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# Le Jeune Dreams of Moose

Altered States among the Montagnais in  
the *Jesuit Relations* of 1634

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**ABSTRACT** This article explores ruptures of colonial representation in the 1634 contribution of Paul Le Jeune to the *Jesuit Relations*, particularly in regard to Le Jeune's intense antipathy to the faith Native Americans placed in dreams and dream interpretation. Native peoples had highly ritualized frameworks for interpreting dreams that stood in stark opposition to the expressed evangelical agendas of the Jesuits. The Montagnais, with whom Le Jeune wintered in 1633–34, used dreams to speak to manitous, who would assist them in finding game and other endeavors. Dreaming itself, with its claims to prophetic vision, was a phenomenon that threatened to override doctrinaire stances. It had the power to erase familiar boundary lines of identity and culture, to express desires either unwelcome or unthinkable, and to force traumatic memories back into the forefront of one's consciousness. Although the Jesuit order in New France labored to bring Native faith in dreams under colonial control, Le Jeune's *Relation* reveals the inherent strains of imposing a dominant discourse of containment on an indigenous framework of engagement—strains that make themselves apparent in Le Jeune's foray into liminality and his own dream of moose.

*He replied to me that all nations had something especially  
their own; that, if our dreams were not true, theirs were; and  
that they would die if they did not execute them. According to  
this idea, our lives depend upon the dreams of a Savage.*

—Paul le Jeune

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All references to the *Jesuit Relations*, abbreviated *JR*, are from *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610–1791*, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites et al. (1896–1901; repr., New York: Pageant Book Co., 1959).

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*So what is wild? What is wilderness? What are dreams but  
an internal wilderness and what is desire but a wildness of  
the soul?*

—Louise Erdrich

#### PERCHANCE TO DREAM

European explorers and missionaries attempting to establish their idea of order on the American continent in the first decades of the seventeenth century were quickly struck by the significance Native peoples attributed to dreams. A number of critics have commented on this intense interest in Native dreaming that surfaces in the annals of exploration and conquest, and yet studies done in this area often rely disproportionately on Western hermeneutics to work through structures of indigenous belief. In his recent book, *Radical Hope*, which focuses on the life of the nineteenth-century Crow chief Plenty Coups, David Lear asserts, “So the Crow, like Freud, thought that dreams were responses to human wishes.”<sup>1</sup> Anthony Wallace, perhaps more famously, reached a similar conclusion in his seminal 1969 treatise on Indian revitalization movements, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca*, when he announced, “The Iroquois theory of dreams was basically psychoanalytic.”<sup>2</sup> While these may be generative claims from the vantage of

1. David Lear, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 67.

2. Anthony F. C. Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* (New York: Knopf, 1970), 61. Wallace’s work famously suggests that Native peoples of the Northeast, and the Senecas in particular, practiced a kind of Freudian approach to dream work. Unlike people in the West, who labored to suppress the information offered in dreams, the Senecas, according to Wallace, found ways to satisfy dream wishes within a ceremonial framework where medicine men or shamans performed the dream work of the psychoanalyst. This remains a compelling study, but its lapses are exposed in more recent scholarship that appropriately takes into account the unreliable conclusions of the Jesuits: their enormous lack of understanding of indigenous rites and practices and their biased agendas bent on discrediting Native tradition rather than objectively reporting it. Other critics who have contributed substantially to the study of colonial reactions to Native dreaming include James Axtell, *After Columbus: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Cornelius J. Jaenen, *Friend and Foe: Aspects of French-Amerindian Cultural Contact in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973); Gordon M. Sayre, *Les Sauvages Américains: Representations of Native Americans in French and English Colonial Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Ann Marie Plane

Western thought, the cartography of dreaming looks different when we approach it through the lens of Native traditions, where the gratification of wishes is not necessarily central to an understanding of dream work. I would even go so far as to say that when we offer interpretations of this nature, we are in danger of gratifying our own cultural desires at the expense of the Native subject or dreamer.

This essay suggests how Western modes of dream interpretation tend to closely track Western ambitions of appropriation and colonization, whereas Native interpretations are typically grounded in rituals of engagement and cooperation with the dream world and its beings, a difference that has implications beyond the seemingly very personal domain of dreaming. Drawing primarily on the 1634 *Relation* of the French Jesuit priest Paul Le Jeune, I explore how the materials of dream in the colonial milieu allow for a disintegration of cultural markers and boundary lines that, in turn, provoke intense anxiety on the part of the colonist and the imposition of interpretive frameworks that must cancel out, or *unwitness*, what the dream allowed as possible. Because dreams, in essence, exceed the culturally prescribed boundaries of identity, their occurrence opens up a space for either unwelcome self-knowledge or radical transformation. As Le Jeune entered into the interior of the Canadian woodlands with his Montagnais (Naskapi/Cree) hosts, he quickly found himself bereft of spiritual coordinates, immersed in practices and beliefs that rendered it increasingly difficult for him to maintain the dominant architecture of his own inner world. His account of this time reads like many a captivity narrative wherein the reader apprehends strains of traumatic cultural disorientation and partial assimilation throughout: he negotiates the cultural spaces between what is witnessed and what can be recorded, what he professes to believe and what he maps out in his dreams.

#### DREAM WARS: CROSSING THE DREAM LINE IN THE AMERICAN INTERIOR

When Le Jeune's contemporary the French explorer Samuel de Champlain made his initial forays into the interior of "New France" in 1609, he noticed of "the large number of savages" encamped nearby that they believed "all their dreams are true; and, in fact, there are many who say that they have had visions and dreams about matters which actually come to pass or will do so. But, to tell the truth, these are diabolical visions, through which they

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and Leslie Tuttle, eds., *Dreams, Dreamers, and Visions: The Early Modern Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

are deceived and misled.”<sup>3</sup> Although Champlain immediately apprehended a kind of threat in the indigenous interpretation of dreams, it was not long before he began to engage in this “diabolical” hermeneutics himself. In a passage from his 1609 journal, Champlain mentions the *Pilotois*, or “sooth-sayers,” among the Montagnais who, through dreams and shaking-tent ceremonies, were able to establish contact with the manitous of the spirit world and instruct their comrades where they might find game.<sup>4</sup> Champlain denigrated this practice, referring to these *Pilotois* as “scapegraces” who “out of a hundred do not speak two words that are true.”<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, he appears to have desired for himself the reverence in which these spiritual leaders were held and was soon flirting with the prophetic potential of his own dreams.

Embarking into the American interior with a Montagnais war party, he notes, “they did not fail to practice constantly their accustomed superstitions, in order to ascertain what was to be the result of their undertaking; and they often asked me if I had had a dream, and seen their enemies, to which I replied in the negative.”<sup>6</sup> In the crucial hours before battle with the Iroquois, however, Champlain relates: “While sleeping, I dreamed that I saw our enemies, the Iroquois, drowning in the lake near a mountain, within sight. When I expressed a wish to help them, our allies, the savages, told me we must let them all die, and that they were of no importance. When I awoke, they did not fail to ask me, as usual, if I had had a dream. I told them that I had, in fact, had a dream. This upon being related, gave them so much confidence that they did not doubt any longer that good was to happen to them.”<sup>7</sup>

Gordon M. Sayre, in *Les Sauvages Américains*, interprets Champlain’s description of his dream as a “promise translated into another cultural idiom.”<sup>8</sup> By recounting his dream to his new allies, Champlain was offering

3. Samuel de Champlain, *Voyages of Samuel de Champlain, 1604–1618*, ed. W. L. Grant (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1907), 141–42.

4. The shaking-tent ritual was a practice used to consult manitous on various matters, including the whereabouts of game, and is still part of Innu, Naskapi, and Cree tradition. The medicine man, in an altered state of consciousness, places himself inside a specially constructed tent or wigwam. The shaking of the tent during this ceremony is said to be caused by the powers unleashed during the consultation and not by the individual inside the tent. See Le Jeune’s thorough description in *JR* XII:17–23.

5. Champlain, *Voyages*, 159–60.

6. *Ibid.*, 162.

7. *Ibid.*, 163.

8. Sayre, *Les Sauvages Américains*, 75.

assurance that they would indeed defeat their enemies. Sayre is skeptical of the idea that Champlain might have been enticed by the Montagnais' faith in the power of dreams, noting that "Champlain did not really respect the customs he engaged in, but he knew the importance of playing along."<sup>9</sup> "Playing along," however, is itself a powerful mode of assimilation, and Champlain, despite his reflexive dismissal of Native culture and belief, was as susceptible to such pressures as anyone else. Though his published reflections are unlikely to forward an open rendering of the liminal state into which he had entered, the above passage hints at the performative aspects of colonial identity. As the Muskagee-Creek critic Craig Womack asserts, "I reject . . . the supremacist notion that assimilation can only go in one direction, that white culture always overpowers Indian culture."<sup>10</sup> Sayre's evaluation, while hardly "supremacist," smoothes over Champlain's liminal predicament, his subconscious urge to become a full member of the war party he was "leading." Champlain, of course, was careful to post his own resistance to such a possibility. His tone is largely ironic. But the moment of excess representation slipped in, dreamlike itself, revealing unruly psychic forces at play, so that Champlain's detailed relation of his dream transcends his own pronounced skepticism and, in fact, speaks to a number of repressed desires.

