

**Subjugation and Autonomy:  
Images of Aboriginal Women, Imagery by Aboriginal Women,  
A Comparative Study**

by

Anne de Stecher

School for Studies in Art and Culture

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research,  
in the partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Carleton University

Ottawa, Canada

June, 2006

© Anne de Stecher



Library and  
Archives Canada

Bibliothèque et  
Archives Canada

Published Heritage  
Branch

Direction du  
Patrimoine de l'édition

395 Wellington Street  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

395, rue Wellington  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

*Your file* *Votre référence*

*ISBN: 978-0-494-26929-9*

*Our file* *Notre référence*

*ISBN: 978-0-494-26929-9*

#### NOTICE:

The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

#### AVIS:

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protègent cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

---

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.

  
**Canada**

## **Abstract**

Paintings by historical European artists and text descriptions in the writings of early explorers, missionaries, colonial administrators, and traders represented Aboriginal women in limited categories. These categories, originating in European preconceptions of the 'Savage' together with expectations of women's roles based in the European patriarchal social structure were naturalized to become the European canon of representation of Aboriginal women. Despite these stereotypes it appears that significant numbers resisted change and assimilation. I examine the typologies reflected in the historical representations and the underlying realities that contradict them.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank a number of people for their contributions to the completion of this thesis. Research was carried out with assistance from the Social Sciences and Research Council.

I would like to thank my thesis supervisor, Dr. Ruth Phillips, for her encouragement and help in the writing process and development of this work. I would also like to thank Prof. Jill Carrick for her comments and suggestions.

Many other people helped me in the preparation and research process. I would like to thank my daughter, Victoria Watson, McGregor de Stecher, Achama Isaac, Nabil Khalil, Carla Taunton, Catherine Hale, and Michelle McGeough.

**Table of Contents**

Abstract		i
Acknowledgements		ii
Table of Contents		iii
List of Illustrations		iv
Preface		viii
Chapter One	Introduction	1
Chapter Two	Representations of Aboriginal Women in Historical European Textual Documents	28
Chapter Three	Images of Aboriginal Women in European Art Works	54
Chapter Four	Huron-Wendat Women's Traditions of Self-Representation	86
Conclusion		109
Bibliography		114
Illustrations		120

### List of Illustrations

- Figure 1: Title page. Gabriel Sagard, *Le Grand Voyage du Pays des Hurons* (Toronto, 1939). Chapter Three.
- Figure 2: Fra Bartolommeo, *Carondelet Altarpiece*, c.1511, Besançon Cathedral; rpt. in Hugh Honour and John Fleming, *The Visual Arts: A History* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, 2005) 469. Chapter Three.
- Figure 3: François-Joseph Bressani, illustration of Huron family from the *Novae Franciae Accurata Delineatio*, 1657; rpt. in Karen Anderson, *Chain Her By One Foot* (London; New York: Routledge, 1991).
- Figure 4: Antoine Bouzonnet Stella, *The Three Maries at the Sepulchre*, Heim Gallery, London; rpt. in *Religious and Biblical Themes in French Baroque Painting* (London: Heim Gallery 1974) 11. Chapter Three.
- Figure 5: François-Joseph Bressani, illustrations of women working, from the *Novae Franciae Accurata Delineatio*, 1657; rpt. in Karen Anderson, *Chain Her By One Foot* (London; New York: Routledge, 1991). Chapter Three.
- Figure 6: Francois Du Creux, illustration in *Historiae Canadensis*, 1664; rpt. in Olive Dickason, *The Myth of the Savage* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, c. 1984), 245.
- Figure 7: Claude Chauchetière, *Catherine Tekakwitha*, c.1679; rpt. in Allan Greer, *Mohawk Saint* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005) 20.
- Figure 8: Illustration in Joseph François Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times*, Plate XVIII (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1977). Chapter Three.
- Figure 9: Illustration in Joseph François Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times*, Plate XIX (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1977).
- Figure 10: Illustration in Joseph François Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times*, Plate VII (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1977).
- Figure 11: Typology, illustration from Baron de Lahontan, *Mémoires de l'Amérique Septentrionale* (Montreal: Éditions Élysée, 1974). Chapter Three.
- Figure 12: Customs, illustration from Baron de Lahontan, *Mémoires de l'Amérique Septentrionale* (Montreal, 1974). Chapter Three.
- Figure 13: *Sauvage dont la Maitresse se cache*, illustration from Baron de Lahontan, *Mémoires de l'Amérique Septentrionale* (Montreal, 1974). Chapter Three.

Figure 14: *Ceremonie Nuptiale du Canada*, illustration from Baron de Lahontan, *Memoires de l'Amerique Septentrionale* (Montreal: Éditions Elysée, 1974). Chapter Three.

Figure 15: *Maniere dont les Peuples des Canada font la Divorce*, illustration from Baron de Lahontan, *Memoires de l'Amerique Septentrionale* (Montreal: Éditions Elysée, 1974). Chapter Three.

Figure 16: Sir Anthony van Dyck, *Cupid and Psyche*, 1639-40. The Royal Collection, London. [www.royalcollection.org.uk](http://www.royalcollection.org.uk). Chapter Three.

Figure 17: Bernard Picart, *Danse de Mariage chez les Canadiens*, 1723 or 1783. Illustration in *Les ceremonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde*. Library and Archives Canada, C007866. Chapter Three.

Figure 18: Drawing of styles of dress of Canadian *habitants* and Aboriginal people, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto; rpt. in Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) 120. Chapter Three.

Figure 19: Jean-Jacques-François Le Barbier, *Canadiens au tombeau de leur enfant*, 1781, illustration in Guillaume Raynal, *Histoire du Canada*; rpt. in Donald Smith, *Le Sauvage* (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1974) 25. Chapter Three.

Figure 20: Unknown artist, *A Family of Micmac Indians*, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa; rpt. in *Painted Past* (Ottawa: Public Archives of Canada, 1985) Fig.36. Chapter Three.

Figure 21: George Heriot, *Encampment of Domiciliated Indians*, illustration in George Heriot, *Travels Through the Canadas* (Edmonton: M.G. Hurtig Ltd., 1971). Chapter Three.

Figure 22: George Heriot, *Dance of Indian Women*, Art Gallery of Windsor, Ontario; rpt. in Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) 27. Chapter Three.

Figure 23: Artist unknown, Artus, engraver. Huron Indians lithograph, ca. 1835. C-041090. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa. Chapter Three.

Figure 24: Joseph Légaré, *Josephte Ourné*, Légaré's Quebec Gallery of Painting, Quebec City; rpt. in John R. Porter, *The Works Joseph Légaré 1795-1855* (Ottawa: NGC, 1978) 78. Chapter Three.

Figure 25: Joseph Légaré, *Engagement of an Indian Girl*, Private Collection; rpt. in John R. Porter, *The Works Joseph Légaré 1795-1855* (Ottawa: NGC, 1978) 79. Chapter Three.

Figure 26: Joseph Légaré, *The Despair of an Indian Girl*, Légaré's Quebec Gallery of Painting, Quebec City; rpt. in John R. Porter, *The Works Joseph Légaré 1795-1855* (Ottawa: NGC, 1978) 81. Chapter Three.

Figure 27: Hyacinthe Rigaud, *Portrait of Louis XIV*, Louvre, Paris, 1694, [www.uic.edu/.../classes/ah111/imagebank](http://www.uic.edu/.../classes/ah111/imagebank). Chapter Three.

Figure 28: Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *The Meeting*, from *The Progress of Love*, Frick Collection, New York; rpt. in Hugh Honour and John Fleming, *The Visual Arts: A History* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc., 2005) 616. Chapter Three.

Figure 29: Illustration in Joseph François Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times*, Plate XIII (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1977). Chapter Three.

Figure 30: Illustration in Joseph François Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times*, Plate XIV (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1977). Chapter Three.

Figure 31: Moosehair embroidered cigar case, Huron-Wendat, Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde, Dresden; rpt. in Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) 136. Chapter Four.

Figure 32: Moosehair-embroidered reticule base, Quebec convent work, Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology; rpt. in Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities* (McGill; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) 117. Chapter Four.

Figure 33: Moosehair-embroidered box, Huron-Wendat, The National Museum of Denmark, Department of Ethnography, Copenhagen; rpt. in Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) 131. Chapter Four.

Figure 34: Coke Smith, *Huron Indian*, c. 1840, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 30197.6. Chapter Four.

Figure 35: Moosehair-embroidered calling card tray, Huron-Wendat, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, Cambridge; rpt. in Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) Plate 17. Chapter Four.

Figure 36: Moosehair-embroidered needlebook, Huron-Wendat, National Museum of the American Indian, New York; rpt. in Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) 140. Chapter Four.

Figure 37: Moosehair-embroidered cigar case, Huron-Wendat, Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin; rpt. in Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) Plate 2. Chapter Four.

Figure 38: Lady's handbag, Huron –Wendat, The Horniman Museum London; rpt. in Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) Plate 15. Chapter Four.

Figure 39: Settee, Huron-Wendat, Private collection, Santa Fe; rpt. in Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) Plate 35. Chapter Four.

Figure 40: Moosehair-embroidered wall pocket, Huron-Wendat, Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin; rpt. in Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) Plate 36. Chapter Four.

Figure 41: Moosehair-embroidered tray, Huron-Wendat, McCord Museum, Montreal, M16935. Chapter Four.

Figure 42: Moosehair-embroidered pincushion, Quebec convent work, late 18<sup>th</sup> Century, Museum für Völkerkunde, Frankfurt; rpt. in Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities* (McGill; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) 110. Chapter Four.

Figure 43: Moosehair-embroidered box, Huron-Wendat, The Brooklyn Museum; rpt. in Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) 139. Chapter Four.

Figure 44: Moosehair-embroidered reticule base, Quebec convent work, The Trustees of the National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh; rpt. in Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) 113. Chapter Four.

Figure 45: Moosehair-embroidered workbasket, Quebec convent work, Bedford Collection, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto; rpt. in Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) 115. Chapter Four.

Figure 46: Ojibwa songboard, Museum of Mankind, London; rpt. in Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) 111. Chapter Four.

## Preface

On 2 July, 1778 English trader John Long was camped near Lake Alemipigon just north of Lake Superior on his way back to Michillimakinac, a main trading center of the region, with a winter's cargo of furs. Accompanying him to assist with the cargo were twenty Nipegon (Winnebago) hunters.<sup>1</sup> A group of the Wasses (Northern Ojibwa),<sup>2</sup> enemies of the Nipegon, set up camp nearby and Long tried to keep the two groups apart. The Nipegon invited the Wasses to a feast with the supposed purpose of ending the dispute that lay between the two peoples, however Long heard that the Wasses had a plan to destroy the Nipegon, and the Nipegon knew of it. Events moved quickly in Long's narrative:

The Nipegons being determined to counteract the designs of their deceitful visitors, and punish their intended perfidy, made holes in the bark of their huts, in which they placed their guns, loaded with swan shot. Each man taking his station, the Wasses, to the number of eighteen, ascended the hill, and were coming prepared to partake of the feast, with knives and wooden bowls, intending to overpower the Nipegons on a given signal; but they were fatally disappointed, for when they got within thirty yards of the Nipegon huts, they were fired at, and all the band, except a girl about fourteen years of age, killed on the spot; she was dangerously wounded, but advanced with a gun, which she snatched from an Indian who was preparing to dispatch her, and shot Ayarbee [the Nipegon leader] through the head, and was herself soon after tomahawked and scalped by a Nipegon boy about the same age, who at such an early period of life displayed all that ferocity which marks the most determined chief.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *Handbook of North American Indians*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institute, 1978) 15:706.

<sup>2</sup> *Handbook of North American Indians*, 6: 241-242.

<sup>3</sup> John Long, *Voyages and Travels of an Indian Interpreter and Trader* (Toronto: Coles Publishing

This short narrative provides an introduction to my thesis and its purpose: to explore historical European traditions of representation of Aboriginal<sup>4</sup> women in image and text, to question the constructed identities they contain, and to demonstrate the existence of other, contradictory identities in text and in images of self-representation by Aboriginal women. The European tradition presents a dominant theme: homogeneous representations of indigenous women in a narrow range of categories characterized by their powerlessness: worker, mother, Indian maiden,<sup>5</sup> and sexual provocateur. Contradictory images such as the heroic Wasses girl are occasionally found in the texts, and they stand out in sharp relief against the background of standardized descriptions. The few text sightings of Aboriginal women acting with autonomy and power does not mean that these were anomalies. Rather, it is the European patriarchal perspective of Western histories that would make them seem so. The story of the Wasses girl, c. 1778, is an example that calls into question the validity of the stereotyped representations that reflect the broad sweep of the historical record.

I was led to this topic by my interest in a culture where women had status and authority, where men and women's roles were characterized by complementarity. The broad stereotypes of Aboriginal women that exist even today work in opposition to the historical facts, and my purpose is try to emphasize the traditional autonomy of women in these cultures, to see behind the wall of stereotypes which have worked to obscure it. My

---

Company, 1971) 98.

<sup>4</sup> The terms indigenous and Aboriginal include First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and non-status Canadian indigenous peoples

<sup>5</sup> The term Indian is used in its historical context, a term that was commonly used in the historical period.

effort to interpret the Huron-Wendat artworks, as part of this process, is made with an awareness that they are based in cultural traditions which are not my own.

It is important to recognize my own position, working in an academic environment of postcolonial discourse, as I analyze colonial texts and images. As Sandra Dyck has noted, it is an easy leap from a deconstruction of what was done in a colonial period to a judgment of what should have been done.<sup>6</sup> My purpose is to explore the impact of European representations of Aboriginal women to better evaluate the information they contain, not to make an assessment based on contemporary cross-cultural understandings.

---

<sup>6</sup> Sandra Dyck, *"These Things Are Our Totems:" Marius Barbeau and the Indigenization of Canadian Art and Culture in the 1920s* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, c.1995) 22.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

The purpose of my thesis is to open broad questions about the impact of missionization and European contact on the identity and subjectivity<sup>1</sup> of Aboriginal women in the historical period, from the beginning of contact to the late nineteenth century, through the exploration of European and Aboriginal traditions of representation. Despite the stereotypes that have become naturalized in the European canon of representation of Aboriginal women, it appears that significant numbers resisted change and assimilation, women who, as James Axtell wrote, “continued in many respects to feel, think, and believe Indian”.<sup>2</sup> Their cultural identity and subjective awareness remained indigenous, however they may have appeared from the exterior. Was the range of responses to the impact of missionization, colonization, war, and epidemics hidden by the conventionality of representation? When cultural change took place, was it an exterior change, a strategy, conscious or otherwise, that ensured group survival in the face of war and devastating epidemics, and the resulting population losses?

These questions are beyond the scope of this paper to explore or study exhaustively. My purpose is to pose questions and present possible theoretical approaches in order to open the discussion about the typologies reflected in the historical representations, the underlying realities that contradict them, and their connections with the stereotypes affecting Aboriginal women today. I will focus on the elements of

---

<sup>1</sup> The terms identity and subjectivity are used in related but different ways. Identity refers to being a specific person or individual, or part of a particular culture or group. Subjectivity concerns the subject, the understanding a person has of themselves.

<sup>2</sup> James Axtell, *The Invasion Within* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985) 276.

heterogeneity in the historical texts and Aboriginal women's own representations of themselves, and the diversity of outcomes of early contact. It is important also to note the weight of European texts and imagery that provided the basis for the construction of stereotypes, against the relatively few Aboriginal women's works that provide a contradictory voice.

In Chapter Two I will explore European historical texts and the impact of homogeneity on their representation of Huron-Wendat women. I will look at the stereotyped identities of Aboriginal women that the texts describe, in relation to the occasional appearances of women who act in contradictory ways, visible in the same texts. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a contextual basis for the main focus of my thesis, the traditions of visual representation to be discussed in Chapters Three and Four. In Chapter Three I will look at European visual representations of Aboriginal women, exploring the impact of European artistic traditions and underlying ideologies, the narrow range of identities and stereotypes that were included in artworks, and the contradictions that were excluded. In Chapter Four I will look at the representations by Huron-Wendat women of Aboriginal peoples in moosehair-embroidered works. I will draw on knowledge of the oral tradition to foreground the continuity of Huron-Wendat discourse, and to reveal continuity of women's understanding of themselves as autonomous<sup>3</sup> beings, in contradiction to most European representation, in text and image. By giving these alternative representations of Aboriginal women's identity greater authority and weight, I will question the degree to which missionization and assimilation affected Native women's concept of themselves in the historical period.

---

<sup>3</sup> The terms 'autonomy' and 'autonomous' are used in this thesis in the Iroquoian understanding, responsible autonomy, upholding the duties and rights in the social contract discussed in the Introduction.

Huron-Wendat historian Georges Sioui discusses the connection between the Aboriginal peoples of today and their ancestors of the historical period as a “vital link” that binds the dead and the living, the peoples of the past and their descendents - a link that can be obscured by “old social myths” of the disappearance of Amerindian peoples.<sup>4</sup> Stereotyped understandings of Aboriginal women obscure the connections between Native women today and their ancestors of the historical period. The purpose of my thesis is to try to get behind another myth that obscures the link between the peoples of the past and present: the myth of Aboriginal women’s vanquished autonomy.

### **Scope of my Study**

The broad temporal sweep of this project is necessary to establish the origins and continuity of the pattern of conventions and stereotypes of Aboriginal women in European texts and images. One of the purposes of my thesis is to explore the ways this pattern was sustained during successive movements and changes in the history of ideas and art, how in the texts there is historical continuity in the rare glimpses of women who challenge the stereotypes, and how in the nineteenth century, after centuries of contact, works of self-representation by Huron-Wendat women assert their traditional role. It is not possible to cover all the literature concerning the history of ideas, art, and primary texts and artworks, however I have drawn on core works in each area. The broad chronological scope means the works of the authors I have selected originate in different subjectivities, both in terms of their roles as missionaries, soldiers, or colonial administrators, and in terms of the history of ideas, and the different periods in which

---

<sup>4</sup> Georges E. Sioui, *Huron-Wendat: The Heritage of the Circle* (Vancouver, Toronto: UBC Press, 1999) 54.

they wrote. The worldview of the Jesuit and Recollet priests, based in the fervor of renewed Catholicism of the Counter-Reformation, was very different than Lahontan, writing in the time of Enlightenment social change and a lessening hold of clericalism,<sup>5</sup> or Heriot, writing in a period of colonial expansion at the start of the nineteenth century. Particularly important in light of this broad temporal coverage is the impact of relativist Enlightenment thinking, as historians such as Lafitau and Lahontan used their discussion of Aboriginal cultures to critique their own.

I have selected the Huron-Wendat nation as a focus in both the primary texts and artworks to limit the study historically and geographically, although a similar argument could be made for other Aboriginal peoples. This nation was the subject of extensive writing in the early contact period and the secondary sources are relatively rich, hence good data exists. The Huron-Wendat, a confederacy of four nations who inhabited the central area of the Eastern Woodlands region, were the subject of intense missionary activity from 1620 until their dispersal in 1649, and continued to have close contact with Europeans throughout the period covered in this study. Their key organizational role in Eastern Woodlands trade and communication networks, their position as a focus of European missionary and trade attention, their high degree of interconnectedness with other Aboriginal groups, and the availability of information about their oral tradition and ceremonies, suggest this nation as a study focus.

In Chapter Two I have drawn on texts describing women of other nations in the Eastern Woodlands, such as John Long's narrative concerning the Wasses, cited in the

---

<sup>5</sup> Philip P. Wiener, ed., *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973) 2:89.

preface. The author's anecdote contradicts widely held stereotypes and seems to indicate a common autonomous position of women. After the Huron-Wendat dispersal in 1649, some migrated to the north-west near the area of the Wasses, and they seem to have shared a general Eastern Woodlands worldview. In Chapter Three I have selected mainly images of the Huron-Wendat peoples, however as illustrators and artists often presented generic images of the 'Sauvage' or Indian, I have also included generalized images of Eastern Woodlands peoples.

### **Ethnohistorical Background**

Ethnohistorical sources describe Huron-Wendat women's traditional position of status and authority. An overview of Huron-Wendat social organization, kinship structure, and women's political and social roles gives anthropological information that supports my argument.

The clan and clan segments rooted in the family were the basis of Huron-Wendat social and political structure. Women gave children their clan identity, and clan segments were made up of members of matrilineal extended families living in one community who were descendents of a common female ancestor.<sup>6</sup> The clan segment had two headmen, a civil leader and a war leader. Sources diverge slightly on the exact role women played in their election, Trigger writes that the role is unclear but suggests that as with the Iroquois, Huron-Wendat women's opinions counted within their clan segment<sup>7</sup> while Karen Anderson is definite that clan leaders were appointed by clan matrons and adds that the

---

<sup>6</sup> Bruce Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1976) 54-55.

<sup>7</sup> Trigger, 1976, 55.

power of Huron matrons to depose clan leaders was “indirectly confirmed by Jesuit reference to problems of leaders who converted [to Christianity].”<sup>8</sup> Norman Clermont writes that the chiefs were created by the women, who could also remove them from power.<sup>9</sup> The numerous descriptions of events where the matrons’ decision carried the day suggest that they played a definitive role. Women’s power, rooted in the domestic space of the longhouse, extended into the public sphere, where women could comply or not with council decisions, and “send authoritative messages to male councilors.”<sup>10</sup>

The Huron-Wendat system of government was based around a leader’s power of persuasion to sway public opinion, leaders held no powers of coercion. Consensus was necessary to decide public issues, and in this the Iroquoian concept of personal freedom is evident, what Trigger describes as “the individual freedom that was fundamental to Indian culture.” No one, man or woman, was bound to a decision they had not agreed to.<sup>11</sup> Political offices were inherited matrilineally, which gave further importance to women’s position in social organization.

The confederacy council, composed of most or all civil headmen, held its main meeting each spring, with the purpose of strengthening the confederacy, resolving disputes between the tribes, and maintaining relations with other nations.<sup>12</sup> Anyone who wanted to express an opinion at these councils could, and women did make public

---

<sup>8</sup> Karen Anderson, *Chain Her By One Foot* (London; New York: Routledge, 1991) 107, 123.

<sup>9</sup> Norman Clermont, “La Place de la Femme dans les Sociétés Iroquoiennes,” *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec*, 13.4 (1983) 288.

<sup>10</sup> Anderson, 127.

<sup>11</sup> Trigger, 1976, 55, 378.

<sup>12</sup> Trigger, 1976, 58-59.

addresses at these meetings.<sup>13</sup> Women's political role was one of substantial influence, especially in matters relating to children and family, when whatever men might decide, it would only come about if women elders also agreed.<sup>14</sup>

Trigger writes that the most basic distinction in Huron society was that made between the sexes, and every task was either men's or women's work.<sup>15</sup> Women were responsible for children and all family matters, such as adoption and integration in the matrilineage.<sup>16</sup> They were responsible for agricultural production and control of distribution, which was a key role. In the time before the Huron-Wendat dispersal in 1649, women's produce made up 75% of the nation's food supply, supplemented by men's hunting and fishing.<sup>17</sup> Eleanor Leacock argues that women's control over the dispensation of the foods they produced, and meat as well, gave them power "to veto declarations of war and to intervene to bring about peace." Leacock points out that in Iroquoian societies, 'household management' was also the management of the 'public' economy.<sup>18</sup>

Women also grew surplus corn to trade with other nations, reflecting the nations' traditional focal position as traders in the Eastern Woodlands and women's central role in this.<sup>19</sup> In the nineteenth century, when European settlement removed Huron-Wendat

---

<sup>13</sup> Anderson, 124.

<sup>14</sup> Anderson, 161.

<sup>15</sup> Trigger, 1976, 34.

<sup>16</sup> Clermont, 287.

<sup>17</sup> Trigger, 1976, 34.

<sup>18</sup> Eleanor Burke Leacock, "Women's Status in Egalitarian Society," *Current Anthropology*, 19.2:247-75.

<sup>19</sup> Trigger, 1976, 65.

peoples' land base and largely ended their traditional ways of hunting and farming. Huron-Wendat women saw opportunity in the market for tourist commodities, used their skills to respond to it, and expanded trade networks to sell their products widely at tourist destinations such as Niagara Falls. I suggest that this tourist commodity trade was a successful adaptation of Huron-Wendat women's production and trading tasks to changing circumstances, a continuation of their tradition of responsible autonomy. There is a parallel in economic agency and need for women's work to support their families and community, between earlier agricultural production and nineteenth century commodity production.

Clermont describes Iroquoian society as one without rape, where women were in charge of sexual relations and reproductive functions were highly valued. This meant that the birth of girls was preferred, and compensation for a woman victim of murder was higher than for a man.<sup>20</sup> Archaeological remains indicate that 66 per cent of women died between 16 and 25, indicating a very high mortality rate in childbirth, adding to the importance of the birth of a girl.<sup>21</sup> Further, while the birth of a girl gave strength to the matrilineage, and their descendents gave strength to that family, boys would go to live with their wives' family.

The kinship structure of the extended family, living in the longhouse, was the institutional setting in which men and women lived most aspects of their daily lives.<sup>22</sup> Trigger writes that the extended family ideally was made up of a woman, her daughters

---

<sup>20</sup> Clermont, 287.

<sup>21</sup> Trigger, 1976, 440.

<sup>22</sup> Anderson, 142.

or her sisters, with husbands and children.<sup>23</sup> In this system, a woman did not depend on her husband for agricultural produce, as this was within women's sphere of control through kinship work groups, nor for hunted or trade goods, as these came from kinship exchange networks.<sup>24</sup> In a matrilineal society, men needed wives more than women needed husbands, as without a wife and the connection to her kinship network, a man would not have access to produced goods.<sup>25</sup>

### **Huron Cosmology**

Knowledge concerning the oral tradition of the Huron-Wendat peoples is only partial, however the narratives that are known demonstrate women's central role, in concert with men. I will present a broad outline of this oral tradition to give a general understanding of its scope and content.

What information is available is drawn mainly from Marius Barbeau's 1911-1912 interviews with the Huron-Wendat of Lorette in Quebec, Amherstburg in Ontario, and Wyandotte in Oklahoma.<sup>26</sup> Another source is the work of Huron-Wendat historian, Georges Sioui.<sup>27</sup> The total knowledge available only presents a partial understanding of a complex of spiritual beliefs, narratives, and rituals. This information is itself inexact; Barbeau's information came from a limited number of sources and is filtered through a Western worldview. Barbeau himself wrote that his records of Huron-Wendat oral

---

<sup>23</sup> Trigger, 1976, 45.

<sup>24</sup> Anderson, 114.

<sup>25</sup> Anderson, 127.

<sup>26</sup> Marius Barbeau, *Huron Wendat Mythology*. Memoir 80. (Ottawa: Department of Mines, 1915).

<sup>27</sup> Georges E. Sioui, *Huron-Wendat: The Heritage of the Circle* (Vancouver; Toronto: UBC Press, 1999).

tradition, although they were the most complete written collection, were scanty and disconnected fragments, which “but faintly reveal the significance and grandeur of the native lore taken as a whole.”<sup>28</sup> Barbeau’s recordings, gathered from a limited number of people whose families had had generations of intercultural contact, processed through layers of translation, represent a weakened version of this discursive tradition. However, the Huron-Wendat voice is clearly heard, particularly when the narratives are brought together with George Sioui’s perspective of the Amerindian worldview.

Barbeau divides the stories recounted to him into several categories. The traditional narratives which the Huron believed in as truth, for example creation stories, etiological stories concerning natural phenomena, and the “sociological” narratives concerning the origin of powers, he called myths. The stories the Huron acknowledged as fiction he called tales, similar to folk tales. Legends or anecdotes of important historical events and wars were described as traditions.<sup>29</sup>

The creation narrative begins with the “endless sea under the pristine sky-world.” From this sky world a semi-divine sky-dweller woman fell into the water region where birds and sea animals rescued her and built an island for her on Big Turtle’s back. The island was enlarged to a continent, and Small Turtle was sent to the sky to create the stars, sun and moon. On the island, the woman bore “mysteriously begotten boy-twins,” or in an alternative story, bore a daughter, Aataentsic, who then died bearing twins. One twin was good, the other bad, and “their mission was to prepare the island for the coming of man.” All good things stem from the good son, all evil from the “wicked brother.” In

---

<sup>28</sup> Barbeau, 1915, 7.

<sup>29</sup> Barbeau, 1915, 2.

the end, the two fought a duel, the good brother won, but the evil elements the other brother had created remained, and the dead mother with the evil twin were in charge of death and the underworld.<sup>30</sup> There is a second version of the creation story which is very similar to the Christian story of the Garden of Eden, illustrating the syncretic aspect of some of the narratives.<sup>31</sup>

Other narratives in Barbeau's myth category tell of supernatural beings, the ukis, with powers to either help or harm man. The friendly ukis were the supernatural guardians of the individual clans and societies. Larger than the uki were the sky gods, such as the Thunderers, though it was the uki who played a more direct role in the affairs of people.<sup>32</sup>

The sociological narratives told of the origins of powers and social standing, the origin of the clans and phratries, also believed as truth. The tales or fictional narratives included stories of tricksters and heroes, human adventures, and human-like animals. Stories such as the cycle of the Fox and the Racoon<sup>33</sup> fell in this group. The last category were the anecdotes, narratives of historical events, such as *The Wyandots at War with the Senecas*. This was an account of a confrontation with the Iroquois, described as a battle over Huron land in which the Huron were the victors.<sup>34</sup>

Examples from the tales substantiate my argument that Huron-Wendat women were represented as autonomous. In the story of *The Horned Snakes in the Swamp*, the

---

<sup>30</sup> Barbeau, 1915, 7.

<sup>31</sup> Barbeau, 1915, 49.

<sup>32</sup> Barbeau, 1915, 9-10.

<sup>33</sup> Barbeau, 1915, 180-183.

<sup>34</sup> Barbeau, 1915, 271, 275-280.

women do not behave as if sheltered by men, but act with competence and empowerment as they work together. The story tells of four girls who went to a cranberry patch to gather cranberries. The women had been warned of snakes who had dens there, so the two cautious women who believed what they have been told rode one horse and tied it to a log, ready for an easy escape, while the other two walked. They were very quiet as they started to pick, but one cautious woman heard snakes hissing. She warned her friend, who warned the others. The first woman ran to her horse, got on, and told her friend to stand on a stump so as to climb more easily on the horse as she rode by. The third girl also escaped, but the fourth was killed by the snakes.<sup>35</sup> The story is in some ways a cautionary tale, however in its warning, be self-reliant, be prepared, and work together to survive, it asserts women's responsible autonomy and the importance of cooperation with each other.

Sioui's perspective of the Huron-Wendat oral tradition differs from Barbeau's, for example in the interpretation of the creation myth. This difference is significant in relation to the meanings of the Huron-Wendat iconography I will discuss in Chapter Four. Sioui writes that Barbeau, from the perspective of the Judeo-Christian tradition, assigns values of absolute good and evil to the twins, and the evil power of death to Aataentsic, their mother. Sioui, interpreting the story from the perspective of the matricentric Huron-Wendat tradition, states that the Huron-Wendat "developed a myth that reflects the more complex interaction of real life." He describes the twins as equally representing male and female, Tawiskaron represents brutal masculine force, but also innocence, he loses the duel with his brother because he doesn't lie. Tawiskaron also has

---

<sup>35</sup> Barbeau, 1915, 246-248.

his mother and grandmother's gift of clairvoyance, he knows that humans need adversity to live, that the "infinite and unthinking benevolence" of his brother Tsestah is harmful to them, it would make them soft and weak. Tsestah is nurturing, he supplies fire and other benefits, but he lacks intuition, the gift of women. The Huron-Wendat perspective positions death, and Aataentsic's role in it as ruler of the underworld, not as the evil of the Western view, but as the necessary lot of mankind. Death, pain and adversity, Sioui states, are the source of compassion, "the fountain of all social virtues...of society itself."<sup>36</sup> Barbeau's Western perspective associates Aataentsic with evil as the source of death, whereas Sioui's perspective based in the Woodlands worldview places her in a balanced cosmology of masculine and feminine, where there are no absolutes.

