Towards a Decolonial Account of Desire: The Cultivation of Desire and Indigenous Women's Self-Making and Resistance in Early Modern French North America
by

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Dedication

For my mother,

For everything you've taught me,

For everything I know.

For time we spent and didn't get to spend together.

For birth and death that are both ineffable.

How have I survived in this world without you for these many years.

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engrossed me in materials and areas of inquiry that I otherwise would not even have known, and in turn propelled me to reflect on my role as a political theorist within interdisciplinary feminist studies. She is also always willing to think with me. To that, I'm grateful. She has offered encouragement and support when I needed it the most; reassured me so many times that I can do this and I belong in this (feminist political theory) field when I sunk into deep doubts and existential angst; read and edited every piece of my writing, often for multiple times. She has always pushed me to do better and be better, but also cautioned me to be humble and open-minded. Our tendency to work at ungodly hours also gives me a sense of solidarity as I feel validated for not being a morning person at all.

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Abstract

This dissertation takes up desire as the central analytic to examine the founding and consolidating of settler-colonial rule in Northeastern Turtle Island (Québec and the Great Lakes area, territory claimed by the French Empire as *Nouvelle-France*) as well as Indigenous women's self-making and resistance in that area. I explore how the cultivation of desire is simultaneously an intense site of political theorizing and colonial investment, as well as Indigenous women's self-making and resistance. Centering embodiment and embodied practices, I show how colonists and Indigenous women crafted different forms of attachment and desire, as well as their respective political efficacy in early modern settler-colonial politics. If the settler-colonial cultivation of desire hinges on disciplining Indigenous women's bodies and regulating their affect, how did Indigenous women react to, subvert, and resist such colonial interventions in and through their embodied practices?

I examine these processes and practices by weaving together close textual analyses and archival-historical research. Chapters are organized thematically. Chapter 1 introduces desire as a central inquiry of political philosophy and theory. I articulate the overall theoretical problematic and my methodology. Chapter 2 is a close reading of Jean Racine's *Iphigénie* to tease out what I call the "imperial fantasy of consent" manifested through the enslaved foreign woman's attachment to her colonizer. Chapter 3 examines the settler-colonial cultivation of desire through an analysis of settler-colonial educational practices aimed at managing Indigenous children's bodies and regulating their affect. In Chapters 4 and 5 I turn to Indigenous women's embodied practices as ways of cultivating decolonial desire. Chapter 4 examines Indigenous women's ascetic practices that I argue show a form of self-making and community-building. Chapter 5 examines Indigenous women's agricultural labor, i.e., labor in land as decolonial praxis. A concluding chapter reflects on the theoretical and

political efficacy of centering desire, attachment, and embodied relations to studies of subjectivity, power, and resistance, as well as to ongoing efforts in theorizing settler-colonialism as a distinct modality of power.

Throughout the dissertation, I work toward a decolonial account of desire, which has two different valences. First, I develop a decolonial reading of desire—that is, I dissect how imperial ideology took shape in early modern French literary and cultural productions, as well as colonial discourses, through the articulation of desire. Second, I develop an alternative account of desire as concrete attachments and relations cultivated through embodied practices. This study therefore contributes to feminist political theory, history of political thought, settler-colonial and Indigenous studies, as well as studies of early modern France and the French Empire.

Chapter 1. Introduction

To Speak of Desire, or, "the Most Fundamental Question of Political Philosophy"

Are we desiring beings? Why do we desire? Is desire natural? Or universal? Or, why do we desire what we desire? How do we come to desire what we desire? Are there "right" and "wrong" desires? To step back even further, what is desire? What is the *political* salience of desire?

Political philosophers have approached these broad inquiries by framing a very specific question: why do people desire their own subjugation?[1] We find the first rendition of this question in the work of French political philosopher Étienne de la Boétie. In *Le Discours de La Servittude Volontaire*, written in the 1570s, La Boétie raises the question, as provocative in his own time as in ours: why do people consent to their own enslavement and voluntarily subject themselves to rule by tyrants? Why do they desire their own subjection? La Boétie claims that the desire for freedom is natural, yet he also laments that people not only permit but also bring about their own subjection by consenting to be ruled. If freedom is the natural state for humans, then why do they desire and choose subjection, and consent to living in such a state that is contrary to their nature, especially when all the people need to do is simply to "not consent to its own servitude?"[2] According to La Boétie, this suggests that "it is therefore the people who let themselves, or rather, bring about their

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[1] Throughout this dissertation, I use "subjugation" "servitude" and "enslavement" interchangeably, to refer to the condition of being dominant and reduced in power in relation to the dominant/colonizer. I use "subjection" to refer to the process of becoming a subject; subjugation is one of the ways that subjection could take place.

[2] "que le pais ne consente à sa servitude." Étienne de la Boétie, *Le Discours de La Servitude Volontaire*, texte établi par P. Léonard. *La Boétie et la question du politique*, textes de Lamennais, P. Leroux, A. Vermorel, G. Landauer, S. Weil, et de Pierre Clastres et Claude Lefort (Paris: Payot, 1976[1577]).

being serfs or being freemen, desert their liberty and take on the yoke, who consent to their misery or rather welcome it."[3] For La Boétie, freedom and subjugation are simply given choices available to a people, and natural reason should enable them to choose freedom and refuse to consent to subjection. Deleuze and Guattari revived this inquiry in the twentieth century, even going so far as to declare it "the fundamental problem of political philosophy (*le problème fondamental de la philosophie politique*)."[4] As Deleuze and Guattari famously put in *Anti-Oedipus*, "the astonishing thing is not that some people steal or that others occasionally go out on strike, but rather that all those who are starving do not steal as a regular practice, and all those who are exploited are not continually out on strike: after centuries of exploitation, why do people still tolerate being humiliated and enslaved, to such a point, indeed, that they *actually want* humiliation and slavery not only for others but for themselves."[5] Deleuze also reads Spinoza, one of the most acclaimed philosophers of the seventeenth century, as being primarily concerned with the same questions. According to Deleuze, the principal questions that Spinoza seeks to answer in *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (*TTP*) are: "Why are the people so deeply irrational? Why are they proud of their own enslavement? Why do they fight 'for' their bondage as if it were their freedom?"[6] Miguel Abensour identifies Spinoza as a key figure in the history of philosophy who is concerned with the question of what he calls "voluntary servitude (*servitude volontaire*)."[7]

The fundamental problem Deleuze and Guattari–and many others–pose is: why are people attached to their own subjugation instead of their emancipation or freedom? Why do they not only

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[3] "C'est le people qui s'asservit, qui se coupe la gorge, qui aiant le chois ou d'estre serf ou d'estre libre quitte sa franchise et prend le joug: qui consent a son mal ou plustost le pourchasse." La Boétie, 111.
[4] Gilles Deleuze et Felix Guttari, *Capitalisme et schizophrénie, vo. 1, L'Anti- Œdipe* (Paris: Minuit, 1972), 36; *Anti-Oedipus*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. lane; preface by Michel Foucault (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 29.
[5] Deleuze and Guttari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 29, emphasis original.
[6] Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988), 9-10.
[7] Miguel Abensour, "Spinoza et l'épineuse question de la servitude volontaire," *Astérion: Philosophie, histoire des idées, pensée politique*, no.13 (2015), La démocratie à l'épreuve du conflit.

endure unfreedom but also actively desire their own subjugation? Many other political philosophers, including but not limited to G.W.F. Hegel, Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx, Michel Foucault, and Judith Butler, have similarly identified attachment to subordination as central to subject formation. Indeed, the question of voluntary servitude, in Abensour's words, "has never ceased to haunt modern political philosophy."[8] The political stakes of this question, we can easily see, are tremendous.

Deleuze and Guattari place desire–or its perversion–at the very center of this inquiry. Their primary task, in other words, is to explain why people *want* their own servitude, a task they revived from Spinoza. By framing the question in this manner, the assumption is that what constitutes "servitude" or "subjection" is transparent, *a priori*, objective, something that is self-evidently against one's liberty and flourishing—even though, of course, it is a subjective judgment made by the thinkers themselves. But such judgment is posited in a transcendental and objective manner. The underlying assumption is that these philosophers know exactly–or at least know better–what servitude (the wrong object to desire) and freedom (the right object) entail, and that not desiring the right object or

sets of principles, put bluntly, is a perversion, a failure, an objective problem that requires philosophical explanation and political response.[9]

On the other hand, Saba Mahmood, among others, has argued that liberal western feminism and feminists tacitly hold that "all human beings have an innate desire for freedom." Here freedom

[8] Miguel Abensour, "Is there a proper way to use the voluntary servitude hypothesis?" *Journal of Political Ideologies* 16, no.3 (October 2011), 329.
[9] Here indeed we see that while thinkers such as Spinoza, Deleuze and Guattari are often evoked as anti-humanist and/or post-humanist thinkers par excellence, their philosophical accounts belie humanist and normative commitments, the implications of which are worth noting.

is understood on individual terms, as an individual resisting power and subverting norms. Mahmood calls into question both this particular understanding of freedom and agency and the assumption that desire for freedom as universal and innate. Mahmood calls on feminist scholars to better attend to embodied capacities and bodily acts, especially acts of piety, through which one "inhabits norms" to "cultivate various forms of desire," which enables us to "see and understand forms of being and action that are not necessarily encapsulated by the narrative of subversion and reinscription of norms."[10]

So here we have two very different accounts of the relation between desire and subjectivity, and they directly contrast each other. One suggests that we are attached to our subjugation. The other suggests that we have an innate desire for freedom. Mahmood, of course, is not claiming that we have, or ought to have, such an innate desire for freedom. Rather, she is critical of the universality of such an assumption. My point is that Mahmood sees this assumption as prevalent among other scholars, especially feminists' work. This assumption is indeed prevalent in many popular discourses and in our everyday conversations to the extent that it does not even need to be pronounced. It is assumed everyone has an innate or natural desire for freedom. And this assumption also often rests on gendered, racializing, and civilizational logics: certain people are more "civilized" and "advanced" because they have such desire naturally, and in order to become "civilized," others ought to come to desire freedom as well. As Mahmood, among others, has noted, this logic is also profoundly gendered: women, especially those who are racialized, non-normative,

[10] Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*: *The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 15, 9.

and non-Western (all of which converge) are often ridiculed for not having such natural desire, for being *unnatural* and primitive. And relatedly, when women express desire that coincides with or confirms the normative assumption of desiring freedom, they are celebrated as finally being civilized and modern. The desire for freedom, understood in an individualistic manner, in this sense, is the hallmark of civilization, and a normative goal.

In fact, by positing the question "why do we desire our subjugation as if it's our freedom," thinkers from La Boétie to Spinoza and Deleuze and Guattari have already posed the desire for freedom as a normative goal, which is why not desiring this normative goal can only be caused by mystification, deception, or ignorance. It is assumed that there is a natural and universal desire for freedom, and that the absence of such a desire has only to do with being deceived or unable to see one's situation clearly. La Boétie states clearly in his discourse, that we are all naturally free and naturally desire freedom.

So do we naturally desire subjugation and servitude, or freedom and resistance? Do we desire freedom too much or not enough? Moreover, what does freedom and desiring freedom entail? What does it *mean t*o desire freedom or subjugation? Are these simply choices clearly laid "out there," in the world, for people to choose from freely? For anyone concerned with the question of subjectivity and subjection vis-à-vis power, these questions are both fundamental and virtually impossible to answer in a vacuum. I contend that instead of treating the question "why do people desire their own subjugation" as descriptive of political reality–people do desire their own subjugation–and subjectivity, we ought to understand the question itself as a discursive formation and explore the stakes of formulating the question in this manner, specifically in the context of early modern European imperialism and colonialism. Desiring one's own servitude is not only articulated in relation to consent philosophically, as we see in La Boétie. Such an association has also been established in imperial and colonial politics. As scholars have pointed out, seeking consent from

Indigenous peoples was something that distinguished the early modern French settler-colonial enterprise from that of the Spanish, English, Dutch, and Portuguese.[20] Consent to colonial conquest and rule is then taken as evidence of Indigenous peoples' attachments to their subjugation.

My own theoretical exploration of desire and its political consequences largely responds to this "fundamental question of political philosophy." But instead of responding to this question as it is, I examine the historical milieu and political context in which this query gained ascendency, namely the early modern period, specifically early modern European colonialism and imperialism. I show that this rhetorical question that was initially raised to criticize people's attachment to their own subjugation would, quite perversely, be reframed as a political goal. Desiring–being attached to–one's own subjugation would be rearticulated as a political ideal in early modern European cultural productions and political discourses. *How* to make people attached to their own subjugation would instead become the question. *How* to make the non-European other desire their own subjugation through colonial conquest and domination, such that the latter would be erased and appear as natural, would become central to articulation(s) of imperial ideology and concrete colonial practices. Instead of blaming people for being attached to their own subjugation, I contend that we must examine the process through which such attachment–desire–is cultivated. I bring into focus the fact that early modern thinkers and colonial agents, in parallel ways, recognized that desire could be cultivated such that people become attached to their own enslavement. Subjection through desire, in other words, was central to such articulation and practices, which I turn to examine in this dissertation. I reframe the question as several interlacing questions, namely: How is the desire for one's own subjugation articulated, what is the logic of its articulation, and how is it cultivated in actual colonial practices?

[20] Vanita Seth, *Europe's Indians: Producing Racial Difference, 1500-1900* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

I also problematize the idea that what entails desiring one's subjugation is transparent, that is, discernable from an objective point of view. In addition to those who puzzle over why people desire their servitude, others have made elaborate philosophical analyses of such attachment. Among them, Nietzsche's account is probably the most sustained and most influential. For Nietzsche, such a "desire to suffer" is a pathological and perverse attachment to one's own powerlessness and injury, making one purely reactionary and suffering from "ressentiment." Nietzsche's critique has been influential among contemporary political theorists, such as Wendy Brown, who directly draws from it to critique contemporary subjectivity. It seems easy enough to blame people for desiring their own suffering, being attached to it and thus reinscribing their injury. But I contend that we need to examine how such desire is cultivated as a means of colonial domination, and moreover, to look anew at the forms of desire that are easily taken to embody the "desire to suffer" or to be "wounded attachments." In colonial discourses, Indigenous peoples' desire and attachments that enkindle it are often taken to exemplify attachment to their own servitude and consent to the settler-colonial order. Yet it did not mean Indigenous peoples faithfully embodied such desire. Seeing through an explicitly feminist and decolonial lens, I show that these practices rather show vital and creative ways of self-making, community-budling, and world-making.[21] My overarching argument is thus that Indigenous peoples cultivated alternative forms of desire and ways of desiring that contested, displaced, and resisted such colonial attempts through their embodied and communal practices. Throughout this

[21] Although I do not elaborate in great detail here, as it is not the purpose of the chapter, I'm evoking "world-making" and "life-world" from a specific phenomenological perspective, especially to Maurice Merleau-Ponty. In short, the world is the source and condition of possibility of all meaning for "me," the subject, who is always already bound in an intersubjective field. Merleau-Ponty departs from earlier phenomenologists such as Edmund Husserl by underscoring that the world is embodied, that is, we experience the world through our bodies. According to Merleau-Ponty, "Insofar as, when I reflect on the essence of subjectivity, I find it bound up with that of the body and that of the world, this is because my existence as subjectivity is merely one with my existence as a body and with the existence of the world, and because the subject that I am, when taken concretely, is inseparable from this body and this world," *Phenomenology of Perception, trans. Donald A. Landes* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 408. World-making, in this sense, is to sustain and recreate the horizon that grounds my embodied existence, orients me and generates meaning for me.

dissertation, I use "desire" in the singular to underscore the fundamental role it plays in relation to subject formation. In this sense, desire can only be singular. Attachment, on the other hand, can take many shapes and forms, all of which give rise to desire as such. I examine how particular attachments are narrated and cultivated through embodied practices in detail.

Desire, Subjection, and Subjectivation

By examining how concrete attachments and desire are cultivated and formed through embodied practices, I contribute to ongoing efforts to theorize subject formation–as subjection–in concrete social and political relations. Sam Chambers has pointed out that philosophical inquiry of subjection often precisely elides what he refers to as "social formation" and problematically reduces subjection into a dyadic self-other movement and locate the key to subjection in the psychic interiority.[22] Differing from this mode of pure philosophical inquiry, recently, many political and critical theorists have foregrounded the significance of desire and attachment to subjectivity and identity. They have developed critical analyses that take account of particular social formations, in one way or another. Wendy Brown has argued that contemporary liberal identity politics is characterized by "wounded attachments": historically oppressed groups not only make political claims to the state by reiterating their injury but are *attached* to their injury to the extent that their political identity is defined by such injury.[23] Relatedly, Lauren Berlant places desire at the center of this mode of politics, which she argues is characterized by "cruel optimism." Berlant writes, "a relation of cruel optimism exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing."[24] Psychoanalytic feminists have also long probed how one comes to be attached to—to

[22] Sam Chambers, "Subjectivation, the Social and a (Missing) Account of the Social Formation: Judith Butler's 'Turn,'" in *Butler and Ethics*, eds. Moya Llyod, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 193-218.
[23] Wendy Brown, "Wounded Attachments," *Political Theory* 21, no.3 (August 1993).
[24] Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 1.

desire—one's own subjugation, and how such attachment is produced through gendered socialization.[25]

Others have drawn our attention to how settler colonialism gives rise to particular attachments and desires that shape the subjectivity of both the colonized and the colonizer. Aileen Moreton-Robinson argues that the desire to (dis)possess Indigenous lands and peoples fundamentally characterizes settler colonialism.[26] Similarly, T.J. Tallie argues that there was a "genocidal, acquisitive desire inherent within the efforts to remove and replace indigenous peoples" in the nineteenth-century British settler-colony Natal, now part of South Africa.[27] Such psychic, material, and discursive investment in dispossession and genocide not only underwrote official colonial policies but also constituted the very subjectivity of white settlers. Hagar Kotef observes that the attachment to one's own violence, in the context of the ongoing Israeli occupation of Palestine, conditions "the settler's ways of being, her very presence, her very political identity."[28] Such "violent attachments" both enable the settler community to cohere, and at once naturalize and erase ongoing violence against Palestinians.[29]

Glen Coulthard, on the other hand, looks at how settler colonialism shapes the desire and subjectivity of the colonized. He argues that "the maintenance of settler-state hegemony requires…the production of the specific modes of colonial thought, desire, behavior that implicitly or explicitly commit the colonized to the types of practices and subject positions that are required

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[25] Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, ed., *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the école freudienne* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1985); Jessica Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988); Amber Musser, *Sensational Flesh: Race, Power, and Masochism* (New York: NYU Press, 2014).
[26] Aileen Moreton-Robinson*, The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).
[27] T.J. Tallie, *Queering Colonial Natal: Indigeneity and the Violence of Belonging in Southern Africa* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019), 7.
[28] Hagar Kotef, *The Colonizing Self: Or, Home and Homelessness in Israel/Palestine* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 49.
[29] Kotef, *The Colonizing Self.*

for their continued domination."[30] In other words, settler colonialism, as a particular mode of colonial relation, not only maintains domination but also attempts to generate consent by fundamentally shaping Indigenous peoples' desire and subjectivity. Yet Coulthard, along with Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, also argues that under ongoing settler occupation, Indigenous peoples in contemporary settler states nonetheless engage in practices that reflect what they call "grounded normativity," which offers a powerful alternative ethical and political framework conducive to Indigenous resurgence.[31] Similarly, many others have looked at how Indigenous and colonized peoples both engaged with indigenous traditions and forms of knowledge, and manipulated colonial intervention, to cultivate alternative forms of desire and attachments that disrupted the mandates of settler colonialism.

Once we examine subjection contextually and concretely, what appears as subjugation–or rather *attachment* to one's own subjugation—can also be seen as a process of self-making. I would suggest that it *should be* seen primarily as self-making. In other words, we would shift our attention from the enslaving or limiting effects of power to the more dynamic ways in which power is enacted and lived. Once we do that, we also see how making the colonized desire their own enslavement is foremost a colonial fantasy, and we can attend to how Indigenous peoples cultivated alternative attachments through their embodied practices.

Throughout this dissertation, I look at the female body and embodied desire as privileged objects instrumental to the articulation of imperial ideology, and embodied practices and bodily acts as privileged sites of settler-colonial intervention and Indigenous self-making and resistance. This presumes that for power to take hold, it needs to be embodied repetitively. Bodily acts are thus

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[30] Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 16.
[31] Glen Coulthard and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Grounded Normativity/Placed-Based Solidarity," *American Quarterly* 69, no.2 (2016), 249-255; Coulthard, *Red Skin*, 13. See also Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2021).

crucial to the cultivation of desire and subject formation. Yet, these very embodied practices and bodily acts also disrupt, displace, and resist subjugation, even though on the surface they may appear to uphold oppressive power and authority and demonstrate one's attachment to one's subjugation. I want to emphasize the centrality of embodiment in my exploration of the relation between desire and subjectivity. Attending to the meaning of these practices and the ways in which these practices shape desire and subjectivity in the context I examine here also has broader implications. In doing so, this dissertation contributes to ongoing efforts in political theory to complicate the common narrative about the emergence of the modern subject and subjectivity, and thus compels us to rethink modern subjectivity and modernity in significant ways.

Enclosure, Psychic Interiority, and the Invention of the Modern Subject

Throughout the dissertation, by combining textual and historical-archival analyses, I examine how desire is narrated, cultivated, and takes shape. In doing so I aim to *de-universalize* subject formation by illuminating how it takes place in and through particular modes of embodiment and desiring, through particular bodily acts and attachments. The modern subject is often evoked as autonomous, that is, devoid of concrete attachments or rather in need of overcoming them. It possesses an interiority, and is posited as universal but tacitly gendered as masculine. In contrast, the kind of subject formation through desire I theorize here is very different. This common account of the modern subject, which is often said to be an invention of modern political thought, does not *describe* what the modern subject is. It is a particular—and hegemonic—way of *positing* it at the expense of other forms of modern selves and subjectivities. More specifically, it is articulated *against* concrete attachments and other possible ways of conceiving subject formation and subjectivity. I aim to recuperate a relational account of subject formation by accentuating the central role of desire

and embodied practices in (European) early modernity, a period often associated with the emergence of the modern subject at the expense of relationality.

Scholars have meticulously shown how drastic changes in the French—and by extension, European—cultural, religious, social, political life and philosophical landscape enabled the modern subject and subjectivity to take shape. Religiously, the Counter-Reformation (or Catholic Reform) enkindled a new kind of religious subjectivity that privileged inner belief and personal relation to the divine. Spiritual experiences became enclosed within the interiority of each individual believer.[32] A series of penitential and meditative techniques focused on the examination of conscience, such as general confession and spiritual exercises, were developed for one to know and discover one's true self.[33] Historian Moshe Sluhovsky aptly describes this transformation as one of "self-conversion"—of becoming a new self, new in the sense that it is founded on a newly formed sense of individual interiority. This process of subjectivation fostered the very notion of individual interiority, to the extent each believer became an individual, autonomous entity. Introspection and meditation—"interior mental and affective processing"—became instrumental to the "cultivation of a Christian self."[34] Not surprisingly, this period also saw the flourishing of mysticism, especially among religious women–*les devotées*.[35] Piety increasingly came to denote personal and direct relation to the divine. The interior self that assumed shape through practices of piety would coincide with the individual body.

Relatedly, not only piety but passions and emotions, in general, were increasingly becoming enclosed within the individual and coded in individualistic terms. The main architect of this general shift is no doubt: Réne Descartes. Descartes places passions and emotions squarely within the

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[32] Moshe Sluhovsky, *Becoming a New Self: Practices of Belief in Early Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).
[33] Sluhovsky, *Becoming a New Self*, 1.
[34] Sluhovsky, *Becoming a New Self*, 11.
[35] Michel de Certeau, *La Fable Mystique, vol. 1, XVIe-XVIIe Siècle* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1982).

individual person, as body and soul.[36] Specifically, passions *are* emotions in the soul, caused by the movements of what he refers to as "animal spirits."[37] For him, these passions are to be explained in purely physiological terms, as animated responses to external stimuli. According to Descartes,

> "The use of all the passions consists in this alone: they dispose the soul to will (vouloir) the things nature tells us are useful and to persist in this volition (volonté), just as the same agitation of spirits that usually causes them disposes the body to the movements conducive to the execution of those things. This is why, in order to enumerate them, one needs only to investigate, in order, in how many different ways that are important to our senses can be moved by their objects."[38]

Passions and emotions, in other words, are nothing but organic and mechanistic responses to external stimuli. These stimuli produce effects on our senses, which for Descartes are located within the self. These effects, which can be "violent," are to be controlled by reason. Descartes' mechanistic and naturalistic–instead of moral–explanation of passions and emotions, in other words, relies on the sharp distinction he draws between passions and reason, and more importantly, on his conception of the mastery of reason over passions. As Charles Taylor contends, "The new definition of the mastery of reason brings about an internalization of moral sources. When the hegemony of reason comes to be understood as rational control, the power to objectify body, world, and passions, then the sources of moral strength can no longer be seen as outside of us."[39] Such internalization of sources, we see, renders the individual, as the unity of body and soul, as a bounded space and entity with an interiority. Internalization, perhaps paradoxically, creates the very concept of interiority.

The consequence is that emotions and passions come to be located within the individual self and thus privatized, whereas reason, which is disinterested, detached, and universal, is rendered properly public. This, as Rebecca Kingston points out, led to the demise of "public emotion" in

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[36] Réne Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, trans. Stephen Voss (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1989[1649]).
[37] Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul,* 36-40.
[38] Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul,* article 52.
[39] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 152.

European intellectual history and political life. Kingston defines "public emotion" as "one that is largely shared by members of a political community with regard to matters of importance to the whole community and on which often hinge questions of their collective identity."[40] With the ascendency and eventual dominance of Cartesianism, emotions lost their public and political relevance as the threads that connect and are shared by members of a community. They became "more and more regarded as mere reflections of individualized states of affairs."[41] They are outward expressions of what the interior, private self experiences and possesses. Bodily, psychic, and emotive boundaries coincide in crafting an individual self: a bounded, autonomous entity that is separated from other autonomous entities. Moreover, this entity is figured as private – outside of and devoid of any social and political influences.

This "inside-outside" opposition, according to Charles Taylor, is the most salient feature of the modern 'western' self. This understanding of 'ourselves' as "creatures with inner depths; with partly unexplored and dark interiors" is "in large part a feature of 'our' world, the world of modern, Western people."[42] Taylor contends that

> "The localization is not a universal one…Rather it is a function of a historically limited mode of self-interpretation, one which has become dominant in the modern West and which may indeed spread thence to other parts of the globe, but which had a beginning in time and space and may have an end."[43]

This particular understanding of the self as being defined by an interiority, in short, is a contingent, historical production of the modern 'West.'[44] The self, in turn, becomes the very

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[40] Rebecca Kingston, *Public Passion: Rethinking the Grounds for Political Justice* (Montréal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011), 93.
[41] Kingston. 94.
[42] Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 111
[43] Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 111.
[44] While Charles Taylor uses "the West" as a stable referent that denotes a particular civilization, I understand it as a relational and unstable signifier that is constantly produced against its Other, which is shifting. I find the "we" Taylor oftentimes evokes problematic both philosophically and politically. To me, what is labeled as "Western" always shifts in relation to the Other that it is posed against. It also problematically glides over that the development of "Western" political thought and civilization is deeply indebted to and intertwined with other traditions, especially Arabic (and Islamic) political thought, and philosophy. As we know, for centuries, it was Arab intellectuals who had complete access

basis of the modern subject. Politically and juridically, the subject is also autonomous, bounded, and self-possessing, to the extent that, to use Taylor's words again, "we naturally come to think that we have selves the way we have heads or arms, and inner depths the way we have hearts or lives, as a matter of hard, interpretation-free fact."[45]

While this seems to be *the* account of the self and the subject that comes to mind when we think about what a self is, I maintain that this hegemonic articulation is posited against alternative forms of subject formation and subjectivities, which are increasingly marginalized and expelled. Communal and social attachments and relations became *disarticulated* such that the autonomous, bounded subject, possessing a psychic interiority, could emerge. Attachment—either to parents, the sovereign/King, or one's community—came to be regarded as a hindrance that ought to be overcome. Overcoming it is often theorized as a normative goal. This is most obvious in the social contract theory that first took shape in this period and would become a fundamental premise of liberal political thought. The most influential political philosophers of the modern period iterate in different ways that to be free is to be self-possessive and independent of any social relation. Isolated and solitary, the individual only enters the social compact later.[46]

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to the manuscripts of Plato and Aristotle, figures that are typically placed at the origin of "Western" political thought and civilization. Europeans until the Renaissance only had very limited access to these materials. Arab philosophers and intellectuals claimed these figures as their intellectual predecessors and produced voluminous work through critical engagements with them. See Murad Idris, "Political Theory and the Politics of Comparison," *Political Theory* (2016), 1-20. https://doi.org/10.1177/0090591716659812 Scholars are also increasingly moving to deconstruct the binary between the "West" and the "East" by showing that the ancient and medieval Mediterranean was a place that ideas traveled across among the Greeks, Arabs, Turks, Byzantines, Romans (Roman subjects), Italians so on, who operated within and developed a common episteme. Others have examined the medieval and early modern Iberian Peninsula in the same manner. Subsequent constructions of "Western" civilization and political thought are thus always contingent and shifting. I thus insist on putting air quotes whenever I use the term.

