural diversity among the original inhabitants of the Americas). The sexual practice under discussion occurs among various groups in the Arctic, North America, Central America, and South America. Therefore, the continuity suggested by Buffon in his discussion of the peoples of the North, implies a behavioral, if not biological, unity between those peoples and the Amerindians to the South that share the hemisphere with them. The connection made here between morality and biology is an important feature of Buffon’s understanding and textual representations of human racial diversity in the *Histoire naturelle*. As I will show later, the purported immorality of the Amerindian is a necessary feature of Buffon’s argument that serves contrapuntally to the Native’s physical constitution, often shown as superior in comparison with the French. Here, however, Buffon deplores the physical as well as the moral. As I mentioned above, rather than attempt to deal with this sexual practice openly and reasonably, Buffon turns to unthinking, uncritical mockery. In an attempt at humor that simultaneously relegates the Amerindian to esthetic as well as moral subaltern status, Buffon proposes to explain the practice by suggesting that the peoples of the North, recognizing their own physical “deformity”, offer their women up to the probing gaze of the visitor in order to discover which of the female members of their families are beautiful and which are ugly. Couched in the flippant humor of the comment, Buffon reduces the familial bonds of these peoples to grotesque ludicrousness (and by extension those of the other Amerindian groups to the South that engage in similar sexual practices)\textsuperscript{124}. In conjunction with

\textsuperscript{124} As in Rousseau’s state of nature, Buffon posits Natives as incapable of maintaining true familial bonds with one another. This designation is significant, because family is the microcosm of culture and society. By denying familial care to the Native, French writers situate the Indigenous peoples outside of the most rudimentary level of humanity, placing them closer to the animal than to themselves. However, Buffon does not contemplate a state of
the barb about the ugliness and stupidity of these peoples, one must consider the position of Buffon as author or speaker. With the advent of the sciences as a global system of power and knowledge, the position of authority from which Buffon speaks allows the naturalist to assert the superiority of the White race through the assertion of his own personal superiority vis-à-vis the objects he discusses, in particular, the peoples of the Americas in this instance. This is a general, structural feature of French representations of the Native. Duchet explains that:

…depuis la découverte de l’Afrique et de l’Amérique, et le début du processus de colonisation, l’homme sauvage est objet, l’homme civilisé seul est sujet ; il est celui qui civilise, il apporte avec lui la civilisation, il la parle, il la pense, et parce qu’elle est le mode de son action, elle devient le référent de son discours (18).

The hierarchy presented by Buffon in this passage, and throughout *Variétés dans l’espèce humaine* and elsewhere in the *Histoire naturelle*, situates the European as solely capable of determining physical and moral beauty as it manifests itself (or does not) in human societies. Privileging the written concurrently privileges the gaze\textsuperscript{125} of the European on the Amerindian and other ethnic groups. In the tradition of French letters, it matters very little whether a French author ever actually gazes upon the object of his textual representations. The French cultural imaginary of the Amerindian being invoked and, at the same time, created in the exercise of representing the Amerindian in writing is based on mythic paradigms and not a realistic portrayal of actual Amerindian subjects. Having established the superiority of his own judgment (Reason, that standard bearer of the age), and by extension that of his fellow White Europeans in his quip about ugly Eskimo women, Buffon also discusses the Cartesian dichotomy between the physical (*le corps*) and the spiritual or mental (*l’âme*) as an unequal distribution across racial lines with

\textsuperscript{125} I employ the term “gaze” in the Foucauldian sense here.
devastating consequences for the overall image of the Amerindian that emerges from his writings.

Buffon’s articulation of the faculties necessary to embark on the scientific endeavor that will become the *Histoire naturelle* is a telling fragment of his philosophy on human races and their hierarchical ordering. Buffon states that:

Pourvûs par la Nature, d’organes uniquement destinez à notre conservation, nous ne les employons qu’à recevoir les impressions étrangères, nous ne cherchons qu’à nous répandre au dehors, et à exister hors de nous ; trop occupez à multiplier les fonctions de nos sens, et à augmenter l’étendue extérieure de notre être, rarement faisons-nous usage de ce sens intérieur qui nous réduit à nos vraies dimensions et qui sépare de nous tout ce qui n’en est pas ; c’est cependant de ce sens dont il faut nous servir, si nous voulons nous connoître, c’est le seul par lequel nous puissions nous juger… (Tome Second, 429-30).

What Buffon refers to in this excerpt is that which precisely distinguishes the French from the other races that will be discussed after this passage (this passage is part of the introduction of a section about human nature). The foundation of the social sciences’ claim to truth in the modern world is made here by Buffon in reference to his study of human natural history. The necessary faculty to examine and report upon human racial differences is actually a double faculty according to Buffon. Primarily, it is derived from the senses and our desire to understand the world beyond ourselves, a materialist viewpoint. This perspective valorizes Reason, that deity of the Enlightenment. The second element of this double faculty is what modern scientists would refer to as scientific objectivity. The distancing from oneself and one’s physical sensations required to adequately judge humanity is what is requisite in order to undertake the task that Buffon’s text represents. From a linguistic standpoint, the repetition of the inclusive “nous” in the passage is significant. The author does not claim the capacity for Reason
and scientific objectivity for himself uniquely, rather he extends it to his readers (the literate French community that might read the text subsequently) through the pronoun “we”. As we shall see, other races are incapable of this double faculty. Buffon insists on the Amerindian being a part of the human species in certain respects, while simultaneously excluding the original inhabitants of the Americas from full human status in other key areas of what the author proposes as the peculiar combination of characteristics and attributes that constitute the Human (read “White European”). Sexuality is a key factor in this determination as inferior, or as “homme à demi”, as Duchet describes the savage in Buffon’s anthropology (258). In addition, the systematic ordering of knowledge represented by Natural History as an inchoate domain of scientific research and knowledge production has consequences for how the French imagine the Amerindian.

Not only does Buffon’s discourse ally itself with recognized and coded regimes of truth in order to stake a claim to a certain truth value in its own right, but the structure and systematization of the domain of natural history itself, and the *Histoire naturelle* as a scientific project and text, support Buffon’s efforts to establish his own scientific authority as a part of the field of discourse that was emerging under the name of natural history at this time:

By virtue of structure, the great proliferation of beings occupying the surface of the globe is able to enter both into the sequence of a descriptive language and into the field of a mathesis that would also be a general science of order. And this constituent relation, complex as it is, is established within the apparent simplicity of a description of the visible (*The Order of Things*, 136).

The “structure” and “general science of order” that Foucault points to are more indicative of the entirety of the animal descriptions of the *Histoire naturelle*, wherein the visible structures of the vast multitude of genera and species are painstakingly articulated, than they are of
Buffon’s comparisons between human races, although the author does provide detailed verbal portraits of racial archetypes in the *Histoire naturelle*, as well. It is this “description of the visible” that makes natural history’s claim to truth because of its “apparent simplicity”, thereby creating the textual space to insert the ridiculous judgments that Buffon includes about the Amerindian and the Inuit as part of the discourse of natural history’s *truth*. The racial profiles Buffon pens are contiguous to the compartmentalized verbal dissections of animals and plants. This contiguity transfers truth value between the two types of depictions, from the observational clarity and self-evidence of the non-human to the travel narrative-based conjectures of the human. In short, without the many tomes of minute description of the anatomy of the various genera of Animalia, Buffon’s moralistic and esthetic claims about human racial differences (which situate White European bodies and minds at the apex of the biological pyramid) would not convey the same authority or *truth* about humanity in all of its diversity. Diversity is, in fact, the special object of natural history, its specialization or area of expertise as it were. Therefore, by establishing authority and linking its discourse up to a certain regime of truth by articulating the visual with regards to the animal world, Buffon can assert his racial classifications and judgments as objective scientific truth. As Foucault states elsewhere in *The Order of Things*: “Natural history is nothing more than the nomination of the visible” (132). However, the “visible” can make claims to “apparent simplicity” as its mark of evident truth, as it pertains to the description of a leaf or a beaver’s tail, but it cannot, of course, hold the same epistemological sway in the relative world of human cultural and ethnic diversity.

The key to Buffon’s claim to scientific truth is the move from the Animal to the Human. Ironically, Buffon does not actually report on what he “sees” in his descriptions of many of the various animals or human races that he describes in the *Histoire naturelle*. The foundation of
natural history’s claim to truth (that which is “seen” and subsequently named) is not actually representative of Buffon’s discourse on human diversity generally and the Indigenous peoples of the Americas specifically. Couched within the “apparent simplicity” of Buffon’s descriptions, is a history of representation of the Amerindian that remains silent. This history is that which I have been tracing throughout this study, namely the mythic paradigms of representing the Indigenous peoples of the Americas in French. Buffon’s images of Native sexuality discussed in the citation above (communal nudity and offering wives or daughters to visitors as sexual partners) repeat earlier images of Native sexuality. Not having “seen” all the different groups of Amerindians he claims to describe in broad strokes here, Buffon reappropriates older discourses and images and enters them into the discursive field of natural history as scientific truth. Obfuscating the origin of the information he instrumentalizes to construct his representations of the Amerindian, Buffon implicitly claims the authority of the eye-witness within a domain that explicitly lauds the “description of the visible” as the marker of objective knowledge. The paradox is easily accounted for if one looks at the sources used by Buffon to create this knowledge about racial difference, however.

Buffon’s work is mined from travel literature. He is a naturalist “de cabinet” who rarely, in point of fact, “sees” the objects he describes. However, the editing process of the Histoire naturelle creates a different image of the work in France:

[La] mise à jour continuelle donne à l’Histoire naturelle le ton et l’allure d’une chronique, en marge de la découverte du monde. Buffon est sans doute l’homme de son siècle qui a le mieux connu et exploré la littérature des voyages, parce que cette connaissance était la base même de son œuvre… ….Contraint le plus souvent de n’observer que par les yeux d’autrui, la valeur de son

---

126 See Thevet’s *Cosmographie universelle* (928-34) and Léry’s *Histoire d’un voyage fait en la terre du Brésil* (149, 214, 234, 427) for examples of Native sexual practices discussed in travel literature.
œuvre est à la merci de témoignages qu’il ne peut ni négliger ni vérifier. Le résultat est une
connaissance au second degré, où les médiations sont multiples et la certitude pratiquement nulle
(Duchet 232-3).

Buffon’s relatively continual “updating” of the knowledge produced in the *Histoire naturelle* creates the illusion of new discoveries being made and subsequently reported on. This praxis is typical of scientific discourse, in general. The tenets of positivism state that the answers science seeks are in a state of constant evolution and refinement, never static or complete. In the case of Buffon’s writings, this structural feature of scientific discourse abets his claims to *truth*. Nevertheless, the denunciation of Amerindian and Inuit sexual practices reiterates an original inscription of those practices as part of the Ignoble Savage mythology that has been at the center of images of the Native since the early periods of contact. By *queering* these practices through an interpretive model that normalizes and naturalizes Judeo-Christian conceptions of appropriate sexuality, the Native is situated in a space of animality, outside of humanity. The question of sexuality is at the heart of European understandings of identity and definitions of self, because the family is the microcosm of the binary that opposes European civilization, with its normative sexuality, and Amerindian savagery, with its *queer* sexual practices. The *queering* of the sexual identities and practices of the Native serves as a technique to deny the existence of the institution of *family* and, therefore, *civilization* to the inhabitants of the Americas, placing them closer to the animal than the human.

In Buffon’s *Histoire naturelle* the peoples of Tierra del Fuego serve as an illustration of the worst of humanity in the South American context of the Western Hemisphere. This example

---

127 Scott Lauria Morgensen argues that sexuality is the defining element of self-definition for Euro-Americans (2). In Morgensen’s analysis, sexuality occupies a special position in epistemologies of Self and Other(s).

128 Many Native sexual practices are critiqued in the same way, such as polygamy, homosexuality, and berdache.

129 Paradoxically, in the discursive field of natural history it is a move in the opposite direction, animal to human, that supports the truth claims of the discipline, as discussed previously.
clearly illustrates the mythic origins of Buffon’s representations of the Amerindian and his determination of the Native as animal. Due, of course, to Buffon’s climate-based theory, the peoples of the far North and the extreme South are the most animalized races. Therefore, the peoples of the Tierra del Fuego region function as a point of comparison with the Arctic peoples, such as the Inuit discussed previously. One can see how Buffon’s description of these original inhabitants of the Americas demonstrates many of the particular characteristics of the naturalist’s discursive strategies for situating the Amerindian in French epistemological frameworks. The following passages are representative of Buffon’s representation of the Amerindian:

Ce peuple paraît être errant, car auparavant on avoit vu des huttes abandonnées, et d’ailleurs les coquillages étant une fois épuisés dans un endroit de la côte, ils sont obligés d’aller s’établir ailleurs ; de plus ils n’ont ni bateaux ni canots, ni rien de semblable. Et tous ces hommes sont les plus misérables et les plus stupides des créatures humaines ; leur climat est si froid, que deux Européens y ont pèri au milieu de l’été (Supplément Tome quatrième 537).

This citation marks out the theoretical and “scientific” ground that Buffon wishes to assert as undeniable truth. Importantly, the visual is highlighted as the source of the naturalist’s inferences about the lifeways of the peoples of the Tierra del Fuego region. It appears (“paraît”) that they are nomadic, because abandoned huts have been seen (“avoir vu”). The gaze that the naturalist employs to describe the various features of the animal and plant worlds is the selfsame objectifying tool that Buffon utilizes in this passage to articulate his judgments about the inhabitants of the southernmost lands of the South American continent. The shift to the visual permits Buffon to claim authority as French writer of natural history, yet he does not maintain the rigorous scientific principles that he sets out for himself to regulate the creation of the Histoire naturelle as an objective, scientific work of truth. Buffon’s observations are nonetheless positioned alongside a more objective scientific discourse. The rest of the Histoire naturelle
focuses on animals, a much more neutral textual and epistemological arena wherein writing consists of simply naming the seen, the “nomination of the visible”, as Foucault terms it. In this way, the objectifying gaze of the naturalist, the same mechanism that produces the description of the horse is put in motion when Buffon writes about the material culture of the Amerindians of Tierra del Fuego. Buffon situates the Amerindian closer to the animal than to the French and the truly human. The fact that Europeans cannot survive the climatic rigors of the region even during the summer in the same environment inhabited by the Natives of Tierra del Fuego, according to Buffon’s text, emphasizes the animality of the latter. The Amerindian is physically superior in some ways (ability to survive in a difficult climatic zone), yet that superiority is dehumanized, becoming an animal quality rather than a human one. This act of making inferior what might otherwise be considered traits of superior health and vigor is a parallel technique to the queering of Native sexual practices. The normative discourse of human physicality present in Buffon’s *Histoire naturelle* prizes the less adapted European body, because it signifies civility according to French epistemology. Buffon confidently states that the peoples of Tierra del Fuego are surely the stupidest and most miserable of all the people of the Earth. The “evidence” for his conclusions appears to be based upon their nomadic lifestyle and their lack of Progress (the absence of watercraft), a key paradigm for Buffon in determining true humanity. The movement that the naturalist’s writing takes to anchor the Native in a space of animality might be referred to as reification. The concretization of the myths of the Ignoble Savage into scientific truth is what I intend by employing the term reification. The general epistemological framework that informs the representations of the Amerindian in Buffon’s work (and in other French texts, more generally) are the mythic paradigms that have been the focus of this study (the mythologies of the Ignoble and Noble Savage, the nexus of Native and Nature). By entering these mythic
assumptions about the Native into the discursive field as part of the “order” of scientific
knowledge in the domain of natural history, Buffon performs a textual act of reification, whereby
the abstract imagination of the Amerindian as expressed in the myth of the Ignoble Savage is
transfigured, or presented, as an image that has been seen by the author. In this way, myth
becomes scientific truth and knowledge about the Indigenous peoples of the Americas based on
structural features of the discourse of natural history and not on verifiable information about
living, breathing Amerindians. Much of the conjectural nature of Buffon’s science is inherent to
the philosophy of a climate-based theory of race. In the citation above, Buffon makes inference
about Native peoples based on the cold climate of the Tierra del Fuego region. However, the
climate theory becomes problematized on the following page of Buffon’s text, by the author
himself, in an interesting way:

Quoi qu’il en soit, ces hommes de la Terre-de-Feu, où l’on prétend que le froid est si grand et où
ils vivent plus misérablement qu’en aucun lieu du monde, n’ont pas perdu pour cela les
dimensions du corps : et comme ils n’ont d’autres voisins que les Patagons, lesquels, déduction
faite de toutes les exagérations, sont les plus grands de tous les hommes connus ; on doit présumer
que ce froid du continent austral a été exagéré… (Supplément Tome quatrième 538).

In this citation, Buffon’s climate theory is asserted via reference to the Amerindian body
in the context of both the inhabitants of the Tierra del Fuego region, and that of another group we
have already seen in Chapter 1 of this study: the Patagonian giants. Buffon insists on the
humanity of the Amerindians of Tierra del Fuego, however, in a qualified manner. He first refers
to them as belonging to the human race (“ces hommes”). Next, he explicates further by telling the
reader that the only way in which he considers them to be human is in the dimensions of their
bodies. According to Buffon, the Amerindian of Tierra del Fuego has only the silhouette of
humanity. This is in keeping with Buffon’s positioning of the Native as enjoying only a liminal
humanity, or as Duchet characterizes the naturalist’s representation of the Amerindian, as an “homme à demi” (258). The most interesting aspect of this citation, given the object of this study, however, is certainly the reference to the Patagonian giants.

Buffon wishes to distinguish himself from the gullible readers who have swallowed wholesale the legend of the gargantuan stature of the Patagonians by qualifying their prodigious height as less than the exaggerations of some authors, while simultaneously asserting that they are, in point of fact, the tallest humans on Earth. The tension between myth and scientific truth is a strawman. The myth actually informs scientific knowledge, despite Buffon’s protestations. Buffon’s blind adherence to the climate theory is evident. Although he states that the cold is so extreme in Tierra del Fuego that it brought about the demise of two Europeans during the summer months just one page earlier, the existence of the mythologized Patagonian giants entails that the climate must not be as cold as one might be led to believe. Buffon attempts to take advantage of opposite poles of the climate theory’s principles at the same time. The stunted, culturally degenerate inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego connote an extreme environment. This is, of course, in keeping with the dogma of climate theory. However, the existence of the giant Patagonians throws a wrench in the works of the naturalist’s well-ordered machine. Buffon attempts to explain away the existence of the Patagonians alongside the peoples of Tierra del Fuego by insisting that the climate cannot be as cold as it has been described (by himself). The argument quickly degenerates into a circular one, because a physically well-developed group (the Patagonians) and an inferior group that is, according to the author, barely hanging on to their status as human (the inhabitants of the Tierra del Fuego region) cannot exist in the same geographical region according to the postulates of the climate theory. Ironically, the truth of Buffon’s systematic and scientific epistemological (and textual) framework for understanding
human racial diversity ends up being based upon a myth, ultimately revealing its nature as imaginary. This is an example of what I referred to earlier in this chapter as transferability. The mythic paradigms that are ubiquitous in the French cultural imaginary of the Native cross generic and discursive lines. Accounts of Oreillons bestiality are reencountered in a novel by Voltaire. Travel narratives inform philosophical truth in the *Discours sur l’inégalité* by Rousseau. And, the Patagonian giants of legend reappear as scientific truth in the *Histoire naturelle* of Buffon, the father of the discipline of natural history in the French tradition.

The mythic is at the center of French representation of the Amerindian. The mythical apparatus is never completely absent in textual images of the Amerindian. The mythological origins of the representation of the Amerindian are not eradicated by the epistemological movement known as the Enlightenment, with its concurrent rationalism and positivism in one of its proto-scientific wings, natural history. What one encounters in Buffon’s citation above is an attempt at mitigating the mythic component, but not disavowing its truths. Buffon’s scientific objectivity occurs in a vacuum of textual allusions and culturally biased inferences and judgments that are structural and intrinsic to Western epistemologies. If natural history is the “nomination of the visible” as Foucault posits, then the biggest irony of Buffon’s racial descriptions about the inhabitants of the Tierra del Fuego region and the legendary Patagonian giants must lie in the fact that the naturalist never sees either. The important point to retain from this and other examples already discussed in this chapter, is the way in which mythically inflected and sensationalized representations of the Amerindian play a critical role in the formation of the French cultural imaginary of the Amerindian as a racial and cultural category. The myth of the Patagonian giants can directly influence Buffon’s conclusions about the climatic zone at the southern tip of the South American continent to the point of rendering the author’s
theoretical principles incoherent and untenable. In addition, the reports of La Condamine about the bestiality of the Oreillons can cause a sensational reaction across France and inspire Voltaire to immortalize the report in fiction in his masterpiece Candide. These mythic and sensationalized representations of the Amerindian are formative in the creation of the French cultural imaginary of the original inhabitants of the Americas. This act of queering the Native is concretized by its association with La Condamine and scientific truth. In the next section, I discuss two authors who emerge as proto-ethnographic or proto-sociological writers in the eighteenth century, focusing on the Amerindian specifically (Joseph-François Lafitau) or including them within their discussion of human diversity in general (Jean-Nicolas Démeunier). These authors illustrate the recycling of long-standing mythic images of the Amerindian, but the framework that they establish for understanding the Amerindian is interesting given the object of this study.

4. Protoethnographic and Protosociological Mythologies of the Native: Joseph-François Lafitau and Jean-Nicolas Démeunier

Joseph-François Lafitau’s most important work representing the Indigenous peoples of the Americas is the multivolume Mœurs des sauvages américains comparées aux mœurs des premiers temps (1724). Lafitau, who spent several years in New France as a Jesuit missionary (1711-1717), takes a position that is anything but original in his desire to explain the provenance of the Amerindian in keeping with scriptural revelation and Christian theology and dogma. The objective that motivates much of his theorizing and exposition in Mœurs des sauvages américains is to establish a link between the Amerindian peoples and the Biblical peoples, specifically the Israelites. The epistemological consequences of the discovery of the Americas shook faith in Christian explanations of human origin and God’s grace and mercy. The Black Legend of the Spanish (much of which was committed in the name of Christ) also put pressure
on the Church to justify itself in light of such atrocities. In addition to his insistence on finding a Biblical connection as a vector to interpret the existence of the original inhabitants of the Americas, Lafitau seeks to create a discursive frame wherein the relatively more accepted (since the Renaissance) pagans of Antiquity (primarily the Greco-Roms) are systematically linked via analogy and metaphor to the Amerindian, thereby establishing them as previous versions of current European peoples, theoretically and epistemologically opening up the road to their inclusion as human objects of proselytizing, with the goal being the eventual “improvement” and “salvation” of the Amerindian by transforming them through the praxis known as the mission civilisatrice into (nevertheless imperfect) copies of their White European models.

Lafitau has often been lauded by critics as an ethnographer avant la lettre, because of his alleged powers of observation and his ability to present information about the Native in keeping with his own predetermined theoretical stance. As in the writings of Buffon discussed previously, the nature of Lafitau’s work, however, is conjectural, and ultimately mythic:

Mais comme la conjecture fondée sur la ressemblance des Iroquois & des Lyciens, n’est pas si juste qu’on n’en puisse faire des applications à d’autres, ainsi que je l’ai dit, & qu’il est difficile, pour ne pas dire impossible, dans un si grand éloignement de temps & de lieux, de rencontrer précisément & avec évidence, ou même avec une probabilité assez forte rapport à un Peuple particulier ; je crois qu’il faut prendre la chose d’une manière un peu plus vague pour courir moins de risque de se tromper.

Mon sentiment est donc que la plus grande partie des Peuples de l’Amérique viennent originairement de ces Barbares qui occupèrent le Continent de la Grece & ses Isles, d’où ayant envoyé plusieurs Colonies de tous côtés pendant plusieurs siècles, ils furent obligez d’en sortir enfin tous, ou presque tous, pour se répandre en divers pays, ayant été chassez en dernier lieu par les Cadmonéens ou Agenorides, qu’on croit être les Peuples d’Og Roy de Bazan, dont il est parlé
dans l’Ecriture, ce qui arriva à peu près dans le temps que les Chananéens fuyant devant les Hebreux, & contraints de leur céder la place, alloient inonder eux-mêmes comme un torrent, d’autres Contrées où ils trouvoient des ennemis moins redoutables (Lafitau, *Mœurs des sauvages*... Tome premier, 89-90).

This lengthy passage contains the overall thesis of the *Mœurs des sauvages*, by going backwards in human history to pinpoint the point of departure of the Amerindian from the Old World en route to the New. As with Buffon’s claims to *truth* in his natural history, Lafitau’s discourse, grounded in his theories of the origins of the Amerindian, asserts a certain truth value. Therefore, the rhetoric and logic employed must be examined more closely. The author offers his readers a very specific explanation which situates the origins of the Iroquois in the south of modern day Turkey, in order to subsequently refute it precisely because of its specificity. As discussed in my analysis of Buffon and scientific discourse, the author’s performance of “updating” lends a veneer of credibility to what he asserts through mimesis of scientific revisionism. The next rhetorical move that Lafitau makes can only be described as paradoxical at best, however. Denying the validity of positing any detailed and specific links between Old World populations and their possible descendants in the New World (the Iroquois-Turkey connection), Lafitau proposes that a more vague approach is the only logical solution to the problem posed by the origins of the peoples of the Western hemisphere. The author next proceeds by hinging his assertions on the feeling or impression (“sentiment”) he has regarding the provenance of the Amerindian.

The *scientific truth* of Lafitau’s discourse is not established on rigorous grounds according to any disciplinary precepts, rather the proto-ethnographer’s propositions can best be characterized as being derived from thinking that is abstract, creative, and relies more on the
imagination than objectivity or rationality, similar to Rousseau’s thinking in the *Discours sur l’inégalité*. Given the predetermined purpose and objective of Lafitau’s text, to provide evidence of a Biblical and Classical explanation for the populations of the Americas, the arguments the author produces are hollow and merely serve to support his thesis whether they can stand up to any critical scrutiny or not. *Moeurs des sauvages* is a conjectural mental exercise that may compile a certain amount of cultural and observational knowledge about the first inhabitants of the Americas, but that nonetheless forces those peoples through a Christian theological sieve in order to add Reason to religious dogma in the face of contradiction and fundamental inconsistencies.

In the second paragraph of the citation quoted above, the theory of Lafitau becomes apparent. The lens through which Lafitau sees the living, breathing Amerindian echoes the perspective adopted by Rousseau in the *Discours sur l’inégalité*. That is, both writers see the Amerindian as belonging to the past. Kevin Bruyneel in his monograph, *The Third Space of Sovereignty: The Postcolonial Politics of U.S.-Indigenous Relations*, discusses this type of hierarchical temporalizing. According to Bruyneel, “These narratives place temporal boundaries between an ‘advancing’ people and a ‘static’ people, locating the latter out of time, in what I call *colonial time*, where they are unable to be modern, autonomous agents” (2). Both Rousseau and Lafitau situate the Amerindian in “colonial time”. Rather than representing the Native as living, breathing subjects, they are objects that cannot advance through time in keeping with one of the Enlightenment’s most precious illusions, Progress, as Europeans do both ontologically and epistemologically as determined from a Eurocentric perspective. The barbaric population that Lafitau imagines as the most likely candidate as the progenitors of the original inhabitants of the Americas is situated in the Peloponnesus, the homeland of one of the greatest civilizations of
antiquity, Greece. The author’s conclusion reveals the ontological difference connoted by placing the Amerindian in “colonial time”. The Greeks who are not those who migrate to the Americas are an “advancing people”; because they go on to form a society that inspires the birth of humanism in Renaissance Europe. Lafitau’s Amerindian can be characterized as not only “static” but degenerative. Lafitau often analogizes Native practices to Antique practices through the vector of Amerindian degeneration in comparison with the original Classical paradigms. Since the discovery of the Americas, the peoples living there represent an enigma and raise a burning question to the Christian West, fomenting an existential and epistemological crisis in what Tony Brown refers to in *Primitive, the Aesthetic, and the Savage: An Enlightenment Problematic*, as “anthropological security”. As Brown states in one articulation of the thesis of his monograph:

> What I am going to suggest is that certain eighteenth-century writers struggle with the human’s place in the world due to a perceived breeching of secure knowledge of the human and the world. That is to say, I take the breeching in question as immanent to the demand for security: in a context we can call the Enlightenment, both for convenience and historical connotation, anthropological security is a recognizable problem because it is breached… …Schematically, the difficulty of thinking the primitive occasions the breach, the attempt to theorize the aesthetic constitutes a central manifestation of the breach, and the savage puts it all in play-for as we will see, the breach in question has much to do with the Old World’s encounter with the New World (xvii-xviii).

Therefore, Lafitau’s response to the “breach” created by the discovery of the New World, his attempt at regaining a semblance of “anthropological security” in a Christian *and* Western epistemological context, is to equate the Native with the Greeks in order to assimilate them to a pagan group that not only has been widely accepted into the European Christian cultural tradition
(despite their non-Christian worldview), but have also served as evidence that even those who have not received the revelation of the Scriptures can be redeemed (if only partially) in the Western imagination. Instrumentalizing “colonial time” and degeneration, Lafitau nonetheless insists on the perfectibility of the Amerindian, if only in the religious context. This possibility of cultural redemption is, of course, contingent upon the Amerindian’s wholesale acceptance of Christianity as well as the system of Western modalities of knowledge, agriculture, and political economy, otherwise known as the *mission civilisatrice*.

Lafitau’s convoluted, imaginary explanation of the Greek origins of the Amerindian is Christianized by its connection to that ultimate example of writing from the Jesuit’s viewpoint, the Bible, which stands metonymically for writing itself (“*L’Ecriture*”). The fact that the group that the author designates as the precursor of the Amerindian race is mentioned in the written, scriptural tradition of Christianity is essential in the context of Lafitau’s intentions in writing *Moeurs des sauvages*. The dual attachment of the Amerindian to Greek Antiquity and Christian Biblical references illustrates Lafitau’s desire to regain “anthropological security” in light of the discovery of the New World. By claiming a Biblical and Classical origin for the Amerindian, the question of God’s omniscience and mercy can be put to rest; in other words, the “breach” can be mended. Tony Brown refers to the new discursive practices of explanation applied to the Amerindian question by Enlightenment thinkers as a “governing historicism” (xvii). We have already examined the historicisms of Rousseau and Buffon (who painstakingly demonstrates the Amerindian to the Old World in the same way as modern science, via the Bering Strait and the populations of Asia, in the *Histoire naturelle*). Lafitau takes a decidedly more religiously-inspired, Christian theological approach. Another, much less well known author, who takes
cultural comparison on the level of custom and praxis as his object of inquiry, is Jean-Nicolas Démeunier.

Jean-Nicolas Démeunier, lawyer and *censeur royal* during the Ancien Régime, is perhaps better known for his political works and activities in the French Revolution than textual representations of the Amerindian. Active during the Directory, Consulate, and Empire, buried in the Panthéon, it is, however, Démeunier’s first publication that is of interest in the context of the present study, a three volume text titled *L’Esprit des usages et des coutumes des différents peuples, ou observations tirées des voyageurs et des historiens* (1776). In the same vein as Buffon, Démeunier demonstrates a staunch faith in climate theory and the ideal of Progress as defined from a Eurocentric perspective. Démeunier succinctly describes the project of *L’Esprit des usages* in the following terms:

Nous connoissons presque toutes les nations, policiées ou sauvages, il est temps de les comparer ; & comme le genre humain offrira désormais un spectacle monotone, on tâche de conserver les vestiges des premiers temps…. On s’est appliqué à suivre les progrès de la civilisation : on examine comment ils changent les usages ; & on indique la dépravation journalière des peuples (v, vii).

This formulation serves both an explanatory and justificatory function vis-à-vis Démeunier’s voluminous compilation of cross-cultural customs and practices. Within this definition of his literary project the author espouses a certain ideology toward the non-European world that makes far-reaching assumptions about those peoples, the past, and the future. As in Buffon’s writings, Démeunier utilizes the inclusive pronoun “we” ("nous") to delineate a cultural, linguistic solidarity with his readership, thereby clearly demarcating Europe as the measure of humanity and civilization. Démeunier situates knowledge of the world on the side of
the French (who metonymically stand for Western Civilization). This hierarchically places the author in the position to “authoritatively” take up the work that is central to his text: the comparison of different peoples and their cultures.

Démeunier envisions the future in a strictly teleological manner. The “spectacle monotone” that he foresees as the universal experience in centuries to come implies that the non-European world will inevitably come to perfectly adapt and assimilate to the civilized ways of the European (“les progres de la civilisation”). The practices and customs that he endeavors to collect, describe, and compare are denigrated as inferior. The aspersion that the author employs is to equate the daily lives of the Amerindian (and other non-European groups) to “everyday perversion” (“la dépravation journalière des peuples”[“dépravation” being associated with immoral conduct, I choose the stronger term “perversion” as its proper translation in this context]). In addition to denouncing the supposed inferiority of the Amerindian, Démeunier concurrently illustrates a tendency that develops significantly after this period and becomes a central concept for my analysis in the fourth chapter of this study: nostalgia. I enter into a more in depth discussion of the phenomenon in the next chapter; however, the temporalizing of Démeunier’s discourse constitutes an early example of a nostalgic vision of the current, living Amerindian as nearing extinction, the myth of the Vanishing Indian. Nostalgia is defined by two major features. First and foremost, one is nostalgic about something or someone that is absent. Secondly, there is a moral dimension that denotes guilt, pain, or attachment. In the context of Démeunier’s work, he is so confident in Europe’s ascendancy that he cannot imagine a non-European presence in the future world. Therefore, a collective historical dimension replaces the vacuum where one might find guilt, pain, or attachment in an individual case of nostalgia, as part of the French (European) cultural imaginary. Rather than lamenting the destruction of the
peoples of the Americas, Démeunier seeks to record their practices as part of a grander conception of human heritage and history ("on tâche de conserver les vestiges des premiers temps"), thereby appropriating other cultures as European in much the same way the Lafitau includes the Amerindian in Antiquity genealogically connecting the Indigenous peoples of the Americas to France. The most important aspect of this literary nostalgia as it will develop more fully in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is the first feature of nostalgia that I mention, the absence of that about which one is nostalgic. Nostalgia presupposes the absence of its object, here the Amerindian (for Démeunier, his object also contains all other non-European peoples). This discursive practice, firmly ensconced within the ideology of the mission civilisatrice which seeks to eradicate what is culturally abnormal or queer (always presuming success and predicting a facile transformation of the Other into the Self), obfuscates the presence and existence of the living, breathing Amerindian. I will examine this trope, which will become known as the myth of the Vanishing Indian in the next chapter, as a key part of my analysis of the representation of the Amerindian in the works of Chateaubriand. It is sufficient here to signal its emergence in the sociologically and historically inflected work of Jean-Nicolas Démeunier.

In this section, I have demonstrated how images and representations of the Amerindian have been transformed within a discursive field that I would describe as proto-scientific (in the example of Buffon, it is natural history, the precursor of biology, whereas with Lafitau and Démeunier, one is confronted with proto-ethnographical and proto-sociological works that also inhabit a space liminal to the genre of historical discourse). The truth claims that accompany the representations of the Amerindian in these particular discursive fields will be a central part of the analysis in the final two chapters of this study.
Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown how the mythologies of the Amerindian encountered in the first two chapters of this study, the Ignoble and Noble Savage and the nexus of Native and Nature, are manifested in the philosophical, fictional, and scientific discourses of the French Enlightenment. In Rousseau’s *Discours sur l’inégalité*, I underlined the mythic ambiguity of the abstract philosophical space of the state of nature and the *homme sauvage*, showing how elements of the Ignoble and Noble Savage myths inform Rousseau’s thinking about primitive man. My interpretation of the representations of the Oreillons and the myth of Eldorado in Voltaire’s *Candide* referenced the concept of oscillation, which indicates the ever-shifting nature of the Native in French letters. Through the technique of comic literary ventriloquism in his portrayal of anthropophagy, the queering of the Oreillons in the author’s account of bestiality which echoed La Condamine’s sensationalized scientific report, and the utopic imaginings of Eldorado that are ontologically separated from the Americas and their Indigenous peoples in the text, the author instrumentalizes the object of the Amerindian through the mythic to more firmly establish ontological difference between them and the French subject. In the third section, I focused on scientific discourse by deconstructing the practices of queering in depictions of Native sexuality and the influence of myth in the articulation of scientific truth about the Amerindian. I posited transferability as a concept to describe ways in which mythic representations of the Native cross generic and discursive lines in order to explain how the myth of the Patagonian giants might find itself in a scientific text about natural history. In conclusion, at the end of my discussion of mythic ambiguity in Rousseau’s *Discours sur l’inégalité*, I suggested connections between Rousseau’s representation of the state of nature as a nostalgic site of universal human history to which one may not return and the myth of the Vanishing
Indian. The mythology of the Vanishing Indian in the writings of Chateaubriand and the French Western novel is the focus of the fourth chapter of this dissertation.
Chapter 4

The Myth of the Vanishing Indian: Chateaubriand’s *Lithic Romanticism*, the French Western Novel, and the Sociology of Émile Durkheim

Introduction

In this chapter I continue to explore how the original categories of Noble and Ignoble Savage are taken up and transformed. I will examine the myth of the Vanishing Indian which is not only an epistemological tendency for understanding the Native in the nineteenth century, but also a narrative technology that misshapes the Amerindian in specific ways. I begin by exploring this mythic paradigm in the works of one of the most influential early French romantic novelists, François-René de Chateaubriand. I introduce the concept of *lithic romanticism* as a theoretical matrix for better understanding the confluence of the Noble Savage myth and the Vanishing Indian myth in the author’s American texts (I use the adjective “American” to refer to those works that primarily occur in North America, or are recounted as taking place on North American soil). The concept and terminology *lithic romanticism* were inspired, in part, by an article that would be best situated within the domain of Comparative Indigenous Studies, “Monumentally Indian: The Photography of Edward Curtis and the Cuzco School of Photography” by Silvia Spitta, published in the journal *Comparative American Studies* in June 2013. Spitta’s analysis, while focusing on photographic images of the Amerindian, rather than textual representations, is useful for understanding one of the primary paradoxes of the nineteenth century view of the Native, namely the Vanishing Indian myth that we will encounter in this chapter through an examination of the works of Chateaubriand, the French Western novel, and the foundational discourse of the *scientific* discipline of sociology in *De la division du*
travail social by Émile Durkheim. It was Spitta’s discussion of the nostalgic and monumentalizing elements of both Edward Curtis’ and the Cuzco School’s photographs of Amerindians that permitted me to recognize a parallel in the metaphorical constructions one finds in Chateaubriand’s American novels. Her usage of the adjective lithic resonated with me when considering the consequences of the figures used by Chateaubriand to construct his personal myth of America and its inhabitants. In my discussion of lithic romanticism, I will concentrate on the temporal and spatial practices of exclusion that are inherent elements of this particular narratology. I argue that the monumental mode in Chateaubriand’s writing is an idiosyncratic manifestation of the long tradition of the Noble Savage myth. Lithic romanticism represents the confrontation between the older figural frameworks for envisioning and writing about the Native (the Noble and Ignoble Savage frameworks) and the emerging paradigm of the Vanishing Indian myth. In point of fact, a significant aspect of lithic romanticism is its genealogical connection with both the Noble Savage and the Vanishing Indian mythic paradigms, two of the most influential French epistemologies in the history of the literary representation of the original inhabitants of the Americas. Both contribute to Chateaubriand’s lithic romanticism’s ultimately exclusionary vision of the Amerindian. As Spitta astutely observes, “Paradoxically, and as if by a sleight of hand, Indians vanish as they are monumentalized” (169). Through nostalgic, guilt-ridden images that render the Native as lithic monument (an example of what Gerald Vizenor refers to as tragic victimry), ironically, this narrative strategy erases Amerindian presence on the land, opening up the metaphoric, textual space for its guilt-free appropriation by Europeans (Survivance: Native Narratives of Presence, ch. 1).
After my analysis of *lithic romanticism* in the American works of Chateaubriand, I will examine a genre that is often ignored or relegated to the margins of scholarship within French and Francophone Studies, the French Western novel. When I employ the label “French Western novel”, I am referring specifically to French examples of the prototypically American genre of the Western novel, wherein “Cowboys” and “Indians” fight for ultimate control of the (American) West. Many French authors (Gabriel Ferry, Gustave Aimard, and Henri-Émile Chevalier will be the primary focus of my discussion) publish works that emulate the American genre. It is a popular literary form that occurs in both serial publication and (more familiar to modern consumers) in the form of the stand-alone novel. Beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century and continuing to the present day, the French Western novel continues to be published and read throughout the Francophone world. Considered by some critics as belonging to a popular form of literature that does not command the same respect as more canonical texts, the French Western novel is an important tool in the scope of this study for analyzing the creation and dissemination of the mythic representation of the Native that manifests itself in a collective French cultural imaginary of the Amerindian. It is through access by a mass audience to these popular works of fiction that the myths of the Amerindian can influence the society as a whole and become a part of the collective French lexicon of symbolic meaning regarding the Native, a *crystallized* French cultural imaginary of the Amerindian. In addition, though they are often criticized as simplistic, formulaic simulacra of Whites and Indians alike, the Western novel’s seeming predictability is interesting precisely because of its power. After all, the genre continues to enjoy success in many different mediated forms (not only in French novels, but also in films and *bandes dessinées*). Despite its supposed simplicity, the French Western novel is a space wherein cultural difference and conflict are resolved (if only apparently) through specific
narrative technologies of representation that are important for understanding the evolution of the representation of the Amerindian in French letters. The Romantic elements of Chateaubriand’s writing resonate within the structures of the Western novel, which demonstrates the affinity of the latter with the former instantiation of a French vision of the Amerindian. The teleological logic of the Vanishing Indian myth is the defining feature of the French Western novel. I discuss how authors of the French Western novel reiterate the Vanishing Indian myth via framing Nature and the Native in certain ways. In conjunction with a particular vision of Nature and the Indigenous, the French Western novel’s tendency to rely on stereotypes as part of a lexicon of images that signify the authentic Amerindian is elucidated though my analysis of the dual trope of the physical and emotional insensitivity of the Native. After having examined the representation of the Native in the French Western novel, I focus on the transferability of mythic visions of the Amerindian in the sociological thought of Émile Durkheim.