It is no coincidence that, in Champlain's journal, when the Montagnais first show him the land of the Iroquois, or Haudenosaunee, he writes of the "beautiful valleys in these places, with plains productive in grain, such as I had eaten in this country, together with many kinds of fruit without limit."<sup>11</sup> Beyond a doubt, Champlain was already composing the first draft of a promotional tract as he considered the promise of such fruited plains for future French settlement. By supplying the Montagnais with firearms, he had already taken the decisive first step in his hope of colonization. The dream, however, not only located Champlain within an indigenous hermeneutics, but it worked to absolve him of the unprovoked bloodshed in which he was soon to engage (he wished "to help them," he claims). Far from fulfilling this *expressed* wish, the dream helped Champlain repress the violence of his *actual*, barely disguised wish, which was to conquer the Iroquois and claim land for French settlement. As such, his dream anticipates the materials of what would become a powerful literary trope in North America: that of the

9. Ibid.

10. Craig Womack, *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 12.

11. Champlain, *Voyages*, 162.

vanishing Indian who, rather than being forced from his land by the exigencies of colonial violence, passively removed himself from the civilized landscape.<sup>12</sup>

Champlain's complex and shifting performance is helpfully elucidated by Ann Marie Plane and Leslie Tuttle, who note that, invariably, "dream reporting is a social act." The materials of dreams are themselves inaccessible to all but the dreamer, and even in this, the dreamer has only limited ability to reproduce the ephemeral conditions of the dream itself. Plane and Tuttle note that when an individual reports a dream, "the dreamer is constructing a persona and building specific forms of connection with others. . . . Perhaps the most historically significant opportunity for self-assertion through dreams lies in the choice to reveal a dream to others."<sup>13</sup> Champlain, of course, was revealing his dream not only to his Montagnais war party, but to his French audience as well. He needed his dream to operate in two different interpretive worlds at once, and so he tailored the materials of his relation to fit the boundaries prescribed by both social situations. Of utmost importance to the Montagnais audience, we presume, was the prophetic potential of the dream. To his French audience he had to negotiate the tensions between the exigencies of colonial conquest and certain expected pieties of "civilized" conduct. Nevertheless, Champlain had no desire to erase the prophetic possibilities of his dream from the interpretive landscape of his Western audience (if he had, he would not have written of it), but he had to adopt an ironic tone in relation to it so that his subject position remained firmly rooted in acceptable discursive practices. This was no simple performance, however, and as the Iroquois of the dream obligingly sank beneath the congealing materials of a colonized landscape, Champlain experienced a partial submerging of his own persona. The Montagnais' enemies had suddenly become "our enemies," and his articulated resistance to their deaths was ignored or subsumed.<sup>14</sup>

After the Montagnais emerged from battle victorious, as prophesied,

12. The trope of the vanishing Indian has been recognized and cataloged by literary critics for many decades. It presupposes Native peoples as locked in customs belonging to the past, unable to progress, thus removing blame for the violent displacement of Natives away from the colonist and placing it squarely in the lap of the "red man" himself. This device has proven extremely generative for the dominant culture and has been repeated in countless ways in literature, plays, paintings, still photography, and movies.

13. Plane and Tuttle, *Dreams, Dreamers, and Visions*, 6–7.

14. Champlain, *Voyages*, 163.

Champlain remained at least rhetorically subsumed, as his narrative employs only inclusive pronouns thereafter, such as “after gaining the victory *our* men amused themselves by taking a great quantity of Indian corn” and “after feasting sumptuously, dancing and singing, *we* returned three hours after with the prisoners.” It is difficult in these passages to differentiate Champlain from the larger group of “savages,” and he even seems to be a participant in the overall “dancing and singing” so often characterized in colonial literature as diabolical in and of itself. Only when Champlain turns to a description of the torture of Haudenosaunee prisoners does he again reassert the dichotomy between us and them, savage and civilized. As he did in his dream, he distances himself from the troubling violence accompanying this victory.<sup>15</sup> When all is said and done, Champlain reaffirms the boundaries of savagery and civilization by delineating a more humane identity for himself that ultimately allows him to exercise an assumed right of ownership.

Champlain concludes the passage by remarking that “the spot where this attack took place is in latitude 43 degrees, and the lake was called Lake Champlain.”<sup>16</sup> Champlain’s recent biographer David Hackett Fischer has noted that Champlain possessed the rare talent of converting “his dreams into realities,” and, in a sense, we see that at play here. In Fischer’s estimation, Champlain’s dream was that of a “war-weary soldier” who dreamed of “humanity and peace in a world of cruelty and violence. He envisioned a new world as a place where people of different cultures could live together in amity and concord. This became his grand design for North America.”<sup>17</sup> Champlain remains an intriguing and singular figure in the annals of exploration, but we should be wary of this so-called dream of peace. A troubling tension persists in the fact that the Iroquois of Champlain’s dream passively drown themselves in a body of water that, when we trace these coordinates on any map, continues to reflect Champlain’s identity back at us. We might conclude that his act of conquest and appropriation here reflects a more complex design that is, nevertheless, casually *unwitnessed* in our ongoing master narratives of colonial endeavor, our own recurring dream of conquest.

15. *Ibid.*, 166; emphasis added.

16. *Ibid.*, 166.

17. David Hackett Fischer, *Champlain’s Dream* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008), 7. Fischer’s recent biography of Champlain observes (263) that “Champlain exercised his right to name it Lake Champlain on his map, as he and his two French companions may have been the first Europeans to see it.”



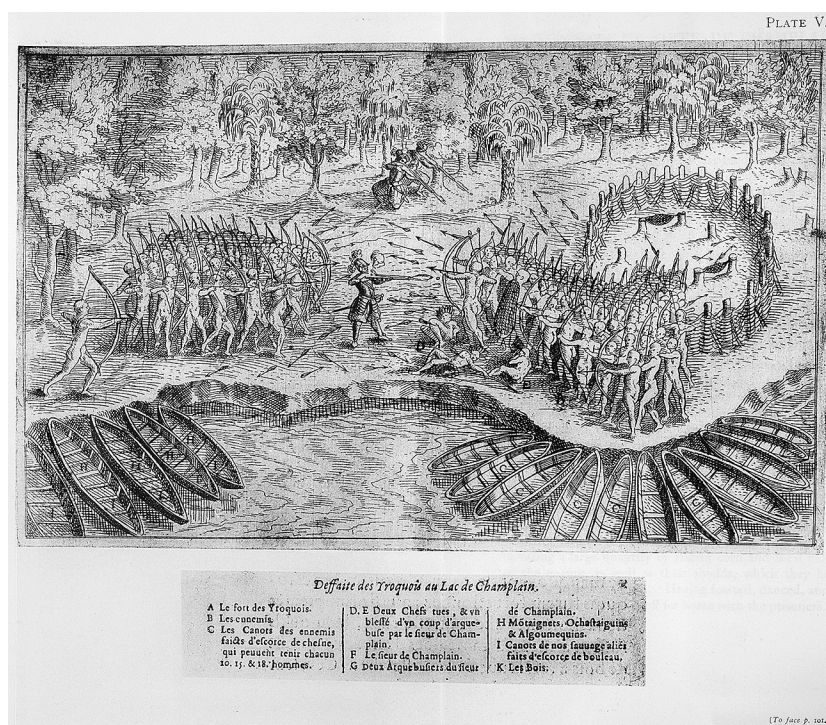


Figure 1. *Defeat of the Iroquois at Lake Champlain*, from *The Works of Samuel de Champlain, in Six Volumes*, ed. H. P. Biggar, trans. John Squair, vol. 2 (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1925). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society.

#### “THE WORLD CREATED BY CONTACT” AND THE TRANSNATIONALISM OF DREAMING

The landscapes of dream are akin to continents without borders. Disparate forces bound to meet up with some kind of particular resistance in our waking lives drift together in dreams without the usual tensions, a Pangea of unarticulated thought, provoking mysterious, unformed longings, liaisons, and apprehensions, the traces of which haunt our waking hours. Dreams push us to explore our free-floating anxieties and desires against the other, more delineated world of rigidly defined nationalisms, ethnicities, genders, and countless other acknowledged and unacknowledged boundaries; they are uncharted territories, interiors without maps, and, what's more, they resist any attempt at mapping.

In Plato's *Republic*, Socrates comments on our unchecked human desires and how they “bestir themselves in dreams, when the gentler part of the

soul slumbers, and the control of reason is withdrawn; then the wild beast in us, full-fed with meat or drink, becomes rampant and shakes off sleep to go in quest of what will gratify its own instincts. As you know, it will cast away all shame and prudence at such moments and stick at nothing. In phantasy it will not shrink from intercourse with a mother or anyone else, man, god, or brute, or from forbidden food, or any deed of blood.”<sup>18</sup> In a sense, as “the control of reason is withdrawn” in dreaming, the performative aspects of our identity are shed as well. Only when we cross the border from dream back into the state of consciousness do we necessarily begin to reimpose external orders of “civilization” and culture through processes of interpretation and forgetting. But in the liminal space between sleeping and the imagined order that comes of waking, we perhaps find ourselves stripped naked, inhabiting other unacknowledged selves.

Western culture’s most well-known authority on dreams, Sigmund Freud, could not help demarcating the space between dreaming and waking as a kind of nationalized geography, referring to the “boundary between the unconscious and preconscious” mind as a disputed borderland region.<sup>19</sup> In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud echoes the sentiments of Plato, noting how dreams are made possible by “a withdrawal of the watchers from the gates of the intellect,” as though border agents relaxed their guard at night, allowing undocumented thoughts to slip past their posts.<sup>20</sup> He muses, “When we say that a preconscious idea is repressed and subsequently absorbed by the unconscious, we might be tempted by these images, borrowed from the idea of a struggle for a particular territory, to assume that an arrangement is really broken up . . . and replaced by a new one.”<sup>21</sup> The dream, and the unacknowledged desires carried with it, is posited as an infiltrator or invader that absorbs and subsumes. Freud reminds us that these infiltrations are fleeting, however, and hold sway only in the slumbering state, until the regime of consciousness can once again reassemble its seemingly unopposed order.<sup>22</sup>

18. Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, trans. Francis MacDonald Cornford (London: Oxford University Press, 1945), 296–97.

19. Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. A. A. Brill (1899; repr., New York: Modern Library, 1950), 397.

20. *Ibid.*, 15.

21. *Ibid.*, 460.

22. I have no interest in presenting Freud as the final arbiter of dream interpretation within Western tradition. Modern dream theory has evolved considerably since Freud’s early musings and spreads into a variety of disciplines, from psychotherapy to anthropology to literary studies. Dreams have been defined as a processing of universal cognitive symbols, as the key to interpreting cultural patterns of thought

By contrast, Craig Womack, the Muskogean-Creek author of *Red on Red*, notes how in “the process of decolonizing one’s mind, a first step before one can achieve a political consciousness and engage oneself in activism, has to begin with imagining some alternative,” the ability to “include other worlds as well.”<sup>23</sup> The worlds of which he speaks are rooted in geographical, cultural, and psychological structures that involve the world of dreaming alongside the realm of conscious thought. Briefly relating the tradition of the Creek “deer dancers,” Womack notes that one of the keys to survival in changing times is the power to transcend forms and boundaries, symbolized in some manner by the Creek hunter’s ability to enter into the deer world while dreaming and take on the deer’s characteristics. “The revelatory moment,” he tells us, “is the realization that dreaming and waking, natural and supernatural, are deeply intertwined, and moments of grace reveal these intricate relationships.”<sup>24</sup> In thinking through the value of indigenous viewpoints expressed in his own Muskogean-Creek culture, Womack is not simply seeking alternative worlds and states. He is performing an overtly political act, reimagining the master paradigms of colonization by which Natives have, for five hundred years, been “whipped into believing we have no intellectual history of our own.” He suggests that by focusing on Creek intellectual and narrative traditions, he will come to better understand and engage with other ways of knowing that have implications beyond the “‘world created by contact.’”<sup>25</sup>

On the surface, at least, Womack’s articulation of the dream state is not entirely in opposition to Freud’s, who suggested that dreaming “may be enrolled in the continuity of the intelligible psychic activities of the waking state.”<sup>26</sup> Freud, in keeping with the values of Western culture, was keen on charting the wilderness of dream. The illusion of continuity he speaks to is of central significance to Western narrative structures, and one might argue

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in ethnographic studies, and as random stimuli produced by REM stages of sleep. I am most interested in contemporary dream theory as it relates to narrative and trauma. Both Cathy Caruth and Judith Herman (quoted later in this article) explore perceived limitations in Freud’s insights and help us see the (at times) overly determined nature of his reported outcomes. Freud does, however, remain the most commonly recognized figure associated with the psychological processes of dreaming and psychoanalysis in general.

23. Womack, *Red on Red*, 230.

24. *Ibid.*, 232.

25. *Ibid.*, 12, quoting Joel W. Martin, *Sacred Revolt: The Muskogees’ Struggle for a New World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), 179.

26. Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 33.

that the cognitive schemata of human experience, our “intelligible psychic activities,” are shaped by this need to assert a template of continuity over both the conscious and unconscious mind. Womack’s dream world is also at least partially couched in the terms of continuance and wish fulfillment. He notes how the evocation of the deer world enables one to imagine “life without colonialism.”<sup>27</sup> Though both authors speak of the significance of dreaming to our conscious lives, however, in Freud’s version we find ourselves asserting authority over the dream by assigning it meanings from within Western culture’s sense of the contiguous, integrated self. The dreaming state is not for Freud, or Western culture in general, a communication with alterity. Freud regarded the idea that dreams “brought inspirations from the gods and demons” as ridiculously “primitive.”<sup>28</sup> The dream, however seemingly mysterious, is beholden to the conception of the world as comprehended by our conscious states. Womack, however, allows for a world of dream that exists separate from the individual, an “alternate world” that claims equal or greater psychic significance, but one that has not been colonized by the conscious state. The deer dancer assimilates to the dream by assuming the deer’s characteristics. In short, one framework seems to require forms of mastery, whereas the other invokes cooperation and the forging of “intricate relationships.” One chooses to view the dream world as a wilderness in need of taming, while the other experiences the dream world as an integral extension of its own cultural and ceremonial expression.

These are not, I imagine, insignificant epistemological differences even if the psychic phenomena that enable them are related. In *Unclaimed Experience*, Cathy Caruth describes consciousness as a process of protecting ourselves from the raw materials of experience by placing them in time.<sup>29</sup> Dreams can be enlisted in this endeavor as well, collecting conscious experiences and attempting to reconcile these with our repressed urges that exist outside the parameters of acceptable social behavior. For what is this sense of integration of which we speak, whether experienced by the self or by the discourse community the self inhabits, but a manifestation or affect of cultural narrative? We rely on strong cultural narratives to supply our sense of identity, to tell us who and what we are and how we cohere as individuals in space and time. To quote the Cherokee writer Thomas King, “When we imagine history, we imagine a grand structure, a national chronicle, a closely

27. Womack, *Red on Red*, 230.

28. Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 4.

29. Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 61.

organized and guarded record of agreed-upon events and interpretations, a bundle of ‘authenticities’ and ‘truths’ welded into a flexible yet conservative narrative that explains how we got from here to there.”<sup>30</sup> Caruth and others describe losing this sense of experiential integration as a species of trauma. A psychologist and trauma expert, Judith Herman, speaks of trauma as “a kind of fragmentation . . . [that] tears apart a complex system of self-protection that normally functions in an integrated fashion.”<sup>31</sup> When we lose this integration, this closely guarded “bundle of authenticities,” we forfeit our sense of identity and an ability to feel rooted in a particular world.

The exigencies of contact, replete with contestations for land, resources, and social structures, are always potentially ripe for such violent fragmentation—a traumatic disruption of narrative continuity. When a particular social system of protections (by which Caruth defines consciousness) collapses, the loss of experiential integration occurs in the disruption of culture, the forced disavowal of spiritual practices, the violent erasure of language and custom, and the disintegration of tight kinship networks. In short, it constitutes the violent disruption of the stories that give life meaning. Paradoxically, the colonizing culture experiences a loss of integration as well, as it is forced to confront its own acquisitiveness and capacities for violence (in a word, its own *savagery*) and begins to construct ameliorating narratives that unhinge themselves from lived experience, imposing counterfeit realities and forged identities—what Larzer Ziff has referred to as the “powerful drift from immanence to representation.”<sup>32</sup> A recent study on the effects of “cultural trauma” in the colonial encounter observes that “the intended and unintended consequences of these cultural interplays [have] profound and long-lasting effects, which in some cases literally redefine either or both groups.” Though it is the colonized who endure unspeakable physical and cultural violence, significant psychic ruptures occur on either end, the legacy of which “may retain salience across generations.”<sup>33</sup>

30. Thomas King, *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 3.

31. Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 34.

32. Larzer Ziff, *Writing in the New Nation: Prose, Print, and Politics in the Early United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), xi.

33. B. Hudnall Stamm, Henry E. Stamm IV, Amy C. Hudnall, and Craig Higson-Smith, “Considering a Theory of Cultural Trauma and Loss,” *Journal of Loss and Trauma* 9, no. 1 (2003): 95. For more on the effects of cultural trauma, specifically in relation to indigenous cultures, see Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart and Lemyra DeBruyn, “The American Indian Holocaust: Healing Historical Unresolved Grief,” *American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research* 8, no. 2

Trauma scholars note that the psychic disassociation connected to these processes is signaled in recurring dreams that are stuck at the moment of traumatic breakdown. The subject becomes involved in a strenuous task of attempting to master the initial moment of rupture by placing it back into a comprehensible narrative framework. The problem, however, is that in the wake of such violent fragmentation the former narrative framework is, by definition, no longer serviceable; it has been ruptured beyond recovery, at which point one either creates innovative new alternatives or remains like a needle stuck at a certain point on a record, unable to stop replaying the same disassociated burp of sound over and over again. The survivor cannot go forward because troubling knowledge has blocked the way, whereas going back forces one to confront the rupture anew. Judith Herman concludes that traumatic dreams “may offer an opportunity for mastery, but most survivors do not consciously seek or welcome the opportunity. Rather, they dread and fear it. Reliving a traumatic experience, whether in the form of intrusive memories, dreams, or actions, carries with it the emotional intensity of the original event. The survivor is continually buffeted by terror and rage.”<sup>34</sup>

The moment of contact between Native and colonist is one we return to again and again in our cultural productions, not unlike the needle stuck on the record of history or the distilled residue of a recurring dream. From the multiple reworkings of John Smith’s Pocahontas narrative to *Dances with Wolves*, to the recent 3-D blockbuster *Avatar*, we find ourselves perpetually grasping at the raw materials of this event, feverishly repurposing it, attempting to map out new pathways and connections as though we might one day trace its roots back to the fruit of some other tree. And although over the course of centuries this dream encounter has fallen under various interpretive frameworks, the fact of its recurrence speaks not only to its usefulness in the maintenance of dominant epistemological structures, but also to some essential failure of this perceived moment to fully integrate itself into a satisfying narrative cartography.

As we attempt to forge more responsible and healing engagements with colonial history, we must not discount the indigenous epistemology that allows for assimilation to the framework of the dream. We must ask ourselves what happens when the colonial dream of cultural containment

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(1998): 60–82; Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Cambridge, Mass.: South End Press, 2005); Eduardo Duran and Bonnie Duran, *Native American Postcolonial Psychology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).

34. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 42.

bumps up against the indigenous dream of cultural engagement on a continent of which, before Columbus, few Europeans had dreamed? And to what extent does the assertion of mastery require a degree of assimilation in the world “created by contact”? Even more than Samuel de Champlain, Paul Le Jeune found himself caught within a troubling dynamic in his 1634 narrative, where to demonstrate any degree of assimilation or to acknowledge the legitimacy of indigenous custom would violate the narrative enforced by colonialism and discredit its purportedly altruistic spiritual designs. Le Jeune would always return to his starting position, regardless of what he learned to the contrary. This remains, almost without exception, the controlling colonial paradigm, a kind of fever dream where the limbs refuse to function and no one can move forward; the players remain stuck in place, “continually buffeted by terror and rage.” Not only trauma survivors, but also the cultures to which they belong, are encouraged to engage in systematic processes of denial and forgetting, or what I refer to as *unwitnessing*. It isn’t simply the violence of isolated individual traumatic moments that becomes displaced in this forgetting, but history itself, Western culture’s dream of mastery, which must also undergo a kind of revision or interpretation to keep intact its original sense of integration.

#### SPEAKING WITH THE MANITOU: THE INTERPRETATION OF DREAMS IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY NEW FRANCE

Paul Le Jeune came to New France in 1633 to head up the Jesuit missionary endeavors in the region. Although he was not the first European priest to attempt these colonial backwaters, he was able to establish a permanent mission in the area of modern-day Quebec and experienced limited success in his goal of converting the Native people to his faith. Most of his converts were either the sick and dying (as pandemic disease spread mercilessly through the region) or the children left orphaned by the sick and dying. Deciding that he would never make real headway with the local Natives until he learned their language, Le Jeune gamely determined to winter with a group of Montagnais from the fall of 1633 to the spring of 1634 and, for a season at least, became immersed in the world of this particular band. The experience afforded Le Jeune fascinating insights into Montagnais life and culture, but it also positioned him in an epic struggle for his own cultural identity.

Like Champlain, who would become governor of the fledgling colony and with whom he was well acquainted, Le Jeune found himself conflicted by indigenous interpretations of dreams. He apprehended not only a spiritual but a physical threat in their custom, noting that “if a Savage dreams

that he will die if he does not kill me, he will take my life the first time he meets me alone.”<sup>35</sup> Le Jeune remarked on this possibility a number of times in his *Relation*, in one instance recording how a “Savage” came to see him, desiring some tobacco:

One of his sons-in-law had dreamed that we would give him a piece of petun, or tobacco, as long as his hand. I refused him, saying that I did not give anything on account of dreams; that they were only folly, and that, when I knew his language, I would explain to him how they originated. He replied to me that all nations had something especially their own; that, if our dreams were not true, theirs were; and that they would die if they did not execute them. According to this idea, our lives depend upon the dreams of a Savage; because, if they dream that they have to kill us, they will surely do it if they can . . . This shows one of the great risks that we run here; it does not frighten me; we may die for God in dying because of a dream.<sup>36</sup>

Like most of his assumptions concerning Montagnais culture, Le Jeune’s understanding of the significance placed on dreams was partial at best. The Native speaker attempted to explain that the practice contained dimensions beyond what Le Jeune was willing to acknowledge. But Le Jeune was insistent on the rhetorical imposition of his own worldview, even as the necessity of making cultural accommodations asserted itself on the peripheries of his narrative. He writes, “But to return to our Savage; I asked him if it would be necessary to execute my dream, in case I had dreamed that I should kill him. He replied that his son-in-law’s dream was not bad; and just as he believed us when we told him something, or when we showed him a picture, so likewise we ought to believe him when he told us something that was accepted by his people.”<sup>37</sup> In the end, despite Le Jeune’s philosophical objections to this type of discourse, he notes, “Finally we found it necessary to give him some [tobacco], taking good care to make him understand that it was not in consideration of his dream, and that we would refuse him whatever he asked under that pretext.”<sup>38</sup> Le Jeune did not *decide* to offer up the tobacco so much as he found it “necessary” to do so, denouncing the dream on the one hand, but conceding to its demands on the other. His narrative affords many such moments in which pragmatic action fails to measure up to ideological assertions.

35. *JR*, VI:181.

36. *Ibid.*, 157–59.

37. *Ibid.*, 159.

38. *Ibid.*



Le Jeune apprehended a threat to his cognitive order in the implied disintegration between dream and reality in Montagnais customs. In his early interactions he wondered if his Native neighbors weren't communicating with "an angel or some powerful being" when "consulting their Manitou," and he pondered the possibility of there being both "good and bad Manitou."<sup>39</sup> He quickly determined, however, to characterize all such interactions as discourse with the devil, and he referred to the spiritual leaders most capable of engaging in such discourse as "Sorcerers." "Not that the Devil communicates with them as obviously as he does with the Sorcerers and Magicians of Europe," he qualifies, "but we have no other name to give them, since they even do some of the acts of genuine sorcerers,—as, to kill one another by charms, or wishes, and imprecations, by the abetment of the Manitou."<sup>40</sup>

As Le Jeune's comments suggest, a belief in the divinatory power of dreams was by no means exclusive to indigenous peoples. Seventeenth-century Europeans, too, were often perplexed by the ambiguous nature of these psychic visitations and were known to invest dreams with the supernatural power to augur the future or connect with what the historian David Hall refers to as "a world of wonders."<sup>41</sup> There are few who are not, at some hour of their lives, at least partially convinced of a dream's ability to speak in some coded or extradimensional fashion to matters of great significance to themselves. Revelatory dreams remain a staple of Western folklore, as well as the literary and film archive of our own times. They serve as a device to help forward narratives and imbue audiences with a sense of mystery that strikes close to the heart of their own experience. The very evangelical order on which the Jesuits based their mission to the New World traced itself back to the dream of the apostle Paul (Le Jeune's Christian namesake), who beheld a vision of Christ in broad daylight on the road to Damascus and for whom a later "vision appeared . . . in the night . . . [of] a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us" (Acts 16:9). As Hall notes, the Bible was, in fact, the "wonder book" par excellence, with its "narratives of visions, voices, witches, and strange deaths [that] lent credence to such stories of a later date."<sup>42</sup>

The Jesuits nevertheless remained cautious when it came to interpreting

39. Ibid., V:157.

40. Ibid., VII:7.

41. David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Beliefs in Early New England* (New York: Knopf, 1989), 71.

42. Ibid., 75.

dreams, acknowledging the revelatory contexts of Christian tradition, but also committed to rational inquiry and emerging Enlightenment thought. Even the classical sources differed in regard to the sources of dreams; the high rationalists like Aristotle were dismissive of divine causation, but other “authorities,” such as Macrobius, Artemidorus, and later figures like the astronomer Johannes Kepler and philosopher René Descartes, believed their work to be divinely inspired in dreams.<sup>43</sup> But the authoritarian character of European cultural organization was not one that relished the idea of relinquishing spiritual authority to disembodied voices speaking willy-nilly to just anyone they pleased. However commonplace, belief in the revelatory power of dreams was culturally marginalized in the world of seventeenth-century Europe, relegated to the domain of primitive superstition and, in certain cases, heresy. Revelation was a much-guarded power, possessed only by saints and divines.

When common folk intruded on the territory of direct revelation, they ran the risk of threatening orthodoxy. Therefore, when Le Jeune referred to Native medicine men and dreamers as “*jongleurs*” and “sorcerers,” he was directly comparing them to those “charlatans” who celebrated quasi-pagan ceremonies such as Mardi Gras and “festivals of fools.” There had, in fact, been a steep rise in the practice and perception of demonology in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe, which resulted in the rampant prosecution of witches and a concerted effort among intellectual and religious elites to “root out the demonic conspiracy.”<sup>44</sup> Olivia Bloechl observes how carnival season in France was replete with “masqueraders” whose songs “formed an important part of their attempts to communicate the desires revealed in their dreams,” provoking Le Jeune’s contemporary and fellow Jesuit Claude Dablon to observe, “It is not in America alone that people seem to take pleasure in being deceived.”<sup>45</sup> At about the same time Le Jeune was commenting on the Native relationship to the world of dream in New France, Anne Hutchinson was being driven out of the New England colony for experiencing prophetic dreams and claiming a direct connection to the voice of God.

43. See Peter Holland, “‘The Interpretation of Dreams’ in the Renaissance,” in Peter Brown, ed., *Reading Dreams: The Interpretation of Dreams from Chaucer to Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

44. Plane and Tuttle, *Dreams, Dreamers, and Visions*, 12.

45. Olivia Bloechl, “Wendat Song and Carnival Noise in the Jesuit *Relations*,” in Joshua David Bellin and Laura L. Mielke, eds., *Native Acts: Indian Performance, 1603–1832* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 130, 131.

In essence, a hierarchical Christian culture, with its foundation built on the contained scripture of alphabetic literacy, was one that could not suffer spiritual freelancers or unauthorized revelations. Christian orthodoxy affords primacy to the textualized word of God (a fully integrated cultural narrative), and therefore remains at odds with the more heterodox structure of Native belief systems. It became an imperative of the Jesuits' mission to contain Native dreams either by denouncing them as the antics of charlatans or pronouncing them diabolical in nature. As Ann Marie Plane and Leslie Tuttle point out, "By locating dream practices as the province of Native Americans (or vulgar peasants, or evangelical crackpots), elite European thinkers redefined the criteria for authoritative knowledge and asserted their superiority."<sup>46</sup> It wasn't that the Jesuits discounted the possibility of other-worldly voices manifesting a psychological presence, but for Le Jeune and his compatriots it was of utmost importance to insist that these unmediated dream voices were not of God but of the devil.