[45] Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 112.

[46] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, edited and intro and notes by J.C.A. Gaskin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)*;* John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du Contrat Social* (Paris: Gallimard, 2011). See C.B MacPhearson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).While Rousseau's political thought has a decidedly republican component to it, ontologically he subscribes to the individual as the basic unit of the social contract. See Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).

Yet although these attachments were attacked and disavowed, they did not disappear. My overall project invites us to bring desire and desiring relations back to the theorization of subjectivity and subject formation. In political discourses, freedom and rights—especially religious freedom, which was the biggest divisive force in many European polities at the time—would increasingly be articulated in individualistic terms, as the common narrative history of modern political thought tells us.[47] Individuality and individual rights are often referred to as *the* pillars of modern European political thought. Yet rather than a *description* of an empirical state of affairs, it is an ideological construction that disavows that the very freedom of say, being a Huguenot, depends on the survival and flourishing of the Huguenot *community* (whether it is conceived in familial or state terms), and more fundamentally, is shaped by attachment to the community.[48]

Such disavowal is also reflected very concretely in political acts such as attempts to exert colonial domination and violence such that the colonizer emerges as authorial, sovereign, and invulnerable. This is to say, the very desire to craft an individualistic form of selfhood against communal attachments is actualized through colonial domination of the *Other*. The very binary between self and *Other* is not made beforehand but articulated through such violent self-making. Colonization, I suggest, was *a means to,* rather than incidental to, the self-making of the modern European/western subject at the expense of disavowing attachments. This leads one to deny one's fundamental dependence on them, both in terms of the colonists' and settlers' dependence on the metropole/imperial community and on Indigenous peoples for basic survival. The colonists' material existence and their very sense of the self, in other words, depended on these attachments—desires—which were also disavowed. Desire, in other words, assumes special political salience in

[47] See, for example, Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, *vol. 1 & 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).
[48] Indeed, analyses (such as Skinner's) of French resistance theory penned by Huguenot thinkers in the early modern period often picture their claims in terms of struggling for individual rights. But it could also be argued that many of them recognize the survival of the Huguenot community within France as the precondition of them being Huguenot.

settler-colonial contexts. This I will explore through a particular settler-colonial context, namely, early modern *Nouvelle–France*.

Against the particular yet common or hegemonic understanding of the individual subject, my theoretical investigation of subject formation places attachment at the very center. I explore how attachment and its cultivation are central to theoretical (ideological) articulations and concrete practices of subject formation, for both imperialists and settlers, as well as Indigenous peoples, albeit in dramatically different ways. Anna Rosensweig has pointed out that in early modern France, there are other thinkers who either explicitly articulate or implicitly give an account of subjectivity as cultivated in and through affective, communal attachments. She finds such expressions not in political treatises but in early modern French tragedies. Rosensweig's readings of the various neoclassical tragedies show that positing the subject in individualistic terms disavows and actively disarticulates relations and desires such as familial ties, romantic desires, and religious affiliations.[49] By recovering depictions of these relations that affect and move people—what she calls "affective evidence"—she restores attachment as central to subject formation.

Building on Rosensweig's literary analysis, I contend that taking desire and concrete attachments into account enables us to get a better and fuller picture of subject formation and subjectivity, in the context of empire and colonialism. Indigenous embodied practices, informed by and situated in Indigenous ways of being and knowing, can aid us tremendously in rethinking subject formation in relation to desire. Doing so also offers us rich resources for an effective political critique of the attempt to exerting oneself as sovereign and autonomous by disavowing social and communal relations as well as exerting domination over others. It enables us to rethink our collective life in the hope of overcoming our contemporary political impasses, as we are confronted

[49] Rosensweig, *Subjects of Affection*, 19.

by the legacies of historical injustice and ongoing (settler)-colonial, racial, and gendered oppression. For Indigenous peoples and other oppressed groups, it enables them—or us—to build community and enact anti-colonial resistance. For the dominant, the colonizers, the settlers, it compels them to reflect on whether their sense of self is constituted through establishing domination over others and oppressing others while disavowing these relations. It also compels them to think of ways in which their sense of the self would no longer rest on relations of domination and violence, as well as the erasure of such violence and disavowal of one's own dependency.

To this end, I explore two main areas that most vividly reveal the political salience of desire: early modern French neoclassical tragedy, and early modern French settler-colonialism in in northeast Turtle Island, territory claimed by the French as *Nouvelle-France*. In doing so, I aim to connect two realms of scholarly inquiries that rarely converse with each other, but should: namely, philosophical and cultural reflections on modern subjectivity—as well as other related central political theoretical concepts such as sovereignty and consent–in early modern Europe, on the one hand, and European imperialism and (settler)-colonialism on the other. Studies of modern subjectivities (in the plural) and narratives cannot be confined to domestic Europe; nor is it accurate to portray (a hegemonic form of) modern subjectivity and sovereignty as already formed in Europe and transported elsewhere, especially to European settlers in the 'New World.' Rather, such inquiry must be situated within the very context of early modern European imperialism and colonialism. In the following sections I elaborate on my methodology—how and why I approach the body of texts I have selected.

Empire *as* Political Theory: Beyond Contextualism

This project is deeply indebted to the contextualist approach to political theory but also aims to go beyond it in many ways. Contextualist political theorists are deeply committed to showing and

have indeed shown the theoretical efficacy of taking history, and the historicity of political ideas, seriously. Quentin Skinner, for instance, traces the emergence and consolidation of a dominant political ideology from many competing political-theoretical accounts,[50] while showing how canonical texts are written as political interventions aimed to advance the authors' theoretical positions. As Skinner puts it, "even the most abstract works of political theory are never above the battle; they are always part of the battle itself."[51] Operating with this governing assumption, Skinner and other contextualists investigate the development of modern political thought by attending to and restoring the discursive field from which specific political ideas come into being and gain dominance.

However, as Martine van Ittersum points out,

> "the most serious methodological shortcoming of the Cambridge School is the mistaken assumption that the historical context of any given political treatise must be yet *another text*. In most cases, the benchmark texts that the Cambridge School uses to contextualize the 'Great Books' are themselves more or less abstract reflections on the origins of political power or the constitutional arrangements of a particular town or country."[52]

Van Ittersum thus argues that this intertextual approach does not pay enough attention to the historical events and contexts that gave rise to these texts, and fails to acknowledge that these theorists were often active political agents hoping to influence politics through their writing and political actions. The exclusive focus on the linguistic and intellectual context also disregards the material conditions, as well as direct material interests, that shape political vocabulary and ideology. As Van Ittersum puts it, oftentimes early modern theorists "reacted to very specific historical developments–whether political, socioeconomic or religious in nature–that affected their

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[50] Quentin Skinner, *Foundations of Modern Political Thought*.
[51] Quentin Skinner, *Hobbes and Republican Liberty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
[52] Martine van Ittersum, *Profit and Principle: Hugo Grotius, Natural Rights Theories and the Rise of Dutch Power in the East Indies, 1595-1615* (Boston: Brill, 2006), xliii.

communities in their own lives and times. More importantly, they took up the pen in the expectation of *changing* the course of events."[53]

The kind of contextualizing work many contextualist political theorists do, as a result, falls short in analyzing the relation *between* politics and political theory, although they often state that as precisely the goal of their analysis. And perhaps not coincidentally, we see that empire and colonialism are distinctly absent, even though the age he examines saw the rapid growth and spread of European imperial and colonial activities. Skinner is also not interested in examining how this "dominant ideology" or common political language he identifies is deeply entangled with European imperialism and colonialism. For instance, Skinner dedicates quite some space to trace what he calls "the revival of Thomism" in the sixteenth century, during which many European powers, especially Spain and Portugal, were actively colonizing and struggling to justify colonial conquest, occupation, and the enslavement of Indigenous peoples and Africans. Skinner even goes into detail about Francisco de Vitoria's series of lectures *De Indis,* in which he discusses in great detail the legal and political foundation and implications of Spanish claim in the Americas.[54] Yet Skinner's reading is exclusively framed around intra-European political and religious conflict. He frames the intellectual context as one in which the Thomists (primarily the Dominicans and the Jesuits) were against the Humanists and the Catholics against the Protestants, and fails to even consider that the imperial context propelled such political-theological reflections and greatly shaped how they took place.[55]

Skinner's practice of separating the state from empire is common rather than anomalous in studies of the history of political thought. As David Armitage notes,

> "The history of political thought has more often treated the history of ideas of the state than it has the concept of empire, at least as that term has been vulgarly understood. Political thought is, by definition, the history of the *polis*, the self-contained, firmly

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[53] van Ittersum, *Profit and Principle,* xliii, emphasis original.
[54] Skinner, *Foundations* vol.2, 148-170.
[55] Vitoria's lectures on the Indies would later be scrutinized by Anthony Pagadan in his seminal work, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

> bounded, sovereign and integrated community that preceded and sometimes shadowed the history of empire and that paralleled and ultimately overtook that history during the age of the great nation-states."[56]

In recent years, thankfully, many scholars of the history of political thought–many of whom are either directly taught by Skinner or are profoundly influenced by his methodology–have furthered our understanding of the relationship between empire and colonialism and the development of key concepts and frameworks in modern political thought. Yet Van Ittersum's criticism also holds true for political theorists who are more explicitly concerned with empire *and* political theory. Their focus is usually on influential political thinkers such as Hugo Grotius, John Locke, Immanuel Kant, and John Stuart Mill.[57] In many projects dedicated to reconstructing the intellectual or biographical context of a given thinker, the focus often becomes showing whether a thinker is pro- or anti-colonial–whether he (it is indeed always a he) or liberalism as a whole–should be 'redeemed' or 'condemned.' This also leads many to frame the relation between empire and liberalism as one of "contradiction," and their focus is turned to exploring how to *"fix"* liberalism rather than looking at how fundamental tenets of liberalism have enabled imperialism and colonialism.[58] As a result, while these scholars have helpfully centered and made empire and colonialism an integral part of the study of modern political thought, the move to contextualization in the study of the history of political thought does little to shift the focus from individual political theorists or abstract–'high'—political

[56] David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 4-5.
[57] Barbara Arneil, *John Locke and America: The Defence of English Colonialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought (*Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999*);* Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Laura Janara, "Brothers and Others: Tocqueville and Beaumont on U.S. Genealogy, Democracy and Racism," *Political Theory* 32, no.6 (December 2004), 773-800; Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); *Boundaries of the International: Law and Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018); Sunil M. Agnani, *Hating Empire Properly: The Two Indies and the Limits of Enlightenment Anticolonialism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013); Jeanne Morefield*, Empires Without Imperialism: Anglo American Decline and the Politics of Deflection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Duncan Bell, *Reordering the World: Essays on Liberalism and Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).
[58] To be fair, more and more scholars have contested the framing of this relation as one of "contradiction" and moved to contend that basic tenets of liberalism operated through structures of domination and practices such as settler colonization and slavery. To my observation, this shift is largely thanks to the contribution of Indigenous, decolonial, Black, and abolitionist scholars and activists.

theorizing. Nor does it adequately account for the relation between political theory *and* politics, or the material conditions and materiality of political ideas. Inquiries framed around "how empire relates to European political thought" risk being self-referential and oftentimes end up recentering the "Great Books" and their authors.

And more importantly, by only focusing on aspects of colonial politics that are not the concern of canonical political theorists, this approach also severely circumscribes what counts as "political" by disregarding actual colonial activities, and the texture and lived reality of colonial politics. As a result, this approach runs into serious limits in illuminating the relation between more abstract political theorizing and concrete political reality. To be fair, this is by no means the goal of these theorists, so pointing this out is not to fault them for 'failing' to fulfill their projects but simply to point out that my focus is different. This also has a lot to do with the academic division of labor (it is somewhat ironic to recall that Skinner was, from early on, set to disregard the academic division of labor by bringing history into the study of texts). I contend that colonial activities 'on the ground' and the lived reality of colonialism should be considered crucial sites of political theorizing. Without giving them substantial attention, our ability to come to terms with ongoing settler-occupation is thus gravely impaired. I am more interested in how political ideologies, religious mindsets, and cultural assumptions and norms gave rise to particular colonial strategies that affected the lived experiences of indigenous peoples. I am less interested in how any given political theorist in the period theorized empire and colonialism. Thus, I turn to analyzing the relation between settler colonial politics and political theory in the early modern period. This is to say, I approach empire *as* a history of political theorizing, which is not the same thing as a history of theories of empire. It is, rather, an attempt to analyze the emergence of the central operating logics of settler colonization through specific archives. I aim to provide an account of the central conceptual and governing logics of settler colonization, logics that we can still witness in contemporary settler states.

I contend that if we want to better understand settler-colonialism as a distinct modality of power underwritten by specific logics, techniques, and subjectifying forces, and get the texture and materiality of how Indigenous people's lived experiences were affected and shaped by settler colonialism since its inception in the early modern period, only examining thinkers such as Grotius and Locke is insufficient. This is why I interrogate the concrete ways in which colonial agents—missionaries, colonists, merchants, settlers, and monarchs—developed particular settler colonial strategies amid various and sometimes competing ideologies and norms available to them, and how these strategies affected and were dealt with by Indigenous peoples. I study settler-colonial politics *as* political theory: as a crucial locus through which political theory unfolded and continues to unfold.

The case of French settler-colonialism is particularly compelling for several reasons. For one thing, it is understudied in comparison to Anglo settler-colonialism, even though French settler colonial activities were just as crucial as their Anglo counterparts in shaping the geopolitics of North America from the early modern period onward. As we can see from Figure 1 and 2, at the height of its power, the French Empire in North America claimed territory extending from the Saint-Laurent River Valley all the way to Louisiana. Yet, the theoretical paradigm of settler-colonialism was developed in reference to Anglo settler colonies and settler-states such as the United States, Canada, New Zealand/Aotearoa, Australia, and South Africa. It is thus pressing to bring French settler-colonization, which shaped Indigenous peoples' experiences in distinct ways, into focus in political theory.

In addition, French settler-colonialism had its distinct logic and strategies that affected Indigenous peoples' experiences differently. In particular, seeking consent from Indigenous peoples is central to French imperial ideology and settler colonialism, which are distinct from those of the Spanish, English, Dutch, and Portuguese.[59] It is not enough to conquer and impose colonial rule; it

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[59] For an overview of the general differences, see Vanita Seth, *Europe's Indians*.

is important that Indigenous peoples should *desire* it. What is taken to be consent to colonial conquest and rule is then taken as the evidence of Indigenous peoples' attachments to their subjugation. I am interested in how consent is engendered and attachment to one's subjugation is cultivated in early modern French political thought and settler-colonial thinking. I trace how desire for one's own subjugation is central to the articulation of an imperialist gender ideology, and how the cultivation of such desire is likewise central to settler-colonial thinking and practices.

Neoclassical Drama, Theatre, and Subjectivity

I turn to Jean Racine's *Iphigénie*, because, as I will show, it vividly captures and *enacts* the imperial fantasy of consent that I argue is central to early modern French imperial ideology. Although Racine is recognized as one of the most accomplished seventeenth-century playwrights, he is seldom read as one that has much to say about empire. Nor have many political theorists paid much attention to his work. This is curious as the highly political nature of drama and theatre in early modern France has been well-documented.

In seventeenth-century France, neoclassical drama was the dominant and orthodox artistic genre. As such, many central political and theoretical concepts and ideologies are shaped and refracted through it. The space of the theater and the ideas that circulate through it also powerfully shape subjectivity. Michèle Longino has remarked that the theatre in seventeenth-century France "forged bonds of common culture."[60] The theatregoers' "shared experience as audience reinforced a sense of collective identity that was being articulated diplomatically, commercially, and militarily, as the state apparatus was consolidated around the figure of the absolutist monarch, Louis XIV."[61] Mitchell Greenberg similarly notes that, in early modern France, the theatre is a "mediating space blurring the boundaries between public and private, between seeming and being, between exterior

[60] Michèle Longino, *Orientalism in French Classical Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 2
[61] Longino, *Orientalism in French Classical Drama*, 2.

reality and inner psychic reality—thus both the appeal and the anxiety it generates in the more traditional political sphere."[62] As Greenberg contends, "not only does the theatre create objects for its subjects (the theatergoing public)[63] but it creates subjects for its object: Racinian tragedy, we can propose, constructs its own novel subjectivity, the new subject of classical tragedy."[64] For that reason, "seventeenth-century French theatre can be considered a place where the anxieties and desires of a society in transformation were continually being essayed and rehearsed."[65]

Moreover, the performative nature of drama sheds light on how political ideas and ideologies take shape and are sedimented through more mundane political practices. As Katherine Ibbett contends, "the neoclassical tragedy is a genre particularly well suited to the interrogation of political practice" as "the theater's engagement with problems of temporality and action allows for a way to address these [political] questions more flexibly and more fully than in the traditional political treatise."[66] Not surprisingly, in recent years many have done interesting feminist and queer rereadings of French neoclassical drama.[67]

While the deeply political nature of and the prominence of gender politics in Racine's work has garnered considerable critical attention in recent (mostly literary) scholarship, his work has seldom been examined through the lens of empire and imperialism, as a site of imperial knowledge-production. There are a few works that discuss representations of the *Other*, especially the Orient

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[62] Mitchel Greenberg, *Racine: From Ancient Myth to Tragic Modernity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 4.
[63] Which includes the King himself.
[64] Greenberg, *Racine*, 3.
[65] Greenberg, *Racine*, 5.
[66] Katherine Ibbett, *The Style of the State in French Theatre. 1630-1660: Neoclassicism and Government* (London: Ashgate, 2009), 24. On the heightened political nature of neoclassical drama, see also Hélène Bills, *Passing Judgment: The Politics and Poetics in French Tragedy from Hardy to Racine* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016).
[67] Stanton, *Dynamics*; Sylvanie Guyot, *Racine et le corps tragique* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2014); Chloé Hogg, *Absolutist Attachments: Emotion, Media, and Absolutism in Seventeenth-Century France* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2019); Anna Rosensweig, *Subjects of Affection;* Jennifer Eun-Jung Row, *Queer Velocities: Time, Sex, and Biopower on the Early Modern Stage* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2022).

and Orientals.[68] References to and articulations of imperial ideas and relations indeed permeate his work, in his portrayal of non-European/Greek/Roman peoples, their political orders, the relations between them and the Europeans/Greeks/Romans, and so on. Critical examinations of representations of the Orientals shed light on the formation of early modern French identity and the French nation as a bounded community, reflecting long-standing tension between the "civilized" and the "barbaric," "the West" and "the East," and more recently "the Christians" and "the Muslims" in the Mediterranean basin. As Marcus Keller notes, a concept of the French nation was shaped through inventions of "notions of France and the French" in the early modern period.[69] But we should remind ourselves that the process of inventing the French nation was deeply entangled with, or rather pursued through, French imperialism and colonialism. Hence, the imperial and colonial *politics* of neoclassical drama is only thrown into further relief when examined in light of concrete French colonial activities, especially in *Nouvelle-France*, the only colony imagined and designed to be another France, and the one most familiar to seventeenth-century French readers thanks to the dissemination of travel writings and official missionary reports such as the *Jesuit Relations* (which I will discuss shortly).[70] As Micah True suggests, "even in the absence of explicit references to France's overseas adventures, they may lurk in the background of the period's literature, and that reading prominent works alongside France's colonial record may help cast the reputedly insular French seventeenth century in a new and revealing light."[71]

[68] For instance, Michèle Longino, *Orientalism in French Classical Drama*, which has a chapter on Racine's *Bazajet* and *Mithridate*. See also Susan Mokhberi, *The Persian Mirror: Reflections of the Safavid Empire in Early Modern France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).
[69] Marcus Keller, *Figurations of France: Literary Nation-Building in Times of Crisis (1550-1650)* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2011), 3.
[70] See Brian Brazeau, *Writing a New France, 1604-1632. Empire and Early Modern French Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009; Sara E. Melzer*, Colonizer or Colonized: The Hidden Stories of Early Modern French Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).
[71] Micah True makes this argument through his of Pierre Corneille's *Le Cid*, one of the most successful and well-known French neoclassical drama. Corneille was Racine's senior and later his adversary. See "King and Colony in Pierre Corneille's *Le Cid*," *French Studies* 71, no.1 (2017), 1-14.

Indeed, even though there is no direct reference to contemporaneous French imperialism in Racine's work, read through an explicit decolonial lens, we can see empire and colonialism permeating Racine's work, especially in *Iphigénie*. Bringing decolonial and feminist lenses together, moreover, allows us to see that the gendered politics Racine gives rise to in *Iphigénie* is imperial, and that the imperial ideology he articulates is fundamentally gendered. In Racine's retelling and reenactment of this Greek myth, we see a gendered form of desire and desiring being articulated, one characterized by the foreign woman's desire to sacrifice herself for empire. In other words, through such narration, imperial conquest is both legitimized and erased.

Missionary Discourses, Convent Writings, and Colonial Archives

In addition to neoclassical drama, I read texts such as the *Jesuit Relations*, Marie Guyart's letters, and French travel writings *as* political theory texts that grant us much better access to colonial management, its effects on Indigenous peoples, and how Indigenous peoples' responses to colonial encroachment. These "first-hand" colonial reports, though imbued with colonial prejudice, still help to debunk the ways in which Indigenous peoples are signified and theorized in the history of political thought, which remain well-entrenched despite being subject to sustained critique. Just taking a cursory look at these archives, we see that instead of being nomadic and wandering in the woods, Indigenous peoples had clear understandings of space. Many were sedentary in the early seventeenth century, and those were not followed clear seasonal migration paths. Instead, of having no sense of government, authority, or leadership, Indigenous peoples had strong and meaningful governments that guided different aspects of their lives. In other words, through critical reading, these colonial records can be used to criticize and invalidate the ways in which Indigenous peoples "transit" in the history of political thought.

Moreover, reading these "first-hand" observations and reflections of Indigenous societies and peoples together with more abstract theoretical works allows me to interrogate the convoluted and multifaceted processes of translation(s) between abstract political ideologies and discourses, on the one hand, and the minute and meticulous strategies developed on the ground to manage bodies and embodied subjectivities, on the other.

I engage with an explicitly feminist and decolonial methodology in reading colonial archives. It has by now become a common decolonial practice to read colonial archives "against the grain" and "between the lines." My own understanding of this mode of reading and interpreting is informed by Saidiya Hartman's imperative "to tell an impossible story and to amplify the impossibility of its telling"[72] but also departs from it in significant ways. There is indeed a tension between the imperative to tell impossible stories, stories that are mired, done, and undone by colonial pens, and the empirical difficulty of telling them. This makes it more urgent than ever to attend to them, in the archives, against the archives, despite the archives. Hartman stresses that her intent is "not to *give voice* to the slave, but rather to imagine what cannot be verified, a realm of experience which is situated between two zones of death–social and corporeal death–and to reckon with the precarious lives which are visible only in the moment of their disappearance."[73] Yet I contend that recent works by Indigenous scholars who seek to decolonize methodologies have made it imperative to *give voice* to Indigenous peoples. This does not mean naively believing any form of unmediated authentic self or unadulterated experience can be retrieved as such. Rather, Indigenous scholars have shown that Indigenous people's agency and meaning-making capacity can be restored and amplified when placed within Indigenous cosmologies, ontologies, epistemologies, and ways of being-in-the-world and being-with-others.[74] The primary way that I engage with decolonial

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[72] Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *small axe* 26 (June 2008), 11.
[73] Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," 12, emphasis original.
[74] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 2012);

methodologies is by situating my interpretations and analysis within the framework of Indigenous ontologies–ways of being–and epistemologies–ways of knowing, and taking an Indigenous-centric view on history.

Without substantial engagement with Indigenous ways of being and knowing, practices, and thought, I contend, settler-colonial studies risks falling into a solipsistic endeavor exclusively focused on settlers (settler-colonial studies is, after all, not settler studies). Such failure especially risks depoliticizing Indigenous practices, affirming their relegation to the ambiguous category of "culture" or "tradition" in settler frameworks, which casts them as pre-political, although Indigenous peoples understand culture and tradition differently.[75] Indigenous scholars have also stressed the importance of historical analysis, which as Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Margaret Kovach, and Jodi Byrd argue, disrupts the universal designation of the world as "postcolonial,"[76] which both problematically names colonialism as "finished business"[77] and obscures the actual history of settler colonization to maintain its reproduction. I contend that historical analysis of settler colonization is pivotal not only because it counters the politics of oblivion. It also, more importantly, sheds light on the enduring logic of settler-colonial thinking and practices, while showing that settler colonization is a contingent and evolving–that is, not inevitable and by no means a finished–process. I thus commit myself to reconstructing Indigenous embodied practices in the early period of Indigenous-European interactions in Northeastern Turtle Island. I read them as political actions. In doing so I elaborate on their meaning and contribution to political theory and feminist theory. Bearing this commitment in

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Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021), 2nd Edition.

[75] Kovach explicitly makes the point that Indigenous cultures are highly political, and are integral to Indigenous research methodologies.

[76] Smith, 99; Kovach, 75-6; Jodi Byrd, *The Transit of Empire : Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

[77] Smith,99; Kovach, 76.

mind, in the following section I introduce my primary archival sources and offer more detailed explanations of how I approach them.

The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents are the most often used historical sources in studies of *Nouvelle-France*.[78] The *JR* is certainly extremely useful, and oftentimes provides the only, if not the most copious, textual evidence concerning the lives of Indigenous peoples in the seventeenth century.[79] These official reports were penned by individual missionaries working "in the field" in *Nouvelle-France*, compiled by the missionary superior annually as one annual report, and sent back to Europe. They were published and made available to the French reading public to raise funds for the mission. While scholars widely anticipate and acknowledge the missionaries' accounts of Indigenous peoples, cultures, and societies as "biased" and "distorted," they have come up with different ways to make sense of and use them. Some argue that these biases and distortions can be identified and corrected, and the purified information used as reliable historical, anthropological, and ethnographic evidence.[80] Others take these texts as not merely representations of the world but as participants in it. These texts were integral to colonial politics, and were meant to further the Jesuits' particular goals, which were deeply intertwined with colonization.[81] Some emphasize that the vision and writing of a New France ultimately helped consolidate an understanding of "Frenchness" back in the metropole.[82] Bronwen McShea takes an audience-centered approach, looking for ways in which the Jesuits sought to appeal to the metropolitan elite in France and Jesuit authorities in Europe. They projected a world that they were actively helping to actualize for metropolitan spectators. The

[78] Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed, *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents* (Cleveland: Burrows Bros., 1896-1901).
[79] The archive is of course enlarged if we include wampums and other material objects, oral history records, and so on.
[80] Takao Abe, *The Jesuit Mission to New France: A New Interpretation in the Light of the Earlier Jesuit Experience in Japan* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).
[81] Carole Blackburn, *Harvest of Souls: The Jesuit Missions and Colonialism in North America, 1632-1650* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000); Micah True, *Masters and Students: Jesuit Mission Ethnography in Seventeenth-Century New France* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015); Bronwen McShea, *Apostles of Empire: The Jesuits and New France* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019).
[82] Brian Brazeau, *Writing a New France*.

information they provided should be read with this in mind. We need to critically interrogate the very ways in which the Jesuits understood and made sense of the native world and alien peoples they found themselves among. In this sense, the epistemological is political. The Jesuits were also skillful rhetoricians (some, like Paul Le Jeune, were professors of rhetoric before they were ordained as Jesuit fathers) that constructed gender ideologies and norms through tactical textual production. In Mary Dunn's words, "Attending to the discursive dimensions of the *Relations* illuminates how representations of both the vicious Amerindian woman and her virtuous counterpart alike served the rhetorical purposes of the Jesuits who sought, through the publication and distribution of the *Relations*, to attract support for their missionary efforts in Canada."[83]

While the JR have been widely studied and consulted by historians, anthropologists, religious studies scholars and literary critics, to name a few, they have rarely gained attention from political theorists. While historians of political thought have studied early modern Jesuit political philosophy and theology, they have only looked at influential Jesuit philosophers such as Luis de Molina, Francisco Suarez, and Juan de Mariana,[84] and almost never pay attention to those who "worked on the ground," many of whom left voluminous bodies of writings. These texts are an integral part of early modern colonial thinking. I contend that it is precisely because of their "worldly" nature that these discourses are critical sources for political theorists, and for studies of empire and colonialism.