Émile Durkheim’s *De la vision du travail social* (1893) constitutes the primary object of my analysis in the final section of this chapter. My reading of the text zeroes in on the articulation of the central research question of the monograph and how the author instrumentalizes representations of Native sexuality in order to naturalize European superiority, both biologically and morally. Supporting his argument with evidence taken from the hard science of biological racism of the late nineteenth century, Durkheim situates the site of ontological difference in what he refers to as primitive “sexual resemblance”. I deconstruct the rhetorical turns in *De la division du travail social* in order to reveal how the author’s discourse of scientific truth originates in the logics of the mythic paradigms of the Ignoble Savage and the Vanishing Indian.
1. Lithic Romanticism in Chateaubriand’s Representation of the Amerindian

Many critics have claimed that Chateaubriand’s early works occupy a position in a direct line with the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, containing elements that speak clearly to the influence of the latter on the former’s literary productions. It is clear that the author of Atala is enthralled with the political and philosophical ideas to be found in Rousseau’s oeuvre. Chateaubriand is, in fact, in a critical position in the context of this study. Over the first three chapters, I have discussed at length the vision of the Amerindian through the construction of mythic representations of the Amerindian Other by generations of French authors. Chateaubriand stands at the crossroads between the Early Modern period, the time period covered in the first three chapters of this study, and the beginning of the Modern period, the time period that will be covered in the final two chapters. In Chateaubriand’s representations of the Amerindian, one can recognize the culmination of trends in constructing the category of the Indian through mythic paradigms. Chateaubriand’s Amerindian is dependent in many ways on a Rousseauian conception of the mythology of the Noble Savage as well as conflations of Native and Nature. However, Chateaubriand does something more. In this section, I will discuss a theoretical concept, that I will call lithic romanticism. Linked to the myth of the Vanishing Indian, the central focus of my analysis of nineteenth century French representations of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas, the concept of lithic romanticism permits me to better explain the particularities of Chateaubriand’s stylistic choices when portraying the Amerindian.

I define the myth of the Vanishing Indian as an epistemological framework that can manifest in various guises in literary, philosophical, or scientific texts, but which is most critically characterized by its positioning of the Native as beyond the pale of progress and modernity, thereby dooming the Amerindian, if not to total destruction, at least to marginalized obsolescence. Throughout this chapter I identify how specific genera (such as Chateaubriand’s romanticism and travel writing as well as the French Western novel) and discursive fields (such as the literary examples just mentioned and scientific discourse, specifically that of sociology in the seminal work of Émile Durkheim, De la division du travail social) employ narrative strategies that engage with the mythology of the Vanishing Indian.
When Chateaubriand inflects his representations of the Amerindian in the voice of *lithic romanticism*, while on the surface it may appear to be an attempt to revalorize the alterity of the Amerindian, the author actually engages in an act of dehistoricization and dehumanization of his object. The textual *disappearing*\(^\text{131}\) of the Native in Chateaubriand’s work requires special critical attention within the history of the French tradition of representing the original inhabitants of the Americas. Although the author’s nostalgic vision of the Amerindian can be interpreted as relativistic, the epistemological technologies employed are resonant with the colonial ideologies of the *mission civilisatrice* and European attempts at cultural, as well as biological, genocide of Native peoples. Mythic metaphoric systems, which directly inform the French cultural imaginary concerning Amerindian alterity, have a symbiotic relationship with political practices which have devastating consequences for Amerindian groups. My study seeks to elucidate the underpinnings of the mythic paradigms used by French authors to situate the Native in specific ways vis-à-vis the French, in order to better understand narratives which *disappear* Indigenous peoples. The stories the French (and other Europeans) tell about the Amerindian are directly complicit with the genocidal tendencies produced by the interaction between French and Native.

I began my discussion of Chateaubriand by signaling his genealogical affiliation with Rousseau, because the mythic component, so central to Rousseau’s musings on the state of nature, plays an equally formative role in Chateaubriand’s idiosyncratic mythology of the Noble Savage, *lithic romanticism*. One can read Chateaubriand’s American novels as containing a vision of the Amerindian in relation to the European that derives in large part from the

---

\(^{131}\) *Disappearing* is the active verb associated with the mythology of the Vanishing Indian. When an author such as Chateaubriand *disappears* the Native in his works, he relegates the Amerindian temporally or spatially to a static ontology whose teleological destiny can only be extinction according to the principles of this Western epistemological technology which accompanies genocide in (settler) colonial praxis. The term is used in similar fashion in Indigenous Studies more generally.
Rousseauian model as it emerges in the *Discours sur l'inégalité*. One is tempted to wonder whether the author’s readings of Rousseau as a young man may have influenced Chateaubriand’s representations of the Amerindian, perhaps limiting the epistemological possibilities available to Chateaubriand when he came into contact with living, breathing Natives during his travels to North America. In this section, I will argue that Chateaubriand constitutes a new way of writing about the Amerindian, which nonetheless, continues to operate, in part, according to earlier epistemological presumptions. While he may mine the works of Rousseau and others for philosophical and metaphorical inspiration, Chateaubriand does do something quite new. One of the ways in which Chateaubriand’s Noble Savage is specifically romantic has to do with individuality and subjectivity. Whereas Rousseau relies on philosophical abstraction that deals primarily with the general and the collective, Chateaubriand shifts focus, in a move very typical of romanticism, to the individual and the personal. However, this shift towards the individual is fraught with contradiction.

In the novella *René* and in the longer, more epic work *Les Natchez*, the individual subjectivity that moves the text along is that of the French protagonist René, and decidedly not that of the Amerindian characters. *Atala* concentrates more clearly on Amerindian characters, the two lovers Atala and Chactas, with the missionary, Père Aubry, also playing an important role. However, the forces of Christianity and the binary opposition between the state of nature and the state of civilization frame and circumscribe the personal story that Chactas recounts to his adoptive son René. The Amerindian characters speak in *Atala*; however, they are not speaking as Amerindians. Rather, they clearly reiterate the morality of French, Catholic culture and the determining factor of the Native characters is precisely their imminent extinction. In this way,

---

132 See chapter 3 section 1 for an analysis of the representation of the Amerindian in Rousseau’s *Discours sur l’inégalité*.
Chateaubriand’s characters Atala and Chactas are inscribed within the mythology of the Vanishing Indian. In conjunction with the generic shift from philosophy to fiction, Chateaubriand’s concentration on the individual Amerindian (as contrived as that Amerindian may be) invests his works with a veneer of verisimilitude. While Chateaubriand may mine theoretical inspiration from Rousseauian philosophy, his American novels and, particularly, the récit de voyage, *Voyage en Amérique*, make a certain claim to truth and authenticity that is solely based on the author’s personal experience with living, breathing Amerindians during his travels to North America. The authority of the eye-witness inscribes Chateaubriand’s texts with a sanction of veracity that solidifies the mythic representations of the Amerindian that one finds there, lending credence to what remains a textual construction which has very little in common with actual Native peoples. In this way, Chateaubriand’s *Voyage en Amérique* is similar to earlier examples of travel writing discussed in this study. By assuming the privileged mantle of the eye-witness account as penned by an informed traveler, Chateaubriand performs the narrative technique of transferability by adapting the same mythic representations of the Native in both his true travel accounts and his fictional American novels. I argue that both are mythic, neither true nor false, but rather based upon a structure established over time within French epistemology regarding the Amerindian as a specific category. What Amerindian does the reader encounter in the texts of Chateaubriand?

The constructions of the Amerindian within the texts of Chateaubriand are composed of the same basic elements that the authors discussed in previous chapters have employed to build their mythically-inflected representations of the original inhabitants of the Americas. Following the example of both Montaigne and Rousseau, Chateaubriand situates the majority of his representations of the Amerindian squarely within the trope of the *bon sauvage*. Chateaubriand
employs the trope, as Montaigne and Rousseau do, as counterpoint, in order to criticize the
decadence of French society. What are the particularities of Chateaubriand’s version of the
classic Noble Savage myth? As I mentioned above, one of the most striking features is the
author’s concentration on the Amerindian, as individual. In addition, Chateaubriand’s characters
are typically presented as tragic figures. Chactas and Atala typify Chateaubriand’s shift towards
the individual Amerindian. However, this shift to the individual does not essentially alter the
overall dehumanizing effects of the bon sauvage paradigm. Although Chactas and Atala are the
characters with whom the reader is invited to identify in Atala, Chateaubriand does not present
these Amerindian characters with the same complexity and sympathy with which he portrays his
fictional alter-ego, the Frenchman René, or the missionaries Père Aubry and Père Sorel.
Chateaubriand’s Amerindian characters are always secondary in comparison to the French
characters in the texts, even when Natives appear as the main characters. Atala is a text that
simultaneously contradicts and proves my point. While Chateaubriand places the Amerindian
characters Chactas and Atala at the center of the action, these characters do not possess the full
humanity that Père Aubry does. It is in fact Père Aubry who leads the couple to accomplish the
necessary transformation, their simultaneous Christianization and Europeanization which
connotes their humanization in the text. It is the presence of Père Aubry and his intervention
(conversion) in the lives of Chactas and Atala that is the necessary message of the text. The
French Catholic mission is the vehicle of the creation of Atala. Without Père Aubry, there would
be no Atala. Echoing the religious texts of the Jesuits in the seventeenth century, the impetus to
convert the Native (nearly always a correlate of colonization and exploitation of the selfsame
Natives) makes the Native worthy of writing about. Natives are measured ontologically and
epistemologically by their acquiescence in the missionaries’ efforts (the innocent, pure Noble
Savage of myth) or their resistance (the demonized, dehumanized Ignoble Savage) to that particular mode of hegemonic disappropriation of Amerindian cultures that was Christian proselytization in the Americas\textsuperscript{133}. In short, the only Amerindians worth writing about are those who have come into contact with the European. It is through that contact alone that the Amerindian becomes worthy of literary consideration in representational form. Not only contact, but apparent cooperation or acceptance of the ideologies of the *mission civilisatrice* often determines whether Indigenous groups are categorized as either Noble or Ignoble. Creating images of the Amerindian that depart from the Amerindian’s perceived or portrayed reaction to Christian culture, the Jesuits, the Ursulines, and Chateaubriand are engaging in mythologizing. This mythologizing never allows for the complexity of realistic representation. Rather, it can be characterized as reductive and exaggerated, much like the distorted reflections in a funhouse mirror. One of the major mythic elements of the representation of the Native are the concepts that I have discussed in conjunction with the changeability of the Amerindian in the French cultural imaginary and text. Some of the technologies of the mythologies of the Noble and Ignoble Savage, as well as the nexus of Native and Nature, which can be inflected in either of the primary mythic paradigms, that I have analyzed in the first three chapters are *framing, oscillation, ambiguity*, and *transferability*. In this section, I will examine the myth of the Vanishing Indian which is not only an epistemological tendency for understanding the Native in the nineteenth century, but also a textual framework that distorts the Amerindian in specific ways. The Vanishing Indian myth performs the *disappearance* of the Amerindian by presenting the Indigenous peoples of the Americas as extinct or nearing extinction, culturally or

\textsuperscript{133} This method for defining the Amerindian by his docility or animosity towards European civilization will continue to be a prevalent matrix in the literary representation of the Native in the French Western novel, discussed in section 2 of this chapter.
biologically. In Homi Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture*, the author indicates how hegemonic discourses temporalize the Other:

Hegemony requires iteration and alterity to be effective, to be productive of politicized populations: the (non-homogeneous) symbolic-social bloc needs to represent itself in a solidary collective will – a modern image of the future – if those populations are to produce a progressive government (43).

According to Bhabha, cultural blocs need to build a “solidary collective will” through discursive techniques employed to create a commonly accepted “modern image of the future”. In the history of the representation of the Amerindian in French letters, the collective French cultural imaginary, as manifested in the mythologies of the Native, identifies the Amerindian as incapable of producing a “modern image of the future” within the paradigm of the Vanishing Indian myth. The progressive requires its counterpoint, as Bhabha indicates the need of hegemonic power of an opposite against which it can define itself in its quest for a “modern image of the future”. In the purview of this study, the *primitive* Native is the “alterity” that functions as obverse to the progressive French self-envisioning, which is critical to the historical moment of the turning from the Enlightenment towards modernity. The Vanishing Indian myth’s performance of the *disappearing* of the Native validates the progressive superiority of the French (European). Whether in Chateaubriand’s American texts, the French Western novel134, or the nascent theoretical presumptions of sociology135, the mythology of the Vanishing Indian echoes the same principle epistemologies of the Noble Savage myth as discussed throughout the course of this dissertation, the innocence and purity of the Native. It is crucial to understand, however, that the textual *disappearing* of the Native in literary and scientific discourses accompanies the

---

134 See section 2 of this chapter.
135 See my analysis of Émile Durkheim’s *De la division du travail social* in section 3 of this chapter.
military and cultural attempts of nineteenth century Europeans to disappear the Amerindian culturally and biologically. Chateaubriand’s writings offer an illustrative case study of the myth of the Vanishing Indian.

In *Atala, René*, and *Les Natchez*, the author primarily aims to present the Amerindian as a victimized Noble Savage. In some ways lamenting the genocide of the Native, Chateaubriand simultaneously positions the Amerindian as in need of the European. The proselytizing message of Chateaubriand’s texts, most evident in *Atala*, echoes the ideologies of the *mission civilisatrice*. In point of fact, Chateaubriand’s works contain many representations that engage with the mythology of the Ignoble Savage, as well. The author needs both mythic textual versions of the Native in order to create the possibility of a contradistinction that really isn’t one at all. By portraying some of the Natives that inhabit his texts on the negative end of the Savage spectrum, the categories of “good” and “bad” Indians are concretized, naturalized, and largely conflated. This, of course, is a classic technique in colonial and colonizing literatures. While the Noble and Ignoble Savages appear to be opposites, they are not as disparate as one might believe at first glance. Interestingly, the other side of the Noble Savage, the Ignoble variety, functions in much the same way as the Noble Savage myth. The Ignoble Savage, the Amerindian who resists the European, who continues to live according to his own cultural paradigms (religious, military, sexual, culinary, etc.) also serves to reinforce the dominant discourse, reifying the superiority of the author’s culture whether the Amerindian cooperates with European culture (the Noble

---

136 French travel writing (Thevet, Léry, Cartier, Champlain, Jesuit Relations, Sagard, Marie de l’Incarnation, etc.) of earlier periods are “colonial” because they participate in French colonial efforts in the western hemisphere. After the Seven Year’s War and the sale of the Louisiana territory by Napoléon, I interpret the examples I discuss as “colonizing” because they engage with the ideologies in much the same way as the settler colonial powers of North, Central, and South America, without the French government having any colonial claim to territories in the geographies represented in French authors’ texts. The primary example of a “colonizing” text would be the French *Western* novel, because the myths of the frontier operate in French as they due in American examples of the genre, however the French are not a “colonial” power on the ground, only ideologically and epistemologically through literary appropriation.
Savage, Chactas and Atala) or opposes it (Atala’s tribe, for example, who plans to ritually
cannibalize Chactas in the novel, or Ondouré, in Les Natchez, who plots the Amerindian attack
on the French). The power of the myth of the Noble/Ignoble Savage lies in the binary’s ability to
reinforce European cultural superiority both when it praises and when it condemns the
Amerindian.

Chateaubriand’s version of the Noble Savage is a mythically-inflected vision of the
Amerindian that simultaneously presents the Native as presently living as a secondary or
dependent creature (I use this term because Chateaubriand often equates his Native characters
with the natural world where they dwell, as part of his overtly Christian discourse) vis-à-vis the
European and simultaneously monumentalizes the Amerindian as already extinct. I have chosen
to qualify Chateaubriand’s particular stylistic twist on the Noble Savage as lithic romanticism.
One of the defining features of lithic romanticism is its close correlation with both the Noble
Savage and the Vanishing Indian mythic paradigms, two of the most influential French
epistemologies in the history of the literary representation of the original inhabitants of the
Americas. Although Chateaubriand tends to display a certain narrative sympathy, often
manifested as nostalgia, with his Amerindian characters, most notably in his American novels
Atala, René, and Les Natchez, I argue that lithic romanticism is complicit with the overall
principles of the mission civilisatrice (or, its more straight-forward and appropriative American
euphemistic equivalent, Manifest Destiny). The Vanishing Indian myth does not dialectically
emerge from the Noble Savage myth; it shares ideological and genealogical affinities with it,
while never fully superseding the original Noble Savage perspective. Rather than develop
dialectically, the Vanishing Indian myth is accumulative; it is in addition to the Noble and
Ignoble Savage and the nexus of Native and Nature\textsuperscript{137}. All of these mythic narratives are requisite elements of Chateaubriand’s \textit{lithic romanticism}.

Throughout the centuries that I have been examining so far in this study, French authors have shown a tendency to compare the original inhabitants of the Americas with the civilizations of classical Antiquity. This comparative model was the impetus behind Lafitau’s extensive proto-ethnographical work, \textit{Mœurs des sauvages américains comparées aux mœurs des premiers temps} (1724)\textsuperscript{138}. Lafitau’s work emerges as perhaps one of the most refined examples of the long-standing tradition in European letters of envisioning the American peoples through the lens of historical Antiquity. In Chateaubriand’s \textit{lithic romanticism}, this tradition continues to thrive, playing a central role in the descriptive frame that informs Chateaubriand’s textual Amerindian. The tactic of mythologizing the Amerindian as a correlate of Antiquity creates an effect of detemporalization.

\textit{Representing Nature: Metaphors of Emptiness}

Removing the Amerindian from the present and affixing his existence to an unattainable past serves to firmly establish the idea that the Amerindian lacks not only a present, but more importantly, the possibility of a future. To repeat Bhabha’s instructive words, the Native cannot produce a “modern image of the future” that may be epistemologically categorized as viable from a French (Western) viewpoint. This future is denied to the Amerindian \textit{ontologically} by the logic of the myth of the Vanishing Indian. In this way, the author’s insistence on the metaphor of

\textsuperscript{137} The original mythic visions of the Native never become obsolete. Rather than evolving, the French representational technologies for presenting the Amerindian and constructing the French cultural imaginary of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas add new techniques, of which the Vanishing Indian myth is one, the Going Native myth (the focus of the chapter 5) another. As a discourse meant to prove the progressive nature of Western civilization, the mythologies of the Native remain remarkably static, or even regressive, with the political consequences that any student of the history of the invasion of the Americas knows well.

\textsuperscript{138} See chapter 3 section 3 for my analysis of Lafitau’s project.
Antiquity creates a closed space wherein one is constrained to understand the Amerindian as already extinct. The myth of the Vanishing Indian goes beyond what Bruyneel calls “colonial time”. In Bruyneel’s formulation the West presents itself as “advancing” whereas the Native is depicted as “static” (2). Not only “static”, the Ancient Indian, the Amerindian that has been equated to Classical Antiquity through the narrative technologies of the myth of the Vanishing Indian, is disappeared or extinct. The technique of situating Indigenous peoples of the Americas temporally as belonging to Classical Antiquity is a leitmotiv in Chateaubriand’s American works. It is a metaphorical choice that is entrenched in the epistemological frame of the French reader and writer alike, naturalized by the Noble and Ignoble Savage, as well as the mythologies of the Nature/Native nexus. The metaphor is persistent and powerful, despite its inherent illogic. I am referring to the legerdemain that occurs when one presents a living, breathing person as belonging to the foggy ruins of time. The metaphorical connection of the Amerindian to Antiquity speaks to the cultural heritage of the audience (French knowledge of historical Antiquity). An early example in the prologue of *Atala* will help to elucidate my point:

> Par intervalle, il élève sa voix, en passant sous les monts, et répand ses eaux débordées autour des colonnades des forêts et des pyramides des tombeaux indiens ; c’est le Nil des déserts. Mais la grâce est toujours unie à la magnificence dans les scènes de la nature. (Chateaubriand, *Atala*, René, 58).

In this passage, Chateaubriand is characterizing the landscape along the banks of the Mississippi River. There is a double substitution that occurs. Romanticism, which has often been described as reflecting an affinity to Nature, is evident in this excerpt. The first substitution occurs around this central concept of Nature. The author creates a metaphorical mapping that creates an interesting vision which imbricates Nature and the Native. As for Nature, it too is referred to as belonging to Antiquity and culture. The primary semantic field wherein Chateaubriand creates a space for his metaphorical substitutions is the domain of classical
architecture. The trees of the forest are “colonnades”. By transforming the organic trees into
cultural productions of a bygone era, Chateaubriand constructs a metonymy that relies upon
contiguity. While the trees are ascribed cultural significance through their similarity to
colonnades, the Amerindians are depicted in a very specific way. The Amerindian becomes
visible in the landscape only as death or absence.

The architectural element equated with the Amerindian that echoes the image of the trees
as “colonnades” is the reference to the architecture of Antiquity par excellence: the Egyptian
pyramids. The pyramid is not an innocuous reference at the time when Chateaubriand is writing
his novella, of course. The recent scientific and military expedition to Egypt by Napoleon
Bonaparte, undertaken in 1798, remains a highly sensationalized and mediatized point of
national pride when Atala is first published in 1801. This rather obvious metaphorical
transformation constitutes the second substitution in the passage. Living, breathing Amerindian
cultures dwelling along the Mississippi River system are replaced by an image of death and
extinction, which is characterized in Chateaubriand’s writing as both cultural and biological. The
writer’s system of representation conjures associations with French scientific and military
superiority: the tombs of the Egyptian pharaohs. The French superiority that the metaphor evokes
is not only military, but cultural, intellectual, epistemological, and by extension ontological. The
presumption of French intellectual superiority is a requisite position from which any textual
representation of the Amerindian emerges within French letters (textual representation remains
unilateral during this time period, i.e. the French are writing about Amerindians, not the other
way around).

Chateaubriand’s carefully constructed metonymy opens up a textual space that calls the
reader to recognize the proper role of the French, as rightful invaders and writers or makers of
history. In contradistinction, the Native is the victim of history. The “colonnades” and “pyramids” are encompassed in the gaze of the Frenchman, this visual appropriation is a precursor to the textualization of that vision, which then leads to the evident next step in the process: military and scientific appropriation. Both Nature and Native are neutralized through the architectural metonymy. These representations are lithic, because they are transmogrified by the substitutive gesture of Chateaubriand’s very specific mythic metonymy of Nature and the original inhabitants of the Americas. Rather than living, the forests are monumentalized through their comparison to one of the key elements of ancient temples, colonnades. Concurrently, the Amerindian is more explicitly condemned to absolute obsolescence and irrelevance vis-à-vis French ideologies of knowledge and power, relegated to the marginal, evoking, at the very best, the inquisitiveness one might afford an historical curio. In short, they are disappeared. Chateaubriand tends to portray the Amerindian within his version of the myth of the Noble Savage as an inferior type of humanity, that nonetheless contains the potential for becoming more French-like and whose purity and innocence, which might as easily be interpreted as stupidity or backwardness, merits pity and compassion. Under this guise of textual sympathy for the Natives he writes about, Chateaubriand nonetheless ensconces them in a position characterized by death and atemporality. In this passage, Chateaubriand nods toward the metonymy of the architectural forest and the sepulchral absence of the Amerindian (ironically, the only way in which the Amerindian is “present” in the landscape is in absentia) by attributing both to the grace and magnificence of Nature. However, the author’s respect for Nature and the

---

139 The situating of the Amerindian as the victim of history reinforces the ontological superiority of the makers of history, such as the French. Mythic victimization is one of the principal aspects of Chateaubriand’s lithic romanticism, which relies in part on the articulation of a nostalgic (re)imagining of the disappearance of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. This narrative technology relegates the Native to the past, denying him the possibility of creating a ‘modern image of the future’, as in Bhabha’s formulation.
Amerindian belies the real consequences of the textual representations of both. In fact, the romantic component within the dyad, lithic romanticism, is only a narrative technology\(^{140}\).

While Chateaubriand speaks to his reader’s hypothetical sympathies for the culturally inferior Amerindian, he simultaneously reinforces that epistemological hierarchy by using it as the central point of reference for his textual representations of the Amerindian in his writings. Chateaubriand’s Noble Savage myth is built upon the tragic. The tragic is an important textual framework whereby the suppression of the identity and culture of the Amerindian is played out in a textual space that has no stakes for the non-Amerindian, French reader. The tragic fate of Chactas or Atala, for example, speaks more to the emotional and psychological concerns of the reader who is removed from any contact with living, breathing Amerindians by both the fiction of textual representation and the physical distance between France and the middle of the North American continent. In Chateaubriand’s texts, the Amerindian is always secondary. René’s troubles and vagaries are the central point around which the plots of both René and Les Natchez revolve, decidedly not the Amerindian characters that undergo comparatively more cataclysmic crises than the lachrymose French protagonist. In short, René’s incestuous lovesickness trumps the Natchez’ struggle for cultural survivance\(^{141}\) in the textual universe created by Chateaubriand’s lithic romanticism.

In another passage, Chateaubriand claims that the Frenchman (and the European, in general) have an emotional need to create their own “empty” spaces. The author invokes

\(^{140}\) I understand a narrative technology as a metaphorical system which engages power structures which do not explicitly reveal themselves as metaphorical, or mythic. A narrative technology appears as reasoned, sympathetic, or scientifically informed information, which nevertheless relies on epistemological structures that obfuscate their own arbitrary origins as knowledges about the Native that are always in formation, or constructed.

\(^{141}\) My use of this term is inspired by my readings of Gerald Vizenor’s writings. Vizenor defines the term as follows, “Native survivance is an active sense of presence over absence, deracination, and oblivion; survivance is the continuance of stories… Survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, detractions, obtrusions, the unbearable sentiments of tragedy, and the legacy of victimry” (Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence, ch. 1).
isolation as a panacea for the psychological ills of the troubled European, thus his need to seek out the “empty” hemisphere, the Americas. The implications of Chateaubriand’s vision are rather explicit in the following excerpt, “Les Européens, incessamment agités, sont obligés de se bâtir des solitudes. Plus notre cœur est tumultueux et bruyant, plus le calme et le silence nous attirent” (Atala, René, 154). Here, the author lays out his own romanticized version of the colonial enterprise, or the mission civilisatrice before the reader. I interpret the ideologies of the mission civilisatrice, which appear on the surface to focalize on the colonized, as more about self-definition through the effort to establish the ontological superiority of those that propagate such ideologies as truth. The mission civilisatrice is a discourse that echoes back to France, having very little to do with the colonized, or the living, breathing Amerindian in the current analysis. What is missing from the citation above (and from the ideologies of the mission civilisatrice)? The Amerindian, or the colonized. Articulations of the disappearance of the Native in Chateaubriand’s texts often rely on architectural images, as I have already shown. In point of fact, the utilization of the architectural metaphor is systemic and systematic in Chateaubriand’s oeuvre. While the European builds himself (se bâtir) the solitudes that he so desperately needs, the Amerindian is either represented as absence (as in this passage) or through the mythic framework of the Vanishing Indian. For example, in the previous citation, wherein the Amerindian is present only as death, the pyramidal tombs that are the only trace left of him in the idealized, romanticized landscape encompassed in the Frenchman’s appropriative gaze. The emptiness of the American continent that the absence of the Amerindian connotes allows for the French to envision the Americas as a possible refuge from the corruption and decadence of the Old World\footnote{We have encountered this type of ideation before, most notably in the writings of Montaigne and Rousseau.}. 

\footnote{We have encountered this type of ideation before, most notably in the writings of Montaigne and Rousseau.}
In the passage above, the absence of the Amerindian is only apparent at the surface of Chateaubriand’s text. In fact, the author reiterates stereotypical assertions about the Amerindian vis-à-vis the European, even though it may only be through silent inference. What does Chateaubriand’s description suggest is the role of the Amerindian? The Amerindian does not need to create an “empty” space that functions as sanctuary in order to calm his noisy and tumultuous heart. The Amerindian already inhabits the space that Chateaubriand refers to as a solitude constructed (not by the Amerindian, but) by the European. Or does he? In fact, as I have already mentioned, *lithic romanticism*, despite its superficial deference to the innocence and purity of the original inhabitants of the Americas, a representational mode that evidently engages with the myth of the Noble Savage, is a duplicitous narrative technology, or mythic construction. The *romantic* (the Noble Savage myth) cannot function without the concurrent *lithic* component (the Vanishing Indian myth). The *romantic* element of the figure often becomes conflated with Chateaubriand’s vision of the natural world, as well. In this way, the author reiterates the nexus between Native and Nature which is so intimately linked to the Noble Savage framework from the earliest periods of contact. The first citation that I discussed, taken from the prologue of *Atala*, is informed by a certain form of metaphorical transformation that occurs through the technique of contiguity. In short, by placing Nature, the magnificence of the views of the banks of the Mississippi River, beside the pyramidal tombs of the Amerindians of the region, Chateaubriand distorts the reader’s understanding of the American landscape and the Amerindian presence there, carving out a textual space wherein the reader can infer the unique provenance of both. In other words, the author intimates to the reader that the beauty of Nature is only possible if the living, breathing Native is removed from the landscape. This narrative
technology exemplifies the textual *disappearing* of the Amerindian in French literature in general and in Chateaubriand’s *lithic romanticism* in particular.

Overall, in Chateaubriand’s American works, the mythic construction(s) that the author creates can be characterized by a fusion between romanticism’s typical adoration of Nature and the Noble Savage myth. The innocence and purity intrinsic to the classic instantiation of the Noble Savage myth is equated to the beauty and the (problematic) ontological alterity of Nature. Paradoxically, both the “emptiness” of the natural world in the Americas and the mythic frame of Chateaubriand’s variant of the Noble Savage figure are contingent upon both the passiveness of Nature and the death of the Amerindian. This death or *disappearance* defines the myth of the Vanishing Indian. The requisite criteria that allows Chateaubriand to present the Amerindian in modes of sympathy, pity, and nostalgia is their presupposed extinction. In his monograph, *Invisible Natives: Myth and Identity in the American Western*, Armando José Prats examines the representational strategies employed in the Hollywood Western vis-à-vis the Amerindian. While Prats may take American Western films as his primary corpus, his analyses are valid when examining texts, as well. The Western novel, which preceded its cinematic manifestation, employs the same devices when writing about the Amerindian. It is useful to consider Prats at this juncture, because the key concept of the first part of *Invisible Natives* is the paradoxical way in which the Native is presented.

According to Prats, the representation of the Amerindian often consists in portraying the Native as an “imminent presence”. However, the paradox: the representation of the Amerindian that presents him as an “imminent presence” simultaneously insists upon his “virtual absence”

---

143 Prats will also be an important theoretical source in my analysis of the French Western novel in section 2 of this chapter.
Synecdoche is often employed in the movies to indicate the presence of the Native in the landscape. Some examples Prats gives: whites find an arrow shaft that implies the presence of the Amerindian, or the white hero comes upon a scene of carnage that infers that the Native was the perpetrator of a massacre. The latter is referred to as the “aftermath of the massacre” in Prats analysis and is treated as the cinematic cliché that it is. Prats argues that these synecdoches function as an “indices of power over the Indian” (31). The power of the metaphor consists in using a superior knowledge of the Amerindian in order to define him through dissection and assemblage. The same process governs Chateaubriand’s *lithic romanticism*. To return to an example included above, the pyramidal tombs in the Mississippian landscape description portend the fate of the Amerindian. “Thus the defining synecdoche tends to determine the Indian’s representational destiny: it originates his presence even as it foretokens his doom” (Prats 27, author’s emphasis). The narrative technology whereby Chateaubriand presents the Native as already extinct is an exertion of metaphoric violence that is complicit with, precedes, and accompanies the very real violence of colonialism in the Americas. This complicity is at the very least ideological. However, by using the term narrative *technology* to describe this discursive structure is meant to emphasize how representational modes transcend ideological resonance. I argue that narrative technologies which mythologize the Native in French literature not only share ideological affinities with colonialism, but actually inform and formulate praxis, through justification *and* the creation of the conditions of that praxis’ possibility. Through both synecdoche and the metaphorical link to Antiquity, Chateaubriand’s *lithic romanticism* presents the Amerindian as already extinct, even as the reader is provided with signs of his existence. This double discourse is what Prats identifies when referring to American Western film’s mythic paradigms of, at once, *originating* and *disappearing* the Native. The technique, typified in
romantic literature, is taken up and perfected in the American Western novel, as well as the French version of the subgenre, the French Western novel. The mythic representations of the Native in the French Western novel will be the focus of the next section of this chapter. When Chateaubriand shifts his focus from synecdoche to the metaphorical connection between living, breathing Amerindians and Classical Antiquity, architecture and the monument are recurring anchors for his discourse.

Lithic Romanticism

In Chateaubriand’s American writings, the author often engages in metaphors that are in the semantic realm of the monumental. In the following example, Chateaubriand immortalizes a cedar tree under which his characters rest, engaging once again in what I call lithic romanticism:

C’était dans ces riantes hôtelleries, préparées par le Grand Esprit, que nous nous reposions à l’ombre. Lorsque les vents descendaient du ciel pour balancer ce grand cèdre, que le château aérien bâti sur ses branches allait flottant avec les oiseaux et les voyageurs endormis sous ses abris, que mille soupirs sortaient des corridors et des voûtes du mobile édifice, jamais les merveilles de l’ancien monde n’ont approché de ce monument du désert (Atala, René, 85).

Here, the Great Spirit, the terminology Chateaubriand adopts to refer to a monotheistic portrayal of Native religious beliefs, creates Nature, much as creation is understood according to Christian cosmogony. Although Chateaubriand insists on the mobility of the image he describes (le mobile édifice), the passage repeatedly calls forth architectural forms that function to monumentalize the natural world in a land that is without real monuments of its own. This is due, of course, to the author’s epistemological perspective which insists on the Amerindian’s lack of real culture and civilization. The forests are described as “pleasant hostelries” (ces riantes hôtelleries),
placed there specifically for the European and his fellow travelers. The canopy of the
cedar is likened to a castle in the sky (le château aérien), an image both mythic and
fantastical, as well as monumental and monumentalizing. Sighs emerge from the
corridors (corridors) and vaults (voûtes) of this “mobile” edifice, thereby personifying
and anthropomorphizing Nature by giving it a human voice to express emotion. The final
example of the monumental mode is evident: Chateaubriand declares the cedar as being
incomparably grander than anything known in the Old World (l’ancien monde) by
declaring it a “monument of the desert” (ce monument du désert). “Désert” is an
important term within Chateaubriand’s (and other authors’) spatial representations of the
Americas, and by extension, their representations of the original inhabitants of the
Americas.