Indigenous encounters with dreaming were quite different, however, from the European model and were often comprehended within elaborate ceremonial structures that were integral to the survival of the community. Le Jeune was at least partially aware of the relationship the Montagnais cultivated with the world of animal spirits, or manitou, and had ample opportunity to mark the traditional practices by which these relationships were nurtured and maintained. As he explained of the local Montagnais who made their encampments alongside his Three Rivers settlement in 1637:

It is the office of the Sorcerer to interpret dreams. . . . The Romans had their Augurs, who did the same thing. They say that when one dreams he has seen a great deal of Moose meat, it is a sign of life; but if one dreams of a Bear, it is a sign of death. I have already said several times that these Charlatans sing and beat their drums to cure the sick, to kill their enemies in war, and to capture animals in the hunt. Pigarouich, the Sorcerer of whom I have spoken above, sang to us once the song he uses when he intends to go hunting. He uttered only these words, *Iagoua mou itoutaoui ne e-e*, which he repeated several times in different tones, grave and heavy, although pleasant to the ear. We asked him why he sang this to capture animals. "I learned," said he, "this song in a dream; and that is why I have preserved and used it since."<sup>47</sup>

46. Plane and Tuttle, *Dreams, Dreamers, and Visions*, 15.

47. *JR*, VII:9–11.

Much of what he dismisses in his account as random or nonsensical is, in fact, in keeping with ceremonial designs of which he was a frequent witness and occasional participant. Le Jeune notes of Montagnais singing that it was done, as in “most of the nations of the earth, for recreation and for devotion, which for them means superstition,” and he states that he was “often invited” to sing along. He remarks on the reciprocal nature invoked in these performances when he observes, “I have often heard my Savage make a long song with these three words, Kaie, nir, khigatoutaouim, ‘And thou wilt do something for me.’”<sup>48</sup> This song suggests something of the level of negotiation taking place between man and spirit world, as the medicine man nurtured his relationship with the manitous of caribou, moose, and beaver, mapping out a successful path for his band to pursue in the coming hunt. As Le Jeune was told by one of his Montagnais “sorcerers” in 1637 (keep in mind Le Jeune’s practice of substituting the word *devil* for the word *manitou*), “the Devil made himself known through dreams. A Moose will present itself to a man in his sleep, and will say to him, ‘Come to me.’ The Savage, upon awakening, goes in search of the Moose he has seen. Having found it, if he hurls or launches his javelin upon it, the beast falls stone dead.”<sup>49</sup>

Hans M. Carlson, who spent time living with the James Bay Crees in the 1980s and has written respectfully of their world and traditions, notes that “through dreams . . . the hunter can map out this geography and the resources that are available to him to partake in the relationship with other-than-human beings. Knowledge and power come in dreams, and, like songs, dreams are an expression of hope, which shapes reality as the hunter tells others of what he has dreamt.”<sup>50</sup> Such an engagement with dreaming may strike the Western mind as inchoate and perhaps even childish, but Carlson comes to appreciate how these beliefs are compatible with the exigencies of life and survival in the James Bay region. Carlson, as an outsider to this community, rightly disclaims any authoritative comprehension of Cree spirituality, but he recognizes that hunting and, by extension, life itself in the James Bay region is a “holy” activity and that “the narrative of reciprocity with the animal world is far more meaningful for the hunter than are any anthropological explanations of that narrative, and so it is in a real sense both practical and rational.”<sup>51</sup>

48. Ibid., VI:183.

49. Ibid., XII:13.

50. Hans M. Carlson, *Home Is the Hunter: The James Bay Cree and Their Land* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), 56.

51. Ibid., 50.

Dreaming, singing, and hunting are all interrelated acts for the Montagnais-Crees. As the Canadian ethnographer Adrian Tanner observes, for the individual most qualified to procure the aid of the manitou, the first thing wanted “was not the traps or the tin stove, but the drum,” which was used “to accompany the hunting songs, which come to them through spiritual revelation and which they sing in the evening to the spirits.”<sup>52</sup> Carlson, too, notes that “the real hunt happened long before the hunter picked up his snow shoes to go to the bush. It happened when he communicated with the animals and asked for their help in feeding his family; their answer would be based upon their knowledge of whether he had been grateful for what they had given in the past.”<sup>53</sup> Like the Creek deer dancers mentioned earlier, the Cree hunter did not see himself in a hierarchical or domineering relationship with the “Game Bosses” (animal spirits or manitou), but he was beholden to them for crucial knowledge about how the animals lived and thought. This information was not only part of an ongoing personal communication but also had been woven into long-standing traditions and practices. As Carlson relates, “There are stories of culture heroes mastering the skills and relationships of this complex world . . . others tell of the ways that people have lived with the animals in their world, where they live and speak as humans, and of how the animals help the hunter when he is in trouble.”<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, for Le Jeune, a code of conduct that submitted to being ruled by the seemingly arbitrary dictates of dream left open the possibility of radical unwarranted acts and made the process of conversion to Christianity nearly impossible.

“IF A FRENCHMAN SOMETIMES GETS LOST IN THESE WOODS”:  
LE JEUNE GOES OFF MAP

Le Jeune characterized his 1633–34 winter with the Montagnais Indians as a kind of mock epic, detailing his heroic attempts to maintain cultural authority under conditions that struck him as borderline absurd. He was initially repulsed by the hardships of this life: the smoke, the cold, the hunger, the long marches with heavy loads, and his isolation as a cultural outsider. Of no use in the hunt, he had to pass his days in the domestic space of the camps, foraging for wood, fetching water, and helping build their

52. Adrian Tanner, foreword to Dorothy K. Burnham, *To Please the Caribou: Painted Caribou-Skin Coats Worn by the Naskapi, Montagnais, and Cree Hunters of the Quebec-Labrador Peninsula* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992), ix.

53. Carlson, *Home Is the Hunter*, 49.

54. *Ibid.*, 48.

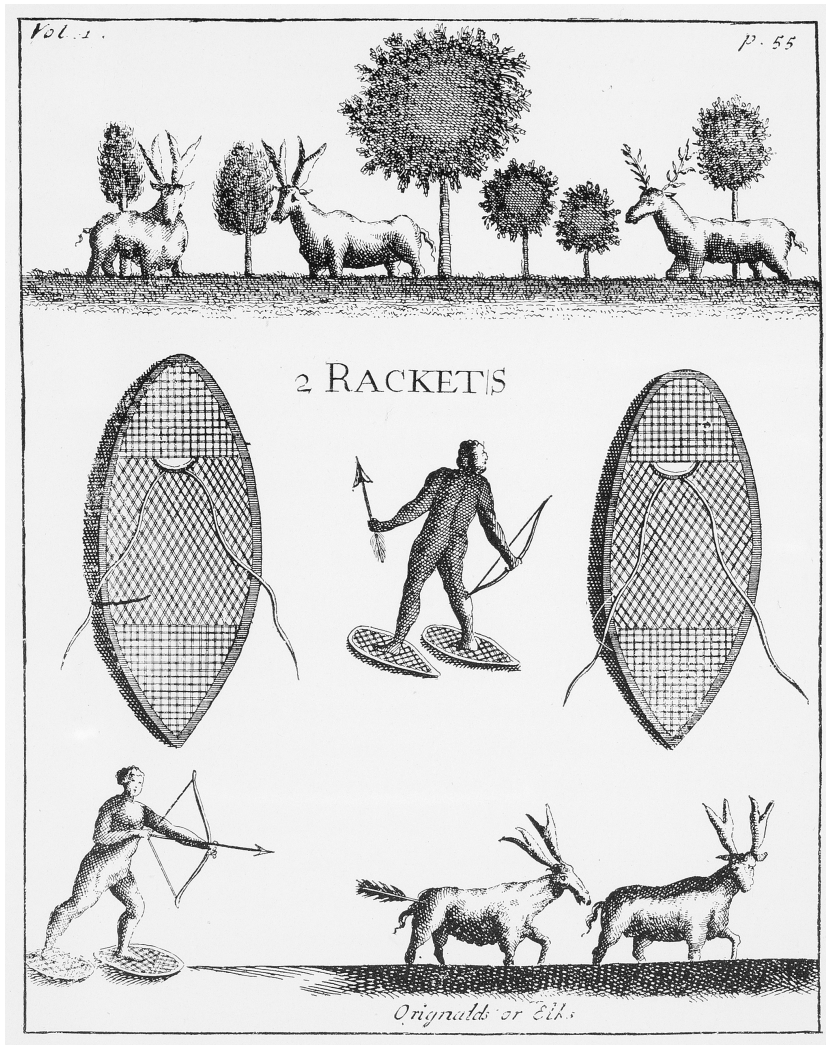


Figure 2. *Curiosity of the Rackets and the Way of Hunting Elk*, from Baron de Lahontan, *New Voyages in North America* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1905). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society.

“houses.” But even here he was necessarily deficient and noted that “the Savages made sport of me because I was not a good pack horse, being satisfied to carry my cloak which was heavy enough . . . and their sneers which were not as heavy as my body.”<sup>55</sup> Carrying camp loads was the task of women in Montagnais culture, as the men needed to be relatively free to strike quickly at game or enemies should the necessity present itself. The Jesuits tended to regard this as part of a hierarchy in which women were considered no better than pack mules or slaves. Carol Devens observes that the Jesuits “assumed that the sexual division of labor reflected status, as it did in Europe: women’s food processing, tool making, and camp tasks were manual work and thus drudgery.”<sup>56</sup> Although Devens observes that the role of women was more highly valued by indigenous peoples than the Jesuits acknowledged, Le Jeune was nevertheless frustrated that his status among the Montagnais was thoroughly feminized. He had commented a year earlier that “our Savage, seeing Father de Noue carrying wood, began to laugh, saying ‘He’s really a woman’; meaning that he was doing woman’s work.”<sup>57</sup> Now that he was compelled to fill such a role himself, this understanding probably exacerbated Le Jeune’s strained relationship with the rest of the band.