Sioui's presentation of the Huron-Wendat oral tradition demonstrates its stature, significance, and important function in the lives of Huron-Wendat people, at a different level of understanding from Barbeau's categories of myth or folk tale. Sioui writes that Wendat stories in general have a moral, and that "one could say their only function is to constitute a moral code." He outlines this moral code, and emphasizes the importance of the stories, stating that the legends and tales constitute history in that they contain the wisdom of a people.<sup>37</sup>

### **Autonomy of Huron-Wendat Women**

Huron-Wendat women's rights, duties, and responsibilities gave them a position in their society which was different from European women's in theirs, consistent with the

---

<sup>36</sup> Sioui, 1999, 18-19.

<sup>37</sup> Sioui, 1999, 36-41.

Iroquoian's fundamental belief in personal freedom of choice as the right of women as well as men.<sup>38</sup> However, it is important not to overstate Iroquoian women's autonomy or the subjugated position of European women. Iroquoian women followed social customs and were expected to carry out duties and responsibilities, and in European society, while women's ability to exercise personal choice was more limited, other factors such as social class mitigated this.

Norman Clermont writes that the Iroquoians privileged personal autonomy highly, "il n'y avait pas de relations strictement obligatoires, subordonnées ou réellement dépendants" 'there were no relationships that were strictly obligatory, subordinate, or truly dependent.' He states that the social contract and customary rights were defined by cultural expectations, implicit social pressure, and tacit historical understandings.<sup>39</sup>

Deborah Doxtator describes the Iroquois philosophy that the "world is made up of reciprocal relationships between two sides."<sup>40</sup> I suggest that this Aboriginal perspective of the nature of the relations between men and women, with Clermont's description of cultural expectations, gives an understanding of women's position in Huron-Wendat society that carries the meaning of responsible autonomy and complementarity of roles. The Iroquoian peoples valued personal responsibility and freedom of choice, for women in the same way as men, that was very different from the more hierarchical European understandings of the relationships between men and women. For example, Doxtator writes that "the Rotinohsyonni [Iroquois] idea of mother" was not the same as the

---

<sup>38</sup> Trigger, 1976, 55, 378.

<sup>39</sup> Clermont, 289.

<sup>40</sup> Deborah Doxtator, "Basket, Bead and Quill, and the Making of "Traditional" Art," *Basket, Bead and Quill* (Thunder Bay, On.: Thunder Bay Art Gallery, 1995) 14.

seventeenth and eighteenth century Euro-North American ideas of subservience to “father.”<sup>41</sup> The contrast between European women’s position of subservience and Huron-Wendat women’s position of responsible autonomy was marked. Lawrence Stone states that in eighteenth century British common law a woman had no legal personality “since it was subsumed in that of her husband.”<sup>42</sup> He describes the historical situation of women in England, “women were taught that it was God’s will that they should obey their husbands.”<sup>43</sup>

From the perspective of Western discourse, Henrietta Moore echoes Eleanor Leacock’s argument that women’s status depends on whether or not they have access to and control over the means of production, the product of their labour, and the conditions of their work.<sup>44</sup> I suggest that the Huron-Wendat women had access and control in all these areas, even in the nineteenth century when they produced commodities for sale to tourists, and this further strengthened their understanding of themselves as autonomous, within the structure of their society.

### **Theoretical and Methodological Approaches**

For the most part we do not first see, and then define, we define first and then see. In the great blooming, buzzing confusion of the outer world, we pick out what our culture has already defined for us, and we tend to perceive that which we have picked out in the form stereotyped for us by our culture.

Lippman, *Public Opinion*, 81.

---

<sup>41</sup> Deborah Doxtator, *What Happened to the Iroquois Clans?* (London: University of Western Ontario, 1996) 73.

<sup>42</sup> Lawrence Stone, *Road to Divorce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 31.

<sup>43</sup> Stone, 2.

<sup>44</sup> Henrietta L. Moore, *Feminism and Anthropology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988) 31-32.

The view that Aboriginal women in many pre-contact communities held positions of relative autonomy with a general complementarity of the roles and responsibilities of men and women has been presented by many scholars, such as Carol Devens in *Countering Colonization*, Eleanor Leacock in *Myths of Male Dominance*, Robert Grumet in *'We Are Not So Great Fools: Changes in Upper Delawaran Socio-Political Life 1630-1758*, Bruce Trigger in *Children of Aataentsic*, and Olive Dickason in *The Myth of the Savage*, among others.<sup>45</sup> These works present a view that opposes the conventional representations found in seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth century historical texts and images which are the sources for the stereotypes of subjugation and powerlessness still operating today. The historical stereotypes reified and naturalized a particular European understanding of Aboriginal cultures and women's role and position within them, and presented this to European readers and viewers. If a situation of relative autonomy did exist in many pre-contact Native cultures, and there is evidence that it continued post-contact, what was the basis of women's identity and subjectivity, and how did it resist change despite missionizing and assimilationist pressures?

To address these questions, in the absence of theories of subjectivity specific to the field of Aboriginal peoples' history, I will turn to Western discourse and Michel Foucault's writings about the subject and identity. Although formulated to conceptualize events in the history of Western culture I will explore the usefulness of Foucault's

---

<sup>45</sup>Carol Devens. *Countering Colonization* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1992); Eleanor Leacock. *Myths of Male Dominance* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1981); Robert Grumet. *"We Are Not So Great Fools: Changes in Upper Delawaran Socio-Political Life 1630—1758* (New Jersey: Rutgers University 1979); Olive Dickason. *The Myth of the Savage* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, c. 1984).

writings to explain and understand the impact of missionization and colonization from Huron-Wendat women's perspective.

In considering this cross-cultural application of theory, it is important to note that Western European values and beliefs are often widely divergent from those of indigenous peoples. Georges Sioui, for example, notes that the Amerindian world vision is circular, as opposed to the European-based linear world vision; life is seen as the work of many creators, in contrast to the Christian religious and monotheistic conception; there is a significant absence among Amerindians of a precise distinction between *absolute* good and evil, in contrast to the Christian dualistic tradition.<sup>46</sup> Sioui writes that for Wendats the first social principle is recognition of the great Sacred Circle of Life, the Circle of relationships.<sup>47</sup> The underlying implication of the Sacred Circle is recognition of *the other* as a complement to oneself, leading to a situation of equal status for all, very different from one that is patriarchal in structure, in family life and society.<sup>48</sup>

Foucault seems to suggest the possibility of the intercultural use of his theory. He discusses historical models of self-knowledge and writes of the procedures or "techniques of the self" used by individuals in order to determine their identity, maintain it, or transform it, "which no doubt exist in every civilization."<sup>49</sup> Hence, with an awareness of the inexactness of such intercultural use, I will discuss Huron-Wendat women's identity and subjectivity in terms of his theories, not attempting a Foucauldian analysis, rather using key questions to shape my work.

---

<sup>46</sup> Sioui, 1999, 44.

<sup>47</sup> Sioui, 1999, 114.

<sup>48</sup> Sioui, 1999, 121-122.

<sup>49</sup> Michel Foucault, *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1997) 87.

A central question concerning the relationship between Western and indigenous cultures also arises from Foucault's *The Order of Things*. Not only the fundamental codes of indigenous and European cultural groups would have been different, the codes that governed languages, schemas of perception, exchanges, techniques, values, hierarchy of its practices, but also the pure experience of order and its modes of being, "the order on the basis of which we think."<sup>50</sup> With such profound differences, would it have been possible for European cultural pressures to bring about essential change in indigenous peoples' way of thinking and worldview? Foucault talks of discontinuity, when a culture changes its way of thinking and begins to think other things in a new way. However, he describes this discontinuity as probably beginning in that space "on the other side, but in which it has never ceased to think from the very beginning."<sup>51</sup> According to Foucauldian understanding of the arrangements of knowledge, could the core of Huron-Wendat beliefs, where the self-knowledge, subjectivity, and identity of women were based, actually have been altered by missionization and assimilative pressures?

I suggest that a further aspect of Foucault's work relates to the question of the continuity of Huron-Wendat women's position of relative autonomy: the way a human being turns himself or herself into a subject<sup>52</sup> and the role of discourse in this process. In "Subjectivity and Truth" Foucault discusses how the subject was established as an object of knowledge, and discusses the "techniques of the self" suggested to individuals to determine, maintain, or transform identity, the "care of oneself."<sup>53</sup> Then in "The

---

<sup>50</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Random House, 1970) xx,xxii.

<sup>51</sup> Foucault, 1970, 50.

<sup>52</sup> Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *The Essential Foucault* (New York: New Press, c.2003) 126.

<sup>53</sup> Foucault, 1997, 87,88.

Hermeneutic of the Subject” Foucault writes of the need for discourses supporting the care of the self, the mode by which a person becomes a subject.<sup>54</sup> His example is drawn from the Hellenistic and Roman period, but it has characteristics similar to the discourse of the Huron-Wendat. He writes, for example, that “those true discourses we need relate only to what we are in our connection with the world, in our place in the natural order.”<sup>55</sup> Further, he writes that they must exist inside, to be at one’s disposal through memorization – which would have been fundamental to an oral culture.<sup>56</sup>

Karlis Racevskis defined discourse as the abstraction of any written or oral process of communication through which meaning is transmitted, as “the visible and describable praxis of what is called ‘thinking.’”<sup>57</sup> The Huron-Wendat oral tradition, a complex of great cultural depth, could be considered a discourse in this sense. Fundamental to this tradition was the central role of women, and hence it can be seen as shaping Huron-Wendat women’s subjectivity and identity and, therefore, their continuing resistance to subjugation. This discursive tradition continued in Huron-Wendat communities until the early twentieth century, when Marius Barbeau recorded detailed accounts from the Huron of Lorette and the Wyandot of Oklahoma.<sup>58</sup> With this understanding of Foucault’s ideas of discourse as related to the care of the self and as connected with self-knowledge and identity, and with the parallel role suggested for

---

<sup>54</sup> Foucault, 1997, 99.

<sup>55</sup> Foucault, 1997, 100.

<sup>56</sup> Foucault, 1997, 101.

<sup>57</sup> Karlis Racevskis, *Michel Foucault and the Subversion of the Intellect* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1983) 16.

<sup>58</sup> Marius Barbeau, 1915.

Huron-Wendat discourse, as articulated through the oral tradition, is it possible to say that their discourse was a source of Huron-Wendat women's identity and the basis of their subjectivity formation and understanding of themselves, providing an ongoing source of resistance to pressure to be assimilated?<sup>59</sup>

Yuri Lotman provides a theoretical approach to leveling the hierarchy of literate and non-literate societies through his exploration of different techniques of memorization and how these are defined by cultural values. His work provides a means to understand the role of oral tradition as discourse in indigenous societies and the complexities of meaning contained in that discourse.

In my analysis of European understandings and representations of Aboriginal women I will use theories drawn from the field of social psychology, and particularly from the study of stereotypes and prejudice. How did European stereotypes concerning Aboriginal women develop? What was the underlying process, the pattern of interpreting or reporting or describing events and peoples that produced these consistent representations of Native women? Walter Lippman's cogent observations about the origins and impact of stereotypes seem to describe the situation of European men arriving in North America and recording what they saw. In the "blooming, buzzing confusion" of what was to them a new world, they picked out what their culture had defined for them, starting the process of homogenization, reducing the wide range of roles played by Aboriginal women in their societies to a few narrow categories. They applied their own cultural values and concepts of social organization to the behaviour of the 'other'.

---

<sup>59</sup> Michel Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth* (New York: New Press, 1997) 88.

Wolfgang Stroebe and Chester Insko discuss the ethnocentrism of stereotypes, those of ingroups as usually positive while those of outgroups less so. They argue that stereotypes help preserve or create differentiations of a group from other social groups, and create or maintain group ideologies explaining or justifying social actions against the outgroup.<sup>60</sup> Walter Stephan argues that stereotypes consist of cognitions concerning groups, which form prototypes of the attributes of the typical category member.<sup>61</sup> There is a tendency to seek “expectancy-confirming” evidence that all people in that group will conform to the prototype, to the extent that a group member will be perceived as conforming even if there is no evidence.<sup>62</sup>

Walter Lippman provides broad definitions of the nature of a stereotype, that it precedes the use of reason, and “stamps itself upon the evidence in the very act of securing the evidence.”<sup>63</sup> He discusses the subjective nature of our “apprehension of social data,” that while an observer may see his experience of events as reality, it is actually an interpretation.<sup>64</sup>

In his article “The Historical Text as Literary Artifact” Hayden White describes essential characteristics of history writing that explain the process of stereotype formation and the conventionalization of representation. The early contact texts can be seen as histories in that they set out to record and explain events, peoples and places and so

---

<sup>60</sup> Wolfgang Stroebe and Chester A. Insko,, “Stereotype, Prejudice and Discrimination,” *Stereotyping and Prejudice* (New York, London: Springer-Verlag, 1989) 5.

<sup>61</sup> Walter G. Stephan, “A Cognitive Approach to Stereotyping,” *Stereotyping and Prejudice* (New York, London: Springer-Verlag, 1989) 43-44.

<sup>62</sup> Stephan, 43-44.

<sup>63</sup> Walter Lippman, *Public Opinion* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1961) 98-99.

formed narratives. White states that historians encode their narrative in culturally recognizable forms so that the reader experiences the effect of having the exotic or strange explained to him or her, they have the sense of having understood events; the original strangeness, mystery, or exoticism is dispelled, subsumed under categories, familiarized.<sup>65</sup> Explanations of events are determined more by what is left out than by what is left in, the facts are tailored to give coherence and produce a recognizable story form.<sup>66</sup> What White calls the “fictionalizing” of history, experienced as an explanation of events and facts, is particularly important to recognize in the texts written about early-contact North America; he goes on to say that by acknowledging the fictive in history, we are able to identify the ideological, and hence be aware of ideological distortions.<sup>67</sup>

This perspective of the source texts as histories, acknowledging the element of fiction and the process of selection and exclusion, helps to understand how homogeneous representations of Aboriginal women were produced, to a large extent by omitting behaviours that diverged from those of European women in order to make the exotic familiar. If divergent behaviour was acknowledged, it was within a recognizable form of lewd or bawdy behaviour, or from the missionary perspective, in the form of paganism or obstacles to conversion. European men saw, for the most part, only the categories defined for European women, women in roles outside this were de-selected. Richard White also describes this process of selection: he writes that in attempting to impose their own

---

<sup>64</sup> Lippman, 127.

<sup>65</sup> Hayden White, “The Historical Text as Literary Artifact,” *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore, London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1985) 86.

<sup>66</sup> H. White, 90-91.

<sup>67</sup> H. White, 99.

cultural categories on the actions of Algonquian women (and by extension, I would add, of all Aboriginal women), the French tended to select material that made the women seem “merely a disorderly and lewd set of Europeans, not people following an entirely different social logic.” He states that the result was “to define a woman in terms of a person - her actual or potential husband - who may not have been anywhere near being the most significant person in the woman’s life.” Relationships with mother, father, extended family and unrelated women were far more significant and a woman’s social status would be more likely to depend on these aspects of kinship.<sup>68</sup>

In another explanation of how stereotypes were formed, Stroebe and Insko suggest that the basic data from which people form images of groups is drawn from their social roles. Gender stereotypes are shaped by the social roles members of a group occupy when they are first seen by another group.<sup>69</sup> When European men made contact with Aboriginal groups, they would have seen women performing tasks defined by Europeans as menial and subservient, though in the context of Aboriginal social organization, they were demonstrations of women’s power in their spheres of influence. Norman Clermont gives a detailed list of the occupations of men and women in Iroquoian society, including the Huron-Wendat. He lists the women’s tasks: most aspects of farming, food preparation, preparation of hides, making clothes, making bark containers, baskets and nets, gathering wood for fires, sewing snowshoes and canoes; making wampum; preparing bodies for burial rituals – all of which would have represented subjugation and lower social status to European observers. The process of de-selection is

---

<sup>68</sup> Richard White, *The Middle Ground* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 61.

<sup>69</sup> Stroebe and Insko, 15.

also evidenced in the representation of Native men's work; Clermont lists men's tasks as clearing fields, commerce, fishing, hunting, making tools, building houses, cutting wood, building canoes, and war.<sup>70</sup> Recollet missionary Gabriel Sagard seemed to recognize only men's activities that related to the European leisure class, stating that the men "play the noblemen...and think only of hunting, fishing or fighting," whereas women and girls "usually do more work than the men" and "keep their place and perform quietly their little tasks and functions of service."<sup>71</sup>

Gordon Sayre's observations about early contact texts further illuminate the point of view from which they were written. Sayre states that the barrier of language and culture perpetuated generalizations. If the author did not understand the particulars of an occurrence it would be generalized as representative of all such events.<sup>72</sup> In this way the Aboriginal identities found in these texts are reflected through the lens of European cultural understandings of the 'primitive' and gender. The richness and complexity of Aboriginal cultures, languages, and traditions was to a large extent subsumed by generalized understandings of the Other, while women, who often received less attention than men in the texts, were relegated to a position of subservience and drudgery.

The construction of stereotypes in text and image involves moral codes discussed by Lippman: personal, economic, patriotic, international.<sup>73</sup> These codes restrict the facts that an observer can actually see, so that only a limited number of interpretations are possible and hence available for representation. The resulting homogeneity had the effect

---

<sup>70</sup> Clermont, 287.

<sup>71</sup> Gabriel Sagard, *Le Grand Voyage du Pays des Hurons; Sagard's Long Journey to the Country of the Hurons* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1939) 102,101.

<sup>72</sup> Gordon Sayre, *Les Sauvages Américain* (Chapel Hill; London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997) 114.

of reducing a multitude of specific cultural identities and a rich complex of gender identities to a narrow set of general categories, which was the basis of the creation and reification of stereotypes. To illustrate the general stereotypes which have formed the basis for understanding of Aboriginal women, I will present examples from a selection of texts, drawn from missionaries, traders, travelers, which demonstrate how the selection and de-selection process of generalization forms a limited, essentialist view of Aboriginal women.

Other theoretical approaches could be applied to this intercultural study of stereotypes, for example the postcolonial work of Homi Bhabha and Edward Said. In addition, exploration of issues of representation intertwined with gender and translation would open further discussion in this field. However, the purpose of this thesis is to map an area of research, and my intention is to pursue these subjects in a project with greater scope.

My method is to select samples of European textual and visual representations of Aboriginal women, and a sample of images by Huron-Wendat women on moosehair-embroidered birchbark objects. The selected texts represent a range of the European perspectives and biases. Many come from French sources; I read some in both the French original and the English translation, with the purpose of understanding both the original author's intended meaning and the unintentional layer of meaning added by the translator. I have included European images that occur as book illustrations, which reflect both the bias of the author as well as the artist's cultural understandings, and also paintings. As with the texts, I have chosen images to represent the constructed categories of Aboriginal women that are the focus of this study.

---

<sup>73</sup> Lippman, 124-125.

## Literature Review

My study is situated within the historical understanding established by scholars such as Richard White and Robert Grumet, whose works have shifted the conceptualization of Aboriginal cultures as weak and powerless, swept away by the tide of the dominant European newcomers, to an understanding of cultural groups negotiating and struggling to adapt and survive. Works such as White's *The Middle Ground*, and Grumet's "*We Are Not So Great Fools*" present a revisionist approach to post-contact history, based on the understanding of Aboriginal cultures of depth and resistance, who made strategic decisions for survival and continuity.

Norman Clermont's article "La Place de la Femme dans les Sociétés Iroquoiennes" gives a detailed description of the role of women in Iroquoian<sup>74</sup> societies, Huron and Hodeñosaunee, at the time of contact. The text provides a basis to assess changes in Huron-Wendat women's status and roles in the years following contact. His description supports the view of Huron-Wendat society as egalitarian, where men had little or no authority over women, and women had fundamental social power and political influence.<sup>75</sup>

Karen Anderson's *Chain Her By One Foot* explores the impact of missionization and acculturation on the Huron-Wendat. Her text presents the view that Huron-Wendat women were vanquished and subjugated within a very short period of time, an essentialist approach which seems to subsume all Huron-Wendat women into one group, which, I

---

<sup>74</sup> The term Iroquoian refers to the language group that includes the nations of the Iroquois confederacy, Mohawk, Seneca, Onondaga, Tuscarora, Oneida, and Cayuga, as well as Huron-Wendat. This group also shared broad cultural similarities.

<sup>75</sup> Clermont, 288.

will suggest, is a result of the process of stereotype formation similar to that seen in the historic texts. If Huron-Wendat women are seen in accurate detail as part of heterogeneous groups with divergent responses to missionization, as described by Bruce Trigger in *Children of Aataentsic*, resistance to acculturation and assimilation can be identified and cultural persistence and continuity recognized. By reducing the diversity of Huron-Wendat women's responses to missionization to one category, submission to the Jesuits, a new stereotype is created, the vanquished Aboriginal woman.

Trigger's *Children of Aataensic* remains the core study of the Huron-Wendat. The comprehensive scope of this text and the wealth of historical data it contains provide a base for dismantling stereotypes that originate, in part, from the exclusion of specific historical detail. However, it is important to read even this text with an awareness of authorial bias based in Eurocentric thinking. In some instances, Trigger's choice of words works to trivialize Aboriginal spirituality. For example, he uses the term "lore" to refer to spiritual beliefs and the term "trinkets" to refer to burial objects.<sup>76</sup> In the area of gender, his word choices at times sideline the importance of women's reasons for resistance to conversion. For example, he describes as "idiosyncratic" a Huron-Wendat woman's reason for refusing baptism, because she would have had to promise never to divorce her husband and this would be an unacceptable constraint on her liberty.<sup>77</sup> Because the individual's freedom of choice was fundamental to the Eastern Woodlands worldview, this can hardly be considered idiosyncratic reasoning. Further, Trigger uses the term "persecution" to describe how a Huron-Wendat woman treats her husband when he

---

<sup>76</sup> Trigger, 1976, 601,671.

<sup>77</sup> Trigger, 1976, 532.

converts to Christianity.<sup>78</sup> However, the breadth and depth of Trigger's research, and the complexity of his approach make this the fundamental text concerning the Huron-Wendat.

Ruth Phillips' work, *Trading Identities* is the key text concerning the Huron-Wendat moosehair-embroidered objects, their historical context and iconographic meanings. Phillips describes the convent origin of moosehair-embroidered birchbark objects, the techniques of working with these materials learned from the local Aboriginal people. The Sisters embroidered in the style used for church textiles, and Phillips argues that "the generic types and representational images first invented within the medium of bark and moosehair became the standard iconography of Indianness throughout the Northeast."<sup>79</sup> Phillips discusses the connection between these tropes of Indianness and those in written texts, outlines the changes in this convent tradition, and the move from convent to Aboriginal community production, particularly Huron-Wendat, in the early nineteenth century.<sup>80</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup> Trigger, 1976, 717.

<sup>79</sup> Ruth Phillips, 104. *Trading Identities* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) 103.

<sup>80</sup> Phillips, 1998, 103, 130-131.

**Chapter Two**  
**Representations of Aboriginal Women in Historical**  
**European Textual Documents**

**Introduction**

The pattern of stereotypes at the center of our [moral] codes largely determines what group of facts we shall see, and in what light we shall see them.

Walter Lippman, *Public Opinion*, 125.

A pattern of stereotypes is not neutral...It is the guarantee of our self-respect; it is the projection upon the world of our own sense of our own value, our own position and our own rights. The stereotypes are, therefore, highly charged with the feelings that are attached to them. They are the fortress of our tradition, and behind its defenses we can continue to feel ourselves safe in the position we occupy.

Lippman, *Public Opinion*, 96.

In this chapter I will explore historical literary representations of Aboriginal women. My purpose is to contextualize the selected group of seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth century images of Aboriginal women by European artists that I will present in Chapter Three, examples that have become canonical. The two traditions, text and image, built a wall of stereotypes that formed European beliefs and expectations that have lasted into the present. I will consider a representative sample of the texts that discuss the Huron-Wendat peoples in the period of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries by different types of authors, traveller-explorers, missionaries, government officials, and trader-interpreters, in order to capture the range of perspectives or biases. I

will give examples from the texts of the conventionalized descriptions of Aboriginal women, which illustrate how European historical accounts constructed formats of representation that would make the ‘New World’ comprehensible to the old. I will then look at examples of textual representations of Aboriginal women that contradict the stereotypes, usually anecdotes describing a particular event. At such moments the imposed generalizations gave way to the specifics of nation and culture, which allow a more accurate reflection of the realities of post-contact Aboriginal women.

### **Examples from the Texts**

One of the earliest descriptions of Aboriginal women comes from Gabriel Sagard, a Recollet priest who lived among the Huron-Wendat from 1623 to 1624. Jean-de-la-Croix Rioux writes that Sagard was a man of his time, a time of “une ferveur en équilibre instable” ‘an unbalanced fervor,’ but that he had the qualities of the historian, finesse of observation, rigorous exactitude, and honesty. Rioux states that Sagard’s work is built on unquestionable sources and commands respect, that he is a sure, competent witness.<sup>1</sup> Sagard describes the Huron-Wendat in specific terms, but at times he moves from referring to ‘nos Hurons,’ to ‘nos Sauvages,’ seeming to blend the specific Huron-Wendat nation with Aboriginal peoples in general.<sup>2</sup> In his descriptions of Huron-Wendat women their roles and behaviour are generalized and provide a basis for the formation of stereotypes. He represents women as drudges when he writes “elles traouillent ordinairement plus que les hommes, encore qu’elles n’y soient point forcées ny

---

<sup>11</sup> Jean-de-la-Croix, *Gabriel Sagard, Théodat* (Montréal, Paris: Fides, 1964) 11-12.

<sup>2</sup> Sagard, 331.

contraintes (sic)” ‘they usually work more than men, although they are not forced or constrained (my translation).’ He lists women’s tasks, the cooking and household work, sowing and harvesting the fields, grinding flour, finding firewood.<sup>3</sup> The dominant image of women working harder than men is reinforced by his statement, quoted in the Introduction, that Huron men live as do the European aristocracy, engaged in hunting, fishing and shooting. This perception may also have been based in class distinctions. Natalie Davis writes that Ursuline sister Marie de l’Incarnation took the women’s heavy work for granted, possibly because she herself had grown up “in a wagoner’s household, doing everything from grooming horses and cleaning slops to keeping the accounts.”<sup>4</sup>

What is excluded, however, is the important larger role Huron-Wendat women played in their community. Sagard actually minimizes this, stating that “les femmes et les filles... se maintiennent dans leur condition et font paisiblement leurs petits ouvrages et les oeuvres serviles” ‘the women and girls...remain in their station and peacefully make their little pieces of work and do their servile tasks (my translation).’<sup>5</sup>

The second generalized representation of women is the sexually available woman, either the promiscuous girl or the married woman free to divorce. In this, he generalizes, making lewd behaviour characteristic of all the young Aboriginal people in Canada, and of the Huron in particular.

Des garçons et jeunes homes de Canada, et particulièrement du pays de nos Hurons, lesquels ont licence de s’adonner au mal si tost qu’ils peuuent, et les

---

<sup>3</sup> Sagard, 324.

<sup>4</sup> Natalie A. Davis, “Iroquois Women, European Women,” *Women, “Race,” and Writing in the Early Modern Period* (London, New York: Routledge, 1994) 245.

<sup>5</sup> Sagard, 324.

jeunes filles de se prostituer si tost qu'elles en sont capables, voir mesme les peres et meres sont souuent maquereaux de leurs propres filles (sic).<sup>6</sup>

Although Sagard used the most crude European terms, speaking of pimps and prostitutes, he later wrote that he had never seen a single kiss or improper or rude gesture.<sup>7</sup> Yet it is the image of lewd behaviour and sexual licence that is represented most strongly in the text and appears in European art work, and works to form the stereotypes which misrepresent the complexities and realities of the culture they were understood to describe.

The Jesuits came to New France after the Recollets in 1625. The *Jesuit Relations* were letters written by the missionaries in the field to the Jesuit superior in France, whose primary purpose was to elicit financial and political support for the Jesuit missions and to support the Jesuit religious position against Jansenist pressures.<sup>8</sup> François-Marc Gagnon writes that the Jesuits were men of the Renaissance and the classical epoch, and that part of their purpose was to make a lesson to civilized man by presenting him with a “savage” man living according to “natural laws.”<sup>9</sup> The *Relations* of the Jesuits who lived among the Huron-Wendat in the seventeenth century are extensive and are one of the sources most frequently used in research concerning the Huron-Wendat peoples. However there are problems associated with their use as a source. The editorial process that they went

---

<sup>6</sup> Sagard, 121.

“with the boys and young men of Canada, and especially with those of the Huron country, who are at liberty to give themselves over to this wickedness as soon as they can, and the young girls to prostitute themselves as soon as they are capable of doing so. Nay even the parents are often procurers of their own daughters...”

<sup>7</sup> Sagard, 121.

<sup>8</sup> *Jesuit Relations and allied documents*, trans. Reuben G. Thwaites (New York: Pageant, 1959).

through, edited first in Montreal then in Paris before publication, means that the accuracy of the events reported or dialogues recorded could be questionable. Gordon Sayre writes that the corporate and individual perspectives from which they were written necessitate a constant filtering and acknowledgement of their bias.<sup>10</sup> Huron-Wendat behaviour and motivation were described not only from the perspective of another culture, but also with the intention of justifying missionization among them.

The Jesuit observations are usually specific as to the Aboriginal nation they describe. However, the descriptions of the women of these communities are, as in Sagard's text, generalized to define Native women within narrow categories. Unlike the Recollets, the Jesuits presented four stereotypes of Huron-Wendat women, the drudge, the woman carrying out heavy, menial tasks, the sexually provocative and lewd woman, the aggressive woman actively resisting conversion (a Megera or firebrand from hell), and the converted and subjugated woman, gentle as a lamb. I would argue that the Jesuit image of the aggressive woman who opposes conversion represents female power, but this is power as destructive rather than constructive, and mis-represents the validated social and public role actually known to be held by Huron-Wendat women.

Jesuit Barthelemy Vimont's description of the Christian marriage of Montagnais convert Charles Meiaskawat to his wife Marie illustrates the two new types of Huron

---

<sup>9</sup> François-Marc Gagnon, *Ces Hommes Dits Sauvages* (Montréal: Éditions Libre Expression, 1984) 14.

<sup>10</sup> Gordon M. Sayre, *Les Sauvages Américains* (Chapel Hill, London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997) 87-88.

The *Jesuit Relations* were written once a year as a single letter or a few letters from different missions, so that an entire year's events might be written, as Gordon Sayre states, in a burst of writing just before the annual journey back to Montreal (87). Sayre describes the *Jesuit Relations* as 'annual reports of a nonprofit organization written by the employees to the directors, but intended also for the consumption of potential contributors to the conversion effort' (88), written in the collective voice by men who had foresworn worldly ambitions in favor of the goal of converting the Indians (45). A further caveat comes from Allan

women who appear in the *Jesuit Relations*. Vimont describes Charles's wife Marie as initially of a very arrogant and violent temper, resisting conversion. However she is persuaded to conversion and Vimont observed that they had "never seen a greater change than in this woman, who has now become truly a lamb, and has very deep and affectionate feelings of devotion."<sup>11</sup>

This illustrates the Jesuit construct of the autonomous woman brought through the power of Christianity to the position of subjugation expected of European Christian women. The pre-conversion Marie could not be taken for a drudge, however the post-conversion wife, promising obedience and humility, is definitely in this role, the role seen frequently in the European art work.