Another reason that these texts deserve a close theoretical analysis is because they both represent and reflect the deeply embodied nature of thinking and writing about politics, a condition that is often masked in "high"—or more abstract—political-theoretical texts, and disassociated from

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[83] Mary Dunn, "Neither One Thing nor the Other: Discursive Polyvalence and Representations of Amerindian Women in the Jesuit Relations," *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 3 (2016), 184.

[84] See for example, Harro Hopfl, *Jesuit Political Thought: The Society of Jesus and the State, c. 1540-1630* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); the edited volume *Jesuit Philosophy on the Eve of Modernity*, eds. Cristiano Casalini (Leiden: Brill, 2019). Juan de Mariana has especially interested some historians of political thought because he was a member of the *Monarchomaques* and is often read as an (early) advocate of tyrannicide. See Harald Ernst Braun, *Juan de Mariana and Early Modern Spanish Political Thought* (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2007). Quentin Skinner also discusses Mariana in *Foundations*.

masculinity. Many feminist critics have remarked that since the early modern period, masculinity has been premised on being freed from one's bodily being, whereas femininity has been depicted as close to or even synonymous with nature.[85] This has enabled men to conceive their relation to nature and women as one of mastery and exploitation. Activities such as thinking and writing become coded as exclusively masculine and thus disembodied. Yet for the early modern French Jesuits, embodiment was quite central to their thinking and writing and as a result hard to disavow. Confronted with a harsh natural environment that they were unaccustomed to and ongoing hostility from Indigenous nations made the missionaries highly conscious of their precarious existence as embodied. This in turn accentuated their awareness of the significance of embodiment in shaping habits, thoughts, and subjectivity. While all thinking and writing is embodied, in this particular context such a condition had to be reckoned with. The missionaries often describe their embodied condition as one of extreme precarity, depravity, confinement, and uncertainty. They were also constantly reminded of their mortality, as physical martyrdom was always on the horizon. Bringing in these texts as texts of political theory enables me to show the deep entanglements between thought and practice, and between spiritual indoctrination and material domination, while revealing masculinity as thoroughly embodied, and embodiment both as the condition of possibility of political thought and a locus of political theorizing.

In comparison to the *JR*, scholars have paid less attention to, and more importantly, made less use of, letters penned by *les femmes religieuses*. Marie Guyart and other Ursulines' letters, some of

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[85] Simone de Beauvoir's account in *The Second Sex* is probably the most well-known one and continues to be cited as a classic feminist text. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parshiey (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1989). Beauvoir famously depicts men as freed from their bodies and inhabit the realm of transcendence, which she condemns is denied to women, who are confined and constrained by their bodies and thus relegated to the realm of pure immanence. Feminist theorists and philosophers have critically engaged with Beauvoir's legacy. Many have reclaimed embodiment as a productive site of feminist theorizing and retheorized feminine/women's embodiment. Others have questioned the idea that masculinity is disembodied. Masculinity studies scholars have indeed demonstrated that masculinity is thoroughly disembodied and explored both of its constraints and possibilities. See for example, Steve Garlick, *The Nature of Masculinity: Critical Theory, New Materialisms, and Technologies of Embodiment (*Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016).

them circulated and published on their own and some included in the *JR*, are often studied as religious texts and texts of women's writing.[86] These "convent writings," to use Thomas Carr's term, being the largest body of women's writings from the period, give us rich details about early modern French womens' religious self-understanding, their spiritual journey, and their experience in the 'New World.' They women are even hailed as pioneer women writers and even (proto-) feminist icons. These studies reflect a renewed interest in (early) women's writings. Feminist scholars across disciplines have examined not only the content, but the genres, ways of circulation—and by extension, the publics such circulation produced—of these texts. In the early modern period, writing was an inherently gendered practice: women tended to write in particular genres—most often letters, and less often autobiographies, novels, and travelogues; their access to both education and literacy, as well as the materials required for writing, were very limited; letters were usually circulated privately and not meant to be seen by the public; works that were published were either published under pseudonyms or posthumously.[87] Letter-writing was an especially gendered and political practice that generated meaning and political possibilities. As Elizabeth Wingrove argues, epistolary form can be exploited to claim political standing and stage political contestation—it can allow those who otherwise would remain silent and illegitimate to "direct one's words to another and in so doing, to presume or perform power over their meaning and effects."[88]

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[86] Marie-Florine Bruneau, *Women Mystics Confronting the Modern World: Marie de l'Incarnation (1599-1672) and Madame Guyon (1648-1717)* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998); Natalie Zemon Davis, *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Lives* (Cambridge: Belknap Press: An Imprint of Harvard University Press, 1997); Caroline M. Woidat, "Captivity, Freedom, and the New World Convent: The Spiritual Autobiography of Marie de l'Incarnation Guyart," *Legacy* 25, no.1 (2008): 1-22; Patricia Smart, *Writing Herself into Being: Quebec Women's Autobiographical Writings from Marie de l'Incarnation to Nelly Arcan* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017); Thomas M. Carr, Jr., *A Touch of Fire: Marie-André Duplessis, the Hôtel-Dieu of Québec, and the Writing of New France* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020).

[87] Michèle Longino Farrell, *Performing Motherhood: The Sévigné Correspondence* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1991); Patricia Francis Cholakian, *Women and the Politics of Self-Representation in Seventeenth-Century France* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2000); Domna Stanton, *The Dynamics of Gender in Early Modern France;* Jean Dejean, *Tender Geographies*: *Women and the Origins of the Novel in France* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1993).

[88] Elizabeth Wingrove, "Sovereign Address," *Political Theory* 40, no.2 (2012), 140.

Although the context Wingrove examines—how an incarcerated subject makes political claims to the sovereign in the late *ancien régime*—is slightly different from what I examine in this project, her insight has strong resonance here as well, making it all the more imperative to examine the letters of *les femmes religieuses* seriously and subject them to political-theoretical analysis. The texts I examine here were mostly written within convent walls due to the law of cloister imposed by the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century. They are vital colonial discourses that have a lot to tell us about colonial relations, especially gendered dynamics. While we can acknowledge *les femmes religieuse*'s agency and power, doing so should not obscure the fact that they were colonial agents. Most of them sailed for Canada out of a strong apostolic ambition linked with the conversion of Indigenous peoples. Such ambition is often the source of agency and power, and why they were committed to writing, as it was through writing that they constructed their selfhood as religious women actively undertaking spiritual—which was at the same time political—labor. Writing was a primary means for them to stage themselves as political agents laboring on behalf of both Church and Empire. Their writings, as Thomas Carr contends, "embodied the rhetoric of colonization by which the settlers explicitly or implicitly justified France's enterprise in the New World."[89] Mary Dunn's extensive study of Marie Guyart's letters, especially those in which she makes observations about Indigenous peoples and cultures and discusses her interaction with Indigenous peoples, affirms this point.[90]

Convent writings and Jesuit discourses thus complement each other, for, as Patricia Smart observes, "while sharing in the missionary ardour and desire for sacrifice and martyrdom of their male counterparts, these women offer a different perspective on New France, one that is attentive to

[89] Thomas Carr, "Writing the Convent in New France: The Colonialist Rhetoric of Canadian Nuns," *Québec Studies* 47 (2009), 3-23.
[90] Mary Dunn, introduction to *From Mother to Son: Selected Letters from Marie de l'Incarnation to Claude Martin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

the concrete details of their daily routines, to their emotional reactions, and even to the most intimate nuances of the interior life."[91] These "convent writings" reveal distinct feminine voices. Reading them along with the official *JR* presents us a fuller picture of not only the empirical colonial reality but also of colonial ideological formation(s). Together, they form a coherent discourse of conversion and civilization in early modern French (settler) colonialism. They demonstrate how power and knowledge come together to (attempt to) pacify, domesticate, and engender the consent of Indigenous peoples–in other words, cultivate their desire for their own subjugation.

Chapter Outlines

Throughout this dissertation, I show that the cultivation of *relations of desire* is central to articulation(s) of imperialist ideology, imperial formation, and settler colonial founding and consolidation, as well as subject formation and subjectivity. I aim to develop a decolonial account of desire, which has two different valences. First, I develop a decolonial reading of desire: that is, I engage with desire as a central analytic to dissect how imperial ideology took shape in early modern French literary and cultural productions, as well as colonial discourses. Second, I develop an alternative account of desire that has decolonial potential, one that denotes concrete attachments and relations cultivated through embodied practices.

In each substantive chapter, I explore how desire assumes specific political meaning in early modern imperialism and a settler colony in different genres by different political agents. Through these explorations, I demonstrate that desire is coextensive with power and underscore the political salience of desire, especially in subject formation and the management of bodies and affects. In particular, I read how the metaphysical pursuit of identity and origin of a "savage"-colonized woman is intertwined with and articulated through her attachment to her conquer-colonizer in Racine's theatrical production; I examine how colonial missionaries sought to cultivate obedience among

[91] Patricia Smart, *Writing Herself into Being*, 4.

Indigenous converts so that they would be attached to their own subjugation; and I look at how Indigenous material culture practices, especially agricultural labor, express a form of decolonial desire that is not anchored in settler futurity. While I do bring in an explicitly feminist lens to bear on my reading of these materials, what I theorize is the general relation between desire and politics.

In Chapter 2, I provide a textual analysis showing that desire is a central modality of empire. Through a reading of Racine's *Iphigénie*, I argue that desire is central to Racine's articulation of an imperialist gender ideology. Racine both affirms and forecloses the transgressive potential of (woman's) desire and shows that both empire and sovereignty are consolidated through the suppression of woman's desire (including but not limited to erotic attachment) and the sacrifice of woman's body. The regulation, suppression, and punishment of her desire highlight that desire is not a primordial force or individual attribute but is fundamentally produced by and subjected to intense political control. I show that Ériphile's erotic attachment to Achilles, her conqueror-colonizer, is intertwined with her existential desire to know her origin and to be incorporated into the Greek polity. Her desire is immanent to her social position as a "savage" woman, a Greek slave, and a social outsider. That is, her desire is situated in and coextensive with the particular configuration of power that Racine puts her in. Narrating her desire, which leads to her sacrifice-suicide, in this particular manner enables Racine to construct an imperialist gender ideology specific to the early modern French Empire.

Chapter 3 turns to a close examination of settler-colonial practices, mainly settler-colonial education. I closely examine missionary reports and letters to uncover the various interventions the colonial agents deployed to educate and discipline the very "nature" of Indigenous peoples by cultivating their minds and reason, as well as reconditioning their bodies, in seventeenth-century *Nouvelle-France*. I argue that settler-colonial education as envisioned, designed, and carried out by the missionaries reveals and relies on competing understandings of Indigenous peoples' nature

(disposition) as at once essentialized and malleable. "Nature" was both used to denote essentialized "savage" traits *and* was to be remade so that one would be attached to one's own subjugation and consent to colonial domination. In this regard, nature is an unstable signifier that can be evoked to refer to both the cause and effect of civilization and colonization. Paradoxically, the missionaries' investment in education showed that what was conceived as the "nature" of Indigenous peoples needed to be brought into being through stringent—in other words, unnatural—colonial intervention.

Despite such intense cultivation, the missionaries were unable to completely replace the existing attachments Indigenous women had with their kin and communities. In the second part of the dissertation, I look at how, through their embodied practices, Indigenous peoples, especially Indigenous women, pursued forms of self-making and alternative attachments that were both conditioned by and disrupted the imperial narrative of desire and settler-colonial cultivation of desire. In Chapter 4 I develop a feminist and decolonial reading of Indigenous women's ascetic practices, specifically self-mortification. Situating them within the historical context and Indigenous cultural traditions, I argue that pious practices, rather than exemplifying the desire to suffer, illustrate a gendered self-making and cultivated alternative form of desire. While Indigenous women engaged in these practices were often hailed by the missionaries as exceptionally pious Catholics and subjects of empire, converting and embodying piety rather enabled Indigenous women to cultivate and sustain attachment to their homeland and kin in a world marked by war, epidemic, forced migration, and colonial encroachment. Cultivating these attachments, in other words, was also cultivating a world that could nourish these attachments. This historical study contributes to feminist theorizing by urging us to better attend to the immanent meaning of feminine piety and pious practices, and contributes to political theory by helping us to rethink the contours of power and resistance by

better attuning us to the political salience of embodied pain as both a political response to domination and a creative force that enables self-making and world-making.

In Chapter 5, I explore how Indigenous women cultivated a distinct form of selfhood and desire through their agricultural practices that were grounded in Indigenous understandings of and relations to land. While the missionaries were invested in breaking up Indigenous relations to land and imposing a 'proper' gendered division of labor on Indigenous communities to make Indigenous men farmers and women 'domesticated,' I argue that it was by engaging in agricultural labor–cultivating land–that Indigenous women were able to cultivate and sustain relations to land, thereby resisting colonial dispossession. Their labor assumed alternative meanings that disrupted and subverted settler-colonial impositions of civilization, especially gender norms. In the early and consolidating period of settler-colonial rule in *Nouvelle-France*, continuing to cultivate land became a crucial means for Indigenous women to cultivate their selfhood, as well as attachments to land, kin, and the world. Such desire, formed under duress, also becomes a powerful means of resistance and anti-colonial world-making. This is of course not to suggest that peoples and communities who did not engage in (extensive) agriculture did not come up with their own ways of resisting settler colonialism. Rather, my point is to center agricultural labor, or labor in land, which has hitherto almost exclusively been seen as a colonial tool rather than a site of Indigenous world-making and resistance. Agricultural labor can be read as decolonial praxis. Reconceiving them in such a way thus has direct implications for decolonial struggles today.

While this is a political theory project, my approach is interdisciplinary, drawing from history, women's and gender studies, and Indigenous and settler-colonial studies. Likewise, I engage in and contribute to diverse fields and bodies of literature: history of political thought, decolonial political thought, theories of desire and subjectivity, Indigenous history, early modern philosophy, and

studies of early modern France and French Empire. In so doing I aim to bridge fields that are often not in conversation with each other but can certainly benefit from it.

By working towards a decolonial account of desire, this dissertation contributes to our understanding of settler-colonialism as an enduring *but no*t inevitable structure of power and domination, and, ultimately, to the ongoing struggles for decolonization, on Turtle Island and elsewhere.

A final note on translations: I used John Cairncross's translation of *Iphigénie*. For the *Jesuit Relation*s, I used Thwaites' bilingual version. I tried my best to find corresponding existing translations of Marie Guyart's letters when possible. All other translations from French are mine.

Chapter 2. Gendering Sacrifice and Desire: The Early Modern Imperial Politics of Gender in Racine's *Iphigénie*

Introduction

On a summer night in 1674, dramatist Jean Racine's *Iphigénie* was performed in Versailles, as part of the royal *Divertissements de Versailles* Louis XIV held to celebrate the recent conquest and annexation of Franche-Comté into the growing French Empire. The play gained immediate success and evoked strong emotional response from its audience.[92] Racine's rewriting of this classical tragedy set in the context of the Trojan war resolves the tragic—the sacrifice of Iphigenia—with a "happy ending." The audience, perhaps to their surprise, finds out that Iphigenia, the princess of Argos, is not sacrificed but rather replaced by another woman, Ériphile, who is also called Iphigenia and commits suicide before she is about to be sacrificed. An illegitimate daughter of Helen and a captive of the Island of Lesbos, Ériphile dies at the end of the play so that Iphigenia is preserved. This replacement is a deliberate design on Racine's part, and judging from the audience's response, it

[92] Georges Forestier, *Jean Racine* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), 1561.

resonated powerfully with them. In the preface of the text that was published a year later, Racine explicitly states that were he not able to find a sacrificeable woman to replace Iphigenia, namely the Ériphile figure/character, he would never have dared to set his hand on this tragedy.[93] He asks, rhetorically, "How could I possibly have sullied the stage with the horrible murder of so virtuous and lovable a person as Iphigenia had necessarily to be in this play?"[94]

Why does a play that places women's body and desire at the center stage evoke such profound affective response from the public? What does Racine's rewriting, differing significantly from both how the story unfolds in Greek mythology and Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis,*[95] tell us about gender ideology in seventeenth-century France? What does the construction of the two Iphigenias tell us about gender and imperialist ideology?

Racine's plays are known for portraying men and women embroiled in violent passions, which threaten the state and the political order alike. Yet it is almost always women whose desires turn out to be truly disruptive, transgressive, and need to be suppressed or punished, either through exile or death.[96] Racine simultaneously shows that it is perfectly possible or inevitable that one desires 'wrongly' or 'improperly,' and the disastrous consequences and effects of doing so. This is evident in his Greek plays, including *Iphigénie*, in his Roman plays such as *Britannicus* (1669) and *Bérénice* (1670), in his biblical plays such as *Esther* (1689) and *Atalie* (1691), showing that what he conveys is not an *ethos* particular to any historical context a play is set in, but rather the political

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[93] "parce que c'est à cet Auteur que je dois l'heureux personnage d'Ériphile, sans lequel je n'aurais jamais osé entreprendre cette tragédie." Jean Racine, preface to *Iphigénie*, in *Racine.Théâtre complet II*, édition présentée, établie et annotée par Jean-Pierre Collinet (Paris : Gallimard, 1983), 202.

[94] "Quelle apparence que j'euss souillé la scène par le meurtre horrible d'une personne aussi vertueuse et aussi aimable qu'il faillait représenter Iphigénie?" Racine, preface to *Iphigénie*, 20.

[95] In Euripides' work, Iphigenia is saved by Artemis at the end, who replaces her sacrifice with the sacrifice of a deer. Euripides also has another play that features Iphigenia as the main heroine, *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, which takes place after she escapes her sacrifice.

[96] There are a few male characters whose desires are suppressed or punished, but it is clearly that they embody femininity. In a sense Racine desegregates gender from biological sex, but still essentializes femininity. I will discuss this point later in the chapter.

currents and ideas of his time that inform his work. As Domna Stanton argues, Racine's rewriting highlights "social-cultural differences between Greek and seventeenth-century French notions of justice and credibility."[97] Racine espouses the necessity of regulating desire in early modern French political imagination and reveals how such regulation is gendered through and through. In the Racinian universe, for women to desire is already to have desired wrongly, which distinguishes the good subject from the bad and the civilized from the 'savage.' The latter's life—and body—is then rendered sacrificeable (and suicidal, which is the erasure of sacrifice). In other words, once the gendered and politically situated nature of desire is taken into account, there is a complete *inversion* of the relation between life and desire. Women's desire is regarded as transgressive and dangerous, which is a *political* articulation of the relation between desire and women. For women, whose bodies and desire became intense objects of regulation and punishment under absolutist ideology and imperial expansion, what constitutes proper female life is *the lack of* desire. On the flip side, desire that is (necessarily) 'wrong' or 'inappropriate' marks the 'savage' or 'barbarian' woman as sacrificeable in the first place. In *Iphigénie*, this desire is primarily articulated as the 'savage' woman's desire for her colonizer-conqueror, which is also the desire to be incorporated into the political polity.

I turn to this specific play/text to elucidate a gender ideology that I argue is also an imperialist ideology. This theatrical production both reflects and contributes to the making and consolidating of a gender ideology interwoven with imperialism, while at the same time contributing to the making of gendered subjects who embody and are affected by such an ideology. Issues concerning how to quell social and political unrest and consolidate sovereignty, and how to manage gendered and civilizational *otherness* are most acutely reflected in *Iphigénie*.

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[97] Domna Stanton, *Dynamics*, 67.

Social unrest and political instability warped seventeenth-century France. Before coming into personal power after the death of Cardinal Mazarin in 1661, Louis XIV's minority years were decidedly marked by women's influence and control of politics in the growing French empire. Two powerful Queen regents, Marie de' Medici and Anne of Austria, left lasting marks on French politics, posing a threat to the absolute association of masculinity with political power.[98] Moreover, a series of civil wars known as *the Fronde* broke out in France, in which the princes, aristocracies, the *parlements*, and peasants advocated for limited monarchical power and significantly challenged it. Lasting from 1648 to 1653, the Fronde made up the majority of Louis XIV minority years. During the series of armed conflicts, (aristocratic) women, most notably the Duchesse de Longueville, the Duchesse de Cheavreuse, and the Grande Mademoiselle (Anne Marie Louise d'Orléans) assumed important military roles and achieved considerable military success. As Jean Dejean notes, "the Fronde can be seen as woman's war. For once women had taken command, the resistance to absolutism remained."[99] The King eventually won over his adversaries, but it was evident that monarchical power was fragile and in need of consolidation, with women being the greatest threat. At the same time, the debates known as *la querelle des femme* also brought questions about masculinity and femininity to the fore.[100] Female bodies (here sex and gender are conflated) are deemed dangerous, deformed, or pathological (compared to male bodies), with excessive (sexual) appetite. Their appetites are regarded as posing direct threats to the stability of the social and political order, thus needing to be put under tight control.

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[98] As Kirk Read has shown, for males—especially monarchs—to act effeminately was regarded as acting tyrannically because both were considered immoderate and losing control over oneself in early modern France. See *Birthing Bodies in Early Modern France: Stories of Gender and Reproduction* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Press, 2011), 128-9.

[99] Jean Dejean, *Tender Geographies: Women and the Origins of the Novel in France* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1993), 37.

[100] See for example, Joan Kelly, "Early Feminist Theory and the *Querelle des Femmes*, 1400-1789," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 8, no.1(1982), 4-28; Domna Stanton, *The Dynamics of Gender in Early Modern France* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 1-23.

In this milieu, women were simultaneously subsumed under the sovereign body-politic and positioned as social outsiders subject to increasing confinement within the household and ideological constraints.[101] While they were vulnerable to all forms of abuse and domination, the power or danger they were accorded at the same time signals that the patriarchal-sovereign political order was fragile. The heightened anxiety that many associated with this age, as Kathleen P. Long et al. remind us, is specifically generated by a crisis of masculinity and by extension of monarchical power.[102]

Paradoxically, as Michel de Certeau reminds us, while divisive conflicts destabilized existing social and political hierarchies, this period also saw the growth of the concept of unity articulated through the exclusion of differences, which culminated in ascending absolutist ideology and rule.[103] The rise of absolutist monarchy and expansion of the French Empire in Europe and other parts of the world went hand in hand.[104] As power became more centralized under the King and monarchical power became increasingly unchecked and unlimited in domestic politics,[105] the King also took

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[101] See for example Joan Kelly's classic, "Did Women Have a Renaissance?," in *Women, History & Theory: the Essays of Joan Kelly* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

[102] Kathleen P. Long (eds.), *High Anxiety: Masculinity in Crisis in Early Modern France* (Kirksville: Truman State University Press, 2002). In the early modern period, political thinkers—from Jean Bodin to Robert Filmer—and actors universally draw an organic link between the King and the father, and see the King as the Father. See Jean Bodin, *On Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992[1576]); Robert Filmer, *Patriarcha* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009 [1680]). As Greenberg notes, Louis XIV consistently refers to himself as the father to his people in his *Mémoire*. See Michell Greenberg, *Canonical States, Canonical Stages: Oedipus, Othering, and Seventeenth-Century Drama* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), introduction.

[103] Michel de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable, vol.1*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 32.

[104] Here I follow Said and take empire as an overarching concept that encompasses both colonialism and imperialism and follow the distinction he has made between colonialism and imperialism. Colonialism refers to "the implanting of settlements on distant territory," whereas imperialism "means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory." Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1993), 9. Barbara Arneil has made a convincing case for the need to distinguish colonialism and imperialism from each other. See Barbara Arneil, *Domestic Colonies: The Turn Inward to Colony* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). While in later chapters I will discuss settler colonial strategies and techniques of power, in this chapter my focus is skewed to imperialism and imperialist ideology.

[105] Many have pointed out that the so-called absolutist rule in France, which is usually associated with Louis XIV's reign, in reality had significant limits and was contested from many sections of society. See for example, Juliette Cherbuliez, *The Place of Exile: Leisure Literature and the Limits of Absolutism* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2005); Ellen McClure, *Sunspots and the Sun King: Sovereignty and Mediation in Seventeenth-Century France* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Allison Stedman, *Rococo Fiction in France, 1600-1715: Seditious Frivolity* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2012); Absolutism is better understood as an ideology or theory of governance. Not only did the practices of absolutist rule have serious limits, but also the ideology itself was contested. See for example, Kathrina Ann Laporta, *Performative Polemic:*

direct control of imperial and colonial affairs. In 1663, Louis XIV disbanded the *Compagnie de la Nouvelle France* established by Cardinal Richelieu in 1627 and made *Nouvelle-France* a royal province of France. Since then, *Nouvelle-France* was put under the direct and increasingly centralized control of Louis XIV. The incorporation of the other-than-French into the empire was a significant development in French overseas expansion and settlement. French imperial and colonial activities generated fresh interest in and fascination with peoples who live on these distant lands. While writings about Indigenous peoples of the Americas had appeared in France and Europe since Columbus's first voyage, it was with the inception of the official colonial project in the seventeenth-century that the cultural and civilizational difference of Indigenous peoples became a pressing political concern for the French court, the aristocracy and the literate public. *The Jesuit Relations*, sent back to Paris for publication annually since 1633, provided detailed, proto-ethnographical descriptions of Indigenous peoples, their lands, and customs.[106] Seventeenth-century France was, in fact, obsessed with the exotic other. As Michèle Longino puts,

> "In the seventeenth century, the domain of the exotic significantly captured the French imagination. This fascination would represent a crucial phase in the development of a collective French identity. It set the operative terms for a colonial mentality, which, in turn, provided key grounding terms for the articulation of a national consciousness. Essential to the shaping of a sense of 'Frenchness' was the signaling of what it was not, the construction of the necessary 'other' against which it could define itself." [107]

It is no coincidence that *Iphigénie* was performed to celebrate Louis XIV's new conquest, an occasion in which his sovereign power was affirmed against the recent turmoil. On the surface *Iphigénie* does not appear to be a play about the *other*. In fact, immediately before the staging of *Iphigénie*, Racine had written and staged two plays--*Bajazet* and *Mithridate*—that address this theme.

Anti-Absolutist Pamphlets and their Readers in Late Seventeenth-Century France (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2021); Anna Rosensweig, *Subjects of Affection*.

[106] Bronwen McShea, *Apostles of Empire: The Jesuits and New France*.

[107] Michèle Longino, *Orientalism in French Classical Drama*, 1.

As a result, literary scholars interested in race and empire have paid more attention to them. *Iphigénie*, as the title and the theme suggest, seems to fall squarely under the conventional category of neoclassical rewriting of Greek drama. Iphigénie is a Greek princess, the daughter of none other than the famous King of Argos, Agamemnon, and Clytemnestra. But upon a closer look, we soon find that one of the central characters, the other Iphigenia, is a slave from Lesbos; in other words, she is a Greek slave. Hence in *Iphigénie* we find many ways in which intersecting othernesses are dealt with, most clearly in and through Ériphile. Ériphile's triple abjected status—a woman, a war captive, and a savage—renders her the absolute other, and her difference makes her an inherent danger to the state, to civilization, and to political order per se. We get a vivid picture of how otherness is signified and managed politically through the suppression of Ériphile's desire and the sacrifice of her body. Gender and empire, in other words, are closely linked, and it is through gender that Racine articulates an imperial vision. Many have argued that gender ideology was (somewhat uniquely) central to the early modern French Empire and acknowledged that both French and colonized women faced gendered oppression.[108] Yet what such gender ideology entails, how it enables such oppression and the particular form of such oppression (which is often taken for granted as the subjugation of women by men), and how it intersects with empire remain undertheorized. My goal in this chapter, then, is to reconstruct an imperialist gender ideology to help contextualize the contemporaneous French imperial and colonial activities that I will explore in the subsequent chapters.