Le Jeune’s travels took him deep into the Canadian interior, the blank spaces on the map, far from any French settlement. He recounts how one night he was asked by his Native “host” how it was “the earth was made; and, bringing me a piece of bark and some charcoal, he had me describe it.”<sup>58</sup> Le Jeune proceeded to sketch out the known world on birchbark, depicting the North American continent and where it connected to South America, noting the various colonial claims and indigenous peoples inhabiting those distant areas. The scene offers what would seem to be a rare and perhaps surprising moment in which Native and colonizer are seen exchanging knowledge through indigenous systems of communication, part of what Matt Cohen has recently referred to as “the networked wilderness” in recognition of the frequency with which indigenous and settler systems of communication necessarily interfaced.<sup>59</sup> It is also, inescapably, an example of what Gayatri Spivak

55. *JR*, VII:115.

56. Carol Devens, *Countering Colonization: Native American Women and Great Lakes Missions, 1630–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 24.

57. *JR*, VI:133.

58. *Ibid.*, VII:187.

59. See Matt Cohen, *The Networked Wilderness: Communication in Early New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

has referred to as “worlding.”<sup>60</sup> Knowledge in the Americas always had to be presented as flowing in one direction: from the European—whose books, arts, and superior science made him the sole repository of “truths”—to the untutored Native whose “savage” culture, as Le Jeune repeatedly admonished, is mired in “ignorance and stupidity.”<sup>61</sup>

The Jesuit’s sense of order was subverted, however, when his host, confronted with Le Jeune’s impromptu *mappa mundi*, enthusiastically responded, “This black robe tells the truth . . . for we are acquainted with the greater part of these lands and tribes, and thou has described them as they are.”<sup>62</sup> The host, too, was a man of the world and revealed a hemispheric knowledge that, if lodged in a different epistemological framework from the Jesuit’s, was no less well informed.<sup>63</sup> Le Jeune, however, remained doggedly insistent on the cultural superiority of the French. He not only understood the Montagnais world to be a trackless space devoid of geographical bearings, but also comprehended their spiritual state as desert wilderness awaiting the imprint of Christian order. Le Jeune persisted, because he could be seen speaking the truth in worldly affairs, that his host might also believe him “when I speak to thee of things about heaven.”<sup>64</sup> Unremarkably, the host was not persuaded by this bit of sophistry, but his surprising range of geographical expertise (not to mention his familiarity with the concept of using charcoal and birchbark for mapmaking) was commented on no further. In fact, it had to be suppressed in the wake of Le Jeune’s more insistent cultural conviction that “grace, politeness, the knowledge of the arts, natural sciences, and much less supernatural truths, have as yet no place in this hemisphere.”<sup>65</sup>

60. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archive,” *History and Theory* 24, no. 3 (October 1985): 247–72. Spivak’s discussion of “worlding” focuses on colonial practices in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century India that operated on what she refers to as the “presupposition of an unscribed earth” (264). The colonist inscribes his own name and order on the landscape with the understanding that indigenous populations have no commensurate notion of order to which they need refer.

61. *JR*, X:147.

62. *Ibid.*, VII:187–89.

63. In reality, neither Le Jeune nor his host had been to the places described on the map. Thus, both claims may be comprehended as founded in hearsay, or reports transmitted through intermediaries by means of either written or oral networks of communication. The assumption that the French version would be more accurate is not necessarily a given when one realizes the endless layers of inaccuracies reported by Jesuit missionaries and other seventeenth-century explorers in the New World.

64. *JR*, VII:187.

65. *Ibid.*, 7–9.



Colonial obsessions with controlling the borders of both geography and identity stood in stark opposition to the epistemological structures of North America's indigenous communities, whose mapping of the world, in the words of the Abenaki historian Lisa Brooks, consisted of "a network of relations and waterways containing many different groups of people as well as animal, plant, and rock beings that was sustained through the transformative 'being' of its inhabitants."<sup>66</sup> Rachel Adams notes that Native geographies are "defined not by the borders of the United States, Canada or Mexico, but by the routes and roots established . . . long before the first European arrivals."<sup>67</sup> Hundreds of years of colonial reporting have mostly succeeded in extinguishing such knowledge, shaping mainstream impressions of Native culture as an entity locked and isolated in a state of puerile stagnation, parochial, illiterate, its tribal structures stifled by vast unimproved wilderness landscapes that afforded limited resources for travel, trade, and subsistence. This construction defies not only the complexity of Native social systems, land management, and traditions, but the vast networks of trade and cultural exchange that tracked the supposed "desert waste" of the North American continent. As one prolific French fur trader, the Baron de Lahontan, pointed out, the area between Quebec and Montreal was a virtual megalopolis, so "replenish'd with [indigenous] inhabitants, that one might justly call 'em two continued villages of sixty Leagues in length."<sup>68</sup> But despite indisputable archaeological evidence that such vast communities and trade networks existed, we must absolutely strain to locate such realities within the colonists' archive.

Le Jeune claimed of the Montagnais that when things became desperate with them, they "played at 'save himself who can'; throwing away their bark and baggage, deserting each other, and abandoning all interest in the common welfare."<sup>69</sup> But when their supplies did finally run thin in the coldest stretches of winter, Le Jeune was surprised to see just the opposite occur. At one point, their evening meal was interrupted by a wandering family that had "passed several days without eating." The starving man, woman, and newborn child were welcomed into their encampment in a moment that

66. Lisa Brooks, *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 3.

67. Rachel Adams, *Continental Divides: Remapping the Cultures of North America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 59.

68. Louis Armand, baron de Lahontan, *New Voyages to North America*, 2 vols. (1703; repr., Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1905), 1:52.

69. *JR*, VII:49.

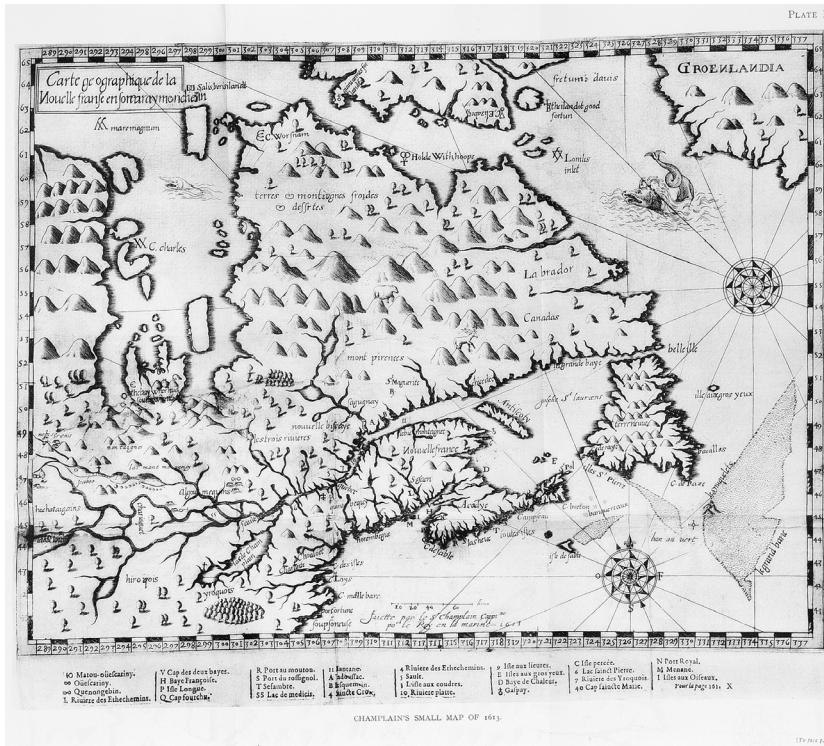


Figure 3. Champlain's small map of New France, 1613, from *The Works of Samuel de Champlain, in Six Volumes*, ed. H. P. Biggar, trans. John Squair, vol. 2 (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1925). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society.

might well have struck Le Jeune for its Christian overtones. "But admire, if you please," he writes with barely concealed bitterness, "the love these barbarians have for each other. These new guests were not asked why they came upon our boundaries, if they were not well aware that we were in as great straits as they." Although they had come, as Le Jeune notes, "to take the morsels right out of our mouths," nevertheless "they were received, not with words, but with deeds; without exterior ceremony, for of this the savages have none, but not without courtesy."<sup>70</sup> His remarks are both insulting and astonished. He mocks the Natives for their apparent lack of ceremony

70. Ibid., 177.

and yet cannot help recognizing the level of humanity exhibited, bespeaking Christian ideals imperfectly practiced among Christians themselves.

Many such moments found their way into Le Jeune's account. His host, Mestigoit, often carried Le Jeune's loads for him when the priest was unable to bear up under the travails of their journey.<sup>71</sup> When Le Jeune found his hands growing dangerously cold, Mestigoit exchanged his warm, labor-heated gloves for Le Jeune's frozen ones. Perhaps, at such moments, Le Jeune's own stinginess with his few possessions and trade goods came back to haunt him. His practice of doling out gifts like tobacco and wine only when it suited his purposes left him at odds with the Montagnais, who shared everything they possessed among themselves and their guests. Le Jeune began to fail both physically and spiritually. When he reached his lowest ebb on the journey, his host again consoled him, offering what might stand as a statement broadly articulating an indigenous view of the land and Native space in general. Gesturing toward the majestic view of mountains, lakes, and roaring rivers opening up before them, his host told him, "Do not be sad; if thou art sad, thou wilt become still worse; if thy sickness increases, thou wilt die. See what a beautiful country this is; love it; if thou lovest it, thou wilt take pleasure in it, and if thou takest pleasure in it thou wilt become cheerful, and if thou art cheerful thou wilt recover." The best Le Jeune could summon in response, however, was to note, "I took pleasure in listening to the conversation of this poor barbarian."<sup>72</sup>

Despite this kind treatment, Le Jeune nevertheless complained that, as his six months with the Montagnais wound down, his cultural authority remained utterly compromised. Traveling with their group was a Montagnais man referred to by Le Jeune as "the apostate," who was a brother of Mestigoit.<sup>73</sup> The apostate was taken by the Jesuits as a young boy to France, where he was baptized and educated as a Christian. Upon returning to America, he too found himself in liminal space, having forgotten his former language and customs; he was unskilled in the hunt and unable to support himself or keep a wife as a result. Lacking the necessary skills to survive in

71. Le Jeune writes, "The Sorcerer, in spite of the fact that I was sick, would force me to carry some of the baggage; but my host took pity on me, and, having encountered me on the way when I was ready to sink from exhaustion, he took what I carried, of his own free will, and placed it upon his sledge" (ibid., 183).