What is of note is that the pre-conversion image of women is as visible in the *Relations*, if not more so, than the image of the lamb. There were further examples of the Jesuit view of the unconverted Huron-Wendat women, they were 'unlovable', 'arrogant', 'overbearing', 'jeering', or scornful, haughty and spiteful, or rough and wild.<sup>12</sup> While the image of the woman as a gentle lamb after conversion does appear in European art work, the woman as an assertive figure resisting conversion does not.

---

Greer who wrote in *Mohawk Saint* of the need to make a special effort 'to counteract the Jesuits' tendency to exaggerate the degree to which they controlled events' (91).

<sup>11</sup> *JR* 25:175-7. The dialogue between Charles and Marie is quoted in the *Jesuit Relations*, however given Sayre's description of the annual writing of these works and their bias, it is possible that the conversation had a strong element of fiction. "'Wait a little,' answered Charles; and turning to his wife, he said: 'But thou, wilt thou continue to be proud, disobedient and ill-tempered, as in the past? Answer me; for, if thou wilt not behave better, I will not take thee for my wife, - I will easily find another.' ... The poor woman had to shout aloud and protest publicly that she would be obedient to her husband, and live with him in gentleness and in the utmost humility" (*JR* 25: 175-7).

<sup>12</sup> *JR* 24:57. Possibly the image of the arrogant woman served a function in the *Jesuit Relations*; she was an obstacle to conversion still to be overcome, proving the ongoing need for funding in the urgent task of conversion, while the docile lamb image illustrated the success of the Jesuit project. The example of the arrogant woman/docile lamb stereotype is drawn from references to the Montagnais community near Quebec.

The Jesuit texts were strong in representing the category of Aboriginal women as generally promiscuous. While by Huron-Wendat traditions the young were permitted to have sexual partners before marriage. Jerome Lalemant described young Huron-Wendat girls' behaviour in terms of "libertinage to which the girls and women here abandon themselves...the girls boast of seeking the young men."<sup>13</sup> Even in 1643, almost twenty years after the Jesuits initiated their conversion efforts among the Huron-Wendat, the freedom for women to divorce and remarry was as strong, it seems, as at the time of first contact.<sup>14</sup> Although the Jesuit's textual imagery helped to build the stereotype of promiscuity, it also shows that in some if not all Huron-Wendat communities, women's identity and subjectivity remained substantially unaltered by Jesuit influences, only six years before the Huron dispersal and the removal of many of the Huron-Wendat from the Jesuit influence only six years later. The women whom the Jesuits did not represent directly were women in active positions of influence, speaking out on issues of concern to their community and acting with authority and power. They appear indirectly in the descriptions of women as Megeras and firebrands.<sup>15</sup>

The Recollet Louis Hennepin was in New France in the 1670s and 80s, after the Huron-Wendat dispersal of 1649. Although Hennepin did not live in Huron-Wendat

---

<sup>13</sup> *JR* 15:107, 38:253.

<sup>14</sup> Jerome Lalemant made the complaint that "License in Marriages is so great, and the freedom of leaving one another on the slightest pretext is so generally admitted as a fundamental Law of these Peoples, that every Christian who marries is exposed, on the morrow of his Nuptials, to the danger of being compelled to observe continence for the remainder of his life" (*JR* 23: 187). It is of note that Lalemant only sees divorce from the perspective of the male convert.

<sup>15</sup> One example of this type is a description of a Huron-Wendat girl: "this little fury of hell is so eloquent that the sick man [her father] goes back on his word and will not be baptized" (*JR* 19:213). There are many specific examples of girls refusing conversion and influencing parents against it, supporting the understanding of Aboriginal women's identity and subjectivity as autonomous.

communities he makes several references to them as a nation throughout his text. He uses a general term 'Savage Women' to refer to Aboriginal women and reinforces the images of the drudge and sexual provocateur already established by Sagard and the Jesuits, while the categories of pre-conversion arrogant Megera and post-conversion docile lamb are not evident.<sup>16</sup> Hennepin also discusses the issue of conversion and the validity of Jesuit statements as to the number of conversions among Aboriginal communities, and the permanence of these conversions. This reflects the rivalry that existed between the Jesuits and Recollet in their missionary activities, and the differences in their beliefs concerning the nature of conversion.

With regard to the sexualized stereotype, Hennepin wrote "there are very few Women among them [the Savages] that withstand the temptation of a woolen Blanket, if any other trivial Present." He also wrote that they "have no inclination to Constancy, they can't keep their conjugal vows inviolated...their common discourse upon this Subject confirms us in it."<sup>17</sup> He reinforces earlier representations of Aboriginal women as doing hard physical work, referring to the heavy loads Native women carry, that they continue working even when pregnant.<sup>18</sup>

Another set of accounts was written by men who came to New France in non-religious capacities: in the military, as trader/interpreters, travelers, or in the role of colonial administrators. Baron de Lahontan, described as "a rebellious, anticlerical deist,"

---

<sup>16</sup> Louis Hennepin, *A New Discovery of a Vast Country in America*, Vols.1 and 2 (London: Henry Bonwicke, 1699) Vol.2, 73.

<sup>17</sup> Hennepin, Vol.2, 73.

<sup>18</sup> Hennepin, Vol.2, 81.

lived in New France as a military officer for ten years.<sup>19</sup> His work *Nouveaux voyages* was published in eighteen editions between 1703 and 1750, indicating the great extent of his influence.<sup>20</sup>

Lahontan's text reflects an ideological move from Counter-Reformation to Enlightenment thinking. Real Ouellet writes that Lahontan's text forms "un portrait critique" 'a critical portrait,' of French colonial activity in North America, but that this critique doubles as "une contestation de la civilisation chrétienne et européenne" 'a protest against Christian European civilization (my translation).'<sup>21</sup> This observation reflects an Enlightenment worldview and serves an ideological purpose. The 'Savage' has a polemical function, to contrast freedom, shared by Native men, women, and children, with the situation of the French, who are, in Lahontan's view, slaves of the king.<sup>22</sup> Lahontan's text reflects the allegorical characteristics of ethnographies described by James Clifford in "On Ethnographic Allegory," and the use of "tribal societies for pedagogical purposes."<sup>23</sup> Lahontan's description of the freedom of Native women have two layers of meaning, both description of Aboriginal culture and a critique of European society where women would not have such freedoms.

---

<sup>19</sup> Sayre, 32.

<sup>20</sup> Sayre, 15.

<sup>21</sup> Lahontan, Baron de, *Mémoires de L'Amérique Septentrionale, Oeuvres Complètes I* (Montreal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1990) 45,54.

<sup>22</sup> Lahontan, 61.

<sup>23</sup> James Clifford, "On Ethnographic Allegory," *The Predicament of Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988) 120.

His descriptions of Aboriginal peoples were highly generalized, rarely tied to specific nations.<sup>24</sup> Of the Hurons, Lahontan wrote that they were “braves, entreprenans, et spirituels” ‘courageous, enterprising, and spiritual,’ but usually his descriptions refer to the generic ‘Sauvage’ or ‘Sauvagesses (my translation).’<sup>25</sup> These generalizations are relevant in this discussion, since to European readers, the types Lahontan represented were corporate images of all the Native peoples in New France, which included the Huron-Wendat.

The image of the woman as the drudge is not prominent in Lahontan’s writing. He describes Native women as unattractive - “Les femmes sont de la taille qui passe la médiocre...si grasses & si pesantes, qu’elles ne peuvent tenter que des Sauvages” ‘the women are above average height... so heavy they could only tempt the Savages (my translation),’ but his text supports the stereotype of women as sexually licentious.<sup>26</sup> Of ‘Savage Women,’ he writes that “les hommes sont aussi indifferens que les filles sont passionées” ‘the men are as indifferent as the girls are passionate’ (sic) (my translation).<sup>27</sup> He also gives details of contraception: “elles boivent le jus de certaines racines qui les empechent de concevoir ou qui fait perir leur fruit” ‘they drink juice from certain roots that prevents them from conceiving or causes miscarriages.’ Contributing further to this image of sexual freedom, he states that the ‘Sauvagesses’ prefer Frenchmen because they are less concerned than the Native men with abstinence, that the Frenchmen are “assidus”

---

<sup>24</sup> In his critical edition of Lahontan’s text, Ouellet writes that Lahontan kept notes while he was in New France, in a precise and systematic manner, an indication of his reliability as a source (Lahontan, 27).

<sup>25</sup> Lahontan, 633.

<sup>26</sup> Lahontan, 634.

<sup>27</sup> Lahontan, 668.

‘attentive,’ and the Native peoples regard marriage for life as “une chose monstrueuse” ‘an outrageous thing (my translation).’<sup>28</sup> In this way Lahontan frames his observations in a European construct of disapproval and judgment at such freedoms.<sup>29</sup> Lahontan’s writing, then, stresses sexual freedom, interpreted as licentiousness, but also works to contradict the idea that Aboriginal women’s behaviour had been altered by post-contact missionary pressures.

Pierre Boucher, governor of Trois Rivières, wrote from the perspective of a Quebec settler and colonial administrator; he came to Quebec with the Jesuits in 1635 and lived there until his death in 1717. During a visit to France he printed the work *True and Genuine Description of New France*, a text which describes the manners, customs, and productions of Canada.<sup>30</sup> It would have been read in France by government officials and those interested in trade, as well as the armchair travelers described by Sayre. In his representation of Aboriginal peoples he makes an immediate generalization, that they are nearly alike, and can be divided into two classes, the Algonquins and Hurons.<sup>31</sup> In his descriptions of Native women he emphasizes mainly the category of women as subservient workers. Of the Huron he says that the women do all the farm tasks, and that

---

<sup>28</sup> Lahontan, 672-74.

<sup>29</sup> Lahontan’s description of the “Femmes de Chasse,” women who chose not to marry but to go on the hunt with men with whom they had non-permanent relationships, contributes to the stereotype of sexual freedom in a context of promiscuity: “par un principe de débauche...elles se divertissent ordinairement avec de Chasseurs” ‘in an example of debauchery, they usually amuse themselves with the hunters (my translation)’ (681). He writes that the women’s reason for this choice of life is that they are not interested in conjugal ties. Lahontan presents this as “comment elles colorent leurs dérèglements”- ‘how they justify their dissoluteness’ (my translation) (681). He describes the parents of hunting women as approving of their daughters’ choice of life; so to the Aboriginal community, this was an accepted norm (682).

<sup>30</sup> It was a document designed to encourage further colonizing of New France; it described in detail the natural resources and benefits of settling the land and represented indigenous peoples in a way that minimized the resistance to such efforts.

<sup>31</sup> Pierre Boucher, *Canada in the Seventeenth Century* (Montreal: George E. Desbarats & Co., 1883) 49.

they act as porters for the men. He clearly states that the business of the men is to hunt, fish, and carry on wars as well as to trade, make canoes, and hold councils, linking them to aristocratic pursuits as had Sagard.<sup>32</sup> Boucher downplays the licentious category, perhaps because his wife was an Aboriginal woman. He describes marriage customs as being not unlike European ones, with parental consent required before marriage. He does not write about promiscuity among young girls, and divorce is downplayed - “divorces happen but rarely.”<sup>33</sup>

John Long, author of a later secular account, was an English trader-interpreter who lived and worked in the Eastern Woodlands from 1768 to 1787. His text was intended to be read by “the merchant and the philosopher,” and provided a map, an extensive dictionary of several Native languages, and details of geography and travel.<sup>34</sup> His text is a mix of both generalization and description specific to particular nation. However, his descriptions of women are conventional representations of one category, the menial servant or even slave, with less focus on the category of sexual promiscuity. Although his references to the Huron are not specific, as in Lahontan’s text, his representation of Aboriginal women included all Native nations. To his readers, the Huron-Wendat women would have been part of this generalization.

Long wrote that as soon as a woman married she lost her liberty and became an “obsequious slave” to her husband, performing the menial work of life.<sup>35</sup> These

---

<sup>32</sup> Boucher, 55.

<sup>33</sup> Boucher, 57.

<sup>34</sup> John Long, *Voyages and Travels of an Indian Interpreter and Trader*. (1791; Toronto: Coles Publishing Company, 1971) x.

<sup>35</sup> Long, 56, 137.

descriptions would have strongly reinforced earlier representations of Native women as subservient, and are sources for the images often seen in European art works.

George Heriot's book *Travels Through the Canadas*, published in 1806, represents an ideology that is a far remove from the Counter-Reformation period of the Jesuit and Recollet texts and the Enlightenment seen through Lahontan's work. He writes from the perspective of his military background at the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich and his role as postmaster general of Canada, immersed in the project of colonization.<sup>36</sup>

Finley writes that Heriot used the resources of the Jesuit library at Quebec for information about the Aboriginal nations he described, and in addition used travel literature and memoirs from other periods, for example Lafitau's *Memoirs des sauvages americains*.<sup>37</sup> However, Heriot was fully aware of the disasters brought by European contact, "the disease, the undermining of the Indians' culture, and the invasion of their lands," and his selections or exclusions from these sources were based on his own experience and subjectivity.<sup>38</sup> He was working from a relativist perspective, critiquing both the earlier works and what he saw around him in Canada.

In his text Heriot both continues the stereotype of menial slave or drudge, and adds specific descriptions of Huron-Wendat and Iroquois women of power and status in their communities. He writes that "among every uncivilized people upon earth, it is the peculiar misfortune of the female sex to be degraded and despised, and to be loaded with

---

<sup>36</sup> George Heriot, *Travels Through the Canadas* (1806; Edmonton: M.G. Hurtig Ltd., 1971).

<sup>37</sup> Gerald Finley, *Postmaster-Painter of the Canadas* (Toronto, London: University of Toronto Press, 1983)99.

<sup>38</sup> Heriot, 86.

the most labourious and toilsome duties.”<sup>39</sup> He specifies the Huron-Wendat in his reinforcement of the stereotype of licentious behaviour, describing the Huron as more irregular in their conduct than the Iroquois, citing their “festival of debauch.”<sup>40</sup> He echoes Lahontan in his general statement that “a young woman is mistress of her person, and a free agent” but in a context of prostitution.<sup>41</sup> The evidence he presents for the negative stereotypes dominates the text, while the Huron and Iroquois women holding power in their communities are presented almost as anomalies and examples of the bizarre behaviour of the Barbarians.<sup>42</sup>

This process of reducing diversity to narrow categories and thereby creating stereotypes continues into contemporary discourse. In *Chain Her By One Foot*, Karen Anderson concluded that Huron women were brought to a position of subjectivity by the pressures of conversion and the impact of war and epidemics. Her text seems to produce a new stereotype, the autonomous Aboriginal women brought to subjugation by the power of Jesuit missionaries.<sup>43</sup> Like those of her predecessors, her conclusions are generalized and arrived at through the exclusion of detail. She is silent about the differences between the four nations within the Huron-Wendat confederacy, the range of Huron-Wendat responses to conversion efforts, the Huron-Wendat who did not take refuge with the Jesuit settlements, and the diversity of Huron-Wendat women’s actions -

---

<sup>39</sup> Heriot, 309.

<sup>40</sup> Heriot, 338.

<sup>41</sup> Heriot, 340.

<sup>42</sup> Heriot, 309.

<sup>43</sup> Anderson, 5,9,226,229.

all of which were described in detail by Trigger.<sup>44</sup> Anderson's process of selection and de-selection illustrates not only Hayden White's discussion of the fictive character of history writing, but also Keith Moxey's assertion that in historical writing there are no disinterested narratives,<sup>45</sup> and that a historian's subjectivity is governed by the ideological traditions characteristic of their situation in history.<sup>46</sup> Anderson seems to be working in an ideological tradition that positions Aboriginal cultures as swept away by the power of the dominant European culture and supports her theory by resorting to a typology of Huron-Wendat women that goes back to the seventeenth century.

### **Contradictions**

The generalized categories of images which I have just described, the Megeras and subservient, docile lambs of the Jesuits and the sexual provocateurs and drudges of Lahontan and Sagard, obscure the actual, experienced reality of Aboriginal women in Huron-Wendat and other cultures. These images are justified by an assertion of changed subjectivity and identity, or by resorting to European ideas about gender roles. Although, as we will see in Chapter Three, the pictorial images based on these types are unambivalent, the seventeenth and eighteenth century textual representations contain contradictory images seen through anecdotes of specific events. These contradictions suggest continuity in Aboriginal women's identity and subjectivity pre- and post-contact, and reveal the constructed nature of the generalized categories and stereotypes.

---

<sup>44</sup> Trigger, 1976, 789, 791, 826.

<sup>45</sup> Keith Moxey, "Motivating History," *The Practice of Persuasion* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2001) 86.

<sup>46</sup> Moxey, 88.

Lippman writes that stereotypes can obliterate the facts, hence when occasionally a contradiction becomes visible, the existence of a stereotype is indicated.<sup>47</sup>

Contradictions seem to appear most often in narratives of the everyday, rather than the grand sweep of events. Although examples are few, they allow us to see behind the stereotypes. Sayre notes that the ethnographic discourse of the *moeurs des sauvages* “asserted the power of knowing and comprehending native cultures through generalization.”<sup>48</sup> Thus diversity was suppressed in favour of a single formula. He cites Tvetan Todorov’s analysis of the gap between experience and myth, the separation between detail and generalization, actuality and idealization, a difference of near and far.<sup>49</sup> The empirical experience is near to the author, the myth is far.

Sometimes the contradictions are clear in the narrative of events, at times they require a reading against the grain of the text to reach an understanding of events as they happened from the Native women’s perspective. I will present three examples of these contradictions, which suggest the strength of Aboriginal cultures and continuity of discourse, traditional institutions, and the roles of the women in their communities.

The first is drawn from the letters of the Ursuline sister Marie de l’Incarnation. In 1640, ten years before the dispersal of the Huron-Wendat and after fifteen years of intense Jesuit missionizing in Huron communities, Marie de l’Incarnation described events in Huronia, which she saw as conspiring to destroy the Huron Mission. She reported that large assemblies were being held among the Huron with the purpose of

---

<sup>47</sup> Lippman, 132-133.

<sup>48</sup> Sayre, 114.

<sup>49</sup> Sayre, 112-113.

exterminating the mission, and described a Huron woman elder speaking to one such assembly.

Une femme des plus anciennes et des plus considérables de cette nation harangua dans une assemblée en cette sorte: Ce sont les Robes noires qui nous font mourir par leurs sorts; Ecoutez-moi, je le prouve par les raisons que vous allez connoître véritables. Ils se sont logez dans un tel village où tout le monde se portoit bien, si-tôt qu'ils s'y sont établis, tout y est mort à la réserve de trois ou quatre personnes... Si l'on ne les met promptement à mort, ils achèveront de ruiner le païs, en sorte qu'il n'y demeurera ni petit ni grand. Quand cette femme eut cessé de parler, tous conclurent que cela étoit véritable, et qu'il falloit apporter du remède à un si grand mal.<sup>50</sup>

This narrative of a specific event tells us several things about the strength of women's roles in their communities at a time when the *Jesuit Relations* were reporting numerous conversions and transformations of women into docile lambs. The large assemblies the Huron-Wendat held to discuss the Jesuit presence in Huronia indicate that despite the impact of depopulation from the epidemics of 1636 and 1637 (when approximately half the Huron-Wendat population was lost), they were still organized and functioning as a cohesive social group, following the traditional ways of public discussion and oratory to reach consensus.<sup>51</sup> That one of the oldest and most respected women spoke there, that her words were recognized as just, and that action was required based on her words, indicates the continuing central *public* role played by women elders.

---

<sup>50</sup> Dom Guy Oury, *Marie de l'Incarnation, Ursuline (1599-1672) Coorespondance*, ed. Arthur T. Adams (Solesmes: Abbaye Saint-Pierre, 1971) 117-118.

A woman elder of this nation held forth at an assembly and this is the gist of her speech: It is the Black Robes who are making us die through their spells; listen to me, I will prove it through facts that you know are true. They find somewhere to live in a village where everyone is in good health, as soon as they are established, everyone dies there, except three or four people...if we don't put them to death quickly, they will bring about the ruin of the country, in such a way that no one will remain, large or small. When this woman had finished talking, everyone concluded that it was true, and that it was necessary to find a cure for such an evil (my translation).

<sup>51</sup> Trigger, 1976, 601.

A similar event which had taken place five years earlier is described by Trigger. In 1635 the Jesuits wished to establish a mission school in Quebec, and they proposed to take twelve boys from Ihonatiria, one of the Huron-Wendat communities, to Quebec. However, when the time came for the boys to depart, head women of their households raised strong objections, and in the end only three boys left for Quebec, accompanied by their fathers or uncles. After the group arrived at Trois Rivières, the fathers and uncles would only allow one boy to continue, and this boy was nearly an adult.<sup>52</sup>

Richard White's description of events almost a century after the 1649 Huron-Wendat dispersal provides further evidence of the continuation of the power of Huron-Wendat women elders and the continuation of the traditional social structure. A number of Huron had joined with the Petun (Tionnontaté) and migrated to the west. In the late 1730s they were in the Detroit area, where a number of Algonquian nations were their neighbours. A conflict developed between the Huron-Petun and the other nations, and to resolve the problem, the French wanted to move the Huron-Petun to Montreal, within the sphere of the mission communities. This did not happen largely because of the strength of the women elders. White writes that "the clan matrons took such a prominent role in opposing the French attempts... [that the French] resorted to secret councils restricted to men in an unsuccessful attempt to break the influence of the women."<sup>53</sup> It is possible that the women did not want to move to the Montreal area of Jesuit control in part because the Jesuit activities altered the social structure of their communities and reduced them to a powerless role. The anecdote illustrates the continuity of the powerful public role of

---

<sup>52</sup> Trigger, 1976, 523-524.

<sup>53</sup> White, 194.

Huron women, and the respect for their opinions around issues that affected the larger community.

It is interesting to note that a large number of Huron-Petun men were in agreement with the clan matrons. Three of the clan elders had also objected to the move, one of them the leader of the non-Christian Huron-Petun.<sup>54</sup> In the end, there was a split in the Huron-Petun; one group settled at Sandusky near the southwestern shore of Lake Erie while another migrated toward the Ohio region and began to call themselves the Wyandot, a variant of Wendat.<sup>55</sup> It appears that none of the Huron-Petun chose to go to the missionary settlement at Montreal, calling into question Anderson's statement that the Huron could only turn to the Jesuits and Catholicism for aid.<sup>56</sup>

More general contradictions that support this understanding of the continuation of Huron-Wendat discourse and traditional ways are found in Louis Hennepin's text. He wrote that the number of Christian conversions was smaller than the Jesuits stated,<sup>57</sup> and from his reports of Huron villages, the Huron population was still significant.<sup>58</sup> He suggests that conversions that did occur were short lived, and not a result of a true understanding of Christianity. In the winter of 1680-81, Hennepin wrote specifically of

---

<sup>54</sup> White, 194-195.

<sup>55</sup> White, 194.

<sup>56</sup> Anderson, 228.

<sup>57</sup> L. Hennepin, *A New Discovery of a Vast Country in America*, Vol.2 (London: Henry Bonwicke, 1699) 147-148.

<sup>58</sup> Hennepin described a Huron village at the Point of Missilimakinak. He writes "their Villages are fortify'd with Pallisado's of 25 foot high, and always situated upon Eminences or Hill;" it seems he knew of several villages indicating the existence fo a significant Huron-Wendat population (Vol.1, 65). He wrote that the Iroquois had "slain the best Warriors among the Hurons, and forced the rest of that Nation to join with them" (88). These reports suggest that there were two bodies of Huron population outside the Jesuit village, and that the Huron-Wendat did not all turn to the Jesuits and conversion after their dispersal.

the Michillmacknack Huron, saying that they would often assist at church ceremonies but came more out of curiosity than “any Design to conform themselves to the Rules of our Holy Religion,” which reinforces the view that conversion was not the only option for the post-dispersal Huron.<sup>59</sup>

Even allowing for the strong sense of competition between the Recollet and Jesuit orders for the conversion of souls, Hennepin’s description of the Huron and other Aboriginal peoples’ remaining in their own traditional beliefs works against the description the Jesuits gave of converts, both men and women, but women in particular. A further example of this is Hennepin’s description of how ‘Savage Women’ who had been baptized and married by the Church to French men, often left their husbands and took others, saying “they were not subject to the Laws of the Christians, and that they did not marry but with a design to stay with their Husbands as long as they agreed together: but if they did not agree well, they were at liberty to change.”<sup>60</sup> This is one of the few times when Hennepin records Native women’s voice, and in its statement of persistent cultural differences that defied missionization, it has an objective ring.

Hennepin wrote that the churches of Savages were to be found at the missionary settlements near Quebec and Mont-royal. His description of these converted Aboriginal peoples, among whom would have been Huron-Wendat, seems to be an objective view of the reality of the depth of conversion and its actual impact on Aboriginal peoples’ identity and subjectivity:

Tho’ their Language as well as Manners are altogether savage, yet for all that those Neophytes are kept in their Devoir. Great pains is taken to educate them

---

<sup>59</sup> Hennepin, Vol.1, 209.

<sup>60</sup> Hennipin, Vol.2, 124-125.

in Piety, yet not much is gain'd upon their Spirit. There are some that are Christians in good earnest; but there are many entire Families who escape from the Missioners after having abode with them ten or twelve Years, and return to the Woods to their first mode of living...of their adhesion to Christianity: It's certain they quite apostatize from it.<sup>61</sup>

Baron de Lahontan's text provides examples of the continuation of Aboriginal women's identity and subjectivity as autonomous and unconcerned with the opposing views of European men. One example is his report of a conversation between Jesuits and 'femmes Sauvages.' The Jesuit reprimanded the parents of hunting women, telling them that there were fires in hell to torment the girls for eternity for this vice. He reports that the women mocked the Jesuits, saying "il faut que les Montagnes de cet autre monde soient formées de la cendre des ames" 'the mountains of this other world must be made of the ashes of souls (my translation).'<sup>62</sup> Aboriginal women's sexual freedom, historically interpreted as a stereotype of licentious behaviour, can be read today as an indication of the freedom to make personal choices, and an egalitarian position in a society of balanced spheres of influence between genders. Lahontan does not specify if these women were Huron or Algonkian; he spent time with both groups, however Jesuit attempts to control women were strongly resisted, and with a powerful weapon, humour.

George Heriot's *Travels Through the Canadas* written in 1806 also presents a generalized contradiction to the stereotypes of powerlessness. Concerning Aboriginal women he writes:

...among associations which have made but little advancement in the arts of life, the condition of women is servile and degraded. The men alone may be said to be properly free, and the women...are almost universally their slaves. In the women, notwithstanding, the property of the tribe, the distinction of blood, the order of

---

<sup>61</sup> Hennepin, Vol.2, 148.

<sup>62</sup> Lahontan, 682.

generations...are, by several of the northern tribes, reputed to be inherent. In them is vested the foundation of all real authority. They give efficiency to the councils, are the arbiters of peace or war, and the keepers of the public stock. The country, the fields and their produce, belong to them alone.<sup>63</sup>

Heriot presents the conventionalized understanding of indigenous women as servile and degraded, the exception or contradiction is the northern tribes, the Huron and Iroquois. However, this distinction between the Iroquoian tribes and all others seems based on their resemblance to European culture in their sedentary, agriculture-based social organization, and on his European understanding of hierarchical social organization. It could not be read that such an essentialist distinction existed between the northern nations and all other groups.

It is an important point to reinforce that the rare text appearances of events that reveal the powerful position of Huron-Wendat women does not necessarily mean that they were of rare occurrence. It does mean that the European men who were making the reports were de-selecting what they thought was irrelevant or did not contribute to the purpose of their historical narrative. In the same way that the Frenchmen negotiating with the Huron-Wendat men at Detroit tried to avoid discussion with the Huron-Wendat women because of women's resistance to their pressures, it seems likely that the authors of missionary and other texts would exclude references to Huron-Wendat women who were behaving in ways outside European women's cultural norms and otherwise resisting cultural pressures to change, or would describe such autonomous behavior in belittling terms so as not to acknowledge it. In "On Ethnographic Allegory" James Clifford discusses ethnography as "performance emplotted by powerful stories." These stories "describe real cultural events and make additional, moral, ideological, and even

---

<sup>63</sup> Heriot, 321-322.

cosmological statements.”<sup>64</sup> The historical ethnographies presented in this chapter are emplotted by the stories of the noble savage, natural man, barbarian, or exotic other, reflecting what Clifford called the “canonical and emergent allegories” of the moment.<sup>65</sup> These would have necessitated exclusions or tailoring of elements inconsistent with the allegory and its intent, elements such as the behaviour of Huron-Wendat women that reflected their authority and status.

### **Analysis**

By approaching the European images through a discussion of the texts a broad pattern of cultural interaction, interpretation, and representation becomes visible. The historical texts and images were co-existent and interrelated; earlier texts were used as the base for later texts, earlier images were used as the basis for later ones, and the texts informed the artists’ works. Many artists had not been to North America and they based their images on the written accounts of those who had, filtered through contemporary European visual traditions. Artists who came to Canada in the nineteenth century would probably have read the earlier accounts, and would already have formed expectations of the Aboriginal peoples they were to meet. Thus the lens of artistic expression presents an even narrower and more selective field of vision than the texts.

The writings of seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth century explorers, missionaries, trader/interpreters and travelers formed a discourse that had far reaching effects on European understandings of Aboriginal peoples. How widely disseminated and

---

<sup>64</sup> Clifford, 98.

<sup>65</sup> Clifford, 110.

widely read were these historical texts? According to Sayre they were read by nearly as many people as read what is today the canonical literature of that period, the major poets and essayists.<sup>66</sup> He discusses the popularity of these narratives not only with traders and officials but with the “armchair audience” in Europe.<sup>67</sup> To give an idea of the popularity of this form of literature in its time, Baron de Lahontan’s *Nouveaux voyages* was published in eighteen editions between 1703 and 1730,<sup>68</sup> and was translated into English, Flemish, and German.<sup>69</sup>

The texts tended to be as generic in their descriptions of Aboriginal women as were the images; Sayre writes that although in the early years of contact the number of different tribes was acknowledged, the diversity of cultures did not seem important. Rather the differences were amalgamated into a single Indian character or personality.<sup>70</sup> This homogeneous description gave rise to the narrow stereotyping of both indigenous men and women.

It is important to note the impact of translation on the textual representation of indigenous women. All early texts involve translation from the Huron-Wendat language, and many of the early contact texts about New France are in French. Translation into English produces another layer of representation. Translators must make vocabulary choices that reflect their own understandings and biases concerning indigenous women,

---

<sup>66</sup> Sayre, xix.

<sup>67</sup> Sayre, 15.

<sup>68</sup> Sayre, 15.

<sup>69</sup> R. Ouellet, *Mémoires de l'Amérique Septentrionale, Oeuvres Complètes I* (Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1990) 9.