Placing the emphasis on Nature (the works of the Great Spirit, in this passage),
the human is effaced in Chateaubriand’s portrayal of the American landscape through the
use of the desert image. This erasure of the Native is both cultural and biological. Desert
refers to the absence of true humanity, as defined by the French writer, not to an arid
landscaped populated by cacti and rattlesnakes. Nature is active in this excerpt, whereas
the human characters are virtually absent, or dead. The Native is disappeared in the
excerpt. The winds descend (les vents descendaient). The castle in the sky goes floating
on the branches (allait flottant). The cedar has a voice, not the human (except the
narrator’s voice, of course). A thousand sighs emerge from the canopy (mille soupirs

---

144 The term ‘désert’ often defines the Americas spatially in French letters. A detailed study of the semantics of the
term in reference to the geographies of the Western hemisphere is a needed addition to the work of this study.
My impression of the usage of ‘désert’ when it is employed to refer to the Americas is that it says more about the
purported absence of culture in an area than to any particular geological feature(s). The great variety of the
regions to which the term is applied make me tend to believe that authors likely employ it with this cultural
significance in mind rather than the typical geological one that characterizes modern usage of ‘désert’ in French.
sortaient). Nature, therefore, plays an active role, while the human is negated. This is similar to the superlative mode in the writings of Cartier and Champlain. If they are not completely erased from the land, they are at least depicted as passive non-entities. People in the scene are only mentioned twice. In the first instance, they are resting in the shade beneath the boughs of the mighty cedar that is the central focus of the excerpt (nous nous reposions à l’ombre). The second time that Chateaubriand mentions a human presence in the passage, once again they are inactive, lacking an active presence in the landscape. Chateaubriand refers to them as travelers asleep under the cedar’s sheltering branches (les voyageurs endormis sous ses abris). This human effacement mirrors the necessity of Chateaubriand’s *lithic romanticism* of erasing the presence of the Amerindian as a fully developed, living human presence in the author’s American works. The ambiguity of the passage lies in the fact that the cedar has been created for the purpose of serving as protection for the European. The Amerindian, without hotels, castles, and monuments, not only has to rely on Nature to provide for him, lacking the necessary civilization and intelligence to alter or take advantage of Nature’s bounty, himself. It is only through the European author’s insight (Chateaubriand’s perspicacity in this particular case) that the great cedar tree can be monumentalized. It becomes a monument of *lithic romanticism* through Chateaubriand’s knowledge expressed in words, in his text. In this way, the French author gives voice to Nature, while silencing the Amerindian, because he is uniquely equipped to do so, based on his purported intellectual, military, and linguistic superiority vis-à-vis the Amerindian. The only possibility of monumentalization rests in the European’s referential knowledge of the monuments of European and Classical civilization. *Lithic romanticism’s* tendency to engage in the monumental mode functions

---

145 See chapter 1 section 4 for a detailed analysis of the narrative technology that I call the superlative mode.
through the exclusion of the Amerindian from occupying a position capable of monumentalizing or of civilization *tout court*.

**Dehistoricization and Monumentalization**

Exclusion is one of the primary functions of *lithic romanticism* in Chateaubriand’s American novels. This exclusion is operated upon the Amerindian on two fronts simultaneously. *Lithic romanticism* excludes the Amerindian in the realm of time, that is to say temporally, through the dual actions of dehistoricization and monumentalization. I will first discuss the temporal aspects of exclusion practiced in Chateaubriand’s *lithic romanticism*. Secondly, I examine spatial exclusion of the Amerindian in Chateaubriand’s writing. Both dehistoricization and monumentalization aim at the same effect by concentrating on different aspects of temporality. In the end, however, they *do* the same thing. Dehistoricization erases the (past) existence of the Amerindian in the Western hemisphere. Inferences concerning the original inhabitants of the Americas’ lack of *true* civilization work to deny the history of Native peoples. Above, I provided an example of this technique taken from the prologue of *Atala*. In that citation, the natural world of the Christian God’s creation is equated with the (extinct) *civilization* of the Amerindian through the metaphor of the Natives’ pyramidal sepulchers. Within the framework of Chateaubriand’s *lithic romanticism*, the tombs of the Amerindians become unified with the natural world of the Creation. The pyramidal tombs are no different than hills. The pyramids indicate no more culture or civilization than the cedar tree described above. In this way, the author excludes the Amerindian from fully belonging to the human family by denying him a place at civilization’s table. Refusing to attribute value to the culture and technical achievements of the Amerindians (which are essential for the
survival of every European colonial effort in the Americas), separates the Amerindian from the historical presence (i.e. capable of having an existence in the present tense) of the French.

Dehistoricization, which works to erase the past of the Native peoples of the Americas, is focused on the pre-Columbian identity of the original inhabitants of the Americas, whereas monumentalization is concerned with the post-contact future of the Amerindian. This may appear paradoxical at first glance. How can monumentalization, often associated with valorizing the past, be primarily concerned with the future? In Chateaubriand’s *lithic romanticism*, one of the intrinsic ironies lies in the connivance between the processes of dehistoricization and monumentalization, as they might be considered to be mutually exclusive techniques. After all, how can one monumentalize, in a seemingly sympathetic and nostalgic mode, a past that one simultaneously attempts to demonstrate never existed? As with the mythic binary of the Noble and Ignoble Savage, the paradoxical figures of dehistoricization and monumentalization exercise a strange power in Chateaubriand’s writings, assuaging collective guilt for the demise of Native peoples, while reiterating French cultural superiority and arguing for further exploitation of the land and the deterritorialization of the original inhabitants of that land, the Amerindians. Therefore, the pyramids of the Native lay down a foundation upon which the building of the necessary solitudes or natural resource extraction and exploitation, which are presented as the European’s birthright as part of the ideologies of the *mission civilisatrice* or Manifest Destiny, can be actualized.

Monumentalization is a technique that chiefly detemporalizes the Amerindian. This detemporalizing is an important feature of the Vanishing Indian myth. This
paradigm is primarily concerned with the future of the Native after contact with the European. If the pre-Columbian Native is more or less an animal or vegetable presence in the Americas, then the post-contact Native is incapable of completely assimilating French (i.e. European) civilization. This is perhaps most clearly reflected by René’s doomed relationship with his Natchez bride, Céluta, in Les Natchez. Although the two have a child, a daughter named Mila (whose name privileges her Amerindian rather than her French origins), they are incapable of happiness or reciprocity. As mentioned above, in keeping with the romantic bent of Chateaubriand’s American novels, the focus is on the personal and the individual. Therefore, rather than a treatise denouncing miscegenation and its prodigy from the viewpoint of the general or collective, Chateaubriand transmits the same message vis-à-vis the inadaptability of the Amerindian to French lifeways via the plot scheme of the failed union between Céluta and René. The Amerindian’s identity as ineluctably, ontologically other is concretized through monumentalization. This is why Mila, René and Céluta’s daughter who does not survive to become an adamic scion of a new Franco-Amerindian race, is designated as Amerindian, therefore without a ‘modern image of the future’. Mary Louise Pratt recognizes an often repeated pattern in European literatures and travel writing regarding the ill-fated relationships between Europeans and Natives in her monograph, Imperial Eyes. According to Pratt’s definition of the model, the European man’s relationship is one of expediency; the European male exploits the Native female and then eventually leaves her behind (95-6). The tale of René and Céluta is quite illustrative of the pattern. René never falls in love with Céluta, but rather accepts to marry her out of pity rather than reciprocity. This is an early indication of the nature of the relationship. Although the
narrative voice of *Les Natchez* focuses on René’s emotional turmoil, the underlying reality of Céluta’s presence in the text is as sexual partner, the consequence thereof being the birth of the couple’s daughter Mila. The lack of emotional reciprocity undergirds the sexual expediency of the relationship. René maintains contact with Céluta despite the fact that he admits he will never be capable of loving her, a detail that is often repeated. Therefore, René’s contact with Céluta is primarily sexual. The final result of miscegenation is clear in the examples cited by Pratt in her analysis and the figure rings true in *Les Natchez*: death for the Native. Pratt tells us:

> Such is the lesson to be learned from the colonial love stories, in whose dénouements the “cultural harmony through romance” always breaks down. Whether love turns out to be requited or not, whether the colonized lover is female or male, outcomes seem to be roughly the same: the lovers are separated, the European is reabsorbed by Europe, and the non-European dies an early death (97).

The power structure of the narrative device of the “colonial love story” has evident consequences. Not only does it infer the inferiority of the non-European, Native object by allowing the European subject to not only survive, but thrive after the separation, but the trope equally echoes the Vanishing Indian mythic component within the greater framework of Chateaubriand’s *lithic romanticism*. Monumentalization works by restricting the Amerindian spatially and temporally to a position that has no plausible exit or ‘modern image of the future’. It is a form of narrative genocide. It is also unilateral and univocal. Monumentalization firmly establishes an ontological difference between the Amerindian and the French, because one forcibly cannot monumentalize a Frenchman, author or character, but perhaps most importantly for the creation of a French cultural imaginary of the Amerindian, one can never monumentalize the French. The
epistemological and textual possibilities that *lithic romanticism* offers Chateaubriand as author are unilaterally associated with the Amerindian, in contradistinction to European characters who do not inhabit the mythic space reserved for the Amerindian in Chateaubriand’s American texts.

Monumentalization often accompanies dehistoricization in the same metaphorical constructions. The pyramids that I have discussed at length in this section exemplify this tendency. Through the monumental mode, using the semantic field of the architectural, Chateaubriand situates the Amerindian in a metonymic position in comparison with culturally familiar references to Classical Antiquity that monumentalizes the Native. The historical reference to Antiquity simultaneously others and disappears the Amerindian. While there may be a hypothetical, genealogical connection between the Greco-Romans of Antiquity and the present, living Frenchman\(^{146}\); it is a tenuous connection at best, as ensconced in mythology as the representation of the Amerindian. It only functions in the abstract, and often only in the *literary*. The Greco-Roman Antiquity that Chateaubriand references is a pervasive element in his writing, a leitmotiv that often reoccurs in depictions of Amerindians and more generally in a wide variety of contexts. By definition, the past can no longer operate in the present tense; it inherently lacks a ‘modern image of the future’. In this way, the equation of the living, breathing Amerindian with Greco-Roman Antiquity through the mythic constructions of *lithic romanticism* functions to exclude the Native from participating in the present and future with the same capacity and agency of the French. Monumentalization presumes the

---

\(^{146}\) As Virgil linked the Romans to the Trojans in *The Aeneid*, French authors of the Renaissance and early modern period constructed genealogies that tied modern French national culture with the Greeks of Antiquity (Desmond, *The Cambridge History of French Literature*, 139-44).
extinction of the Native, relegating the present Amerindian to an inalterable past, while simultaneously constraining him to an historical dead-end, erasing the very possibility of future agency, development, or change. The original inhabitant of the Americas’ only presence is in absentia. Prats refers to the space that the Amerindian “occupies” in the cinematic ideology of the American Western movie as the “vanishing point” (123, 140-1). While his analysis treats the cinematographic Western as its object, its application is equally appropriate in the case of lithic romanticism in the American texts of Chateaubriand. Monumentalization is a metaphorical construction that lies at the convergence of the temporal and the spatial.

As I mentioned above, lithic romanticism enacts a textual exclusion of the Amerindian on two fronts simultaneously. I have explained the first aspect of that exclusion, temporal exclusion, which operates via the double strategies of dehistoricization and monumentalization. I will now turn my attention to the spatial aspects of lithic romanticism. Firstly, the metonymic contiguity wherein Chateaubriand represents the Native vis-à-vis Nature is a spatial metaphorical practice. In a classic rhetorical move, situating of the Native within the category of Nature, the author positions the Native outside the purview of Nature’s opposite, which is, of course, Culture, the specific reference being French civilization. A technique that Chateaubriand often employs in his descriptions is more implicitly exclusionary: silence. By silencing the presence of the Amerindian, Chateaubriand opens a space for colonization. The Americas become an “empty” space through the textual practice of disappearing or

---

147 This lack of adaptability is, of course, a quintessential irony of the ideologies of the mission civilisatrice, which precisely aims to change the Native into a near mirror image of the French.

148 This is a “colonizing” discourse which metaphorically and ideologically participates in colonial mentalities without physical action on the ground. See discussion above of “colonial” and “colonizing” distinction (footnote 7).
silencing the presence of the Native. This “empty” space becomes associated with personal European psychological and emotional actualization in Chateaubriand’s American texts, as in the citation above wherein the European “builds solitudes” in the conveniently depopulated Americas in order to resolve personal conflicts. The American landscape takes on a therapeutic function that inherently denies the right of its original inhabitants to continue to use and dwell in the same space as the European. The impossibility of the Amerindian and the French to reside in the same physical and cultural space is emblematic of lithic romanticism’s spatial representation (exclusion) of the Amerindian. In the voice of one of the Ignoble Savages in Les Natchez, the villainous Ondouré, who plans the deadly attack on the French and plots to take René’s wife Céluta as his own wife, Chateaubriand speaks quite explicitly about the spatial exclusion of the Amerindian:

Mais pourquoi, continua Ondouré, m'étendrois-je sur les maux que les étrangers ont fait souffrir à notre patrie ? Voyez ces hommes injustes se multiplier à l'infini, tandis que nos nations diminuent sans cesse. Ils nous détruisent encore plus par leurs vices que par leurs armes ; ils nous dévorent en s'approchant de nous ; nous ne pouvons respirer l'air qu'ils respirent ; nous ne pouvons vivre sur le même sol. Les blancs, en avançant, et en abattant nos bois, nous chassent devant eux comme un troupeau de chevreuils sans asile. La terre manquera bientôt à notre fuite, et le dernier des indiens sera massacré dans la dernière de ses forêts. (Chateaubriand, Les Natchez, 143).

In the first citation that I discussed in this section in relation to Chateaubriand’s lithic romanticism, the metaphorical link the author achieves through metonymic contiguity between Nature and Native is depicted as an example of magnificent unity in God’s creation. In the citation above, a similar metaphorical transformation occurs. However, rather than unity, destruction is its ultimate end. In both extracts, Native and
Nature are represented contiguously; they occupy the same textual space. The space that they occupy is constantly eroding, according to the Amerindian character Ondouré who speaks in the last excerpt. One of the most important exclusionary concepts that inform the textual representations of the Amerindian in Chateaubriand’s American texts (and in the works of numerous other French authors) is the epistemologically restraining ideology of incompatibility. The Native cannot inhabit the same physical or metaphysical space as the Amerindian. This ontological alterity, built on narrative technologies of spatial mutual exclusivity, is a mythic construction. Portraying the Amerindian as belonging more closely to Nature as opposed to Culture can privilege the innocence or purity of the Amerindian in comparison to the corrupted, exploitative European. In this passage, the Whites are described as having a voracious appetite, devouring the Amerindian, as well as the trees and forests of the Americas. This positive portrayal of the Amerindian, wherein the Native appears to occupy the moral high ground, remains nonetheless complicit with a mythic representational framework that performs the literary work of the mission civilisatrice by reinforcing discriminative epistemologies that hierarchize civilized French ideologies as naturally superior to animalized Amerindian lifeways and worldviews. Crucially, the spatial aspect of lithic romanticism justifies the removal of the Amerindian from the American landscape in favor of European invasion and settler colonialism. The conclusions that lithic romanticism reaches are identical, regardless of the point of departure of its spatial conflation of Nature and Native. In other words, whether Chateaubriand is employing romantically inflected descriptions of the banks of the Mississippi River in conjunction with the pyramidal ruins of Amerindians as a magnificent example of the Creator’s wisdom, or appropriating the voice of the Native
to decry the demise of his people faced with the avarice and immorality of the White menace, the result is the same: the Amerindian is confined to the margins of livable space, what Prats refers to as the “vanishing point”. As Chateaubriand expresses it, in the voice of Ondouré, the last of the Indians will be slaughtered in the last of his forests. The ultimate teleological fate of the Amerindian in the systematic representational strategy of *lithic romanticism* as I have discussed it in the American works of Chateaubriand is to be a source of nostalgia and pity for a time, before passing into the monumentalized oblivion indicative of the myth of the Vanishing Indian. The textual presence of the Amerindian is bewilderingly immortalized in *lithic romanticism* as a perpetual absence, ironically lacking a past, present, and future. Chateaubriand and the Romantic Movement in both European and American literatures will be especially influential in the next group of texts I will discuss, the French Western novel. Another irony will emerge as the living, breathing Indian is massacred and sequestered on reservations and denied rights which are simultaneously accorded a *universal* nature, purportedly applicable to all of humanity. The nostalgia and pity associated with the textual representation of the Native continues to gain purchase at precisely the moment when some of the most heinous acts of betrayal and mass violence are being perpetrated against the Amerindians of the Plains and what will become the Western United States.

2. The Mythic Frontier: The Vanishing Indian in the French Western Novel

   Eugène Louis Gabriel Ferry de Bellemare (1809-1852), better known by his *nom de plume*, Gabriel Ferry, is perhaps the first French writer to create texts within the generic categorization that I will refer to in this study as the French Western novel. It can be difficult, however, to determine the authorship of some of the texts published under the pseudonym
Gabriel Ferry, because of the unusual situation of the publication of many of his works. After the author’s death in a fire aboard the British steam liner *L’Amazone* in 1852, some of Gabriel Ferry père’s works continue to appear, whereas other novels leave the presses under the same name, while they are actually the creation of the author’s son, Gabriel de Bellemare, or Gabriel Ferry fils. I will treat the specific work that I am going to discuss below, *Les aventures d’un Français au pays des Caciques* (1881) as the work of Gabriel Ferry père. There is no definitive answer to the question of its authorship, however. Throughout the novel, the author refers to his own personal experiences traveling through Mexico long before the moment of diegesis, which I believe supports my attribution of this particular work to Gabriel Ferry père rather than to his son. If determining the authorship of certain publications proves difficult, what is certain is the fact that the texts published under the name Gabriel Ferry enjoy great success during the second half of the nineteenth century in France. Many of the author’s novels are reprinted several times. *Le coureur des bois* (1853), for example, goes through no less than nine editions during the nineteenth century alone. Its most recent reprinting, as part of the series *Livre national-Aventures et Voyages*, occurs in November 2009. I mention this brief sketch of the publication history of Gabriel Ferry’s oeuvre to insist upon the influence the author exercises within the French population, in general. While his novels may not esthetically compare to the canonical texts of his time period, they enjoy a wide readership. This suggests that Gabriel Ferry, as well as the other authors of the French Western novel that I will discuss below, play a critical role in laying down the foundations of the modern collective French cultural imaginary of the Amerindian. The representations of the Native that one encounters in this corpus, which is often categorized as belonging to the French genre *roman d’aventures* (which I refer to more specifically as the French Western novel), shape the semiological significations of the category Amerindian in
French culture. The crystallization of the mythic meaning of the Native first takes place in this popular literary form, influencing adults and children alike to form certain visions of the Amerindian. This textual crystallization will later be continued and reinforced in cinema, in France, the United States, and elsewhere. What constitutes a French Western novel?\textsuperscript{149}

The designation of a text as an example of the French Western novel hinges primarily on the presence of the Amerindian in conflict with imperial power. This iconic contest typically takes place in what will become the American West; there are many examples of the French Western novel which are situated in Mexico and other regions of Central and South America, however. That being said, I will begin my discussion of the genre by examining a text whose characteristics do not necessarily correspond to those that I’ve just proposed in my generic definition, Les aventures d’un Français au pays des Caciques (1881) by Gabriel Ferry père.

Given the scope of this study, the mythic representation of the Amerindian in French letters, one can readily apprehend what attracted my attention to a novel that mentions the “land of the Caciques” (a term often translated as chief in English) in its title. As I began reading this novel, however, I was surprised by what I encountered there, or more precisely, by what was missing: Amerindians. The pays des Caciques is conspicuous for the absence of living, breathing Natives in the novel, which can best be described as a nineteenth century update of the roman picaresque à la Lesage or à la Scarron set in post-revolutionary Mexico. The comic action of the text takes place in a New World geography which is nearly entirely devoid of the Native. When Ferry does mention the original inhabitants of Mexico, the descriptions he offers are terse and

\textsuperscript{149} While I signal some brief examples of the French Western novel, it is not within the purview of this study to exhaustively examine the genre. I would like to further develop my thinking on the French Western novel as a future research project. This corpus has been woefully neglected in scholarship in French and Francophone Studies.
deprecatory. To provide some brief examples, the author references Natives dressed in rags, recounts a priest of Spanish descent grabbing an Amerindian by the hair to ask him for directions, describes the tyranny of Amerindian village leaders vis-à-vis the Native population, mocks examples of Indigenous religious syncretism, situates Amerindian culture temporally in the European Middle Ages, and portrays the Natives as gullible, naïve children in the presence of members of the Catholic clergy (76, 87, 89-91, 96-7). This panoply of narrative conventions and clichés constitutes an exhaustive list of all the representations of the Amerindian in the novel (284 pages), a novel which nevertheless claims to take place in the pays des Caciques. When I completed my reading of the text, I was at first disappointed, convinced I had wasted my time. However, as I continued to explore mythic representations of the Amerindian in French letters in the nineteenth century, I discovered that the opposite was true.

A critical question that Les aventures d’un Français dans le pays des Caciques suggests: what is the significance of the absence of the Amerindian in the pays des Caciques? Within the historical trajectory of the mythic representation of the Amerindian in French literature, the absence of the Amerindian in this novel is, in point of fact, redolent of the myth of the Vanishing Indian. The irony of the novel’s title doubles as an assertion of the superiority of those of Spanish descent in Mexico. Ferry portrays Mexico of circa the 1840s (this is an approximate estimation of the moment of diegesis of the text; it is certainly situated temporally in post-revolutionary Mexico, at any rate). Ferry’s Mexico is depicted as having already successfully completed its own mission civilisatrice. As part of the particular vision of identity in Mexico, Ferry ellipses the presence of the Amerindian and obfuscates the complex ethnicities at play there. The large mestizo and creole population made and continue to make up the majority of the Mexican population. In keeping with a myth, cherished by some, but not all of those with a stake
in Mexican national identity politics (a politics which has had devastating consequences for those populations who maintain their Native status), Ferry reiterates the illusion that the only identities that exist in Mexico are those of the colonizers and the colonized, the Spanish and the Amerindian. This narrative technology is reductive and recreates a neatly compartmentalized binary, which lends itself easily to French (European) ideological and epistemological tendencies. By removing the Amerindian almost entirely from the pays des Caciques, Ferry echoes Chateaubriand’s idealized depiction of the space of the Americas as “empty”. Ferry actually employs the same French substantive that Chateaubriand uses in his American geographies (solitude) to qualify the American landscape (Ferry 104, 264). Why begin my discussion of the French Western novel, a genre that is typified by the presence of the Amerindian in conflict with the might of imperium, by analyzing a novel remarkable for the absence of living, present Natives? The (virtual) absence of the Amerindian in the landscape and plot of texts situated in the Americas, what I have been referring to as the Vanishing Indian myth, is the defining, teleological representative figure of the French Western novel. While the myth of the Noble Savage continues to be an operative narrative technology, regularly employed to represent the Native in French literature, as the modern world takes shape politically and ideologically, as it comes to more closely resemble the present configuration of global capitalism, the Vanishing Indian myth takes over as the dominant representational paradigm wherein the Amerindian ironically exists textually as a non-entity, present only in absentia, at the same time that he becomes the unique subject of a paradoxical guilt-laden collective nostalgia.

This phenomenon is perhaps no more evidently exemplified than in Les aventures d'un Français dans le pays des Caciques by Gabriel Ferry. Whether the author expressly engages in irony by referencing the space where the action of his novel unfolds as the land of the
Amerindian, or whether the title is construed naively matters little. The myth of the Vanishing Indian becomes the central metaphor of the frontier, precisely at the moment when the so-called “empty” spaces of Nature (solitude) eulogized by both Chateaubriand and Ferry disappear at the feet of the armies of conquest and commerce. The domination of Nature and the extinction of the Native are at the heart of the French Western novel, enmeshed and conflated within the purview of the extractive, exploitative gaze of the European. In this section, I will explore how the Vanishing Indian myth evolves in conjunction with techniques of representing Nature and civilization, the use of and function of stereotype, and the collapsing, reductive character of mythic representations of the Amerindian (i.e. the Noble and Ignoble Savage and Vanishing Indian myths) in the French Western novel.

Because the genre that I am discussing is underexplored by academic researchers, I will first introduce the major authors that I will examine in this section. One of the most influential and prolific writers, author of several novels and novellas, who penned a large part of the corpus of nineteenth-century French Western novels, is Gustave Aimard, né Olivier Gloux (1818-1883). At times writing alone, at times collaborating with Jules Berlioz D’Auriac (1820-1913), Aimard writes multiple novels per year during the apogee of his career, publishing more than 50 novels in his lifetime. Aimard spends much time abroad, gaining first-hand, eyewitness experience with living, breathing Natives. He often makes reference to his personal travels in support of his fictional descriptions in his novels, thereby adding a veneer of truth to his representations. It is not only experience with the lands and peoples of the Americas that inspires the author, however. The popular literature he finds in the Americas serves as a direct model for his own artistic creations. In fact, some of Auriac and Aimard’s works are known plagiarisms of relatively unknown American Western novels, dime novels, or penny dreadfuls. It is important to note the
derivative nature of the French Western novel. As a genre, it is closely imitative of its American literary predecessor and contemporary. The authors that I analyze in this section do not represent innovative revisions of the prevailing modes of the American version of the Western novel. Rather, they typically echo the conventions and concerns of the American authors from whom they gather inspiration.

The popularity of tales of the American West is a well-known phenomenon throughout Western Europe during the nineteenth-century (Billington 35-47). France, in particular, sees the emergence of the French Western novel in mid-century with the early works of Gabriel Ferry. The genre increases in popularity with the Auriac-Aimard duo (Aimard being the more popular, more established of the two) during the 1860s and 1870s. Another author of interest, working at roughly the same time as Auriac and Aimard, is Henri-Émile Chevalier (1828-1879). Chevalier is significant because of his association with Québec and early French-Canadian literary production. Despite his French nationality, one could easily consider Chevalier as an early Québécois novelist. The author spends nearly ten years in the former French colony, before finishing out his days in the fatherland, dying in Paris in August of 1879. Chevalier writes two cycles of novels that focus on Amerindians. The majority of these texts are centered on specific groups, such as Les Pieds noirs (1861), La Huronne: scènes de la vie canadienne (1861), La Tête plate (1862), Les Nez percés (1862), Les Derniers Iroquois (1863), and Poignet d’acier: ou les Chippiouais (1863). Chevalier’s work is important, because it is an early example of a Canadian literary representation of the original inhabitants of the Americas in French Québécois literature. Chevalier helps to create a French cultural imaginary, not only of the Amerindian groups that Chevalier takes as his objects, but also of Canada as a particular space (in both the physical and cultural senses) in the French mind. It is for this reason that I will consider him as primarily a
Quebecois author for the purposes of this study. It should be noted, however, that Chevalier
does not greatly alter the formula of the traditional French Western novel in his works.
Chevalier’s writing tends to toe the line as far as generic conventions and plotlines are
concerned. This is common when one considers the Western novel, in general. There is very
little change in the basic structure, metaphors, or plot situations. While from a critical standpoint,
this may cast the Western novel as an inferior textual form, the formulaic (mythic) nature of the
Western novel is the perfect object to examine in this study.

I will begin my analysis of the French Western novel by first discussing some aspects of
the general framework that governs the representation of the Native and Nature within the
generic logic of this popular form. As I stated above, the prevailing myth that informs the French
Western novel is the myth of the Vanishing Indian. The myth of the disappearance of the Native
from the land is the teleological impetus of the genre. I will now examine two quotes from
Gustave Aimard’s first French Western novel, Les trappeurs de l’Arkansas (1858). I choose
these two citations specifically because they are representative of the ideology of the French
Western novel’s vision of the Native and Nature alike.

In the first citation Gustave Aimard expounds on the meaning of contact and conquest in
South America. The theoretical viewpoint that the author espouses might just as easily be
extended to North America, Central America, and the Caribbean, as well (in fact, it does perform
this type of geographic transferability in the author’s other works). In the following citation,
although Aimard references South America, which might indicate a direct reference to the Black

\[\text{\textsuperscript{150}}\text{ discuss representation of the Amerindian in post-imperial Quebecois literature in greater detail in the fifth chapter of this study, which examines texts of the twentieth-century.}\]
Legend\textsuperscript{151} and the Spanish, Aimard’s panning is generalized. He universally categorizes the conquest of the Americas in relation to greed and a desire for riches. Importantly, the connection with Aimard’s discourse and the Vanishing Indian myth is explicit:

Le voyageur qui pour la première fois débarque dans l’Amérique du Sud éprouve malgré lui un sentiment de tristesse indéfinissable. En effet, l’histoire du Nouveau Monde n’est qu’un lamentable martyrologe, dans lequel le fanatisme et la cupidité marchent continuellement côté à côté. La recherche de l’or fut l’origine de la découverte du Nouveau Monde ; cet or une fois trouvé, l’Amérique ne fut plus pour ses conquérants qu’une étape où ces avides aventuriers venaient, un poignard d’une main et un crucifix de l’autre, recueillir une ample moisson de ce métal si ardemment convoité, après quoi ils s’en retournaient dans leur patrie faire étalage de leurs richesses et provoquer par le luxe effréné qu’ils déployaient de nouvelles émigrations (Aimard, \textit{Les trappeurs de l’Arkansas}, 3).

The lingering sadness that afflicts the European who arrives in the Americas is the nostalgia and guilt-laden sting of the Vanishing Indian myth. Nostalgia and guilt are, after all, central elements of the Vanishing Indian myth. The History of the New World is described in this passage as nothing more than a martyrology, or an almanac of the dead\textsuperscript{152}. Aimard perfunctorily condemns the violence inherent in colonialization, while all the manifestations of its avarice and excesses are duly catalogued by the author. However, Aimard’s text belies his own claims and apparent stance. In fact, the novel focuses almost exclusively on the agency of Europeans. The actions of European subjects constitute the plotlines of the novel. The many Native dead of the martyrology are silent in the passage and in the novel more generally. What Aimard offers the reader is the opposite of a martyrology of the Amerindian peoples. He writes about the Americas in order to portray the triumph of Progress and Western Civilization. The \textit{disappearing} of the Native is a necessary prefatory condition to create the space for the

\textsuperscript{151} The Black Legend is a vitriolic discourse that denounces the Spanish conquest as particularly avaricious and cruel. It is typically taken up by other colonizers (such as the English or French) who wish to portray their particular style of genocidal invasion as \textit{less cruel, or even enlightened}. 

\textsuperscript{152} \textit{Almanac of the Dead} is the title of an important Native American novel by Leslie Marmon Silko. Silko’s text can be described as functioning as a martyrology wherein the author explores the grotesque underside of greed in the late twentieth century context. I reference the Silko novel in order to emphasize the omnipresence of this particular understanding of the history of conquest in both European \textit{and} Native literatures.

249
European to demonstrate his ontological *superiority*. This passage serves as a *framing* for the French readers understanding of American geographies. The destructiveness of the European, while lamentingly and perfunctorily condemned in the excerpt, nevertheless defines the Western hemisphere spatially. In this way, the French Western novel closely echoes the *lithic romanticism* of Chateaubriand by presenting the American landscape as already devoid of living, breathing Amerindians. There is a logical explanation for this genealogical connection, because I posit that the French Western novel constitutes a development, or evident next stage, of Romanticism’s grappling with the alterity of the Amerindian and the natural environment of the Americas.

The martyrology is a perfect metaphor for the Vanishing Indian myth, because it accurately encapsulates the functioning of the literary technique, or narrative technology, itself. Signaling the death of countless Amerindians, the martyrology, the almanac of the dead, doesn’t actually bother with providing a single name of the Native dead. Rather, it alludes vaguely to the destruction of entire cultures in a single word, a synecdoche of genocide. The martyrology as written, textual form is also an interesting element of any epistemological and ideological posturing that insists upon the superiority of the written over the oral. The Native’s History relies on the auspices of the European (French) author. It is only through writing that the Native can be known. In the case of Aimard’s *Les trappeurs de l'Arkansas* and the French Western novel in general, the written History of the Native consists in chronicling his extinction, which is actually a heroic story about the economic success of the European. At the close of the passage, the author enunciates one of the most critical aspects of the Vanishing Indian myth, namely its essentially teleological nature.
The endless stream of new European migrants, the establishment of a purely extractive economy, until the last Amerindian vanishes: this is the crux of the myth of the Vanishing Indian (or this is its reflection in praxis). It would be remiss to neglect the positioning of this passage vis-à-vis the novel as a whole. In fact, the citation above is the novel’s incipit. Aimard anchors his novel in this vision of the Native as already extinct. This performative framing informs French epistemological categorizations of the Amerindian as inferior, dehistoricized, and disappeared. This might seem paradoxical for a text full of Amerindian characters. However, this is the overarching irony of the (French) Western novel: the Indians one battles are always already absent, already defeated and forgotten, their defeat and subsequent disappearance being their sole purpose in the genre. If this constitutes the central image of the Amerindian in the French Western novel, his absence, his disappearance, his extinction, the French Western’s vision of Nature is closely imbricated with this paradigmatic mythic system of meaning. The Amerindian must disappear in order to open up the land. The land must be “empty” before it can be appropriated by the colonizer\textsuperscript{153}. In the following excerpt, Aimard provides the reader with a mythic representation of the natural world of the Americas, a narrative trope that has been present in French letters from the period of early contacts:

La nature semble comme à plaisir avoir prodigué ses bienfaits à pleines mains dans ce pays. Le climat est riant, tempéré, salubre ; l’or, l’argent, la terre la plus féconde, les fruits les plus délicieux, les herbes médicinales y abondent ; on y trouve les baumes les plus efficaces, les insectes les plus utiles pour la teinture, les marbres les plus rares, les pierres les plus précieuses, le gibier, les poissons de toutes sortes. Mais aussi dans les vastes solitudes du rio Gila et de la sierra Madre les Indiens indépendants, Comanches, Pawnees, Pimas, Opatas et Apaches, ont déclaré une rude guerre à la race blanche, et dans leurs courses implacables et incessantes lui font chèrement payer la possession de toutes ces richesses dont ses ancêtres les ont dépouillés et qu’ils revendiquent sans cesse (Les trappeurs de l’Arkansas, 6).

\textsuperscript{153} This narrative technology echoes quite closely earlier techniques of literary geographies. I am referring specifically to the superlative mode in the writings of Cartier and Champlain. See chapter 1 section 4 for my analysis of the superlative mode.
The double image of Arcadian Nature and recalcitrant Natives is at the heart of the French Western novel’s mythology. Despite the ideological and discursive pretense of the *mission civilisatrice* to assimilate and incorporate the Amerindian, the Vanishing Indian myth (and by extension, the French Western novel) insists upon the *disappearance*, or genocide of the Native. Through the defeat of the tribes of the American West (and in other geographical locations) the Vanishing Myth presents the Native as facing imminent extinction. The resistance of the Native is a costly obstacle to colonizing the remainder of North America to the Pacific, one which must be overcome in order to fulfill the Whiteman’s *Manifest Destiny*. Unlike the metaphorical *disappearing* of Chateaubriand’s *lithic romanticism* and Cartier and Champlain’s superlative mode, the *disappearance* of the French Western novel refers to the biological elimination of the Native through violence. The myth of the Vanishing Indian is perpetuated when the Native is imagined, like the buffalo, as (nearly) extinct. This is a convenient way of forgetting about, silencing, or *disappearing* the *continued* resistance and survival of Amerindian peoples in the American West and elsewhere after the end of the Indian Wars. The mythology of the French Western novel is a discursive instrument of an economic vision of the world. White victory over the resistance that the Comanche, the Pawnee, the Pima, the Opata, and the Apache represent in this passage is a teleological presumption of the French Western novel, whether the author writes sympathetically of the Amerindian (as is the case with Aimard) or not. This teleological arrogance is inherent in Western novels and films generally. If one reads this passage in conjunction with the first passage that I discussed above (in fact, this quote appears shortly after the novel’s incipit), one is forced to recognize that the Comanche, the Pawnee, the Pima, the Opata, and the Apache are all doomed to be yet another entry in the *martyrology*, in the almanac of the dead, even though they are putting up a valiant resistance in this citation.
Again, it is not surprising that this passage occurs near the beginning of Aimard’s first French Western novel. Both this excerpt and the preceding one function as devices of *framing* which shape the reader’s understanding of the Amerindian and American geographies. Both excerpts engage in stereotyped images of Natives and Nature in the Western hemisphere; there is nothing new in these representational modes with regards to the history and tradition of the representation of the Amerindian in French letters. However, the unique contribution of the French Western novel in my study of the evolution of the mythic representation of the Amerindian is the teleological epistemology that the French Western novel establishes and formulizes. There is no space for living, breathing Amerindians in the epistemological space created by the convergence of the Noble and Ignoble Savage and Vanishing Indian myths. The ritual replaying of the battle between the resisters to Progress and its scions is simultaneously historicized and dehistoricized in the French Western novel. The conflict between Native and European is historicized because it is presented as belonging to History, to the past. There is no possibility of the reversal of its unilateral movement. The Amerindian’s role is to lose, to die, to disappear onto the silent pages of the almanac of the dead. The European’s role is to conquer, to appropriate, to live, and get rich if at all possible. Those roles are concretized by the mythic structures of the French Western novel. The battle between the Indigenous of the Americas and the Europeans is dehistoricized because of the French Western novel’s tendency to silence the histories of violence and genocide (e.g. the martyrrology metaphor as stand-in for the genocidal violence of conquest). The epistemological circumscription of the French cultural imaginary of the Amerindian in the French Western novel relegates the Amerindian to a closed space (without a past and without a ‘modern image of the future’) while depicting Nature in the Americas as an “empty” space, a *terra nullius*, there for the taking. This dual epistemology is a defining feature
of the French vision of both the Native and the natural world the living, breathing Amerindian
does, in fact, continue to inhabit. Aimard’s opening remarks on the peoples of the Americas and
the land in Les trappeurs de l’Arkansas are representative of the general framework in which the
Amerindian is understood in the (French) Western novel. In examining the Vanishing Indian
myth in greater detail, one remarks that myth realizes its objective of making the Amerindian
disappear by employing a variety of narrative technologies.