72. Ibid., 191.

73. The life of this "apostate," christened by the French Pierre-Antoine Pastedchouan, has been given a remarkable treatment by Emma Anderson in *The Betrayal of Faith: The Tragic Journey of a Colonial Native Convert* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

his own land, he was left to loiter around the French forts begging for handouts. Le Jeune aimed to use this unfortunate pawn of colonial contact as a translator and go-between during his winter with the Montagnais. Once having crossed the Saint Lawrence River, however, and having cut the cord with the French settlements, this apostate, Pierre-Antoine Pastedchouan, refused to play the role assigned him. This became a source of constant anguish for Le Jeune, as it foiled his main purpose for accompanying the Montagnais, which was to learn their language. Although Pierre-Antoine could sometimes be bribed with tobacco to translate, he otherwise paid Le Jeune the ultimate insult by recognizing the priest as lower than himself on the hierarchical ladder within the Montagnais encampments.

This insult reached its apex when Le Jeune found himself lost in the woods one December day in 1633. Unable to retrace his footsteps or locate the proper trail taken by those who had gone on ahead, Le Jeune suddenly apprehended himself as swallowed up by the immensity of the Canadian interior. To make matters worse, he was trailed by a Montagnais child, roughly six years of age, who clung to Le Jeune for guidance. On many occasions, Le Jeune had pointed to his compass as an example of the wonders of European technology that enabled the “worlding” of these uncharted regions.<sup>74</sup> Now, however, on the verge of panic, Le Jeune turned to his spiritual moorings to orient himself. “The thought came into my mind that I was not lost,” he tells us, “since God knew where I was.”<sup>75</sup> This appears a dubious marker, however, as Le Jeune quickly determined it was time to play “save himself who can,” and he abandoned the Montagnais child who “could not keep up with me as I increased my speed.”<sup>76</sup> He was again to find, however, that, to his own chagrin, the Montagnais lived by a different code than he. It was the apostate who circled back and rescued Le Jeune, promptly scolding him for abandoning the child. Le Jeune’s feeble attempts to defend his actions were met with scorn, and he was guided to the new encampment, where repeatedly “they asked me where the little boy was,

74. Le Jeune wrote in 1635 that, if he knew their language (Le Jeune was never to learn the language despite all his efforts), “I would always propose some natural truth, before speaking to them of the points of our belief; for I have observed that these curious things make them more attentive.” To illustrate this point, he “drew out a little compass that I had in my pocket, opened it, and placing it in his hand, said to him ‘we are now in the darkness of night, the Sun no longer shines for us; tell me now . . . the place where it must rise tomorrow’” (*JR*, VII:93–95).

75. *Ibid.*, 141.

76. *Ibid.*, 139.

crying out that I had lost him.”<sup>77</sup> Some women finally retraced Le Jeune’s footsteps, hazarding their own lives in the growing dark, to bring the child to safety. For Le Jeune, however, the world was realigning itself in a grave new aspect, no longer navigable by the tools and spiritual coordinates his presumably superior culture employed to bring a vision of order to the world. He concedes, “You must not be astonished if a Frenchman sometimes loses himself in these forests.”<sup>78</sup> Even if God did know of his whereabouts, Le Jeune himself had become hopelessly lost.

#### ALTARE CONTRA ALTARE: PITTING DREAM AGAINST DREAM

It is worth noting that Le Jeune reminds us of his nationality in this moment of ultimate disorientation, since his identity as a Frenchman was the very thing at stake. The question became: To what extent did Le Jeune overlap the borders of nationhood in his time with the Montagnais, and was he ever able to gather the materials of his identity together again with any kind of certainty or fortitude? Even his most solid point of reference, his Christian prayer book, seemed to blur and distort its meanings, as he recalls, “I sometimes thought I was going blind; my eyes burned like fire, they wept or distilled drops like an alembic; I no longer saw anything distinctly, like the good man who said, *video homines velut arbores ambulantes*. I repeated the psalms of my breviary the best I could, knowing them half by heart, and waited until the pain might relax a little to recite the lessons; and when I came to read them they seemed written in letters of fire, or of scarlet; I have often closed my book, seeing things so confusedly that it injured my sight.”<sup>79</sup>

This cannot be read as a mere complaint of smoke in the eyes. Le Jeune found himself bereft of spiritual orientation, unable to locate himself firmly on familiar cultural ground. Even his vision could not be trusted, and as meanings began to run together, the scripture he refers to (“I see men, like trees, walking around”) became inverted. Intending to evoke the revelation of the blind man who, upon encountering Christ, miraculously began to see more clearly, Le Jeune described himself as one whose vision was failing, so that the trees themselves seemed to walk like men. Far from situating this dream vision within a Christian framework, it seems to orient itself within

77. *Ibid.*, 143.

78. *Ibid.*

79. *Ibid.*, VIII:129.

northeastern woodland cosmologies in which the human race first sprung from the trees of the forest.<sup>80</sup>

Allan Greer reminds us that European missionaries in the New World “were, of course, there to teach the Indians, not learn from them, and yet it seems unlikely that the years of immersion in a different culture would leave their outlooks unaltered. Nowhere in the published *Jesuit Relations* do any Jesuits admit to compromising their European principles, but, reading between the lines, it is possible to detect evidence of soul-searching and shifting points of view.”<sup>81</sup> Le Jeune’s internal conflict culminated in a fascinating attempt either to regain what he perceived to be the upper hand in his spiritual struggles or to negotiate his subject position among the Montagnais in previously undreamed-of ways. In a passage reminiscent of Champlain’s 1608 account, Le Jeune writes, “Our Savages ask almost every morning, ‘Hast thou not seen any Beavers or Moose, while sleeping?’ And when they see that I make sport of their dreams, they are astonished and ask me, ‘What does thou believe then, if thou dost not believe in thy dream?’” What indeed? Le Jeune’s response: “I believe in him who has made all things, and who can do all things.”<sup>82</sup>

Le Jeune’s attempts to gain influence over the Montagnais band, to supplant their reliance on dream divination with scriptural devotion, fell apart in the long winter of 1634. His sermons fell on deaf ears, his intimate if one-sided conversations failed to persuade, and he found himself marginalized in the small community, ridiculed by the women and of no use to the men. It was at this point in their winter sojourn, “on the eve of Epiphany,” as Le Jeune tells us, and in their time of greatest hunger, that Mestigoit revealed to Le Jeune a dream that “caused him much anxiety.” The host had dreamed that Le Jeune would “fall into such a stupor, that, not being able to put one foot before the other, [he] wouldst die alone abandoned in the midst of the woods”; he feared that his dream would be “only too true.”<sup>83</sup> Throughout the account, Mestigoit had been Le Jeune’s protector

80. In his *Key into the Language of America* (1643; repr., Bedford, Mass: Applewood Books, 1997), Roger Williams notes that God, or Kautantowwit, “made one man and woman of a stone, which disliking, he broke them in pieces, and made another man and woman of a Tree, which were the Fountaines of all mankind” (135).

81. Allan Greer, ed., *The Jesuit Relations: Natives and Missionaries in Seventeenth-Century North America* (Boston: Bedford, 2000), 17.

82. *JR*, VI:183.

83. *Ibid.*, VII:169.

and confidant among the Montagnais. Mestigoit's traditional courteousness, as well as his kind and open nature, persuaded Le Jeune that he was the most susceptible to Christian conversion. Though this proved mere wishful thinking in the end, the implications of the host's dream must have felt like a final strand giving way in Le Jeune's struggle to keep the core of himself intact.

Le Jeune confides, "I had an idea this dreamer might play some bad trick on me and abandon me, to prove himself a prophet." His response was particularly uncharitable given the host's consistent kindnesses throughout, but Le Jeune nevertheless tells us, "For this reason I made use of his weapons, opposing *altare contra altare*, dream against dream. 'As for me,' I replied, 'I have dreamed just the opposite; for in my sleep I saw two Moose, one of which was already killed and the other still living.'"<sup>84</sup> Le Jeune apparently employed his dream of moose to insist that his God was stronger than the Montagnais' God. But it is not a simple power play, as he reveals to his readers that "in truth, I had had this dream some days before."<sup>85</sup>

The notion of a Jesuit engaging in the dream hunting practices of the Canadian woodland bands speaks to an extraordinary level of cultural slippage on Le Jeune's part. Even as he assured his host "that dreams were nothing but lies," he admitted to a dream encounter that had no frame of reference in the psychological world of his origins. Le Jeune's dream of moose was a subconscious sojourn into liminality, a meeting of the Montagnais and their world on some middle ground, stripped of the cultural markers that until then had prescribed his identity and belief. Did the Christian God bring this dream to Le Jeune to help him compete in the Montagnais universe? And why would God do this, given Le Jeune's own insistence that dreams were "nothing but lies"? As the bedrock foundation of his text began to shift and blur, the assimilative possibilities engendered by dream began to merge into the domain of his waking world, thereby creating new epistemological landscapes that he had to negotiate both emotionally and physically.