<sup>70</sup> Sayre, 108-109.

often widespread in the period. The impact can be manifested through nuances of meaning.<sup>71</sup>

Another aspect of translation is the difference between the meaning a European observer might assign to relations between men and women in Aboriginal communities, and the meaning found through translations of words from the Native language. For example, although John Long wrote that Aboriginal women were treated as slaves and drudges by their husbands,<sup>72</sup> in his dictionary of Ojibwa (Chippewa) vocabulary, the word 'root' has two definitions, one is the roots of trees, the other is a figurative expression for the affections of the heart which entwine about each other.<sup>73</sup> This suggests that relations between men and women were not as harsh as Long had described.

## Conclusion

The conventionalized categories of representation and the contradictions to them present a paradox: it seems that the categories that defined Aboriginal women in European terms as subjugated to men, the drudge and the licentious woman, were the very categories that reflected women's relative autonomy and egalitarian position in their communities. These categories when read against the grain demonstrate the power women held. The activities which Europeans interpreted as drudgery in fact reflected

---

<sup>71</sup> For example, Paul Lejeune in the 1636 *Relation* writes of a Huron woman that "elle avait la face modeste, mais l'oeil si assurée, que je la prenais pour un homme" 'she had a modest face, but her glance was as bold as a man's' (*JR* 10:255). The Thwaites edition translates *assurée* as bold rather than, for example, self-assured, another possible choice. 'Bold' as an adjective applied to a woman, particularly in that era, would have had the nuance of impropriety, whereas self-assured carries the nuance of personal power.

<sup>72</sup> Long, 56, 137.

<sup>73</sup> Long, 238.

responsibility for the land, control of the produce from the land to distribute or sell, ownership of the longhouse, and responsibility for the family and larger community decisions which affected it. The women portrayed as Megeras were in actuality the women elders who spoke in public councils on issues that affected the community as a whole, women with power and influence. The promiscuous girls and women free to divorce were women who, within the general social mores of their communities, had the right to decide with whom they wanted to live their lives, but not subjected to the wishes and beliefs of a particular man, father, brother or husband.

The images of the women that are glimpsed through the contradictory anecdotes embedded in the early texts illustrate a continuity with the pre-contact understanding of the situation of Aboriginal women in many parts of the Eastern Woodlands. The different experience of order and its modes of being made it difficult for the two groups to make sense of each others' behaviour, or for the Aboriginal peoples to be changed in any essential way by European attempts at conversion or assimilation.<sup>74</sup>

Despite the historical representations of Aboriginal women in text and image as essentially powerless, and despite Anderson's recent representation of Huron-Wendat women as brought to subjugation, the powerful women seen in the narratives of specific events contradict these interpretations. They call into question the understanding of Aboriginal cultures as essentially changed by a dominant, powerful culture. Instead, the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth century women who appear in these accounts display cultural strength, continuity and an ability to adapt and respond to change.

---

<sup>74</sup> Foucault, 1970, xx.

## Chapter Three

### Images of Aboriginal Women in European Art Works

#### Introduction

European artistic tropes transformed Aboriginal women's actual position, to make it a clouded reflection of the limited roles permitted to European women. I will look at a series of characteristic images from text illustrations as well as independent artworks, drawing on visual works of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This broad chronological range illustrates the continuity of conventions of representation first established in the early contact period.

The images that I have selected are reflective to a large extent of the main defined identities in the texts: the roles for women recognized in European ideology, institutions and social structure. The textual traditions discussed in Chapter Two are translated through the artistic conventions, the allegorical meanings achieved through these conventions giving additional layers of content to the ethnographic representation.

The artworks in this chapter reflect the great changes in the history of art during these centuries, corresponding to changes in the history of ideas. Hugh Honour and John Fleming state that Baroque art of the seventeenth century displayed a "predominantly religious emotionalism, dynamic energy and exuberant decorative richness," reflecting the mood of the Counter-Reformation emanating from Rome.<sup>1</sup> French Rococo art of the early eighteenth century, stepping away from the conventions of the Academy, reflected the Enlightenment desire for freedom from authority, while works that were "sublime in

---

<sup>1</sup> Hugh Honour and John Fleming, *The Visual Arts: A History* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc., 2005) 572.

sentiment” reflected another mode of the period, the depiction of moral subjects.<sup>2</sup> Neoclassicism reflected Enlightenment beliefs in “logic, clarity simplicity and moral rectitude.”<sup>3</sup> Romanticism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries reflected a reaction against the narrowness of the Enlightenment, showing the limits of reason, privileging feelings and intuition.<sup>4</sup> The picturesque aesthetic is another aspect of the European world view. It is described by Ian McLean as a way of naturalizing progress or history, “its favourite subjects were the frontiers of civilization,” a dialectic between nature and culture in which the wild becomes the picturesque.<sup>5</sup> The conventions of representation of Aboriginal women, moving through these changing artistic traditions and ideologies, demonstrate strong threads of continuity in a narrow range of categories.

There are no women artists among those whose works I have selected, stemming from the fact that during the early years of contact there were few European women in what is now Canada. The French women who came to New France as settlers or nuns did not leave an artistic record in the media of painting or drawing, and it was in the nineteenth century, when the wives of colonial administrators began to arrive, that European women artists produced works representing Aboriginal peoples. Anna Jamison and Katherine Jane Ellice were two such artists, but their images were not of the Huron-Wendat, so have been excluded.

In Karl Lubbers’ study of images of Native Americans he identifies a line of development that moved through three stages: first, recording Aboriginal peoples in their

---

<sup>2</sup> Honour and Fleming, 615.

<sup>3</sup> Honour and Fleming, 628.

<sup>4</sup> Wiener, Vol. 4, 199,202,201.

<sup>5</sup> Ian McLean, “Under Saturn,” *Double Vision* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 151.

everyday life and surroundings, second, reducing them to subordinate elements in a real or imagined landscape, and third, “conceiving of them as vanishing ... existing in a scenery already imaginatively appropriated by Euro-American artists for their own culture.”<sup>6</sup> I will use these stages to group the artworks I have selected; placing them in these broad categories helps to identify further how European interpretations of Aboriginal peoples often originated in the self-interest of those interpreters.

### **Recording or Documentary Works**

Six Native figures appear on the engraved title page of the 1632 edition of Sagard’s *Le Grand Voyage du Pays des Hurons* (Fig. 1). Each represents a role and activity in daily life as imagined by the artist, who would have based his illustration on information from Sagard’s text rather than on actual contact with the peoples of North America. Through artistic codes of representation the artist situates these figures in relation to the two priests in the engraving, to Christianity, and to Western European culture and ideology. He sets up comparisons between the two cultures and establishes a hierarchy. The larger size of the priests immediately signifies their greater importance, and their architectural setting represents the Christian world, more civilized, focused around God, ordered through culture, clothing, buildings, and writing. The symmetrical walking or dancing poses of the Native figures give the impression of constant movement and a childlike air in contrast with the static positions and *gravitas* of the two brothers.

The smaller Aboriginal figures represent an exotic, potentially violent people, where the women follow European subservient roles and the men wage war and conduct

---

<sup>6</sup> Karl Lubbers, *Born for the Shade*, Amsterdam Monographs in American Studies 3 (Amsterdam, Atlanta: Rodopi, 1994) 167.

distinctly non-Christian ceremonies. This engraving is a complex encoding of a power relationship between two cultures as presented by the European reporter, Gabriel Sagard, as he wanted to see it and as he wanted European readers to see it; it is doubtful if the Huron-Wendat would have experienced it in the same way.

The format of the title page is similar to that of a Renaissance altarpiece, for example Fra Bartolommeo's *Carondelet Altarpiece*, c.1511 (Fig.2). The priest-saint and St. Sebastian gaze at Christ in the same way that the haloed Recollet brothers gaze at the name of Christ, while the Recollet priest on the right is in a pose very similar to the priest-saint on the right in Fra Bartolommeo's image. In both works, architecture is used to establish divisions within the picture plane. In each image, two horizontal lines in the architecture create three levels, with a central framed opening. In the Altarpiece this framed doorway opens to an idealized landscape, while the Sagard title page presents publication information about a book which opens the way to a new land for the reader. The *Carondelet Altarpiece* presents a contrast between two specific registers, the earthly and the heavenly, while Sagard's title page presents a contrast between two states of man, savagery and civilization, as represented by the Native figures and the priests. While the priests occupy architectural space, part of a civilized environment, the Huron figures are almost in limbo, which contributes to their air of the imaginary and fantastical, in an exotic realm far removed from the real. This makes the priests' missionary work seem even more intrepid and self-sacrificing, bringing the word of God to the ends of the earth.

The clothes worn by the priests and the Native figures provide further encoding; a sixteenth century tradition of books of costumes used dress to symbolize differences between people – more clothes indicated higher rank, less equaled lower. The semi-

nudity of the Aboriginal figures associated them with a lack of social order and two other, opposite meanings: either primordial innocence or man arising out of bestiality, in contrast to the priests who are covered from head to toe in voluminous robes.<sup>7</sup> To further remove the Native figures from a condition of individuality and personal identity, their faces are represented as interchangeable types, while the priests are depicted as individuals. The only connection the Native figures have with their culture and environment is through the small images, the cabane and the canot. These images are positioned as ornamentation in the lower panels, significant below the priests as signs of difference and exoticism.

The positioning of European culture as dominant and Aboriginal culture at an earlier stage of cultural development is further established by classicizing references. The smaller Native figures in the upper tier are composed in the tradition of a Greek decorative frieze. They occupy a position of lesser importance, in low relief in a shallow, undefined space, while the two priests are sculptural in their three dimensionality.

Two textual references to God in the engraving situate the priests and the Native figures within the European understanding of a hierarchy of culture and civilization. While the priests gaze up in adoration at the cross and monogram of Jesus Christ, the Hebrew word for 'the Lord' is placed above the Native figures. Hugh Honour states that Aboriginal peoples were believed by some to be the progeny of the Lost Tribes of Israel or of Jews who had fled Jerusalem after its destruction.<sup>8</sup> This reference to the Hebrew Lord positioned North American Aboriginal peoples within the hierarchy of Western

---

<sup>7</sup> Dickason, 50.

<sup>8</sup> Hugh Honour, *The New Golden Land* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975) 121.

European cultures, as people who had a common origin but at what was seen as an earlier stage of development.

In this visual context of cultural hierarchy, the images of Aboriginal women established the essentialized stereotypes seen in successions of later representations. They appear as types whose accompanying attributes make them recognizable or familiar to European viewers, through their work roles which were well known in European social organization. One woman pounds maize, another carries a baby in a cradleboard, while the third carries a basket and hoe. Throughout his text, Sagard referred frequently and disapprovingly to the freedom of Huron-Wendat women and girls, and he made no reference to egalitarian gender roles. In the European artistic tradition there was no recognized code to represent women as autonomous. Hence Native women are assigned the same roles as European women, child bearing, work in the fields, and preparing food. The reality of Huron-Wendat women's lives is concealed.

The overall message of the title page is the extension of Christian patriarchy to an exotic and less civilized society. It does not reflect Sagard's detailed description of the complexities of Huron-Wendat culture, their traditions, songs, rituals, and the freedom held by women, but it does convey his essential underlying purpose: to further the project of conversion. It defines the relationship of power between Europe and indigenous peoples and their perceived need for their conversion.

The illustration from the *Novae Franciae Accurato Delineatio* of 1657 is attributed to Jesuit priest François-Joseph Bressani, who worked among the Iroquois after the Huron dispersal in 1649(Fig. 3).<sup>9</sup> The engraving follows the pattern of encoding

---

<sup>9</sup> François Marc Gagnon, *Ces Hommes Dits Sauvages*. (Montréal: Éditions Libre Expression, 1984) 32. Gagnon writes that the image is attributed to Bressani, but was probably engraved by G.F. Pesca.

Aboriginal peoples through European traditions of representation, with the purpose of furthering the project of conversion and the saving of souls. The success of this mission is represented through the image of a Huron Christian family, praying to a cross, symbol of Christ's crucifixion. They are shown as assimilated to the European model of the family, the base of European hierarchical social structure. The mother and father are on their knees (not a position familiar to indigenous peoples), while the children imitate their father in the position of his hands in entreaty and prayer. They regard the cross with an adoring gaze, signifying devotion and dedication to their new religion. Their poses are reminiscent of figures in European paintings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for example Antonio Bouzonnet Stella's *The Three Maries at the Sepulchre*, c.1650 (Fig. 4). The pose of the praying Huron figures is similar to the figure of the kneeling Mary, light from the cross falls on the Huron figures in the same way that light from Christ touches Mary, and the folds of the clothing worn by the Huron figures is shadowed and draped in a way reminiscent of the folds of the clothing worn by the European figures. By situating the members of a Huron family in this recognized Christian tradition they are made familiar and established as converts. However, Bressani does choose to include visible signs of difference. For example, the pouch over the man's shoulder, woven with barely discernible non-Christian symbols, may be intended to remind the viewer that these are still savages. He may not have known that these symbols represented the bearer's vision quest and an individual connection with the spirit world, and were embroidered by a woman relative as an interpretation of his dream. It is almost possible to make out the image of the Thunderbird, a powerful sky spirit in the Eastern Woodlands

---

spiritual tradition.<sup>10</sup> This figure represents a strong connection with the Huron-Wendat spiritual tradition and women's key place in its structure.

Placed in the European religious and social tradition, within the patriarchal hierarchy of religion and family, the Huron-Wendat woman is depicted in a role very different from her pre-contact position. She is removed from the complex responsibilities of agriculture and the relationships of the longhouse and subjugated to her husband and Christianity, limited to the role of wife and mother. When considered in the light of Huron-Wendat women's persistent resistance to conversion as described by Bruce Trigger and Karen Anderson, this image is revealed as propaganda rather than actuality.<sup>11</sup>

The Bressani drawing of the women in the fields repeats the three motifs seen in the Sagard illustration (Fig.5). The same work roles familiar to Europeans have been assigned: child rearing, work in the fields, and food preparation. Both Bressani, who spent time among the Iroquoian nations, and Sagard, who spent a year among the Huron-Wendat, would have had the opportunity to see the other roles that Iroquoian women and woman elders played in their communities, the control of the planting and harvesting of food and its dispersal, and the decisions concerning children and young adults in the communities. These images thus select and exclude, they select what is familiar to European viewers and what is consistent with the project of conversion and assimilation, they exclude behaviour which resists European cultural pressure. The simplistic, essentialized presentation of Huron-Wendat women also excluded the possibility of

---

<sup>10</sup> Ruth Bliss Phillips, "Dreams and Designs: Iconographic Problems in Great Lakes Twined Bags," *Great Lakes Indian Art* (Detroit:Wayne State University and the Detroit Institute of Arts, 1989) 53.

<sup>11</sup> Trigger, 1976, 532,565,593,716-717; Anderson, 18.

sophisticated social organization, with balanced, egalitarian relations between men and women as the foundation of successful community.

The illustration of Huron women in *Historiae Canadensis*, 1664, by Jesuit François Du Creux, presents Native women in a European landscape, an idyllic pastoral scene rather than a wilderness, with strategically placed trees and a background escarpment opening to a vista of winding river and gently rolling hills (Fig. 6). The women are types rather than individuals, the two standing are almost duplicates of each other in dress, pose, and facial appearance. One is carrying a young child and the seated woman is engaged in what appears to be needlework, while a swaddled baby rests in a small hammock slung between two trees. The women's dress and headbands are woven with patterns, they wear necklaces, bracelets, and armbands, and are statuesque in appearance. They seem to represent the noble savage of Jesuit ideology, written of by the Jesuits before Lahontan and Rousseau. George Healy writes of the Jesuits' "curious propensity to ennoble the savage," though with reservations. This was based in the Spanish Jesuit Luis de Molina's system, which believed man was born exempt from original sin, in a state of pure nature, a "purely natural" man, that "nature alone was sufficient to direct man into a good... life." That the Jesuits' savage was more exemplary at the close of the seventeenth century than at the beginning is due to the development of the argument with the Jansenists, who believed natural man was essentially depraved.<sup>12</sup> Thus Du Creux's representation of the noble sauvagesses in the manner of classical Greek figures reflects changing European ideology. This did not necessarily make the stereotypes of Aboriginal women any closer to their actual experience, they still inhabit

---

<sup>12</sup> George R. Healy, "The French Jesuits and the Idea of the Noble Savage," *William and Mary Quarterly* 15 (1958) 144-145, 147-148, 155.

an empty landscape, devoid of context, in their roles of childbearing and work, “leur petits ouvrages, et les oeuvres serviles.”<sup>13</sup>

Claude Chauchetiere’s late seventeenth century portrait of Catherine Tekakwitha, one of many that he drew but the only one that survived, presents Tekakwitha as a saint, floating above a pastoral landscape, in a costume which Greer states related to textual documents, combining Iroquois and European elements (Fig. 7).<sup>14</sup> Tekakwitha is in the pose of a Madonna but without a child, instead holding a cross and gazing sorrowfully down toward a church. She is presented in relation to the crucifix and the church below her, signifying her conversion and her dedication to the life of a Christian nun. This related to the category of the Aboriginal woman as catechist and preacher to her people, a variant of the Indian princess motif. French missionary efforts in New France were directed toward converting and francisizing Native women, so that they would carry religion and French culture to their family and community, and in turn “reform” them.<sup>15</sup>

The engravings in Joseph-François Lafitau’s text *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times*, 1724, record the daily life and surroundings of the Iroquois and Huron in the classicizing tradition, reflecting artistic encoding as well as a prevalent system of beliefs. Healy outlines Lafitau’s argument that the ‘savages’ had come originally from the Near East; Lafitau believed that most of the Canadian tribes had come from Greece and Ionia, the sedentary Hurons were

---

<sup>13</sup> Sagard, 324.

<sup>14</sup> Allan Greer, *Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005)20.

<sup>15</sup> Dominique Deslandres, “L’éducation des Amérindiennes d’après la correspondance de Marie Guyart de l’Incarnation,” *Studies in Religion* 16.1 (1987) 94.

“Hellenians.”<sup>16</sup> Thus the illustrations present the Huron or Iroquois women as dancing mynaenads, in a classical style of dress with flowing hair (Figs.8, 9). This European representation of Aboriginal men and women engaged in a dance is a motif repeated by many artists, but it is depicted as decorative, colourful, and exotic, related to Greek mythology or European folk dance. The significance and importance of dance as an integral part of a ceremonial complex that constituted the larger discourse of Aboriginal cultures is not recognized.

Another illustration in Lafitau shows women engaged in physical work, making maple syrup, working in fields, and preparing food (Fig. 10). From these illustrations it is clear how stereotypes could arise; there seem to be two categories of women: the servile physical worker, or the sexualized figure derived from the tradition of unruly dancing women familiar from Greek mythology.

The illustrations of Baron de Lahontan’s early eighteenth century text *Memoires Pittoresques de la Nouvelle-France* include unskilled drawings of figures of men and women (Figs.11, 12), depicting appearances and customs described by Lahontan in the text, and also elaborate works by a trained artist, whose images are in the representational context of classical antiquity (Figs.13, 14,15). The works based in the classical tradition are in an architectural setting with further buildings and landscape visible in the background. This encoding reflects the eighteenth century trope of the noble savage, this time in reflection of Lahontan’s Enlightenment belief in the idea of a “rational but untutored morality” existing in nature.<sup>17</sup> This was constructed to answer the purpose of

---

<sup>16</sup> Healy, 161.

<sup>17</sup> Healy, 143.

European philosophers of the time rather than through an understanding of the lived reality of Aboriginal spiritual beliefs and social system. While the figures in the rough drawings seem at times to barely resemble people, the engravings present figures of idealized, classical appearance in a rational, ordered life. This encoding reflects the artistic climate in France at that time, when academic training of artists focused on studying and copying the works of antique sculpture and Renaissance painting.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, the encoding has the effect described by Honour, it “reinforced the links between the savage people of America and the republicans of antiquity.”<sup>19</sup> In addition, the engravings are in the style of history painting, a genre which incorporated an intention of moral improvement.<sup>20</sup> Through the use of conventions and encoding, the illustrations reflect Lahontan’s text, a critique of European society through the representation of an idealization.

The women in the engravings appear as the female counterpart to the noble savage, in classical appearance, either wearing a version of the Greek chiton or nude, barely covered by flowing robes. The encoding of the nude is in the framework of Greek mythology, Honour suggests the story of Cupid and Psyche, for example.<sup>21</sup> The image of the *Sauvage dont la Maitresse se Cache* (Fig.13) is reminiscent of Sir Anthony van Dyck’s *Cupid and Psyche*, 1639-40 (Fig.16). The Native woman lies partially covered by

---

<sup>18</sup> Honour and Fleming, 604.

<sup>19</sup> Honour, 122.

<sup>20</sup> Honour and Fleming, 570, 615, 659.

<sup>21</sup> Hugh Honour, *The New Golden Land* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975) 122.

In the story of Cupid and Psyche, Cupid fell in love with and married Psyche, a beautiful mortal, and to escape the wrath of Aphrodite, could only visit her at night.

flowing drapery, as does the figure of Psyche, while the Native man is represented in much the same way as Cupid, semi-nude in flowing draperies. The figures in both images follow the classical ideal, the recognized convention for the representation of nude figures. What makes the images of the Aboriginal women different is their evident control of events, compared to Psyche's apparent unawareness of Cupid's approach and hence no clear indication of her wishes. In one image the Native woman refuses the man, and in another she chooses to accept him.

The mythologized appearance of the Lahontan illustrations creates an imagined rather than actual depiction of Aboriginal peoples' reality. It places women, perhaps more so than the men, in the environment of an idealized Greek classical context and encodes the images in the realm of the mythological, the fantastic.

To European viewers, living in the patriarchal society of Louix XIV, these images would probably have appeared to be an aspect of Lahontan's literary critique of the lack of freedom in French society, rather than the reality it was for Huron-Wendat and other Iroquoian women.

### **Aboriginal Figures as Elements in the Landscape**

The constructs of the picturesque and the sublime, and the Romantic movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are reflected in different conventions of representation of Aboriginal figures. Dennis Reid describes English gentlemen painters who took "delight in the splendours of natural scenery ...that was charmingly primitive, rough, quaint, or exotic...picturesque."<sup>22</sup> When applied to North American landscapes,

---

<sup>22</sup> Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988) 19.

these artistic conventions reflect the underlying ideology of colonization, domesticating not only the land but also the people inhabiting it, making them unthreatening and insignificant, marking the land and the people as under colonial control, the country open for expansion. Stephen Copley and Peter Garside write of the picturesque aesthetic developing during the eighteenth century, when “broadly picturesque conceptions increasingly informed landscape painting and design.”<sup>23</sup> The picturesque was an aspect of a Eurocentric world view, demonstrated by the constructed settings and the Native figures placed, almost as landscape elements, within them.

*Danse de Mariage chez les Canadiens* by Bernard Picart is an illustration from *Les Ceremonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde*, the 1723 or the 1783 edition (Fig. 17). The representation of Native figures dancing in a bucolic landscape has echoes of the moving figures of men and women on the Sagard title page and in the Lafitau illustrations, following the form of a row of dancing figures in exotic costumes. However, I suggest that elements in this image present a different understanding of Aboriginal peoples, reflecting a later period, toward the end of the eighteenth century. The figures wear garments which, though some still cling to the Greek chiton style, draw more on actual Native articles of clothing. The men and women’s footwear looks like patterned moccasins, one man wears thigh-high leggings, a woman wears an embroidered sash and armband, while the men wear ear ornaments. The detail in the depiction of the weapons carried by the men, the knife, the quiver of arrows, the tomahawk, as well as the object held by the seated woman, possibly a rattle to

---

<sup>23</sup> Steven Copley and Peter Garside, “Introduction,” *The Politics of the Picturesque* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 3.

accompany the dance, and the pose of the man on the left leaning on his rifle, all indicate a move away from the classicizing convention and the trope of the noble savage. This depiction of the exotic other, a recording of colourful costumes and customs for the gaze of the European viewer, is in a domesticated setting rather than a wilderness, against the backdrop of a European settlement with a church. This illustrates what McLean described as the colonial picturesque, a wilder foreground with Aboriginal figures and the “enlightened order of European settlement in the middle ground.”<sup>24</sup>

It is a taxonomy of types rather than individuals, the Indian warrior leaning on his rifle, the dancing woman in the center, the clothed older woman as the servile worker. Although it is described as a marriage ceremony, the complexities and cultural depth of both women’s and men’s roles in Aboriginal society are reduced to a representation of a simple country dance. In fact, Aboriginal dances were the core of systems of religious belief and community structure. Charlotte Heth states that Indian religious practices were “the nexus for most dances,” the two so integrated that “the dance is not possible without the belief systems and the music, and the belief systems and the music can hardly exist without the dance.”<sup>25</sup> Women play a key role in these dance ceremonies, reflecting their status and importance in ceremony and ritual.

The drawing of the styles of dress of French habitants and Aboriginal peoples, c.1760, by an anonymous German artist takes this taxonomic tradition of representation a step further (Fig. 18). It reflects the element of the picturesque aesthetic described by Phillips, “visible ethnic differences were exploited with the picturesque as pleurably

---

<sup>24</sup> McLean, 152.

<sup>25</sup> Charlotte Heth, ed. *Native American Dance* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Inst., 1992) 7,12.

exotic manifestations” (118). In this image, the focus on the picturesque costume presents the figures as isolated in a void, without background, almost as mannequins. Both French habitants and Aboriginal peoples are placed as Other, objects of curiosity, their images to be collected, at a far remove from the trope of the noble savage.<sup>26</sup> This image reduces specificity and heterogeneity to general types. The women’s clothes are simple, they show little decorative work, while the basket one woman carries relates to women’s commodity production rather than the earlier roles of farming and food preparation. This reflects a changing ideology, the European visitor as spectator, visiting the ‘New World’ to see the exotic people and the landscape, and to collect curios.

*Canadiens au tombeau de leur enfant*, 1781, by Jean-Jacques-François Le Barbier is a romanticized version of the noble savage of French convention, a critique of French society through contrast with heroic Native figures, living close to nature (Fig. 19).

Robert Berkhofer wrote that “the Indian of imagination and ideology continued to be derived ...from the polemical and creative needs of Whites,” and the Native figures in the painting, were derived from these needs.<sup>27</sup> This is not a documentary recording but a fictionalized representation in the style of classical antiquity, with the Native family as elements in the larger landscape. Le Barbier used a passage from historian Guillaume Raynal’s text *Histoire Philosophique et politique* as the basis of this painting, which was to be submitted to the Paris salon.<sup>28</sup> The painting was used as an illustration in a later edition of Raynal’s *Histoire*, published in thirteen editions outside France,<sup>29</sup> and was

---

<sup>26</sup> Phillips, 1998, 118.

<sup>27</sup> Robert E. Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian* (New York: Knopf, 1978) 71.

<sup>28</sup> Honour, 133.

<sup>29</sup> Donald B. Smith, *Le Sauvage* (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1974) 10.

included in F.X.Garneau's *Histoire de Canada* of 1845, published in sixteen editions and textbook printings.<sup>30</sup> In the illustration's second appearance in Garneau's text, it would have taken on the ideology of the vanishing race, creating a stereotype that Berkhofer wrote was the most romantic of all, "the impression of the Indian as rapidly passing away before the onslaught of civilization."<sup>31</sup> The work maintains many of the fictive European understandings of Aboriginal peoples and their environment. The woman is placed in an essentialized role as Virtuous Mother, a romantic image of maternity in the artistic convention of the "cult of sensibility" then prevalent in France.<sup>32</sup> Honour writes that it is in the sentiment of two of Rousseau's interests: the virtue of breastfeeding, and the "superior sensibility of simple people living in the bosom of nature."<sup>33</sup> The grouping in the European concept of the family, very different from the structure of extended families and kinship networks that characterized Aboriginal communities, further removes the Native figures from the reality of Aboriginal life.<sup>34</sup>

### **The Vanishing Race**

Paintings in this grouping, in the period from around 1800, present Aboriginal figures in a landscape created by European artists to reflect the current understanding of

---

<sup>30</sup> Smith, 24-25.

<sup>31</sup> Berkhofer, 88.

<sup>32</sup> Honour and Fleming, 615-616.

<sup>33</sup> Honour, 133.

<sup>34</sup> Trigger, 1976, 818. In *Children of Aataentsic*, Trigger writes that even after they settled at Jeune Lorette the Huron-Wendat people continued to live in bark longhouses, which would imply traditional extended family arrangements. However, he does not state when this changed to European houses in nuclear family arrangements.

‘the Indian,’ in transition from the trope of the noble savage to the ‘wretched Indian in need of redemption,’ within the paradigm of the vanishing Indian. Artists placed the Eastern Woodlands topography within the format of the European landscape tradition, as Lubbers writes, “appropriated by the Euro-American artists for their own culture so that the Indians appear to be trespassing on the white man’s land.”<sup>35</sup>

The work *A Family of Micmac Indians with their Chief in Nova Scotia*, 1801, illustrates both appropriation of the land and a typology of women’s stereotypes (Fig. 20). It was painted by an unknown artist for J. Hames, a Halifax Customs Collector, and reflects both contemporary political concerns as well as a larger ideology. The Mi’kmaq had had strong ties with the French and a history of conflict with the English, and the effect of placing the Eastern Woodlands topography in the format of the British landscape tradition with the Mi’kmaq as elements within it reinforces the British conquest of the French and the larger colonial project. The images of the women in this work, though not Huron-Wendat, reflect changing ideological understandings of Aboriginal peoples in Eastern Canada. Though the title of the work puts the focus on the chief, probably the man stepping out of the canoe, the subject of the works is the women, in the functions and roles as understood by the European male artist. This painting is fascinating as a clear and distinct typology of Aboriginal women; it illustrates the solid visual wall created by European artistic representations which blocked from sight the actual life and identities glimpsed in the texts.

It is immediately noticeable that the figures are no longer represented in the trope of the noble savage, instead the scene and figures convey an overall impression of dejection, from the facial expressions of the figures to the dilapidated wigwams. C. L.

---

<sup>35</sup> Lubbers, 167.

Higham discusses this transition in text representation, stating that “the image of the wretched Indian demonstrated the need for Christianity and civilization, thus providing Protestant missionaries...with an argument to use when seeking support.”<sup>36</sup> The only positive image is the saintly figure of the Christian basket weaver, her conversion demonstrated by the crucifix around her neck, illustrating the benefits of Christianity, health and wellbeing, in the role of the virtuous Indian maiden. The over-worked morose woman with the baby in the cradleboard carrying the fish and the woman nursing the baby in the wigwam complete the standard identities assigned to Aboriginal women since Sagard, with the additions of the sexualized serpentine figure of the woman in the foreground group and the child with the distorted, almost caricatured face. These images reflect more recent notions of Aboriginal women as debased, the opposite of the noble savage. They relate to Higham’s explanation of the transition to the wretched and debased construction as a justification for Protestant missionization and colonization.

Perhaps most tellingly, the beginnings of the depiction of Aboriginal peoples as a vanishing race can be seen in the image of the sick woman in the foreground. In the early decades of the nineteenth century Aboriginal nations were no longer seen as necessary allies to the French or English. The trope of the noble savage gave way to the representation of the doomed, vanishing race, and the image of the sick woman seems to foretell this.

The expressions of the different faces, which can be read as deliberate on the part of the artist, could also be the result of a more basic level of drawing ability. Not all artists would have been professional, some were amateurs, and this could be another explanation for the distinctive characteristics of this work.

---

<sup>36</sup> C.L.Higham, *Noble, Wretched, and Redeemable* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2000) 56.