I develop a feminist contextual reading of *Iphigénie* that situates the play/text in the historical and political context within which it was written, produced, and enacted. Roland Barthes has written

[108] See for example, Karen Anderson, *Chain Her By One Foot: The Subjugation of Native Women in Seventeenth-Century New France* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Lisa J. M. Poirier, *Religion, Gender, and Kinship in Colonial New France* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2016); Ashley M. Williard, *Engendering Islands: Sexuality, Reproduction, and Violence in the Early French Caribbean* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 2021.

that "history will never tell us what is happening inside an author at the moment he is writing," and that it would be much more effective to "reverse the problem and asks what a work tells us about its times."[109] To do so, Barthes suggests, calls us to consider a writer's milieu "more organically, more anonymously, as the locus of certain habits of thought, certain implicit taboos, certain 'natural' values, certain material interests of a group of men actually associated by identical or complementary functions."[110] Yet I also contend that analyzing a work as rich as *Iphigénie* calls for us to go beyond the writer's personal milieu—in Racine's case the Jansenist education he received at Port-Royal,[111] the court, and the theatre—and consider the wider cultural, social and political milieu of seventeenth-century France, especially French gender dynamics and imperial expansion, both of which are refracted through the play/text.

I argue that desire is both central to actual imperial formation, and a key critical analytic of empire as it helps to elucidate the shifting gender dynamic in early modern French Empire. While desire is often taken only to denote passionate erotic love in general and in Racine's *œuvre*, I understand desire more capaciously as denoting intense affective and embodied attachment that can be directed to various objects and ideals. I focus on how desire is gendered and politically situated in this play/text, interrogating how being situated in this particular context gives rise to particular forms of desire. I show that Racine establishes a rhetorical link between imperial conquest on the one hand, and access to and absolute control over women's bodies and regulation of women's desire on the other. This imperialist gender ideology, as some feminist scholars have noticed, rests on the bifurcation between the 'good' and 'bad' woman, the 'good' and 'bad' subject. While the former is preserved to consolidate and uphold the domestic patriarchal order, the latter is deemed

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[109] Roland Barthes, *On Racine*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, a division of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2017), 156.
[110] Barthes, *On Racine*, 156.
[111] For the influence of Port-Royal on Racine, see Geoffrey Brereton, *Jean Racine: A Critical Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951).

“sacrificeable” and is sacrificed in the name of empire. Moreover, the contrast between the good Greek princess who gets to live because she is non-sacrificeable, and the jealous and evil Oriental (savage) princess who deserves to—and even desires to—die, epitomizes a gender ideology that is intrinsically linked to colonial and imperial conquest and pacification. We will see that desire and its embodiment are central to the articulation of this imperialist ideology. Through this play, Racine provides his country people a political vocabulary, a powerful way of framing, comprehending, and fabricating reality in a particularly chaotic time.

Trope, Disposability, and Sacrificeablity

This ideology, as I will show, coheres around and through a central trope, which I call the sacrificeable woman, personified by the character Ériphile. As Marlene L. Daut pronounces, tropes “render those aspects of experience that might have been strange into an order of words that made them infinitely understandable.”[112] Tropology is a particular way of “constituting reality in thought.”[113] My analysis will look at how the trope of the sacrificeable woman operates both reductively—that is, the complex historical and political events and the variegated affect that we can discern in the play/text are all crystalized in Ériphile’s desire to commit suicide—and productively, giving name and reality to the political salience of her desire.

In recent years, many have observed that late-modern and capitalist societies produce the living dead: disposable and surplus lives. As Zygmunt Bauman puts,

> “Well there are more troubles with modern life, but this one is particularly acute. We feel it very strongly. Namely the obsessive production of redundant people—disposable people. People for whom there is no good in society, therefore they should be either separated from the rest and put somewhere in an enclosure, or completely disposed of—very often, particularly in our times, just left to their own initiative what to do with themselves.”[114]

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[112] Marlene L. Daut, *Tropics of Haiti: Race and the Literary History of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World, 1789-1865* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), 36. Daut develops her own use of tropes via Hayden White’s tropological theory of discourse. See Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978).

[113] Daut, *Tropics of Haiti,* 36.

[114] Zygmunt Bauman, “Disposable Lives” in Histories of Violence, http://opentranscripts.org/transcript/disposable-life-zygmunt-bauman/, retrieved in April 2023.

Achille Mbembe famously calls this mode of politics necropolitics. As he explains, necropolitics refers to "the various ways in which, in our contemporary world, weapons are deployed in the interest of maximally destroying persons and creating *death-worlds*, that is, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to living conditions that confer upon them the status of the *living dead*."[115] Mbembe also suggests that "today's form of necropower blurs the lines between resistance and suicide, sacrifice and redemption, martyrdom and freedom."[116] Accentuating the racial-colonial order underwriting this necropolitical order, Mbembe suggests that suicide is a form of self-sacrifice insofar as one "become[s] one's own victim." Using suicide-bombers as his example, Mbembe comments that they "proceed to take power over their death by approaching it head-on."[117] As such, suicide-sacrifice is a *response* to necropolitics, to the condition of being relegated to the living dead. Others such as Giorgio Agamben, Lauren Berlant, Judith Butler, and Jasbir Puar, have also identified the production of death and killiability as a central feature of contemporary (later-capitalist/late-modern) politics.[118] Puar has especially extended Mbembe's thesis beyond the production of death to discuss the mass production of debilitation, with a particular focus on Palestine and Palestinians.

These observations and analyses shrewdly reveal and lament imperial, colonial, racial and state violence and cruelty. Being disposable seems to converge significantly with being sacrificeable. But I contend that being sacrificeable has resonances with, yet is also distinct from, being disposable or killable precisely because desire is so central to the articulation and function of this trope. As I will show, although what ultimately is sacrificed is Ériphile's life, what is politically at stake is her

[115] Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), emphasis original.
[116] Mbembe, *Necropolitics,* 92.
[117] Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, 90.
[118] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995); Lauren Berlant, "Slow Death (Sovereignty, Obesity, Lateral Agency)," *Critical Inquiry* 33, no.4 (Summer 2007), 754-780.; Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When if Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2009); Jasbir K. Puar, *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).

desire—her attachment to her colonizer and by extension empire, to which gender is at the focal point. What is more, Ériphile's sacrifice-suicide is not used to evoke—and condemn—the violence of the state or imperial power, but to grant a happy ending to the otherwise tragic story. In other words, her desire for her own death is what allows the imperialist ideology to cohere. Consent is supposedly engendered through such attachment, which simultaneously justifies and erases imperial conquest. This is what I will be calling "the imperial fantasy of consent."

Beyond Oedipus/the Oedipus Complex: Desire, Gender, and the Female Body

Critics have long noticed the prominence of "feminine" themes, such as passion, corporality, and sexuality—as well as their violent effects—in Racine's *œuvre*. They often use *Iphigénie* as an example of this prominence. Many hold that Racine's plays are defined and moved by passionate love, which makes some identify Racine with the feminine.[119] However, for many, how gender actually appears and operates as an organizing principle of difference, power, and conflict, does not warrant attention. This is especially problematic given that *Iphigénie* is often regarded as Racine's most secular and most political work. Such inattention is not accidental, but a conscious choice that can be justified. This is laid out most clearly in Barthes' structuralist reading. As Barthes explains, it is the situation rather than biological sex that organizes desire and attachment in Racine's plays. For him, what the characters in Racine's plays embody are not specifically gendered ideals or norms. They are merely instruments Racine deploys to express the tragic: the untimely and transcendental clash between individual passion and collective political life. In his words,

> "Sex itself is subject to the fundamental situation of the tragic figures among themselves, which is a relation of force. There are no characters in the Racinian theatre; there are only situations; everything derives its being from its place in the general constellation of strengths and weakness. The division of the Racinian world into strong and weak, into tyrants and captives, covers in a sense the division of the sexes: it is their

[119] This view spans from Racine's contemporaries to his great cultural successors such as Voltaire to today. See a recent collection of literary criticism of Racine, *Racine: The Power and the Pleasure*, ed. Edric Caldicott and Derval Conroy (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2001). See also Stanton's account, *Dynamics*, 67.

situation in the relation of force that orchestrates some characters as virile and others as feminine, without concern for their biological sex."[120]

Sex/gender (here Barthes collapses them) are merely signs and instruments used to convey a universal struggle. They have no substance, no meaning of their own.

While it is the case that, as Barthes notices, Racine does not essentialize men and women according to binary biological sexes, Racine still essentially associates femininity with captivity and confinement, and masculinity with tyrannical domination and authority. Though Barthes contends that for Racine, it is the situation rather than nature or biology that defines gender relations, we see that in the Racinian universe, the feminine remains being defined by weakness whereas the masculine, by strength. Moreover, in *Iphigénie*, masculinity is erected mainly through the control of female bodies and suppression of women's desire.

Another valence of this universalist reading is reflected in the fact that many have especially insisted on the absolute centrality of the "Oedipus complex" in Racinian theatre. Ever since Sigmund Freud developed the theory itself, which assumes that Oedipal desire is universal, the theory has been widely deployed as a universal model to explain how transgressive fantasy and desire are produced through and against social norms and order.[121] Greenberg, parsing Philip Lewis, claims that "Racinian tragedy squarely confines within the compass of the Oedipal legend."[122] This view places the patriarchal figure(s) as the primary—if not sole—agent(s), and puts patriarchal incestuous desire within the family and an enclosed society at the center of the unfolding of the tragic. The masochist Oedipal desire, which Freud takes to be transhistorical and universal, is tacitly accepted by

[120] Barthes, *On Racine*, 13.
[121] Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams: The Definitive and Complete Text* (New York: Basic Books, 2010). Freud initially uses Oedipal desire to refer to a child (boy)'s desire for his opposite-sex parent—it's interesting to note that though Freud presents his account as universal, even according to himself, the girl child's relation to her father is quite different. See Freud's writings on female sexuality. Subsequent scholars have used Oedipal desire more broadly to refer to (sexual) desire that transgresses social, especially patriarchal, order.
[122] Mitchell Greenberg, "Racine, Oedipus, and Absolute Fantasies," *Diacritics* (Fall 1998), 43.

readers such as Lewis and Greenberg, which also helps to explain why psychoanalytic readings of Racine have been so dominant. Greenberg also heavily draws from Guy Rosolato's psychoanalytic account of the Oedipus complex and the primal scene in his readings of desire in Racine. For Greenberg, Racine is essentially proto-Freudian, depicting desire as by nature masochist.[123] Moreover, Barthes and Greenberg take to be the case that the stories Racine depicts are merely different iterations of timeless and universal themes such as the repression of desire and the quest for origin and identity ("*qui suis-je*"). For them, gendered difference and the character/figure's relation vis-à-vis the dominant polity simply do not enter the picture in the unfolding of the tragic.

According to this reading, when Oedipus and Ériphile (among others) pose the question "*qui suis-je*" (or in Ériphile's case she explicitly laments that "*j'ignore qui je suis*" and attributes her miseries to it), what is expressed is simply the universal and universally frustrated pursuit for origin and identity. These characters, who are interchangeable in this reading, are simply casting "attempts to solve the riddle(s) of origins" that show that they are all "condemned by a traumatic history that has inexorably shaped their destiny but that forever escapes their understanding."[124] Greenberg draws on Rosolato and Lewis to argue that Racine's preoccupation with incestuous—transgressive—sexual desire and search for origin is symptomatic of the absolutist fantasy of unity, or the fantasy to be absolutist, which also marks a form of subjectivity taking shape in absolutist France.[125] Different from Barthes', Greenberg's reading does pay attention to how the historical context shapes the form of desire and fantasy he takes Racinian plays as narrating and displaying, and how such fantasy

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[123] Greenberg, "Racine, Oedipus, and Absolute Fantasies," 44-46.

[124] Greenberg, "Racine, Oedipus, and Absolute Fantasies," 56.

[125] Greenberg, "Racine, Oedipus, and Absolute Fantasies," 54. Also Greenberg, *Racine*, 25. Greenberg sees this desire for absolutism in other French Baroque works as well, though articulated in different ways. For him such desire marks the historical and political milieu itself. See *Detours of Desire: Readings in the French Baroque* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1984).

reflects and gives shape to the particular context in which it is produced. Yet Greenberg ultimately contends that what Racine presents is a *historical expression* of the universal struggle.

While I find these psychoanalytic readings helpful to a certain extent as they notice the centrality of desire and fantasy to the Racinian theatre, I think they are also reductive because of their inattention—and the justification of such inattention—to the situatedness of the characters and how such situatedness shapes their particular desire. I attend to the ways in which Racine devises the characters, and explore how he articulates a specific gender ideology through such devising. My reading thus departs from them and attends to how the way a character/figure is situated gives shape to her desire (or the lack thereof), how desire is used to mark a character/figure, and most of all, the distinct form of desire and subjectivity and the relation between them. While Greenberg does take into account how the historical milieu shapes literary productions, he nonetheless largely ignores how desire is, or might be, gendered, why and how gender matters, and how the absolutist fantasy of unity and being "one" (rather than fragmented and/or multiple) is articulated through the suppression of women's desire(s) and sacrifice or annihilation of women's bodies.[126] I find it problematic to read women characters, most of whom are captivated, colonized, or at least displaced from their homeland or state, whose bodies are physically confined in alienating or hostile spaces, simply as faceless and nameless figures whose only use is to carry out universal struggles in a theatre exclusively structured by the Oedipus complex and convey the universal absolutist fantasy of being a unified subject (or in the King's case, being an absolutist monarch). After all, it is taken for granted

[126] This reading also both recalls Hegel's reading of Antigone and Hegel's general account of tragedy. For Hegel, tragedies express the universal and timeless conflict between ethical life and the state (politics), the former is defined by particular attachment while the latter expresses Geist—absolute, transcendental Will or Spirit. Hegel assigns women and gendered forms of attachment to the realm of ethical life and argues that they are incapable of attaining transcendence. In *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, he has famous called women(kind) "the everlasting irony of the community (288)." See G.W.F Hegel, *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller; analysis and foreword by J.N. Findlay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); Elements of the *Philosophy of Right*, trans. H.B. Nisbet; eds. Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Hegel, perhaps somewhat ironically, shows that gender is rather central to the unfolding of the tragic. On unpacking women being "the eternal irony of the community," see Luce Irigary "The Eternal Irony of the Community," in *Speculum of the Other Women*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).

rather than convincingly shown that neither one's body nor desire carries particular gendered or situated meaning and is simply subsumed under the supposed universal desire for origin and identity—both understood as self-identical through time and in terms of unity. I challenge the reading that her desire can be adequately read as another iteration of the Oedipal complex, as a quest for origin and self-identity, as illustrating the loss of cosmic unity and devasting effects of self-knowledge. I instead argue that the play/text reveals how and why the management and regulation of women's bodies and desire is essential to banish disorder and consolidate sovereignty.

If we see Iphigenia—or rather the two Iphigenias—instead of Oedipus as the central figure(s) and examine her/their desire—or the lack thereof—we get a very different picture. We will see the particular ways in which desire and sacrifice are made to *matter* politically. The significant changes Racine makes in telling this classic story to ensure that the mythical sacrifice of a young virgin would be in accordance with the sensibility of his French contemporaries make gender, desire, and sacrifice central to his narrative. Particular ideals concerning femininity, masculinity, and sovereignty also take shape through it. We see a discourse of absolute state-patriarchal power affirmed through a particular articulation of a captivated-colonized woman's desire and the justifiable sacrifice of foreign/savage women's bodies.

Feminist theorists and literary critics such as Véronique Desnain and Domna Stanton, of course, have noticed the gendered nature of Racinian desire, which they take to be synonymous with erotic love. They argue that desire and sacrifice do not convey universal forms of tragic conflict, but have specific gendered meanings and significations. My reading both draws from Domna Stanton's argument that *Iphigénie* reveals the "ideology of 'the sacrificeable'" that rests on the bifurcation between the good and bad daughter[127] and departs from it, as I take into account Ériphile's desire(s) other than her erotic passion and bringing into focus the subtle shift from sacrifice to suicide that

[127] Stanton, *Dynamics*, 72.

Racine puts into motion at the end of the narrative. Women's desire, which includes but is not limited to erotic attachment, is regulated, suppressed, and punished, so that sovereignty is consolidated. I foreground that desire is the standard of sacrificeability that distinguishes the good daughter from the bad one, the good subject from the bad one, and of empire itself. Racine shows that the desire to regulate and punish is an essential feature of empire in general and settler colonialism in particular. He simultaneously enriches our understandings of the politics of desire by showing that desire can manifest as disruptive and dangerous force, and forecloses the disruptive force of desire by showing that such desire ultimately is the desire for one's death. What he expresses, then, is an imperial and absolutist fantasy of the consent and voluntary subjugation of the colonized/conquered.

Two Iphigenias, Good and Bad

Racine opens the narrative with the familiar story: The Greek troops are stranded in Aulis because the winds stop. Their leader, Agamemnon, after consulting the seer Calchas, learns that in order to appease the goddess Artemis, he needs to sacrifice his daughter Iphigenia. The physical sacrifice of Iphigenia's body is the only way to ensure the victory of the Greeks against the Trojans. As Greenberg notes, on the successful completion of Iphigenia's sacrifice "hangs the triumph or the defeat of one of the two major antagonistic views of the world, either the Western Greek or the Eastern Trojan (Asiatic)."[128] What is ultimately at stake, in other words, is the civilized Greek nation-state, which Racine's audience would readily identify as the French nation/Empire. Many have shown that though all European powers in the early modern period believed that they were superior in terms of civilization to non-European peoples, the French Empire was marked by a distinct

[128] Greenberg, *Racine*, 166.

civilizational logic in which colonization was both conceived and justified as bringing civilization to 'barbarian' peoples.[129]

Caught between his role as patriarch and King, between the family and the state, Agamemnon has to make the tragic decision that would inevitably cause him great loss and grief. He changes his mind several times throughout the narrative: at first he agrees to sacrifice Iphigenia and sends a letter to trick her to come to Aulis to get married to Achilles; then he goes back on his decision but learns that Iphigenia has already arrived in Aulis, accompanied by her mother, Clytemnestra; then he is persuaded again and decides to sacrifice her after all. This tension between familial duty and political responsibility is a recurring theme in tragedies since Ancient Greece, and through the renaissance has become a prominent focus of neoclassical drama in seventeenth-century France. The ways in which Racine presents and resolves this conflict is quite different from his predecessor and competitor, Pierre Corneille. While Corneille often subsumes familial and personal happiness under the interest of the state, which marks his plays with hypermasculine gallantry, in Racine the conflict is more pronounced and passionate love occupies a more central stage and assumes great political relevance.[130] Here, Racine aptly captures masculine anxiety and the fragility of the sovereign-patriarchal order of his own milieu. Stanton argues that "Racine's rewriting of Euripides's tragedy dramatizes the need for absolute kingship to abolish dis-order, and it does so, by erecting a paternal order on the sacrifice of women."[131] While women are presented both as the cause and remedy of chaos, the various women figures—Iphigenia, Clytemnestra, Ériphile (and by

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[129] This is noted by historians of French Empire and French studies scholars. See for example, Richard White*, The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); James Pritchard, *In Search of Empire: The French in the Americas, 1670-1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Sara E. Melzer*, Colonizer or Colonized.*

[130] Richard E. Goodkin, *Birth Marks: The Tragedy of Primogeniture in Pierre Corneille, Thomas Corneille, and Jean Racine* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000); Edric Caldicott and Derval Conroy (eds), *Racine: The Power and the Pleasure*.

[131] Stanton, Dynamics, 67.

extension Helen, her biological mother)—respond to the edict of sovereign patriarchal power differently.

Iphigenia, the protagonist after whom the play is named, embodies absolute submission, which remains unwavering even after learning that her father intends to sacrifice her. When she and her mother get to Aulis, they run into Achilles. They inform Achilles that the reason they are in Aulis is for him and Iphigenia to get married, leading Achilles to believe that Agamemnon actually betrothed Iphigenia to him. After talking to Agamemnon, however, Achilles realizes that the marriage is a sham and becomes infuriated after hearing Agamemnon's real plan. Though the marriage is fake, Achilles has nonetheless positioned himself as the actual betrothed of Iphigenia and acts as her protector. He tries to convince Iphigenia to rebel against her father and promises her that he would challenge Agamemnon. In response, Iphigenia says,

> "If you still love me, if you deign to hear,
> As a last favour, a found sweetheart's prayer—
> It's not, my lord, that you must prove it me.
> Do not forget, the man you would defy,
> This barbarous bloodthirsty enemy,
> He is my father, whatsoe'er he's done."[132]

Shortly after, facing Achilles' criticism of her father, Iphigenia displays unfaltering loyalty and devotion to her father, the patriarch-King:

> "He is my father, I repeat, my lord.
> A father whom I love, a father whom
> I worship. He adores me, and till now
> Has never shown me aught but marks of love.
> …Why should you think, inhuman, barbarous,
> He does not groan at the impending blow?
> What father gladly kills his flesh and blood?
> Why would he lose me, if I could be saved?
> Ah! Do not doubt it, I have seen his tears.
> Must you condemn him ere you hear him speak?
> Why must his heart that's wrung by countless woes,

[132] Jean Racine, *Iphigénie*, in *Iphigenia; Phaedra; Athaliah,* trans. John Cairncross (New York: Penguin Classics, 1964), 993-998.

Alas, he crushed beneath your hate as well?"[133]

Not only does Iphigenia put no blame on her father, she even pledges for him and defends him, the man who would become her murderer. Any challenge to the patriarchal order is not only impossible, but simply unimaginable. Not for one moment does Iphigenia even think of defying her father's order. She is presented as devoid of independent selfhood and as completely determined by her position within the patriarchal order. Right before she is about to be sacrificed at the altar, addressing Agamemnon, she again says,

"Sire,
Be not dismayed. No one is false to you.
When you command me, you will be obeyed.
My life is yours. You wish to take it back?
You could have given your orders openly.
With the same joy, the same submissive heart
I too the husband that you promised,
I would obediently hold out my head,
Though guiltless, to the high priest Calchas' blade,
And, honouring the blow that you ordained,
Give back to you my blood that is your own."[134]

Until what is supposed to be the last minute of her life, Iphigenia's devotion to her father, and to the order he embodies, never falters. She understands herself as existing primarily as a daughter and a subject, and secondarily as Achilles' love-object. As the one who is going to be sacrificed, she is, and has to be, the one who affirms her own submission to make the patriarchal order seem naturalized. No violation nor violence shall be named if she, the victim, assents to it and accepts it as her fate.

Writing in seventeenth-century France instead of fifth-century BC Greece, Racine is aware that a virtuous princess like Iphigenia is, after all, unsacrificeable. Since sacrifice serves the sole purpose of appeasing chaos, the turmoil evoked by her proposed sacrifice makes it evident that she

133 Racine, *Iphigénie*, 1001-1020.
134 Racine, *Iphigénie*, 1175-1184, emphasis mine.

is unsacrificeable, precisely because she is Agamemnon's legitimate daughter, a Greek princess, and Achilles' love-object. Iphigenia's virtue denotes her unfaltering familial piety and obedience, which renders her unsacrificeable. Such unsacrificeability stands in stark contrast with the unvirtuous woman Ériphile, who, according to Racine, "deserves to be punished" because of her jealousy of Iphigenia for enjoying Achille's love, and because she is an illegitimate child of Theseus and Helen. Helen has run away with Paris and caused the Trojan War and hence the very need to sacrifice Iphigenia. It is eventually revealed that Ériphile, too, is a princess—though she is a social outsider of the Greek polity—and she too is called "Iphigenia," and it is her, not the real princess Iphigenia, that the goddess has demanded to be sacrificed. Ironically, Ériphile's concealed high birth, which she longs to know so that she could have a sense of belonging, is what would bring her to death. It is also why she comes to Aulis with Iphigenia and Clytemnestra in the first place.

Crucially, Ériphile is also a war captive from the island of Lesbos, who has grown an intense erotic attachment to Achille, the conqueror-colonizer of Lesbos. In her own words, she is merely "a vile Greek slave." She confesses that living as a stranger who does not know her birth, "captive and unknown, is nothing"[135] comparing to the pending marriage between Iphigenia and Achilles. Rather, "Lesbos' vanquisher, Achilles…. whose bloodstained hand carried me off in chains…whose very name should have a hateful ring" is the mortal whom she cherishes the most.[136] This quasi-masochistic love the captivated-colonized feels for her captivator-colonizer, which is both sexual and political, assumes particular salience in 1674, when French imperial and colonial activities were rapidly growing. It is not incidental that Ériphile is presented as passionately attached to her conqueror. As Stanton observes, Ériphile 's desire "legitimizes—and even sentimentalizes—an imperialist erotics of power on a politics of seduction."[137] While Barthes acknowledges this kind of

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[135] Racine, *Iphigénie,* 470-1.
[136] Racine*, Iphigénie,*, 471-6.
[137] Stanton, *Dyamics,* 77.

eros as "love-as-rape," which he regards as categorically different from "love-as-duration,"[138] he elides the political stakes of portraying desire in such a manner by failing to notice the gendered and in this particular case the imperial nature of intense attachment the woman captive forms to her conqueror. It is not simply "an absolute Event" that is "immediate," but one fundamentally constituted by violence and projected imperial fantasy of voluntary subjugation, which then erases the violence of the sacrifice (or the murder) altogether. We see that before Ériphile's material body is sacrificed, she has already sacrificed herself because her subjectivity is, on the most fundamental level, marked her desire for her conqueror.

But Achilles only loves Iphigenia—or accepts Iphigenia as his proper love-object—and is willingly to challenge the King for her sake. When Achilles confronts Agamemnon over what the latter's real plan concerning Iphigenia is, Agamemnon, agitated, asks: "Do you forget whom you are questioning?"[139] To which Achilles immediately responds, "Do you forget I love whom you offend?"[140] Agamemnon, claiming ownership, then asks: "And who asked you to mind *my* family? I can do with *my* daughter what I please: I am her father."[141] Achilles, not caving to Agamemnon's declaration, claims:

> "No, she is yours no more.
> I'll not be tricked by empty promises.
> While still a drop of blood flows in my veins,
> And since you were to link her fate with mine,
> I will defend my rights based on your oaths."[142]

Agamemnon's oaths, we already know, are mere lies that have the sole purpose of getting Iphigenia to Aulis. In this exchange that concerns Iphigenia's fate, we clearly see that Iphigenia's desire is jarringly absent. It is not only mute, but simply unthinkable. She can only be claimed or possessed

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[138] Barthes, *On Racine*, 10.
[139] Racine, *Iphigénie*, 1347.
[140] Racine, *Iphigénie*, 1348.
[141] Racine, *Iphigénie*, 1349-1350, emphasis mine.
[142] Racine, *Iphigénie*, 1352-1356.

but cannot herself be a subject of desire. She is but an object of exchange in this homosocial economy and is presented as consenting to its order of things, as Iphigenia remains committed to sustain the patriarchal-sovereign order in which she occupies a clear—though completely passive—role.

Facing Achilles' passionate defense of her life which would entail her revolting against her father, Iphigenia is astounded and responds by saying: "Who? I revolt against a father's words? I would deserve the death that I avoid/ What of respect? My supreme duty is—."[143] Yet by reiterating that her life serves the sole purpose of upholding the patriarchal-sovereign order, including sacrificing herself, we see that Iphigenia is *attached* to the patriarchal-sovereign order., only that her desire upholds instead of transgressive it. Ironically, if Ériphile's desire renders her transgressive and needs to be eliminated, Iphigenia's desire too needs to be silenced as it is not even registered as desire as such. For, being a 'good' daughter and subject, she must have no desire.