One of the most prevalent phenomena that becomes evident when one reads examples of
what I refer to as French Western novels is the utilization of a certain lexicon of conventional
images and metaphors in order to indicate an authentic Amerindian in these works of fiction. The
use of this lexicon points to the established existence of a coded French cultural imaginary of the
Amerindian. I argue that the accumulative practices of representation of the Amerindian during
the preceding centuries in French (as well as European and American) letters create a set of
clichéd figures and tropes that are then employed by authors in the often formulaic Western. The
best term to refer to these hackneyed simulacra is to rightly call them stereotypes. Stereotypes
develop with use and repetition, as do the literary figures that I discuss in this section. In the
modern era, before the instantaneity of broadcast television and the World Wide Web, the
written word was the diffusion point for ideologies. Through the various European discourses of
alterity (including that of the Amerindian) emerging from the early Middle Ages to the
nineteenth century, the stereotype, diffused in written form, creates a sense of identity in Europe
generally, what Benedict Anderson refers to as an imagined community. This identification with
a broader community is brought into being through the advent of the novel. Though he refers
more specifically to nationalist discourses, Anderson’s theoretical vision can easily be extended
to consider the creation of a pan-European identity, which manifests itself in the twenty-first-
century in the political entity of the European Union (16, 24). In the French Western novel, a
genre that deals primarily in stereotyped characters and structurally replicated plotlines, the
stereotypes that emerge from the long tradition of representation of the Amerindian become
\textit{crystallized} into a vocabulary with its own semiological purchase within the French cultural
imaginary. When one examines the representation in French throughout the sixteenth,
seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, one notices without fail the repetition of certain ways of
understanding the Amerindian within the many different genres and literary movements. The
\textit{crystallization} that is inherent in systemic adherence to stereotyped caricatures makes the French
Western novel possible. Only the accumulative efforts of readers and writers alike, over several
centuries, create the proper artistic space which the French Western novel is destined to fill in the
history of representation of the Amerindian. The utilization of the stereotyped lexicon of the
Native is a narrative technology that functions as a condition of possibility of the evolution of the
Noble Savage myth into the preponderant image of the Amerindian in the nineteenth century: the
myth of the Vanishing Indian.

This model of literary stereotyping indicated by the existence of what I have been
referring to as a lexicon of \textit{authentic} Amerindian tropes is reductive, dehumanizing, and
participates in the \textit{disappearing} of the Native within the parameters of the Vanishing Indian
figure. As many critics have denounced, the “Indians” that emerge in such representations have
very little to do with living, breathing members of the groups that the authors claim to describe.
For example, if we reconsider the list of Chevalier’s American novels which are named after
certain tribes or ethnic groups (mentioned above), one recognizes when one reads these novels
that there is little or no difference between the Iroquois, the Huron, the Blackfoot, the Flathead,
or the Chippewa. It is sufficient to include a few well-placed stereotypes in order to create a thin
veneer of verisimilitude. Nineteenth-century literary Amerindian characters are formulated within an intertextual tradition of representation. They are all constructed within their respective narratives from the same basic vocabulary, the same set of stereotyped figures.

In the final analysis, the representation of the Amerindian in Chevalier’s novels speaks more to the cultural expectations of the reader than to any living, breathing Amerindian lifeways or identities. This long representational tradition vis-à-vis the Native is an all-encompassing system, both esthetic and epistemological, that circumscribes the possibilities of what an Amerindian can be in any given (literary) discourse in French. The dual nature of this tradition (it being both in the realms of literature, art, and science, as well as epistemology and cultural imaginings) is precisely what constitutes the representation of the Amerindian in French as myth. Myth explores the unknown artistically in an attempt to understand, in an attempt to provide certain guidelines or explanations for reducing the irreducible and unknowable to the known and comprehensible. Myth is strategically at play in the literary representations of the Amerindian from the early period of first contacts until the present day as a narrative technology which seeks to hierarchize the peoples of the world, positioning the French (European) at the pinnacle of the scale and the Amerindian as inferior. All representations of the Amerindian in French letters engage with and employ myth to appropriate the Native first as an object of knowledge, then, secondly as an object of writing. The power of myth to invoke belief, to create visions of reality or a cultural imaginary that nonetheless make certain claims to truth, is remarkable. The myth of the Amerindian always holds more sway, exercises more power, and inspires more interest than actual living, breathing Native peoples. This power is instrumentalized through the narrative technologies of myth in the tradition of the representation(s) of the Amerindian in French. The unilateral nature of the mythic paradigms employed by French authors allows for the undisputed
superior position of those constructed realities in comparison with anything outside of the French episteme. The Native view of the world has no place in French letters (other than as curio or grotesque caricature) until the discourse of scientific racism which only examines the Native in an epistemological space of hegemony, violence, and domination. The discourse of scientific racism is aided and abetted by the crystallization of the stereotypes of the Amerindian\textsuperscript{154}. Stereotypes say something about the alterity of other peoples, but their primary function is to situate non-Europeans hierarchically. In the very act of written representation and stereotype resides a certain epistemological smugness and cocksureness that works to silence the very thing that one purports to describe: difference. Space is constricted in the enunciation of the stereotype. That is, difference is banished from the space of correctness, the space of identity. The only discourse which can be associated with a ‘modern image of the future’ is that of the subject writer, decidedly not that of the object, the alterity of other peoples. If stereotype does not completely silence difference, then it irrevocably places it in a situation of inferiority, without voice or agency. No matter what the trait described in the stereotypical mode, the non-European is always portrayed negatively in comparison with the dominant culture (the one pronouncing or writing the stereotype). This is the quintessential characteristic of the stereotype as a cultural phenomenon and narrative technology. It processes all difference, positive, negative, or ambiguous and remakes it as negative and inferior. There is no (or very little) space for ambiguity in the realm of the stereotype. The non-European (Amerindian) is less than the European (French), even though intriguing aspects of difference may be explored (always tainted in some way, e.g. innocence as ignorance, sexual liberty as sin, etc.), in the end difference is

\textsuperscript{154} See section 3 of this chapter wherein I demonstrate how myths of the Native inform Émile Durkheim’s articulations of sociological thought. Durkheim’s arguments integrate discourses of scientific racism from the late nineteenth century. Both Durkheim’s thinking about the Amerindian and that of his scientific sources are informed by the mythic assumptions as concretized throughout the history of the representation of the Amerindian in French.
unable to be assimilated or accepted as Human, as Civilized, as true Culture. This tradition exists within the confines of Europe herself, where stereotypes about different cultural groups contribute to the emergence of nationalism in writing.155

While this is perhaps unsurprising, what is perhaps more unusual within the genre of the French Western novel, is the paradoxical fact that even when an author attempts to revise the predominant stereotype, the author necessarily fails to create any space wherein the Native might somehow escape the prevailing epistemological and ideological certainty of the stereotype and its mythic, totalitarian system of meaning. The umbrella of inferiority covers the representation of the Amerindian in the French Western novel precisely because of the prevalence of the Vanishing Indian myth as the teleological impetus of the genre. That is, even the Noble or Good Savage (typically a character that acts as a traitor to his own racial identity by supporting the White Hero and the imperatives of Progress and Manifest Destiny) is doomed to expire, to disappear from the land with which he is imbricated in the French cultural imaginary of the Amerindian. Even the collaborator is neatly disposed of according to the ideology of the Western novel, a conclusion already arrived at before even beginning. The logic of the Western is one of conflict; however, the outcome is never in doubt. The reader always knows who will win in the end. More importantly, the reader knows who deserves to win regardless of ruthlessness or violence, regardless of true savagery that has nothing to do with the crystallized words of the Western world. Action matters less than knowledge. Myth is about having knowledge of the unknown and disseminating that knowledge as truth for the benefit of the linguistic community in general, the imagined community as part of the creation of the French cultural imaginary of the Amerindian.

155 A more detailed discussion of this phenomenon can be found in Benedict Anderson’s Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.
The writer of the French Western novel presents himself as having access to specialized knowledge of the Amerindian and the Americas. It matters little that the texts are fiction. As in the travel accounts of the early periods of contact, the authority of the eyewitness has purchase in the French Western novel, as well. In the case of two of the most renowned writers in the genre, Aimard and Chevalier, their textual descriptions are validated by their travel experiences in the Americas. In this travel-inflected claim to special knowledge about American geographies and peoples, the author implicitly aligns himself with the White Hero figure in the French Western novel. The White Hero is, of course, the protagonist that accomplishes the goals of Western civilization in the wild “empty” spaces (the itinerant abode of the Amerindian) of the frontier. It matters little whether the White Hero is amical or inimical toward the Amerindian characters that support or resist him (the representation of various Amerindians, individually and collectively, depends largely on their stance on the white man’s goals of expropriation and conquest), both types of White Hero inevitably serve the desires of progress and colonization at the heart of the Europeans’ projects in the Western hemisphere. The constituent elements, the mythic building blocks that construct the character of the White Hero are epistemologically bound to the author of the French Western novel himself. When Gustave Aimard, husband of a Comanche woman, experienced traveler in many different regions of the Americas, represents the Amerindian in his texts, he necessarily positions himself as expert on everything Amerindian. In the act of representation of the Amerindian itself, in the act of engaging with the myth of the frontier that repeats itself ad infinitum in the Western novel (American, French, German, etc.), the author of the French Western novel engages in a complicit act of apologetics regarding the mission civilisatrice, Manifest Destiny, and ideologies of racial hierarchy and violence. The stereotypical

156 At times, both Ferry and Chevalier directly reference their firsthand experiences with the spaces and Indigenous groups of the Americas to authenticate their fictional representations with a veneer of truth.
mode of representation (that attaches meanings to White and Amerindian alike) restricts the possibility of *true* revisionism to zero. Paradoxically, the nostalgic mode, which expresses collective guilt and horror at the destruction of Native peoples and places, does not reconfigure the representational forms or ideologies that inform the representation of the Amerindian in the French Western novel. Though it may psychologically speak in a voice of revision, it engages in the same vocabularies and epistemologies of the narrative technologies that it seeks to destroy (Prats 127). The specialized knowledge of the Amerindian that the author of the French Western novel claims for himself is metatextual. It is commentary on generic conventions, little more. There is nothing in it that one could relate to the living, breathing Native.

According to Prats, not only is specialized knowledge of the Amerindian a key feature of the White Hero, but a certain ability to assimilate the Amerindian in his very essence, to appropriate his very identity as Amerindian is often associated with the White Hero. In portraying the White Hero, writers of the Western novel usually imbue this archetype with Amerindian-like qualities. The White Hero’s knowledge of the Amerindian is one of his defining features. The intimate familiarity that the White Hero has with the Amerindian (whether the relationship is one of friendship or conflict does not greatly alter the prevailing metaphorical link between the White Hero and the Native) allows him to conquer the Indigenous, through good will or through warfare (Prats 174-5). One of the stereotypes of the Native that make up part of the lexicon of clichés in the French Western novelist’s repertoire is his capacity to pass undetected by the untrained, unobservant eyes and ears of those of European descent. It is common to include a description of White adventurers on the frontier being wholly surprised by the sudden appearance of an Amerindian or even several Natives, appearing seemingly out of nowhere, catching the European off guard and unawares. Therefore, when Aimard begins his
novel *Le grand chef des Aucas* with a description of his White Hero that employs this stereotype vis-à-vis the White Hero, it functions within the context of the French Western novel as an authenticating technique:

Sans que le plus léger bruit m’eût fait soupçonner son arrivée imprévue, à quatre pas en face de moi, un homme me regardait, appuyé sur un rifle… …Cet homme me rappelait cette race de hardis aventuriers qui parcourent l’Amérique dans tous les sens. Race primordiale, avide d’air, d’espace, de liberté, hostile à nos idées de civilisation, et par cela même appelée à disparaître fatalement devant les immigrations des races laborieuses… (Aimard, 6-7).

Using the lexical item of the undetectable Native as an authenticating image of the White Hero, Aimard goes on to situate the European, specifically the character Valentin who is identified as a *coureur de bois* who has intimate knowledge of American geographies gained through twenty years of experience living among Indigenous peoples, nearly within the same metaphorical space reserved typically for the Amerindian in the framework of the myth of the Vanishing Indian. The *disappearance* of the Native before the advancing hordes of industrious European immigrants is echoed here in the teleology of the *coureur de bois*’ inevitable obsolescence. The White Hero is likened to the Amerindian precisely because of his knowledge of him. The adoption of Native lifeways, even in part, condemns the *coureur de bois* to be *disappeared* in parallel with the Native. Part of the mythology of the Vanishing Indian is its correlative mythology of the Vanishing White Hero. The ability to adopt another groups lifeways is unilaterally in favor of the Whiteman, however. It is the cultural inheritance of the White Hero alone, never the Amerindian, to arrive at the mastery of the Other through knowledge of him (Prats 200-2). Native peoples cannot become like those of European descent in the same way. Perhaps one of the most important consequences (or functions) of the mythical structures of the French Western novel is its denunciation of one of the most prized ideological tenets of the
mission civilisatrice: assimilation of the Amerindian, conversion to Christianity, whitening him until the negative Amerindian portion of his identity magically vanishes. The opposition of the Vanishing Indian myths teleology to any attempt at assimilation of the Amerindian exemplifies the ways in which the author of the French Western novel is complicit with the ideologies of conquest. The structure of the French Western novel, beyond the fact that it only represents the Amerindian in fragmentary, stereotyped images, is narrowly teleological. The motivating teleology of the French Western novel is imbricated in the myth of the Vanishing Indian. The end point envisioned by the genre of the Western novel in general is the extinction, or disappearance, of the Amerindian as a distinct cultural and/or biological group in the Americas. All Amerindians, Noble and Ignoble Savages alike, resisters and collaborators, are condemned to be represented within the epistemological limitations of the myth of the Vanishing Indian as part of the generic logic of the Western novel157.

As I have noted during the course of this study, the power of the Noble and Ignoble Savage binary is in its capacity to reiterate the inferiority of the Amerindian even when it employs laudatory, nostalgic, or revisionist modes of discourse. The teleological impetus of the (French) Western novel, the Vanishing Indian myth, instrumentalizes the same powers of mystification as the Noble and Ignoble Savage myths. The repetition of figures, crystallized into stereotypes by the nineteenth century, is one of the supporting narrative technologies that lend reader credence and authorial credibility to both the Noble and Ignoble Savage and Vanishing Indian myths. The utilization of stereotyped representations of the Native in the French Western novel reinforces the ideologies of colonization.

157 For example, the Apache scouts that assist the United States Army in finally bringing in Geronimo, in one of the most highly mythologized conflicts of the Indian Wars, illustrate this teleology. The Apache scouts are loaded onto the same train as Geronimo and share his fate as prisoners of the American state.
The insensitivity of the Native equally constitutes one of the prevailing stereotypes throughout the history of the representation of the Amerindian in French letters. Native insensitivity can be placed in one of two general categories, physical or emotional. Out of the long list of hackneyed images of the Native, the double valence of the cliché of Native insensitivity provides us with a unique opportunity to show the paradoxical nature of the stereotype and the representation of the Amerindian in general. In this way it is similar to the Noble and Ignoble Savage myths and the myth of the Vanishing Indian. Despite apparently positive portrayals of certain traits that are textually linked to the Amerindian in repetition of the long tradition of narrative representation in French letters, the overall function of figures used by French authors to represent the Amerindian is to establish and maintain a hierarchy that forcibly situates the Native in an inferior position in relation to that of the European.

The dual nature of the insensitivity stereotype is recognizable from the early period of first contacts. The two categories of Native insensitivity are physical insensitivity and emotional insensitivity. Physical insensitivity can be described in some situations as a positive trait, whereas emotional insensitivity is universally negative. The ability to withstand great physical exertion or extreme weather conditions has long been a standard figure French authors employ to describe the Amerindian. Chevalier, describing a half-Native character, tells us, “Il était court de taille, trapu, doué d’une charpente robuste, dure et flexible comme l’acier, et d’une constitution qui ne redoutait ni les tiraillements de la faim, ni les brûlements de la soif, ni les morsures du froid boréal, ni les ardeurs d’un soleil tropical” (La Tête-Plate, 3). The superhuman is evident in the geographical designations of the northern forest and the (sub)equatorial tropics. This double geography is not a real space that might be inhabited by living, breathing Amerindians. They would not occupy the North and the tropics simultaneously; however, they presumably
could withstand either, given their remarkable physical insensitivity. In Aimard’s *Le Grand Chef des Aucas*, the author makes a similar generalization, “Les fatigues physiques ne semblaient pas avoir de prise sur l’organisation de fer de l’Indien” (309). Descriptions of Native physical insensitivity are present throughout the history of the representation of the Amerindian in French letters.\(^{158}\)

In the context of ritualized torture, insensitivity in the face of physical pain is portrayed as one of the most important indicators of masculine valor in Native societies of the Americas. Refusing to cry out or react while undergoing terribly exacting torture is reiterated so many times over the course of the history of the representation of the Amerindian that it becomes conflated into a stereotype that serves as a marker of male Native identity, in general. The opening scene of *La Tête-Plate* by Henri-Émile Chevalier is a perfect example of the figure:

—Les Chinouks sont des femmelettes. Ils ne savent pas plus vaincre leurs ennemis que les torturer. Moi, j’ai tué deux fois quatre de leurs guerriers.

—Tu as menti, Queue-de-Serpent, répliqua un des chefs, en frappant le prisonnier de son tomahawk.

Un flot de sang jaillit de la blessure que celui-ci avait reçue au visage. Sans pousser une plainte, il continua:

—Oui, dans ma cabane, pendent les chevelures de deux fois quatre de ceux que les Chinooks appellent leurs braves [Chinook warriors that Queue-de-Serpent boasts about killing] sont morts en pleurant comme des daims timides.

Un nouveau coup de tomahawk l’atteignit à la poitrine. Les muscles frémirent, ses dents grincèrent et des gouttes de sueur perlèrent son front, mais la douleur ne lui arracha aucun cri, aucun mouvement convulsif.

—Les Chinouks, poursuivi-il stoïquement, ont le bras aussi faible que l’esprit. C’est du sang de lièvre qui gonfle leur cœur. Comment pourraient-ils triompher des vaillants Clallomes, eux qui ne peuvent les renverser quand les Clallomes sont attachés? J’ai enlevé ta femme, Oeil-de-Carcajou, et elle m’a servi comme esclave.

\(^{158}\) Descriptions of this type are notably prevalent throughout the Jesuit Relations, to give just one prominent example. The physical weakness of the academic Jesuits compared with the long-practiced athleticism of the Natives is one of the contrasts that fill the expansive corpus of the Relations.
A ces mots, l’indien qu’il interpellait bondit de fureur. Tirant de sa gaine un long couteau, il se précipita sur le captif pour l’en percer. Un de ses compagnons l’arrêta.

—Non, ne le tue pas encore, lui dit-il; nous lui montrerons comment les Chinooks traitent les hiboux de son espèce (Chevalier, La Tête-Plate, 3).

The Chinook have taken a prisoner, Queue-de-Serpent. The text begins in a space of ritualized torture. The novel’s incipit enters this space of ritualized torture in media res. The prisoner, following the traditional protocol, insults his torturers hoping to acquire a quick death, a coup-de-grâce brought about by uncontrollable anger due to the prisoner’s verbal jibes. When the tomahawk blows come, the physical insensitivity of Queue-de-Serpent appears impossible. Within the insults and provocations that Queue-de-Serpent launches are other elements that speak to the inhumanity of the Amerindian: murder (the many scalps the prisoner has taken) and sexual depravity (the sexual enslavement of another’s wife)\(^\text{159}\). Moreover, the entire scene signals the inhumanity of the Amerindian. I am referring, of course, to torture. This example taken from Chevalier underlines the negative aspects of the physical insensitivity trope. The convergence of this figure with the repetition of the crystallized images of violence, sexual license, and torture present the Amerindian as non-human, the myth of Ignoble Savage. The Native cannot be identified with by the reader. The Native necessarily inhabits a space devoid of culture and humanity (physically, emotionally, and psychologically). As I mentioned above in my discussion of the dual representations of Nature and the Native in the texts of Aimard, this scene in La Tête-Plate by Chevalier is one of framing; it informs and delimits the reader’s possible understanding of the Amerindian. Throughout the remainder of the text, and indeed when the reader consumes other examples of the French Western novel, the Amerindian, as

\(^{159}\) See chapter 3 sections 2 and 3 where I discuss how sexual difference marks Amerindian ontological difference in French literature of the eighteenth century. Sexuality is a site of difference with particular power in the French (European) mind.
category, is epistemologically circumscribed by the insensitivity trope. The Native cannot acquire full humanity in the textual space of the French Western novel.

When Gustave Aimard or Henri-Émile Chevalier use the cliché of insensitivity to describe their Amerindian characters it serves as a signifier of everything Amerindian. The mere mention of insensitivity evokes a semiological system with its own hegemonic ideologies, hierarchizing the insensitivity of the Native as inferior to the sensitivity of the European. European weakness trumps Native stamina and endurance through the power of textual discourse. This is how the narrative technology of myth functions. The physical superiority of the Amerindian (the European is usually depicted as relatively incapable of withstanding the same pain, work, or weather as the Indigenous) is subverted. Rather than praising the Native, or objectively remarking upon his superiority, the physical insensitivity trope animalizes him. The positive turns negative within the representational and epistemological vision of the Native repeated in the French Western novel (as well as in other genres and texts before and after the French Western novel). The effectiveness of the narrative technologies of the textual representation of the Native in French letters is the capacity of every portrayal (positively or negatively inflected) to echo the logic and ideologies of French (European) superiority vis-à-vis the Amerindian. The myth of physical insensitivity can be considered as an element of the myth of the Noble Savage. Much of the nobility of the Noble Savage myth has to do with Native warrior culture and comparisons to European aristocratic ideals of masculinity.

The physical prowess of the Amerindian male (a source of awe and fear), coupled with their gender roles (Native societies are stereotypically portrayed as being very misogynistic and
paternalistic, women are often represented as no more than slaves to their husbands\textsuperscript{160}, and relative liberty (only nobles had the ability to hunt and go to war in European societies at the time of early contacts) all contribute to form the myth of the Noble Savage: strong and free. Despite the system of meaning inherent in the Noble Savage trope’s tendency to elevate the Amerindian above the status of the typical European male in many respects, there is a disconnect between the presumptions that such a system implies regarding the European and the Amerindian. Paradoxically, the best of Amerindians may be described as a Noble Savage, yet he still contains within him the stain of the Ignoble variant of the myth. In contrast, the lowliest of Europeans is capable of knowing, seeing, and appropriating the nobility of the Noble Savage. That is, the European is intrinsically equipped with the knowledge necessary to understand the Native, to assimilate him epistemologically into a system of meaning (or myth) wherein European superiority is never challenged. Therefore, the stereotype of Native physical insensitivity, a component or possible iteration of the myth of the Noble Savage, praises, but more importantly, animalizes the Amerindian, establishing the Native’s unmovable and race-based inferiority.

Emotional insensitivity is the opposite side of the insensitivity stereotype. Insensitivity to situations that require an emotional reaction in the tragic mode of European drama and narration is tantamount semiotically to savagery. Emotional insensitivity, when it enters into a description of a Native character, signals and signifies the Ignoble Savage. One of the most typical forms that the emotional insensitivity cliché takes in French letters is the figure of the

\textsuperscript{160}This branding of Amerindian societies, also employed in modern discourses about Islamic societies, as patriarchal and misogynistic obfuscates matrilineal tendencies that were prevalent throughout the Americas. The (political) agency of Indigenous women is used as a marker of the inferiority of Amerindian cultures in the following section in Durkheim’s study \textit{De la division du travail social}. The plasticity of the mythologies of the Native, a system which allows French writers to denounce the Amerindian as misogynist and criticize female agency simultaneously, speak to their constructed nature as expedient discourses of colonial and racist ideologies.
Amerindian (usually male) that does not pay sufficient heed to the bonds of family, committing acts of violence against his progenitors, partner, or progeny. The central position of sexuality in the heart of the family entails a normative rejection of non-family affirming practices by Natives. For example, in La Tête-Plate by Henri-Émile Chevalier, the author engages in the ethnographic mode, framing Amerindian culture for his French and Canadian readers with an anecdotal tale about a Chinouk chief named Casanov that murders his wife after the death of the couple’s son (15-6). Similarly, in Le Grand Chef des Aucas, Aimard provides another scene that is redolent of Native emotional insensitivity. The chief Antinahuel, in a fit of anger, forgets the sacred bonds of family, and violently murders his own mother by dragging her behind his stallion (Aimard 145-6). Later in the narrative, Aimard presents the moral standard espoused by the Araucan, “Les Araucans ont pour leur famille une affection profonde. L’idée de laisser derrière eux exposés aux désastres de la guerre, leurs parents et leurs amis, les plongeait dans une inquiétude extrême” (Le Grand Chef des Aucas, 392). While Antinahuel’s violent act constitutes an aberration according to the cultural norms of the Araucan, the function of the emotional insensitivity trope is to mark the category Amerindian, in general, as inhuman and inferior. Despite the existence of examples of moral, courageous, even heroic Araucan in the novel, the emotional insensitivity of Antinahuel stains the Araucan as a people, and the Amerindian in general.

The stereotype of Native emotional insensitivity situates the Amerindian in a non-human space, outside of culture and civilization. Therefore, both the positively and the negatively inflected versions of the insensitivity trope create a mythic space of animality with regards to the textual representation of the Amerindian in the French Western novel. Similarly to the Noble and Ignoble Savage myths, the myth of the Vanishing Indian replaces difference with one
teleological conclusion about the past, present, and future of the original inhabitants of the Americas: *disappearance*. It matters little whether certain groups attempt to adopt Western principles of religion or farming (the Cherokee being a pertinent example in the Southeast United States before their expulsion from their homelands) or resist wholly the armies of conquest (the Apaches being one of the most cited examples of such a stance), the Vanishing Indian myth insists on the essential vulnerability of any and all Amerindians. Each and every Native is condemned according to the ideology of the mythologies of the Vanishing Indian. In point of fact, Vanishing Indian is a misleading name for this narrative strategy. Perhaps a more accurate moniker would be *Vanished* Indian myth. It is through the myth of the *Vanished* Indian, that literature dramatizes the *already accomplished disappearance* of the Native of the Americas. Though the Amerindian plays a role in the texts of the French Western novel, it is a secondary role. The shadow of imminent extinction hangs over all of Amerindian civilization. This extinction is metaphorically presented as a foregone conclusion. The Amerindian in the (French) Western novel is a walking specter, a phantom awaiting the proper moment to *disappear* forever into the death of History. Within the generic logic of the French Western novel, Progress is the conqueror of the Amerindian, not the colonizing descendants of Europeans. Thereby, White violence against Indigenous peoples is justified and morally displaced as an ineluctable, temporal continuance, rather than a disruptive, methodical genocide. After all, how can one blame the White harbingers of Progress for paving the way? Situating Progress (and not the actual Whites who commit acts of violence against Natives) as the impetus behind the *advancing* frontier, the physical manifestation of Manifest Destiny, condemns the Amerindian for his incapacity to create a ‘modern image of the future’, which necessarily reiterates the ideologies of economic

---

161 Despite the term *Vanished* Indian’s appropriateness, I employed Vanishing Indian because of its status as a conventionally recognized concept.
extraction and exploitation connoted by the term Progress. Native lifeways are often directly antithetical to such a vision of Nature and humanity’s place in it\textsuperscript{162}. The Vanishing Indian myth is the necessary opposite number of the myth of Progress. Both neglect the reality of culture and identity in favor of stereotyped, simplified, explanatory systems of meaning that seek to blur moral definitions in relation to physical and cultural acts of genocidal violence. The mythic mode employed throughout the history of the representation of the Amerindian in French letters depersonalizes and distances the physical consequences of esthetic and political ideologies associated with representational strategies vis-à-vis the Native, separating the moral responsibility for epistemological choices regarding Amerindians from the acts of writing and reading. Discursive strategies that follow a similar pattern continue to abound in many contexts wherein a power differential divides the creators and consumers of cultural productions from the victims of exploitative and violent world politics. The mythic mode of representation of the Amerindian that I have been discussing is perhaps most evident in the formulaic French Western novel. With the triumph of the Vanishing Indian myth as the central representational paradigm of not only the French Western novel, but of nineteenth century imaginings of the Amerindian in general, a narrative technology that engages with a lexicon of stereotyped images, the French Western novel presents the French reading public of the second half of the nineteenth century with an unambiguous history of genocide. Progress creates no victims, only victors, everything else disappears in the fog of the Vanishing Indian myth, including the Native. The mythic strategies that I have been discussing are attempts to silence difference. Though it may not

\textsuperscript{162} For a poignant analysis of literary examples of this difference see Lee Schweninger’s \textit{Listening to the Land: Native American Literary Responses to the Landscape}. Although Schweninger focuses on American literary examples, his analyses are equally applicable to other Indigenous lifeways, epistemologies, and literatures of the Western hemisphere.
appear as immediately obvious, discourses of Native exoticism are similarly structured to eradicate difference.

The wildly fantastic and idealized has been a central characteristic of the representation of the non-European from the first attempts at writing down what adventurers and travelers encounter far outside the comfortable confines of the European continent (and sometimes within what might be considered European geographies, as well). The enchantment and fascination that fill the Noble Savage mythic vision typifies the outward gaze of the European towards the non-European world. This type of awestruck outward gaze appears, at the surface level of discourse, to lend itself to an opening up, epistemologically. However, the apparent imagination that the outward gaze utilizes is essentially pointed inward (spatially) and backward (temporally). The most powerful epistemological force that circumscribes the representation of the Amerindian in French letters is the cultural connaissance at the disposal of both the author and reader. Through the specific knowledges of the Native created by the myriad mythologies employed to describe him, the representation of the Amerindian signals a deficiency at the heart of European history and epistemology: namely, an inability to express alterity without resorting to the mythic apparatus that I have been discussing in this section and throughout this study. The representational strategies that French (and other European) authors use to represent the Amerindian are nearly identical to the strategies used to describe other non-European groups. The vacillation between fascination and fear is a distinguishing feature of the West’s overarching strategy to deal with the non-European world. Couched within the layers of traditional rhetoric, within the myths themselves, lies the germ of racist ideologies that do not develop in a way that is recognizable to us in the twenty-first century until the nineteenth century, when the study of

163 Edward Said’s analyses in Orientalism is a pertinent example of how the narrative technologies of myth operate in other cultural contexts.
science of the Human begins to be undertaken in earnest\textsuperscript{164}. Western culture tends to assimilate the Amerindian to groups that have always been the bogeymen of classical letters (the Scythians, etc.). In addition, Western culture tends to relegate the cultures of the Americas to the same temporal space occupied by the Ancients (comparisons to Greco-Roman or Egyptian culture, etc.). Rather than constituting an outward gaze wherein something new and different is described as phenomenon, Western culture and letters reiterate previous representations of alterity, treating new groups as type and category, as noumena. The distance between the actual phenomena (living, breathing Natives) and the traditional narrative restrictions that insist on their status as known and conventionalized noumena is most noticeable in the stereotyped discourse of the French Western novel. The inability of the French author to escape the confinement of narrative tradition and convention results necessarily in the mythic representation of the Amerindian. Rather than opening up to the non-European world, looking outward, and discovering the Amerindian as a separate culture, the mythic structures (e.g. the Noble and Ignoble Savage, the nexus of Nature and Native, the Vanishing Indian, the binary associated with the stereotype of Native insensitivity) are a familiar textual space that permits French authors and readers alike to situate the Amerindian in the relatively harmless categories of the extremely infantilized (i.e. the extreme innocence and purity associated with the Noble Savage myth) and the powerless (the erasure of the presence of living, breathing Indians that is the essential function of the Vanishing Indian myth). The author of the French Western novel’s toolbox is limited to derivative literary techniques and stylistics that do not challenge the established epistemology. The mythic representation of the Amerindian that exhibits itself in its most stylized and stereotyped forms in the French Western novel is no more than a shadow play, divorced completely from the living.

\textsuperscript{164} I examine this phenomenon in relation to the foundational discourses of sociology in \textit{De la division du travail social} by Émile Durkheim in the next section.
breathing Amerindian. As in Gabriel Ferry’s *Les aventures d’un Français au pays des Caciques*, the Native is absent, nowhere to be found. The *absence* of the Native object can have dramatic consequences for the definition of the modern European subject, however, particularly in the nascent discourses of the social sciences. In the next section, I examine the role of Amerindian difference, namely sexuality, in the articulation of modern sociology in the text *De la division du travail social* by Émile Durkheim.

3. Émile Durkheim: Amerindian Sexuality and the Foundations of Modern Social Science

Émile Durkheim is considered by many to be the father of modern sociology. Within his voluminous corpus, the monograph *De la division du travail social* (1893) occupies a seminal position regarding the formulation of the author’s sociological thought. It is in this text, for example, where the author first introduces the concept of the “*fait social*”, or social fact, which he introduces as the most basic object of sociological inquiry. With the unique importance of *De la division du travail social* in the development of Durkheim’s thinking individually and in the history of the establishment of the discipline of sociology, more generally, I propose to examine this text as an illustrative example of the vision of modern (French) social sciences of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. Rather than explore the totality of Durkheim’s work, I intend to examine this text as particularly indicative of the epistemologies that participated in the formation of the author’s *scientific* understanding of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas (and elsewhere). In this section, I will focus uniquely on how Durkheim employs his *knowledge* of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas to speak about European modernity as hierarchically superior to the *primitive* Amerindian. Durkheim’s articulation of what he calls the *problème* that he is addressing in *De la division du travail social* is heavily dependent upon presenting Amerindian sexuality and gender roles in specific ways. The author instrumentalizes sexualized
iterations of the mythologies of the Ignoble Savage to posit the Native as retrograde. This narrative technique allows Durkheim to then posit the European as the scion of progress and modernity. Employing naturalized European sexual normativities as benchmarks of civilization, Durkheim constructs his argument around the aberrance of Native identities and lifeways. This section is composed of a close reading and analysis of the articulation of Durkheim’s research question in the beginning of De la division du travail social. I begin by demonstrating how the division of social labor defines civilization according to Durkheim. Next, I show how the author establishes a connection between the organic or the biological, embodying the object of the social fact. This sets up the rhetorical space which subsequently allows Durkheim to reference Native bodies and sexualities as evidence of primitiveness in comparison to modern French anatomies. After having explained how the biological is linked to the theoretical in Durkheim’s argumentation, I identify how the author makes connections between physical modernity and moral superiority, thereby situating the Amerindian as inferior both ontologically (biologically) and morally. My analysis exposes how the father of sociology dehumanizes and detemporalizes the Native as a basis for the creation of a foundational discourse of the social sciences in French, a discourse which purports to offer nothing less than objective scientific truth.

One of the fundamental assumptions of Durkheim’s sociological thought as expressed in De la division du travail social is the hierarchy of modern and primitive. The modern is unquestionably presumed superior to the primitive. As a starting point for much of the nineteenth century’s scientific inquiry into Indigenous peoples worldwide, this Western epistemological arrogance is virtually uncontested, despite mythic paradigms such as the Noble Savage, which instrumentalize the Native as counterpoint to corrupt civilizations. It is important to note that this
hierarchy is a naturalized point of departure for the scientific gaze of the Westerner when exploring the Amerindian and other Indigenous groups. The following citation succinctly expresses many of the connotations of the epistemological choice of valorizing the modern and deprecating the primitive:

Il n'y a plus d'illusion à se faire sur les tendances de notre industrie moderne ; elle se porte de plus en plus aux puissants mécanismes, aux grands groupements de forces et de capitaux, et par conséquent à l'extrême division du travail… Ils y voient la loi supérieure des sociétés humaines et la condition du progrès (1-2).

Eurocentric visions of Western modernity are characterized as an idealized image of progress in this quote. Durkheim does complicate that position by remarking that suicide and crime rates are more prevalent in civilized societies, yet he does believe that the concept of division is crucial to society, linking that to a higher morality than that which might otherwise be attainable in non-divided societies. While Durkheim attempts to maintain an objective distance from the idealization of progress and division throughout the text, he nonetheless concludes that the division of labor and societal progress are illustrative of biological and moral truth. As I referenced in the first chapter as part of my discussion of myth, Wole Soyinka pinpoints the centrality of compartmentalization in the West as it pertains to mythic discourses that nevertheless make claims of truth:

[It] is a recognisable Western cast of mind, a compartmentalising habit of thought which periodically selects aspects of human emotion, phenomenal observations, metaphysical intuitions and even scientific deductions and turns them into separatist myths (or ‘truths) sustained by a proliferating super-structure of presentation idioms, analogies and analytical modes (37).

---

165 I use the term “gaze” in its Foucauldian sense here.
166 Durkheim publishes a monograph, Le suicide, on the subject four years after penning De la division du travail social, in 1897.
Soyinka rightly argues that the act of division, in a wide variety of contexts is a defining trait of Western culture. I reintroduce Soyinka’s insight here, because the division of labor and the compartmentalizing penchant of the Western mind are synergistic. They reinforce one another with increased cooperative energy as modernity progresses. After all, any way of thinking is bound to have direct effects on a people’s way of living. Soyinka’s use of the term “technology” is significant, because compartmentalized epistemologies, understood by Soyinka as “technology”¹⁶⁷, are reflected in the industrial technologies of labor that Durkheim props up as the markers of civility. Division, or as Soyinka calls it, “compartmentalization”, becomes an overarching site of veridiction¹⁶⁸ in De la division du travail social. The analogy performs facile transferability when Durkheim switches codes, leaving behind labor to talk about the biological, specifically the bodies of the Native and the French.

Having offered division in labor as the precondition of and evidence for progress, in the next step in Durkheim’s argument the author associates the law of division to the body and the individual, stating that, “…la loi de la division du travail s'applique aux organismes comme aux sociétés” (3). The truth of Durkheim’s analysis, which it must be admitted is highly speculative and conjectural at best, is transferred from one domain, the very specific discussion of European economics in modern industrial societies, to the domain of universal human biology. This is a crucial connection that the author makes in order to later make observations and draw conclusions based on the truth of Indigenous bodies as proof of the existence of the “social fact”, which is the very basis of the disciplinary methodology of sociology as posited by Durkheim in this seminal work in the field. It is critical to deconstruct the articulation of Durkheim’s argument, in order to expose the mythic origins of the scientific truth it naturalizes. Durkheim

¹⁶⁷ It is with the same understanding that I employ the term narrative technology in my analyses.
¹⁶⁸ I employ the term in the Foucauldian sense of the term, a site where truth is claimed, or created.
elaborates on and seeks to concretize the *transferability* of his insights into the French social realm from what he sees as a universal *truth* of biology in the following excerpt:

> Ce n'est plus seulement une institution sociale qui a sa source dans l'intelligence et dans la volonté des hommes ; mais c'est un phénomène de biologie générale dont il faut, semble-t-il, aller chercher les conditions dans les propriétés essentielles de la matière organisée. La division du travail social n'apparaît plus que comme une forme particulière de ce processus général, et les sociétés, en se conformant à cette loi, semblent céder à un courant qui est né bien avant elles et qui entraîne dans le même sens le monde vivant tout entier (3-4).