George Heriot's watercolor of the same period, *Encampment of Domiciliated Indians*, 1806 is an illustration from his work *Travels Through the Canadas* (Fig. 21). It is situated in the English landscape tradition, although the landscape is more domesticated than in the image of the Mi'kmaq, and the Native people appear to be infringing on the European settlers' community, visible in the background. Heriot was influenced by the constructs of the picturesque and the sublime. In this image the picturesque landscape is still to a large extent the focus, with the familiar components of billowing clouds in a large sky, water, and trees. The figures of Native people occupy a space as additional elements, the sensibility of the picturesque in this image supports the domesticated aspect of colonization and assimilation. McLean's observation of a colonial picturesque pattern can be seen in the composition, with the wild in the foreground, represented by the Native figures, and the "enlightened order of European settlement," the farm house, on the other side of a stretch of water in the middle ground.<sup>37</sup>

This image presents a stereotyped view of Aboriginal women's roles in a typology similar to that in the painting of the Mi'kmaq family, with women, children, and the sexualized figure of a woman in Western dress. However, missing from this painting are any signs of women's work, always visible in earlier images. Visually, Heriot presents Native peoples as indolent and improvident, a description he dwells on in his text: "they are adverse to industry or exertion, and seldom give themselves the trouble of constructing wigwams, or huts."<sup>38</sup> He also excludes from his visual representations his text descriptions of the powers and autonomy of women of the Northern nations. His

---

<sup>37</sup> McLean, 151.

<sup>38</sup> Heriot, 23.

choices in representation reflect an underlying ideology and purpose, to present an interpretation of Aboriginal peoples that justified colonization and assimilation, and the absence of visual signs of women working, a central motif in earlier images, is a significant change.

Heriot's *Dance of the Indian Women*, c.1805, repeats the motif of the dancing women, again reminiscent of a Greek frieze and Sagard's title page, illustrating staged Indianness (Fig. 22). Finley writes that it was customary for the Quebec gentry, administrators, and military to visit Jeune Lorette in Quebec to watch the Huron-Wendat perform their dances. Heriot made such visits, and took notes to use in his writing and watercolors. Finley describes this image as "luminous," with a pronounced classical ingredient and use of line associated with neoclassical artists.<sup>39</sup> The watercolor is classicizing in its presentation of semi-nude Native women in the flowing light draperies of ancient Greece, and reveals the voyeuristic gaze of the mainly male European audience. The noble savage becomes an element of the picturesque and the object of European tourist focus.<sup>40</sup> The Huron-Wendat figures in a 1835 lithograph illustrate what is probably a more accurate impression of the clothes worn by Huron-Wendat women of the period, and the extent of the fictive element in Heriot's representation (Fig.23).

The images of Aboriginal women by Quebec artist Joseph Légaré stay within the romantic tradition, reminiscent of the earlier trope of the noble savage, and place their subjects within the paradigm of the vanishing Indian, situated in a landscape appropriated by European codes of representation. *Josephite Ourné*, c.1844 (Fig. 24), *Engagement of*

---

<sup>39</sup> Finley, 93-94.

<sup>40</sup> Phillips, 1998, 26.

*an Indian Girl*, c.1844 (Fig.25), and *Despair of an Indian Girl*, c.1844 (Fig. 26) present a trilogy of stereotypes far removed from the reality of Aboriginal peoples of that time, a reality with which many French Canadians may not have been familiar. By the mid-nineteenth century most Aboriginal peoples in Ontario and Quebec were living in Native communities and reserves, not in the forest wilderness that is the background in these works.

Légaré's work *Josephte Ourné* presents a Native woman encoded as an Indian princess through use of the European convention of representation for nobility or royalty, complete with pedigree. On the verso of the work are the words "Josephte Ourné...agée de.../fille d'un Chef Sauvage d'Ocnawaga."<sup>41</sup> This portrait convention presents the noble subject slightly turned from the viewer, in the dress signifying their rank and role, one hand holding attributes associated with warfare or hunting, the occupations of royalty and nobility. An example of this tradition is Hyacinthe Rigaud's painting of Louis XIV, 1694 (Fig.27). There are many similarities between the two works. Légaré presents his subject in a flowing red dress and fine jewellery, her broad embroidered collar and beribboned medal similar to the king's cravat, sash, and medal on its gold chain. Josephte Ourné's hair and feather ornament are as elaborate as the king's wig, indicating the importance of the wearer. Her left and right hands hold hunting attributes, the fishing rod and catch, symbols of her role as huntress in the forest and her right to hunt in her domain, a prerogative of the aristocracy and royalty in Europe. The king holds the scepter in one hand, his other hand close to his sword, attributes of his rule over his kingdom and his role as warrior to protect it. A forest vista stretches out to Josephte Ourné's left,

---

<sup>41</sup> John R. Porter, *The Works of Joseph Légaré 1795-1855* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1978) 74.

suggesting her kingdom, just as the blue drapery embroidered with the fleur du lys represents the king's land, France.

John Porter writes that research has not been able to identify the subject, and this may not be a portrait of a particular woman but rather Légaré's romanticized constructed image of the vanishing race.<sup>42</sup> The other two paintings by Légaré continue this theme; an article in *Le Castor* from 1844 describes the works: "philosophical painting of the customs of those nations which peopled the land of America before the Europeans arrived."<sup>43</sup> This description situates the Native figures as fictional, recalling the past, of a culture which had peopled North America but had been replaced by Europeans. The images present a romantic fiction of Aboriginal women, but bear no relation to reality.

*The Engagement of an Indian Girl* and *the Despair of an Indian Girl*, I suggest, are reminiscent of the French genre style of the Rococo period, for example *The Meeting* from *The Progress of Love* by Fragonard (Fig. 28). The wilderness garden background of Légaré's works is reminiscent of Fragonard's setting, while the format, the central trees and foliage with the two vistas receding on either side framing the two figures in the center, is also similar to Fragonard's work and the format of that genre. The Indian girl's dress with its more fitted, décolleté bodice is similar to the revealing dress of the girl in *The Meeting*. The Indian girl's gesture of turning her head away from the man, while at the same time reaching out her hand to him, echoes the pose of the girl in Fragonard's work. I would argue that by using a romantic French genre tradition to structure a work depicting a Native couple, Légaré draws on its characteristic expression of "joyous,

---

<sup>42</sup> Porter, 75.

<sup>43</sup> Porter, 77.

carefree sexuality” to further romanticize and dramatize his narrative.<sup>44</sup> Though he never left Quebec, L egar  was a collector and a connoisseur of paintings imported from Europe, both secular and religious, and the artistic styles of eighteenth century France would have been known to him and available for incorporation in his own works.<sup>45</sup>

I put forward the argument that L egar ’s situating of these works in European traditions of representation, the royal portrait tradition and the genre painting of romantic love, placed the Canadian topography and its Aboriginal peoples almost as actors in a theatrical performance. Although the probably imaginary figure of Josephte Ourn  may position a Native woman in the role of European royalty, this was fictitious in subject and setting, a constructed vision, as were the romanticized women in the other two paintings. They bear no resemblance to the lived situations of Aboriginal women. As an ensemble, well known and widely viewed in Quebec of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, these works served to further distance European viewers from the reality of Aboriginal women’s lives.

### **European Artistic Conventions and Underlying Ideologies**

In “The Historians’ Indian” Bruce Trigger wrote that “entrenched European stereotypes continue to distort our understanding of native peoples and their history,” and the origin of these stereotypes is visible in European artworks.<sup>46</sup> By identifying the

---

<sup>44</sup> Honour and Fleming, 614.

<sup>45</sup> Porter, 14.

<sup>46</sup> Bruce Trigger, “The Historian’s Indian,” *Out of the Background* (Mississauga, On.: Copp Clark Pitman, 1988) 40.

conventions of representation and how they were used, and comparing them to the lived reality of Aboriginal women, I have treated these images as texts. Using Foucaultian theory of subject formation I argue that, like the written texts, the visual images can be filtered, looking past the stereotypes to support the view of Aboriginal women's identity and understanding of self, their subjectivity, as essentially unchanged by missionizing and assimilationist pressures.

The European visual portrayal of Aboriginal women contrasts sharply with the women of status and influence foregrounded in Chapter Two, who, as we have seen, appeared albeit infrequently, in the historical texts. The discussion of the text representations serves as a counterpoint for the visual. The conflict between missionary, colonizing purposes and Aboriginal women's intent to maintain their cultural traditions and their position within them is not seen in the images, and an awareness of these conflicts from the text discussion foregrounds the greater power of visual images to essentialize, and thereby produce stereotypes.

The impact of homogeneity in the production of stereotypes was a focus in the discussion of texts. Hayden White's theory of the process of selection and de-selection and the element of fiction in history writing explains to a large extent the process of stereotype formation, the ground being prepared by the simplification and generalization of peoples, events, and facts. The literary project of making the 'New World' comprehensible to the old meant that the specifics of nation and culture were removed. In the case of Aboriginal women the social roles were reduced to those familiar to European eyes. I suggest that as historians tailored facts to produce a culturally recognizable narrative, artists tailored the facts to fit a recognizable artistic format or code of

representation. In this way the exotic was explained, encoded through what Hayden White terms “fictionalizing.” In artwork, as in history, the fictive when recognized, reveals the ideology behind the distortions.<sup>47</sup>

The visual representations diminished the stature of Native women to a greater extent than the texts. European artistic tradition had conventions to portray queens and aristocratic women, who were powerful in European terms, however this tradition could not extend to women such as those in the Aboriginal social structure, an egalitarian society based in government by consensus, rather than a hierarchy of royalty.<sup>48</sup> Artists turned to images based on function: women working in the fields, looking after children, preparing food, or the motif of ritual dancing - all of which were accurate but so incomplete as to become misrepresentations.

The layers of visual representation of Aboriginal women over the centuries established European expectations of identity more rigidly than the texts, and the stereotypes in the visual representations have moved into popular culture. Anecdotes that contradicted the stereotyped identities were rare and were not emphasized. As these texts faded from public knowledge, the range of possibilities of women’s roles within a heterogenous Aboriginal population largely vanished from European understanding. The contradictory identities of autonomous women, a closer reflection of Native women’s lived experience, have been blocked from sight or forgotten. By looking at written texts, visual images, and artwork by Aboriginal women (Chapter Four) I highlight the inaccuracy of the naturalized identity seen in the European images.

---

<sup>47</sup> H. White, 99.

<sup>48</sup> Trigger, 1976, 54.

During the period under discussion, from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, successive styles of representation reflected prevailing European artistic modes and changing social, political and religious views, from the Counter-Reformation in the seventeenth century, the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, to the expanded colonizing project of the nineteenth century. However, the narrow range of identities assigned to Aboriginal women by European artists in the early contact period were maintained through these centuries into recent times. Where in the texts cultural and psychological differences and resistance to assimilation and conversion pressures were described, usually in critical terms, in the visual images these forms of resistance were omitted. As Lubbers points out, the artists' imagination had less latitude than the writers'; European reception demanded expected visual images, whereas authors had more freedom.<sup>49</sup> Although text descriptions of Aboriginal women's behaviour that would have been unconventional according to contemporary European standards may have been framed in critical terms, and descriptions of Native women acting with authority may have been scant, they were there. For several reasons artists could only depict behaviour and social roles that were outside European experience in a mythologized framework. First, individual artists were generally not in the business of establishing new artistic conventions. Their purpose was to provide the viewer with what was familiar and expected, in conventional styles and formats. Second, artists were unable to recognize and acknowledge powerful women in influential roles, either experientially if they had traveled to North America, or from reading the texts, as they were accustomed to viewing women as subject. To recognize and represent women as non-objectified, in a situation

---

<sup>49</sup> Lubbers, 197.

where neither gender was subordinate to the other, would have required change in the artist's fundamental ideology and an understanding of the varieties of social organization, and an acceptance of alterity.

From the beginning, European artists seem to have presented Aboriginal peoples within existing constructs, rather than presenting images of a new, unfamiliar reality. Greer describes the people of one culture becoming a version of the people of another culture, and this is how Native women were represented in European art.<sup>50</sup> Not only did the European canon influence the format of depictions of Aboriginal peoples,<sup>51</sup> but incorporated them within the European scale of values.<sup>52</sup> Dickason states that the intent was to "identify Amerindians with peoples of Europe's classical antiquity," which had the effect of placing North American Aboriginal peoples "in the early stages of a universal cultural development."<sup>53</sup> Ruthven Todd writes that the artists' task was to present an image acceptable to the English or European public, placed within the frame of reference of European art. An aspect of this task would have been to represent women within the accepted European tradition, there was no place within this structure for images of women of status and authority. Todd states that the "strange" was not strange enough to break the conventions by which it was received and was assimilated by European iconography.<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> Dr. Allan Greer, ICSLAC presentation, Carleton University, November, 2005.

<sup>51</sup> Lubbers, 95.

<sup>52</sup> Lubbers, 51.

<sup>53</sup> Dickason, 51.

<sup>54</sup> Ruthven Todd, "The Imaginary Indian in Europe," *Art in America* LX (Jul-Aug, 1972) 40-41.

### Exclusions From the Visual Record

The limitations of the European traditions of representations and the need to fit the 'strange' into a known and recognized social structure meant that certain subject matter was excluded from artistic representations of Aboriginal women, and this also means that the visual historical record differs from the text record. Behaviour that would challenge European social structure and order was not depicted, for example women in public roles. Historical texts give evidence that Aboriginal women, including the Huron-Wendat, were active in the public, ritual ceremonies of the torture of prisoners, for example in the description of Jesuit Paul LeJeune, "women and children fell upon him [the torture victim] each one trying to see which could strike the hardest blows."<sup>55</sup> However in the images of such scenes, for example two illustrations drawn from Lafitau's text (Figs.29, 30), women are not included as participants, but rather on the sidelines, "grooming the stick or club with which he is to be struck."<sup>56</sup> Further, recorded in the texts are descriptions of women elders speaking at large public meetings on issues that affected the well-being of the larger nation, such as those discussed in Chapter Two, yet this also is not represented. The farmed fields that were source of the staple foods of the Huron-Wendat and the larger Iroquoian group, that were the responsibility and sphere of power of women, were only represented in rough sketches indicating fieldwork, such as the illustrations from Lafitau and Lahontan's texts.

---

<sup>55</sup> JR 9:257.

<sup>56</sup>Joseph Francois Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1977) 10.

There are two possible reasons for the lack of representations of the strong agricultural base of Iroquoian society; first, it would contradict the established European view of Aboriginal peoples as nomads rather than settled farmers, thus in European eyes not owning the land and leaving it free for colonizing.<sup>57</sup> Second, to record a visual image of the land as *women's* sphere of power, where they had control over management, production and dispersal, situating their work as the foundation of their society and the basis of their considerable power and influence – such an understanding of women's farming would have undermined European images of women's powerlessness at all levels. A woman as a peasant labourer was one thing, and that was what was seen in the sketched text illustrations of the early contact period. A woman who in cooperation with the women of her extended family had control over land use, who had the power and responsibility to feed the community with surplus available for trade, was another thing entirely, and one which was not represented.

The actuality of Huron-Wendat women's sexual freedom before marriage is not quite excluded in visual images, but it is ambiguous in its representation and became generalized to the image of the sexually provocative Aboriginal girl or woman. The seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth century European texts relating to the Huron-Wendat and Eastern Woodlands, particularly the missionary accounts, discuss the promiscuous behaviour of women and girls, but only a few visual images represent this view.

It seems possible that sexual freedom before marriage, typical of Huron-Wendat and Iroquoian social structure, is not fully realized in the European images because there

---

<sup>57</sup> Phillips, 1998, 122-123.

was no distinct tradition of representation to contain it. Although missionary and other texts presented this behaviour as promiscuous, Lahontan saw it as evidence of Aboriginal women's freedom of choice and independence, writing that "A Young Woman...is Master of her own Body, and by her Natural Right of Liberty is free to do what she pleases."<sup>58</sup> Lahontan's was articulating an Enlightenment position critical of a corrupt European society, yet he was also reporting on customary behaviour that was very different from the limited control European women had over their lives and bodies. Within European social conventions, there was no acceptance of sexual freedom before marriage. There were only three categories; maiden (not sexually free), married woman (not free to divorce), prostitute (sex within a financial context). In Aboriginal society, the category of prostitute did not exist. In Europe the prostitute was the only category into which any kind of sexual freedom on the part of women could fit, but there was no widely accepted code of representation.

In the nineteenth-century sexualized representations of Aboriginal women did appear, but this seems to be in the context of a move away from the trope of the noble savage to that of the wretched savage contaminated by contact with Europeans, in need of redemption and colonization, and as an aspect of the voyeuristic tourist gaze.<sup>59</sup> These images appeared in what could be seen as an adaptation of the English genre tradition, the representation of scenes of everyday life, interwoven with elements of ethnographic observation and typology. Representation of sexuality came about when a tradition of artistic representation which could contain it was available, and at a time when the

---

<sup>58</sup> R. White, 63.

<sup>59</sup> Higham, 56.

interests of the project of colonization and missionization were served by a negative depiction.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have explored a sample of European representations of Aboriginal women, identifying the artistic tropes and codes of representation that constituted the works and the ideological foundations informing the artists' choices of inclusion and exclusion. I then discussed how the use of European traditions of representation transformed Native women's actual position into a less powerful version of European women's situation.

Significant in these artworks is the presentation of Aboriginal peoples as simple and childlike, a perspective based in Western European understandings of a hierarchy of cultures. This view was already established when the Jesuits and the Recollets came to New France in the early seventeenth century, and it was based to a large extent on another hierarchy, that of literacy. From this Eurocentric perspective, the cultural discourse of the Huron-Wendat, the complex of narratives discussed in the Introduction and incorporating ritual and ceremony, was given little recognition or acknowledgment by European writers. The European approach in general was to treat Aboriginal peoples as children not capable of understanding sophisticated discourse on an equal basis. The visual representations reflect and extend this unequal relationship between the two cultures.

I suggest that if Aboriginal men could not be recognized as equals to European men, then the possibility of seeing Aboriginal women as more powerful, of more status

---

and influence then European women was very remote. Hence the autonomy of women in their sphere of power in agriculture is seen in terms of European peasant labourers; women's independence in terms of sexual partners and later divorce was either not represented or was presented but in mythical terms such as Lahontan's or in the derogatory terms of the late nineteenth century. Instances of women's power and influence in making decisions affecting the larger community, for example the events cited in Chapter Two, in 1738 concerning a possible Huron-Wendat relocation from Detroit to Montreal, in 1640 concerning the Jesuits and the spread of epidemics, and in 1635 concerning the removal of children from communities, simply do not appear in the visual imagery.

## Chapter 4

### Huron-Wendat Women's Traditions of Self-Representation

In this chapter, I will explore artwork by Huron-Wendat women, which in its form and content suggests the continuity of their pre-contact status and autonomy and ongoing connection with their traditional discourse. I argue that this body of work provides evidence of the continuity of Aboriginal women's identity and refutes the theory of their subjugation after contact.

The imagery of nineteenth century Huron-Wendat women's artwork, moosehair-embroidered birch bark objects, illustrates the continuity and strength of Huron-Wendat discourse and worldview and the centrality of women in their traditional role of influence and autonomy. The iconographic interpretation that I will make of Huron-Wendat women artists' work situates their imagery as an extension of the oral tradition discussed in the Introduction, as reminders of this discourse and as a meeting point between the Aboriginal mnemonic and pictographic tradition and the European pictorial tradition. I will draw on Marius Barbeau's written record of the Huron-Wendat tradition, discussed in the Introduction. It is significant that Barbeau's main sources were often women, for example Catherine Johnson of Oklahoma who spoke Wyandot almost exclusively,<sup>1</sup> or Mary McKee, of Anderdon, Ontario. Smith Nichols, Barbeau's main source among the Sandusky Huron, had learned most of his stories from his grandmother, Nendusha.<sup>2</sup> It is clear from this that Huron-Wendat women as well as men were storytellers, passing on

---

<sup>1</sup> Barbeau, 1915, Preface.

<sup>2</sup> Marius Barbeau, *Huron-Wyandot Traditional Narratives in Translations and Native Texts* (Ottawa: National Museum of Canada, 1960) 2.

the oral tradition that contained the symbols and rituals that were the source of collective memorization, which I will argue appear in the iconography of the moosehair-embroidered objects.<sup>3</sup>

### **History of the Huron-Wendat Works**

Although the Huron-Wendat works may appear to be a continuation or adoption of the commodity tradition of moosehair-embroidered birch bark objects first established by the convent nuns of Quebec in the eighteenth century, substantial differences in iconography and pictorial style can be identified, reflecting different content and purpose. The convent works first developed in the contact zone that was seventeenth and eighteenth century Quebec; Barbeau showed that the nuns drew from the Aboriginal material culture of moosehair and porcupine quill works, and adapted these forms and techniques to the French embroidery tradition. The nuns began producing these works in the early eighteenth century as both commodities and gifts; the subjects depicted were the elaborate floral motifs originating in the French medieval embroidery tradition with the innovative addition of Aboriginal figures. These figures were in mythologized or emblematic forms of representation, situated in wilderness surroundings symbolized by floral motifs.<sup>4</sup>

In *Trading Identities*, the key text in this area, Ruth Phillips has shown that the nuns' tradition of representation can be seen as both syncretic and synergistic, as the

---

<sup>3</sup> Barbeau, 1960, 2-3.

<sup>4</sup> Marius Barbeau, *Saintes Artisanes* (Montréal: Éditions Fides, 1943).

sisters, working from the visual tradition of their own culture, developed new artistic motifs and subject matter based on European conventions of representation of Native peoples. Huron-Wendat women began producing moosehair-embroidered works as tourist commodities in the early nineteenth century, at around the same time that the nuns, for reasons that are unrecorded, phased out their production.<sup>5</sup> Building out from the foundation of Phillips' work, I will look at the Huron-Wendat iconography through an exploration of the relationship of imagery to text, European art, and the Huron-Wendat oral tradition and worldview.

### **Huron-Wendat Worldview, Tales and Legends**

An interpretation of Huron-Wendat iconography based in an Aboriginal worldview recognizes first, the Aboriginal belief in animals and inanimate objects as other-than-human persons, and second, the belief in transformation between other-than-human and human form.

In his article "Ojibwa Ontology, Behaviour, and World View," Irving Hallowell discusses other-than-human persons and metamorphosis. Hallowell's text is specific to the Ojibwa, however since the nations of the Eastern Woodlands, which included the Huron-Wendat and the Ojibwa, shared a similar worldview, I will refer to this work to interpret the Huron-Wendat images. Further, Barbeau wrote that the Huron-Wendat storytellers borrowed from cognate or neighbouring tribes, the Seneca, Ojibwa, Ottawa, and other Algonkin groups, so shared elements in these tales were common.<sup>6</sup> In

---

<sup>5</sup> Barbeau, 1943, 87-88,103.

<sup>6</sup> Barbeau, 1915, 19.

describing the Ojibwa understanding of other-than-human persons, Hallowell wrote that the characters in the stories are indistinguishable from human persons, and “persons” of the other-than-human class do not always present a human appearance.<sup>7</sup> Thus from the perspective of the Eastern Woodlands worldview, a larger than ordinary bird might be interpreted as a transformed other-than-human woman, carrying out the actions of a human woman, for example sitting beside a cooking fire, and a woman carrying a basket beside a berry tree might be interpreted as a spiritual being. The element of transformation is described by Deborah Doxtator as part of the oral tradition, where “beings transform their outward shapes from animals to human beings to plants and back again.”<sup>8</sup> With this understanding of the Aboriginal world view, the scenes in the Huron-Wendat embroidered objects can be given broader, less literal translations as visual depictions of figures from the oral tradition.

### **The Huron-Wendat Embroidered Works**

“Metaphor is largely in use among these Peoples; unless you accustom yourself to it, you will understand nothing:” the words of Father Paul Lejeune, a Jesuit priest who worked among the Huron-Wendat in the early seventeenth century, suggest a path to understanding the imagery in the moosehair-embroidered works.<sup>9</sup> Rather than a literal explanation of these works, metaphorical meanings may be found through connections with Huron-Wendat oral tradition.

---

<sup>7</sup> Irving A. Hallowell, “Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior, and World View,” *Contributions to Anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976) 368.

<sup>8</sup> Doxtator, 1995, 17.

<sup>9</sup> *JR* 10: 219.

The central motifs in the Huron-Wendat images which differentiate them from the convent works and make connections with Aboriginal spiritual beliefs and mythology are the strawberry plants and other fruit-bearing trees, the birds, the fox or coyote figure, and the seemingly disproportionate sense of scale. One possible explanation for the oversized representation of the fruit, animals, and birds leads to the other-worldly, spiritual content of the works. Aataentsic, the daughter of the sky-woman who fell into the lower region, had two sons who assisted in the creation of the world. They had different views; Tsestah wanted to make life easy for the Huron-Wendat, and in preparing the world for humans, he made the fruit grow large on luxuriant bushes within easy reach. Barbeau writes “The Good One...made all kinds of trees covered with savoury fruits, just within hand’s reach; the blackberries, strawberries, and raspberries he brought forth on high bushes...it was mere pleasure to gather them up.” This abundance also produced plump, succulent animals unafraid of the hunter’s arrow or snare. However, Tawiskaron thought the people should have to work; he shrank the fruit to a fraction of their former size,<sup>10</sup> and made the animals difficult to catch.<sup>11</sup> It is possible that the larger-than-life size of the fruit, and the animals and birds in easy reach in the Huron-Wendat works indicate that these scenes are in the world created by Tsestah, a paradise of abundance. Supporting this interpretation of the images as paradise, Paul Lejeune wrote that another Eastern Woodlands nation, the Montagnais Algonquian, saw paradise as abounding in blueberries.<sup>12</sup> The abundance of fruit and their large size on high bushes as the tales describe, suggest that the

---

<sup>10</sup> Barbeau, 1915, 45-49.

<sup>11</sup> Barbeau, 1915, 302-307.

<sup>12</sup> George Hamell, “Trading Metaphors: The Magic of Beads,” *Proceedings of the 1982 Glass Trade Bead Conference* (Rochester, N.Y., 1983) 8.

embroidered scenes are a metaphorical representation of a perfect world drawn from pre-contact narratives and spiritual understandings. Further, the scale of elements suggests that these are not scenes of everyday life: the baskets the women carry are too small for actually carrying the oversized fruit, supporting this metaphorical interpretation.

A scene of a large bird beside a campfire embroidered on a cigar case suggests another motif of Eastern Woodlands narratives, transformation, and a possible interpretation as an other-worldly being, possibly a metaphor for the Sky Woman (Fig. 31). In "Trading Metaphors" George Hamell writes of a Seneca (Iroquoian) story involving a woman bird man-being, and it is possible that this larger-than-life bird, represented in the scale of a person, is such a being. This interpretation is consistent with the world Hamell describes, peopled by rattlesnake man-beings, stone giant man-beings, beaver and otter man-beings, and white bear man-beings.<sup>13</sup> Supporting the idea of bird-woman transformation, Hamell writes that among Northern Iroquoian beliefs since the early seventeenth century, a small bird has been a form into which the free-intellect-personality soul transforms itself.<sup>14</sup> Lejeunes' comment about the Huron-Wendat use of metaphor encourages thinking in such terms, looking for an extended meaning based in the oral tradition.

A comparison with convent work highlights the difference in representation. The three birds on the Huron-Wendat cigar case in Fig. 31 have the same coloring, the dark head and flashes on the wings and tail, indicating a specific species of bird, either fictional or real. They are very different from the bird in the convent work reticule base

---

<sup>13</sup> George Hamell, "Trading Metaphors: The Magic of Beads," *Proceedings of the 1982 Glass Trade Bead Conference* (Rochester, N.Y.: Rochester museum and Science Center, 1983) 9,14,16.

<sup>14</sup> Hamell, 11.

which is close to realistic size and easy prey for the hunter (Fig. 32). The birds in the cigar case occupy their space in a way that indicates possible status as other-than-human.

Berries and other fruit are prevalent motifs in these works, and their importance in Huron-Wendat spiritual terms, especially strawberries, is great. Hamell writes that the significance of berries in Northern Iroquoian narratives and ritual is in their “inherent power of physical and spiritual renewal,” and he writes that occupying as they do the threshold between the village clearing and the surrounding forest, berries hold the liminal position between the earth and the sky, in stories and ritual.<sup>15</sup> They are believed to have been brought to Earth-Island from the Sky World by Sky Woman, and in Iroquois spiritual beliefs, similar in many aspects to Huron-Wendat, the grandmother of the twins, the Sky Woman, becomes the Matron of the Souls, and tends the fields of strawberries on the way to the afterworld.<sup>16</sup> Hamell reports that the Delaware Algonquians, close neighbours to the Northern Iroquoians, believed travelers to the spirit world are greeted there by “women coming with baskets on their backs full of strawberries, and bilberries, large as apples.”<sup>17</sup> The powerful position of women in Iroquoian cosmology, their role in creation and in the transition to the afterworld, is reflected in the influential position of women in Iroquois and Huron-Wendat culture. The Huron-Wendat artists’ work can be understood in Deborah Doxtator’s terms, “like picture writing on utilitarian objects, basketry, pottery...these objects as metaphors are not transcriptions of word for word linear sentences but of concepts and processes...and mean not one thing but several.”<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Hamell, 8-9.

<sup>16</sup> Hamell, 10.

<sup>17</sup> Hamell, 8.

<sup>18</sup> Doxtator, 1995, 16.

One of the Huron-Wendat works is a box bought at Niagara Falls, in 1847 (Fig.33). Elements of dress and surroundings are depicted in great detail; patterns on clothes, the texture of the dog's coat, the colours of the tree bark, and dappled leaves are all clearly visible. The woman on the side of the box cover carries patterned baskets to gather the enormous strawberry at the base of the tree, while in the panel below her a woman wearing a European style hat appears to be picking fruit. The motif of the bird in the tree accompanies both women.

A pipe-smoking man walks with a dog on a lead, and while an interpretation of the dog leash as “an icon of taming and domestication” has been suggested by Phillips, I would argue that there is another possibility.<sup>19</sup> In a lithograph by Coke Smyth, *Huron Indian*, c.1840, a Huron-Wendat man dressed in traditional attire stands at ease with his dog at his feet, the dog wearing a collar attached to a lead the man holds behind him (Fig. 34). These two images, by European and Huron-Wendat artists, suggest a common practice of dogs on leads, and may also be an element of the oral tradition. The Huron kept great numbers of dogs, some were killed and eaten but some were special pets and never killed.<sup>20</sup> Given the important distinction between dog-as-meat and dog-as-pet, keeping a pet dog on a lead might have been a common practice. Dogs also figure in the Huron-Wendat tales, for example the tale of *The Fugitive Young Woman and her Dog Charm*. This story tells how a young girl carries a small figure of a dog in a piece of buckskin around her neck. If she got in trouble, she would rub this dog in one direction and he would grow to enormous size and protect her. She would then rub it the other

---

<sup>19</sup> Phillips, 1998, 138.

<sup>20</sup> Trigger, 1976,41.

way, and the dog would shrink to its former small size.<sup>21</sup> This dog and those seen in other works could contain layers of meaning, a reminder of stories of the oral tradition and a part of Huron-Wendat life as distinct from the European mythologized imagery of the convent works.

The overall impression given by the images on this box is of ease and plenty, with drinking gourds, pipes and the presence of ample fruit and flowers, signs of spring. Possible interpretations relate to the creation myth of strawberries along the path to the after world and the Matron of Souls, or to the creation myth of paradise on earth, symbolized by the large fruit and flowers before it was altered by the bad twin, Tawiskaron. What seems clear is that the scenes relate to Huron-Wendat spiritual beliefs, and women's role in these stories, rather than Christianity.