Being a 'good' subject and a good 'woman' makes Iphigenia an object of exchange between Agamemnon the patriarch and Achilles the young warrior. Both Agamemnon and Achilles claim absolute ownership of her and her body, the former as her father and sovereign, the latter as her betrothed. Though he is also a male figure, Achilles is in fact a challenger of the patriarchal-sovereign order by virtue of this homosocial rivalry over the control of Iphigenia's body. This is a case of what feminist theorists have called "the traffic in women."[144] In Irigaray's words,

> "The society we know, our own culture, is based upon the exchange of women, Without the exchange of women, we are told, we would fall back into the anarchy of the natural world, the randomness of the animal kingdom. The passage into the social order, into the symbolic order, into order as such, is assured by the fact that men, or groups of

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[143] Racine, *Iphigénie,* 1575-7.
« Qui ? Moi? Que contre un père osant me révolter,
Je mérite la mort, que j'irais éviter?
Où serait le respect? Et ce devoir suprême… »
[144] Gayle Rubin, "'The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex" in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, eds. Rayna R. Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 157-210; Luce Irigaray, *This Sex which is Not One,* trans. Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).

men, circulate women among themselves, according to a rule known as the incest taboo." [145]

In such exchange among men, wives, daughters, and sisters have and only have exchange value insofar as they are circulated among men.[146] Here, quite literally, we see that Iphigenia is trafficked and ultimately preserved, while Ériphile is rendered sacrificeable and eventually sacrificed. Ériphile is sacrificeable in this strictly heterosexual patriarchal order, whereas Iphigenia is not, because of Ériphile's abjected status as an illegitimate child, an unloved and unprotected woman, and a socially other(ed) war captive. In Barthes's words, "Ériphile *is* nothing; Iphigenia has everything."[147] Though the two Iphigenia seem to be in stark contrast, both of them are needed to sustain the absolute patriarchal order. Feminist readings of the play have explicitly pointed out that Iphigenia and Ériphile form a double.[148] While the good woman/bad woman dichotomy is widely deployed by Racine in his tragedies, nowhere else is the contrast starker and the political stakes more pronounced than in *Iphigénie.* As Véronique Desnain observes, this double is didactic in the sense that the presence of the "negative woman" is essential in defining the way we respond to the more prominent heroine. Where the secondary female character is 'bad', Desnain argues that one of her essential functions is that of the scapegoat, which allows the survival of the good woman despite the apparent odds stacked against her."[149] For Racine, Ériphile's jealousy of Iphigenia, who "is a sister" to her and "pities" her,[150] is a sin and needs to be punished. It signals both her lack of modesty and inappropriate desire, so that punishment—death—is what she justly deserves, while her obscure origin and captivated status ensures that such sacrifice does not threaten the Greek polity. Iphigenia, and most of all her body, is preserved in the narrative because she is Agamemnon's legitimate

[145] Irigary, *This Sex which is Not One*, 167.
[146] Irigary, *This Sex which is Not One*, 168.
[147] Barthes, *On Racine*, 108.
[148] Stanton, *The Dynamics of Gender in Early Modern France*, 75.
[149] Véronique Desnain, "Les Faux Miroirs: The Good Woman/Bad Woman Dichotomy in Racine's Tragedies," *The Modern Language Review* 96, no.1(January 2001), 40.
[150] Racine, *Iphigénie*, 411.

daughter, a princess of Argos, and the love-object of Achilles. As both a daughter and a subject, Iphigenia embodies familial piety and feminine virtue in the form of absolute obedience to the patriarch (or to use Barthes's term, the Father) and the king. In Stanton's words, *Iphigénie* ultimately "serves to "(re)construct and (re)affirm the differences between the 'good' and the 'bad' women according to seventeenth-century gender norms, analogously, between good and bad subjects of the absolutistic male-bounded state."[151]

Yet although Ériphile seems to be nothing like Iphigenia, as she is the social outsider of the Greek polity, she is simultaneously domesticated —colonized—within so that she could be a scapegoat, while at the same time remains distanced or alienated from it. In other words, she is not so much the absolute Other as actively *othered* and excluded. She must share enough similarities with the good woman to be recognized as one of "us" but at the same time remain fundamentally othered. This dynamic of othering within a broad perimeter of sameness is the civilizational logic that underwrites French imperialism and assumes significance in French imperialism. Colonial agents, especially missionaries, while upholding that "all mankind is one" under providence, also see Indigenous peoples as the savage Other that needs to be either domesticated and brought into civilization or sacrificed for the sake of the civilizing progress.[152] In Michael Harrigan's words, they are seen as social—and political—outsiders but spiritual insiders.[153]

Ériphile is not simply a scapegoat, as many—including feminist critics—suggest, but is paradoxically a subject of desire, which would imply agency and (transgressive) vitality, and a suicidal subject who renounces all desire, at the same time. Her body is thoroughly eroticized, and she is an

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[151] Stanton, *Dynamics*, 84.
[152] The early modern French saw Indigenous peoples' bodies as the same in nature as the French bodies, so that Indigenous peoples and the French could become one people through civilization. See Masarah Van Eyck, *"We Shall be One People": Early Modern French Perception of the Amerindian Body* (Montréal: McGill University PhD Dissertation, 2001). Assimilation is the central tenet of early modern French imperial ideology and colonial practices. I discuss this extensively in Chapter II.
[153] Michael Harrigan, *Frontiers of Servitude: Slavery Narratives of the Early French Atlantic* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2018*)*, 74-5.

erotized subject, whereas Iphigenia is not. What she embodies, in de Certeau's words, is "pure excess."[154] De Certeau argues that in Western travel literature since the sixteenth century, "the primitive" or "the savage" is always marked by such excess, which he observes as denoting pleasure and bliss that stands in the stark contrast of and disrupts reason and order. "The savage" and its erotized body is thought to embody the unmediated pleasure of desire, of desiring the unmediated. But here, Ériphile's desire becomes "pure excess" not as pleasure but as agony and suffering. In this sense, Racine departs from his contemporaries by refraining from the colonial fantasy of the return of the pristine and unmediated relation to pleasure, yet he crafts a different fantasy, an imperial fantasy in which the erotized and desiring "savage" woman is sacrificed to fuel the ambition of empire and consolidate sovereignty.

It is Ériphile's desire that makes her sacrificeable and seeks death. That the captivated—or rather colonized—feels erotic attachment to the conqueror or the colonized, finds immanent expression in settler-colonialism in particular, as it shrewdly erases the violence of (sexual) conquest and the would-be continued violence to maintain sexual and political domination. The sexual is political in the sense that political pacification takes place primarily through the pacification of women's bodies and cultivation of erotic attachment to the colonizer and the imperialist body-politic. This imperial fantasy of consent is projected back to the enslaved and colonized woman, who retrospectively legitimizes her own subjugation, as well as the whole colonial enterprise. She *would have* wanted to be captivated because she loves her conqueror *now*. Both sexual and political conquest is simultaneously erased and justified. Such narrated desire of the colonized of having wanted to be colonized, which is necessarily posited retrospectively, both reflects and contributes to France's imperial and settler-colonial agenda.

[154] Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 228.

To Desire is to Desire Death: From Sacrifice to Suicide

The political significance of sacrifice has not been lost, especially on those who work in the tradition of Greco-Roman-European thought. For example, in his psychoanalytic study of sacrifice, *La sacrifice: Repères psychanalytiques*, Guy Rosolato argues that sacrifice mainly serves to regulate guilt and aggression within a given society. His account is particularly relevant because he probes the relation between sacrifice and mythical origins as well as (sexual) desire, all of which Racine deploys in his play/text. Returning to the Oedipal complex, Rosolato suggests that the feeling of guilt emerges from the son's aggressive desire to kill his father and incestuous sexual desire to possess his mother, which causes the son to experience guilt vis-à-vis the father. Meanwhile, the father also experiences aggression against his male offspring, which leads the father to sacrifice his son.[155] Yet by only focusing on sons/male victims, Rosolato—and those who study sacrifice solely through the Oedipal complex—elides the gendered dimension of sacrifice, ignoring how gendered difference affects the ways in which sacrifice is conceived and practiced. This is also the case for those who do not dwell on the Oedipal complex, who argue that sacrifice is a powerful political tool to assuage masculine and monarchical (the two essentially converge) anxiety.[156] However, by confining the function of sacrifice within a closed society, such accounts ignore the imperial significance of sacrifice—how aggression is often turned outside as imperial and colonial efforts. Here I suggest that if we pay particular attention to the specific context in which a sacrifice takes place, especially in terms of gender relations and empire, we can get a different view of the political meaning of sacrifice—and suicide—in Racine's narrative, absolutist ideology, and French empire and settler colonialism. Sacrifice and desire are intrinsically linked together in this imperialist gender ideology.

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[155] Guy Rosolato, *La sacrifice: Repères psychanalytiques* (Paris : Presses universitaires de France, 2002).
[156] Kathleen P. Long (eds.), *High Anxiety;* Mitchell Greenberg, *Detours of Desire.*

Here, aggression is not regulated within a closed society but rather decidedly turned outward. As Greenberg notes, the Greeks form a community "united in a common goal and around a common leader, Agamemnon, whose sole purpose is the destruction of the Trojan state."[157] The sacrifice of Iphigenia would enable the Greek state, which is currently unravelled by chaos, "to maintain social cohesion by fixing the growing violence on an innocent victim, and, through her, on Troy."[158] But Iphigenia is unlike Oedipus, whose (unconscious) incestuous desire for his mother leads him to kill his father. As I have argued, Racine presents her as devoid of desire, and that ultimately makes her unsacrificieable.

Stanton notes that for Racine, (women's) desire is the primary cause for dis-order that needs to be contained in order for paternal and sovereign power to be consolidated.[159] As a result, desire is in principle gendered, and having desire that (necessarily) runs against the interests of paternal and sovereign power renders a woman sacrificeable, as the desire that is associated with women is already coded as transgressive and dangerous. While a thorough discussion of how gendered desire manifests in all Racinian tragedies is out of the scope of this chapter, we see in *Iphigénie* that the woman who embodies hyperbolic desire is sacrificeable and has to be sacrificed. It is precisely by eliding this gendered portrayal of desire in Racine that Barthes is able to proclaim that "what Racine expresses is alienation, not desire."[160] By this he means that alienation permeates and structures the Racianian universe, within which no one is the master of one's own destiny. What appears to be desire cannot be attributed to any individual character but is determined by the particular position one occupies and function one performs. Such alienation transcends any social and political context and underpins universal human existence. Yet as I have discussed earlier, the social and political

[157] Greenberg, *Racine*, 173.
[158] Greenberg, *Racine*, 173.
[159] Stanton, *Dynamics*, 79.
[160] Barthes, *On Racine*, 13.

context—seventeenth-century France—matters greatly in how Racine narrates these tragedies. As Goodkin contends, Racine's tragedies "reflect the changing the nature of French society" [161] that he lives through and witnesses. His narratives do not faithfully reproduce ancient Greek and Roman political or gender ideologies, but reflect the ascending absolutism in seventeenth-century France.

Ériphile, unlike Iphigenia, is marked by strong desire that renders her a threat to the Greek state. In the narrative, after confessing her passionate love for Achilles and jealousy of Iphigenia to her confidante Doris, she expresses her desire to die before it is discovered that she is the other Iphigenia that shall be sacrificed. In her last words she laments:

> "Ah! Let me die.
> Achilles' love, I see how strong it is.
> I'll not go off with unavailing hate.
> Reason no more. I'll kill her or be killed."[162]

Her attachment to Achilles, in other words, leads her to seek death. In this way she is portrayed as desiring death herself, and her propensity for death would later on render her sacrifice justifiable, thereby providing the final relief to the otherwise tragedy. While ultimately she is rendered sacrificiable and sacrificed in the name of the sovereignty of the Greek state, we see that her sacrifice is first and foremost legitimized because of her attachment to Achilles. It is this kind of desire that constitutes her as a sacrificiable-suicidal subject in the first place. Desire, in other words, is both the cause and effect of her sacrifice. It is what marks her as the "bad woman" and "bad subject" against Iphigenia. As Véronique Desnain observes, "one important feature of the 'bad woman' is her open expression of desire, which is seen as socially dangerous and reprehensible, and is often perceived as psychologically dysfunctional (hysterical), as are the active steps she takes to secure her individual happiness."[163] To have and pursue one's desire is enough ground to lead a woman to her own

[161] Goodkin, *Birthmarks,* 173.
[162] Racine, *Iphigénie,* 1488-1491.
[163] Desnain, "Les Faux Miroirs," 41.

demise because doing so makes her a threat to the patriarchal sovereign order. Her passionate attachment to Achilles intersects with her search for origin, as she attributes her misfortune in comparison to Iphigenia to her being an orphan:

> Iphigenia in her father's arms
> The idol of her haughty mother's love?
> And I, always exposed to dangers new,
> Placed among strangers from my earliest days
> Neither at birth nor later have I seen
> Mother or father ever smile on me.[164]

This leads her to lament that she does not know her origin and identity.[165] An oracle has pronounced that the only way for her to find out who she is for her to die (*que sans périr, je ne me puis connaître*).[166] Here, we see, Racine has already foreshadowed Ériphile's death by rhetorically linking desire and death, a link only exists because she is of obscure origin and a war captive.

Ériphile's attachment to Achilles is surely erotic. But it is also social and political. By desiring Achilles, she also desires to be incorporated into the Greek polity, as to be associated with Achilles would mean to become a social-insider. Yet paradoxically, the very polity that she desires to be incorporated in and to an extent submit to, which would ensure her life, is also the one that condemns her to death. Her desire and the attachments underwritten it, I contend, should not be read as universal forms of human longing, but instead should be understood as generated by her particular social-political status. Ironically, the only way that she could be incorporated into that polity is to die in its name (which is also how she finds out her origin) and therefore to ensure its future. While Racine's play/text also affirms the need to submit to sovereign power by highlighting the repercussions of failing to do so, he also shows that desire not directed at the perpetuation of one's life is perfectly intelligible and even necessary, as it helps to delimit the boundary of the polity

164 Racine, *Iphigénie*, 421-425.
165 Racine, *Iphigénie*, 427.
166 Racine, *Iphigénie*, 430.

and bifurcates between the 'good' and 'bad' subject. Such desire constitutes a kind of subject and subjectivity that is associated with punishment if not death. The very desire that makes the subject possible has already condemned her to death.

At the end of the narrative, having been brought to the altar, where the sacrifice would take place, Ériphile "rushes to the altar, grasps the sacred knife, plunges it in her breast."[167] As Ériphile has pronounced that she hopes to die, her suicide only actualizes that desire. Here we also see a subtle shift from sacrifice to suicide (sought after and enacted by herself at the end of the play). This kind of desire, one in which a captive outsider forms intense attachment to her colonizer-conqueror, makes her a suicidal subject. The subtle shift from sacrifice (enacted by the community to which she is an outsider) to suicide is also *made possible* because of the peculiar nature of such desire. By replacing Iphigenia with Ériphile, Racine also replaces sacrifice with the individualized act of suicide, and violence and coercion with (what appears to be) peace and consent. The Greek community and state—which Racine intends his audience to identify as French and which they would identify as such—thus clears itself of the murderous violence of a young woman, but still receives the desired goal of such violence. From her own perspective, Ériphile's suicide can be read as an act of rebellion. As Desnain puts it, it can be read as a "last ditch and futile attempt to define her own identity and reject her scapegoat status" and a "refusal to conform to the role ascribed to her."[168] In a heteropatriarchal-imperial order that relentlessly punishes women who desire, killing oneself becomes the only option to exert minimum control over oneself and demonstrate one's agency. Read in this way, it could be said that Racine in some sense affirms woman's agency, which critics have noticed is mostly absent in sacrifice stories.

[167] Racine, *Iphigénie*, 1775-6.
[168] Desnain, "Les Faux Miroirs," 41.

Jacques Derrida, for example, notes the gendered nature of sacrifice stories since antiquity. He suggests that women have already been excluded and sacrificed before sacrifice actually takes place. He asks:

> "Would the logic of sacrificial responsibility within the implacable universality of the law, of its law, be altered, inflected, attenuated or displaced, if a woman were to intervene in some consequential manner? Does the system of this sacrificial responsibility and of the double 'gift of death' imply at its very basis an exclusion or sacrifice of women? A woman's sacrifice or a sacrifice of women, according to one sense of the genitive or the other?"[169]

Immediately afterwards, Derrida also notes that in the case of the tragic hero or tragic sacrifice, "woman is decidedly present, her place is central."[170] Looking at *Iphigénie*, it does seem that women—Iphigenia, Ériphile and Clytemnestra—are central to the unfolding of the narrative. This may suggest that women's agency, and to an extent, desire, are the forces that propel the development of intense political conflicts portrayed in this narrative. However, as Julietta Singh observes, "sacrifice is a properly masculine realm, one through which female agency is concurrently sacrificed."[171] Though what Singh examines are anticolonial and postcolonial texts, her observation is illuminating here as well, showing that anticolonial and postcolonial theory (unfortunately but also not surprisingly) and colonial texts are underpinned by a similar gender ideology, one in which women are *agents but not agential*, meaning that they follow the orders of men to fulfill their function dictated by men.[172] Indeed we see that while Iphigenia and Ériphile are indispensable for Racine to narrate the tragic conflict between family and state, and the fragility of sovereign power, they remain largely vehicles of heteropatriarchy ideology.

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[169] Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of the Death,* 2nd Edition & *Literature in Secret*, trans. David Wills, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 76.
[170] Derrida, *The Gift of the Death*, 76.
[171] Julietta Singh, *Unthinking Mastery: Dehumanism and Decolonial Entanglements* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 41.
[172] Singh, *Unthinking Mastery*, 39.

The two Iphigenias, however, function differently, because they are attached to different objects and ideals. While Iphigenia attaches herself to the patriarchal-sovereign order to the extent that she seems completely subsumed, Ériphile is not merely a scapegoat but a subject of desire. However, it is precisely her desire(s)—for Achilles, to know her identity, and to be incorporated into the Greek social and political order—that render(s) her sacrificeable and makes her voluntarily seek to be sacrificed. She could be said to possess some kind of agency, but such agency is used by Racine to construct her as a sacrificeable-suicidal subject. By directing her passion and rage, initially aimed at Iphigenia and the Greeks, back onto herself, both Ériphile's body and desire are pacified in that they now align perfectly with the interest of the Greek state and its imperial agenda. What we are witnessing, I would suggest, is not an affirmative account of woman's agency and the transgressive power of women's desire, but a further closure of it. Nor should it be read as an example of woman's "death drive," an innate desire for self-destruction. Rather, the displacement of Ériphile's sacrifice with (voluntary) suicide does important ideological work. It is precisely her desires to know her origin and identity ("*qui suis-je")* that brings her close to death, and to be incorporated into the Greek polity, that make her seek death in order to preserve that polity and ensure its imperial triumph over its savage *other*. The preservation and consolidation of the body-politic, demands her death. Thus, by eliminating herself, Ériphile both eliminates the potential threat to the Greek state and resolves the political crisis, allowing the civilized Greeks to set off to eliminate their Oriental other. Her suicide, in other words, becomes the condition of possibility of this impending imperial war, of this outwardly projected aggression.

Ériphile's sacrifice-suicide releases Iphigenia from being sacrificed on the altar, therefore granting the would-be tragedy a happy ending. After all the stagnation and waiting,

> "The heavens open, and the lightning's flash
> Spreads sacred awe that reassures us all
> The soldier marvels, says that in a cloud
> Diana to the pyre descended, thinks

> The goddess rising through the soaring flames
> Carries to heaven our incense and our vows
> Then there's bustle to depart."[173]

The Greeks can finally set off to destroy Troy. Meanwhile, Iphigenia will wait for Achilles' return and marry him, as Agamemnon has promised.[174] Yet we are told that she alone "weeps over her enemy (*La seule Iphigénie dans ce commun bonheur pleure son ennemie*)."[175] She alone recognizes that though she has avoided being sacrificed, she remains an object to be trafficked from her father to her betrothed, a commodity that is used to seal the alliance between Agamemnon and Achilles and ultimately stabilize the sovereign order. As Desnain underscores, the altar is both the place for sacrifice and marriage in Racine's work.[176] Heterosexual marriage, in other words, can be read as a different kind of sacrifice. To be given for sacrifice and for marriage—as an object or commodity to be trafficked—both signal the lack of control over one's own body and fate, and the purpose is to consolidate a political order that excludes them. Having regained her life because of her absolute submission to the patriarchal-sovereign order and lack of desire, she still holds no control over her own life or body. While it might seem the two Iphigenias are worlds apart, it appears that the Iphigenia that gets to live realizes the commonalities shared between them. For both of them, death seems to be the only way for them to exert some degree of agency, though the consequence would ultimately benefit the system their acts would transgress. The sacrifice of the one and preservation of the other, in other words, both serves to consolidate the patriarchal-sovereign order and fulfills the imperial ambition of the Greek—and by extension the early modern French—state. Perhaps paradoxically, Racine highlights the political salience of woman's desire but ultimately forecloses its

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[173] Racine, *Iphigénie*, 1783-1789.
[174] While Racine's play/text ends with the death of Ériphile, we know that in Greek mythology and in ancient Greek plays, Achilles dies in Troy and does not return.
[175] Racine, *Iphigénie*, 1790.
[176] Véronique Desnain, "At the Altar: Marriage and/or Sacrifice in Racine," *Seventeenth-Century French Studies* 18, no.1 (1996), 159.

disruptive and resistant power. Nonetheless, the narrative shows that desire is central to the articulation of an imperialist gender ideology, a political language, in seventeen-century France and French Empire.

Conclusion

Racine's *Iphigénie* was performed to celebrate the King's most recent imperial conquest in France while gender relations were undergoing drastic changes in Canada under colonial intrusion. Rather than suggesting that there is a direct causal relation between the gender ideology emerging from this play and settler colonial strategies on the ground, the gender ideology that I have teased out from the play/text gives us a lens to examine early modern imperial politics of gender. I contend that this gender ideology in which female bodies and female desire are central is also an imperial ideology in the sense that the state/empire also rests on the containment of female bodies and regulation of female desire, as well as the bifurcation between the good and bad daughter, good and bad subject, one marked by (transgressive) desire and the other the lack thereof. It is the very condition of empire that produces the distinction between the good and bad woman, the very kind of desire that constitutes the 'savage' woman as a sactificeable subject because she necessarily would desire 'wrongly.' The very desire that enables the 'bad woman' to exist in the first place also condemns her to death through either sacrifice or suicide, or the subtle shift from the former to the latter. Also paradoxically, the only way for her to demonstrate her agency, ends up fulfilling the mandate of empire. What Racine narrates, then, is an ideological foreclosure of the disruptive, let alone resistant, force of desire. Such foreclosure makes this articulation of desire ideological, as it does not describe a reality that is "out there," but signals the emergence of a political language that projects a reality that does not exist yet into being. In this imperialist gendered articulation of desire, to desire is not to desire life or *jouissance* (which implies both joy and possession), but to be relegated

to death. Such discursive production iterates the imperial fantasy of consent by both erasing the at once sexual and political conquest, and justifying the pacification and annihilation of the foreign woman that poses a danger to the at once domestic and imperial body-politic.

The ideology that I reconstruct from Racine's play/text captures powerful aspects of Racine's historical and ideological context. Racine's encapsulates a salient way in which desire and sovereignty, desire and empire, are articulated in close relation to each other. Therefore, on the one hand, it reflects desire as a politically charged and cogent force in contemporaneous French imperial and colonial practices; on the other hand, it gives us a compelling interpretive lens to dissect the relation between desire and empire, and examine how it plays out, runs short, or is disrupted, in those practices. As an ideology, which is a coherent and enclosed system, it seeks to contain, to limit, to give particular form to how desire matters and is supposed to matter politically.

Though Racine forecloses the disruptive and resistant force of (women's) desire, many have argued, both philosophically and historically speaking, desire and subjectivity produced by power always exceeds its intention.[177] While we have seen that desire and its regulation are central in early modern imperial ideology, in the next chapter, I will explore the cultivation of desire as a mode of gender re-subjectivation that both enables the production of a certain kind of subject and means to institute power and domination on it. While the colonial agents intended to produce obedient subjects and docile bodies, and to actualize colonial subjugation, their investment in the cultivation of desire also enabled Indigenous women to practice particular kinds of agency and self-making that disrupts such intensions and escaped the purview of settler-colonial subjugation. While the cultivation of desire on the surface produced female subjects who embodied religious piety and

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[177] See for example, Ranajit Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, (New York: Colombia University Press, 1994); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990); *The Psychic Life of Power: Essays on Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

exceptional obedience, I develop an interpretive framework that locates how Indigenous women pursued their self-making and practiced agency, sustaining their attachment to (home)land, community, the non-human and the spiritual world.

Chapter 3. "*Elles ont laisse leur humeur Sauvage à la porte*:"[178] The Settler-Colonial Education of Nature and Desire

Introduction

In the previous chapter I reconstructed an emerging gender ideology that coalesced around the bifurcation between the 'good, domestic' woman and the 'bad, barbarian' woman and the sacrificeablity of the latter's body in early modern French literary productions. In this chapter I turn to look at how Indigenous peoples' bodies and embodiment became the focal points of colonial practices: the logic of what I have called "the imperial fantasy of consent" was playing out in actual colonial activities in roughly the same period. I examine the various interventions the colonial agents deployed to educate and discipline the very "nature" of Indigenous peoples by cultivating their mind and reason, as well as reconditioning their bodies, in seventeenth-century *Nouvelle-France*. As Ann Laura Stoler puts it, such education is the education of desire.[179] Stoler mainly examines the colonial management of sexuality and how it intersected with race and class. Instead, I focus the actual education of Indigenous peoples, primarily children: the training and instruction they received from missionaries intended to make them embody Christianity and rid them of any trace of Indigeneity.

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[178] "They left their savage nature at the door." Letter from Marie Guyart to Paul Le Jeune, JR, 19 (1640), 53.
[179] Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*: *Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995).

This process was at once about "Francisation," "civilization," and Christianization in the early days of *Nouvelle-France*.[180]

I argue that the education of desire rests on the premise that the very "nature" of Indigenous peoples can be radically reshaped so that they would come to desire different objects and ideals and form different attachments. Nature is an unstable signifier that is evoked to refer to both the cause and effect of civilization and colonization, through which the very disposition of "the Savages" would be remade entirely so that they would no longer betray any "savage traits." Colonial agents aimed to bring this vision into reality through the various means they created and deployed to make Indigenous peoples consent to their own subjection.[181] In other words, the key to the cultivation of desire, understood as affective and embodied attachment, is the molding of nature.

As many have noted, nature is a loaded concept that is evoked to mean many different things. It is politically charged when surfacing in colonial discourses since the early modern period. As Anthony Pagden explains, "Any judgment on the nature of the Indians…[h]ad thus to have its origin in a scheme which offered an explanation for the structure of the whole world of nature and the behaviour of everything, animate or inanimate, within it. Any attempt to introduce a new element

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[180] George F.G. Stanley, « The Policy of 'Francisation' as Applied to the Indians During the Ancien Régime, » *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 3, no.3 (December 1949), 333-348 ; Nadia Fahmy-Eid, "L'éducation des filles chez les Ursulines de Québec souls le Régime Français," in *Maitresses de maison, maitresses d'école : Femmes, famille et éducation dans l'histoire du Québec* (Montréal : Boréal Express, 1983), 49-76; Vincent Grégoire, « L'éducation Des Filles Au Convent Des Ursulines De Québec à L'époque De Marie De L'incarnation (1639-1672) », *Seventeenth-Century French Studies* 17, no.1 (1995), 87-98.

[181] Although it is well beyond the scope of this chapter or even this dissertation, we should bear in mind that the period that saw the inception and rapid expansion of French imperialism coincided with the intellectual development of French constitutionalist thought, at the heart of which is exploration of what entails consent of being ruled by the monarch and when is it justifiable to revolt. The latter is also related to a political discourse that positioned the French as descendants of the colonized—the Gauls—of the Roman Empire. French political thinkers of this camp were keen to develop a new political vocabulary that justifies—and erases—imperial conquest and colonialism by recourse to consent, to differentiate themselves from their former colonizers. See Sara E. Melzer, *Colonizer or Colonized*. On French constitutionalist thought, see François Hotman, *Francogallia* (*La Gaule française)* (Paris: Fayard, 1991[1573]); Julian H. Franklin, *Constitutionalism and Resistance in the Sixteenth Century: Three Treatises by Hotman, Beza, and Mornay* (New York: Pegasus, 1969); Quinten Skinner, *Foundations of Modern Political Thought, Vol.2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978). I have sought to map out how consent is deeply intertwined with an emerging gendered ideology in Chapter 2.

into that scheme could, if ill-conceived, threaten the whole."[182] Early modern explorers, travelers, colonists, missionaries, and "learned men"—theologians, philosophers, and university professors—came up with essentialist accounts of Indigenous peoples, in one way or another. Their behavior, ways of living, (the lack of) culture, and society, can and should all be explained by their very nature.