Durkheim naturalizes the ideal of progress and the division of labor as a biological phenomenon. Taking a particular economic mode which is historically specific to modern industrial developments in the West as his starting point, the author extrapolates this mode as *the* defining essence of biological life in general. Thereby, Durkheim situates progress, as he understands it economically (capitalism’s extractive, exploitative model), as the evolutionary *truth* of life on Earth. This is a particularly illustrative example of the narrative technology of *naturalizing* one’s viewpoint through myth and rhetoric. Having proven the validity of progress as universally beneficial and biologically imperative, Durkheim goes on to instrumentalize the Native as counterpoint, that is, as an example of peoples who have not accepted the course of Nature as he envisions it. In this way, the Amerindian is categorized as *retrograde*. This vision of the inevitability of division and its biological origins *naturalizes* not only economic and legal aspects of *civilized* societies, but also assumes a specific sexual normativity, namely Western sexual expectations and morality.

The next rhetorical move that Durkheim makes is to *transfer* the biological and economic *truth* that he has discovered to the moral question:
...la division du travail, en même temps qu'elle est une loi de la nature, est-elle aussi une règle morale de la conduite humaine, et si elle a ce caractère, pour quelles causes et dans quelle mesure? (4).

Durkheim goes on to answer yes to this question. Having established the biological truth of division, Durkheim’s argument makes a jump that cannot easily be justified or explained using the rigorous methodology of the scientific epistemologies of the West, despite the author’s assurances to the contrary and his explanation of the “social fact”, which will be discussed further below. Not only is division a primordial biological reality, but it also represents a universal moral imperative. Therefore, when Durkheim subsequently employs myths of the Ignoble Savage by citing retrograde Native sexual practices, the Amerindian is presented as resistant to progress both biologically and morally. Earlier in this study, I referenced two concepts that it might be useful to recall at this point of my analysis of Durkheim. Bruyneel describes ‘colonial time’ as a Western epistemology of the Native that presents the European as ‘advancing’ and the Indigenous peoples of the Americas as ‘static’ (2). Durkheim’s argument is informed by this way of thinking. In addition to Bruyneel’s theory, I have also cited Bhabha and the necessity for hegemonic powers to create a ‘modern image of the future’ for themselves, while simultaneously denying such claims to the colonized (43). In making the Native doubly retrograde, belonging to ‘colonial time’, without a ‘modern image of the future’, Durkheim’s representational models participate in the overarching mythic paradigm of the period: the myth of the Vanishing Indian by excluding the Native from having a future. Making the Amerindian retrograde within his discourse of scientific truth, Durkheim demonstrates the transferability of the myth of the Vanishing Indian. From the lithic romanticism of Chateaubriand’s American novels at the outset of the nineteenth century, to the French Western novel’s depiction of the Native at the “vanishing point” in mid-century and beyond, to the foundational myths of
sociology in Durkheim’s *De la division du travail social* near the end of the century, the Vanishing Indian myth is characteristic of the French vision of the Amerindian as represented in the literature\(^{169}\) of the period.

The *disappearing* of the Native within Durkheim’s text passes through the author’s articulation of modernity and primitiveness as a question of morality. The author sees progress, which comes about through the division that is the object of his study, as the moral impetus of his times, stating that, “*En un mot, par un de ses aspects, l’impératif catégorique de la conscience morale est en train de prendre la forme suivante:* mets-toi en état de remplir utilement une fonction déterminée” (6, author’s emphasis). This is the moral imperative that Durkheim’s work locates as the teleological end or *function*, as he puts it, of division. Either perform an economic function, as determined by the profit-driven immediate needs of the system, or fall into obsolescence, *disappearance*, and social death. In short, if you are not contributing, you are simply irrelevant. As such, although he has not introduced the Native explicitly into his analysis, Durkheim positions the Native *a priori* as retrograde, biologically and morally incapable of complying with the (ideal) social order he is describing. It must be admitted, however, that Durkheim does not offer up progress as the biological, moral, and economic imperative of human existence without careful consideration of possible detractions. He does make brief mention of the possibility that modern industrial society might not be an indisputable model for healthy living. Durkheim cites Lémontey, a political thinker during the period of the French Revolution, who, like Rousseau before him, compares modern, *civilized* life and that of the Amerindian, and decides in favor of the latter’s existence (6). Durkheim also points to suicide as a predominantly Western phenomenon as a possible critique of progress and

\(^{169}\) I understand “literature” in the broadest sense of the term here.
the division of labor, later penning the monograph *Le suicide* (1897) which painstakingly researches the occurrence in French society. However, in the final analysis, Durkheim’s argument in *De la division du travail social* supports the modern industrial societal model as the epitome of the multifaceted *truth* of progress.

In a close reading of the articulation of his arguments, the logic followed by the father of sociology becomes apparent. By carefully examining the steps the author takes to reach his conclusions, one can expose the metaphorical and mythic nature of his discourse. In the following citation, Durkheim provides an outline of how his analysis will proceed:

> Notre travail se divisera donc en trois parties principales : nous chercherons d'abord quelle est la fonction de la division du travail, c'est-à-dire à quel besoin social elle correspond ; nous déterminerons ensuite les causes et les conditions dont elle dépend ; enfin, comme elle n'aurait pas été l'objet d'accusations aussi graves si réellement elle ne déviait plus ou moins souvent de l'état normal, nous chercherons à classer les principales formes anormales qu'elle présente, afin d'éviter qu'elles soient confondues avec les autres (8).

In this passage, Durkheim lays out the structure of his argument and his methodological presumptions are evident. In the third element of his exposition he signals how the abnormal will help to better understand the normal. Using nosology as an analogy, the author presents that which is abnormal, the *retrograde* Amerindian, as pathological vis-à-vis the healthful, progressive *functioning* of the French, for example. By taking up the abnormal or pathological as his object, Durkheim asserts an ontological difference. Within this ontological, or biological difference, abnormality is also associated with immorality, of course. This continues and builds upon Durkheim’s metaphorical focus on the biological and the individual body. By insisting that the reader accept the connection between the physical body and civilizational progress as it
becomes manifest through the division of social labor, the author lays down the groundwork for the rest of his argument, in which the social scientist instrumentalizes descriptions of Native sexuality as abnormality and immorality, in order to concretize the ontological and moral superiority of the French (European). Morality is of key concern in De la division du travail social, because Durkheim recognizes the tension between modern industrial economic progress and moral decadence (as evidenced by his scholarly interest in suicide as a negative effect of progress). After claiming that industry and art are both questionable as to their logical and historical association with good moral standing, science is posited as the standard bearer, or source of morality, for the social order that is the object of Durkheim’s investigation:

De tous les éléments de la civilisation, la science est le seul qui, dans de certaines conditions, présente un caractère moral. En effet, les sociétés tendent de plus en plus à regarder comme un devoir pour l'individu de développer son intelligence, en s'assimilant les vérités scientifiques qui sont établies (14).

The development of intelligence is, perhaps unsurprisingly, located squarely and uniquely in the domain of science and scientific truth. I include this citation here in order to emphasize the universalizing and totalizing claims of Durkheim’s discourse. Presenting science as the flag bearer of modern morality is problematic when one considers the mythic origins of the discourse’s specific brand of truth. I have been following the train of Durkheim’s thought about progress and its attachments to human biology and morality. Thus far, he does not directly allude to the Amerindian; however, it is necessary to clearly understand the context into which the representation of the Amerindian is inserted in Durkheim’s articulation of one of the foundational texts of sociology. I will now analyze the direct references to the Amerindian in the opening sections of the text, where Durkheim proposes the “social fact” as the base unit of
knowledge, not only in sociology, but, as the quote above shows, in all human intelligence in general. It is in the area of sexuality and gender roles that the representation of the Native specifically intervenes in Durkheim’s analysis:

Des voyageurs nous rapportent d’ailleurs que, dans un certain nombre de tribus de l’Amérique du sud, l’homme et la femme présentent dans la structure et l’aspect général une ressemblance qui dépasse ce que l’on voit ailleurs. Enfin le dr Lebon a pu établir directement et avec une précision mathématique cette ressemblance originelle des deux sexes pour l’organe éminent de la vie physique et psychique, le cerveau. La différence qui existe par exemple entre la moyenne des crânes des parisiens contemporains et celle des parisiennes est presque double de celle observée entre les crânes masculins et féminins de l’ancienne égypte. » un anthropologue allemand, M. Bischoff, est arrivé sur ce point aux mêmes résultats (20-1).

After having discussed whether or not resemblance causes humans to come together, or whether the attraction of opposites is the maxim that most correctly describes the origin of human society, Durkheim shows how resemblance is primitive and division leads to sexual differences. Gender differentiation is closely linked in the author’s exposition to progress and its moral and biological universal imperatives. Durkheim cites hard science, namely cranial measurements, to situate Indigenous peoples of South America in a temporality that is equated with that of Ancient Egypt. By positing an ontological relationship between Ancient Egypt and living, breathing Amerindians, Durkheim engages in the tradition of situating the Native temporally in the past, within the parameters of the Vanishing Indian myth. At the beginning of this chapter, I demonstrated how Chateaubriand’s lithic romanticism performs the same mythic analogy, directly referencing the iconic architectural construction of Ancient Egypt par excellence, the pyramids, and the Nile River in his descriptions of the Amerindian and American geographies. As evidence of the scientific truth of the ontological superiority of the French,
Durkheim reiterates one of the most characteristic metaphors of the mythic paradigm of the Vanishing Indian. The site where Durkheim locates this mythic ontological difference is significant. It is sexuality that defines that difference, biologically and morally. After all, the lack of a modern, European division of labor is the cause of the extraordinary “resemblance” between Amerindian men and women of South America, according to Durkheim and his scientific sources. The pinpointing of Native sexual resemblance as a site of ontological difference is echoed in discourses of anthropology and settler sexual normativities in the twentieth century, as well. Morgensen, in his study *Spaces Between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization*, localizes *berdache* as an important element in the *queering* of the Native.

*Berdache*, which Morgensen labels a “colonial object”, which highlights the constructed nature of the concept, is typically an androgynous male Amerindian figure. In the following passage Morgensen explains how *berdache* functions in (settler) colonial discourses:

> It *[berdache]* cohered an object of knowledge that described a gender-transitive and homosexual subject, defined by male embodiment, who received social recognition in Native American societies. Over time, the object projected a uniformity of sex, gender, sexuality, and indigeneity that let it represent principles of human nature and culture. Disagreement over its definition regularly called its qualities into question, but that very deliberation promulgated *berdache* as a key object of colonial desire for Indigenous and sexual truth (55).

While Durkheim does not directly reference *berdache* as a specially revered Native identity, the author’s articulation of Native sexuality utilizes the same narrative technologies as the more modern discourses targeted by Morgensen’s analysis. In particular, the “uniformity of sex, gender, sexuality, and indigeneity” that the construction of *berdache* allows Westerners to claim, is precisely the way in which Durkheim employs Native sexualities in order to “represent principles of human nature and culture”. Not only does the father of sociology locate ontological
difference in what he interprets as androgyny, but he utilizes that distinction as a founding site of scientific truth, namely European superiority over Indigenous peoples. In comparison to the Ancient Egyptian and contemporary, androgynous Amerindian, it is the big-brained Parisian man and the tiny-brained Parisian woman that serve as the model for the division of sexual labor, progressive modernity, and civilization as Durkheim understands it:

[La division] augmente à la fois la force productive et l'habileté du travailleur, elle est la condition nécessaire du développement intellectuel et matériel des sociétés ; elle est la source de la civilisation. D'autre part, comme on prête assez volontiers à la civilisation une valeur absolue, on ne songe même pas à chercher une autre fonction à la division du travail (12).

The division of labor, based on Durkheim’s interpretation of modern and primitive gender roles, is presented as a profit-enhancing, intellect-building, wellspring of civilization. Thereby, the propagation and maintenance of the modern industrial economic machine is revealed as the sole function of the division of labor. The superior male and inferior female that results from such a system manifests itself in many ways within the author’s argument. Durkheim’s analysis has direct consequences politically, not only biologically for women, in particular. In addition to his citing of the small brains of contemporaneous French women170, Durkheim signals female political agency as retrograde, going against the sacred principles of progressive division:

Il y a maintenant encore un très grand nombre de peuples sauvages où la femme se mêle à la vie politique. C'est ce que l'on a observé notamment chez les tribus indiennes de l'Amérique, comme

170 Not only does Durkheim cite the smaller brain size of Parisian women, he goes on to include more precise comparisons, claiming that science has proven that the male Parisian brain is among the world's largest specimens, whereas the female Parisian’s cranial capacity, on the contrary, is even smaller than a Chinese woman’s (an insult, to Durkheim’s thinking) and barely above that of a New Caledonian woman’s (apparently near the bottom of Durkheim’s scale of feminine intelligence) (24).
In this excerpt, Durkheim lists various Indigenous groups, including two groups that have been important in my study of the representation of the Amerindian in French literature, the Iroquois and the Natchez, in addition to Pacific Islander groups. Native female agency, what Durkheim describes as their “participation in the life of men”, is positioned as a behavioral correlate of the extraordinary “sexual resemblance” of Amerindian societies. As such, it is morally condemned, to Durkheim’s mind, because of the inseparability of the biological and moral in Durkheim’s thought. The political agency of Native women is categorized as retrograde in Durkheim’s scientific analysis. Presented as evidence of European superiority, the relatively smaller brain sizes of French women are the marker of civilized progress, whereas the sexual and biological androgyny, embodied by the political agency and “participation in the life of men” of Indigenous women is stained with primitiveness. Durkheim goes on to equate the concept of “sexual resemblance” with a weakening of familial bonds. As mentioned in the final section of the third chapter of this study in my discussion of the representation of the Native in French scientific texts of the eighteenth century, family is often denied to the Native, this lack being cited as a sign of their inhumanity. Durkheim’s *De la division du travail social* participates in that tradition in the following citation:

> Or, chez ces mêmes peuples le mariage est dans un état tout à fait rudimentaire. Il est même très vraisemblable, sinon absolument démontré, qu’il y a eu une époque dans l’histoire de la famille où il n’y avait pas de mariage ; les rapports sexuels se nouaient et se dénouaient à volonté sans qu’aucune obligation juridique liât les conjoints (22).
As in other examples, such as early written accounts by Europeans which state that Amerindian peoples do not respect familial bonds, claiming that Natives practice anthropophagy on their own family members, Durkheim presents contemporaneous living, breathing Amerindians as lacking the very basis of society: family. The irony of this argumentation as part of a justification for the advantages of the civilized division of labor, which itself can be cited as weakening and destroying the bonds that hold family units and communities together through hyper-individualism and atomization is staggering. Nonetheless, what Durkheim characterizes as irresponsible Native promiscuity and retrograde sexuality becomes the site of the ontological difference between the normalized, naturalized French and the queered Amerindian. Through a discourse of truth, based on Durkheim’s speculations and quotations of cranial measurements, or hard science, Native practices are queered and disappeared by employing the written technologies of a representational mode that engages with the history of the myths of the Ignoble Savage and the Vanishing Indian that I have traced in this study. As for La Condamine and Buffon in the eighteenth century\textsuperscript{171}, Durkheim focalizes on Native sexuality as a marker of difference. As Morgensen argues, sexuality is a determining factor in the epistemological understanding of the alterity of the Amerindian, as well as a tool of European (settler) self-definition (2).

In this section I have shown how Émile Durkheim instrumentalizes the mythologies of the Ignoble Savage and the Vanishing Indian in the articulation of his primary argument in one of the foundational texts of sociology, \textit{De la division du travail social}. Through a close reading and analysis of the early sections of the work, I have demonstrated how the author conflates progress biologically and morally in order to argue for the ontological superiority of European

\textsuperscript{171} See chapter 3 sections 2 and 3 for analyses of these two authors.
bodies and minds in contradistinction to Native bodies and minds. By *queering* Native sexualities and gender roles through a turn to *hard science*, Durkheim makes *truth* claims about Indigenous peoples to *naturalize* the purported superiority of the West.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I examined the evolution of the mythic representation of the Amerindian in French letters through the works of Chateaubriand, the French Western novel, and one of the foundational texts of sociology, Émile Durkheim’s *De la division du travail social*. The theoretical concept of *lithic romanticism*, a romanticized vision of Nature and the Native in Chateaubriand’s American novels permitted me to explain the narrative technologies employed by the author from the representational strategies and tactics that precede and succeed it. The particularity of *lithic romanticism* lies in its idiosyncratic methodology of erasure of the Native both spatially and temporally. The absence of living, breathing Amerindians in the geography of Chateaubriand’s writings, coupled with the fixation of the Native in the past (often correlated to allusions to Antiquity), constitute the monumental mode of discourse that characterizes the author’s *lithic romanticism*, a narrative style that engages with the epistemological and representational paradigm known as the Vanishing Indian myth. The Vanishing Indian myth is *the* framework that informs the genre of the French Western novel, as well.

In my analysis of the French Western novel, I explained how the authors that operate within the confines of this typology tend to espouse particular limited visions of Nature and the Native’s place in it. *Framing* is an important concept in my discussion, not only of Nature and Amerindian representation, but also of the formulaic structure of the French Western novel in general. The use of generalities concerning Nature and the Indigenous function within a generic
logic that utilizes a *crystallized* lexicon of stereotypes and figures that serve to identify authentic Native representation in conjunction with the author’s purported specialized knowledge of the Amerindian. The specific figure that I chose to elucidate was the dual trope of Native insensitivity (physical and emotional). One stereotype among many, the importance of Indigenous insensitivity lies in its ambiguity. Both positively and negatively inflected, insensitivity shares the essential characteristic of polyvalence with the two larger mythic models at the center of this study’s examination of the history of the representation of the Amerindian in French letters, namely the myths of the Noble and the Ignoble Savage and the Vanishing Indian. After my analysis of the Amerindian in the French Western novel, I focused on discourses of scientific truth in Émile Durkheim’s seminal *De la division du travail social*.

As one of the fundamental works that establish the discipline of sociology as a social science, *De la division du travail social* occupies an important place in the history of scientific texts that take human difference as an object in the late nineteenth century. Through an interpretation of the formulation of the author’s argumentation in the early sections of the monograph, I deconstructed how the author instrumentalizes representations of Native sexuality in order to *naturalize* European superiority, both biologically and morally. I illustrated how the myths of the Ignoble Savage and the Vanishing Indian inform the groundwork for Durkheim’s representations of European modernity and progress vis-à-vis Native primitiveness and sexual abnormality. In the fifth and final chapter, I will explore the Going Native myth in both French and Quebecois literatures of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

288
Chapter 5

Mythologies of Going Native in French and Post-Imperialist Quebecois Literatures

Introduction

In the final chapter and conclusion of this study, I will examine the representation of the Amerindian in French literature of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the Post-Imperialist literature of Quebec, and the father of structural anthropology, Claude Lévi-Strauss’ vision of the Native in *Tristes tropiques*. I begin my analysis in the fifth chapter with a discussion of the mythic rewriting of two earlier works wherein Amerindian representation figures prominently: *Vendredi, ou les limbes du Pacifique*, winner of the Grand Prix du Roman of the Académie Française in 1967, by Michel Tournier and *Rouge Brésil* by Jean-Christophe Rufin. Tournier’s novel is a rewrite of the Daniel Defoe classic *Robinson Crusoe*, whereas Rufin’s Prix Goncourt winner for 2001 takes another look at Villegagnon’s failed colonial venture in the sixteenth century, this specific interaction between French and Native in Brasil will also be the focus of the conclusion of this study in which I analyze the myths of the Native and the anthropological discourse of Claude Lévi-Strauss in *Tristes tropiques*. While continuing my examination of the classical paradigms for the mythologizing of the Amerindian in French letters such as the Noble and Ignoble Savage myths, the myth of the Vanishing Indian, and the nexus between Native and Nature, or the Ecological Savage myth (all of which have been key themes of previous chapters), in this chapter I introduce and focus on a new paradigm that is exemplified in the works analyzed in this chapter: the myth of Going Native. In previous centuries many French authors have appropriated and displaced supposed elements of Native practices and identities for their own philosophical and esthetic, literary purposes. However, in the twentieth century authors explore
the myth of the Amerindian as a possible source of identity creation and transformation or self-actualization for the West.

In my analysis, I deconstruct the narrative technologies of Going Native in Tournier and Rufin’s novels in order to demonstrate how these French authors perpetuate the framing of the Amerindian that we have already encountered in preceding chapters of this dissertation. In short, I argue that while the authors attempt to present the Amerindian as remedial counterpoint to Western society’s folly and decadence (much as Rousseau’s conceptualization of the state of nature attempted to do two centuries earlier), living, breathing Amerindians have very little to do with the psychological and philosophical dramas that constitute the textual framework of *Vendredi, ou les limbes du Pacifique* and *Rouge Brésil*.

Following my discussion of the Going Native myth, I turn my attention to the imbrication of Native and Nature in the texts as pointed examples of modern environmentalist discourse, examining the articulation and consequences of such a discursive move in parallel with the authors’ iteration of the Going Native myth. Both novels attempt to include an ecological message in the fictional worlds they create. This ecocritical bent is overtly associated with the writers’ textual representations of the Amerindian. Contact with Amerindian peoples and the subsequent process(es) of Going Native serve as a catalyst for a rethinking of Western ecological epistemologies for both Crusoe and Colombe, the two protagonists. I will discuss the underlying ironies and limitations of this particular variety of conflating Native and Nature.

In the second section of the chapter, I shift focus away from France entirely in order to examine Quebecois Francophone representations of the Amerindian in the Post-Imperialist literature of Quebec. By ending my study with a look at French-Canadian authors’ visions of the
Native, I enlarge the scope of my research to encompass a more proximate geographical context that offers a unique opportunity to comparatively analyze French and Quebecois mythologizing of the original inhabitants of the Americas in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In addition to reworking or resisting classic images, Quebecois authors Robert Lalonde and Jacques Poulin present new mythic imaginings of the Native based largely on the Going Native myth and themes of sexuality. Through the theoretical insights of *berdache* as articulated by Scott Lauria Morgensen in *Spaces Between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization*, I offer deeper understandings of the connection between political discourses and literary narratives of Going Native. According to the Going Native model, transformation of characters of European descent is catalyzed by contact with First Nations peoples. This is articulated through a road trip that includes a revisionist historicizing of Settler-Indigenous relations in the Americas in *Volkswagen Blues* by Jacques Poulin. In both *Le dernier été des Indiens* by Lalonde and *Volkswagen Blues*, mythic Native sexualities characterize the Amerindian characters as agents of change for the French-Canadian protagonists. This sexualizing of the already well-established mythic literary identity of First Nations peoples is coupled with a particular iteration of the Going Native myth wherein Kanak and La Grande Sauterelle (the main Amerindian characters in the two novels, respectively) act as guides in order to reveal something crucial about the Euro-Canadian protagonists’ own identity quests.

In my final conclusion, I end the study by exploring mythic Going Native in Claude Lévi-Strauss’ *Tristes tropiques*. I show how the author engages intertextually with the genealogy of mythologies of the Amerindian which constitutes the history which this dissertation traces. By presenting a text which subjectively attempts to reveal the personal motivations and ideological underpinnings of an ethnographic journey into the Amazonian rainforest of Brazil in search of
authentic, uncorrupted Indigenous groups, Lévi-Strauss provides evidence for the inescapable influence of mythic paradigms for understanding the Native, even in discourses that seek to adhere to ideals of scientific objectivity. Analyzing *Tristes tropiques* allows me to come full circle, or *boucler la boucle* by returning to the starting point of this study, sixteenth century representations of Brazilian Amerindian groups, proving that the mythic lens continues to offer the only vision of the original peoples of the Americas in French letters.

1. Going Native in Mythic Rewriting: *Vendredi, ou les limbes du Pacifique* by Michel Tournier and *Rouge Brésil* by Jean-Christophe Rufin

As we have seen throughout this study, myths of the Native in the French literary tradition are often rewritings, at times, they are little more than mere repetitions of earlier textual representations of the Amerindian. Having traced the evolution of certain mythic strains in Western thought concerning the original inhabitants of the Americas, for example the myths of the Noble and Ignoble Savage, the nexus of Nature and Native, and the Vanishing Indian paradigms, I now turn my attention to the (re)iterations of the Native in twentieth and twenty-first century French letters. In the first part of this section, I examine Michel Tournier’s novel, *Vendredi, ou les limbes du Pacifique*. This novel, published in 1967, winner of the Grand Prix du Roman, is a rewriting of one of the most fundamental texts in Western literature, *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe which first appeared in print in 1719. Defoe’s classic masterpiece continues to exert a considerable amount of cultural purchase in Anglophone society (I need only cite the recent success of the cinematographic reboot, *Cast Away*, starring Tom Hanks, to demonstrate the allure that the desert island continues to have in the Western mind). *Robinson Crusoe* has not only greatly influenced English-speaking readers, however. The novel was well received throughout Europe, including in France. *Robinson Crusoe* has shown itself to be one of
the most imitated plotlines in the history of Western literature, television, and cinema, leading to
the coining of the term robinsonade to describe any similar storyline in French. The mythic
story of Crusoe has certainly informed the French cultural imaginary concerning the peoples and
geographies of the Americas. It is hardly surprising, then, that the highly awarded author Michel
Tournier chose to reimagine the classic tale in his novel, Vendredi, ou les limbes du Pacifique. I
begin my discussion of Tournier’s text by examining the importance of the title of the novel vis-à-vis the protagonist and the role of Friday, the Araucan of both Amerindian and African
descent.

While it may seem evident and insignificant, the about-face represented by Tournier’s
decision to change the entire philosophical perspective of the story of the castaway, Robinson
Crusoe, by choosing to title his text Vendredi, ou les limbes du Pacifique is revealing.
Comprehending Tournier’s locating of his own text vis-à-vis Defoe’s classic original is an
essential element for any informed understanding of Tournier’s efforts to rewrite the famous
story. The choice to switch the focus of the title away from the English protagonist toward the
Indigenous man, Friday, may indicate a particular theoretical positioning of the author in his
rethinking of Defoe’s work. In the original novel, the main character is defined by his struggle to
maintain his integrity against Nature and against Friday’s corrupting influence. Crusoe
withstands his years of exile only to emerge virtually unchanged by his ordeal. Defoe’s Crusoe
remains intact psychologically and culturally. He is an Englishman from the first to the last page
of the text. This is perhaps the greatest difference between Defoe’s original Crusoe and
Tournier’s reiteration. The book that Tournier has written is about nothing if not transformation
and transcendence. Tournier insists upon Crusoe’s complete reinvention of his identity. As we

172 To cite just one example, George Méliès directed a film based on the novel in 1902, situating Robinson Crusoé
as one of the first grand narratives cinematized in France.
will see later in this section, the theme of self-actualization through the mythology of Going Native is also the central theme in Jean-Christophe Rufin’s *Rouge Brésil*. Tournier’s Crusoe is changed by the dual influences of Nature and the Native, by his struggle and communion with the island of Speranza and the observational philosophy that develops from his interaction with Friday.

Tournier’s title, therefore, refers to Friday, not Crusoe. The implication, which is attested in the subsequent twists and turns of the plot, is that Friday’s vision of the world, no matter how naïve and primitive, is the more important philosophical vision of the text. Tournier presents Friday’s naïveté as the remedy to the corruption of Crusoe’s Judeo-Christian and Freudian cultural heritage, portrayed in the text as a hindrance and obstacle rather than an aid to enlightenment and personal actualization. Tournier attempts to convince the reader that the transformation that leads to Crusoe’s conversion, his Going Native, exemplified by his final decision to remain on the island rather than return to civilization, as he does in Defoe’s version, is Friday’s doing. However, a closer examination of the text demonstrates two important factors that belie the underlying theme of Crusoe’s assimilation. Firstly, the transformation of Crusoe from Englishman to Native begins long before the arrival of Friday on the scene. Despite his manic efforts to control the microcosm that is the island of Speranza through rules, measurement, ritual, and intensive agricultural exploitation, Crusoe, under the influence of the natural environment according to Tournier, begins to change well before he ever encounters Friday:

En effet, l’observation de la Charte et du Code pénal, la purge des peines qu’il s’infligeait, le respect d’un emploi du temps rigoureux qui ne lui laissait aucun répit, le cérémonial qui entourait les actes majeurs de sa vie, tout ce corset de conventions et de prescriptions qu’il s’imposait pour ne pas tomber ne l’empêchait pas de ressentir avec angoisse la présence sauvage et indomptée de la nature tropicale et , à l’intérieur, le travail d’érosion de la solitude sur son âme d’homme civilisé (82).
It is the “savage and untamed tropical” environment that first begins to transform Crusoe into a new person. It is important to note, here, how the Going Native myth functions. The myth posits that contact with the Native leads to epistemological (and sometimes ontological) transcendence. I would argue that, in the final analysis, Tournier’s intention is to ironize the supposed transformation of the Westerner in contact with the original inhabitants of the Americas. What most convincingly belies the Going Native myth in Tournier’s text is the intimate relationship that Crusoe experiences with the island of Speranza herself. At once mother (Crusoe descends into the depths of a cave in an obvious metaphor for a Freudian return to the womb) and lover (Crusoe engages in sexual intercourse with various natural elements of the island, such as a mossy patch at the interstice of two branches, as well as with the earth itself in the form of a sandy knoll, leading to the propagation of a new plant variety in the second instance [a metaphor for the joint progeny of the protagonist and the island]), the central role in Crusoe’s Going Native is more closely linked to his intimate, familial relationship with Nature. Crusoe’s relationship with Friday, before the latter explodes the elaborate infrastructure installed by his master, is one of domination and violence, possibly signaling a microcosmic critique of colonialism on the individual level. The implicit suggestion of the text, that Friday is somehow responsible for the transformation of the Englishman into Noble Savage, is confuted not only by this early stage of the European/Native relationship (colonizer/colonized), but remains problematic after the dramatic explosion that quells Crusoe’s efforts at controlling the island, as well as his sole companion. In this second, ostensibly more egalitarian, stage of the Crusoe/Friday relationship, Tournier essentially presents a number of loosely related scenes (all centered upon Friday’s interaction with Nature, a point to which I return below) wherein Friday behaves more or less mysteriously.
The reader is confronted merely with the observations and attempted rationalizations of Crusoe, which are revealed by the narrator or in Crusoe’s own words in the form of entries in his Log-Book. In no way does the author give a glimpse into the inner workings of Friday’s mind, making his perspective elusive at best. The musical instrument and kite fashioned from the cadaver of Andoar (a male goat killed by Friday), two symbols of the “aerial” philosophy that represents the realization of Crusoe’s Going Native transformation are symbols of Friday’s epistemological difference vis-à-vis Crusoe’s Western heritage. In short, they imply a more respectful vision of Nature, a more humble attitude towards Man’s superior status among other living creatures. Crusoe draws these conclusions based on his observations of Friday’s behavior and, according to his own epistemological categorizations and imperatives, professes having undergone a profound transformation; he has now successfully Gone Native after having recognized the error of his Western European ways. Irony is a central element in all of Tournier’s fiction and is certainly not absent here. The author is not only mocking Crusoe’s intelligence but also his arrogance. At the end of the text, it is Friday who escapes the island. Friday has been sufficiently intrigued by his glimpse at the modern world in his limited experience with the crew of the Whitebird, the ship that finally arrives on the shores of Speranza, in order to wish to make his way in the Western world. The irony resides in the effect of Crusoe’s influence upon the Native. When the explosion that destroys the precarious shred of civilization created in a vacuum by Crusoe on the island of Speranza occurs, it is the consequence of two converging elements of the dysfunctional relationship between Crusoe and Friday, between colonizer and colonized. The dual elements of the colonial project that conspire to bring Crusoe’s exploitative system down are regulation and imitation. Firstly, Crusoe’s hoarding of the only remaining tobacco on the island (hardly an innocuous reference, tobacco is
one of the most significant productions of the Americas that travels to the Old World from the New) instigates the steadfast rule that Friday shall not be allowed to smoke the noxious weed. This rule leads Friday to smoke his tobacco in an out-of-the-way place, namely the bottom of the grotto where the stores of gunpowder are also housed. In smoking the forbidden plant, Friday wishes to imitate his master. In the logic of the mission civilisatrice, this impetus to imitate the superior Westener’s behavior is ever an ambiguous aspect of contact. From the earliest days of the period of first contacts, concern is expressed, often by religious writers, concerning the terrible influence of the French lower orders on the Indians. Here, however, the self-proclaimed sovereign of the island of Speranza, Robinson Crusoe, exceedingly moral, is the object of Friday’s imitation. The ironic result of the colonial efforts of Crusoe is not that Friday adopts Christianity with its coterminous attitude toward private property and Nature, but that he picks up the master’s bad habit of smoking which leads to the destruction of the entire edifice of Crusoe’s superior Western epistemology.

The second factor that forces the reader to question the sincerity of Crusoe’s supposed transcendence from civilized to primitive is the ending of the novel which leaves Crusoe with a young boy from the Whitebird, the ship that finally arrives, taking Friday and leaving behind a cabin boy who escapes the violence abuses of the ship captain to take his chances with Crusoe on the desert island. On the surface, it may appear that Crusoe’s satisfaction at the end of the novel is based upon the mere fact that he is not alone. However, the denouement of the text equally raises doubts as to Crusoe’s supposed transformation from English to Native. The discovery of the Estonian cabin boy’s presence on the island is, after all, a rewriting of the introduction of Friday into Crusoe’s world. Rather than being met with fear (Crusoe had aimed his rifle at Friday upon first seeing him, intending to kill him, but missed, killing one of Friday’s pursuers and
frightening the rest of the party [the only reason Friday survived and came to live on the island]),
the young cabin boy, an ersatz protégé or son, the long-awaited progeny of Crusoe’s fecundation
of the island, is met with joy as the fulfillment of Crusoe’s destiny. The cabin boy, Jaan
Neljapäev, is rechristened *Jeudi* (Thursday) in the novel’s last line, “Désormais, lui dit Robinson,
tu t’appelleras Jeudi. C’est le jour de Jupiter, dieu du Ciel. C’est aussi le dimanche des enfants”
(Tournier 254). The reference to the sky alludes to Crusoe’s transformation, his Going Native
mythology is inscribed as an awakening to “aerial” realities that his former self was incapable of
realizing. The protagonist moves through three phases of development, from the telluric, to the
vegetative, finally reaching enlightenment in the “aerial”. The “aerial” stage of his self-
realization is symbolized by the two objects that Friday creates from the remains of the goat
Andoar, a kite and a musical instrument made from the animal’s skull. The goat is significant
because upon first arriving on the island, Crusoe encounters a similar goat, killing him out of
rage, symbolizing the carelessness of the European vis-à-vis Nature. The irony in the final scene
resides in the fact that the symbol of Crusoe’s complete transformation from *civilized to savage*,
the sky god Jupiter’s affiliation with the name *Jeudi*, is proof that Crusoe has not, in point of
fact, been able to successfully rid himself of his cultural heritage. Crusoe’s happiness when he
discovers Thursday emanates from the new opportunity to inculcate (i.e. to possess, to dominate,
to control, to colonize) that the young Eastern European boy represents. The first action taken by
Crusoe when Friday arrives is to give him a name. Naming is tantamount to possession. Naming
is a claiming of control or objectifying (with the more or less implicit intention to take
possession of) the object named173. While Thursday’s escape from the ship frees Crusoe from

---

173 The name *Jeudi* in particular is significant, because it indicates that Crusoe’s transformation has not been an
advance but a retreat. The first Other the Englishman encounters is christened Friday. The naming of the young
Estonian cabin boy by the moniker Thursday implies a regression. I would argue that Tournier uses this regression
ironically, however such a move would also be in keeping with the temporal framing of the Native in both the myth
living out his remaining years in solitude\textsuperscript{174}, it also provides him with an opportunity to pass on the knowledge that he has gained from Nature and the Native Friday to another (generation). The paternalistic aspects at the origin of Crusoe’s relationship with Thursday are not essentially different from the parameters that defined the protagonist’s relationship with Friday. Does Tournier’s rewriting of Defoe’s masterpiece dramatically alter the relationship between the European and the Amerindian (or Eastern European) as represented in French literature? In short, no. The text is not about \textit{Vendredi} as Tournier’s title suggests. The text presumes an alternative worldview that is subsequently grafted upon the stereotypes and clichés of the Amerindian (the \textit{crystallized} lexicon examined throughout this study, such as primordial innocence and instinctual harmoniousness with the natural environment, those being two key examples) in order to give the impression of reciprocity and transcendence. This transformation, this conversion, this \textit{Going Native} is illusory and mythologized, however. Crusoe needs the presence of the Other, Friday and Thursday in the case of Tournier’s novel, but not in order to necessarily learn \textit{from} them. The critical need satisfied by the Other is appropriative. Crusoe appropriates Nature and Native (Friday) in order to make certain claims about his own identity, however, these claims do not actually have any real connection to Nature or the Native. The system wherein Going Native is played out in this novel and in Rufin’s \textit{Rouge Brésil} occurs within the closed system of the Western mind. Rather than representing liberation from his Judeo-Christian, Freudian cultural

\textsuperscript{174} It should be noted that in Crusoe’s case “solitude” is a negative here. In Chateaubriand’s \textit{lithic romanticism} of the early nineteenth century, discussed in the first section of chapter 4, Europeans seek “solitude” in order to self-actualize in what is portrayed as “empty” American geographies. In Tournier’s text, it is through the relation with the Amerindian that self-actualization purportedly takes place. However, the end of \textit{Vendredi} demonstrates that it is through the hegemonic colonial power differential of the domination of colonizer over colonized, in this case of Crusoe over Friday, and then Thursday, rather than in a mythic process of Going Native, that Crusoe finds his \textit{true} identity.
heritage, Crusoe’s Going Native simply reiterates classic myths of the Amerindian, the Noble Savage and the nexus of Nature and Native. Crusoe attempts to become what his heritage has told him an Amerindian is, a Noble Savage. The irony at the end of Tournier’s text (the naming of his new colonized object, Thursday) points toward a continuation of the economic, philosophical traditions of Crusoe’s European heritage rather than the creation or evolution of any new, hybrid identity. Hybridity or assimilatory identity formation is not what is at stake in Vendredi, ou les limbes du Pacifique, because Crusoe never actually knows Friday or his culture. Mocking the tradition of uniformed observational positivism that has had a large hand in the corpus under discussion in the four preceding chapters of this study (and continues to today), Tournier presents Crusoe as a protoethnographer who examines the behavior of Friday and comes to his own esoteric conclusions based on the infallible power of the European gaze on the Amerindian. Nothing is communicated about Friday’s interior experience, beliefs, or vision of the world. Rather, through observation and rationalization within the closed system of Western thought, Crusoe builds a false “aerial” philosophy, based in part on actions that he observes Friday carrying out. The crucial element of Crusoe’s supposedly transformational, Going Native philosophy is missing from the pages of Tournier’s text, however: Friday. The edifice of Crusoe’s transcendence is built upon a foundation of observational rationalism that does not grant Friday the status of subject. Rather, it exiles Friday (and, subsequently, Thursday) to the realm of the object. Crusoe’s possession of the (mythology of the) Amerindian is total.