The Huron-Wendat calling card tray contains figures and motifs similar to those on the box. (Fig. 35). The composition is of note; the constituent panels and elements within each form patterns which produce an overall sense of rhythm and movement. In each panel there are trees on both sides as framing devices, possibly an adaptation of European landscape techniques. The trees follow the trapezoid shape of the panels in such a way as to open the pictorial space for the figures, which all walk or face in the same direction, to the right. There is a central element in each panel, a bird in a tree or two birds in a nest, which produces an overall visual harmony in the composition within each panel, and in the unity of the four panels.

The scenes on this tray, as in the box in Fig. 33 above, illustrate the adoption of another aspect of the European tradition of representation, the effect of recession,

---

<sup>21</sup> Barbeau, 1915, 239-241.

achieved by making some figures smaller than others. This illustrates the observation and selective adoption and adaptation of certain elements of European artistic tradition by Aboriginal artists, in this case an element of pictorialism, adapted to a mnemonic tradition of representation.

The abundant berries on the trees, the women with baskets, the bird, the pipe, and the water gourd or bottle, are all familiar motifs, with the addition of the small fox or raccoon in the tree. This animal, seemingly unafraid of the pursuing hunter, may be stealing the fruit. This scene suggests the early stage of creation when fruit was large and abundant, and animals were gentle, easy prey for hunters. Barbeau wrote of the tales of the Fox and Raccoon, and this animal might be an aspect of these tales.<sup>22</sup> The bird of prey in the center panel could represent an eagle on a coat of arms, it could represent a Huron-Wendat totem, or it could be connected to the Thunderbird, the spirit of the Sky World. Phillips discusses the “polyvalency” of certain symbols, having meaning in both Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian iconographic systems, and this is one such example.<sup>23</sup>

The mid-nineteenth century needle book has fewer pictorial elements, balanced in their arrangement but not symmetrical (Fig. 36). It contains an image of a tree with a flowering strawberry plant at its base, and one beautiful large strawberry as big as the fox that stands on a branch. The composition of the work makes the strawberry and the fox the focal point, the fox directly above the strawberry suggesting a connection in meaning. The fox's front paws are standing on the stalk of one of the oversized leaves, almost as if it were gaining a vantage point of height to see in the distance. Foxes don't usually climb

---

<sup>22</sup> Barbeau, 1915, 384.

<sup>23</sup> Phillips, 1998, 20.

trees, and strawberries aren't usually this size, and while possible meanings of the strawberry are found in Huron-Wendat spiritual beliefs, the meaning of the fox, beyond its trickster role, is not as clear.

The needle book is edged with white beads, which may be linked to ideas of lightness, well-being, transparency, and the cognitive aspect of Life, all values signified by whiteness and luminosity according to Hamell.<sup>24</sup> In this context, the beads may be metaphorical berries, and are further evidence of the soul's liminal state, between the here and the hereafter, and at the same time, the berries are "the substance by which these threshold states-of-being are positively resolved."<sup>25</sup> I suggest that this needle book can be interpreted as a metaphor for all these meanings, as a container for the tools of representation.

The two seated women smoking pipes who frame the upper panel of a cigar case dating from 1858 reflect the symmetrical arrangement of elements that is characteristic of many Huron-Wendat embroidered objects (Fig. 37). One woman holds a basket for the abundant, oversized fruit growing from what may be an apple tree, and two large birds, their markings similar to the ones in Fig.31, perch in the boughs. In the panel below a woman and a boy walk together, smoking pipes, toward a partially-cut down tree that is growing new branches. It seems unlikely that it is a random choice by the artist to represent such a tree; a metaphorical meaning is possible, of the new growing from the old, possibly indicating continuity from generation to generation. The conjunction of this tree with the woman and young boy may represent the passing on of cultural information,

---

<sup>24</sup> Hamell, 6-7.

<sup>25</sup> Hamell, 7-8.

and women's role in this. Sioui writes that in matricentric societies it is the woman's role to educate, to teach "the social and human virtues."<sup>26</sup> He writes that in Amerindian societies, "woman represents reason, the being who educates man, orients his future, and anticipates society's needs."<sup>27</sup> This understanding of women's role supports my suggestion of the metaphorical meaning of the old tree and the new branch, the woman and the young boy.

The lady's handbag is complex in its design of three separate scenes (Fig.38). The woman in all three wears the same dress, which indicates that the scenes are related. There are familiar motifs: the fox in the tree, the seated smoking woman beside a fruit-bearing tree, and the strawberry flowers and vine that frame the scenes. In one scene the man and woman appear to be dancing. In Haudenosaunee social dances such as the moccasin dance, men and women dance together, either arm in arm or moving around each other changing places.<sup>28</sup> I suggest that given the closeness between Haudenosaunee and Huron-Wendat customs, it is possible that this is such a dance. In the panel above, the same figures are paddling a canoe with their dog, a baby in a cradleboard, and a second man. It is difficult to know the meaning of these images, either the metaphorical content or the legend or tale they relate to. That there is meaning seems clear, to think otherwise would suggest a randomness which is unlikely, given the strength of the spiritual and story-telling tradition that these works originate in, and the difficult, time consuming nature of their production. Phillips' term "dual signification," describing the

---

<sup>26</sup> Sioui, 1992,18.

<sup>27</sup> Sioui, 1992, 14.

<sup>28</sup> Charlotte Heth, ed. *Native American Dance* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institute, 1992) 21.

“communicative mode” of souvenir art, that commoditized visual arts can be expected to mean in the same way that other art forms do, gives support to my argument.<sup>29</sup>

The motif of the strawberry plant is the central theme of the elaborately embroidered miniature settee (Fig. 39). There is texture in the variation of stitches and tonal changes in the colors of the leaves and flowers, adding to the complexity of the design. Borders of leaf chains follow the lines of the settee, which are edged in white with a couching stitch. The strawberries are the central motif in the main panels, and vines of strawberry flowers balance the fruit on either side. The symmetry of the arrangement of elements and the repetition of the curves in the leaf chains and vines give a sense of rhythm and movement, similar to the card tray. The large strawberries, strawberry flowers and vines make the entire work a metaphor for physical and spiritual well-being, one of the symbolic meanings of the strawberry.<sup>30</sup>

The wall pocket dating from 1841 shows one simple scene, a woman with a patterned basket approaching a strawberry vine (Fig. 40). There is more open space in this work, the picture plane is less filled than the settee, but there are the same tonal variations in the stitches, the element of the leaf chain following the line of the edges of each panel, and the symmetrical arrangement of elements. A speculative interpretation is that this is the Matron of Souls tending the strawberries on the path to the afterworld, her central position highlighting her importance, framed by the form of the object and the flowers and vine.

---

<sup>29</sup> Phillips, 1998, 20.

<sup>30</sup> Hamell, 7.

A second birch bark tray contains iconographic elements not seen in the other works (Fig. 41). As in the tray in Fig.35, the symmetrical arrangement of elements within each panel combines to form a unified, balanced compositional whole. The figures all walk in the same direction, in this case to the left, the trees in each panel follow a pattern of similar curves, and in each panel there is a man and a woman, possibly a balancing of the feminine and masculine in ceremony. Some figures seem to be playing flutes, used in ceremonial dances, and other figures hold what look like leaves of tobacco, a plant which played an important role in Huron-Wendat society.<sup>31</sup> The plants depicted in this tray resemble tobacco plants, seen in Figs. 41a and 41b. Some of the plants in the embroidered images have leaves which are turning brown, the point at which it is ready to be harvested. I suggest that the images should be read in series and that they are possibly connected with the harvesting of tobacco, a specialty crop grown by Huron-Wendat men for their own use.<sup>32</sup> The tobacco leaves were used in ritual and ceremony as offerings or gifts to please the spirits and secure their aid,<sup>33</sup> as gifts within the community or between nations,<sup>34</sup> and possibly as part of harvesting ceremonies for fruit and berries.

In this work as in many others, several of the figures drink from bottles or gourds. Phillips' interpretation is that these were bottles of alcohol, but to assume this is to become caught in another stereotype.<sup>35</sup> Although alcohol use was prevalent, the times when its use is described do not seem to be in situations such as these images portray:

---

<sup>31</sup> I would like to thank Michelle McKeough for her contribution in suggesting the tobacco plant.

<sup>32</sup> Trigger, 1976, 41,415.

<sup>33</sup> Trigger, 1976, 76.

<sup>34</sup> Trigger, 1976, 715.

<sup>35</sup> Phillips, 1998, 122.

scenes of men and women harvesting, indicated by the cutting tools held by several of the figures and the leaves of what may be tobacco held by others. For example, Long described many instances of drunkenness among the Native peoples with whom he traded, but this occurred when groups received rum in return for furs and immediately began to drink, continuing until all was consumed. Long describes four to five day drinking binges, during which men, women and children might be accidentally killed.<sup>36</sup> In contrast, of the Huron-Wendat of Jeune Lorette he writes “they are an exception to the generality of Indians, seldom drinking any spirituous liquors.”<sup>37</sup> Given this evidence of the Huron-Wendat community’s relative abstinence, it seems unlikely that the women artists would include alcohol in their imagery.

Rather than alcohol, the figures could be carrying water containers, or, if this is an image of a harvest ritual, possibly strawberry juice. Hamell writes that strawberry juice was used to prevent illness and bring power, and most relevant to the tobacco harvest, he states that the Six Nations Iroquois drank berry juice during important annual ceremonies.<sup>38</sup> Given the similarities between the traditions of the two peoples, Iroquois and Huron-Wendat, this supports the possibility that bottles of strawberry juice were being depicted in these images, because of its “physical and spiritual restorative powers.”<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Long, 56, 104.

<sup>37</sup> Long, 154.

<sup>38</sup> Hamell, 9.

<sup>39</sup> Hamell, 9.

The image of an eagle or possibly the Thunderbird is encircled by vines on the base of the tray, similar to the tray discussed earlier, however this bird holds six double-headed arrows in his talons and a smaller yellow bird in his beak. It is possible that the six arrows refer to the six nations of the Iroquois Confederacy, and the Huron-Wendat artist was using the eagle as a mnemonic or symbol to represent this.

The meaning of the complex of elements in this work is not clear, however the amount of effort and skill that went into its composition and execution indicate that it had significance beyond the commercial.

### **The Huron-Wendat Works and the Convent Tradition**

The Huron-Wendat works arose from an intercultural environment, however the iconographic interpretation that I have presented is based in the Huron-Wendat oral tradition or discourse, created from the perspective of an Eastern Woodlands worldview. What was the relationship between the convent and Huron-Wendat works? What was the Huron-Wendat worldview and material culture tradition that formed the Aboriginal context of these works?

While Barbeau positions the Huron-Wendat works as a production ‘s’emparer’ ‘snatched’ from the convent sisters by Aboriginal peoples, “jamais vraiment créatrice” ‘never truly creative (my translations),’ situated within the paradigm of the vanishing race and the perspective of the colonial project,<sup>40</sup> Phillips’ analysis discusses the autoethnographic content of the works and meanings centred in Native oral tradition,

---

<sup>40</sup> Barbeau, 1943, 103.

recognizing the Huron-Wendat artists' adaptation of the convent tradition.<sup>41</sup> Phillips sets out some main points of formal difference between the convent and Huron-Wendat traditions: the medallion frames of the convent works in which figures were centered were not used by the Huron-Wendat artists, there seem to be less connection or "narrative coherence" between the scenes, and the scale of size of people, plants and animals relative to each other is very different.<sup>42</sup> Further, Phillips writes that the Native artists eliminated images that bore no relation to contemporary reality, the loin-cloth clad warriors are replaced by figures in the dress worn by the Huron-Wendat for special occasions, and motifs such as the tomahawk were dropped.<sup>43</sup>

Building out from Phillips' work, I suggest there are other aspects which distinguish the two traditions. First, there is a difference in the depiction of the surrounding environment. The convent works depict Native figures enfolded by European motifs; the wilderness environment of the noble savage is expressed through floral motifs from the tapestry tradition almost in the scale of trees, for example in a convent work pincushion (Fig.42). A sheep, a European domestic animal and possibly intended as a symbol of Christianity, grazes on one of the side panels of a reticule base (Fig. 32). In the Huron-Wendat works however, the figures are neatly spaced between what look like identifiable trees of the Eastern Woodlands region, representing a local environment, for example lilac, birch, and apple trees in the Huron-Wendat boxes (Figs.33, 43). A second differentiating aspect is the play of scale between the elements.

---

<sup>41</sup> Phillips, 1998, 137,139.

<sup>42</sup> Phillips, 1998, 135.

<sup>43</sup> Phillips, 1998, 137.

Figures in the convent works, for example in a reticule base and a workbasket (Figs. 44, 45), tend to be smaller in relation to the total size of the picture frame than the Huron-Wendat works. In the Huron-Wendat works the figures are usually the full height of the picture plane, for example, in the embroidered box (Fig.33) and calling card tray (Fig.35). The convent works, based in European traditions of representation, encode an interpretation of 'Indianness' within the picturesque and relate to their producers' and buyers' understanding of assimilation and the mythical 'Other.'

I open the question that the dissimilarities between the two embroidery lines and their traditions of representations, Western European and Aboriginal North American, may originate in the differences between literate and non-literate cultures. Yuri Lotman discusses this distinction.<sup>44</sup> He places writing in a context outside value-laden, civilized/non-civilized hierarchical associations by defining it as a mechanism or tool for collective memorizing, but not the only mechanism for this task. Cultures that value the recording of unique events or unusual occurrences, resulting in a constant multiplication in the number of texts, use writing as a tool for memorizing, while cultures that value memory which preserves information about the established order rather than its violations, and the repeated production of texts rather than the constant increase in their number, use mechanisms such as mnemonic symbols. Ritualization and sacralization of memory accompany mnemonics to preserve the knowledge of laws and customs through performance.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> Yuri Lotman, *Universe of the Mind* (London: Tauris, 1990).

<sup>45</sup> Lotman, 246-247.

Lotman wrote that the world of oral memory is full of symbols, “the material objects which represented the mnemonic sacred symbols are found not in verbal texts but in ritual ones,” they can have multiple significance, in different rituals or outside ritual, with “an enveloping mass of oral tales, legends and songs associated with them.”<sup>46</sup> The symbols do not signify meaning, says Lotman, but “*remind* one of it.”<sup>47</sup>

Lotman’s theory offers a way of understanding the differences in purpose and content of the two traditions, convent and Huron-Wendat, and suggests new interpretations for the Native women’s works. Aboriginal cultures used the mnemonic, ritualistic method of memorization, and their artwork when viewed as mnemonic in purpose contains broad meaning and depth of cultural connection, with layers of intent beyond the commercial. The convent work, product of a culture that uses writing as a tool for memorization, does not serve the mnemonic function. The iconography has a different purpose, to mythologize a people and their environment and, in the process, set out a structure of cultural hierarchy, all within the context of memory, the souvenir function.

I suggest that the images depicted on the Huron-Wendat moosehair-embroidered objects are one of the multiple layers of meaning and multiple significances described by Lotman, mnemonics for ritual texts. Their content and form can be interpreted as visual expressions or reminders of Huron-Wendat oral tradition, the rituals and beliefs of the spiritual realm, tales, and legends. Barbeau wrote of mnemonic devices such as pictographs and symbols on wampum belts used by the Huron, which supports this

---

<sup>46</sup> Lotman, 249.

<sup>47</sup> Lotman, 250.

interpretation.<sup>48</sup> Situated in this way, these art works are an assertion by Huron-Wendat women of their traditional cultural identity, and central to this was their autonomy and status within their communities. This supports my view of a continuous, uninterrupted process of subjectivity formation and understandings of identity, originating in Huron-Wendat discourse.

The element of hybridity also played a role in the creation of these works and contributes to the layers of meaning they contain. They are the cultural production of the Quebec contact zone, and bring together the Aboriginal collective memory technique of mnemonics and ritualization with elements of the European pictorial tradition, for example the narrative style of representation and verisimilitude. From the perspective of the European artistic tradition the Huron-Wendat images appear to be a move away from the pictorialism of the convent works, however from the perspective of the Aboriginal pictographic tradition, seen in an Ojibwa ritual song board, they are a move toward it (Fig.46). The scenes in the Huron-Wendat moosehair-embroidered objects are more pictorial in both the amount of detail they contain and the way the images relate to each other and to their surroundings, creating greater narrative content. In addition, the adoption of a technique of perspective conveys a sense of recession and three-dimensional space (Figs. 33, 35). François-Marc Gagnon writes that the Ursuline sisters, following Jesuit practice, used images in their evangelization efforts with Huron girls who were students. The students said that they “*ayment grandement les images*” ‘they liked the images enormously (my translation),’ and one student used the images to instruct her mother, “*cette enfant se mit á l’instruire des mystères de nostre foy, qu’elle*

---

<sup>48</sup> Barbeau, 1915, 3.

expliquait par des images” ‘this child instructed her in the mysteries of our faith, which she explained using the paintings (my translation).’<sup>49</sup> I suggest that through these Huron students, elements of the European pictorial tradition entered the Aboriginal tradition of representation, as is seen in the moosehair embroidered objects.

### **Layers of Meaning in the Huron-Wendat Moosehair Embroidery Tradition**

The Huron-Wendat artists, like the convent nuns, produced their works with the purpose of selling to a specific market, and they maintained the basic picturesque style that appealed to European buyers. I have argued that the images have meaning illustrating the continuity of community adherence to traditional beliefs and women’s centrality in that tradition. The Huron-Wendat women may have had a further layer of purpose and meaning in their art work: to assert their existence in the contemporary nineteenth century world in the everyday appearance of their time, in a realistic landscape, participating and functioning in the same world as their European contemporaries. This contradicted the European tradition of representing mythologized Aboriginal figures in a European landscape tradition, within the paradigm of the vanishing race, seen in paintings such as Josephe Légaré’s work *The Engagement of an Indian Girl*, discussed in Chapter Three (Fig. 25). While it is unlikely that the layer of meaning and content based in Huron-Wendat discourse would have been understood by European buyers, the visual differences between the appearance of the Native figures in the convent works and the figures in the Huron-Wendat works may have been intended to convey meaning the purchasers. While the convent works depict images of the European stereotypes, for

---

<sup>49</sup> Gagnon, *La Conversion Par l’Image* (Montréal: Les Éditions Bellarmin, 1975) 50-51.

example the romantic noble savage, the hunter/warrior, the Indian princess, or the worker, in picturesque costumes or in the case of the hunter, wearing only a breech cloth, the Huron-Wendat works present figures in the poses and dress of their contemporary world. The men are always fully clothed, while the women wear European black hats as well as traditional garments such as moccasins and long shirts decorated with zigzag power lines, a familiar motif in Eastern Woodlands material culture. This contradiction in representation symbolized by dress seems to parallel an effect seen in twentieth century Aboriginal art, described by Allan Ryan. He writes that the work of Aboriginal artists such as Shelley Niro is “a welcome corrective” to European representations and categories, presenting as it does Native women as contemporary twentieth century people, inhabiting the contemporary world.<sup>50</sup>

What does not appear in these Huron-Wendat images is as significant as what does appear - while there are abundant references to traditional Huron-Wendat spirituality, there are no references to Christianity- despite the fact that the Jesuit missionaries had been in direct contact with the larger Huron-Wendat community since 1625, and Lorette, the main community where these works were produced, was regarded as assimilated and Christian. Through their artistic choices the Huron-Wendat women artists emphasized their nation’s traditional spirituality and women’s status, as well as the ongoing Aboriginal presence in the contemporary world.

### **Eastern Woodlands Cultural Tradition**

The artistic context of these works is grounded in the spiritual beliefs of the Eastern Woodlands or Great Lakes peoples; these beliefs were reflected in all elements of

---

<sup>50</sup> Allan J. Ryan, *The Trickster Shift* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999) 62.

their lives, and the artistic expression seen in their material culture was central to the definition of connections between individual people and the spirit world. For example, pictographic and geometric images on objects such as woven pouches were believed to represent visions received during the dream quest, to contain religious powers for the dreamer and embody a connection with their other-world helper. Ruth Phillips states in “Dreams and Designs” that men would ask their wives to include certain motifs in the beadwork done for them, drawn from their dreams.<sup>51</sup> An example of such a pouch bearing the image of what looks like a Thunderbird, the most powerful spirit of the Sky world, is seen in the Bressani drawing (Fig. 3). The patterns woven into cradleboards were intended to invoke the powers of the spirit world, possibly to protect the child. In all cases, the images made a connection between humans and the spiritual powers that would help them, they reflected the Eastern Woodlands worldview and humans’ place in that world. The images were not incidental or trivial, they established the significance and importance of the object they elaborated.

Huron-Wendat material culture was part of this Eastern Woodlands tradition, and I have approached the interpretation of the moosehair-embroidered images from a perspective that recognizes the key role women artists played as intermediaries between the human world and the spirit world. They acted as interpreters of dreams and visions, and created a visual expression of the connections between the two realms through the use of mnemonic symbols. Although the moosehair-embroidered objects as commodified trade items were not necessarily made with a spiritual purpose and were intended to please the European buyer, the artists came from a strong visual tradition that worked

---

<sup>51</sup> Phillips, 1989, 61.

with symbolic, pictographic terms. These terms were intended to communicate to the viewer, and from this context it seems likely that the imagery used in the commodified objects would be in an iconographic idiom that had significance to the maker. From this perspective, each element would contain meaning, even if this is not clear today due to the incompleteness of the available information, and it seems reasonable to conclude that this meaning is grounded in Huron-Wendat women's expression of their spiritual beliefs and worldview. This reflects the "dual significance" described by Phillips, where "commoditized visual arts...mean in the same way that other art forms do."<sup>52</sup>

## Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed Huron-Wendat moosehair-embroidered objects in the context of the Quebec contact zone and Huron-Wendat cultural tradition. In this tradition, Huron-Wendat women's material production defined and interpreted relationships with the spiritual world, and while the moosehair objects were commodities, the iconography can still be seen as relating to this earlier purpose. I have expanded this possibility through a brief exploration of Huron-Wendat spiritual beliefs, oral tradition, and worldview, suggesting their possible mnemonic role as a technique of collective memorization.

My discussion of the Eastern Woodlands world view and Huron-Wendat art works focused on the relationships between humans and other-than-human beings and powers of transformation, in an attempt to see the works from the perspective of their

---

<sup>52</sup> Phillips, 1998, 20.

creators. The exclusion of references to Christianity and the repeated motifs from traditional spiritual beliefs relating to women's role in creation and in the afterworld supports my view of the continuity of traditional discourse and the understanding of Huron-Wendat women's sense of self as largely unchanged, despite pressures of missionization and assimilation. Foucault discussed the need for discourse in the techniques of the self, to support the modes by which a person becomes a subject. It is possible that Huron-Wendat discourse continued into the nineteenth century, in part through women's material culture production, as the source of their unaltered subjectivity and identity.<sup>53</sup>

In conclusion, the Huron-Wendat production of tourist commodities was a successful adaptation to quickly changing circumstances, which yet maintained a continuity with the traditions of basket, quill, and bead in the creating of the objects as metaphors described by Deborah Doxtator. She writes that the processes surrounding the activities of "basket, bead and quill" are strongly embedded in Aboriginal women's identities, and I suggest that these Huron-Wendat works can be seen as metaphors for the continuation of that identity.<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> Foucault, 1997, 99.

<sup>54</sup> Doxtator, 1995, 14.

## Conclusion

I have explored historical European traditions of representation of Aboriginal women in image and text, questioned the constructed identities they contain, and located contradictory identities in two sources: European texts and Aboriginal women's self-representational imagery. A representative sample of European historical texts and artworks and an inclusive grouping of Huron-Wendat moosehair-embroidered objects was the focus of this study.

My findings question the accuracy of European stereotyped understandings of Aboriginal women's identity as either subjugated pre-contact or brought to a position of subjugation by European colonizing pressures. My research found in the texts details of specific historical encounters which support an alternative understanding, that in Iroquoian societies such as the Huron-Wendat, where the responsible autonomy of the individual, man or woman, was highly valued and coercion was not a method of social control,<sup>1</sup> the nature of women's subjectivity continued relatively unaltered from pre-contact time into the nineteenth century. While I acknowledge the limitations of a study that focuses on one cultural group, the similarities in the worldview of Eastern Woodlands nations indicates that this conclusion could be extended more widely.

I have drawn on three areas of theory as a framework for this research: Foucault's writings concerning the episteme and the formation of subjectivity and identity, Yuri Lotman's work discussing the techniques of collective memorization used by non-literate societies, and Hayden White's theories of history writing. Fundamental to my discussion

---

<sup>1</sup> Clermont, 288.

is the dismantling of the belief in a hierarchy of cultures based on literacy, and Lotman's theories facilitate this shift in perspective. The leveling of the literate versus non-literate playing field situates the oral tradition of Aboriginal societies, complexes of mnemonic symbols, rituals, ceremonies, songs and dances, as discourse in Foucault's use of the word: supporting the techniques of care of the self, connected with self-knowledge and identity.<sup>2</sup> Lotman described mnemonics as symbols intended to remind the viewer of meaning. The images in the moosehair embroidered works can be seen as mnemonic reminders of Huron-Wendat discourse, a discourse based in the centrality of women's role in creation and life which continued into the early twentieth century, carried forward by women elders as well as men. These interpretations support the continuity of the traditional nature of Huron-Wendat women's subjectivity, while evidence drawn from historical texts demonstrates women's position of authority and status in their communities well into the contact period.

In Chapter Two, I brought together a selection of historical texts from a range of seventeenth to nineteenth century French and English sources, to explore the effect of conventions of representation on stereotype formation. I identified a paradox: the categories that from the Aboriginal perspective originated in women's autonomy and egalitarian position, from a European perspective placed women in a position subjugated to men. What European men saw as drudgery was in fact women's control over and

---

<sup>2</sup> Foucault, 1997, 87,99-102.

responsibility for essential resources; what was seen as licentiousness was women's responsibility and control over their bodies and sexuality.

I brought forward several text descriptions of events contradicting European stereotypes of Native women, few in number compared to the body of text supporting European conventional understandings, but significant as descriptions of women acting in assertive, influential ways, and as events that could only have taken place as part of a generally accepted social norm. The rarity of these text descriptions is an indication of the filtering process of the European authors. Either these events were inconsistent with the narrative writers wanted to bring to a European audience, or the authors could not recognize the assertive behaviour for what it was, and so labeled it in negative European terms.

I discussed these different interpretations of women's roles and behaviour in terms of Foucault's epistemes, that the different experience of order and its modes of being made it difficult for the two groups to make sense of each others' conduct. I concluded that the narratives of powerful women, which contradicted the stereotyped interpretations, called into question the understanding of Aboriginal cultures as essentially changed by European contact, and instead supported a view of cultural continuity and adaptation.

In Chapter Three I explored two aspects of European representations of Aboriginal women: the artistic tropes and codes of representation that constituted the work, and the underlying ideologies that informed artistic choices. From this came a discussion of the ways in which European traditions of representation transformed Aboriginal women's actual position of status and influence, so that the visual images

reinforced the stereotypes seen in the texts. However, while the texts did describe women in specific events which contradicted the generalized views, the artworks, limited by the European artistic tradition and codes of representation, allowed no space for such women.

Chapter Four focused on the moosehair-embroidered objects made by Huron-Wendat women artists, their connection with the convent tradition of such objects, and their iconographic content and meaning based in Huron-Wendat discourse. Yuri Lotman's theories of mnemonic symbols support the connection between the images and Huron-Wendat spiritual beliefs, oral tradition, and understandings based in metaphor.

The process of transformation and interpretation is a theme that runs through this thesis. First, the historical authors defined Huron-Wendat women within three or four distinct categories, interpreted behaviour and social interactions that they observed in European terms, and through their representation transformed the lived reality of Aboriginal women into a version of Indianness which met the ideological requirements of the particular moment. Second, the European artists depicted women within the even more limited structure of the European artistic tradition which had no space within its patriarchy-based ideology for images of women living outside such a belief system. This visual transformation formed fixed images for European viewers, interacting with and reinforcing the text representations. Third, the moosehair-embroidered works by Huron-Wendat artists brought Aboriginal cultural traditions together with awareness of European artistic codes and the demands of the European market place. They are works of self-interpretation and self-representation which assert the contemporaneity of Huron-Wendat presence, illustrate the continuity of traditional beliefs and discourse and

women's central role within this system, and transform European images of 'Indianness' into versions which approached more closely the lived reality.

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

- Adams, Arthur T. ed. *The Explorations of Pierre Esprit Radisson*. Loren Kallsen, modernizer. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Ross & Haines, Inc., 1961.
- Boucher, Pierre. *Canada in the Seventeenth Century*. Translated by Edward Louis Montizambert. Montreal: George E. Desbarats & Co., 1883.
- Hennepin, Louis. *A New Discovery of a Vast Country in America*. Vols.1 and 2. London: Henry Bonwicke, 1699.
- Heriot, George. *Travels Through the Canadas*. Edmonton: M.G. Hurtig Ltd., 1971. First printed in 1806.
- Jesuit Relations and allied documents*. English translation by Reuben G. Thwaites. New York: Pageant, 1959.
- Lafitau, Father Joseph-François. *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times*. Vol.1 and 2. First printed in 1724. William Fenton and Elizabeth Moore. Toronto: Champlain Society, 1974.
- Lahontan, Baron de. *Mémoires de L'Amérique Septentrionale*. Montreal: Éditions Elysée, 1974.
- Lahontan, Baron de. *Mémoires de L'Amérique Septentrionale, Oeuvres Complètes I*, édition critiques par Réal Ouellet. Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1990.
- Long, John. *Voyages and Travels of an Indian Interpreter and Trader*. First printed 1791. Toronto: Coles Publishing Company, Toronto, 1971.
- Oury, Dom Guy. *Marie de l'Incarnation, Ursuline (1599-1672) Correspondance*. Solesmes: Abbaye Saint-Pierre, 1971.
- Picart, Bernard. *Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde*. Amsterdam; Paris: Laporte, 1783.
- Radisson, Pierre Esprit. *The Explorations of Pierre Esprit Radisson*, ed. Arthur T. Adams. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Ross and Haines, Inc., 1961.
- Sagard, Gabriel. *Le Grand Voyage du Pays des Hurons; Sagard's Long Journey to the Country of the Hurons*. Trans. H.H.Langton. Toronto: The Champlain

Society, 1939.

### Secondary Sources

- Anderson, Karen. *Chain Her by One Foot*. London; New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Axtell, James. *The Invasion Within*. New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Barbeau, Marius. *Huron and Wyandot Mythology*. Memoir 80. Ottawa: Ottawa Department of Mines, Government Printing Bureau, 1915.
- Saintes Artisanes*. Montreal: Editions Fides, 1943.
- Huron-Wyandot Traditional Narratives in Translations and Native Texts*. Bulletin No. 165. Ottawa: National Museum of Canada, 1960.
- Bar-Tal, Daniel, Carl F. Graumann, et al. *Stereotyping and Prejudice*. New York: Springer-Verlag, 1989.
- Berkhofer, Robert E. *The White Man's Indian*. New York: Knopf, 1978.
- Clermont, Norman. "La Place de la Femme dans les Sociétés Iroquoiennes," *Recherche Amerindiennes au Quebec*. 14 (4) 1983, 286-290.
- Clifford, James. "On Ethnographic Allegory," *The Predicament of Culture*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988, pp.98-121.
- Copley, Steven, and Peter Garside. "Introduction," *The Politics of the Picturesque*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 1-12.
- Davis, Natalie A. "Iroquois Women, European Women," *Women, "Race," and Writing in the Early Modern Period*. London; New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Devens, Carol. *Countering Colonization*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1992.
- Dickason, Olive. *The Myth of the Savage*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, c. 1984.
- Doxtator, Deborah. "Basket, Bead and Quill, and the Making of "Traditional" Art," *Basket, Bead and Quill*. Thunder Bay, On.: Thunder Bay Art Gallery, 1995.