Meanwhile, Indigenous peoples were conceived as natural—*sauvage*—in early modern European thought differently. Prominent European theologians and philosophers resorted to Aristotelian categories, which were upheld by Thomas Aquinas and remained orthodox among early modern European theologians and missionaries, to categorize and conceptualize Indigenous peoples as "natural children" who displayed what humanity *would have* looked like at the beginning of civilization. It suggests that Indigenous peoples had rational minds but were confined in the darkness for too long so that their rational faculty remained immature and, therefore, ought to fall under the paternalistic guidance and education of their European masters.[183] This conceptualization, which persisted through the following centuries, would also morph. For instance, in the first edition of the Dictionnaire de l'Académie of France, published in Paris in 1694, the term "Sauvage" is defined as "certain people who live in the woods, without religion, without laws, without permanent dwelling and more like beasts than men."[184] Being natural would primarily come to mean that Indigenous peoples as pre-civilization, devoid of proper social and political organizations. Education—cultivating their mind, which was at once civilization and conversion, was seen as the primary justifiable means of colonization.

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[182] Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 28.

[183] Pagden, Chapter 4, "From nature's slaves to nature's children." Francisco de Vitoria, a prominent theologian and a professor at the University of Salamanca, came up with the most elaborated account of why Indigenous peoples were natural children and the implications for European conquest in a lecture titled "De Indis" that he delivered in 1539. See Francisco de Vitoria, *Political Writings*, ed. Anthony Pagden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[184] « Se dit…de certains Peuples qui vivent dans les bois, sans religion, sans loix, sans habitation fixe, & plustost en bestes qu'en hommes. » *Dictionnaire de L'Académie française, édition première* (Paris, 1694). Online entry see https://www.dictionnaire-academie.fr/article/A1S0073

Both of these connotations of "nature" would survive and continue to define Indigenous peoples in European and settler-colonial imaginaries. While the second connotation has been tied to Indigenous peoples specifically, the first refers to the *Other*—in terms of culture/civilization, religion, race, and gender--more broadly. The nature of the *Other* is most often cast in an essentialist manner; in other words, to speak of the nature of someone or a people is to come up with an essentialist account of it, which is mainly used in a degrading and pejorative manner. As feminist theorist Stacy Alaimo summarizes,

> "the idea that there is such a thing as the 'nature' of something is a type of essentialism, a philosophical or commonsensical belief in some sort of essence, core identity, or characteristic that defines an individual or group as such. An essentialist notion of say, woman's nature, would assert a quintessence of woman, that could presumably be delineated. Both sexism and racism have been fueled by essentialist beliefs that women, as well as other groups, such as people of African descent or indigenous peoples, are inferior due to their unchanging, core 'natures,' which exist in a realm apart from histories of colonialism, economic systems, ideologies, or other social and discursive formations."[185]

Unsurprisingly, critical theorists writing from different vantage points have argued—and have arrived at a consensus—that to speak of a "nature" is to advance a kind of essentialism, which serves to justify colonialism, racism, sexism, heteropatriarchy, ableism, etc.

In a different vein, Stoler has pointed out that in colonial archives, essence or nature does not necessarily denote fixed nature but can instead be understood as *ascribed*, as producing "the categories of things that are thought to exist or can exist in any specific domain, and the specific attributes assigned to them."[186] Rather than implying stability and fixity, essence can be understood as "protean, not fixed, subject to reformulation again and again."[187] In other words, it is not *a priori* but *produced* in and through colonial epistemes that seek to name, classify, and stabilize social and

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[185] Stacy Alaimo, "Nature" in *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, ed. Lisa Disch and Mary Hawkesworth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 530.
[186] Ann Laura Stoler, *Against the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 4, emphasis original.
[187] Stoler, *Against*, 4.

political phenomena. Stoler points out that attending to the historicity of essence reveals the epistemic habits and anxiety of colonial administration, which sheds new light on the production of colonial archives, the object of her study. I contend that historicizing essence not only sheds light on colonial episteme and the production of colonial archives but also tells us much about colonial ideology and management, about concrete colonial practices that sought to produce, stabilize, and manipulate nature. Nature is protean, not only in the sense that its meaning changes throughout time. As I will show, the double connotations of Indigenous 'nature' reveal two different—if not contradicting—understandings of nature.

Since the missionaries were the primary colonial agents in this early period of settler-Indigenous interaction during which settler-colonial rule had not been consolidated and they left the most abundant written documents, I closely read these missionary reports from this period, particularly the *Jesuit Relations* and Ursuline Marie Guyart's letters. I approach the discourse of conversion and civilization these texts reveal as a site of colonial knowledge-production and development of colonial power rather than evidence of historical facts and truths. I argue that colonial education as envisioned, designed, and carried out by the missionaries, reveals an understanding of Indigenous peoples' nature as at once essentialized and malleable. Colonial domination is justified on the ground of Indigenous peoples' uncivilized nature. This rhetoric also actively depoliticizes Indigenous social and political organizations and practices by relegating them to the realm of 'nature' and customs. Indigenous social and political orders are all simply conceived as natural—that is, unmediated by rules, laws, thought, or political deliberations.

Meanwhile, missionaries used nature, disposition, and *humeur* interchangeably. As I will show, this usage testifies to an understanding of nature as thoroughly embodied and explains why missionaries subscribed to an understanding of nature as thoroughly malleable through the re-conditioning and disciplining of bodies. Paradoxically, the missionaries' investment in education

showed that what was conceived as the "nature" of Indigenous peoples needed to be brought into being through stringent—in other words, *un*natural—colonial intervention and repetitive disciplines. My analysis makes clear that while the missionaries' avowed goal is to "save souls" and their endeavour is often framed as "harvest of souls," the actual strategies they designed and deployed primarily targeted Indigenous peoples' bodies and embodied affect. The soul and the mind are understood as embodied, that is, consciousness and subjectivity are shaped through the regulation of the body.[188]

The actual measures the missionaries deployed vary both temporally and geographically, as the missionaries had to constantly improvise and adjust their plans when many of their strategies ran into dead-ends. Education took place both inside and outside of seminary walls, and formal seminary education was but a small part of what colonial education entailed. These measures served to remove Indigenous children from Indigenous spaces and ways of inhabiting such spaces to settler spaces and 'civilized' ways of being-in-the-world, so that Indigenous bodies would be *disposed* toward settler spaces, colonial authorities, and the settler-colonial project as a whole. Although the scale of early modern settler-colonial education was much more limited compared to subsequent state-led investments culminating in residential and boarding schools in various settler states, there has been considerable continuity as well as difference. I contend that closely examining settler-Indigenous interaction in this early period illuminates both continuity and potential rupture in the development of settler-colonial power.

[188] This effectively challenges the mind-body dualism that is most often associated with René Descartes in modern philosophy. While it is beyond the scope of this chapter, we see that as Cartesianism was gaining ascendency in European intellectual circles, there were competing understandings of the relation between mind and body. It is also interesting to note that Descartes was educated at the exact same Jesuit college—La Flèche--where many early missionaries to Nouvelle-France were educated at and he spoke fondly of his time there. New(er) interpretations of Descartes and Cartesianism have questioned the rigid mind-body dualism and many have placed the body back in Cartesian consciousness. See for example, Susan Bordo, eds, *Feminist Interpretations of René Descartes* (College Park: Pennsylvania State University, 2000); Judith Butler, "How Can I Deny That These Hands and This Body Are Mind?" in *Senses of the Subject* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 17-35.

I suggest that the missionaries' vision rested on a *recursive logic*: that Indigenous peoples, having been 'civilized,' would have consented to the coercive and often violent ways in which they were educated that made them so. Within this discursive formation, it is not simply that Indigenous peoples were represented as being attached to their subjugation; more importantly, they *have had had already consented* to such subjugation because, as already 'civilized' beings, they *would have* chosen and consented to civilization and refused 'savagery.' Indigenous peoples would not simply consent to colonial domination but also *desire*—be attached to—their own subjugation.

In other words, in this colonial ideology, the *effect* of colonization is posited as the cause so that civilization is something that cannot be refused and consent is already presumed—they would know that colonization was for their good had they been colonized, so that colonization would be something they had consented to.[189] The subjectivity produced by colonization is used to justify the means and cause of colonization. The effect then further justifies the cause and the means, and conquest and coercion are thereby thoroughly erased. The double connotations of nature is what made settler-colonial education—and settler colonialism as a whole—*at once* genocidal, dispossessive, and assimilatory.

This chapter is structured as follows: first I explain why education assumed tremendous importance in the early period of settler-colonial rule in Nouvelle-France. I then move to a detailed discussion of Jesuit education of Indigenous boys and Ursuline education of Indigenous girls in formal educational–seminary–settings, followed by an exploration of how education was carried out in Indigenous villages and mission settlements respectively. I weave together missionaries' descriptions and reflections of their practices to tease out a colonial ideology hinged on the complete transformation of Indigenous peoples' nature through re-conditioning of their bodies and affect. As

[189] C. Heike Schotten makes the point that civilization is something that cannot be refused through her reading of Hobbes' *Leviathan*. See Schotten, *Queer Terror: Life,* Death, and Desire in a Settler Colony (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

we will see shortly, the missionaries frequently used the metaphor of domesticating animals to describe this process of radical re-shaping of nature. It should be clear by the end of my discussion that settler-colonial education of desire ultimately amounts to cultural genocide, premised on the radical eradication of Indigeneity.

Settler-Colonial Power in Seventeenth-Century *Nouvelle-France*

In the early period of settlement, when the colony was but a trading post, epistemic devices were especially critical to colonial attempts to consolidate settler-colonial power. Systematic colonial efforts in *Nouvelle-France* only started with the arrival of the Jesuits in 1632. The Jesuits received the monopoly over missionary activities from Cardinal Richelieu, the principal minister of the young Louis XIII, and acted as fervent apostles of empire.[190] Similar enthusiasm for apostolic visions of empire characterized the *femmes religieuses* who came to *Nouvelle-France*, at the request of colonial missionaries shortly after. The majority of the texts I examine span from the 1630s, when the Jesuits and Ursulines first arrived in Canada, to the early 1670s. *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents* are the most commonly used historical sources in studies of *Nouvelle-France* and French Empire in North America. These include the official *Relations*, which were published and sold publicly in France to raise money for the mission(s); the *Journals*, which were only available to the Jesuit authorities in Europe and not intended for the public eye; and other miscellaneous private letters addressed by individual Jesuits to their authorities in Europe. The *JR* gives us a valuable pathway to examine how the French made sense of Indigenous peoples and the Indigenous world they set foot upon and immersed themselves in. While previously scholars often used these reports as ethnohistorical evidence of Indigenous cultures and customs, more recent scholarly work has acknowledged that these texts, intending to produce authoritative colonial knowledge, were integral to colonial politics

[190] Bronwen McShea, *Apostles of Empire: The Jesuits and New France* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019).

and were meant to further the Jesuits' particular goals that deeply intertwined with colonization.[191] Building on this turn, I read the JR in tandem with writings by *les femmes religieuses*, which provide more insight into the gendered dynamic of colonial encounter and interactions. Marie Guyart, in particular, wrote hundreds of letters to her son, Claude Martin and her sisters of the Ursuline order in Tours, from 1626 until her death in 1672, on topics that mainly concerned her own spiritual journey and her missionary work with Indigenous girls and women. Most of her letters are thus of a private nature,[192] though she also wrote public reports that were included in the *Relations*.

As many historians have argued, French imperial power in *Nouvelle-France* and in the Americas generally in this period—in terms of military force, administrative capacity, and simply demography—was both limited and fragile, lacking the means to (sufficiently) conquer, or compel Indigenous peoples by force.[193] Guha's observation is applicable to Nouvelle-France: colonial agents depended on education to engender consent, to pacify and domesticate Indigenous peoples, and more importantly, to narrate such pacification and domestication *as if* Indigenous peoples had consented to their own subjugation.[194]

The comparative weakness of French imperial power makes it all the more crucial to examine the discourse that the colonial agents put forward and empirical practices they deployed in attempting to bring what I have articulated in the previous chapter as an "imperial fantasy of consent" into reality. By discourse, I do not mean only language or linguistic representation, but a distinct way in which power and knowledge are joined together. In Foucault's words, "power and

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[191] I discuss the decolonial methodology I engage with in reading these letters and reports in the Introduction of the dissertation.

[192] After Guyart's death, her son, Claude Martin, published the letters she wrote to him, along with a spiritual biography that she had authored. Contrary to his own claim, both the letters and the biography were heavily edited by him to make Guyart's life and thought better comply with the rigid norms imposed on religious women by the Council of Trent. See Mary Dunn, "'But an Echo?': Claude Martin, Marie de L'Incarnation, and Female Religious Identity in Seventeenth-Century New France," *The Catholic Historical Review* 100, no. 3 (2014), 459-485.

[193] Richard White, *The Middle Ground*; Michael Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press); James Pritchard, *In Search of Empire*.

[194] Ranajit Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony*.

knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations."[195] Here I explore the specific "field of knowledge," or epistemic regime, regarding Indigenous peoples' 'nature,' in the founding and consolidating period of settler-colonial rule in *Nouvelle-France*.

Missionaries—especially the Jesuits—identified and often resorted to cultural differences to explain the slow or lack of progress in the early days of the mission(s). They were also convinced there is a universal humanity that Indigenous peoples share with Europeans and Christians, a view rooted in the Thomist philosophical understanding of humanity that the Jesuits ascribed to.[196] It is precisely this belief that justified colonial education and conversion and gave rise to fervent Jesuit apostolic activities, the goal of which is to eradicate this temporal gap, bringing Indigenous peoples 'up to speed' with the advanced stage of civilization the French has achieved so that they could become 'one people.'[197] The logical conclusion of this particular understanding of Indigenous peoples' "nature" is that all differences, no matter how immense they appear at present, would eventually be eradicated. Yet while colonial agents use their supposed cultural 'backwardness' to deny Indigenous peoples' capacity for self-government and sovereignty and to justify colonial domination, it is never envisioned that once Indigenous peoples "catch up" and inhabit the same temporality as the French, they would be able to govern themselves and (re)claim sovereignty. They would by then have already been domesticated and educated as colonial subjects, meaning that colonial subjection would not only be the political reality but also be that which characterizes their subjectivity—what they *have consented to* and simply who they *are*.

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[195] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol.1, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 27.
[196] See Quentin Skinner, *Foundations, vol.2*, 169.
[197] Samuel de Champlain, the 'founder' of the colony of Québec, once told the Wendat, "we shall be one people." I discuss this more in Chapter 5.

Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak has pointed out that the "civilizing mission" of colonization relies on the "rejection of affect," which "served and serves as the energetic and successful defense of the civilizing mission."[198] Such rejection of affect—the sensing, emotive, embodied, desiring dimensions of existence—by the colonizer, she argues, not only constructs affect as itself barbarous and so threatening to civilization, but also identifies affect solely with the colonized (whom she calls "the native informant"), who is then constructed as abnormal, dependent, irrational, and pathological.[199] Yet such rejection precisely testifies to the preoccupation the colonial agents have with affect and the *affective*—desire, emotion, subjectivity, which is always already coded as pathological, either as the *excess* of civilization, or as the manifestation of nature as that which is outside of civilization. It was not enough to reject affect; rather, the affective itself--or the nature from which various forms of affect emanate--needed to be regulated and reshaped to cure the pathology of both the mind and the body.[200]

Some scholars have argued that the colonial educational approaches in this period were accommodationist or additive because the missionaries tolerated Indigenous differences and some learned and used Indigenous languages in their instruction.[201] Historians have also noted that French imperial power was particularly weak in the Americas, although the French Empire saw great territorial expansion through the course of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. At the height of its power, the territory it claimed stretched from the Saint Lawrence River Valley all the way to Louisiana (see figures 1 and 2). Scholars have pointed out that French accommodations with

[198] Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 6.
[199] Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, 49.
[200] Some historians have noticed the relevance of emotions and missionaries' investment in regulating emotions in the mission contexts. See the edited volume, *Emotions and Christian Missions, Historical Perspectives*, eds. Claire McLisky, Daneil Midena and Karen Vallgarda (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).
[201] Marcel Trudel, *Les écolières des Ursulines de Québec 1639-1686, Amérindiennes et Canadiennes* (HMH : Montréal, 1999); Mairi Cowan, "Education, Francisation, and Shifting Colonial Priorities at the Ursuline Convent in Seventeenth-Century Québec," *The Canadian Historical Review* 99, no.1 (March 2018), 1-29.

Indigenous peoples as a distinct feature of French settler-colonialism. While accommodation may appear as the opposite of assimilation, I suggest instead that the former was a means to the latter. Missionaries attempted to master Indigenous languages and understand Indigenous cultural and social practices only to facilitate and accelerate their civilizing progress. Hence, these early pedagogical designs and practices, and the overall colonial ideology, reveal more continuity with, rather than a contrast to, later state-led assimilationist and genocidal efforts.

Reconditioning Nature: The Education of Desire and the Disciplining of the Body

While Foucault (in)famously named schools as one of the main institutions of disciplinary power—along with, notably, barracks, factories, and prisons[202]many scholars have noted that education was integral to the civilizing missions in many parts of the colonized world. Some have argued that education was a means to disseminate "modern, Western knowledge,"[203] which further justified their imperial and colonial presence.[204] It was also used to train industrial laborers and thus was closely connected to the question of citizenship.[205] Specifically in settler-colonial settings, education had a rather distinct and what could be said a more fundamental function: to produce civilized imperial subjects by reforming the minds and bodies of colonized peoples.[206] Though Foucault pinpoints the emergence of school as a critical disciplinary institution in the eighteenth century, and many post-colonial scholars characterize colonial education as a nineteenth-century product, Domna Stanton contends that "schools and their pedagogical ideology are crucial to the formation of the disciplined, docile subject in the post-modern era, as it was in the early modern

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[202] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1995).
[203] Sanjay Seth, *Subject Lessons: The Western Education of Colonial India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).
[204] E. Patricia Tsurumi, *Japanese Colonial Education in Taiwan, 1895-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977); Scott Simon, "Making Natives: Japan and the Creation of Indigenous Formosa," in *Japanese Taiwan: Colonial Rule and its Contested Legacy,* Andrew D. Morris, eds. (London: Bloomsbury, 2015); Sarah Steinbock-Pratt, *Educating the Empire: American Teachers and Contested Colonization in the Philippines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).
[205] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006).
[206] Anna Haebich, *For their own good: Aborigines and Government in the Southwest of Western Australia* (Crawley: UWAP, 1992); T.J. Tallie, *Queering Colonial* Natal, chapter 5; David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (Kansas City: University of Kansas, 2020), 2nd edition.

French state."[207] Seventeenth-century French pedagogy, Stanton argues, was closely linked to Counter-Reformation confessional practices and thus had a marked religious dimension.[208] Indeed, many early modern European religious orders, including the Jesuits and the Ursulines, were known for their dedication to education. Subsequent development in European colonial education is deeply indebted to this earlier period. The Jesuit educational model is particularly influential even today, whereas the Ursuline model has profoundly impacted girls' and women's education.[209]

The advent of religious education in the seventeenth century also brought debates regarding the education of girls to the fore. French intellectuals of the time disagreed vehemently on what kind of education girls can and should receive, if any, at all.[210] Yet despite such disagreements, they all shared the same philosophical belief that education should conform to women's nature that is categorically distinct from that of men, so that both sexes could fulfill their *natural* function within the family, society, and the state. In contrast, I want to stress that settler-colonial education, which was at once conversion and civilization, was guided by a completely different ethos and had a completely different goal. Rather than complying with the "nature" of Indigenous peoples, the avowed purpose of the architects of colonial education was to drastically *reshape* Indigenous peoples'

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207 Domna Stanton, *Dynamics*, 89.
208 Stanton, *Dynamics*, 89-90.
209 Robert Schwickerath, J*esuit Education: Its History and Principles, Viewed in the Light of Modern Educational Problems* (Freiburg: B. Herder, 1903); Cristiano Casalini, "The Jesuits," in Henrik Lagerlund and Benjamin Hill, ed., *Routledge Comparison to Sixteenth Century Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 159-188; Marie de Saint Jean Martin, Mother, *Ursuline Method of Education* (Rahway, NJ: Quinn & Boden Company, 1946); Danielle Culpepper, "'Our Particular Cloister': Ursulines and Female Education in Seventeenth-Century Parma and Piacenza," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 36, no. 4 (2005), 1017-1037; Emily Clark, *Masterless Mistresses: The New Orleans Ursulines and the Development of a New World Society, 1727-1834 (*Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 2007).
210 See for example, Francois de Salignac de la Mothe-Fenelon, *Traité de l'Éducation des filles*, edited by Emile Faguet (Paris, 1933[1687]); Poulain de la Barre (*De l'égalité des deux sexes: Discours physique et moral où l'on voit l'importance de se défaire des préjugés*, Paris: Jean du Puis. 1673); (*De l'éducation des dames pour la conduite de l'esprit, dans les sciences et dans les moeurs: Entretiens*, Paris: Jean du Puis, 1674); *Three Cartesian Feminist Treatises*, introduction by Marcelle Maistre; translated by Vivien Bosley Welch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002). On girls' education in seventeenth-century France, see Jean Perrel, « Les écoles de filles dans la France d'Ancien Régime" in *The Making of Frenchmen : Current Directions in the History of Education in France, 1679-1979*, dirigé par Donald N. Baker et Patrick J. Harrigan (Waterloo: Historical Reflections Press, 1980), 75-84.

'nature' by redisposing their bodies and reconditioning their desire. This is also reflected in how the missionaries treated Indigenous and French students differently in the colony.

The Jesuits were well-known for being adamant in upholding theological orthodoxy as well as for having a standardized and elaborate educational design. By the seventeenth-century, at the height of the Counter-Reformation, the Jesuits had made themselves famous for being the finest teachers of Europe, which was a major reason why Richelieu assigned them the task of proselytizing to Indigenous peoples. *Ratio Studiorum*, the single most important document of Jesuit education, was rectified in 1599, and since then became the standard curriculum of all Jesuit schools in Europe. This model was imported to *Nouvelle-France*, wherein a single missionary would be solely responsible for a group of students he could gather. In European Jesuit schools, students first learn Lower Grammar; Middle Grammar; Upper Grammar; Humanities, which included history, geography, and studies of Greek classics; and Rhetoric, which aims to cultivate perfect eloquence in each student. They would then move into the study of philosophy, which typically lasts three and half years. In the first year, students take introduction and logics; the second year moves on to the study of natural philosophy, including physics, cosmology, and astronomy; and last students study metaphysics, psychology, and moral philosophy. Mathematics also run parallel with philosophy instruction.[211] In philosophy, Aristotle was retained as *the* standard author, while Aquinas's interpretation of Aristotle, in other words, Thomist scholastic Aristotelianism, remained authoritative, and as we will see soon, deeply influenced the conceptual framework through which the Jesuits made sense of the unfamiliar land and peoples they encountered. Each student was assigned his own teacher, who was in charge of teaching all subjects and oversaw the student's entire journey.

[211] Robert Schwickerath, J*esuit Education*.

Meanwhile, the Jesuits also adjusted—and had to adjust to—local conditions wherever they went to 'spread the gospel.'[212] Such was the case in *Nouvelle-France*. The Jesuits reinterpreted religious and theoretical principles in the course of their experiences and interactions with Indigenous peoples. They certainly had to make significant adjustments to the content of what they were teaching in the colony, though the principles were aligned with those of *Ratio*. More importantly, this dialectical process of interchange between philosophical principles and colonial reality gave rise to a distinct ideology, at the center of which is the conviction that Indigenous peoples could be remolded through education to the extent that they would stop being Indigenous altogether. For the Jesuits, education, which was religious in nature, entailed above all moral conditioning and habit forming through the re-disposition of the body. In this colonial ideology that directly grew out of colonial experiences, the education of desire was conceived as an embodied process. While Aristotle's political taxonomy enabled early modern theologians and philosophers to conceptualize Indigenous peoples as natural children, there was another important strand of Aristotelian thinking that influenced the concrete practices of missionaries, especially the Jesuits: namely, his moral philosophy concerning nature, disposition, and habit. Though the Jesuits did not directly quote Aristotle, the influence of Aristotelian moral philosophy was quite clear in their discussion of education.[213] This was the primary philosophical resource they drew from and attempted to apply to the new peoples and landscapes they encountered.

Unlike the Jesuits, the Ursuline (and other religious women orders[214]) Sisters received limited, informal education that was practical in orientation. The Ursulines arrived in Canada for the

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[212] See, for example, John W. O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge Harvard University Press, 1995); John Patrick Donnelly, S.J., eds. & trans, *Jesuit Writings of the Early Modern Period, 1540-1640* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2006); Takao A*be, The Jesuit Mission to New France*; Micah True, *Masters and Students*.

[213] Robert Schwickerath, *Jesuit Education;* John W. O'Malley, *The First Jesuits*; Paul F. Grendler, "Philosophy in Jesuit Schools and Universities," in *Jesuit Philosophy on the Eve of Modernity*, eds. Cristiano Casalini (Brill: Leiden, 2019), 11-33.

[214] These include groups such as the Augustinian and the Congrégation de Notre Dame, which were primarily medical orders in which the nuns mostly took charge of tending the sick. But the nuns also took some Indigenous girls as boarders in their hospital. They baptized the first Indigenous nun. I will discuss her story later in this chapter.

explicit purpose of educating girls: their pronounced apostolic ambition was "civilizing" and educating "*les petite filles sauvages*." In their Constitution, ratified in Québec in 1647, it clearly states that : "The particular devotion of the Ursulines of this country, as long as they remain there, is that their fourth vow extends more to Indigenous girls (*filles sauvages*)."[215] Educating Indigenous girls remained the central maxim of the Ursuline endeavor in Canada—only in the early 1720s was the clause "I dedicate education to Indigenous little girls" « *Je voue instruction aux petite filles sauvages* » removed from their vow.[216] This partly reflected the shifting priorities of the order, and partly suggested that such strong commitment did not yield the outcome they desired. Although we do not have exact information on what pedagogical manuals they used, we know that the ones they could have used were those circualting in France at the time, including : *le Petit alphabet, le Grand Alphabet, Le Psautier, les Pensées Chrétiennes, Bienséance et civilité chrétienne, l'Introduction à la Vie dévote, le Pédagogue, Civilité chrétienne, Bienséance et civilité chrétienne, l'Instruction de la Jeunesse, le Petit Office de Norte Dame, les Manuscrits et les Contrats, le Nouveau Testament, le Catéchisme*, etc.[217] As we can tell from the titles of these manuals, a girl's education was largely religious in orientation, with some emphasis on basic literacy. This is confirmed by Marie Guyart's own remarks on education in the convent. Guyart herself was known for having learnt Innu, Algonquian, Wendat, and Iroquoian languages and for writing dictionaries and catechisms in these languages as well as French. In one of her letters addressed to her son in 1668, Guyart mentioned that "from the beginning of Lent to the Ascension I wrote a big book in Algonquin on sacred history and other holy things, with a dictionary and catechism in Iroquois, which is a treasure. Last year I wrote a big Algonquin dictionary in the French

[215] « *Ce qui est La particuliere devotion [des Ursulines] de ce païs, tant quelles y demeureront, est que leur 4me vœu s'étende de plus aux filles sauvages.* » All Ursulines have take three vows–of poverty, chastity, and obedience. In addition, Ursulines of Nouvelle-France took the fourth vow, which is to dedicate their lives to educating Indigenous girls.
[216] Trudel, *Les écolières des Ursulines de Québec*, 60-1; Thomas Carr, "Writing the Convent in New France," 7.
[217] Nadia Fahmy-Eid, "L'éducation des filles chez les Ursulines de Québec souls le Régime Français," 54.

alphabet and another with the alphabet of the savages."[218] Unfortunately, though Guyart was determined "before my death to leave as much writings as possible (*je me suis résolve avant ma mort de laisser le plus d'écrits qu'il me sera possible*),"[219] none of these manuscripts survived as they were all burnt in a fire that devoured the seminary building.