Tournier, writing during the emergence of the deconstructionist project of postmodern literature and the popularization of New Age spiritualties based on knowledge of Indigeneity in the second half of the twentieth century, sees clearly the binary systems behind Western conceptions of identity and culture. He holds them up to the reader, as in a mirror, in order to mock and ridicule;

175 I use this term in its Foucauldian sense here.
however, Tournier does not take the next step beyond an exposition of that binary worldview. Tournier is content to expose the mechanism without proposing blueprints for a new machine. *Vendredi, ou les limbes du Pacifique* is a product of its time. Published in 1967, the novel reflects the deconstructionist turn, but not the more creative, iconoclastic bent of later postmodernist literary works. In fact, Tournier’s project dissects and displays the processes of mythologizing that have been the focus of this study over the preceding centuries. Having lost the Native as he was articulated in the classic Noble Savage within the mythology of the Vanishing Indian myth, one turns to the past, to a time before the mythologized Indian vanished, or was disappeared. Ironically, now that the West has annihilated the last trace of the Amerindian, the teleological terminus of the thought represented by the Vanishing Indian myth, the only response is to become Native oneself. The Going Native myth is a return to the Noble Savage myth after having passed through the disappearance of the Native in the myth of the Vanishing Indian. All of the mythologies that I have analyzed in this study are in genealogical and synchronic relation. That is, the Vanishing Indian and Going Native mythologies develop from the tradition of the Noble and Ignoble Savages, as well as the nexus of Native and Nature. Additionally, one recognizes that various elements of the entire mythic genealogy that I have traced in this dissertation continue to have purchase in modern French (European) representations of the Amerindian. The Native, once the Noble Savage, is reduced to nostalgic symbol through his disappearing via the narrative technologies of the Vanishing Indian, because the role of the Noble Savage can only be played henceforth by the European himself. In destroying the living, breathing Native via the Vanishing Indian myth, French literature revives him like a phoenix in the person of the Westerner whose knowledge of the Amerindian (actually this specialized knowledge is based upon the traditional mythic system of representation of the
Amerindian in Western letters, and not on actual Native persons) allows him to return vicariously to the equally abstract realm of Rousseau’s state of nature, allows him, in short, to Go Native. Having created the myth of the Amerindian (the Noble and Ignoble Savage, the Nature and Native nexus, the Vanishing Indian) within the fantasies of the French mind, the Native now is released and all that remains is corrupt Europe’s efforts at redemption through a particularly unnatural form of nostalgia wherein the supposed identity of the vanquished Amerindian (who is not in fact eradicated, something this mythic system deals with by avoiding the present, seeking refuge in the past) is appropriated by the colonizer himself. Jean-Christophe Rufin’s *Rouge Brésil* reflects some of the same appropriative narrative technologies of representation of the Amerindian, without the same ironic tone and subtlety of Tournier’s text.

*Rouge Brésil*, the winner of the 2001 Prix-Goncourt, by Jean-Christophe Rufin is another example of rewriting an earlier representation of the Amerindian, in particular the colonial adventures of Villegagnon and company in Brazil in the 1550s, previously discussed in chapter one through my analyses of the writings of Thevet and De Léry, both of whom were members of Villegagnon’s party on the expedition. Therefore, it is logical to include Rufin’s text here, because it permits me to *boucler la boucle*, to bring my analysis full-circle, by returning to the specific contact between the French and the Tupinamba. I would argue that Rufin’s decision to rewrite this particular episode of French colonialism demonstrates how influential it became in the French cultural imaginary of Amerindians and American geographies. This specific interaction between French and Native in Brasil will also be the focus of the conclusion of this dissertation in which I analyze the myths of the Native and the anthropological discourse of Claude Lévi-Strauss in *Tristes tropiques*. To return to *Rouge Brésil*, the essential element at the heart of Rufin’s novel is the theme of transformation, or what I refer to as the myth of Going
Native. For both Tournier (who uses the theme to mock Western epistemological practices) and Rufin (who appears to buy into the Going Native concept more naïvely), the Amerindian represents a privileged site of identity (re)formation\textsuperscript{176} for their European protagonists. The main character who undergoes the process of Going Native in Rouge Brésil is the young Frenchwoman Colombe, obviously a feminized version of the patronym of Christopher Columbus, Colomb\textsuperscript{177} in French\textsuperscript{178}. This rewriting of Columbus’ name is an example of the long tradition of reimagining the history of the contact between Europeans and Amerindians in a more positive way, a literary obscurcation of the historical genocide that actually occurred. Montaigne engages in this practice in “Des coches”. Rousseau’s first written text, the play, La découverte du nouveau monde, is based upon this tradition of envisioning a radically different outcome of the ‘discovery’ of the Americas, as well. Chateaubriand’s Père Sorel is another example of this nostalgic impetus to undo the violent atrocities of the European colonial invasion of the Western hemisphere by presenting an enlightened French replacement of or counterpoint to the Black Legend of the Spanish. Rufin situates himself in a long tradition of rewriting that does not adhere to historical or cultural realities, but rather, philosophically engages with the abstract in constructing an alternate history. The attraction of the past, as it finds its expression in the texts of both Tournier and Rufin, may indicate the power of the Vanishing Indian myth’s long reign in French letters. Rather than seek to explore living, breathing Indians existing in modern times,

\textsuperscript{176} The practice of “(re)formation” is fraught with ambiguity. It indicates both change and forming again. Reformation also means to reestablish something in its original form, something which has been corrupted. I also intend by this term to focus the reader’s attention to the mythic epistemologies that undergird the European fantasy of Going Native.

\textsuperscript{177} Christopher Columbus is the etymological father of colonialism. Colon in Spanish, his name is at the origin of terms with that root. This etymology is being purposefully referenced by Rufin here as part of the author’s critique of the European model of conquest.

\textsuperscript{178} In translation, colombe also refers to the bird, dove, with all of the religious and symbolic connotations entailed by that animal. The dual etymology of Colomb’s name articulates a critique of European colonialism which offers a more peaceful variant that nonetheless naturalizes European superiority.
French authors of the twentieth century often attempt to locate (represent) the *authentic* Native as an entity belonging only to the distant past.\(^{179}\)

Such is the power of the French literary tradition’s mythologizing of Amerindian identity as coterminous with the Noble and Ignoble Savage and Vanishing Indian paradigms. A consequence of the French literary tradition’s insistence on a reductive, anachronistic vision of the Amerindian constitutes a metaphorical genocide wherein all modern Natives are not acknowledged, are rendered invisible, essentially *disappeared*. It is important to recall the efficaciousness of metaphorical systems and linguistic structures in determining praxis. The silencing of the brutal history of the colonialization of the Americas is abetted by the literary traditions of the European countries (including France) that represented, and continue to represent, the original inhabitants of the Americas according to the same preconceptions and traces of the myths of the period of first contacts, despite pretensions of revisionism or New Age philosophical appropriations of ignored, misconstrued lifeways. In Rufin’s *Rouge Brésil*, as in Tournier’s *Vendredi, ou les limbes du Pacifique*, gender roles and sexuality are central to the author’s exploration of Western identity.\(^{180}\)

Colombe, the young woman who functions as the protagonist in *Rouge Brésil*, experiences a sexual transformation catalyzed by her contact with the Tupinamba. Hers is a

---

\(^{179}\) To take another example, Gaston Leroux’s *L’Épouse du Soleil* (1913) represents a hybrid form that situates representations of anachronistic rituals of the distant Incan past into the Peru of the early twentieth century. Leroux places the *authentic* Indian of the contact period in the modern world. The Incan priest that attempts to kill the avant-garde of capitalism, Marie-Thérèse, who runs an exploitative guano operation off the coast, in a ritual ceremony is *disguised* as a lowly bank employee. The entire novel is built around the fear of a group of characters of European descent of possible revenge at the hands of Amerindians. This fear emerges from the past as an anachronistic manifestation of colonial guilt. *L’Épouse du Soleil* represents a modernist example of the Ignoble Savage myth wherein every Native is equated to the worst examples of violence and irrationality in an historical contextualization that obfuscates Incan beliefs to increase the tension and anxiety of Leroux’s plotline.

\(^{180}\) It should be noted that neither author delves into the sexuality, or even into the inner psychic life of their Amerindian characters with the same detail and concentration as they expend on their European characters.
sexual instantiation of the Going Native myth. Before contact with Natives, Colombe dresses as a boy in order to be permitted aboard Villegagnon’s ship and accompany her brother Just to the New World. Presenting the French (often obsessionally religious in Rufin’s rewriting) as repressive, the Native Tupinamba represent a more sane, healthy environment wherein Colombe can realize her sexuality fully. One of the most important elements of Colombe’s sexual Going Native is her adoption of nudity. Her nudity reveals her gender to the French prior to her forced repatriation into the colonial space of the island off the Brazilian coast. Rufin, in his efforts to rewrite the story of Villegagnon’s expedition to Brazil, anachronistically inserts present day social critiques (such as feminist and ecocritical perspectives) into the sixteenth century context of his novel. However anachronistic, Rufin’s text balances the demands of the genre of the historical novel and the modern criticisms he wishes to bring to his readers’ attention well. That being said, it must be recognized that both issues (the feminist and the ecological critiques) are entirely linked to French epistemology and occur in a philosophical, textual vacuum that does not take into account the epistemology of the Tupinamba, rather Rufin appropriates certain elements of the historical accounts of Thevet, De Léry, and Villegagnon’s own writings in order to structure an essentially twenty-first century French discussion about women’s bodies and rights and the destruction of the environment. Claude Lévi-Strauss’ Tristes tropiques performs a similar substitution. Focusing on the same tribe, the Tupinamba, with all the powers of the structuralist gaze, Lévi-Strauss expounds on Native practices in order to better understand universal human (read Western) experience, seeking to find an anthropology of the Same by a positivist, observational dissection of the Other. Nudity, which was one of the most salacious aspects of early narrations of encounters with Amerindians (such as Thevet’s and De Léry’s) is

---

181 The reader later discovers that the two characters are not, in fact, related biologically, leaving the door open for the unconvincing love story that Rufin develops in the second half of the text.
accorded a privileged role in the transformation, the Going Native, of Colombe, the main character of Rufin’s novel *Rouge Brésil*.

Not only does Colombe’s nudity constitute an assuming of her gender role as woman (she sheds her male outfit, revealing her true feminine self), it also signifies a certain power in the world of Rufin’s text. While Colombe’s nudity reflects aspects of a modern feminist epistemology of the female body, Amerindian female nudity signifies neither power nor liberation. Rather, Native nudity is associated with sexual exploitation, not only by members of Villegagnon’s party, but, I would argue, equally by Colombe’s mentor in the process of Going Native, a Frenchman left in Brazil years before Colombe’s arrival in the region named Pay-Lo. Pay-Lo has many Amerindian lovers with whom he has produced numerous progeny. Pay-Lo’s polygamy, or more accurately, sexual promiscuity (the narrator ascribes to him only one wife), is described as belonging to the morays of the Tupinamba. Gender roles, sexuality, and the myth of Going Native are inextricably knotted in Rufin’s text. Both Pay-Lo before her and Colombe adopt gender roles in keeping with Tupinamba praxis. However, to the modern reader, the two characters’ adoption of aspects of Native sexuality represents a contradiction. After all, Pay-Lo’s sexual liaisons with many Amerindian women can readily be construed as directly opposing the modern French, feminist critique present elsewhere in the novel, for example in the representation of Colombe’s nudity as an expression of sexual liberation and true feminine identity. Rufin’s insertion of anachronistic elements of modern social critique (the two most prominent being feminist and ecocritical concerns) creates tension that underpins the readers (mis)understanding of the Going Native plotline in the text. Confusion derives from the ambiguity associated with Colombe’s Going Native experience. By contrast, in *Vendredi, ou les limbes du Pacifique* by Michel Tournier, the author presents Crusoe’s transformation as an
inevitable consequence of the protagonist’s contact with the natural environment on the island of Speranza (an element that I examine below) and with the African-Araucan character Friday. Tournier’s textual version of the mythology of Going Native, wherein the author emphasizes the influence of the Native Friday and not that of Nature in the transformative process, attributes a certain mythical power to the Native. Contact with the Native is a necessary preliminary that leads the European to enlightenment, which leads to self-actualization through the realization of a Going Native experience. Concerning this mythic itinerary, Rufin’s text is more ambiguous regarding the source of transformative power. In Rouge Brésil, the author presents a triumvirate of influences that operate on Colombe: Pay-Lo (the Frenchman who has completed his own journey of Going Native which allows him to act as mentor and guide to the young woman), Native Tupinamba women, and Nature. All three of these elements assist in Colombe’s transcendence, in her Going Native. Although all three elements are present in Colombe’s metamorphosis, Rufin’s text privileges Pay-Lo’s role as guide on her spiritual journey of conversion. As with Tournier’s rewriting of Crusoe, Rufin’s Amerindian characters are conglomerations of stereotypical details taken from the crystallized lexicon of representations of the Native, specifically passages from Thevet and De Léry; they are not explored with the same depth or complexity as his European characters. As in the case of Tournier’s Vendredi, ou les limbes du Pacifique, Rufin’s title references both Native and Nature, Rouge Brésil. Both authors’ attempts to shift perspectival paradigms aside, both novels direct the reader’s attention exclusively to Western concerns, relegating the Native to observation and mythologizing, in short, to a mythic ontology which is temporally linked to “colonial time”, “static” and incapable of transformation (Bruyneel 2). Going Native is a unilateral and univocal mythology. Little to

\[182\] Going Native is unilateral, because it is unidirectional. Only the European is capable of Going Native through his specialized knowledge of Native cultures. It, of course, matters little whether that knowledge is accurate or mythic.
no ink is spilt recounting the epistemological and philosophical conflicts of Tupinamba or Araucan existence. French categories and philosophical imperatives are the authors’ primary focus. Indigenous characters are necessary secondary elements of the novels’ plots. Necessary because they are the key mythic ingredient that catalyzes the protagonists’ experiences of Going Native. In keeping with this concentration on the European, it is Pay-Lo who takes center stage in Colombe’s (meta)physical transformation.

Rufin’s version of the myth of Going Native is articulated in a unique manner when analyzed in comparison with Tournier’s rewritten Crusoe. The microcosmic solitude of the island of Speranza facilitates a reductive vision of contact and reciprocal influence in identity (re)formation. In Rouge Brésil, on the other hand, the action takes place amongst numerous peoples with different affiliations and roles in the identity transformation of Rufin’s protagonist. This creates ambiguity and confusion, because the reader cannot pinpoint exactly whence the mythic power of transformation comes. However, Rufin provides us with a key: Pay-Lo. In a further complication of the feminist critique that occasionally takes the foreground in the novel, the elderly Frenchman mentors the young Frenchwoman, Colombe, providing her with the knowledge needed to fulfill her (feminine?) destiny. More important than the gender schizophrenia that permeates the plot is the fact that Colombe’s guru in Going Native is, after all, a Frenchman. There is little textual evidence that might indicate that author Jean-Christophe Rufin intends his articulation of this mentor-mentee relationship in identity metamorphosis to be read as irony; however, the reader must ask how authentic Colombe’s Going Native can be when she is converted by an elderly Frenchman and not by Amerindians. My aim is not to claim that

---

I argue that European fantasies of Going Native are essentially mythically informed, appropriating representational paradigms and mythologies of the Native, not epistemologies of living, breathing Amerindians. Going Native is univocal because the narrative perspective is uniquely European, which can be characterized by the underdevelopment of Native characters.
Rufin does not present Native women and Nature as aspects of Colombe’s conversion experience. They do, however, play a less primary role. I argue that the central role of proselytizer, or guide in the transformation of Going Native, resides with Pay-Lo. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the European with knowledge of the Amerindian constitutes the perfect actor for the role of mentor in the Going Native process. The proof that Rufin’s European characters act as guides, helping other Europeans in their Going Native, is evident in the novel’s dénouement. When Just is reunited with the transformed, native Colombe, another transformation occurs in turn. The faux-incestuous love story plays out via yet another mythic Going Native miracle. Just, who undergoes inculcation at the hands of Villegagnon himself as the admiral’s chosen protégé, pliable and subservient to his master’s extractive, colonial mentality, rapidly changes sides upon seeing the new, nude, liberated, and Native Colombe. A consequence of the culmination of the love story is Just’s own conversion, his own Going Native. Like Colombe, it is not knowledge of Native epistemology that activates Just’s about-face and the abandon of his Western, colonial heritage, it is the assistance of a more experienced European that effectuates the necessary transmogrification. Just’s mentor in the process of Going Native is Colombe, not Amerindians. The irony is lost within the romantic plotline and Rufin’s preference for a happy ending without too many complications, yet there have been few moments in the long history of the representation of the Amerindian in French literature as examined in this study that have provided a clearer glimpse of the mechanics of the mythology created within that tradition to

---

183 Armando José Prats, in *Invisible Natives: Myth & Identity in the American Western*, demonstrates how appropriating knowledge of Native cultures is a key element of the cinematographic Western. He states that, “The Western, in such cases, tends to value the white hero’s appropriation of the Indian’s ways, not the authenticity of those ways… the Western simply takes it for granted that its hero can be as Indian as the Indian himself and at times even more Indian than the Indian” (12-3). The same process is echoed in the myth of Going Native in French literature when knowledge (through contact) opens the door for the self-actualizing process of the European character. The knowledge instrumentalized in this transformation by the European is mythically-inflected, rather than an objective understanding of authentic Amerindian lifeways or perspectives.
signify the Native. Close examination of the mythic representations of the Amerindian reveals that French authors’ metaphorical constructions of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas are often little more than two-dimensional, unilateral and univocal conversations with French cultural paradigms, leaving no room for the living, breathing Amerindian in their reflection as it manifests itself in their discourse. In addition to providing pertinent examples of the structuration of the Going Native myth, the latest evolution (or rewriting) of the Noble and Ignoble Savage and Vanishing Indian myths, *Rouge Brésil* by Jean-Christophe Rufin and *Vendredi, ou les limbes du Pacifique* offer another look at a theme that has been an integral element of textual representations of the Amerindian since the period of first contacts: the epistemological link between Native and Nature in the French mind. Linked with the myth of the Noble Savage, the nexus of Nature and Native is a primary mythic paradigm of the Native that participates in a genealogy that begins in the period of early contacts with the articulation of the Noble and Ignoble Savage mythologies in conjunction with the Nature/Native nexus. Subsequently, these original myths evolve in French literature, morphing into the Vanishing Indian myth and the myth of Going Native. All of the mythic frameworks that I have mentioned continue to have purchase and find expression simultaneously or in *oscillation*.

**The Role of Nature in Mythologies of Going Native: Tournier’s Vendredi, ou les limbes du Pacifique**

A crucial element of Tournier’s critique of Western Man via the innocence and “wisdom” of the Native is how the author depicts the irreparable rift between Crusoe’s and Friday’s diametrically opposed praxis vis-à-vis the natural world. As in Rufin’s version of the Going Native myth, Tournier’s articulation of the mythic nexus of Native and Nature reveals the mechanism behind the myth, unraveling its folds to expose its fictional character. As mentioned
above, both Rufin’s and Tournier’s novels semantically associate the Native with the environment, particularly in their titles. Both *Vendredi* and *Rouge* (an adjectival signifier of Indianness via the expression *peau-rouge*, or Redskin) are contiguous to substantives that allude to the land (*les limbes du Pacifique* and *Brésil*, respectively). Rufin’s title makes a double reference to the exploitative, extractive economy of Villegagnon’s colonial venture (*Brésil* refers originally to the tree of the same name that, among other natural resources, attracts the French and other Europeans to that particular stretch of South American coastal forest). Tournier, ever astute at dismantling and deconstructing the binary propinquity of European epistemologies, operates in full knowledge of the mythic connection established early on in the French literary tradition between Nature and the Native. To return to a point that I touched on earlier, Tournier’s rewritten Crusoe’s Going Native experience does not begin with the arrival of Friday on the island of Speranza. It is Crusoe’s growing familiarity with the natural environment of the island that instigates the protagonist’s purported metamorphosis. In keeping with the ironical bent characteristic of Tournier’s style, it is not exposure to Native epistemology, to a novel praxis vis-à-vis the natural world that inspires Crusoe’s transformation. After repeating the failed logic of his own Western cultural heritage (colonial and extractive mentalities associated with resource management, including but not limited to agricultural and administrative systems), it is the voyage within (the Freudian descent into the *womb* of the island) that allows the European protagonist to discover the enlightened truth within his own mind, hidden deep in the *primitive* depths of his own identity, crucially not in any *knowledge* of the Amerindian. Tournier structures

---

184 This particular representation of American geographies as transformative and remedial echoes Chateaubriand’s privileging of spatial *and* cultural “solitudes” in his American novels. “Solitudes” of “empty” American spaces were necessary for the emotional and psychological healing (similar to the self-actualization associated with mythologies of Going Native in the twentieth century) of Chateaubriand’s European characters in a romantic literary context.
his text in such a way as to present Crusoe and Friday as opposed in their epistemological approaches to the environment, notably wildlife.

The most evident example of Tournier’s ecocritical critique of Western praxis is centered on one animal in particular: the goat. The author uses characters’ interactions with this specific animal to contrast Crusoe and Friday’s viewpoints on our fellow creatures. When the protagonist comes to his senses following the shipwreck and begins to explore the island, a vague shape gradually comes into focus before him. It turns out to be a ram:

Mais peu à peu l’objet se transforma dans la pénombre verte en une sorte de bouc sauvage, au poil très long. La tête haute, les oreilles dardées en avant, il le regardait approcher, figé dans une immobilité minérale. De la grosse statue de poil qui obstruait le sentier sortit un ricanement de ventriloque. Sa peur s’ajoutant à son extrême fatigue, une colère soudaine envahit Robinson. Il leva son gourdin et l’abattit de toutes ses forces entre les cornes du bouc. Il y eut un craquement sourd, la bête tomba sur les genoux, puis bascula sur le flanc. C’était le premier être vivant que Robinson avait rencontré sur l’île. Il l’avait tué (17).

This short scene represents an attempt by Tournier to define Western epistemology vis-à-vis the natural world. Crusoe’s cultural heritage takes over his actions, this is the starting point of the journey upon which he is about to embark, his movement away from civilization, his Going Native. The passage can be read as equating the non-human animal in some measure with the stereotypical, mythologized Amerindian by referring to the goat as savage, wild, and hirsute, both descriptions reach far back into the original conceptions of the Savage as the European Wildman (Dickason, Myths of the Savage, 70-80). What follows further supports my argument that the wild goat stands as metaphor for the original inhabitants of the Americas. The goat is depicted as prideful and confident. He holds his head high and even dares to laugh. This is too much for the Englishman to bear. Seemingly overcome by a nameless, incomprehensible rage, Crusoe cracks the goat’s skull and leaves him for dead. Tournier explicitly points to the moral of the story (Crusoe kills the first living thing he encounters in the New World) which emphasizes
the myopic *savagery* of Crusoe’s actions, while simultaneously exposing the root of Western praxis vis-à-vis Nature. Another group was historically slow to recognize the evidence of Western superiority upon first seeing Europeans in the New World: the Native populations of the Americas. Despite Christian-influenced assumptions about Indigenous’ *need* for proselytizing, for the supposed benefits of the *mission civilisatrice*, Natives do not immediately abandon their culture or systems of knowing (a theme that is at the heart of Tournier’s text)\textsuperscript{185}. With these reasons in mind, I argue that not only does the goat represent Nature in the eyes of Crusoe, but also metaphorically stands for the Native (Crusoe does attempt to kill Friday upon being faced with the prospect of actual physical contact with him, as well).

Another aspect of this scene is significant: Crusoe’s inaction regarding the animal’s dead body. One of the distinguishing epistemological differences between European and Native and their respective interactions with the environment is linked to the use of resources and that use’s relation to the human. For Crusoe, killing the non-human animal and leaving its corpse there to rot in the tropical heat is acceptable behavior. Although Tournier does not explicitly state it at this stage of the narration, the author is, in fact, embedding a critique of Western ecological practice into the passage by remarking on Crusoe’s leaving the animal behind. The classic example that exemplifies this Western/Native difference is the buffalo. The original inhabitants of the Americas who inhabit the Great Plains of North America (themselves often relative newcomers to the region as a consequence of European invasions) when the Europeans begin to seek out their lands use every part of the buffalo to fulfill a variety of material needs, wasting nothing (I discuss how Friday makes creative use of the goat Andoar’s dead body below). The

\textsuperscript{185} One need only read the early volumes of the Jesuit Relations to encounter numerous examples of Natives proclaiming the superiority of Amerindian lifeways and deploring the internecine violence and greed of European societies.
diametrically opposed image depicts the European’s wanton dissipation of this great resource: the sportsman of European descent shooting randomly into the herd from the window of his train car, sending out a paid man to fetch the skins, and leaving the rest of the animal to rot in the sun. Tournier introduces the reader to Crusoe’s violently wasteful relationship with Nature in order to present us with Friday’s ecological practices in the guise of remedy later in the text. In Rousseau’s philosophy, the state of nature acts alternately as curative and source of fear (in the passages where it is related as a state of war, for example) vis-à-vis the modern state of decadence. Tournier nods to Rousseau, albeit with a healthy dose of irony and circumspection, by portraying Native practices as remedial. Later in *Vendredi, ou les limbes du pacifique*, Tournier employs the same non-human animal to make sure his point has not been lost on the reader: the goat. I will now examine some of the key elements of Native ecological practice as Tournier presents them to his readers in the interaction between Friday and the goat named Andoar.

Firstly, the anonymity and erasure that is present in the scene wherein Crusoe murders the goat on a whim is no longer present, because Friday names his goat, Andoar. This detail is not insignificant. It appears in Tournier’s text as counterpoint, not only to Crusoe’s relation to the animal world, but also to the other examples of naming that occur in the novel, namely Crusoe’s christening of the African-Araucan Friday and the Estonian cabin boy Thursday. Friday’s naming is not an appropriative act fraught with the same epistemological categorizations as Crusoe’s compartmentalizing practice of naming. When Crusoe briefly considers the possibilities of a name, he rationally judges the Amerindian as not quite human, yet not quite object. He ultimately decides on the day of the week that the Native arrives on the island as a satisfactory intermediary name. Friday’s naming of Andoar, on the other hand, is not
explicated by the author. As mentioned above, Tournier does not give his readers any profound glimpses into the psyche of his Amerindian character. Rather, everything we learn about (or from, as in the process of Going Native) Friday comes to the reader via the eyes and rationale of Crusoe. Tournier does, however, emphasize the concept of equality in his depiction of the relationship between Friday and Andoar.

The name Andoar is apparently not subject to the same ontological categorization that Friday’s name represents for Crusoe. However, the lack of subjective depth accorded to Friday significantly precludes the reader from understanding what Friday thinks, feels, or means by the things he says. After all, couldn’t Andoar be an Araucan word for Friday or some other arbitrary concept or object? The reader does not know. Tournier is mocking the ludicrousness of European naming practices vis-à-vis the Americas (intended as land and peoples). The name Friday (credit must be given to Defoe in this respect, of course) replicates European naming practices as they occur all over the globe in the age of European discovery. An example that I mentioned in the first chapter is the naming of the Baie de Chaleur, a bay on the coast of the Maritime Provinces of Canada that experiences very little chaleur (heat) during the year as it turns out. It just so happens that it is a halcyon summer day when Jacques Cartier and company are blown into that stretch of water, thereby eternally harnessing the geographical feature with a concept that hardly resembles it at all. It is the same with Friday.

Secondly, there is an inherent respect displayed by Friday in relation to Andoar that surpasses the parameters of Crusoe’s interaction with the natural world. Tournier inscribes this respect between Friday and non-human animals earlier in the text by explaining how Tenn (the only other survivor of the shipwreck, a dog) behaves differently toward Friday than he does toward Crusoe. In another scene, Friday nurses the runt of a brood of vultures, much to Crusoe’s
dismay and confusion. However, the most evident example that clearly demonstrates Friday’s respect for Andoar is presented in direct opposition to Crusoe’s wanton violence and wastefulness when he kills the nameless goat upon arriving and leaves its corpse lying on the ground: after battling with and precipitating the goat over the edge of a cliff, killing him, Friday transforms Andoar’s cadaver into something new. In this way, Tournier presents the Native as envisioning and creating meaning in, or through, the death of non-human animals. This representation is in direct opposition to the Englishman’s disinterested exploitation of the natural environment, including his killing of the goat. Friday consecrates Andoar’s bodily remains in two different ways. First, he creates a kite from the dried skin of the animal. Second, Friday creates a musical instrument from the goat’s skull. The stereotypical image of Native resource management mentioned above (the use of every part of the buffalo by the Plains Indians) is echoed in Tournier’s text. Rather than merely focusing on material need (such as nourishment, clothing, tools, etc.), however, Friday’s transformation of Andoar’s dead body speaks to cultural concerns. In this way, Tournier takes a stereotype (the use of all resources) and reemploys it in order to insist on a particular interpretation of the Amerindian as a being with true culture, evidenced by the leisure and art inherent in the objects fashioned by Friday. According to the strict Western rationality represented by Crusoe throughout the early part of the novel, the kite and the musical instrument are futile and purposeless, a waste of time. Time is an all-important commodity in Crusoe’s worldview. By contrast, both the kite and the musical instrument are critical tools and metaphors in Crusoe’s process of Going Native. They represent the final stage of his metamorphosis: the “aerial” stage. Commencing in the telluric, passing through the vegetative, and culminating in the “aerial”, Crusoe’s purported transformation (begun under the auspices of his own mind and cultural heritage, not under Amerindian influence) can only be
complete with the aid of Friday, and, by extension, Andoar, whose remains are the cornerstone of the protagonist’s final philosophical turn. As I mentioned above, the seeming transformation of Crusoe into full-blown innocent Native, according to the long-standing mythology of what it means to be an Amerindian in the French literary tradition is, in the end, illusory. Crusoe names the young Dutch boy Thursday, which reflects the Englishman’s attempt to Go Native, to _return to nature_, Thursday coming before Friday, representing a reversal in the temporal order that is, of course, impossible, but which symbolizes Crusoe desires as they pertain to the Amerindian epistemologically. While Tournier presents Friday as a more ecologically-centered being, he does not give the reader any insight into Friday’s inner sanctum of thoughts and beliefs. Rather, the reader is left with the interpretation of Robinson and what he extrapolates for his own New Age philosophical development. Appropriating actions and objects that he clearly does not understand (the kite and the musical instrument); Crusoe incorporates them into his own redemptive epistemology. However, the Englishman’s new philosophy fails utterly to take into account Friday’s worldview. This practice echoes the same extractive logic of Crusoe’s behavior vis-à-vis the natural world, and may be interpreted as characteristic of European epistemology more generally. George B. Handley urges caution and critical awareness when examining Western discourses that aim to _return to nature_ via contact with the _primitive_ in a Latin American context, which equally applies to an informed reading of Tournier’s _Vendredi_. Handley verifies a link between modern environmental discourses that idealize _primitive_ peoples and the mythology and the Noble Savage, stating that:

The privileging of animism and the essentializing of the native or black subject can lead to a categorical dismissal of the diasporic subject and of hybridity, and the valorization of wilderness can lead to an unfruitful dismissal of history, technology, and culture (Handley, “The Postcolonial
Handley rightly recognizes the univocal and unilateral nature of Western discourses of Indigenous ecology, calling this narrative technology a “categorical dismissal of the diasporic subject”, a description that certainly fits the Native-African Friday, who has been banished from the Araucan community, which may have adopted him as a Maroon from a previous displacement effectuated through the slave-trade and plantation economy. Friday’s trajectory remains unclear in Tournier’s novel, illustrating the erasure of his subjectivity, but also an “unfruitful dismissal of history, technology, and culture”. By silencing Friday’s subjectivity and history in favor of Crusoe’s Western mythology of Going Native, the Amerindian is ironically present only as the reflection of Crusoe’s own epistemologies, not as subject or agent. Such ahistorical framings of Native ecology have become commonplaces of modern environmentalist media and discourses. As such, “…viewing American Indians as keepers of the land is finally simply an escape mechanism, something that does not in itself bring about any actual behavioral change toward the environment” (Schweninger, Listening to the Land: Native American Literary Responses to the Landscape, Introduction). While Tournier’s focus may be to debunk mythologies by ironizing Western binary logics, crucially without offering any type of solution to, or corrective for this problematic epistemological tendency, it is important to note how the mythologies of the Ecological Savage operate in Western cultures, as part of the collective cultural imaginaries of what the category of Amerindian signifies. Perhaps a more healthy relativistic perspective on Friday’s actions after having killed Andoar, a view that takes into account Native ecologies and lifeways, would focus on the concept of reciprocity. George Tinker asserts that, “Violence cannot be perpetrated, a life taken, in a Native American society, without
some spiritual act of reciprocation” (qtd. in Schweninger, *Listening to the Land: Native American Literary Responses to the Landscape*, ch. 3). However, Tournier’s description of Friday’s spiritual actions vis-à-vis Andoar’s dead body only reiterates the observations of Crusoe as articulated within the mythic paradigm of an *ecological* Going Native. Native epistemology, ecology, or spirituality are absent and silent except for in their relation to Crusoe and his imperatives.

The final result of the interaction between Friday and Crusoe is separation. Friday runs away from the prospect of life on the island with his former *master*, opting for the adventure of a more *modern* life. The denouement of Tournier’s text differs considerably from Defoe’s original. In the source novel, both Crusoe and Friday venture back to Europe where Friday saves Crusoe from wolves (a significant metaphor representing the last remaining scraps of wildness left in the Old World, simultaneously standing for the extant “wild” spaces of the Americas). While Tournier’s *Vendredi, ou les limbes du Pacifique* offers some interesting elements that lend themselves quite readily to ecocritical analysis, the novel’s limited scope (existence on an island) and engagement with the impossibility of *returning to nature* converge to present two of the most common critiques levied against environmental criticism: lack of translatability and lack of plausibility. In the first case, the island of Speranza, while it may function metaphorically to explicate the evils of Western ecological follies at an epistemological level, is difficult to translate to a more viable global scale that takes into account the vast web of interactions that are hinted at in Tournier and Defoe’s texts (both ships in both novels are engaged in international commerce). Although Crusoe’s individual transformation (in the New Age context provided by Tournier) is laudable vis-à-vis his interaction with the natural world, his solution, his Going Native, is impracticable, illusory, and above all appropriative. Again, putting into relief a
common criticism wielded against ecocritics, Crusoe Goes Native, goes back to nature in a cultural and environmental vacuum that does not begin to address the complexity of global environmental crisis nor the privilege of white bourgeois concerns in the Global North. I argue that Tournier recognizes the limitations of his text. Tournier enjoys deconstructing preconceived ideas and stereotypes. Tournier’s texts are fraught with irony that forces the reader to question those received notions about the Other and about the Self. However, Tournier does not transcend the linguistic level of deconstruction. He does not present a third option that goes beyond the deconstructed binaries that are the objects of his work. Vendredi, ou les limbes du Pacifique satirizes Western attempts to fix environmental problems on the back of clichééd understandings of Native lifeways. In that respect, it is an early example of a criticism of the primarily Western theoretical nexus of ecocritical discourse which often disregards the concerns of populations of the global South, to cite merely the most well-known example.

**The Ecological Savage and Native Sexuality in Rouge Brésil**

In contrast to Vendredi, ou les limbes du Pacifique, Rouge Brésil criticizes Western environmental destruction differently. Whereas Tournier’s ecocriticism remains somewhat abstract, attacking Western philosophy and epistemology more generally (likely due in no small part to the theorized desert island premise of the text), Rufin directly cites extractive practices linked to the bourgeoning global capitalism of the sixteenth century. Rouge Brésil “rais[es] the question of nature in colonial context” (Racevskis 78). If Tournier’s ecological bent aims more widely, Rufin has a narrower, more precise target. Rouge Brésil addresses local problems associated with trade of brazilwood (whose red interior serves as double entendre for the racialized Redskin often attributed to the original inhabitants of the Americas, in order to render the novel’s title ambiguous and polyvalent), deforestation, and the ecological limitations of the
island ecosystem where Villegagnon elects to situate his camp. The island of Speranza, where Crusoe’s agricultural exploitative feats are played out, represents Edenic abundance and, in many respects, natural tranquility (violence being mostly Crusoe’s doing in Tournier’s text), the small island that serves as the setting for Villegagnon’s *France antarctique* colonial venture is evocative of the consequences of Western Man’s willfulness concerning the natural environment. Rather than choosing a suitable location with all of the necessary resources for survival, it is Villegagnon’s personal will that determines that the Frenchmen will establish their fledgling colony on an island without a potable water supply or any appreciable means of subsistence. Echoing the Ignoble Savage myth, prevalent throughout this study, Villegagnon’s decision is portrayed as emanating from a primal fear of the Native. One of the many ironic conclusions that may be drawn by the readers of *Rouge Brésil* centers on the concepts of human violence and danger. Although Villegagnon bases many of his decisions on fear of the Ignoble Savage’s capacity for brutality, Rufin emphasizes the destructiveness of French practices vis-à-vis both Nature (extractive economies and deforestation) and Native peoples (sexual exploitation of Amerindian women). The author’s critical stance goes beyond the environmental in order to ridicule the entire Western superiority complex, in general. Making a mockery of the Frenchmen on numerous levels, *Rouge Brésil* succeeds as a rewriting of De Léry’s *Histoire d’un voyage faict en la terre du Brésil* because Rufin’s text reiterates, in a more modern timbre, which takes into account issues of environmentalism and feminism, the acerbic wit of the original. However, the critique that I would raise in conjunction with Rufin’s novel is similar to the critique of Tournier’s *Vendredi*: both authors focus and attention is aimed squarely at the European.

The existence of the living, breathing Amerindian is secondary and clichéd. In Rufin’s case, the critique of the environmental crimes of the French colony are catalyzed by and offset
against the wisdom and simplicity of the Tupinamba. Much is said about the nudity of Tupinamba women, the act of cannibalism is mentioned and cursorily condemned in the classic fashion, and yet, as for elements of Tupinamba worldviews or daily practices, little is conferred to the reader of this novel. As mentioned above in conjunction with the two-dimensional narrative of Vendredi, ecological Going Native fails to account for Native histories and subjectivities. By propping up the Amerindian as spiritual key to more sound ecological practice without actually engaging in Native practices or worldviews in any concrete way performs a double “dismissal” of Indigenous subjectivity and culture (Handley, “The Postcolonial Ecology of the New World Baroque”, Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment, ch. 5).