- What Happened to the Iroquois Clans?* Dissertation. London: University of Western Ontario, 1996.
- Dyck, Sandra. *"These Things Are Our Totems:" Marius Barbeau and the Indigenization of Canadian Art and Culture in the 1920s.* Thesis. Ottawa: Carleton University Press, c.1995.
- Finley, Gerald. *Postmaster-Painter of the Canadas.* Toronto; London: University of Toronto Press, 1983.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things.* New York: Random House, 1970.
- Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth.* ed. Paul Rabinow. New York; The New Press, 1997.
- The Essential Foucault.* ed. by Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose. New York: New Press, c. 2003.
- Gagnon, Francois Marc. *Ces Hommes Dits Sauvages.* Montréal: Éditions Libre Expression, 1984.
- La Conversion Par l'Image.* Montréal: Les Éditions Bellarmin, 1975.
- Goldie, Terrie. *Fear and Temptation.* Montreal & Kinston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989.
- Greer, Allan, ed. *The Jesuit Relations: Natives and Missionaries in North America.* Boston: Bedford/St.Martins, 2000.
- Greer, Allan. *Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits.* Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Grumet, Robert. "We Are Not So Great Fools:" Changes in Upper Delawaran Socio-Political Life 1630-1758," Dissertation. New Jersey: Rutgers University, 1979.
- Hallowell, A. Irving. "Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior, and World View," *Contributions to Anthropology.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976. 357-390.
- Hamell, George. "Trading in Metaphors: The Magic of Beads," *Proceedings of the 1982 Glass Trade Bead Conference.* Rochester, N.Y.: Rochester Museum and Science Center, 1983.
- Hayden White. "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact," *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism.* Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1985. 81-100.

- Healy, George R. "The French Jesuits and the Idea of the Noble Savage," *William and Mary Quarterly* 15(1958 143-67.
- Heth, Charlotte, ed. *Native American Dance*. Washington, D.C., Smithsonian Inst., 1992.
- Higham, C.L. *Noble, Wretched and Redeemable*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2000.
- Honour, Hugh. *The New Golden Land*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1975.
- Honour, Hugh and John Fleming. *The Visual Arts: A History*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc., 2005.
- Leacock, Eleanor Burke. "Women's Status in Egalitarian Society," *Current Anthropology*, 19.2:247-75.
- Myths of Male Dominance*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1981.
- Leacock, Eleanor, and Mona Etienne, eds. *Women and Colonization*. New York; London: Praeger, Publishers, 1980.
- Lippman, Walter. *Public Opinion*. New York: Macmillan Company, 1961.
- Lotman, Yuri. *Universe of the Mind*. London: Tauris, 1990.
- Lubbers, Klaus. *Born for the Shade*. Amsterdam Monographs in American Studies 3. Amsterdam; Atlanta: Rodopi, 1994.
- Moore, Henrietta L. *Feminism and Anthropology*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988.
- Moxey, Keith. "Motivating History," *The Practice of Persuasion*. Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 2001, 65-89.
- Phillips, Ruth Bliss. "Dreams and Designs: Iconographic Problems in Great Lakes Twined Bags." *Great Lakes Indian Art*. ed. by David W. Penney. Detroit: Wayne State University and the Detroit Institute of Arts, 1989. 53-68.
- Trading Identities*. Montreal, Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998.
- Porter, John R. *The Works of Joseph Légaré 1795-1855*. Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1978.
- Public Archives Canada. Picture Division. *The Painted Past*. Ottawa: Public Archives of

Canada, 1985.

Punter, David. "The Picturesque and the Sublime: Two Worldscapes," *The Politics of the Picturesque*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp.220-239.

Racevskis, Karlis. *Michel Foucault and the Subversion of Intellect*. Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1983.

Reid, Dennis. *A Concise History of Canadian Painting*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Rioux, Jean-de-la-Croix. *Gabriel Sagard, Théodat*. Montréal; Paris: Fides, 1964.

Robinson, Sidney K. *Inquiry into the Picturesque*. Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991.

Ryan, Allan J. *The Trickster Shift*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999.

Sayre, Gordon M. *Les Sauvages Américains*. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

Sioui, Georges E. *For an Amerindian Autohistory*. Montreal, Kinston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992.

*Huron-Wendat: The Heritage of the Circle*. Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press, 1999.

Smith, Donald B. *Le Sauvage*. Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1974.

Stephan, Walter G. "A Cognitive Approach to Stereotyping," *Stereotyping and Prejudice*. New York; London: Springer-Verlag, 1989, pp. 37-57.

Stone, Lawrence. *Road to Divorce*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

Stroebe, Wolfgang, and Chester A. Insko. "Stereotype, Prejudice and Discrimination," *Stereotyping and Prejudice*. New York; London: Springer-Verlag, 1989, pp.3-34.

Thomas, Nicholas, and Diane Losche. "Under Saturn," *Double Vision*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp.131-162.

Todd, Ruthven. "The Imaginary Indian in Europe," *Art in America* LX (Jul-Aug. 1972) 40-47,41.

Trigger, Bruce. *The Children of Aataentsic*. Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1976.

“The Historian’s Indian,” *Out of the Background*. Mississauga, On.:  
Copp Clark Pitman, 1988. 19-44.

Urry, John. *The Tourist Gaze*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Sage Publications, 2002.

Van Kirk, Sylvia. *Many Tender Ties*. Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer Pub., 1980.

White, Richard. *The Middle Ground*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Wiener, Philip P., ed. *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*. New York: Charles Scribner’s  
Sons, 1973.

## Illustrations



Figure 1: Title page. Gabriel Sagard, *Le Grand Voyage du Pays des Hurons* (Toronto, 1939). Chapter Three.



Figure 2: Fra Bartolommeo, *Carondelet Altarpiece*, c.1511, Besançon Cathedral; rpt. in Hugh Honour and John Fleming, *The Visual Arts: A History* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, 2005) 469. Chapter Three.



Figure 3: François-Joseph Bressani, illustration of Huron family from the *Novae Franciae Accurata Delineatio*, 1657; rpt. in Karen Anderson, *Chain Her By One Foot* (London; New York: Routledge, 1991). Chapter Three.



Figure 4: Antoine Bouzonnet Stella, *The Three Maries at the Sepulchre*, Heim Gallery, London; rpt. in *Religious and Biblical Themes in French Baroque Painting* (London: Heim Gallery 1974) 11. Chapter Three.

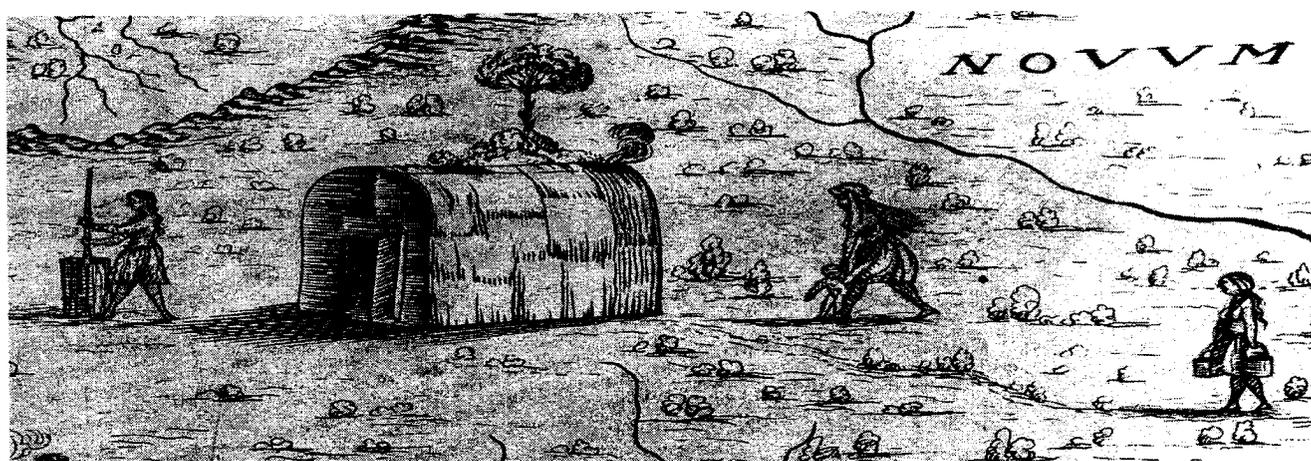


Figure 5: François-Joseph Bressani, illustrations of women working, from the *Novae Franciae Accurata Delineatio*, 1657; rpt. in Karen Anderson, *Chain Her By One Foot* (London; New York: Routledge, 1991).Chapter Three.



Figure 6: Francois Du Creux, illustration in *Historiae Canadensis*, 1664; rpt. in Olive Dickason, *The Myth of the Savage* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, c. 1984), 245.  
Chapter Three.



Figure 7: Claude Chauchetière, *Catherine Tekakwitha*, c.1679; rpt. in Allan Greer, *Mohawk Saint* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005) 20. Chapter Three.

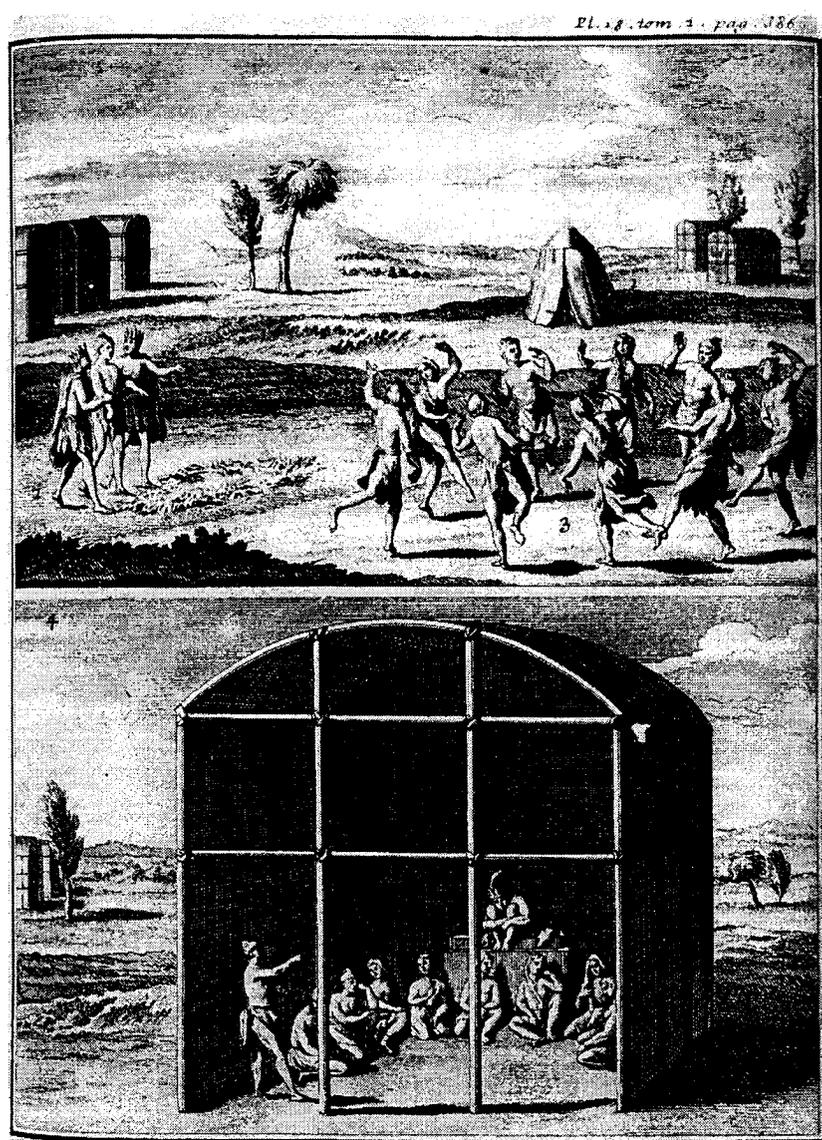


PLATE XVIII

Figure 8: Illustration in Joseph François Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times*, Plate XVIII (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1977). Chapter Three.

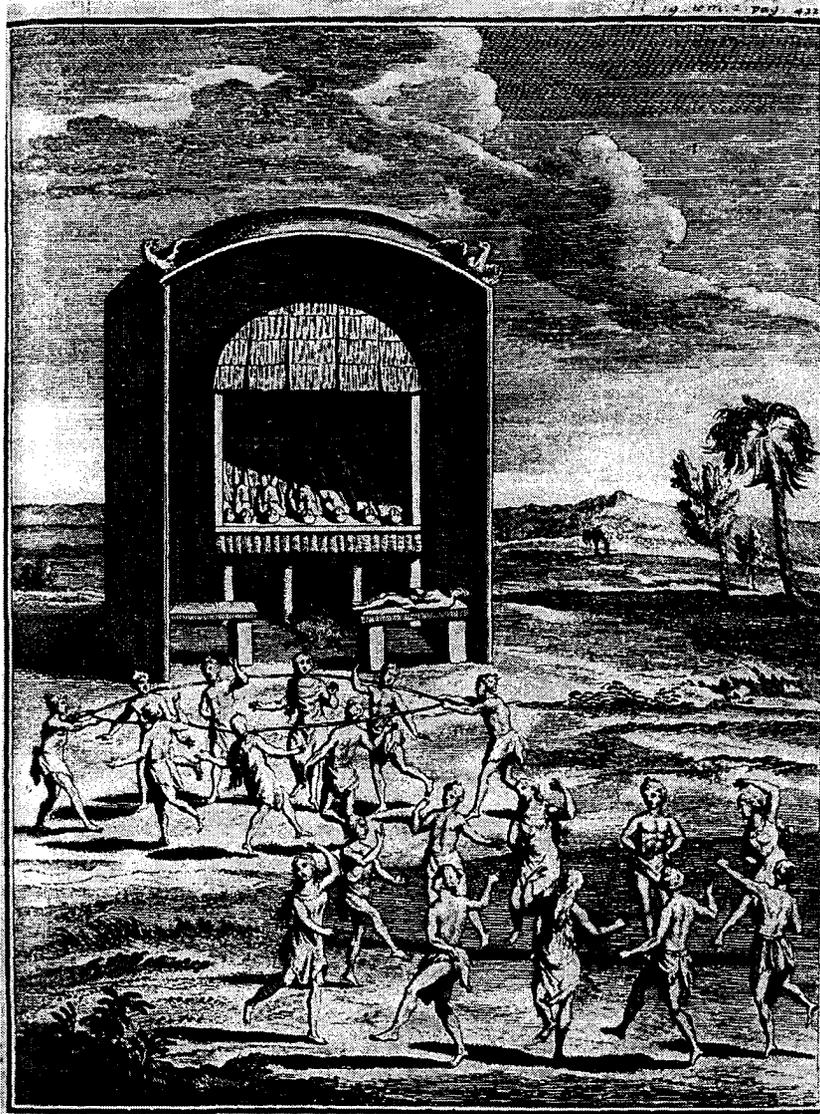


PLATE XIX

Figure 9: Illustration in Joseph François Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times*, Plate XIX (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1977). Chapter Three.

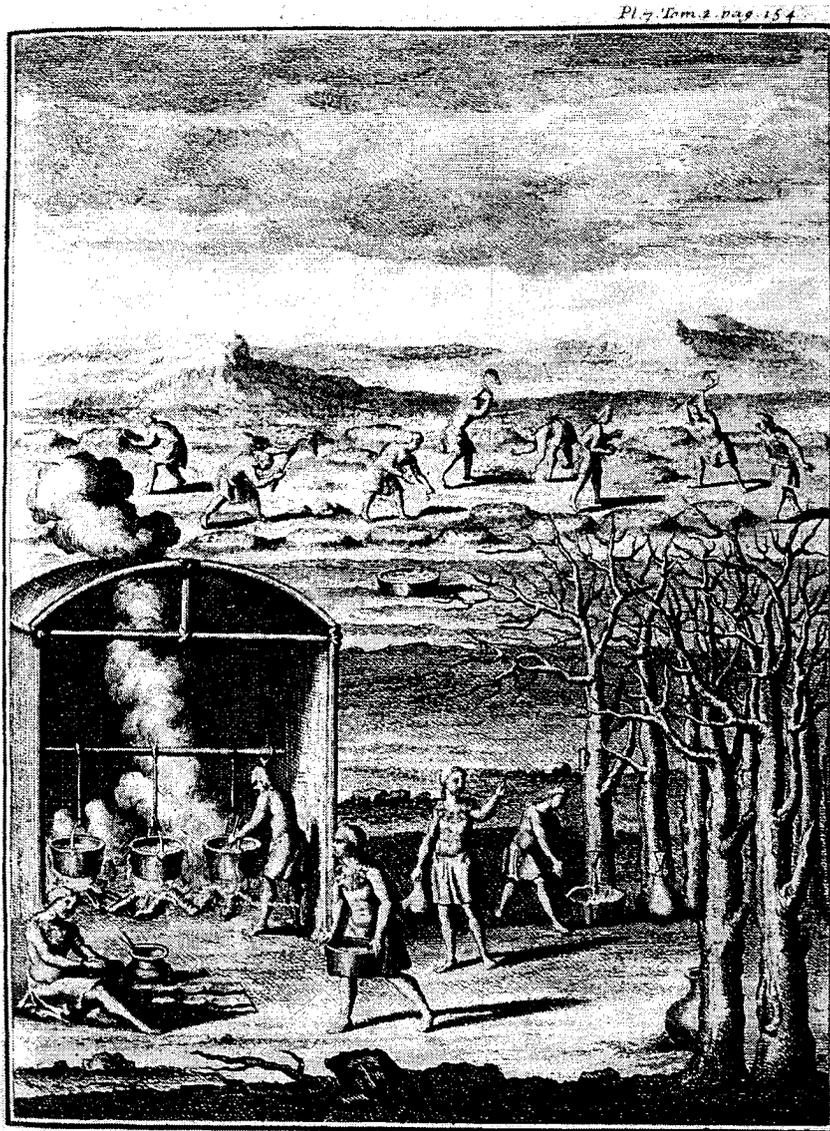


PLATE VII

Figure 10: Illustration in Joseph François Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times*, Plate VII (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1977). Chapter Three.

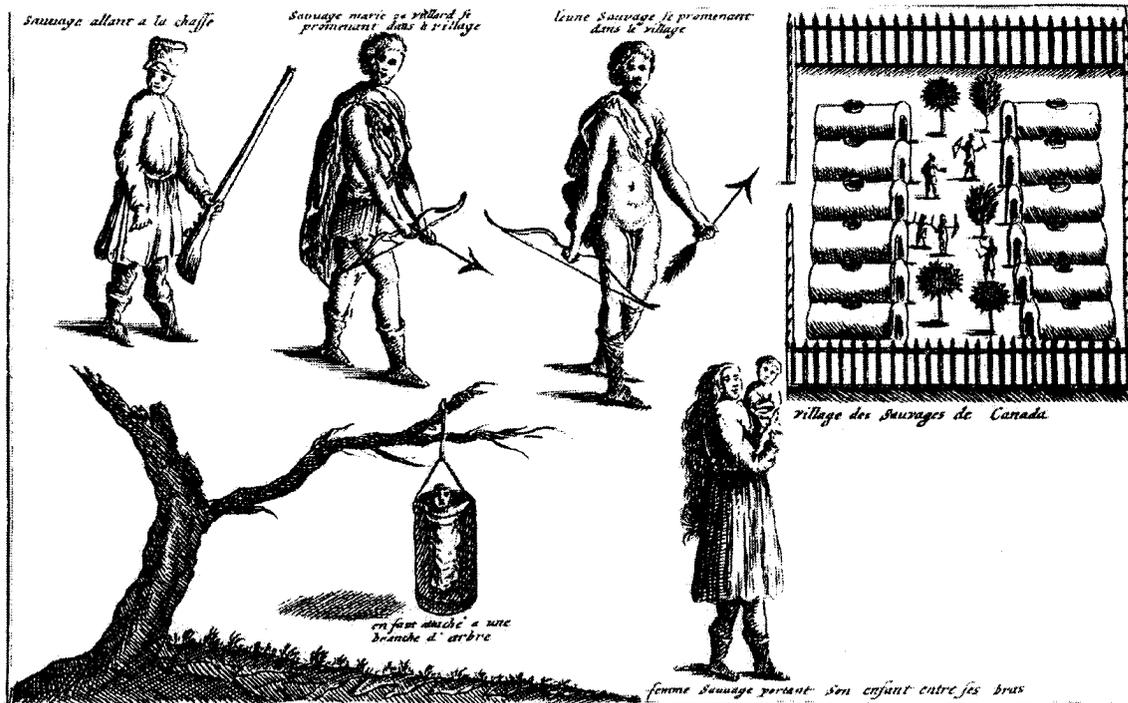


Figure 11: Typology, illustration from Baron de Lahontan, *Mémoires de l'Amérique Septentrionale* (Montreal: Éditions Élysée, 1974). Chapter Three.

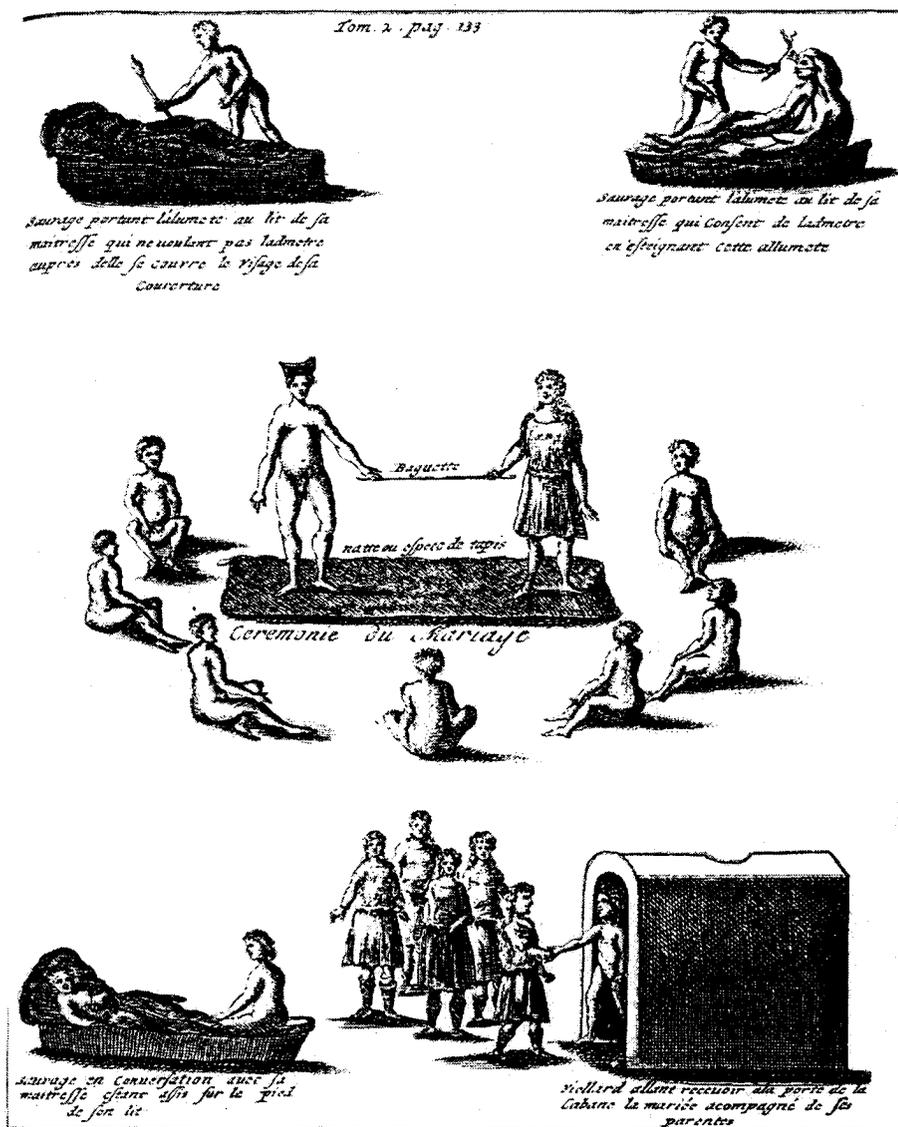


Figure 12: Customs, illustration from Baron de Lahontan, *Mémoires de l'Amérique Septentrionale* (Montreal, 1974). Chapter Three.

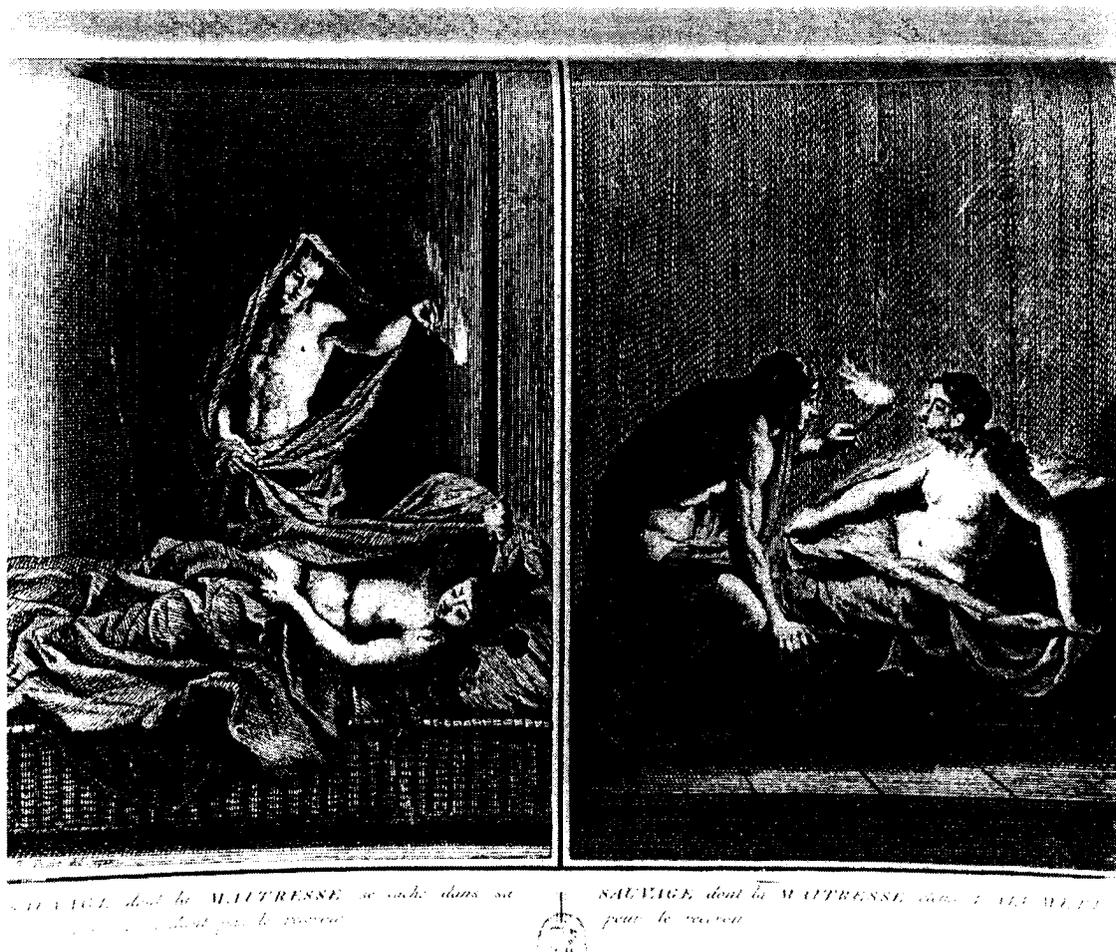


Figure 13: *Sauvage dont la Maitresse se cache*, illustration from Baron de Lahontan, *Mémoires de l'Amérique Septentrionale* (Montreal, 1974). Chapter Three.



CEREMONIE NUPTIALE du CANADA

Figure 14: *Ceremonie Nuptiale du Canada*, illustration from Baron de Lahontan, *Memoires de l'Amerique Septentrionale* (Montreal: Éditions Élysée, 1974). Chapter Three.



*MANIERE dont les PEUPLES des CANADA font le DIVORCE.*

Figure 15: *Maniere dont les Peuples des Canada font la Divorce*, illustration from Baron de Lahontan, *Memoires de l'Amerique Septentrionale* (Montreal: Éditions Elysée, 1974). Chapter Three.



Figure 16: Sir Anthony van Dyck, *Cupid and Psyche*, 1639-40. The Royal Collection, London. [www.royalcollection.org.uk](http://www.royalcollection.org.uk). Chapter Three.



C-007866

Figure 17: Bernard Picart, *Danse de Mariage chez les Canadiens*, 1723 or 1783. Illustration in *Les ceremonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde*. Library and Archives Canada, C007866. Chapter Three.



Figure 18: Drawing of styles of dress of Canadian *habitants* and Aboriginal people, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto; rpt. in Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) 120. Chapter Three.

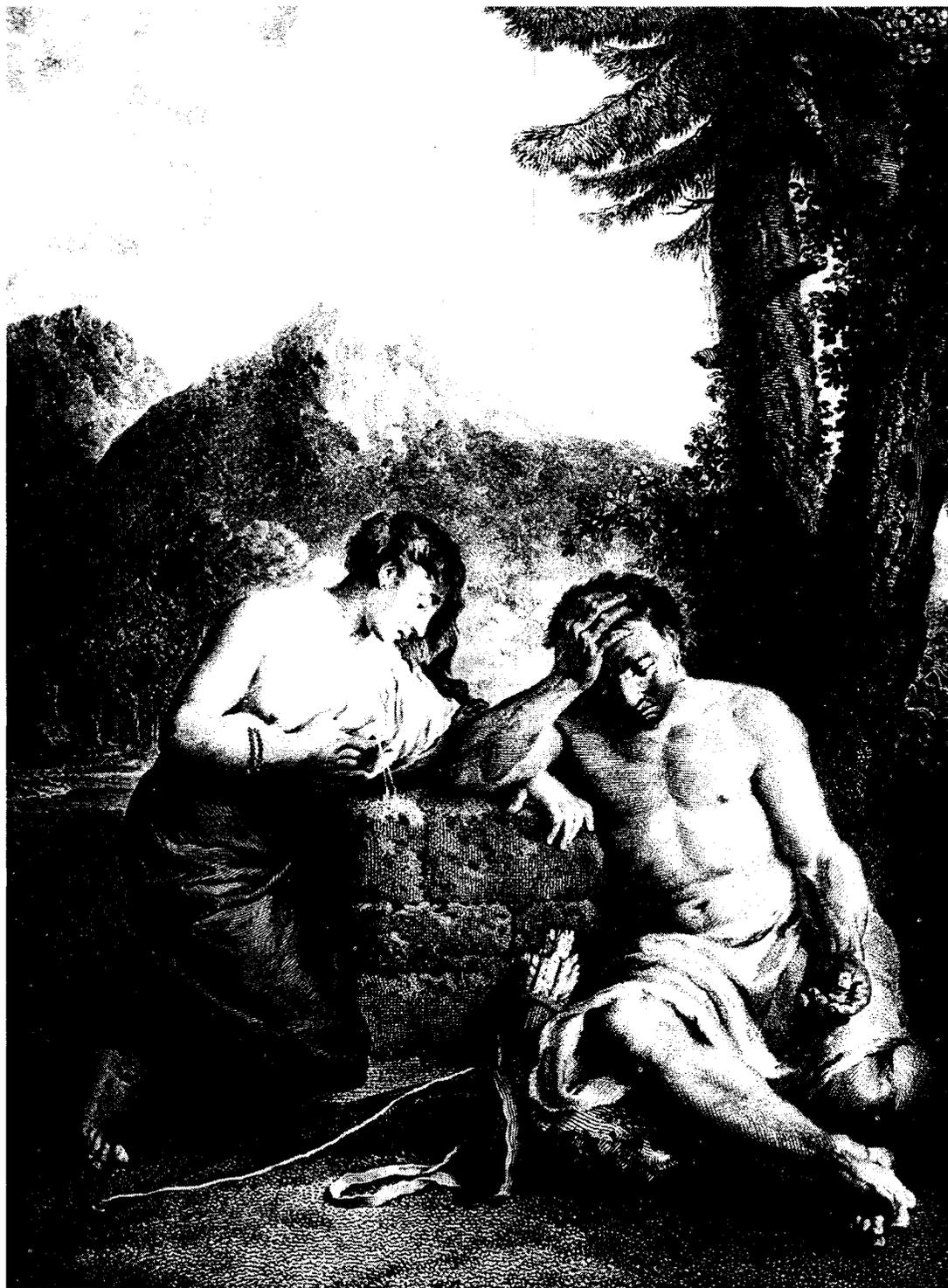


Figure 19: Jean-Jacques-François Le Barbier, *Canadiens au tombeau de leur enfant*, 1781, illustration in Guillaume Raynal, *Histoire du Canada*; rpt. in Donald Smith, *Le Sauvage* (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1974) 25. Chapter Three.