In the spring of 1634 Le Jeune began his trek home, traveling under the care of Mestigoit and the apostate, Pierre-Antoine. The journey grew perilous as the group took to their canoe and traversed the half-frozen river waters that would lead them back to the French settlements, using their paddles to chop through the giant blocks of ice. At one point the canoe began to take on water, and they were barely able to make an emergency

84. Ibid.

85. Ibid.

landing on a small island. The weather turned against them, and they spent a few miserable days “upon a point of land exposed to all winds.”<sup>86</sup> Le Jeune’s narrative voice continues its interesting turn in these final passages of the 1634 *Relation*. He suddenly begins to open up like the earth itself emerging from its frozen state and releasing its waters into the rapidly rising river on which they traveled. For the first time Le Jeune begins to refer to his companions as “my people,” and his language slides into a sort of anthropomorphic diction noticeably absent in his earlier prose. As they waited out the wild weather, Mestigoit and the apostate hunted for food, leaving Le Jeune alone in the camp. It was during this hour that suddenly “the sun shone out brightly, the air became clear, the winds died away, the waves fell, the sea became calm, in a word, it mended, as the sailors say.” Le Jeune wonders if he should race after his companions, but he decides it would be “like a turtle pursuing a greyhound.” So instead, as he relates, “I turned my eyes to heaven as to a place of refuge; and when I lowered them, I saw my people running like deer along the edge of the wood straight toward me.”<sup>87</sup>

The wind change Le Jeune commented on had the sense of being every bit as spiritual as it was meteorological. His language connotes the establishing of a connection that was nonexistent throughout the preceding narrative, in which the Montagnais were always “my savages” or simply “the barbarians.” As Womack noted (quoted earlier), “The revelatory moment is the realization that dreaming and waking, natural and supernatural, are deeply intertwined, and moments of grace reveal these intricate relationships.” Le Jeune experienced this change almost as an epiphany—his heart opened to some direct human element in his relationship with the Montagnais, rather than through the strict imposition of Christian “truths.”

As Mestigoit piloted him safely through the remainder of their dangerous journey downriver through rapids and ice, Le Jeune writes, “It was here I saw the valor of my host. He had placed himself in front, as the place where the greatest danger is to be found. I saw him through the darkness of the night, which filled us with terror while augmenting our peril, strain every nerve and struggle against death, to keep our little canoe in position amid waves capable of swallowing up a great ship. I cried out to him, *Nicanis uabichtogoueiakhi ouabichtogoueiakui*, ‘My well-beloved, to Kebec, to Kebec, let us go there.’”<sup>88</sup> Finally landing safely, Le Jeune remarks of Mestigoit: “it

86. Ibid., 201.

87. Ibid., 203.

88. Ibid., 205.



is true that if he had not had the arms of a Giant (he is a large and powerful man) and an ingenuity uncommon among either Frenchmen or Savages, either a wave would have swallowed us up, or the wind would have upset us.”<sup>89</sup> Le Jeune’s effusions of gratitude emerged not only from his relief at returning safely home, but also from a visceral sense of indebtedness toward his protector that had blossomed over a six-month period.

The passages related here were sent off to France in the first flush of Le Jeune’s return in the spring of 1634, so there was little time for editing or revision. There is a decidedly unguarded cast to his writing as he concludes the narrative of his six-month journey with the giddy declaration: “I feel like saying these two words to whomsoever will read these writings, *ama et fac quod vis* [love and do what you want].”<sup>90</sup> In a sense, we seem to be receiving a privileged glimpse into how Le Jeune processed this experience in that particular moment, for such freedom of expression was anathema to his endeavor, a relinquishing of the colonial controls on which conversion depended, and within the year he would emotionally recoil from all these sentiments.

#### UPON WAKING

As Le Jeune opened his 1634 *Relation*, the tone had changed considerably. His prefatory letter to Cardinal Richelieu offers an intriguing glimpse at the recognition of slippages that had occurred in the previous year. He writes, “I do not know whether I am becoming savage, by associating every day with the savages; but I do know well that it is not so much the contact with their barbarism as the respect I owe your Eminence, which has prevented me until now from giving myself the honor of writing to you.”<sup>91</sup> In the passages that follow Le Jeune relates the fates of all who accompanied him on his 1634 journey, the ones he had referred to in a moment of passion as “my people,” coolly noting that “almost all of those who . . . treated me so badly, have died.” Of the “Sorcerer,” whose dreaming and drumming challenged Le Jeune’s spiritual leadership, he states that he continued in his blasphemous mocking of God with “scoffing and impious speeches.”<sup>92</sup> But Le Jeune notes that “God did not fail to strike him; for the year had not yet expired, when his cabin took fire, I know not how, and he was dreadfully scorched, roasted and burned,” his fate on earth presumably mirroring the

89. *Ibid.*, 207.

90. *Ibid.*, 211.

91. *Ibid.*, 239.

92. *Ibid.*, 301.

fate that awaited him in eternity. Le Jeune continues bitterly that “Mestigoit, whom I had taken for my host, was drowned. I would much rather God had touched their hearts . . . but having sneered, in company with some of the savages, at the prayers I had made them say in the time of our great need, he was involved in the same vengeance.”<sup>93</sup> This unflattering eulogy was based not on any renewed experience with Mestigoit, but rather on reflection in which Le Jeune attempted to distance himself cognitively as far as possible from the giddy position (“My well-beloved, to Kebec, to Kebec”) he had embraced in his 1634 memoir. Le Jeune writes off Mestigoit, callously dismissed because he failed to convert or take Le Jeune’s preaching to heart. Mestigoit probably died of smallpox, which, according to Le Jeune, caused him to lose his reason, so that “he ran hither and thither naked, like a madman,” and drowned himself in the river, the very river on which he had so skillfully preserved Le Jeune’s life in the previous season.<sup>94</sup>

Le Jeune spent 1635 attempting to rhetorically correct his own “errors” of 1634. To do so, he had to disavow his experience, his strong feelings for the strange people with whom he had forged emotional bonds, and the circumstances that had crossed over the line of his dreaming, allowing him to traverse landscapes of alterity and converse with manitou. He unwittingly his own experiential impressions, reinscribing his encounter in terms more suitable to the colonial gate watchers who loomed over the house of the archive. Because the assimilative elements of his narrative were unsustainable, he reflexively purged himself of their particulars, unwitnessed them, and allowed no show of remorse over their disintegration, thereby pinpointing for us the traumatic rupture, the moment when the narrative of contact refuses to move forward but instead becomes hopelessly mired in place like a recurring dream that cannot resolve its own tensions.

Le Jeune’s dream of moose transgressed the recognized boundaries of identity, locating him in a human space where nationalities and lines drawn on a map no longer ruled. In a sense, the dream offered up to Le Jeune what Judith Herman recognizes as “an opportunity for mastery.”<sup>95</sup> But to find oneself in such a space was ultimately unthinkable for a Jesuit and tainted with the whiff of what Plato termed “forbidden food” or original sin. To the French Jesuits, the Native reliance on dream divination remained the greatest threat to their project of conversion. This was so not only because it spoke to cognitive processes beyond colonial control, but also

93. Ibid.

94. Ibid.

95. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 42.

because in the realm of dreaming, both Indian and Jesuit stood on shared space, common human ground. Dreams were “the oracle that all these poor Peoples consult and listen to, the Prophet which predicts to them future events, the Cassandra which warns them of misfortunes that threaten them, the usual Physician in their sicknesses, the Esculapius and Galen of the whole Country,—the most absolute master they have.”<sup>96</sup> But if Western tradition increasingly rendered dreaming a frightening and undomesticated realm devoid of reason and restraint, Le Jeune had briefly seen it as a landscape of possibility.

Le Jeune’s writings retain an ethnographic distance from here on in, no longer rendering himself a participant in this moment of encounter, but rather an impassive observer regarding his subject through a remote colonial gaze. In the following year, when “the Sorcerer’s” son was brought to him to be placed in a newly established seminary at Three Rivers, Le Jeune observes that despite his desire to do good for the boy, “he has a most horrible scrofulous affection [infection?] near the ear” that Le Jeune was afraid would affect the other boys.<sup>97</sup> Despite the fact that the priest has ministered to none but the sick and the dying since his arrival in the New World, the boy is turned away. Pierre-Antoine, too, returned at last to Le Jeune, seeking food and shelter. As a result of his fourteen years in France, the apostate could read and write, but he still had no skill as a hunter and was treated as an outsider by his own community, especially since his brothers had perished. Though his former providers were both dead, Le Jeune turned Pierre Antoine away from the mission to fend for himself with the admonishment that, as proof of his goodwill, he should come again in a time of abundance, “not when the Savages were having a famine.”<sup>98</sup>

Freud saw interesting correlations between dreaming and self-representation through writing, noting that “the writer stands in fear of censorship; he therefore moderates and disguises the expression of his opinions. . . . He must conceal his objectionable statement in an apparently innocent disguise.”<sup>99</sup> In fact, relating a dream is sometimes a very handy way of accomplishing this. Le Jeune’s refusal to validate the transformations undergone while in Native space forced him into a stage of repression and denial. The excess reportage of his 1634 *Relation* may have haunted him like a dream, but he did not allow himself to deviate from this position, and

96. *JR*, X:169.

97. *Ibid.*, VII:303.

98. *Ibid.*

99. Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 52.

so his reportage becomes static, repetitive, unresponsive to his experiences with indigenous peoples, much like a needle stuck on a record. The “savages” had to remain, as Le Jeune claims, a people without “any form of worship” and “neither laws nor government”—in short, a people without civilization.<sup>100</sup> But at what cost, both personal and historical, did he have to maintain this position that their practices were without merit, that their lives were without value, that the horrible fates they suffered in his presence were so richly deserved? We must not be astonished if a Frenchman sometimes gets lost in these woods.

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100. *JR*, VII:153.

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