This “dismissal” is especially apparent in Rufin’s novel, because rather than realizing an ecological transformation through contact with the Ecological Savage, Colombe is guided by the European Pay-Lo on her journey of Going Native. Rufin’s articulation of Colombe’s transformation demonstrates that (ecological) Going Native should rightly be interpreted as European fantasy rather than Native epistemology when Native lifeways and perspectives are silenced or “dismissed”. The question that any ecocritic should ask upon reading both Rouge Brésil by Jean-Christophe Rufin and Vendredi, ou les limbes du Pacifique by Michel Tournier has to do with the position of the Amerindian in the environmental debate. What does it mean to position the Native as symbolic spokespeople for safeguarding the world’s natural beauty?

Reminiscent of the Noble Savage, the Ecological Savage is a slippery epithet with a plethora of undesirable consequences. Shepard Krech III, in his monograph The Ecological Indian: Myth and History, pinpoints the advent of the Ecological Savage, which he calls the Ecological Indian186, in the 1960s and early 1970s. Krech seeks to revise Western understandings of the Ecological Savage, because, as he rightly asserts:
…its relationship to native cultures and behavior is deeply problematic. The Noble Indian/Ecological Indian distorts culture. It masks cultural diversity. It occludes its actual connection to the behavior it purports to explain. Moreover, because it has entered the realm of common sense and as received wisdom is perceived as a fundamental truth, it serves to deflect any desire to fathom or confront the evidence for relationships between Indians and the environment (27).

In Krech’s analysis, “common sense” and “received wisdom” signal what I have been referring to as cultural imaginary throughout this study. The mythology of the Ecological Savage is transformed from narrative technology into a “fundamental truth” about the Indigenous peoples of the Americas, that prevents any deeper understanding of Native ecological practices and epistemologies. What is remarkable in Krech’s text is the positioning of culture in the author’s thinking about Nature and Native. In his monograph *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History*, he sets out to demonstrate ways in which Amerindian peoples did historically alter their environments. Krech’s motivation is to show that through environmental destruction, the Native does in fact attain culture as understood from an entirely Western perspective. While Krech rightly opposes the “dismissal of history, technology, and culture” that Handley laments in reductive discourses of primitive ecological soundness, he may overshoot his attempts to valorize Native cultures by insisting on their environmental destructiveness. One of the essential characteristics of myth as I have used that term in this study is of a discourse which precludes reciprocal understanding of the Amerindian by Europeans. The extremes of myth do not allow for a vision of the Native as human. In the case of the Ecological Savage, might there be an epistemological space wherein Amerindian ecologies might be understood neither as minimal and animalistic nor as destructive in the same manner as European extractive economies?

the new Ecological Savage and the earlier mythic paradigms of the Noble and Ignoble Savage.
Deterministic binaries of Ecological Savage or culture definitions that rely on environmental irresponsibility do not accurately represent Native views of Nature. Environmental harm should not be a criterion for human ontology. Native peoples interact with the environment in a number of ways, that diversity must be examined and included if our understanding of Native cultures is to be more complete and anchored than the mythologies that have been the focus of this study.

As in the Noble Savage myth, (a)temporality is crucial to the fantasy of the Ecological Savage. As long as Native peoples are idealized as Noble and Ecological beings that are blessed with an ontological exceptionalism that prevents them from participating in the struggles of modern social life as any subject of European descent is presumed to be doomed to, we have not progressed one jot from the early contact period’s legendary fictions wherein the humanity of the original inhabitants of the Americas is distorted. The mythic Ecological Savage is relegated to “colonial time” in Western epistemologies, that is a static temporality that does not allow for advances to be made concerning the current ecological crisis (Bruyneel 2, Schweninger, Introduction). While I do not contend that those of European descent cannot learn about more balanced ecological practice from Amerindian peoples, I do argue that the mythologizing and authenticating of the Ecological Savage is appropriative and reductive. The myth of the Ecological Savage, a twentieth century manifestation of what I have referred to often in this study as the representation of the nexus of Nature and Native, proposes problematic temporalizations of living, breathing Natives, disallowing them a ‘modern image of the future’ by presenting them as rural, agrarian, or hunter/gatherer when, in point of fact, large percentages of Amerindians currently inhabit urban areas. The burlesque caricaturing of the mythic representational paradigms of the Noble and Ignoble Savage and the Vanishing Indian is equally present in the myth of the Ecological Savage. The difficulty for the modern reader is to recognize
that the apparent *acceptability* of the generalizing, inferiorizing Ecological designation as attributed to the Native is just that, merely apparent. The Noble Savage as esthetic, philosophical, and epistemological model has been *palatable* for centuries to the Western mind. One may convincingly argue that it continues to exercise an enormous amount of cultural purchase in Western conceptions of the Amerindian today. However, one objective of this study has been to demystify the myths associated with the Native in French literature. Substituting one myth for another, while not examining the reason for the urgent need to engage in myth with regards to Indigenous peoples as a departure point for critical thinking about the Amerindian, is not acceptable, even in the guise of modern literary environmental criticism, if we are to transcend (settler) colonial ideologies and epistemologies of Native and Nature. Within the designation of the Amerindian as *closer* to Nature, is an evolutionary judgment that cannot be erased. Closer to Nature equals *farther* developmentally and temporally from Culture in Western binary conceptualizations of what wilderness signifies in the Judeo-Christian-Capitalist tradition. Ecocritics should maintain a healthy critical wariness of facile conclusions about Indigenous peoples. A fine balance must be reached between valorizing environmental practices that uphold values of reciprocity and biocentrism and repeating hackneyed mythic representations of Amerindians as *primitive*, Ecological Savages. Solutions for the environmental crisis may come in many forms. Proposed answers that come from Indigenous peoples must be considered without ceding to the fantastical mythologizing of a *return to nature* which may be related epistemologically to the Going Native myth in the Western mind. Having discussed some

---

187 I am making direct reference here to the mythic genealogy that my study has outlined: original myths of the Noble and Ignoble Savage, in conjunction with the connoted nexus of Nature and Native inherent to the Noble Savage paradigm, evolve into the mythologies of the Vanishing Indian and Going Native, while continuing to be repeated and to influence the French cultural imaginary in their own right.
ecocritical aspects of *Rouge Brésil*, another central feature of the text must be examined as it relates to representations of the Native: sexuality.

Native sexuality has been instrumentalized as a marker of ontological difference in French authors’ representations of the Amerindian since the period of earliest contacts. Difference based on sexuality is also a key component of the articulation of the mythology of Going Native in Rufin’s *Rouge Brésil*. However, while Native sexualities have typically been inscribed within the parameters of the Ignoble Savage in preceding centuries, the sexuality of the Native is appropriated by twentieth century French author Jean-Christophe Rufin as a source of liberation and self-actualization. In this way, Native sexualities, or more accurately, French mythologized visions of appropriated Native sexualities become critical to the realization of the European desire to Go Native. Rewriting Ignoble Native sexuality as Noble is evident in *Rouge Brésil*.

Sexuality and sexual normativity inform Rufin’s text in many ways. In light of this, Colombe’s androgyny can be interpreted through what Scott Lauria Morgensen calls “the colonial object berdache” (55). Morgensen’s study, *Spaces Between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization*, focuses on settler colonialism as a critical site of anthropological inquiry into the formation of non-Native queer identity, primarily in the late twentieth century. Morgensen defines which contexts might be considered as participating in

---

188 In the second section of this chapter, I will also analyze the role of Native sexuality in the Quebecois novels *Volkswagen Blues* by Jacques Poulin and *Le dernier été des Indiens* by Robert Lalonde as part of French-Canadian narratives of Going Native.

189 While sexuality plays an important role in Tournier’s *Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique*, it is presented quite differently. Friday’s emulation of Crusoe’s sexual practices (having intercourse with the island of Speranza herself by penetrating the sandy earth) is coded as transgressive. As with the tobacco restriction, Friday is not allowed to perform the (normative?) sexuality of the master. While sexuality and its representation can lead to interesting questions about the mission civilisatrice in the text, a discussion of sexuality in Tournier’s novel is not necessarily related to the myth of Going Native, therefore I will focus on *Rouge Brésil* in order to analyze representations of Native sexuality in this section.
settler colonialism in the following passage, “Settler colonialism is naturalized whenever conquest or displacement of Native peoples is ignored or appears necessary or complete, and whenever subjects are defined by settler desires to possess Native land, history, or culture” (16). It is precisely in association with the desire to “possess Native culture” that French (and Quebecois) iterations of the myth of Going Native participate in the logics and ideologies of settler colonialism. Sexuality is a privileged site of ontological difference that is constructed in discourses and ideologies of settler colonialism by engaging the “colonial object berdache” (Morgensen 55). Before continuing, it is necessary to define berdache. Berdache is an anthropological conceptualization for theoretically understanding Native sexuality. In short, it is instrumentalized to make generalizations about Native sexuality that have moral and ontological consequences in Western epistemologies of Amerindian peoples. As a theoretical object, it attempts to generalize Native roles wherein sexually ambiguous, transgender, and/or homosexual individuals (typically male) are granted special (often elevated or revered) status in Indigenous cultures. Morgensen explains further in the following excerpt:

While appearing to describe Native Americans, berdache presented a primordial mirror to the civilizational modernity of colonial and settler subjects. It cohered an object of knowledge that described a gender-transitive and homosexual subject, defined by male embodiment, who received social recognition in Native American societies. Over time, the object projected a uniformity of sex, gender, sexuality, and indigeneity that let it represent principles of human nature and culture. Disagreement over its definition regularly called its qualities into question, but that very deliberation promulgated berdache as a key object of colonial desire for Indigenous and sexual truth (55).

190 While Québec, as a Canadian province, might more easily be conceived of as participating in settler colonialism as it has traditionally been understood, I argue that the French text Rouge Brésil, through its articulation of the Going Native myth as part of a French colonial venture, which attempts to “possess Native culture” also constitutes a textual site of settler colonialism.
Morgensen rightly pinpoints the functionality of *berdache* as a tool for self-definition of those of European descent. Propbing up *berdache* as the moral opposite of European sexual normativities allows (settler) colonial peoples to define themselves ontologically in contradistinction to Amerindian peoples. *Berdache* not only *queers* those Natives who are “trans-genitive” or “homosexual”, but, in point of fact, *queers* all non-normative Indigenous sexual practices, such as nudity, as defined from a Eurocentric perspective. One of Morgensen’s most important insights is his understanding of the conflation of *berdache* with sexual uniformity or androgyny\(^{191}\). While initially employed to construct difference, subsequently, *berdache* is coopted in order to connect *modern* non-Native homosexual identity to *primitive* Native sexuality\(^{192}\). As such, *berdache*, in homosexual identity politics of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries in the United States, symbolizes a *sexual* iteration of the Going Native myth. Through both Native nudity and androgyny (two *Native* sexual practices that are *queered* according to *berdache*), Colombe, who is representative of Indigeneity because of her having completed the process of Going Native, can be interpreted as an instantiation of the colonial object *berdache* in Rufin’s version of the myth of Going Native. The young female protagonist Colombe must dress as a boy in order to gain acceptance as a passenger aboard Villegagnon’s ship. The representation of transvestism is not directly related to transgender identification by that character (representations of androgyny associated with Colombe are discussed below, however). Rather, transvestism in the novel situates Western sexual normativities as repressive.

---

\(^{191}\) Sexual uniformity, a characteristic element of *berdache*, constitutes the cornerstone of Durkheim’s understanding of *primitive* peoples’ lack of sexual differentiation, one of the indispensable components of his argument for an ontological separation between *modern* and Indigenous peoples. See chapter 4 section 3 of this dissertation for a discussion of how sexual uniformity informs Durkheim’s representation of Native sexuality in *De la division du travail social*. See section 2 of this chapter for a detailed discussion of how theorizing through Morgensen’s reading of the colonial object of *berdache* can enlighten interpretations of Jacques Poulin’s novel *Volkswagen Blues* and Robert Lalonde’s *Le dernier été des Indiens*. Both texts include characters who, like Colombe in *Rouge Brésil*, are presented as androgynous or trans-genitive.

\(^{192}\) See footnote 192.
The author explicitly portrays Colombe’s subsequent unveiling of her femininity as a liberating *coming out*. Colombe’s *coming out* as heterosexual female, symbolized as sexual freedom and *truth* by her “Native” nudity, might be interpreted as *queering* transvestism. The normativity of cisgender is reinforced by the structure of Rufin’s plot. However, I argue that Rufin is making a feminist critique rather than attempting to naturalize cisgender here. It is Colombe’s right to assume her heterosexual female identity that Rufin wishes to assert. How does Colombe realize or perform her sexuality, her gendered *truth*? It is through the mythology of Going Native that she *comes out* of the prison of her Western heritage\(^\text{193}\). Nudity, in contradistinction to repressive, patriarchal, and colonial transvestism, is the key to Colombe’s philosophical and sexual transformation.

Nudity has a long history in the representation of the Amerindian in French letters. As part of the general category that I have been referring to as Native sexuality, nudity has often been cited as a marker of ontological difference, typically being inscribed within the mythologies of the Ignoble Savage. Rufin’s representation of Amerindian nudity is a departure from the negatively-inflected coding of that tradition. Rather than being presented as a source of shock and moral indignation, Native nudity is transformed into the key to sexual identity and *truth* in *Rouge Brésil*. By rewriting, and in some ways reiterating, De Léry’s ambiguous take on Native nudity\(^\text{194}\), Rufin does not escape the overarching epistemological imperative of mythologizing.

\(^{193}\) The Western exploration of sexualities (practices marked as normative or not) in the twentieth century and beyond is historically attested in various movements that engage with mythologies of Going Native. For example, Morgensen recounts ways in which countercultural LGBTQ groups, such as the Radical Faeries, in the Santa Cruz/San Francisco area of the United States appropriated Native sexualities, or mythologies of Native sexualities, to perform what he calls “modern primitive” sexualities in the latter part of the twentieth century (163-77).

\(^{194}\) Léry both discounts Native feminine beauty as a sexual temptation and goes some way toward complicating that very position in the following passage, “Sur quoy je diray en un mot, qu’encores voirement qu’en apparence il n’y ait que tropp d’occasion d’estimer qu’outre la deshonnesteté de voir ces femmes nues, cela ne semble aussi servir comme d’un appast ordinaire à convoitise : toutes fois, pour en parler selon ce qui s’en est comunement apperceu pour lors, ceste nudité ainsi grossiere en telle femme est beaucoup moins attrayante qu’on ne cuidroit.
the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. He simply replaces the negative image of the nude Ignoble Savage for the redemptive model of the nude Noble Savage, which serves as catalyst for his twenty-first century myth of Going Native. In the following passage, Rufin precisely articulates the self-actualization of Colombe, the realization of her journey, her Going Native:

…elle était surtout heureuse d’avoir tombé le masque et affirmé doublement sa liberté : en dévoilant son identité véritable et en montrant que, pour être femme, on n’était pas contrainte de s’enfermer dans ces autres prisons que sont la modestie, la fausse pudeur et les robes à volants. En cet instant, courant parmi les bouquets d’euphorbes et de frangipaniers, son corps aguerri et caressé de peintures rituelles, jeune et tendu comme les feuilles turgescentes de caoutchouc, elle se sentait au carrefour de toutes les forces et de toutes les douceurs, de toutes les fermetés et d’autant de tendresses. Aucun lieu du monde, aucune époque n’aurait pu lui donner cette liberté, cette puissance. Tandis que le bleu pâli d’eau de la baie s’ébauchait au-dessus des arbres, elle sentait son âme prendre la même teinte pastel et sans ombre du bonheur (Rufin 379).

Colombe’s process of Going Native is related specifically to Native sexuality through nudity. Native nudity is a catalyst for self-realization. The “prisons of falsity” Rufin mentions are explicitly related to clothing (les robes à volants) in the passage through a transcendence of Western moral conceptions of modesty through what is both (doublement) a physical and metaphorical unveiling of her feminine identity performed as Native nudity. Rather than being labeled as uniquely feminine, Colombe can equally be interpreted as exhibiting androgynous characteristics. This is hinted at in the designation of her body as “aguerri”, which references Colombe’s participation in activities coded as male in the Native society of coastal Brazil, such as hunting. In “Of Cannibals and Colonizers: Irony, Gender, and Ecology in “Rouge Brésil””,

Et partant, je maintien que les attifets, fards, fausses perruques, cheveux tortillez, grands collets fraisez, vertugales, robes sur robes, et autres infinies bagatelles dont les femmes et filles de par-deça se contrefont et n’ont jamais assez, sont sans comparaison, cause de plus de maux que n’est la nudité ordinaire des femmes sauvages : lesquelles cependant, quant au naturel, ne doivent rien aux autres en beauté” (234-5).
Roland Racevskis demonstrates how Colombe inhabits a liminal space as to her performance of gender roles, calling her a “purposefully androgynous character” (76)\(^\text{195}\). In conjunction with transvestism, Colombe’s performance of “male” coded behaviors is significant, because it reflects tendencies in French (Western) visions of Native sexuality in specific ways. Colombe, having successfully Gone Native, represents how the French imagine the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. Her character is a positively-inflected (i.e. Noble Savage) manifestation of the tradition of mythic representations of the Native in French letters that I have been tracing in this study, as part of a collective French cultural imaginary of the category “Amerindian”.

As a nude female hunter, Colombe is a modern Western articulation of the androgyny associated with berdache, and more generally of its queered correlate Native nudity, which functions as a critical element of the mythology of Going Native in Rufin’s Rouge Brésil. French and Quebecois\(^\text{196}\) (Western) mythic visions and representations of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas which engage in the myth of Going Native often portray Native sexuality in ways that can be interpreted through the theoretical framework of berdache. Berdache is a useful critical tool in analyses of mythologies of Going Native, because it further elucidates ways in which textual representations of the Amerindian in French are appropriative despite seemingly valorizing Native practices. Literary examples of understanding Native sexuality as androgynous or trans-genitive, in order to locate European (sexual) liberation within the mythology of Going

\(^{195}\) The gendering of Colombe in the text is quite complex, defying easy interpretation. After having completed her personal transformation of Going Native, heteronormativity defines the sexual relationship she enjoys with Just, for example. In addition, her androgyny might also be read as a celebration of a more modern vision of female agency, as part of Rufin’s modern feminist critique discussed above, that would have been anachronistic at the time of the colonial misadventure that came to be known as “Antarctic France”. Read in this manner, Colombe’s participation in “male” activities might simply express her right to interpret her equality to men by joining in activities from which women (Amerindian women do not take part in the “male” activities) are typically excluded. This may be a valorization of modern feminist normativities of gender and the roles that might now be associated with women, rather than a commentary on gender ambiguity.

\(^{196}\) See section 2 of this chapter’s discussion of Jacques Poulin’s Volkswagen Blues and Robert Lalonde’s Le dernier été des Indiens.
Native, and anthropological inquiries that forefront the colonial object *berdache*¹⁹⁷ as part of a discourse that also seeks to (sexually) liberate non-Native homosexual identities indicate a shift in Western epistemologies and (narrative) technologies of relating to the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. Through *berdache* and sexual Going Native mythologies, such as that in *Rouge Brésil*, the original myth of the Noble Savage is reinforced and reiterated in a new form, one which utilizes new (narrative) technologies. The mythic constructions of *berdache* and Going Native (which can echo the ideologies and presumptions of the colonial object *berdache*, as I’ve shown) do not transcend earlier epistemological paradigms; they only provide a new variation of the same old song.

After approximately four and a half centuries (the time separating the writing of De Léry’s *récit de voyage* and Rufin’s novel), mythic paradigms remain largely unchanged, especially with regards to their central epistemological position. Myth is still the lens through which the French (and other European groups) envision the Amerindian of the past, present, and (likely of the) future. Whether narratives of Going Native are articulated via visions of Nature as informed by the myth of the Ecological Savage or non-normative sexualities that are positively-inflected through the colonial object *berdache*, foundational myths from the earliest periods of contact continue to circumscribe French understandings of the Amerindian. In the next section, I

---

¹⁹⁷ Morgensen demonstrates how *berdache* participates in the genealogy of twentieth century anthropology as a discourse of modern non-Native identity, "In the mid-twentieth century, U.S. cultural anthropology’s heritage as a settler science of American Indians transformed into a popular project promoting relativist accounts of cultural difference. In the wake of Franz Boas’s public critiques of race essentialism, his students Alfred Kroeber, Ruth Benedict, and Margaret Mead offered ethnography as a method to translate primitive culture for the edification of modern society. Their relativism maintained a civilizational difference between the societies they portrayed and the Western, if not settler societies, whose modernity was to be educated by primitive peoples’ insights into the human condition. Mead notably invited her U.S. audiences to incorporate such knowledge into the progressive promotion of respect for human differences. Her writings on gender and sexuality presented berdache as part of anthropology’s application of primitivity to the self-fashioning of modern subjects of a settler society. The popularity of berdache was enhanced when gay and lesbian politics articulated progressive legacies of U.S. anthropology" (56).
shift focus away from the domain of French letters and its visions of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. I now turn my attention to the literature of Québec and an examination of how French-Canadian authors engage with the representational tradition of the French literature vis-à-vis the Native.

2. *Berdache: Sexuality and Mythologies of Going Native in the Post-Imperialist Literature of Québec*

Throughout the history of the representation of the Amerindian in French letters, which I have been tracing in the first four chapters of this study, I have exclusively examined texts written by French authors. While many of the writers we have encountered over the course of this discussion have had important ties to Québec, perhaps most notably Samuel de Champlain (see chapter 2) and Henri-Émile Chevalier (see chapter 4), all the authors in my corpus are commonly categorized as French. In this section, I explore the literary tradition of Québec and its contribution to the evolution of Francophone mythologies of the original inhabitants of the Americas, or as they are typically labeled in the Canadian context, First Nations. The literature of Québec is linguistically and culturally linked to the French literary tradition. Reaching maturity during the twentieth century, the Francophone literary tradition of Québec is often considered a distinct national literature for Quebeckers and critics alike. In the domain of French Studies in the North American academy, Quebecois literature often finds itself situated somewhere under the all-encompassing, global umbrella of Francophone (World) Studies. By analyzing the literary representation of the Indigenous of the Americas in the context of post-imperialist Québec, I enlarge the scope of my work to include not only a Francophone voice, but one which has a
much closer relationship and propinquity to living, breathing Natives, as opposed to their Hexagonal French counterparts.198

One of the many themes that I have developed in the first four chapters has been the reflective nature of the representation of the Amerindian in French letters. Writing about the Native in the French tradition is reflective when it speaks back to French culture and concerns. Often the images of Indigenous in French texts function as a critique of French society. There is no concept of portraying the Native with an eye for what might be called authenticity or objectivity; rather, the Amerindian is employed as counterpoint in a discourse that is solely intended for a French audience, concerned with uniquely French issues. It is a discourse that essentially examines the Amerindian as object in order to elucidate something about the French subject alone. This characteristic teleology remains an influential paradigm in Quebecois texts that depict First Nations peoples. Some authors do attempt to open up a space wherein the Amerindian reflects something other than the philosophical categories of the Western mind199 or incarnations of mythic ideals such as the major metaphorical systems present in the French tradition of representing the Amerindian, the Noble and Ignoble Savage, the Vanishing Indian, the Ecological Savage, and Going Native myths. While the Quebecois author may be described as engaging in a post-modern, deconstructionist shift in literary representations of First Nations peoples, one that seeks to transcend classic images and stereotypes, I will argue that at the center of these (re)visions of the Amerindian, myth remains critical for understanding the creation, consequences, and techniques of the representation of the Native in post-imperialist Quebecois literature of the twenty and twenty-first centuries.

198 The genealogical relationship between the Post-Imperialist literature of Québec and the French literary tradition should not be ignored or forgotten, however.
199 I am referring to the compartmentalizing of Western thought as defined by Wole Soyinka. See chapter 1 section 1.
I will begin by adopting a comparative methodology in order to explore some similarities and differences between the French texts discussed in the second section of this chapter and Quebecois authors’ techniques for representing the Amerindian in mythologies of Going Native. By no means is the following analysis meant to be exhaustive or comprehensive. I have chosen texts that constitute germane examples for comparison with *Vendredi, ou les limbes du Pacifique* by Tournier and *Rouge Brésil* by Rufin. In particular, the mythology of Going Native is the paradigm through which I examine the two primary sources I will discuss in this section, *Volkswagen Blues* by Jacques Poulin and *Le dernier été des Indiens* by Robert Lalonde. In both novels, representations of ambiguous or androgynous Native sexuality play a key role in the articulation of a Quebecois myth of Going Native. My choices are justified because all four novels center on purported transformations of characters of European descent which have been initiated by contact and experience with Amerindian characters, which constitutes my definition of a myth of Going Native. As such, all four works contain iterations of the Noble Savage and Going Native myths including parallel categorical considerations that dovetail nicely for my purposes of investigation. To schematize somewhat, both *Vendredi* by Tournier and *Volkswagen Blues* by Poulin involve the psychological metamorphosis of the main character of European descent toward a more salutary mental, emotional, and spiritual state within the fictional frameworks of the novels. *Volkswagen Blues* does differ from Tournier’s text in many respects, however. Most notably, the First Nations character, La Grande Sauterelle, a Métis who functions as guide in the French-Canadian protagonist, Jack Waterman’s journey of Going Native is represented as an androgynous character. I will incorporate Morgensen’s theorizing of *berdache* in my analysis of both La Grande Sauterelle in *Volkswagen Blues* and Kanak, the main First Nations character in *Le dernier été des Indiens*. The plotlines of *Rouge Brésil* by Rufin and *Le
*dernier été des Indiens* by Lalonde contain parallel trajectories, as well. Both texts present a specific version of subgenre of the Going Native motif: sexual liberation realized through contact with the Native, the *sexual* Going Native myth. I will begin with a brief consideration of the implications of Poulin’s Going Native myth vis-à-vis the manifestations of the same mythic system in Tournier and Rufin. I will then shift my focus to the portrayal of Amerindian sexuality in both Canadian narratives in order to comparatively examine how gender and settler normativities are challenged in Quebecois authors Jacques Poulin and Robert Lalonde’s works.

In *Volkswagen Blues* 200, the main character, Jack Waterman, a Montréalais novelist facing an identity crisis, serendipitously meets a Métis woman named la Grande Sauterelle (the tall grasshopper, so called because of her long legs). In Poulin’s text, Pitsémine (la Grande Sauterelle’s name in her mother Montagnais tongue) plays a traditionally female Amerindian role, familiar in the history of the *discovery* and *exploration* of the Americas: she acts as guide to the Euro-Canadian, Jack Waterman, on his quest 201. The White protagonist’s journey here is not one of conquest, but a voyage of personal discovery and self-actualization. The plot is pushed forward by Waterman’s need to find his long-lost brother Théo. However, the psychological transference wherein Waterman places an inordinate amount of significance on the rediscovery of his brother is misplaced and only serves as backdrop to more important revelations. In reality, the voyage undertaken by Waterman and la Grande Sauterelle has far more to do with Waterman’s own existential questionings than the whereabouts of his brother. It is an internal journey. As such, Waterman’s interiorizing echoes the same process in Crusoe’s *transformation* in *Vendredi, ou les limbes du Pacifique*. Both characters are internally conflicted and seek

---

200 Jacques Poulin (1937-) is a Quebecois novelist who has published 14 novels. The government of Québec awarded him the Prix Athanase-David in 1995 to recognize his contribution to French-Canadian literature.

201 Malinche, guide to Cortés, and Sacajawea, guide to the Lewis and Clark expedition, are two of the most iconic examples of female Amerindians serving as guides to male Western invaders.
remedy in contact with indigeneity, yet the Going Native that they experience is superficial at best. It is mythic precisely because it does not engage with Amerindian lifeways or epistemologies. It remains an imperial process and narrative technology of appropriation. As will be demonstrated below, Volkswagen Blues does reference historical and colonial violence in a way that does attempt to recognize Settler-Indigenous histories, yet it remains a mythic discourse that instrumentalizes images of the Native. In Volkswagen Blues, Poulin metaphorically replaces, or parallels, the identity crisis of his main character with the larger, collective matter of the traumatic legacy of Settler-Indigenous relations in North America. While Waterman uncovers the truth about his brother by tracing his steps across North America, he simultaneously learns elements of the history of White-Amerindian conflict and violence that are introduced to him by La Grande Sauterelle. Her guidance is double. She leads him geographically by sleuthing clues about Théo’s whereabouts and she initiates him to stories of the land in relation to colonial, imperial history. Both conflicts/journeys are characterized by the centrality of guilt. As Waterman recounts his emotional guilt over the abandonment of his brother, that personal emotion is echoed in the collective White/Settler guilt vis-à-vis the genocidal history of European-Native relations. It is in this dual function that Pitsémine or La Grande Sauterelle acts as (spiritual) guide.

Poulin’s text differs significantly from the two French texts discussed in the first section of this chapter in the depiction of relations between characters of European and Amerindian descent. However, I will first discuss the similarities. It is my aim in this final section to account for the continuance of French literary models within Quebecois literature, while also examining the many ways in which French-Canadian authors diverge from their continental counterparts in their representational strategies for writing about the Native. Tournier, Rufin, and Poulin
instrumentalize contact with (the myth of) the Amerindian in order to catalyze salutary transformations of their non-Native characters’ identities, thereby inscribing their plots with mythologies of Going Native. As in *Vendredi, ou les limbes du Pacifique* and *Rouge Brésil*, Volkswagen Blues offers the reader an Amerindian character that is somehow responsible for the self-actualization of a main character of European descent. Volkswagen Blues ends with the parting of Waterman and La Grande Sauterelle, which prompts the narrator to summarize the meaning of their encounter and experience together in the following manner:

Il [Waterman] agita la main jusqu’à ce que le Volks eût disparu, et lorsqu’il entra tout seul dans l’aérogare, il souriait malgré tout à la pensée qu’il y avait, quelque part dans l’immensité de l’Amérique, un lieu secret où les dieux des Indiens et les autres dieux étaient rassemblés et tenaient conseil dans le but de veiller sur lui et d’éclairer sa route (Poulin, 320).

While Poulin attempts to portray Waterman’s metamorphosis as redemptive over the course of the novel’s narration, the final sentence presents the meaning of the protagonist’s voyage in a revealing light. As in Tournier’s *Vendredi*, where the ending of the text forces the reader to question the validity of the identity transformation that has supposedly occurred, Poulin’s sendoff is problematic. Suggesting that Native and other Gods are holding counsel in order to watch over Jack Waterman does not have the effect of culminating Canadian-First Nations solidarity as the author may have intended. Rather, the final sentence is an appropriation, a dispossessing. Representation is appropriation and always involves a certain level of instrumentalization. Critical analysis can allow for the dissection of what otherwise may take on the aura of self-evidence and even *truth*. By situating Poulin’s novel as a mythological journey of Going Native in order to discover *truth* about oneself and to self-actualize, the interaction between the characters is more deeply understood as a metaphor for Settler-Indigenous relations.
in general. However, despite Poulin’s “recognition” of colonial histories and conflict in the articulation of Waterman’s Going Native, Poulin’s novel does not represent Amerindian lifeways of viewpoints as central. La Grande Sauterelle’s role is as catalyst and guide for Waterman’s transformation, just as Native (and other) gods’ role is to benevolently watch over the White, Post-Imperialist subject who has lost his way spiritually.

La Grande Sauterelle’s guidance in the novel is chiefly on the metaphysical plane. In keeping with the metaphor of La Grande Sauterelle as inheritor or reflection of the historical figures Malinche and Sacajawea, Poulin’s Amerindian leads the Whiteman to spiritual treasures that are thereby opened up to subsequent plundering. While Waterman’s journey is geographical, it gains its significance in relation to the internal existential quest and historical apprenticeship of the protagonist. It is through his knowledge of the Amerindian that he realizes his own actualization and knowledge of himself, as well as North American geographies and histories. However, Poulin does transcend the superficial and clichéd in his representation of the Amerindian. One way in which Volkswagen Blues differs from the French examples that I have examined so far, is its attention to colonial violence and the consequences of that history for Amerindians and Whites alike. Historical and mythic objects ranging from a hand-written note by Jacques Cartier to the myth of Eldorado are some of the landmarks that Waterman and La Grande Sauterelle discover on a journey that takes them from Gaspésie to San Francisco. Violence is often at the center of Poulin’s depiction of this quest, which, at times, takes the form of revisionist history lesson:

C’est l’Amérique. On commence à lire l’histoire de l’Amérique et il y a de la violence partout. On dirait que toute l’Amérique a été construite sur la violence (141).
What Poulin intimates to his readers in the novel are the psychological consequences of colonial violence, not merely historical facts and figures. The physical or geographical and the metaphysical are ontologically linked in Waterman’s understanding of the land and (original) peoples of the Americas through their shared heritage of violence. Metaphorically, Poulin transfers those consequences onto the object of the protagonist Waterman’s long-lost brother Théo, who also serves as catalyst for his identity quest. When Waterman and La Grande Sauterelle find Théo by exhaustively uncovering evidence left behind amongst the remaining personages of the Beat and Hippie movements of the 50s and 60s still in the Bay Area, Théo is an invalid who no longer recognizes Waterman. I argue that Poulin metaphorically establishes parallels between the individual and the collective, thereby proposing that Théo’s catatonia is a direct result of colonial violence now revisiting the colonizer in the form of traumatic guilt.

Théo is directly linked to the invasion of the West and Manifest Destiny in the novel:

Une dernière chose : mon frère Théo et les pionniers. Le rapport entre les deux n’est peut-être pas très évident, surtout que je n’ai trouvé que des histoires insignifiantes à vous raconter au sujet de mon frère – une grande maison, un jardin, une rivière, un snowmobile et des choses comme ça.

Mais je suis certain qu’il y a un rapport et c’est probablement le suivant : mon frère Théo, comme les pionniers, était absolument convaincu qu’il était capable de faire tout ce qu’il voulait (Poulin 149, author’s emphasis).

The author makes explicit the connection between the banality of modern consumer life and its trappings (the large house and attached yard, as well as leisure associated with the recreational vehicle, the snowmobile) and the legacy of colonial violence. Rather than simply appropriate the mythic imaginary of the Amerindian as catalyst for an egotistical, personal

---

202 Another area of exploration that my interpretation invites is a psychoanalytic reading which might explore how the “return of the repressed” is played out in the historical knowledge shared by La Grande Sauterelle with Waterman and the violent consequences that history writes on Théo’s body.
journey of self-actualization, Poulin presents us with another type of Going Native myth (in spite of the appropriative bent of the end of the novel). Throughout the text La Grande Sauterelle instructs Waterman on Amerindian perspectives that differ from the accepted histories of North America, revising and often simply informing Waterman about incidents that have occurred since the contact period. This engagement with the imperial past and present shapes both La Grande Sauterelle and Waterman during the journey. In this way, Volkswagen Blues by Jacques Poulin differs significantly from Tournier and Rufin’s French articulations of the Going Native myth. Unlike Crusoe and Colombe, the two European characters whose transformations occur in isolation, in texts lacking any presentation of what might be recognized as Native-inspired viewpoints, Poulin grapples with the aftermath and continuing tensions of racial conflict between North Americans of European descent and the original inhabitants of the Americas. This recognition of Settler-Indigenous relations does not transcend the mythic origins of Going Native. Although La Grande Sauterelle is superficially cast in the cliché of female Native guide to a male White explorer, in Poulin’s text La Grande Sauterelle resists categorization as either cultural traitor or submissive sexual conquest, two designations often imputed to guides and Amerindian women respectively within the literary tradition of Native representation in European writing. In fact, the character La Grande Sauterelle contradicts many gender-role stereotypes. Next, I will discuss the importance of gender and sexuality in Quebecois representations of the Amerindian, first in Poulin’s Volkswagen Blues, then in Lalonde’s Le dernier été des Indiens.

---

203 The limits of Settler “recognition” have been widely criticized. See Glen Sean Coulthard’s Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition for an in-depth discussion of the Canadian context in particular.
Throughout the first four chapters of this study, we have seen how French authors have been intrigued and fearful of Amerindian sexuality. Often part and parcel of the Ignoble Savage myth, Native sexual practices have often been condemned as immoral, lascivious, and generally non-normative. Nudity and concurrent shamelessness have been severely critiqued by some writers while others (such as Jean De Léry) have been unable to fully conceal their curiosity. In addition to early indictments of Indigenous sexuality, eighteenth and nineteenth century authors show a tendency to romanticize Native sexuality according to European norms. Such is the case in Graffigny’s *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* and Chateaubriand’s *Atala*, texts wherein the characters’ actions follow the same guidelines as any conventional European fictional love affair. In the two examples that I have chosen to highlight in this section, Quebecois authors challenge traditional representational motifs regarding Native sexuality. I argue that reading *Volkswagen Blues* and *Le dernier été des Indiens* through the critical lens of berdache allows for a more nuanced understanding of the mythic appropriation that is iterated in the novels’ articulation of European fantasies of Going Native. Through a metaphorical plasticity often ascribed to the Amerindian in all Western literary traditions, both authors explore gender roles and sexual stereotypes vis-à-vis Settler normativities.

La Grande Sauterelle’s identity is ambiguous in many different ways throughout *Volkswagen Blues*. She belongs to both races (non-Native and First Nations); her father is White and her mother is Montagnais. This is similar to Tournier’s (and Defoe’s) Friday whose mixed ancestry included African and Araucan origins. This hybridity is a site of identity conflict for her in the novel as she struggles with the history of the interaction between the two components of her biological heritage. Poulin does not provide much clarification about La Grande Sauterelle’s

---

204 See footnote 192.
cultural influences, however. Her mother appears briefly in a scene at the beginning of the text, at a museum in Gaspésie. No mention is made of her father, other than his the implicit genetic contribution. Her background is obfuscated in the novel, a lack of specificity that is common for representations of Amerindians in narratives of Going Native. The same lack of detail does not typically apply to characters of European descent. Throughout the history of the representation of the Amerindian in the French tradition mixed-race characters have often been portrayed as displaying the worst characteristics of both European and Amerindian peoples (the French Western novel is a genre that often repeats this topos, for example). La Grande Sauterelle can be interpreted as representing a departure from that tradition, because she is easily construed as superior on many levels to her Euro-Canadian counterpart, Waterman. La Grande Sauterelle acts as guide geographically, leading Waterman to his brother, but also epistemologically, revising his understanding of Settler-Indigenous relations and histories, thereby enlightening him. This directly opposes previous representations of the mixed-race Native as bane. But perhaps the most interesting ambiguity associated with La Grande Sauterelle centers on sexuality and Poulin’s bending of gender roles. One striking duality that is linked to her sexual identity is associated with her sobriquet La Grande Sauterelle. As mentioned above, this moniker is presented as indicative of Pitsémine’s long legs. Though it can be interpreted as sexually objectifying, the name challenges normativities in at least two interesting ways. First, the designation of her as tall refuses a common idealized vision of femininity that valorizes small female bodies. In light of the fact that Amerindian women have often been portrayed as facile sexual conquests, ‘Grande’ does not lend itself readily to that stereotype. In addition to its adjectival flouting of representational norms, the substantive ‘Sauterelle’ relegates Pitsémine to the domain of the non-human animal, while simultaneously insisting on polysemy and femininity, thereby underlining
Pitsémíne’s fundamentally ambiguous nature. The representation of gender in the case of La Grande Sauterelle is significant, because she is often represented as androgynous.