Figure 20: Unknown artist, *A Family of Micmac Indians*, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa; rpt. in *Painted Past* (Ottawa: Public Archives of Canada, 1985) Fig.36. Chapter Three.



Figure21: George Heriot, *Encampment of Domiciliated Indians*, illustration in George Heriot, *Travels Through the Canadas* (Edmonton: M.G. Hurtig Ltd., 1971). Chapter Three.



Figure 22: George Heriot, *Dance of Indian Women*, Art Gallery of Windsor, Ontario; rpt. in Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) 27. Chapter Three.



Figure 23: Artist unknown, Artus, engraver. Huron Indians lithograph, ca. 1835. C-041090. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa. Chapter Three.



Figure 24: Joseph Légaré, *Josephite Ourné*, Légaré's Quebec Gallery of Painting, Quebec City; rpt. in John R. Porter, *The Works Joseph Légaré 1795-1855* (Ottawa: NGC, 1978) 78. Chapter Three



Figure 25: Joseph Légaré, *Engagement of an Indian Girl*, Private Collection; rpt. in John R. Porter, *The Works Joseph Légaré 1795-1855* (Ottawa: NGC, 1978) 79. Chapter Three.



Figure 26: Joseph Légaré, *The Despair of an Indian Girl*, Légaré's Quebec Gallery of Painting, Quebec City; rpt. in John R. Porter, *The Works Joseph Légaré 1795-1855* (Ottawa: NGC, 1978) 81. Chapter Three.



Figure 27: Hyacinthe Rigaud, *Portrait of Louis XIV*, Louvre, Paris, 1694, [www.uic.edu/.../classes/ah111/imagebank](http://www.uic.edu/.../classes/ah111/imagebank). Chapter Three.



Figure 28: Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *The Meeting*, from *The Progress of Love*, Frick Collection, New York; rpt. in Hugh Honour and John Fleming, *The Visual Arts: A History* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc., 2005) 616. Chapter Three.

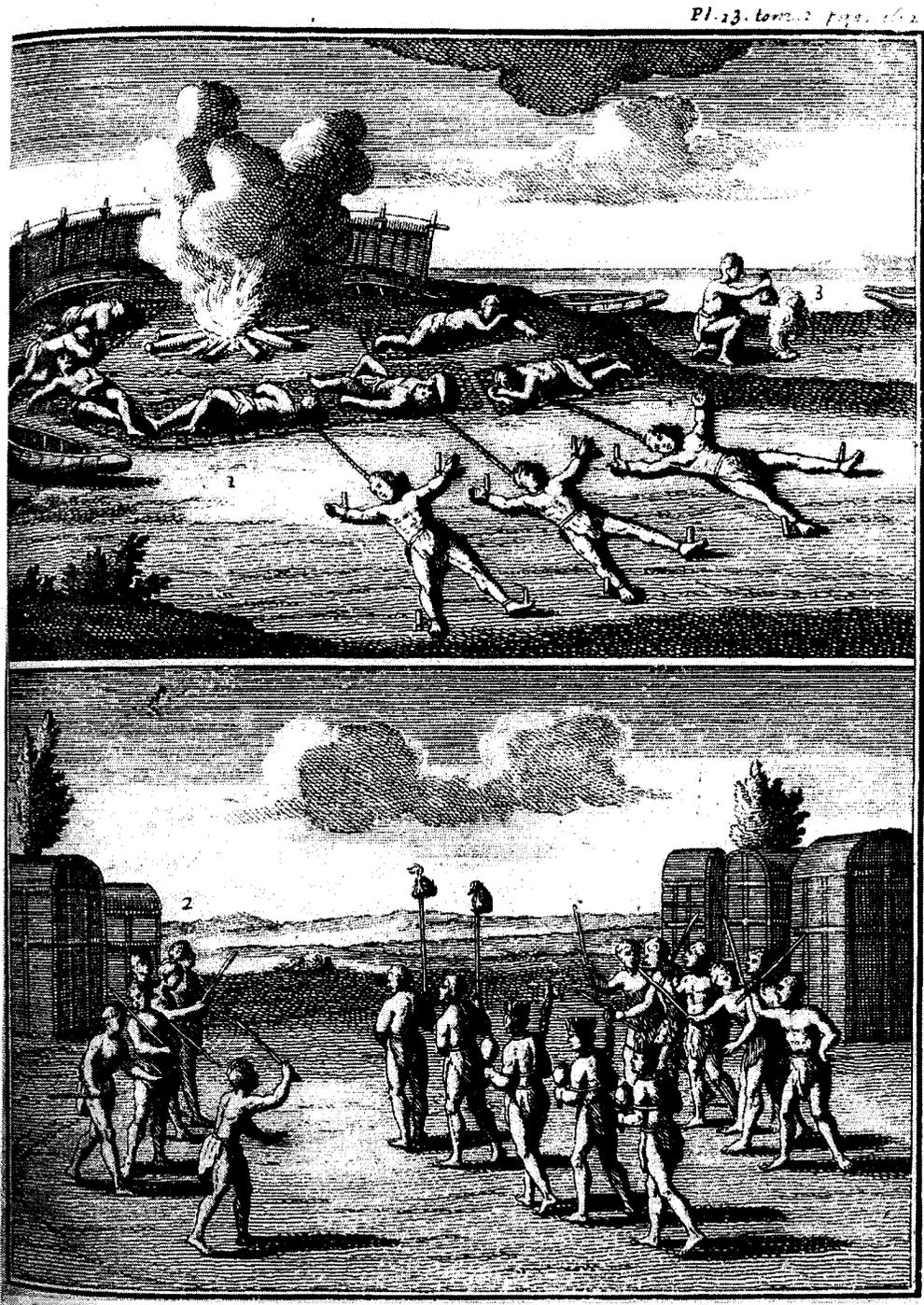


Figure 29: Illustration in Joseph François Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times*, Plate XIII (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1977). Chapter Three.

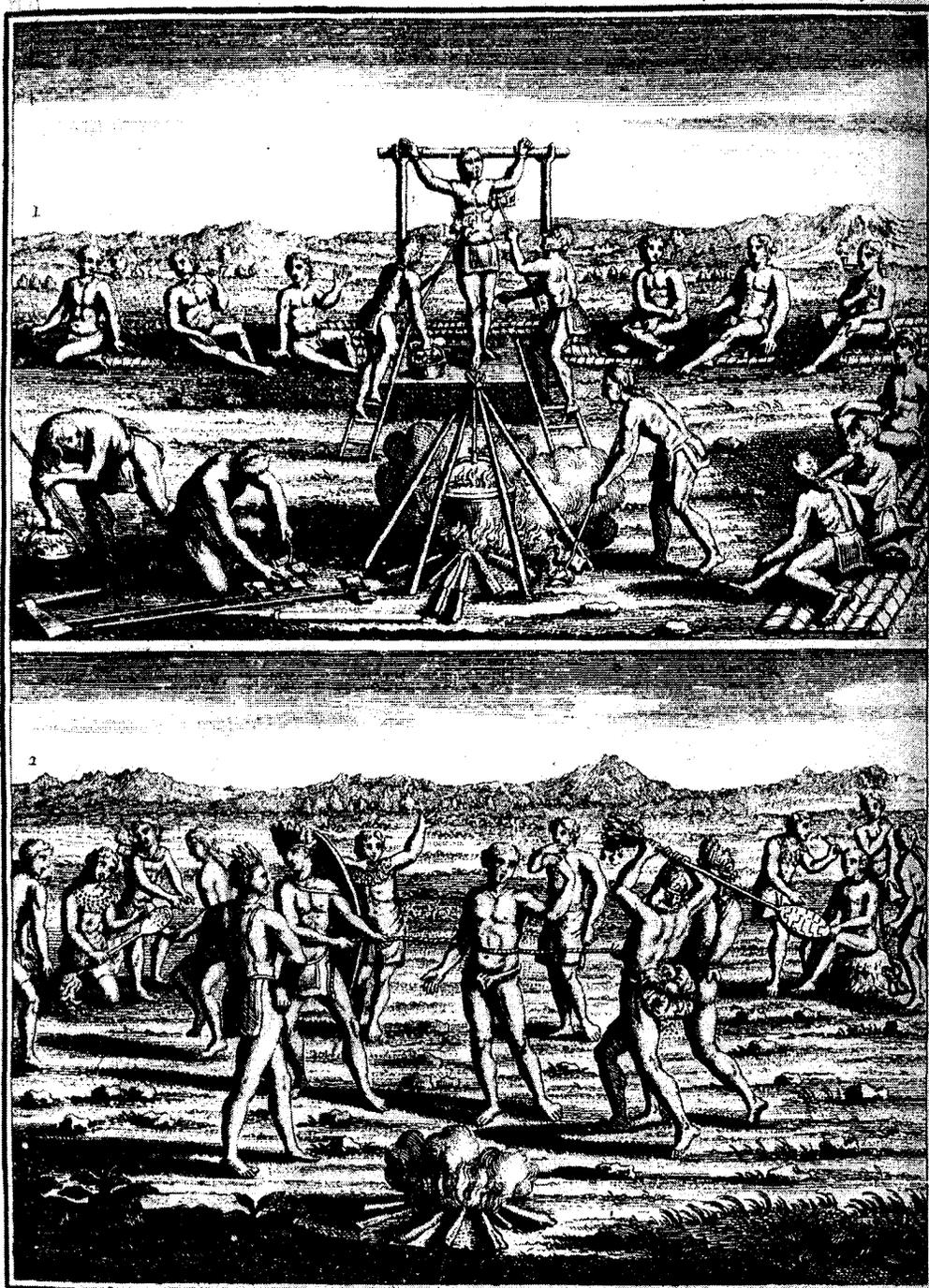


Figure 30: Illustration in Joseph François Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times*, Plate XIV (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1977). Chapter Three.



Figure 31: Moosehair embroidered cigar case, Huron-Wendat, Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde, Dresden; rpt. in Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) 136. Chapter Four.

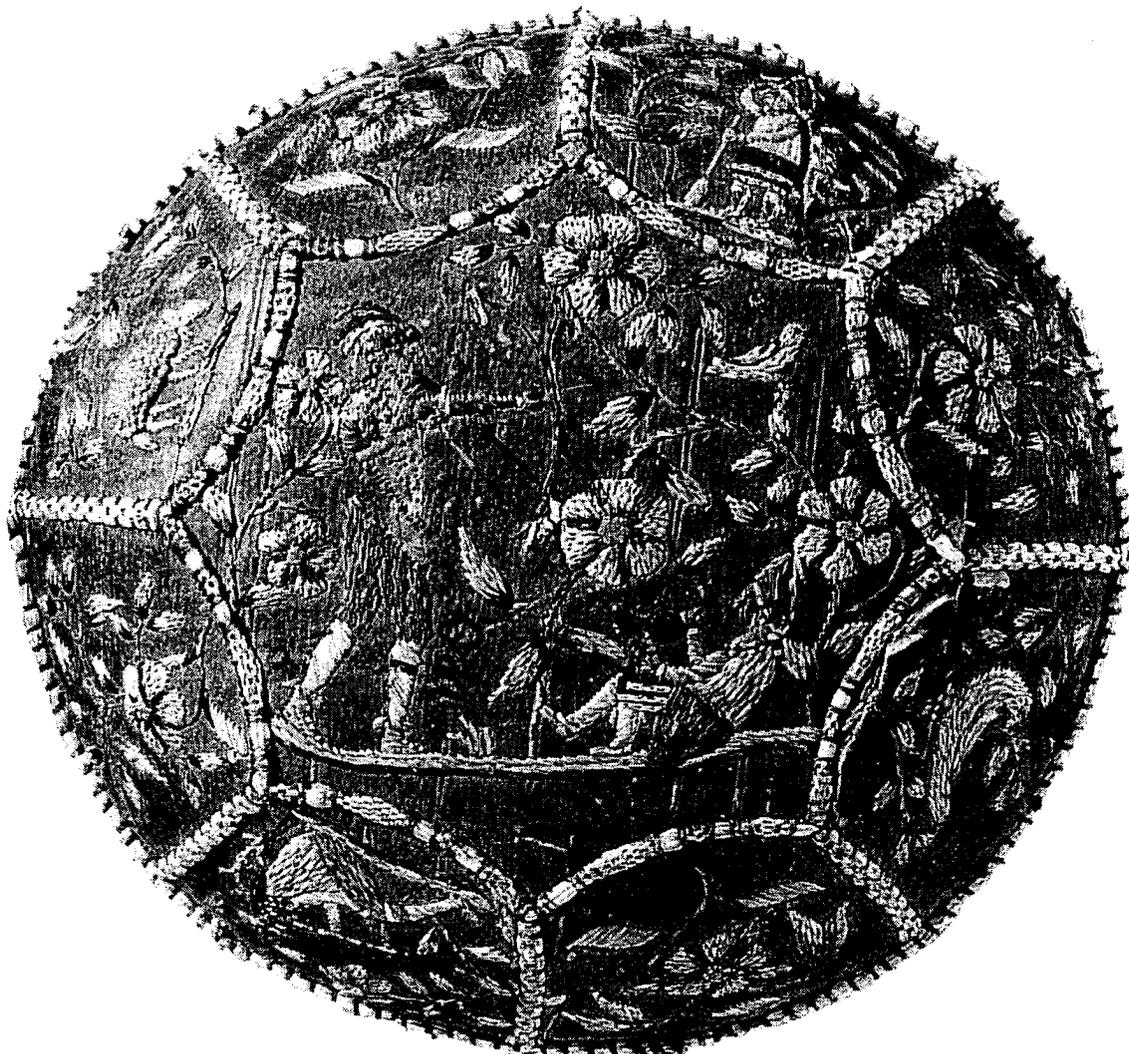


Figure 32: Moosehair-embroidered reticule base, Quebec convent work, Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology; rpt. in Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities* (McGill; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) 117. Chapter Four.



Figure 33: Moosehair-embroidered box, Huron-Wendat, The National Museum of Denmark, Department of Ethnography, Copenhagen; rpt. in Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) 131. Chapter Four.



Figure 34: Coke Smith, *Huron Indian*, c. 1840, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 30197.6. Chapter Four.



Figure 35: Moosehair-embroidered calling card tray, Huron-Wendat, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, Cambridge; rpt. in Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) Plate 17. Chapter Four.



Figure 36: Moosehair-embroidered needlebook, Huron-Wendat, National Museum of the American Indian, New York; rpt. in Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) 140. Chapter Four.

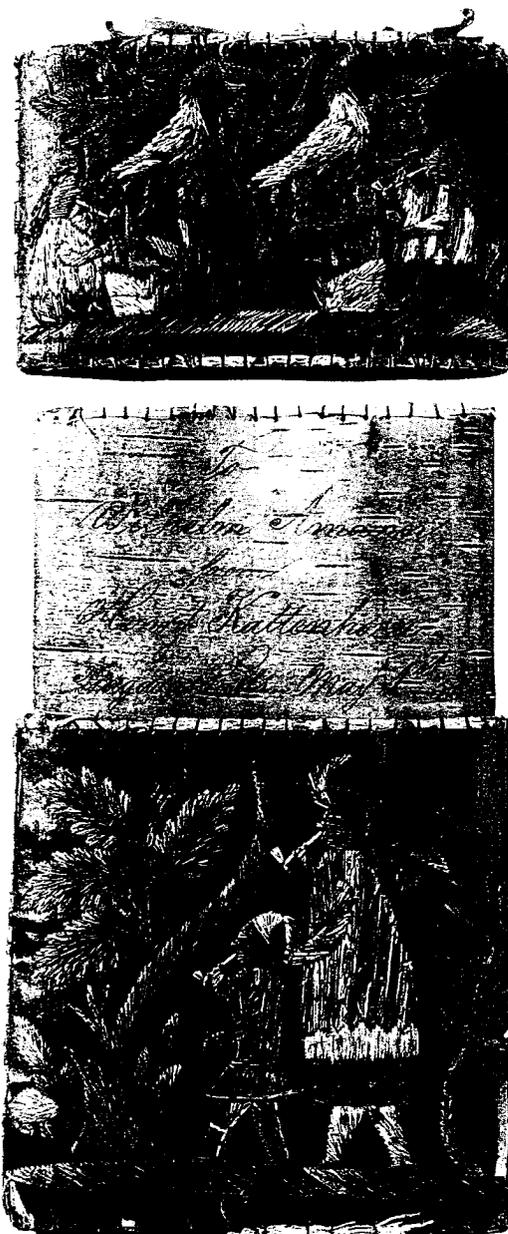


Figure 37: Moosehair-embroidered cigar case, Huron-Wendat, Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin; rpt. in Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) Plate 2. Chapter Four.



Figure 38: Lady's handbag, Huron –Wendat, The Horniman Museum London; rpt. in Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) Plate 15. Chapter Four.

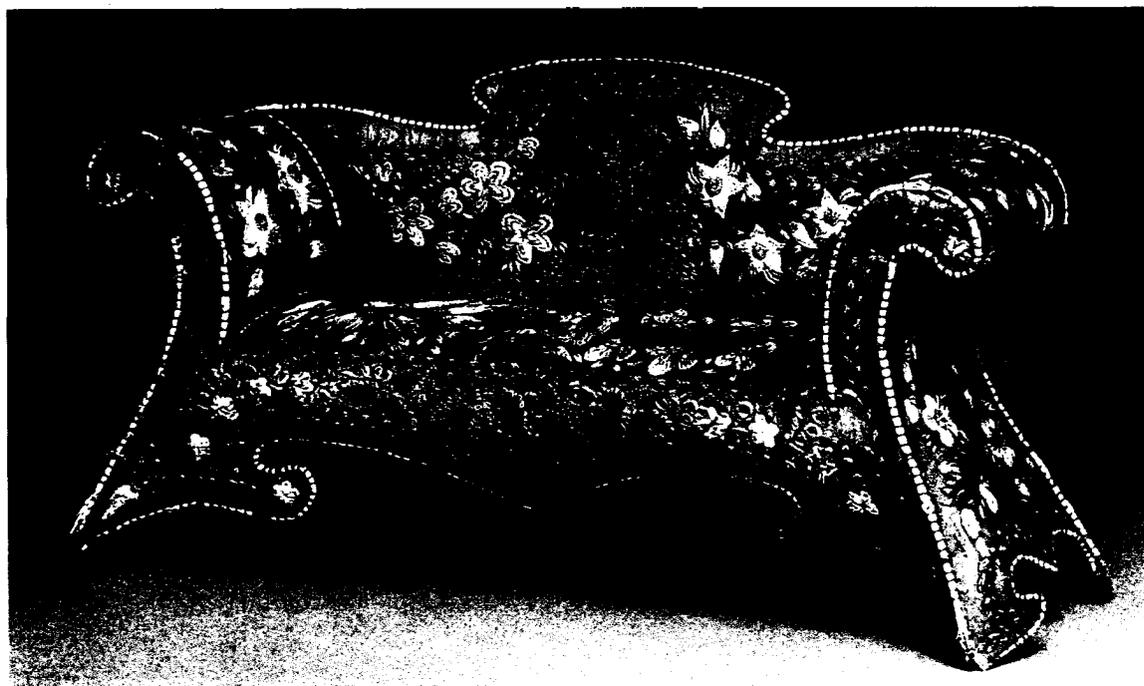


Figure 39: Settee, Huron-Wendat, Private collection, Santa Fe; rpt. in Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) Plate 35. Chapter Four.

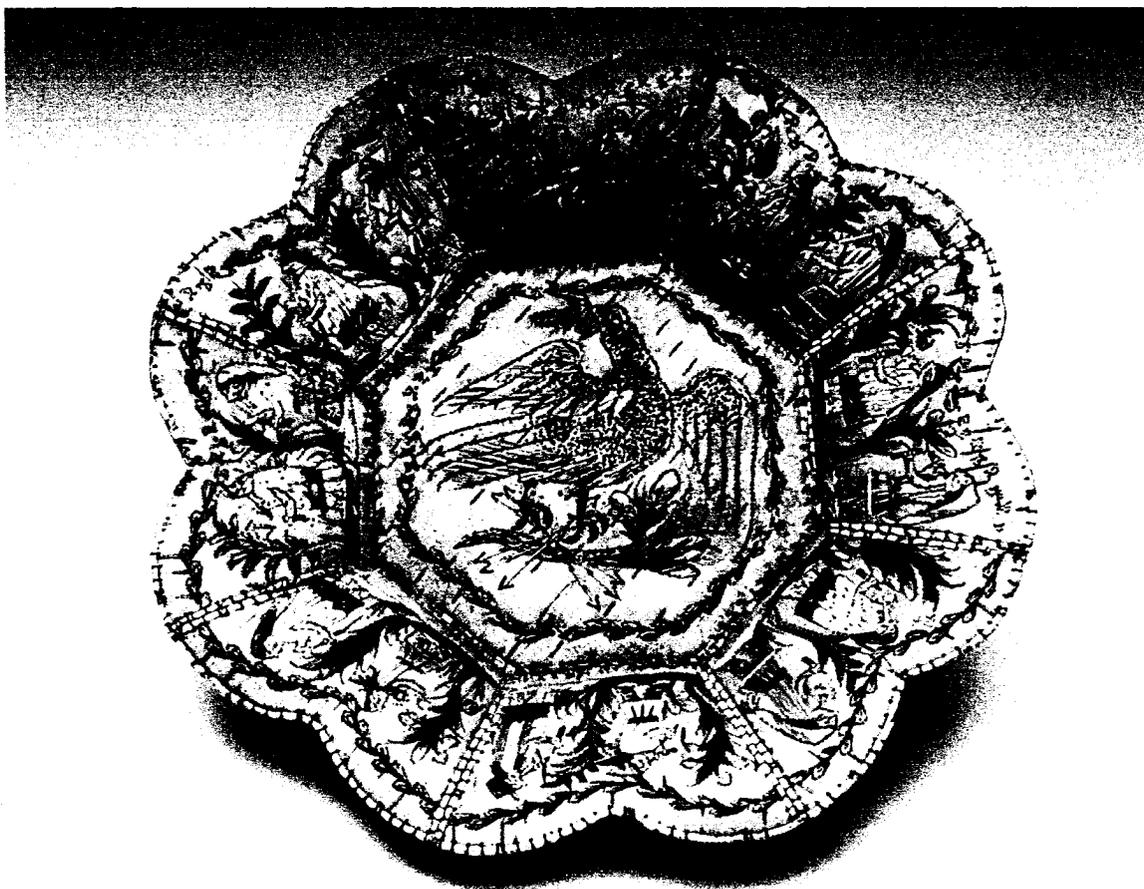


Figure 41: Moosehair-embroidered tray, Huron-Wendat, McCord Museum, Montreal, M16935. Chapter Four.

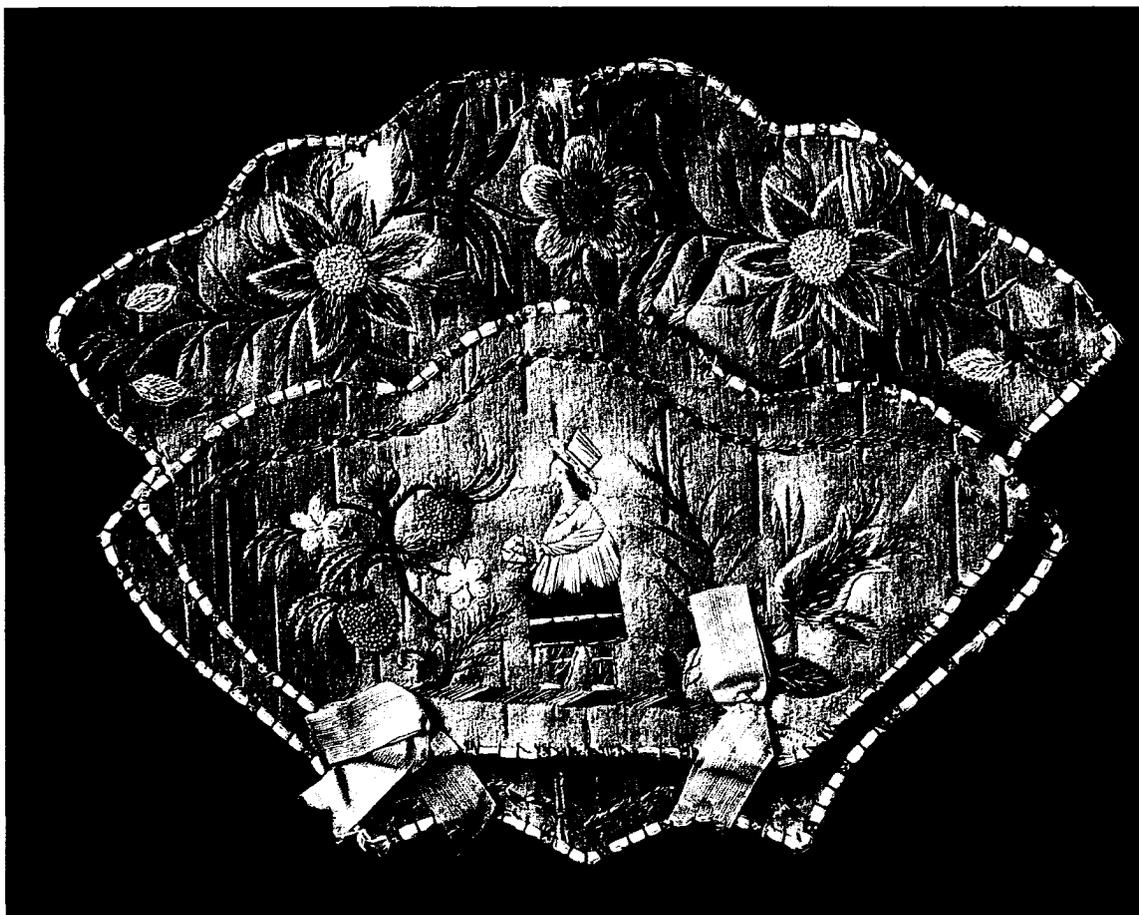


Figure 40: Moosehair-embroidered wall pocket, Huron-Wendat, Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin; rpt. in Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) Plate 36. Chapter Four.



Fig.41a. Tobacco plant with flowers. [www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/agecon/tobacco\\_econ](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/agecon/tobacco_econ)



Fig.41b. Tobacco farm. [www.wm.edu/niahd/journals/index.php](http://www.wm.edu/niahd/journals/index.php)



Figure 42: Moosehair-embroidered pincushion, Quebec convent work, late 18<sup>th</sup> Century, Museum für Völkerkunde, Frankfurt; rpt. in Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities* (McGill; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) 110. Chapter Four.



Figure 43: Moosehair-embroidered box, Huron-Wendat, The Brooklyn Museum; rpt. in Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) 139. Chapter Four.



Figure 44: Moosehair-embroidered reticule base, Quebec convent work, The Trustees of the National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh; rpt. in Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) 113. Chapter Four.



Figure 45: Moosehair-embroidered workbasket, Quebec convent work, Bedford Collection, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto; rpt. in Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) 115. Chapter Four.

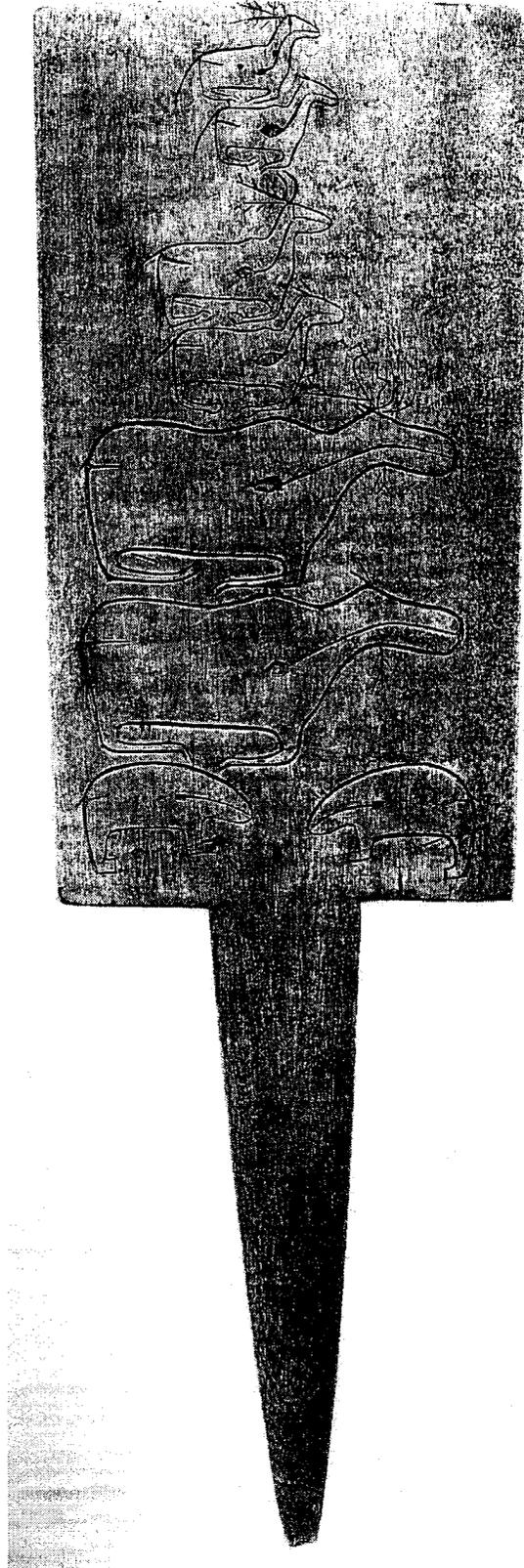


Figure 46: Ojibwa songboard, Museum of Mankind, London; rpt. in Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) 111. Chapter Four.