The Ursulines were also cloistered—they only left their convent during emergency situations such as fire—while the Jesuits, being mobile, followed Indigenous bands to their home country and many went on hunting trips with them, though they also attempted to establish a permanent seminary (which I will discuss shortly). Yet the Ursulines shared the same pedagogical ethos and fulfilled similar colonial functions with the Jesuits. By reading their practices together, I show that gender and embodied sexual difference were privileged targets of the cultivation of desire, which is to say, the desire thus cultivated was gendered. Specifically, obedience was seen as both the goal of colonial education and Indigenous girls' and women's "natural" disposition. Since obedience was increasingly coded as a defining trait of femininity and the *nature* of women in early modern French gender discourses,[220] Indigenous women and girls were seen as failing to embody 'proper' sexual differences and violating 'proper' gender norms—in other words, they were 'unnatural' as they failed to comply with feminine nature. Paradoxically, they needed to be disciplined to become natural.

The Jesuits claimed that Indigenous peoples "have a strong aversion to constraint," and "The Savage nature (*Le naturel Sauvage*) demands freedom, and is marked by an imperious desire

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[218] Marie Guyart, Lettre CCXXXV (août 1668), in *Correspondance,* Nouvelle édition par Dom Guy Oury moins de Solesmes. Préface de S.E. le Cardinal Charles Journet. Ouvrage publié avec le concours du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (Solesmes: Abbaye Saint-Pierre, 1969*),* 801. "Depuis le commencement du Carême dernier jusqu'à l'Ascension j'ay écrit un gros livre Algonquin de l'histoire sacrée et des choses saintes, avec un Dictionnaire et un Catéchisme Hiroquois, qui est un trésor. L'année dernière j'écrivis un gros Dictionnaire Algonquin à l'alphabet François; j'en ai un autre à l'alphabet Sauvage."

[219] Marie Guyart, Lettre CCXXXV (août 1668), in *Correspondance,* 801.

[220] There were, of course, competing discourses of femininity and women's 'nature' in early modern France and Europe. The proliferation and ascendency of proto-feminist discourses were accompanied by misogynist ones, while control and regulation of women's bodies intensified. See, for example, Joan Kelly, "Early Feminist Theory and the Querelle des Femmes, 1400-1789,"; Stanton, *Dynamics;* Jean Dejean*, Tender Geographies.*

(*vouloir*) for what is pleasing, or an avoidance of what is displeasing."[221] The Mother Superior of the Hospital, an Augustinian nun, in recounting the death of a Wendat nun, compares Indigenous girls' abhorrence of constraint to little chickens' fear of the kite and little lambs running from the wolf.[222] According to her, "All this proceeds from one and the same cause, namely, nature."[223] In this characterization alluding to the "noble savage" ("*bon sauvage*") trope that would haunt the European imaginary of the New World,[224] the missionaries saw both the desire and bodies of Indigenous peoples as naturally disposed toward freedom, which had the negative connotation of unruliness, lack of regulation, and cruelty.[225]

On the other hand, the missionaries also claimed that the intelligence and natural good dispositions of the natives could be brought to light by instruction.[226] In fact, this is the underlying principle of their whole educational, and more generally the civilizational, enterprise. The missionaries had to believe that Indigenous peoples' nature and bodily habits could be radically reshaped to justify their missionary activities. Paul Le Jeune, observing the Innu and Algonquin students at the Jesuit seminary, wrote in the 1639 *Relations* that, "These young lads, most of them between twelve and fifteen years of age, have taught us two admirable truths,--one is, that if animals are capable of discipline, the young Savage children are much more so; the other, that education alone is wanting to these poor children, whose minds are so good as those of our Europeans."[227] They showed "as much grace and docility as any of the French" once placed and educated in the

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[221] JR 44, 269
[222] JR 44, 259.
[223] JR 44, 259.
[224] Dorris Garraway has clarified that the term itself does not actually appear in any of the primary sources usually associated with the myth. See *The Libertine Colony: Creolization in the Early French Caribbean* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 95. In the history of political thought, Rousseau's *Discours sur l'origines et les fondements de l'inégalité* is most commonly associated with this myth. However, the term itself does not appear in the text.
[225] JR 51, 205; JR 52, 145. The Iroquois were mainly associated with excessive cruelty.
[226] JR 44, 259.
[227] JR 16, 179.

seminary space.[228] What is implied is that the natives can indeed become French—to embody Frenchness.

We see from this discourse that nature is understood as fundamentally embodied. The colonial agents were acutely aware that the education of desire entailed shaping and disciplining the body. The term regularly used when describing the "nature" of Indigenous peoples, and sometimes themselves, is "disposition," which at once points to a moral attitude and a form of bodily comportment. What appears as "moral ills" that Indigenous peoples display is a form of bodily malalignment. Re*disposing* the body—ridding it of bodily disease—would also cure the moral ills, whereas reconditioning moral attitude would entail disciplining the body. In other words, the body became an intense object of biopolitical control. More precisely, it was constituted as an object in the first place—became legible as a modifiable object—through such disciplines. As I will explore in the next chapter, the subversive and incalculable power of the body became the excess of settler-colonial biopolitics that enabled Indigenous women to pursue their self-making and resist settler-colonial cultivation of desire by drawing from external resources.

Many Jesuits pronounced that their goal was to change "this barbarous disposition (*cette humeur barbare*) by teaching them to live like men, and then to be Christians;"[229] to "cultivate them (*à les cultiver*)…[t]ame those fierce natures (*dom[p]ter ces naturels farouches*)."[230] The Jesuits, the Ursuline, and the Augustinian Sisters regularly evoked the language of "cultivation" in describing their colonial vision and practices. They especially saw the Iroquois as "barbarous" because of the ongoing war they waged against other Indigenous Nations and how they treated their captives.[231] These social and

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[228] JR 16, 181.
[229] JR 51, 205;
[230] JR 52, 145.
[231] This practice is commonly known as "the mourning wars" in contemporary literature. As Jon Parmenter notes, "Mourning wars, which arose from a cultural mandate to replace deceased relatives and involved far-ranging, often large-scale raids on rival native nations to procure captives to either adopt or ritually torture and execute." "After the Mourning Wars: The Iroquois as Allies in colonial North American Campaigns, 1676-1760," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Series, LXIV, no.1 (January 2007), 39. See also Daniel Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois*

political practices, which were contingent responses to an ongoing crisis—significant demographic loss and depopulation exacerbated by diseases brought by Europeans—were taken to represent the very nature of the Iroquois. The Ursulines and Jesuits saw the aversion to restraint and desire for freedom as the nature of the natives in general.

But nature can be reshaped, affirmed the Ursulines. Shortly after their arrival in Canada, one Ursuline wrote that "Those who cross over here from your France are almost all mistaken on one point—they have a very low opinion of our savages, thinking them dull and slow-witted; but, as soon as they have associated with them, they confess that only education, and not intelligence, is lacking in these peoples."[232] Observing the girls who were sent to the Seminary, they contended that "There is nothing so docile as these children. One can bend (*plier*) them as he will; they have no reply to anything one may desire from them."[233] In a letter Marie Guyart sent to Le Jeune, which was included in the 1641 *Relations*, she reiterated that the girls at the Seminary "left their savage nature (*humeur Sauvage*) at the door, they have brought no part of it with them."[234] Conferring an earnest compliment to one of the Seminarists, Magdelaine, Guyart claimed that "one would not take little Magdelaine for a savage."[235] These remarks are particularly interesting because they suggest that the very nature used to characterize a people can also be disassociated from and disembodied by the latter. In a letter to her son, Guyart similarly valorized the piety of the seminarists and remarked, "Is this not delightful in girls born in barbarity?"[236] The emphasis on docility and obedience lends force to their belief in being able to "bend" the nature of these native girls, to "cultivate these young plants, to render them worthy of the garden of the church, that they may be some day transplanted

League in the Era of European Colonization (Williamsburg, Virginia: Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1992); Daniel P. Barr, *Unconquered: the Iroquois League at War in Colonial America* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2006); Jon Parmenter, *The Edge of the Woods: Iroquoia, 1534-1702* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015).

[232] JR 19, 39.

[233] JR 19, 39.

[234] JR 19 53.

[235] JR 19, 53.

[236] Marie Guyart, Lettre LXXIII (30 septembre 1643) in *Correspondance*, 201; *From Mother to Son*, 60.

into the holy gardens of paradise."[237] While they displayed a "natural" aversion to restraint, suggesting the limit of the colonial educational effort, their "natural" obedience could be exploited to make them attached to their own subjection. That these incompatible traits are both ascribed to nature indicates that nature is a fundamentally malleable concept. It is conceived in an essentialist manner, as the timeless source of all worldly actions, as what characterizes Indigenous peoples in general, but at the same time as changeable.

Through the cultivation of their desire and pacification of their bodies, their "natural" disposition was envisioned to be replaced by cultivated piety and obedience. Being disposed towards something implies a bodily orientation, a way of moving towards certain things while refraining from others. The French word *humeur* also exclusively concerns the human body. Bodily disposition and moral nature are conceived as intertwined and mutually expressive of the other. In a letter Marie Guyart sent to Le Jeune, which was included in the 1641 *Relations*, she wrote about a native girl named Magdelaine Amiskonian, that she was, "in her manners (*mœurs*), like one who has been brought up among us; you could not find a disposition (*humeur*) sweeter or more pliable."[238]

The humor theory (*théories des humeurs)*, which can be traced back to Hippocrates and Galen, was dominant in the early modern period in explaining differences in human behavior and personality, and in particular sexual difference.[239] It was widely applied in medicine to diagnose bodily alignment in early modern Europe.[240] The theory was also included in the first edition of the

[237] JR 19, 37.
[238] JR 19, 53.
[239] Hippocrates, *Hippocratic Writings*, trans. IM Lonie (London: Penguin, 2005); Galen, *Method of Medicine*, trans. Ian Johnson and G.H.R. Horsley (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011); Jacques Jouanna, "The Legacy of the Hippocratic Treatise *The Nature of Man*: The Theory of the Four Humours," in *Greek Medicine from Hippocrates to Galen* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 335-359; Lauren Kissell, "Medical Understandings of the Body," in *Routledge History of Sex and the Body 1500 to the Present* (London: Routledge, 2013), 57-74.
[240] Lauren Kissell, "Medical Understandings of the Body," & Micael Stolberg, "Examining the Body" in *Routledge History of Sex and the Body 1500 to the Present* (London: Routledge, 2013), 57-74 & 91-105.

Dictionnaire de L'Académie française.[241] Under the entry "humeur," the humor theory is introduced, and immediately afterward, the stationary states: " Humor, is also said of a certain disposition of the mind, either natural or accidental."[242] We shall note that here the mind is conceived as embodied. Organic bodily illness and moral failures are mutually implicated: both would require remaking the self through specific techniques (*techne*), which are at once organic and spiritual. The transformation of nature thus requires the re-conditioning of the body—literally ridding it of diseases; or rather, it is through the modification of bodily comportment and disposition that nature could be reshaped. This is especially evident in Guyart's descriptions of the girls at the Seminary. When she praised their piety and affirmed their ability to be made "good Christians," she most often commented on their manners, bodily dispositions and embodied practices. For her, obedience and piety foremost entailed a bodily disposition—to religious authorities, cloistered life, and God. By being (re)disposed in this way, they would be disposed away from the native ways, Indigenous communities, Nations, and land. We need to note that what civilization would produce is not civilized *Indigenous* men and women. Instead, they will become civilized subjects of empire who are completely rid of such "naturel sauvage." In other words, they would stop being Indigenous *in nature* altogether. The belief that Indigenous peoples' "nature" could be radically reshaped made education the focal point of the civilizing mission and is reflected in their educational vision, designs, and practices, to which I will now turn.

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[241] *Dictionnaire de L'Académie française, édition première* (Paris, 1694). Online entry see https://www.dictionnaire-academie.fr/article/A1H0161

[242] https://www.dictionnaire-academie.fr/article/A1H0161 ."*Humeur, se dit encore d'une certaine disposition de l'esprit, ou naturelle, ou accidentelle."*

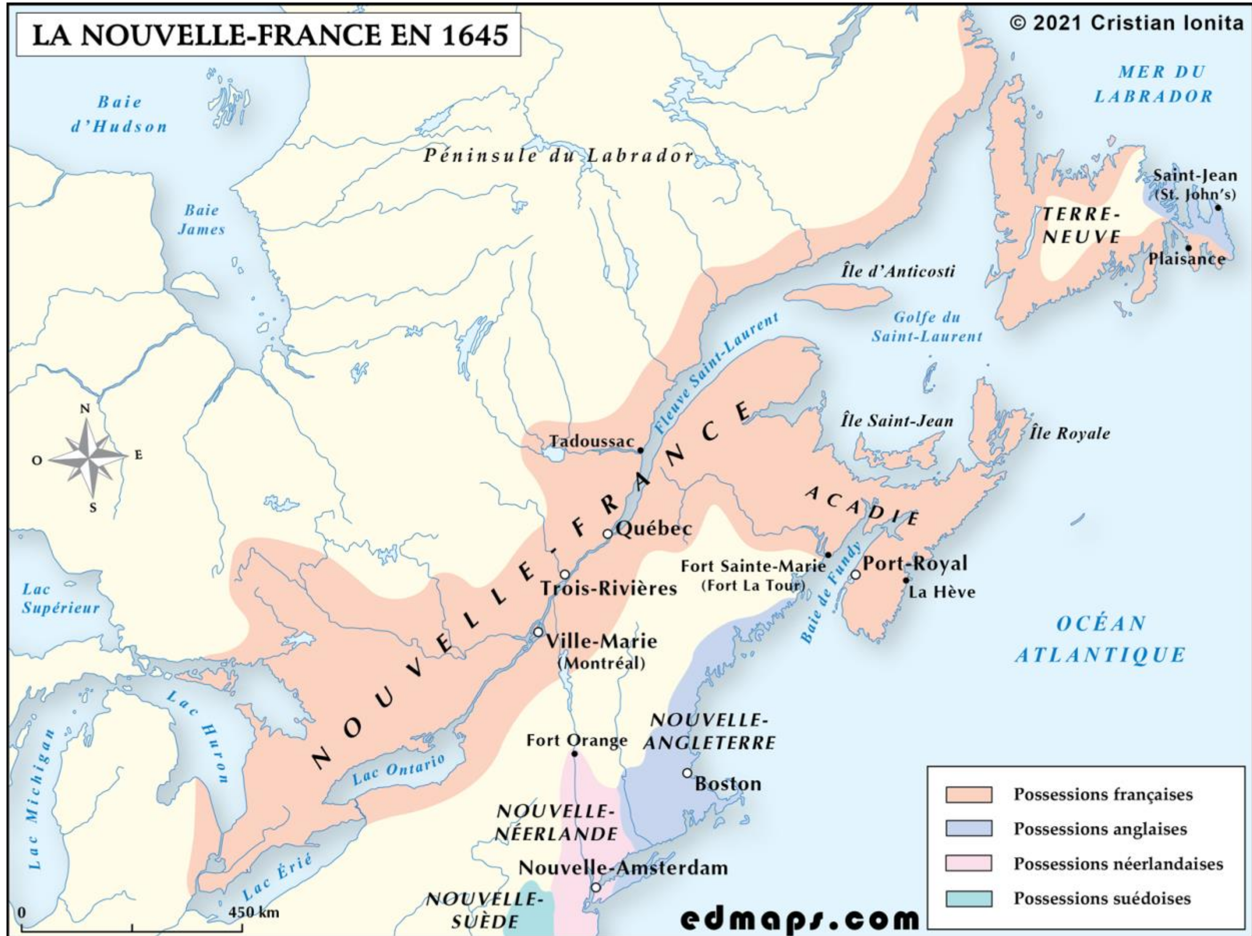

Figure 1: (Territory claimed by) New France in 1645

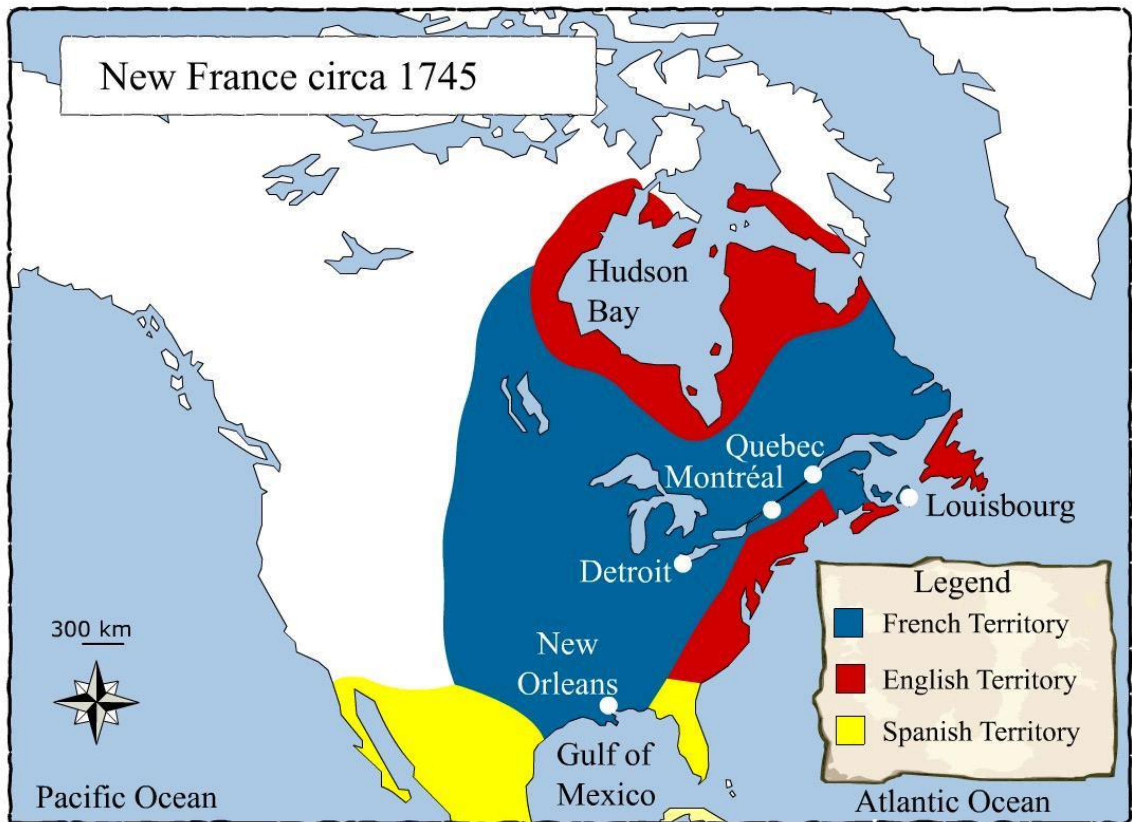

Figure 2: (Territory claimed by) New France in 1745

Jesuit and Ursuline Seminaries in Canada

The Jesuits had been trying to persuade Wendat parents to let them take their children away to educate shortly after they first arrived in Saint-Laurent river valley. Unsurprisingly, there had been strong objections from Wendat parents and communities regarding the Jesuits' proposal. However, the Jesuits' consistent persuasion and promises of material support, coupled with the deteriorated relation between the Wendat and the Haudenosaunee, made the Wendat more inclined to form alliance with the French, and led some Wendat parents to agree to let the Jesuits take children. From a great number of children, the Jesuits chose twelve "very fine lads" to be brought to the French settlement at Québec.[243] Yet, as Le Jeune recalled, "when it came to separating the children from

[243] JR 12, 39.

their mothers, the extraordinary tenderness which the Savage women have for their children stopped all proceedings, and nearly smothered our project in its birth."[244] To the Jesuits' dismay, quite a few students ran away during the trip to Québec: "If they were with us in the morning, in the evening they were gone."[245] Only three of the twelve boys remained, who were soon joined by three other boys from a different band. Eventually, six students arrived at Notre-dame-des-Anges, just outside of Québec, where in 1636, the first Jesuit Seminary was founded ("under very great difficulties").[246] The number of students remained small throughout the existence of the Seminary until its closure in 1644.

The students were made to follow a strict schedule and code of conduct at the Seminary. Le Jeune recounts, "These young men are petted, are dressed in the French way, are furnished with linen and other necessary articles. They are lodged in a place selected for this purpose, with the Father who is to have the care of them."[247] All but one student were "contented, cheerful, obedient" and "acted so well and lived so peaceably among themselves."[248] This other student, however, was said to be of a "melancholy disposition (*humeur melancholique*)" and was eager to return to his home shortly after he arrived and could not agree with the others.[249] His attachment to his family and community was seen as evidence of his abnormality and was attributed to his nature, understood as embodied disposition. The fact that his body was disposed to his community, instead of being disposed towards the kind of obedience that the missionaries sought to cultivate at the Seminary, a settler space designed to rid him of his indigeneity, marked him as melancholic in *nature*. Because of such a natural disposition, he could not be civilized. He was eventually sent away as he wished.

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[244] JR 12, 41.
[245] JR 12, 41.
[246] JR 12, 45.
[247] JR 12, 12, 45.
[248] JR 12, 47.
[249] JR 12, 45.

Of the remaining "obedient" students, two—Tsiko (the French named him Paul) and Satouta (the French named him Robert)[250]—soon died of disease, causing the Jesuits "a great affliction:" they believed that "some day they would effectively succor their Nation."[251] The Jesuits attributed the deaths to "the change of air and of occupation, and especially of diet."[252] They believed that the French diet, consisting mainly of bread and meat, was much more substantial than the cornmeal broth that the Wendat were used to eating, and that caused them to overeat at the Seminary. To remedy the problem, they fed the others "partly in the Huron and partly in the French," which "kept them in good health."[253]

Diet was only one of the many drastic changes that the students had to adapt to, and as the deaths of the two boys showed, many were ill-adapted. Le Jeune claimed, "There is nothing so difficult as to control the tribes of America. All these Barbarians have the law of wild asses,--they are born, live, and die in liberty without restraint; they do not know what is meant by bridle or bit. With them, to conquer one's passions is considered a great joke, while to give free rein to the senses is a lofty Philosophy."[254] In stark contrast, "the Law of our Lord is far removed from this dissoluteness; it gives us boundaries and prescribes limits, outside of which we cannot step without offending God and reason."[255] Le Jeune attributed their living and loving perfect liberty to their "nature." While he admitted that "it is very hard to place this yoke, although it is mild and easy, upon the necks of people who make a profession of not submitting to anything, either in heaven or upon earth; I say it is very hard, but not impossible."[256] Very hard because of their "nature," but not impossible because

[250] Both Tsiko and Satouta came from influential Wendat families. Recruiting these boys from influential families was strategic for the Jesuits, as they would become instrumental in fostering good relations between the French and Wendat.
[251] JR 12, 51.
[252] JR 12 53.
[253] JR 12, 53.
[254] JR 12, 61.
[255] JR 12, 61.
[256] JR 12, 61.

such nature could still be remade so they could be controlled. This is one of the many instances that the Jesuits sought recourse to the domestication of animals in describing their pedagogical vision.

Immediately after, in the same *Relations*, Le Jeune continued to write that he was "astonished to see how wild young men, accustomed to follow their caprices, place themselves under subjection, with so much meekness, that there seems to be nothing so pliant as a Huron Seminarist."[257] He also acknowledged that it required "great skill, gentleness, and remarkable patience to manage them" and again emphasized that "to employ harshness towards these Nations is to throw them into rebellion."[258] He thought that "the consciousness of being three hundred leagues distant from their own country makes these young men more tractable (*souples*)" while at the same time claiming that "their docility and obedience has been a great gift to us from our Lord."[259] He further explained, "As they took the price, at the start, in living after the French manner, the Father gave them to understand that we regulate all our actions, that we do not act according to mere whims, but do what is reasonable and what we have planned beforehand; that it would be well for them to imitate us in this regard."[260] According to Le Jeune, after the students showed their willingness to do it, a program was arranged for them "which they observe daily, with much obedience and submission."[261]

Le Jeune gave a detailed account of their daily schedule, the only one we see in the missionary reports and thus worth close examination. The first thing they do after arising in the morning is prayers, after which they go to the Chapel to attend the mass. Then they eat breakfast, then are taught reading and writing. Then they take an intermission, after which the Father teaches them the catechism. Then they eat dinner. After dinner, they go to the Chapel again to do more

[257] *JR 12*, 61.
[258] *JR 12*, 61.
[259] *JR 12*, 63.
[260] *JR 12*, 63.
[261] *JR 12*, 63.

prayers. Then they are given more instruction in reading. Only after are they free to go outside and walk, or do other activities. The Jesuits reported that they usually go hunting or fishing, making bows and arrows, or clearing some land in their own way, or other things that are agreeable to them. In the evening, they say their prayers and then retire to rest.[262] Le Jeune admitted that the "threat of fires and eternal torments" was incorporated in the instruction as "it is by this bridle that they will be retained in the faith, if they can once hold it in their mouths without chafing."[263] The bodily metaphor Le Jeune used is striking. It can be inferred that the Jesuits also inculcated civilizational values, especially the importance of clearing and cultivating land. Le Jeune was pleased that the students cleared some land and planted corn in it.[264] The Wendat were traditionally sedentary, and many were farmers who cultivated land and engaged in agricultural labor. However, the ethical meaning they attached to such labor was quite different from the individualistic and civilizational one the Jesuits and the French attached to it. While Le Jeune knew about the Wendat's practice, he nonetheless ascribed the Wendat boys' labor to their education, a sign that they had become French and accepted French and Christian values.

At times Le Jeune seemed to attribute such docility and obedience to these boys' "nature," as qualities and bodily orientations they brought to the Seminary. Yet at other times, the obedience and docility cultivated at the Seminary was the most prominent fruit of their education, and those who came to embody it were effectively made *non-Wendat* and French. Le Jeune exclaimed, "To be born a Savage and to live in this restraint, is a miracle. To be Huron and not to be a thief, is another miracle. To have lived in a freedom which dispenses them even from obeying their parents, and then to undertake nothing without leave, is a third miracle."[265] Le Jeune claimed the students would call

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[262] *JR 12*, 65.
[263] *JR 12*, 77.
[264] *JR 12*, 77.
[265] *JR 12*, 65.

whoever "commits some act of rudeness" 'Huron,' and ask him how long it is since he came from that country."[266] The cultivated docility, obedience to discipline and colonial authority, was what differentiated the "natural" Wendat from the "cultivated" ones. The Wendat boys became so "well disposed"—redisposed—that they not only wished to remain with the French "all the rest of their days,"[267] but also desired to attract "some of their compatriots, and also of getting some girls of their country to come down, that they might have them instructed, and marry them according to the Christian and Catholic religion."[268]

Encouraged by the "progress" thus made, Le Jeune envisioned the ascent of civilization over 'savagery' in the near future:

> "First, in a few years there would be here a village of Christian Hurons, who would help in so slight degree to bring their compatriots to the faith, through commerce with each other; and our wandering Montagnez would, little by little, become stationary through their example and through alliance with them. Secondly, Messieurs the Directors, and Associates would have hostages here to assure the lives of our French in the country of the Hurons, and to maintain the commerce they have with all the more distant peoples and nations. "[269]

Such a vision, however, was far from the reality. Only three Seminarists—Teouatirhon, Ariethoua (Andehoua), and Aiacidace—were left, though they were all very "well disposed." Yet when the Jesuits brought the three of them to Trois-Rivières to give them the chance to go back and visit their kin, Teouatirhon decided to go back with them to Wendat country, showing that he remained disposed towards his country's people and land.[270] Aiandace, though "remarkably obedient" while at the Seminary, was even more attached to his kin and "desired the more ardently to go back and see his mother and nurse."[271] Andehoua, on the other hand,

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[266] *JR 12*, 75.
[267] *JR 12*, 79.
[268] *JR 12*, 79.
[269] *JR 12*, 79.
[270] *JR 12*, 107.
[271] *JR 12*, 109.

was especially pious, which was attributed to him having "a good disposition (*un bon naturel*)."[272] Andehoua's conversion does seem more thorough. He disapproved of his fellows' return to their home country and lamented: "remember that, before we knew God, we lived like beasts; let us not return to our early ignorance; be careful of thyself, do not forget what has been taught us."[273] Here, Andehoua seemed to have wholeheartedly adopted the evaluation of Wendat and French culture the Jesuits upheld. He even acted as Preacher to his own people, defending the moral superiority of the French and Christian values.