In a scene where the two protagonists seek accommodations at a YMCA, La Grande Sauterelle dons masculine garb and a baseball cap in order to pass for male and spend the night in the same room as Waterman. Obvious parallels exist between La Grande Sauterelle and Colombe. Both characters are represented as transvestite and androgynous. In both cases, their performance of transvestism is contextualized as a necessary adaptation to accommodate Western normativies. Young girls are prohibited from embarking on French colonial adventures in Rufin’s text and YMCA regulations dictate that only same-sex pairs can occupy the same sleeping quarters in Poulin’s Volkswagen Blues. Therefore, one can interpret transvestism as expediency; however, I argue that the representation of the sexuality of the characters is more complex. In addition to the example of tranvestitism, La Grande Sauterelle is an avowed automotive mechanic. This echoes Colombe status as Native hunter, because as mechanic La Grande Sauterelle exhibits behaviors culturally coded as “male”. When the eponymous Volkswagen begins to run poorly, it is La Grande Sauterelle who saves the day by performing a roadside tune-up. Poulin emphasizes the switched gender-roles by portraying Waterman as unable even to assist by handing over needed tools, ostensibly because he is unfamiliar with the coded male activity of auto repair. Read from a heteropatriarchal perspective, Poulin’s portrayal of the European male “explorer”205 as passive and effeminate and the Amerindian female, typically marked as passive and sexually available in narratives informed by the legacy of colonial ideologies, as active and agentive disturbs general stereotypes of both categories. This gender role reversal is repeated again in a scene recounting the unique example of sexual

205 In the economy of the novel, Waterman stands metaphorically as explorer. This is made explicit early on by associating his journey of (self-)discovery with Jacques Cartier’s historic exploration of Gaspésie.
intercourse between La Grande Sauterelle and Waterman later in the novel. While sexual tension is present throughout the text, the romantic element between Waterman and La Grande Sauterelle is secondary to the identity quest and historical overview of Settler-Indigenous relations. Nonetheless, when the two reach the continental divide\textsuperscript{206}, in another example of the reversal of gender stereotypes and representational tradition vis-à-vis the female Amerindian and the male European, it is La Grande Sauterelle who initiates the only explicit instance of sexual intercourse between the characters in the novel. Inversing typical sexual roles of dominance and aggression, La Grande Sauterelle does not reflect earlier imaginaries of Amerindian women in the scene. Her behavior is generally coded as male in \textit{Volkswagen Blues}. Disseminating knowledge, leading the expedition, and sexually possessing the Euro-Canadian male, La Grande Sauterelle’s sexual identity counters the mythic systems of knowing and writing the Native that have been dominant heretofore in ways that are commensurate with the instrumentalization of the colonial object \textit{berdache} as discussed in the previous section in reference to Colombe’s Native nudity and androgyny in Rufin’s \textit{Rouge Brésil}. In Robert Lalonde\textsuperscript{207}’s \textit{Le dernier été des Indiens}, the First Nations character Kanak plays a similar role.

\textit{Le dernier été des Indiens} engages with many of the preceding representational paradigms already analyzed and discussed in this dissertation. However, I will focus my discussion of the novel on the iteration of the Going Native myth that Lalonde creates in his descriptions of the interaction between the two main characters, a French-Canadian adolescent

\textsuperscript{206} Symbolically, the union between the two characters (and their cultures) may be a metaphorical gesture at repairing the “divide” that has been created by the difficult history of Settler-Indigenous violence on the North American continent. However, the encounter is not one of overwhelming passion or emotional unity; rather, it is depicted as a casual, purely physical encounter, more functional than transformative or reconciliatory.

\textsuperscript{207} Robert Lalonde (1947-) is a novelist and actor. He has published over 20 novels. His second novel, \textit{Le dernier été des Indiens}, won the Prix Jean-Macé in 1982.
named Michel and his First Nations companion Kanak. Once again, as in Volkswagen Blues and Vendredi, ou les limbes du Pacifique, the Amerindian character acts as guide in the identity transformation of the main character of European origins. However, in Le dernier été des Indiens, the relationship between the two young men is primarily a sexual one. While sexuality occupies a relatively central position within the process of Going Native in Tournier and Rufin’s texts, it is the critical site of identity transformation and Going Native in Lalonde’s novel. Michel is initiated into sexual pleasure and the discovery of his own body by Kanak to whom Michel loses his virginity. Whereas in the two other novels (Volkswagen Blues and Vendredi) the transformation of the main character takes on collective meaning by the metaphorical connections made by both authors between the individual and Western culture in general, in Lalonde’s text the stakes are much more personal and intimate. Because Michel’s sexual explorations place him outside of the mainstream French-Canadian community, his story is not attached to larger collective entities or structures. This particular example of queering the Going Native myth is at once refreshing and problematic.

Michel is predestined to enter the seminary at the end of the summer, an unavoidable plot point that heightens the tension and conflict created by the two dichotomous identity forces threatening to tear the young man apart: namely, ties to his own French-Canadian family and community (fulfilling expectations by studying to be a clergyman) and Michel’s sexuality (his homosexuality, expressed through his clandestine relationship with the Iroquois, Kanak). In some ways, a failed coming out story, Le dernier été des Indiens represents the struggles of a young man at grips with a culture that does not accept his sexuality. What role does the

---

208 In point of fact, Michel’s grandmother is portrayed as Amerindian. However, the text forefronts the dichotomy between the cultural spaces inhabited by Michel who is ensconced in a Catholic Euro-Canadian world and Kanak who enjoys the liberties of sexuality and Nature in an Amerindian space. Many of the narratives of Going Native contain individuals with more than one ethnic heritage, both Friday and La Grande Sauterelle, for example.
Amerindian play in this struggle? What representational consequences arise from the playing out of this *queer* iteration of what I have designated as the Going Native myth?

As is typical of any example of the Going Native myth, one key element of the transformation of the European character is that character’s self-actualization, which entails the discovery of *truths* about oneself or the human condition that lead to better physical, mental, spiritual, or sexual living thereafter. In Michel’s case in *Le dernier été des Indiens*, discovering his sexuality largely constitutes this actualization. In the conflictual arena of the protagonist’s psyche, sexuality and freedom are coterminous in many respects. In keeping with previous examples of the Going Native myth, contact with the Amerindian serves as catalyst for transformative identity experiences. Throughout this study I have examined the nexus of Nature and Native. In Lalonde’s novel, within the main character Michel’s binary cultural situation, homosexuality is naturalized in its association with the Amerindian space, or natural environment, while being strictly categorized as taboo in the Catholic French-Canadian domain. That naturalization leads the author to employ a classic technique in the history of the representation of the Amerindian in French letters, metonymically linking Nature and Native as part of the mythology of Going Native.

Not only does Michel’s Amerindian sexual guide and lover, Kanak, evoke innocence and liberty (this is precisely where the Going Native myth genealogically continues the imagery of the Noble Savage myth), but all of the mythic powers attributed to the Native in this symbolic system are conflated. The following citation illustrates this amalgamative turn:

*Angélique ou diabolique, tout ce que vous voudrez, mais il n’est ni rapace ni lâche. Pas du tout enclin au massacre. Non plus porté à la fainéantise. Complètement à l’antipode de sa légende.*
Jamais je ne l’ai vu détruire, saccager. Jamais il ne se plaint. Simplement, quelquefois, le soir, sa voix hurle. C’est comme pour le loup : quand il y en a trop-plein, comme un chant (Lalonde 63).

Departing from French authors Tournier and Rufin, who more or less surreptitiously engage in reiterating the stereotypic representational legacy of the French cultural imaginary’s vision of the Native in their narratives of Going Native, Quebecois author Lalonde refutes the Western epistemological categorizations of the Amerindian, directly challenging their centuries-old esthetic hegemony. The Noble and Ignoble Savage myths are referenced and dismissed. Lalonde seeks to inform the reader about the Amerindian, speaking in a more reciprocal timbre. I intend reciprocal as a discourse that seeks to transcend the mythic imperative of Western discourses of the Native. By imbuing a narrative with reciprocal images of the Native, tendencies to dehumanize the Amerindian through the various mythic paradigms discussed in this dissertation are decentered. However, reciprocal passages do not preclude a text from also engaging in mythologizing. In this particular citation, Lalonde’s demystification makes an abrupt about-face when the author introduces the wolf metaphor as a means of connecting the Native to Nature and the non-human animal world. There are few animal metaphors more mythically charged in Western literature than that of the wolf. The wolf has long been an inhabitant of spaces at the periphery of civilization, the forests of fantasy and nightmare, arousing irrational fears. Lalonde’s wolf metaphor resists that European tradition’s relegation of the wolf to the monstrous, however. Not only does the wolf function as metaphorical bridge between Native and Nature, but the particular instrumentalization of this animalized image continues the theme of (homo)sexuality as synonym for freedom, identity, release, and truth. Orgasmic release is inserted into various scenes in the novel to recall what Lalonde asserts as an ontological

---

209 For a fascinating review of the mythic power of the forest in the Western mind see Robert Pogue Harrison’s Forests: The Shadow of Civilization.
difference between Amerindian and French-Canadian epistemologies and lifeways. In one particularly poignant example, Michel is told to get on his knees by the parish priest in order to pray. Lalonde compares the servitude and humility of genuflection in the context of the Catholic mass with the same physical action leading to the much more spiritual and fulfilling experience of performing fellatio on Kanak (22). The song of the wolf echoes the metaphor of sexual release (linked to the Amerindian through mythologies of Going Native in Lalonde’s text) as signifier of naturalness. In this way, Lalonde posits the naturalness of homosexuality, repudiating the notion of its being sinful. This argument is made explicit early on in the novel:

Oui, je suis né, cette nuit, avec eux [les Indiens], en eux, parmi leur innocence. Je n’ai rien fait de mal. Je ne vois pas, je ne sens pas encore le mal. Tout ce qui vit est transperçant. Pourquoi alors m’avoir fait croire au fétide des rosaires, à la paresse des grand-messes, au mièvre, au mou ? Je sais maintenant que tout ce qui arrive pour vrai arrive avec élan, avec force, avec les dents, avec la peau, avec l’air du soir, rouge chaud, avec la nuit ! Je les vois, je les touche, j’ai encore le frisson, même après les secousses douloureuses, puis moins douloureuses, puis transportantes. Je n’ai pas perdu connaissance. Je suis en pleine connaissance, enfin, sans livres ni neuvaines, sans peur, sans mal. Je suis au monde, dépucelé, neuf (Lalonde 20).

Catholic epistemology is represented as stale, esoteric, lifeless, and notably flaccid, while the Native (enmeshed in the metaphor of sexuality) is vivacious, concrete, tactile, and erect. Employing the classic Christian mythology of rebirth, Michel’s resurrection originates with intercourse (in all senses of the term) with the Amerindian. The innocence of the Amerindian, resonant with the Noble Savage paradigm, transfers through the homosexual act in order to exculpate the protagonist. Guilt is only distanced for a time, however.

In Lalonde’s text, the young Iroquois man Kanak is a symbol of (sexual) freedom who is also related ontologically to experiences in the natural environment. In this particular iteration of
the Going Native myth, the transformation typical in Going Native narratives is as fleeting and ephemeral as the love affair between the two young men. *Le dernier été des Indiens* both engages in and refutes prevailing representational models that have been the object of this study (Noble, Ignoble, Vanishing, Ecological, and Going Native myths). The *salvation* that Michel confabulates with Kanak in the text is redolent of other mythic fantasies encountered in this examination of the Native in French and Quebecois letters. Unable to continue his relationship with Kanak, Michel is taken away to begin his new life as seminarist in the novel’s dénouement. During the journey the truck gets a flat tire. Michel contemplates running away to rejoin Kanak (idealized escape being one of the problematic significations of the Amerindian in mythologies of Going Native), but instead he fiddles with the radio controls, happening upon a report of the death of Premier of Quebec, Maurice Duplessis. While there is no lasting Going Native for the main character in Lalonde’s text, other than the discovery of the *truth* about his own sexual identity perhaps\(^{210}\), the choice to include this news account of Duplessis’ death is significant. The death of Duplessis in 1959 marks a symbolic threshold, the passing of the conservative order (represented by Duplessis) and the awakening of the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s in Québec. As in *Volkswagen Blues* by Jacques Poulin, Lalonde’s writing speaks to political issues and not only of mythic representational models of imagining. The indication made by including the death of Duplessis at the end of *Le dernier été des Indiens* is to signal a coming overthrow (or lessening) of the Catholic Church’s hegemony over daily Quebecois life. It is unclear what, if any, consequences this may have for Michel and Kanak. Aligning two categories of Other, the

\(^{210}\) It is unclear if the sexual truth that Michel encounters in his interactions with Kanak is indicative of his sexual orientation. They may represent experimentation, thereby inscribing Lalonde’s myth of Going Native as typical of other such narratives wherein the transformation of the European in contact with the Native is superficial at best. The novel leaves off with Michel dutifully on his way to the seminary, giving no definitive clues as to the meaning of the Going Native interlude for Michel’s sexuality and orientation throughout his life.
homosexual and the Amerindian, *Le dernier été des Indiens* offers a captivating example of the Goings Native myth.

How should the reader interpret the essential role played by Amerindian (sexual) identity in *Volkswagen Blues* and *Le dernier été des Indiens*? At their most basic level, such representations certainly participate in the same mythologized narrative technologies that have been analyzed throughout this study. Metaphorical plasticity is one of the defining characteristics of the mythic paradigms that have been prevalent in French literary images of the Native since contact, the most glaring example being the Noble and Ignoble Savage myth, which often posits both extremes as equally viable for the same groups. La Grande Sauterelle and Kanak’s polysemous natures are resonant with the original mythic paradigms of the Noble and Ignoble Savage, which have traditionally been interspersed throughout texts. At times they are commingled in descriptions of the selfsame Amerindians (what I have referred to as *ambiguity*) and, at other times, have been instrumentalized in discourses that alternate between Noble and Ignoble attributions of identical or different groups (what I have referred to as *oscillation*). These mythic devices reveal deeper truths about Amerindian representation more generally. Faced with difference, writers are unable to disentangle fictional or scientific representations of Amerindians from the myths that first defined these peoples for the West. The genealogy of the original Noble and Ignoble Savage myths demonstrate how persistent these exaggerated visions of the Native can be. Developing as a logical consequence of and in conjunction with the advent of the Noble Savage mythology, the myth of the Ecological Savage (which I have also referred to as the nexus of Nature and Native) is also a product of the earliest period of contacts. Subsequently, Noble Savage ideology evolved into a nostalgia and guilt-laden romantic image known as the myth of the Vanishing Indian. The last evolutionary turn of the Noble Savage, itself a direct consequence
of the void created by the *disappearing* of the Native effectuated in the mythology of the Vanishing Indian, is the Eurocentric fantasy of Going Native. These models have shaped the French cultural imaginary of and *(scientific) knowledge* about Native peoples, informing epistemology and praxis. Within the articulation of the Going Native myth in both French and Post-Imperialist Quebecois literatures, sexuality coded as non-normative from a heteropatriarchal European (settler) colonial perspective (Native nudity, gender ambiguity, transvestism, androgyny, and homosexuality), portrays Native identity vis-à-vis French-Canadian identity in specific ways. *Berdache* is an effective theoretical tool for unpacking the significance of La Grande Sauterelle’s sexuality and performance of gender in *Volkswagen Blues*, Kanak’s and Michel’s interactions in *Le dernier été des Indiens*, and the role of representations of Native sexuality in myths of Going Native more generally.

I discussed the concept of *berdache* as it might be applied to critical readings of myths of Going Native in the previous section in my analysis of representations of sexuality in the French novel *Rouge Brésil* by Rufin. The colonial object *berdache* is appropriate as a lens through which one can better interpret the representation of the sexuality of La Grande Sauterelle and Kanak in the Post-Imperialist literature of Québec, as well. In the twentieth century, first anthropologists and then non-Native LGBTQ groups appropriated and instrumentalized constructed knowledges about Native sexuality centralized discursively around the term *berdache*\(^{211}\). *Berdache* is prototypically used to identify, “a gender-transitive and homosexual subject, defined by male embodiment, who received social recognition in Native American

---

\(^{211}\) See section 1 of this chapter, in particular footnote 20 (which explains how LGBTQ groups coopted Native sexual identity through *berdache* to articulate their own Going Native mythologies of sexual liberation in a settler society) and footnote 27 (which enumerates how anthropologists’ developed the colonial object of *berdache* in the twentieth century as a source of *truth* about *primitive* peoples and non-normative sexualities as defined for a Eurocentric point of view).
societies” (Morgensen 55). This definition applies to early iterations of *berdache*. Yet, the concept evolved and became more generalized as a way of understanding Native sexualities and roles associated with gender ambiguity. Morgensen reminds us that, “Over time, the object projected a uniformity of sex, gender, sexuality, and indigeneity that let it represent principles of human nature and culture” (55). Originally associated with specific practices and embodiments, *berdache* becomes semantically generalized to include any Native sexualities and lifeways viewed as non-normative from a Western viewpoint\(^{212}\). *Berdache* functions to *queer* Native sexuality and other practices. Throughout the history of this study, this *queering* might be related to the Ignoble Savage mythology through connotations of immorality and animality. However, it is through appropriation and Going Native that *berdache* takes meaning in modern non-Native movements to seek recognition and citizenship in settler states such as the US\(^{213}\). In *Volkswagen Blues* and *Le dernier été des Indiens*, La Grande Sauterelle’s gender ambiguity and transvestism and Kanak’s role as homosexual guide\(^{214}\) reference the same vision of the Native as that instrumentalized by non-Native LGBTQ understandings of *berdache* as a site of identity and *truth* in narratives that I would qualify as mythologies of Going Native. It is through contact with the *queer* Native that French-Canadian characters achieve self-actualization and discover the *truth* about themselves in both of the novels that I have analyzed in this section, as well as in the

\(^{212}\) I argued in section 1 in relation to Colombe’s “Native” nudity, that *berdache* might be used to analyze this practice, for example.

\(^{213}\) Morgensen states that he attempts to explore, “what followed their [modern non-Native LGBTQ] embrace of primitivity as a nature in need of civic inclusion in a white settler society: for, if white sexual minorities traversed their primitivity in order to claim national whiteness, they followed a normative path to citizenship for white settler subjects. Deloria’s argument that settler citizenship is based on the conquest and incorporation of primitivity-crucially, as disappeared Native American indigeneity-makes primitivity a resource that settler subjects access when asserting their national belonging” (45). Morgensen’s insight demonstrates how politics of identity enact the genealogical connection between the mythologies of the Vanishing Indian and Going Native that I have been arguing for in the literary domain in this study.

\(^{214}\) Kanak is also represented as performing behaviors that can be interpreted as coded as “female”. For instance, when a young Amerindian woman suddenly goes into childbirth, Kanak successfully performs the “female” duties associated with a midwife in European epistemologies, reinforcing the mythologized power often associated with a *berdache* figure.
French novel *Rouge Brésil*. In short, in the fictional traditions of French and Post-Imperialist Quebecois literatures, *berdache* is central to discourses that locate self-actualization in parallel with appropriative and constructed representations of Native sexuality. The representational and the political (LGBTQ identity movements in the late twentieth century) resemble each other on the level of discourse, because both locate Eurocentric *truth* in mythic narratives of Going Native. Morgensen affirms that non-Native groups, “organized in a political culture that validated journeys to personhood for white male citizens by translating primitive roots coded as Native American into white settler modernity” (45). The process of metaphorical transformation of characters of European descent within sexualized narratives of Going Native in the novels I have been discussing by Rufin, Poulin, and Lalonde performs a similar operation in the domain of esthetics rather than that of modern queer politics through mythically-inflected understandings of *berdache*. Even though French and Quebecois authors attempt to valorize Native practices and lifeways in narratives of Going Native (which may or may not engage with images of the colonial object *berdache*), such works fail to transcend mythic paradigms that circumscribe epistemological possibilities for *reciprocal* understanding of Native peoples as fully human subjects. In continuation of my exploration of anthropological conceptualizations of the Amerindian, in the conclusion of this study I examine how mythologies of the Native are reiterated in the scientific fantasy of Going Native as articulated in the structural anthropological text *Tristes tropiques* by Claude Lévi-Strauss.

215 While sexuality and normativity play an important role in *Vendredi, ou les limbes du Pacifique*, that text does not appropriate Native sexuality as a catalyst for Crusoe’s self-actualization. Tournier’s novel does not engage with the colonial object *berdache*. 
Conclusion

In this chapter I have extended my examination of the representational tradition of French literature vis-à-vis the Amerindian to encompass not only twenty and twenty-first century Continental examples, but also texts from the Post-Imperialist literature of Quebec. In the first section, I explained the functioning of the Going Native myth in *Vendredi, ou les limbes du Pacifique* by Michel Tournier and *Rouge Brésil* by Jean-Christophe Rufin. I demonstrated ways in which the Going Native myth continued the French cultural imaginary’s tendency to articulate the Native as bearer of a particular exceptionality. That exceptionality continues to be redolent of previous models of portraying the Amerindian in French letters (Noble and Ignoble Savage myths, the Ecological Savage, as well as the Vanishing Indian myth). I expanded my explanation of the Going Native myth to explore a common variant thereof: the myth of the Ecological Savage. This part of my interpretation advances previous discussions on the nexus of Native and Nature (a central focus of this study). I demonstrated how the colonial object *berdache* can enlighten interpretations of gender ambiguity and androgyny in representations of *Rouge Brésil*’s protagonist Colombe. The discussion of Native sexuality and its connection to the mythologies of Going Native in French literature led me into an examination of the same phenomenon in Quebecois literature through consideration of *Volkswagen Blues* by Jacques Poulin and *Le dernier été des Indiens* by Robert Lalonde. Sharing many characteristics of French narratives of Going Native, the Post-Imperialist Quebecois authors discussed do attempt to integrate Native histories and viewpoints, although these examples of revisionist discourses that seek to problematize previous understandings of the Amerindian do not transcend the Western epistemological penchant for compartmentalized mythic paradigms. I will conclude the
dissertation by investigating how myths of the Native intertextually inform Claude Lévi-Strauss’
individual journey of Going Native in *Tristes tropiques*. 
Conclusion: Claude Lévi-Strauss’ *Tristes tropiques*: A Mythic Journey of Going Native

Claude Lévi-Strauss is widely acknowledged as the father of structural anthropology and one of the most influential French social scientists of the twentieth century. As with Durkheim and sociological discourse in the fourth chapter, Lévi-Strauss instrumentalizes the (idea of the) Native in specific ways in his articulation of what anthropology is or should be. In my analysis of Durkheim I focused attention on *De la division du travail social*, a seminal work that theorizes the basic tenets of the discipline of sociology by referencing the Amerindian, a text chosen primarily because of its influence within the field of sociology. It shapes how later sociologists understand the object of their study by establishing a clear-cut distinction (although he does complicate this division in his work) between primitive and modern. Claude Lévi-Strauss, who tends to downplay the role of Durkheim in his thinking, nonetheless performs similar acts of distinguishing between the Self and the Other, between European and Amerindian (or more generally, non-European) groups. These divisions are informed by the mythologies of the Native that have been the object of this study.

Rather than interpret and analyze the author’s dense theoretical works, such as the four volume *Mythologiques* or the seminal *Anthropologie structurale*, I have chosen to examine *Tristes tropiques* (1955). It is his most popular book, read within the discipline, it is widely read by non-anthropologists as well. For this reason, it can be argued that *Triste tropiques* has more purchase in the articulation of a French cultural imaginary of the Amerindian than his more theoretical works. Of course, anthropological works would have much less impact than popular literature however. *Tristes tropiques* is unique within the voluminous corpus of Lévi-Strauss’
work. No other text, except perhaps *Myth and Meaning*\(^{216}\) (1978), reveals the subjective side of the renowned anthropologist’s research. Wendy Doniger states that, “in *Tristes Tropiques* he founded a new genre of introspective, subjective, lyrical writing about fieldwork that rescued the field of anthropology from scientific posturings” (*Myth and Meaning: Cracking the Code of Culture*, x). Part *récit de voyage* or *journal de route*, part fieldnotes, and part theoretical analysis of Indigenous tribes of the interior of Brazil, *Tristes tropiques* is germane to the purposes of this study precisely because of the subjectivity signaled by Doniger. To examine the ways in which the founder of structural anthropology performs a personal mythic journey of Going Native in the name of social science, no better example could be explored than *Tristes tropiques*. It is in this text that the author openly grapples with the meaning of his mission (and of anthropology more generally) into the Amazonian basin to discover those who have not yet been discovered.

As Doniger rightly intuits, *Tristes tropiques* resists the designation of anthropology as science. I would argue that the “rescue from scientific posturings” can best be understood as an engagement with mythologies of the Amerindian in a subjective voice, which nevertheless passes for scientific discourse. Lévi-Strauss directly questions the scientific nature of anthropology in the text. He claims that directing the ethnographical gaze at other societies creates a possibility for objectivity, “…quand il s’agit de sociétés différentes, tout change : l’objectivité, impossible dans le premier cas [l’analyse de sa propre culture], nous est gracieusement concédée” (460). However, he obliquely admits that the objective knowledge obtained by the ethnographer is illusory. Towards the end of the text Lévi-Strauss includes a synopsis of a play he wrote during a period of boredom and waiting. The main character, an

\(^{216}\) *Myth and Meaning* is a published transcript of a series of candid talks given by Lévi-Strauss in English on the Canadian Broadcast Company’s radio program *Ideas*, in December 1977.
obvious stand-in for Lévi-Strauss himself, is described in the following way upon his return to civilization:

Maintenant qu’il est revenu chargé de merveilleux : explorateur que les mondains s’arrachent pour leurs dîners, le voici seul à savoir que cette gloire chèrement payée repose sur un mensonge. Rien de tout ce qu’on lui fait crédit d’avoir connu n’est réel ; le voyage est une duperie : tout cela paraît vrai à qui n’en a vu que les ombres (455).

Not only does Lévi-Strauss write about his own adventures and fantasies of Going Native in *Tristes tropiques*, but he also engages intertextually with many of the authors discussed throughout this study, such as Léry, Thevet, Montaigne, Rousseau, Durkheim, and Defoe. Lévi-Strauss’ intertextual reflections present evidence of the existence of the genealogy of the mythologies of the Amerindian which I have proposed in this dissertation: originating in the Noble and Ignoble Savage binary along with the correlate nexus of Nature and Native (or Ecological Savage), subsequently manifesting as the Vanishing Indian myth, and finally shifting to the fantasy of Going Native. Chapter titles such as “*Bon sauvage*” and “*Robinson*” indicate how mythologies of the Native inform Lévi-Strauss’ writing about and understanding of the Indigenous of Brazil. Just as the artist Paul Gauguin finds inspiration in Bougainville and Diderot’s *Supplément* to create his own mental and textual space for his Tahitian quest of Going Native, Lévi-Strauss internalizes the mythologies of the authors listed above prior to setting foot on Brazilian soil. By periodically alluding to these authors and their mythologies and by sometimes quoting them directly, it is as if they and their myths accompany the anthropologist on his personal voyage of Going Native. In the following excerpt, Rousseau’s articulations of the state of nature intermingle with Lévi-Strauss’ thinking:
Rousseau avait sans doute raison de croire qu’il eût, pour notre bonheur, mieux valu que
l’humanité tint « un juste milieu entre l’indolence de l’état primitif et la pétulante activité de notre
amour-propre » ; que cet état était « le meilleur à l’homme »… …L’étude de ces sauvages apporte
autre chose que la révélation d’un état de nature utopique, ou la découverte de la société parfaite
au cœur des forêts ; elle nous aide à bâtir un modèle théorique de la société humaine, qui ne
correspond à aucune réalité observable, mais à l’aide duquel nous parviendrons à démêler « ce
qu’il y a d’originaire et d’artificiel dans la nature actuelle de l’homme et à bien connaître un état
qui n’existe plus, qui peut-être n’a point existé, qui probablement n’existera jamais, et dont il est
pourtant nécessaire d’avoir des notions justes pour bien juger de notre état présent » (469).

Framed and informed by Rousseau’s abstract musings on the state of nature, Lévi-Strauss
intimates to his reader what the purpose of anthropological research is in this key passage of
Tristes tropiques. What both Rousseau and Lévi-Strauss recognize is the important fact that the
ideas that Europeans have of the Native may be theoretically instrumentalized to ameliorate
modern civilized life, yet they have no basis in reality despite claims made to universal truth.
What is fascinating in this articulation is the correlation between theoretical, or mythical, truths
about Natives and the future happiness of Europeans. Deciphering the social structures and
systematic meanings and similarities of Indigenous mythologies operates as a catalyst in a
discourse of Going Native, much in the same way that contact with the Native in the novels
discussed in chapter 5 do. It is through knowledge of the Native that the future of the European
can be realigned or repaired. The origin, a site of truth for European philosophy, is located with
the Caduveo, Bororo, Nambikwara, and Tupi-Kawahib, despite the father of structural
anthropology’s admission that the foundation of this original truth about humanity is little more
than conjectural. Elsewhere, Lévi-Strauss describes his arduous journey to find the origin thus,
“Quant à moi, j’étais allé jusqu’au bout du monde à la recherche de ce que Rousseau appelle

217 These are the Indigenous groups of Brazil that Lévi-Strauss investigates in the text.
“les progrès presque insensibles des commencements »” (376). By citing Rousseau, Lévi-Strauss positions his discourse in genealogical connection with the discourse penned by the philosophe two centuries earlier. This genealogical link establishes anthropology\textsuperscript{218} as a philosophical abstraction that, despite the author’s discomfort with the attribution, nonetheless makes claims of truth as a discourse of social science.

Lévi-Strauss discusses the alienation of the ethnographer from his own society and social milieu as a typical trait of those in the field (458–9). Thereby, he situates the investigation of exotic societies\textsuperscript{219} as an attempt to escape one’s own society. Here, the author speaks in the subjective voice which dominates much of the narration of Tristes tropiques. Apparently generalizing, Lévi-Strauss actually reveals personal truths about his own relationship to his work, to French society, and to the exotic societies where he conducts his research. His individual alienation from French society is, nevertheless, useful for the very society the ethnographer abandons. According to Lévi-Strauss, the instrumentalization of knowledge about the Native can serve to better French (European) society. Lévi-Strauss makes this clear in the following passage:

A les mieux connaître [les autres sociétés], nous gagnons pourtant un moyen de nous détacher de la nôtre, non point que celle-ci soit absolument ou seule mauvaise, mais parce que c’est la seule dont nous devions nous affranchir : nous le sommes par état des autres. Nous nous mettons ainsi en mesure d’aborder la deuxième étape qui consiste, sans rien retenir d’aucune société, à les utiliser toutes pour dégager ces principes de la vie sociale qu’il nous sera possible d’appliquer à la

\textsuperscript{218} I am referring to the classical anthropology of this time period, Lévi-Strauss’ Brazilian expedition takes place in the late 1930s. Later developments of self-reflexivity in the various subfields of anthropology have attempted (more or less successfully) to address the shortcomings that I signal here.

\textsuperscript{219} Lévi-Strauss readily recognizes the high value placed on the most remote and unknown societies throughout Tristes tropiques. The desire to contact such groups motivates his expedition which endures extreme deprivation and danger in search of the most authentic and most primitive groups, typified by the Tupi-Kawahib in the anthropologist’s opinion.
réforme de nos propres mœurs, et non de celles des sociétés étrangères : …c’est la société seule à
laquelle nous appartenons que nous sommes en position de transformer sans risquer de la détruire ;
car ces changements viennent aussi d’elle, que nous y introduisons (470).

Echoing the depreciative view that Rousseau espouses of French society, Lévi-Strauss
posits alienation as a primary condition of ethnographical work. This alienation is celebrated as
one that brings about personal liberty. Even if French society is not irredeemable, “c’est la seule
dont nous devions nous affranchir”. The severing of the anthropologist from his own society is a
preliminary requirement before he can then pass on to what the author calls the “second stage” in
the process. The second stage involves uncovering truths about other societies in order to then
change one’s own society. This formula is redolent of the equation of the literary myth of Going
Native as I have understood it and defined it in my analyses of French and Quebecois novels in
the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in chapter 5. However, the anthropological myth of
Going Native aims at a much broader metamorphosis, one that transcends the individual in favor
of the collective. From the personal journey of Going Native which Lévi-Strauss articulates in
the pages of *Tristes tropiques*, he extrapolates a greater significance for French society while
simultaneously signaling the unilateral, appropriative, and extractive nature of the supposed
*transformation* to come. It is only French (European) society that can benefit from the
anthropological and ethnographic investigation of Indigenous peoples of Brazil (and elsewhere),
because Lévi-Strauss’ vision of primitive authenticity\(^{220}\) privileges isolated Native peoples as the
only bearers of *true* Amerindian culture. In short, when Europeans and Amerindians collide in
the contact zone\(^{221}\), the encounter can only benefit the European who can thereby discover the
necessary universal truths about humanity that allow for societal liberation and self-actualization

\(^{220}\) See footnote 223.

\(^{221}\) I intend this term as Mary Louise Pratt employs it, a place where cultures interact and both have influence on
the outcomes. I point to this meaning to counter the teleological ideology of the Vanishing Indian myth.
(for the European) as in any discourse of Going Native. For the Amerindian, contact entails destruction\textsuperscript{222}. This perspective illustrates the imbrication of the mythologies of the Vanishing Indian and of Going Native. It is the \textit{disappearance} of the Native, either already completed or near completion, which instigates discourses of Going Native wherein Europeans replace the disappeared Amerindian as original and rightful inheritor of American geographies and philosophical truths. In this way, Lévi-Strauss’ anthropology of Brazil as articulated in \textit{Tristes tropiques} performs the mythic narrative technology of Going Native. Lévi-Strauss proposes to remedy the ills of Western society by a philosophical extraction of wealth from the Americas that follows closely the ideological tendencies of the prior material extraction of natural resources that preceded it, it too often procured with the help of the Native.

I will conclude my discussion of the representation of the Amerindian in French where I began in the sixteenth century. Lévi-Strauss’ final \textit{discovery} in the Amazonian rainforest are the Tupi-Kawahib. As I have shown throughout this study, mythologies of the Amerindian inform and shape the epistemological possibilities open to the French in their attempts to understand the Native. It is through the mythic lenses of the Noble and Ignoble Savage, the nexus of Nature and Native (or Ecological Savage), the Vanishing Indian, and Going Native that French writers have framed and portrayed the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. Nearly four hundred years after Thevet and Léry encountered the Tupinamba, Lévi-Strauss believes he is walking in their

\textsuperscript{222} For example, upon leaving the Tupi-Kawahib, Lévi-Strauss speculates that they will immediately \textit{disappear}, “Ainsi s’écoulaient les jours à rassembler les bribes d’une culture qui avait fasciné l’Europe et qui, sur la rive droite du haut Machado, allait peut-être disparaître à l’instant de mon départ : au même moment où je mettais le pied dans la galiote revenue d’Urupa, la 7 novembre 1938, les indigènes prenaient la direction de Pimenta Bueno pour s’y joindre aux compagnons et à la famille d’Abaitara” (429). Paradoxically, the move to Pimenta Bueno, an outpost of the nearly defunct telegraph line run through the forest nearly thirty years before Lévi-Strauss’ adventure, which signals demise for the Tupi-Kawahib according to the anthropologist’s narrow vision of \textit{authenticity}, is actually a form of resistance, an act of survival. Intermarriages are being arranged between two groups and the smaller Tupi-Kawahib group so precious to Lévi-Strauss because of their isolation is joining Abaitara’s group in order to continue to practice their lifeways and culture.
footsteps. As I mentioned above, the writers of the centuries preceding the anthropologist’s foray into the Brazilian forest haunt the narration of *Tristes tropiques*, thereby establishing an intertextuality based on the mythic genealogy whose evolution I have traced in this dissertation. Lévi-Strauss tells the reader this about the Tupi-Kewahib:

Il y a donc de fortes chances pour que ces Indiens soient les derniers descendants des grandes populations tupi du cours moyen et inférieur de l’Amazone, elles-mêmes parentes de celles de la côte que connurent, au temps de leur splendeur, les voyageurs du XVIᵉ et du XVIIᵉ siècle dont les récits sont à l’origine de la prise de conscience ethnographique des temps modernes : car ce fut sous leur involontaire influence que la philosophie politique et morale de la Renaissance s’engagea sur la voie qui devait la conduire jusqu’à la Révolution française. Pénétrer, le premier peut-être, dans un village tupi encore intact, c’était rejoindre, par-delà quatre cents ans, Léry, Staden, Soares de Souza, Thevet, Montaigne même, qui médita dans les *Essais*, au chapitre des Cannibales, sur une conversation avec des Indiens Tupi rencontrés à Rouen. Quelle tentative ! (399).

Lévi-Strauss situates the mythologies of the Amerindian written during the earliest periods of contact as central to subsequent political transformations in French and European history. According to Lévi-Strauss, it is the encounter with the New World that sparks the philosophical questioning that leads to both the French Revolution’s radical rethinking of rights and equality and the awakening of what he dubs a modern ethnographic awareness. With all of these mythic discourses circulating in his writing and his anthropological thinking, Lévi-Strauss ends the passage by passionately associating the opportunity of realizing the journeys completed by his predecessors (such as Léry, Thevet, and Montaigne) in real life with the desire of temptation. However, as my analysis of *Tristes tropiques* above confirms, the reality and *truth* Lévi-Strauss seeks in his own mythology of Going Native proves to be little more than illusory,
falling back into the same mythic paradigms from whence it came. This text in particular exemplifies the inability of the French writer to escape the tradition of mythologies of the Amerindian that circumscribe his vision of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas, despite the fact that according to Lévi-Strauss’ view of anthropology requires a rigorous self-alienation from the interference of one’s own cultural background in order to attain scientific objectivity in ethnographic research. Myth informs and delimits French visions of the Amerindian from the sixteenth to the twenty-first century, continuing at the present moment and likely into the future to dehumanize and objectify the original inhabitants of the Americas in ways that influence not only art but political praxis.
Bibliography

Primary Sources:


**Secondary Sources:**