"Seeing a young Barbarian of their nation become a Preacher of the law of the great God" shocked his country people.[274] Another exceptionally 'good" student, who was baptized as Pierre Ateiachias, was also Wendat, about fifty when he asked to join the Seminary. The Jesuits at first did not want to accept him because of his age, but eventually, they were impressed by his disposition (*naturel*), which was "far different from all that one imagines of a Savage:" "He was gentle, courteous, compliant, prompt to do a favor to any one whomsoever, never idle."[275] At the same time, he underwent a drastic transformation during his time at the Seminary, to the extent that his countrymen who wintered near the seminary "reproached him with being no longer a Huron, and with renouncing his own country."[276] His response was interesting, as he claimed that he was "not casting off his love for his nation" but "giving up its vices."[277] For him, being a good Christian was compatible with being a Wendat and upholding Wendat values and customs that were in accordance with Christian and French ones, while renouncing the ones the missionaries denounced. This self-understanding differed

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[272] *JR 12*, 105. This is an example of Le Jeune using "naturel," "disposition," "humeur," interchangeably.
[273] *JR 12*d, 107.
[274] *JR 12*, 107.
[275] JR 16, 173.
[276] JR 16, 175.
[277] JR 16, 175.

from the missionaries' vision, which stipulated that native converts would cease to be native and become French and civilized altogether.

While the first students were all from Wendat nations, the Seminary also attracted some Innu (Montagnais) and Algonquin students in the following years.[278] Le Jeune and others similarly affirmed their nature was prone to be remade and civilized via education, even remarking that they conducted themselves better than the French boys. According to these Jesuits, these native boys embodied "as much grace and modesty as if they had been brought up in a well-regulated academy; they are found ready for their lessons at the proper hours; they love one another."[279] Though the students seemed to have made good progress–according to missionaries' standards–in the Seminary, disease again took many of their lives. Some new students joined after the initial six, of whom only Andehoua stayed. By the end of the 1630s, only five or six students were left.

The nascent Seminary remained a frail and small institution. Eventually, it was closed in 1644 when a Haudenosaunee raiding party killed the seminarians and their teachers.[280] This, as historian James Ronda notes, "marked the end of concerted Jesuit efforts at Institutional Indian education."[281] Yet the Jesuits continued to deploy other means to "civilize" Indigenous peoples. For example, they commonly adopted the means of settling in Indigenous villages to preach and create mission settlements. They also collaborated closely with the Ursulines, who worked exclusively with girls and women, and the Augustinians, albeit to a lesser extent.

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[278] JR 16, 179.
[279] JR 16, 179-181.
[280] JR 26, 19.
[281] James P. Ronda, "The European Indian: Jesuit Civilization Planning in New France," *Church History* 41, no.3 (September 1972), 393.

As I have mentioned earlier, the Ursulines came to *Nouvelle-France* with the explicit goal of educating Indigenous girls. At the Ursuline Convent, girls were taught reading and writing in French and in Latin, the official language used in all church activities. They were also offered music lessons—many students could sing in three languages: their own Indigenous language, French, and Latin. They spent a great amount of their time doing feminine labor such as needlework and embroidery, while most of their days was dedicated to prayers and penance.[282] The girls sent to the Ursuline Convent and the Hotêl-Dieu in Québec were all expected to the cloistered, though there were also day students and transitory students who would come and go. Confinement within the convent walls could be seen as a form of corporeal punishment in its own right, at least to the Indigenous girls who attended the Ursuline Seminary. While the Ursulines and *les femmes religieuses* in Canada (as in Europe) themselves found ways to negotiate the rigid demands of cloister imposed on them by the Council of Trent, they attempted to impose strict cloister on their native seminarists. Confinement, or enclosure, as Foucault notes, "is the protected place of disciplinary monotony,"[283] a disciplinary means to regulate bodily comportment through restriction.[284] By constraining bodies within the confines of the convent space, feminine virtues such as modesty, chastity, resignation, and religious piety were to be cultivated. Corporeal punishment, such as whipping and deprivation of food, was also routinely used in the convent when the students made "mistakes." It is perhaps ironic that, though Foucault largely ignores or evades discussion of colonialism in his work, his (in)famous claim that schools (along with factories, barracks, and hospitals) resemble prisons is best thrown into relief precisely in the settler-colonial context.[285]

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[282] Vincent Grégoire, « L'éducation Des Filles Au Convent Des Ursulines De Québec à L'époque De Marie De L'incarnation (1639-1672), » 90.
[283] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 141.
[284] Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 40.
[285] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 228.

Yet confinement could not be enforced as thoroughly as the nuns would have liked. In one of the letters sent to her son in 1668, Marie Guyart mentioned that there were only three Indigenous full-time borders at the Seminary (in comparison to sixteen French girls), while most were attending on a temporary basis. She confirmed that the Ursulines did "successfully" raise some Indigenous girls "in the French manner." While some returned to their parents, for others their marriages were arranged and "they do very well." One of them was "given" to Pierre Boucher, who was made governor of Trois-Rivières.[286] But Guyart also lamented that their natural attachment to their parents and freedom prevented them from being fully civilized, that is, satisfied with being confined. In her words, they

> "are like birds on the wing (*des oyseaux passagers*), staying with us only until they become sad, a condition which the character of the savages cannot endure (*ce que l'humeur sauvage ne peut souffrir*). As soon as they grow sad their parents will take them away, fearful they will die. On this score we leave them free, for we win more this way than by constraint. There are others who take off by whim or caprice. Like squirrels, they climb up our palisade (which is as high as a wall) and go running in the woods."[287]

Here, Guyart's explicit comparison of educating Indigenous children to wild animals is hard to miss. She also scorned Indigenous parents for loving their children too passionately (*leur parans qui sont passionnez pour leurs enfans*) and regarding giving their children to the Ursulines as a favor,[288] while Guyart, like many later actors who were directly involved in educating Indigenous children, thought of it as a favor they were conferring. We need to note that by referring to the close attachment between parents and their children as 'natural'—that is, as pre-social and non-political—Guyart is in fact advancing a rhetoric that served to *depoliticize* the central role kinship played in Indigenous sociality, cultures and politics. For many Indigenous peoples and Nations, including the Wendat, Algonkian, and Haudenosaunee

[286] Marie Guyart, Lettre CCXXXV (août 1668), in *Correspondance*, 802; *Selected Writings*, 272.
[287] Marie Guyart, Lettre CCXXXV (août 1668), in *Correspondance*, 802; *Selected Writings*, 272.
[288] Marie Guyart, Lettre CCLI (1octobre 1669), in *Correspondance*, 852; *Selected Writings*, 273.

peoples that the Ursulines had the most extensive contact with, kinship was the key unit upon which Indigenous social and political affairs were conducted. It was through this kind of rhetorical move that the French were able to cast Indigenous peoples as pre- and outside of 'civilization.' This is but another incident in which Indigenous cultural and political traditions and norms were relegated to the realm of essential *nature* (*humeur*). Yet at the same time, for Guyart and others, such 'natural attachment' was to be severed through cloistered education.

Guyart's remark accentuates that in the settler colonial context, confinement also had another crucial function—separating Indigenous children from their families and communities. This was to shield them from the supposedly polluting influence of Indigenous societies. This was precisely what caused objection and resistance. In the 1668 *Relations*, Le Mercier reported, "I have been obliged to join with them [native children] some little French children, from whom, by living with them, the Savages will learn more easily the customs and the language."[289] The missionaries believed that these isolated spaces would serve to civilize and assimilate Indigenous children while also cultivating religious piety and obedience to colonial agents. By imitating French children, they would learn to *embody* 'civilized'—French—manners.

In actual practice, many colonial agents soon realized the difficulty of executing this policy. While the Jesuits and Marie Guyart both remarked that many Indigenous coverts willingly accepted corporeal punishment, when it came to confinement, most could not stand it, and many escaped at night. Even children who were "urged to be made nuns," once long kept in confinement that was meant to "to test their call and habituate them to a settled and cloistered life," "they felt, as they grew older, the impulse within them to go and come; and they frankly told their teachers that they

[289] JR 52, 47.

lacked the sense requisite for constancy."[290] Jesuit Le Mercier later further affirmed that it was challenging to separate Indigenous children from their families "on the part of both the children and the parents."[291] He observed that even when the parents initially permitted the separation, it was difficult to "effect a separation for any length of time."[292] Marie Guyart also mentioned that Indigenous children usually left the convent to join their family and kin in practices such as hunting, seasonal migration, and wintering in the forests in winter.[293] Native converts and their family did not see conversion as entailing the loss of freedom and severance of ties to their communities, while the missionaries saw living a Christian life and Indigenous communal existence as mutually exclusive.

A notable exception is Geneviève-Agnès Skanudharoua, the first Indigenous nun of Canada.[294] Instead of fleeing and resenting cloistered life, she embraced it. The Mother Superior of the Hospital gave a detailed account of her life in a letter, the content of which is included in the *Relations* of 1657-1658, the year of her death. A daughter of "one of the principal Huron Captains" whose parents "were excellent Christians," Agnès was given to the Augustinian Sisters at the Hotêl-Dieu of Québec in 1650 when she was eight years old.[295] At the time, her native Wendat people were devastated by both small-pox and Haudenosaunee attacks.[296] Agnès learned the French language, reading and writing quickly and well, even excelling over the French girls.[297] The nuns "often marveled that a Savage girl, nurtured and reared in the woods, could so soon understand what was taught her."[298] She showed an "ardent desire" to "become a nun," which was granted after the nuns

[290] JR 52, 259-260.
[291] JR 52, 47.
[292] JR 52, 47.
[293] Marie Guyart, Lettre CCLI (1 octobre 1669), *in Correspondance*, 852; *Selected Writings*, 273.
[294] Lettre circulaire de sœur Geneviève-Agnès Skanudharoua, 1657, Qubéc, Le Monastère des Augustines, HDQ-F1-D2, 1 S.
[295] JR 44, 261. "Huron" was the term the French used to refer to the Wendat people. "Wendat" means "dwellers of the peninsula."
[296] I discuss this social and political context in more details in Chapter 4.
[297] JR 44, 263.
[298] JR 44, 263. This offhand remark shows the ideological baggage of the writer, as the Wendat did not live in the woods but were sedentary and cultivated large farms. "*Dans les bois*" was simply what the French took to mark a "sauvage."

"tried her by every means."[299] It was said that "more than death, she feared going home with her parents,"[300] that when the nuns tried her by letting her choose between leaving the Convent and being corporeally punished, she immediately chose the latter and began to undress herself until the nuns stopped her.[301] At the same time, her parents frequently asked her to leave, but "she was always as firm as a rock."[302] Due to her piety and commitment to leading a cloistered life, she was finally made a nun in March 1657, but passed away due to illness only a few months later.[303] The Mother Superior of the Hospital wrote a lengthy letter commemorating Agnès' short life (see figure 3), testifying to the unusualness of her life and experience. Today, she remains the only Indigenous woman who had her entry in the Augustianian archive in Québec.

The valorization of Agnès' piety ironically reveals she was an anomaly. Agnès was exalted precisely because she defied desires and attachments that other native girls and her own parents shared, renouncing living an Indigenous life altogether, at least according to the narrative in the *Relations*. We shall note that rather than showing their "natural disposition against constraint," native girls' desire to go home and their parents' desire for her to go home demonstrated the importance of communal life and kinship ties, both of which were disrupted by cloistered education. For others, being a Christian did not mean cutting ties with their families and communities. Though her parents sent Agnès to the Seminary, they also did not see it as entailing the complete severance of communal ties and existence.

[299] JR 44, 265.
[300] JR 44, 265.
[301] JR 44, 265.
[302] JR 44, 265.
[303] JR 44, 265-7.

Figure 3: Letter by the Mother Superior of the Hotêl-Dieu of Québec on Agnès, 1650

"j'aime l'obéissance:"[304] Corporeal Punishment and the Pacification of Bodies

Though Le Jeune claimed that the natives were "more easily subdued by love, rather than fear," the missionaries routinely deployed corporeal punishment in their pedagogical practices, both in the seminaries and beyond their walls. For example, Guyart told a story that concerned an Indigenous couple. A young man argued with his wife, and the couple was taken before the chiefs. The chiefs "condemned the man to be chained up inside a cellar of the fort and to fast there for three days on bread and water" and condemned the woman to the same punishment to be carried out in the Ursuline Seminary.[305] It is unclear why simply arguing with one's wife would incur such severe punishment for both of them. However, we can infer that corporeal punishment was a common, if not naturalized, means that the missionaries undertook to discipline Indigenous peoples' desire and actions. In another story Marie Guyart relayed, an Indigenous woman was sent to the Ursulines by her family who were Christians because she had married a pagan.[306] The marriage was broken up, and after being instructed in the Christian faith for not very long, the woman wished not to see her husband again unless he became Christian, and took flight when she ran into him.[307] She did not change her mind when her husband threatened to kill her. Afterward, she allegedly told the Ursulines: "I love obedience (*j'aime l'obéissance*)."[308] The other women and girls present agreed that she should go through severe punishment for her "disobedience" to prevent others from imitating her; some even suggested condemning her death. Eventually they settled on public whipping. The woman willingly agreed to be whipped in public so that she would become qualified for baptism.[309] According to Marie Guyart, this woman "did everything that was wished of her" "without complaint

[304] "I love obedience." Marie Guyart, Lettre LXV (29 septembre 1642), *Correspondance*, 163; *Word from New France: The Selected Letters of Marie de L'Incarnation*, trans. & ed. Joyce Marshall (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1967), 104.
[305] Marie Guyart, *Correspondance*, 163; *Word from New France,* 104.
[306] Marie Guyart, *Correspondance*, 163; *Word from New France,* 104.
[307] Marie Guyart, *Correspondance*, 163; *Word from New France,* 104.
[308] Marie Guyart, *Correspondance*, 163; *Word from New France,* 105.
[309] Marie Guyart, *Correspondance*, 163; *Word from New France*, 105.

and with matchless submissiveness and graciousness (*sans se plaindre et avec une douceur et affabilité nompareille obéit à tout ce que l'on veut*)."[310] Afterwards, she went to the Jesuit de Quen to beg to be baptized and confessed that she was perfectly content about being whipped.[311] A few years later, in a letter to her son Claude Martin in Paris, Guyart would characterize this transformation as one through which "wolves become lambs and beasts children of God (*des loups devenus agneaux et des bestes enfans de Dieu*)."[312]

The remark "I love obedience" poses many interpretive challenges. Such challenges, however, can be bypassed if we do not use them as reflective of colonial reality but instead shift our attention to examining colonial discourse and settler-colonial techniques and ideology. Guyart uses this woman's story to show that Indigenous women were not simply subjugated to religious and colonial authorities, but eagerly desired their own subjugation and disposed their bodies towards religious authorities. These tales also show that corporeal punishment was a means that was routinely deployed to reform desire and recondition the body. They revealed the missionaries' understanding that corporeal punishment was an essential and effective means to pacify Indigenous bodies and engender consent to colonial domination. Obedience to colonial and religious authorities would not simply be imposed on Indigenous peoples; it would be consented to and desired.

Though the missionaries made progress in various missions they set up in Indigenous villages, they also encountered many obstacles and setbacks, especially in the Haudenosaunee Country. Since the Jesuits made little progress in their seminary experiment, they thus deemed the creation of Indigenous mission communities necessary to their civilizing mission. One Jesuit made it clear when he pronounced that "the French colony is the chief means and the only foundation for the conversion of these tribes: there is no better or more efficacious way of procuring their salvation

[310] Marie Guyart, *Correspondance*, 163; *Word from New France*, 105.
[311] Marie Guyart, *Correspondance*, 163; *Word from New France*, 106.
[312] Marie Guyart, Lettre LXXX, 26 aôut 1644, *Correspondance*, 222; *Word from New France* 133.

than by succoring this settlement."[313] The Jesuits envisioned that in these mission communities, being far away from Indigenous villages, the Christian converts would be free from the pollution of the 'superstitions' and 'savage ways' of their countrymen and especially the influence of the "jugglers"—medicine men and women. They likewise believed living in such communities would make the converts sedentary (regardless of whether their Indigenous communities were in fact already so). Just as being confined within convent space is in itself a form of corporeal punishment that re-conditions their bodies, so is separating Indigenous converts from their families and communities by relocating them to mission communities. Not surprisingly, corporeal punishment was also widely deployed in these spaces. Envisioned as exceptionally pristine and almost idyllic, they were in fact permeated by violence and coercion.

The first mission settlement, commonly known as Sillery (Kamiskouaouangachit), was established in 1637 and attracted mainly the Innu (Montagnais) people to settle. Later, many of the Wendat displaced and dispersed by the Haudenosaunee relocated to a colony near Québec in the early 1650s.[314] The kind of religious piety and ordered lives these refugees embodied further encouraged the Jesuits to believe that, by separating Indigenous converts from their native communities, they would establish Christian communities even more pure and perfect among Indigenous peoples than those of the French.[315] Later on, more mission settlements were created. Undoubtedly, continuous war and conflict (both with the French and within Indigenous communities), famine, and disease made relocation more appealing, which the Jesuits were well aware of. They also provided those who resettled with basic material offerings. As Jean de Lamberville confessed in the *Relations* of 1673,

> "Formerly I wept at the overthrow and destruction of the hurons by the Iroquois, and now I praise God for it; for I see clearly that, if the nation had remained flourishing as it

[313] JR 23, 271.
[314] JR 36, 203.
[315] JR 58, 147; JR 60, 31.

> was of old, we could not in a hundred years have gained so much ascendancy over Them, to adapt Them to our Christian customs, as we have gained in a few years. I have The same Opinion as regards the Iroquois. I am convinced that to make them good Christians in their own country is a difficult thing, and one that will take a long time to accomplish; but if we could gradually detach Them from Their dwelling-place, and attract Them to Our huron Colonies, it would be very easy to make worthy Christians of them in a short time."[316]

Lamberville acknowledged that the severance of Indigenous kinship and community bonds and the formation of new ones, which would change their "natural affection," was imperative to the civilizing mission. These affective and embodied ties proved hard to break and were understood as such. Lamberville contended that

> "It is not more difficult for the richest personages in Europe to abandon their great wealth and enter The Religious State, than it is for our Iroquois to quit their relatives and friends, their fields, their Cabins filled with indian corn and small articles of furniture suited to their manner of living, in order to go and dwell in another Spot where they are not sure of finding a single one of all the things that they abandon."[317]

Here we see a colonial vision resting on the re-education of desire and re-conditioning of bodily disposition in mission settlements. Desire as embodied and affective attachment would be cultivated through the adoption of "Christian customs" towards Christianity and colonial religious authorities instead of being invested in embodied labor such as cultivating land and harvesting corn. It would be directed to religious piety, which entailed a different kind of bodily comportment, a new relation to the body characterized by restraint and obedience. The cultivation of desire was understood as a thoroughly embodied process that would reshape subjectivity. Embedded in this vision is the idea that the very nature of Indigenous peoples was so malleable that it could be reshaped.

Despite the difficulty Lamberville and his fellow Jesuits acknowledged, some Haudenosaunee did come and resettle in the Huron colonies. While the attraction of Christianity

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[316] JR 57, 69. I preserved the exact spelling in Thwaites' translation. This Colony rapidly grew in population and required more land and wood. In the following year (1674), the Jesuits removed them to a new settlement, called Lorette, also near Québec. Lorette was subsequently often mentioned by the Jesuits to comment on the piety of its residents, both Wendat and Haudenosaunee.
[317] JR 57, 73.

most likely played a role, it is not hard to infer from the pages of the *Relations* that social and political issues such as ongoing war, disease, unrest in Indigenous villages (especially the excessive selling of brandy by French traders and excessive consumption), and the basic material offerings of mission communities, were significant factors as well.[318] Additionally, many Indigenous peoples who did resettle had motives and visions that differed markedly from those of the missionaries.

Undeniably, resettlement did have adverse effects on Indigenous communities, specifically their connection to (home)land, and often was the direct result of the disarray caused by colonial conflicts. But at the same time, resettlement also reflected the active way in which Indigenous communities were re-making themselves amidst unprecedented change, and provided Indigenous communities with new opportunities that often disrupted the missionaries' intentions. Historian Jean-François Lozier suggests that while scholars usually emphasize the formation of these early mission settlements as products of missionary action, they are more appropriately understood as "a joint creation, the result of intersecting French and Indigenous desires, needs, and priorities."[319] Indeed, rather than showing that Indigenous peoples were pacified or assimilated, or as the traditional narrative suggests, fell into decline and decimation, their resettlement suggests that "individual and groups" were "being in a continual process of 'becoming.'"[320] Indigenous attachments and desire exceeded the kind of desire—obedience to colonial authorities and attachment to their own subjugation—that missionaries sought to cultivate. Moreover, Indigenous "desires, needs, and priorities"—to use Lozier's words—did not only complement those of the missionaries and settlers, but also clashed with, disrupted, and resisted them. I will explore these in the following two chapters.

[318] JR 57, 81; 101; 187.
[319] Jean-François Lozier, *Flesh Reborn: The Saint Lawrence River Valley Mission Settlements through the Seventeenth Century* (Montréal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2018), 20.
[320] Lozier, *Flesh Reborn*, 19-20.

In many of these mission communities, religious zeal and practices of piety did seem to prevail. Lamberville was so marveled at it that he accredited it to "the power of divine inspiration."[321] Indigenous women converts in particular expressed their devotion by taking the vows of chastity and remaining celibate, as well as through extreme bodily mortification practices. I will look at these mortification practices in greater detail in the next chapter. Here, I want to bring attention back to education and conversion. The missionaries envisioned that by becoming devoted, practicing Catholics, Indigenous women converts would cease to be Indigenous altogether. Their bodies would be redisposed towards God and the religious and colonial authorities, while their desire would be brought in line with French civilization and the settler-colonial order as a whole. Indigenous women converts were seen as having been successfully assimilated. For the colonial agents, it was simply an oxymoron to be simultaneously a 'true Christian' and Indigenous. While we see much evidence that Indigenous peoples themselves did not take being Christian and being Indigenous as mutually exclusive, the missionaries firmly believed that conversion meant assimilation or the eradication of difference, which is to say, the eradication of Indigenousness. At the root of this vision, I have suggested, is the fundamental philosophical understanding of Indigenous peoples' nature as both essentialist and malleable: whereas the "sauvage" has fixed traits and denotes a fixed state of being, through civilization and conversion, Indigenous Christians would cease to embody any "*sauvage*" trait and thus cease to *be* Indigenous altogether. It follows that Indigenous cultural and spiritual traditions and ways of being-in-the-world and being-with-others would also cease to exist. The radical malleability and assimilability of Indigenous peoples' *nature*—both their mind and body—justified their cultural genocide in the ideology and practices of settler-colonial education. As we can see, this assimilatory logic would continue to inform and underwrite settler-colonial education in the centuries to come.

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[321] JR 57, 73.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to show that the double connotations of the very concept of 'nature' greatly informed early modern settler-colonial education and the biopolitical regime to which it gave rise. The missionaries mainly deployed disciplines, corporeal punishment, self-inflicted mortification, migration, and dislocation. In describing their educational practices and narrating the drastic changes they brought to Indigenous peoples, the missionaries show that they were invested in shaping and transforming how Indigenous peoples disposed themselves, specifically their bodies. At the same time, these descriptions and narratives also give rise to a discourse of conversion that hinges on the education of desire. This discourse was enabled by the coming together of particular forms of power and knowledge, which ultimately rested on competing, if not contradictory, understandings of Indigenous peoples' 'nature' as at once static and malleable. I would suggest that this conflict is at the core of settler-colonial ideology, which is *at once* genocidal, dispossessive, and assimilatory. Both understandings are essential to the articulation and function of this ideology: their static nature as "savages" denies them dominion both in themselves and in land, which is used to justify conquest and settler-colonization, while their malleability enables the colonial agents to envision them as capable of full incorporation into the body-politic as subjects of empire. While differing vastly in scale and impact from later settler colonial educational measures, specifically boarding and residential schools,[322] there has been considerable consistency in settler-colonization, once we take a *longue durée* perspective. My analysis thus complicates and enriches our understanding

[322] Scholars from different disciplines have written extensively on the trauma and damage caused by settler-colonial education, especially boarding and residential schools. See, for example, David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction;* Sarah Klotz, *Writing Their Bodies: Restoring Rhetorical Relations at the Carlisle Indian School* (Denver: University Press of Colorado, 2021). Many Indigenous authors and activists who experienced these schools have drawn from their personal experiences to critique them. See, for example, Zitkala-Sa, *American Indian Stories* (Washington: Hayworth Publishing House, 1921); Basil Johnston, *Indian School Days* (Tulsa: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990). The final report of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Mission was published in 2015. See https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Executive_Summary_English_Web.pdf.

of early modern European conceptions of Indigenous peoples and settler-colonial ideology, power, and means of regulating and disciplining Indigenous peoples' bodies and desire. Many policies and actions that are thought of as rather recent, such as separating Indigenous children from their parents and kinship networks and communities, and confining them within enclosed settler spaces, were already deployed by missionaries in the early modern period, at the very genesis of settler colonialism.

The logical conclusion of this settler-colonial vision is that Indigenous peoples would cease to be Indigenous altogether. In other words, it is a vision premised on assimilation and ultimately cultural genocide: radical eradication of difference. The focus of colonial education was to cultivate a particular form of embodied subjectivity so that the educated students would be attached to their own subjugation and be disposed towards obedience to colonial authorities and the settler-colonial order as a whole. Empirically speaking, the missionaries' educational efforts produced frustrating results, and many even failed—such as the Jesuit seminary.[323] The missionaries had limited means and resources, and their efforts often met with frustrating results in this early period. Indigenous students often ran away or refused to be confined within seminary walls. Many remained imbued within Indigenous cultural and spiritual traditions and disposed and attached to their homeland, kin, and community. Yet the very logic I identify here would survive and continue to be reflected in the subsequent development of education concerning Indigenous children in settler states in the centuries to come. The importance and scale of investment settler states would accord to the education of Indigenous children in fact testifies to the very resilience of Indigenous cultures and peoples.

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[323] Historians typically refer to early Jesuit and Ursuline educational efforts as failures because of the lack of lasting results they produced. For example, see James P. Ronda, "The European Indian;" Mairi Cowan, "Education, Francisation, and Shifting Colonial Priorities at the Ursuline Convent in Seventeenth-Century Québec.".

The various settler-colonial practices aimed at the cultivation of desire were designed to achieve the goal of cultural genocide. Accordingly, the missionaries discursively construct and rhetorically evoke the figural trope of the exceptionally pious Indigenous woman convert to prove the 'success' of their biopolitical regime. However, as I will explore in the following two chapters, Indigenous women both engaged in self-making that displaced and disrupted the intended goals of the missionaries and staged outright resistance to settler-colonial intrusion into their homeland. Embodied desire, as I will show, is central to their self-making and resistance. I will specifically look at Indigenous embodied relations to land and how Indigenous women engaged in embodied labor to cultivate and maintain such relations in the face of growing colonial encroachment.

Chapter 4. The Desire to Suffer? Asceticism, Piety, and Indigenous Women's Self-Making

"Trauma [is] a collective experience that generates collective response."
--Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*.

"Isn't Our Body the Only Thing We Have?"
--Catherine of Siena (1347-1380)[324]

Introduction

In the previous two chapters I have theorized how desire is articulated, refracted, and cultivated in early modern French imperialist gender ideology and colonial discourses, foregrounding the centrality of gender and embodiment. In this and the next chapter I shift to examine how gendered Indigenous practices displaced, disrupted, and resisted settler-colonial cultivation of desire. Reconstructing Indigenous embodied practices within and against the colonial archival grain, I probe how Indigenous women crafted attachments and relations that went beyond and often against the colonists' mandate. I argue that these practices can be read as practices of anti-colonial and decolonial self-making, community building, and world-making, showing us a decolonial form of desire and mode of desiring.

Recently, many scholars have argued that quotidian practices both reflect and are shaped by particular forms of desire and attachments, and can both reinforce or contest them. There are also

[324] Suzanne Noffke, eds, *The Letters of Catherine of Siena Volume II* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001), 201.

considerable differences in their appraisals: while some see the practices of the colonized and oppressed as reflecting attachment to their own subjugation, others see them as having the potential to disrupt and transform colonial and oppressive relations.[325] Saba Mahmood and Leanne Simpson in particular draw our attention to women's, or *feminine*, practices that pose challenges to relations of domination. In this chapter, I enrich this ongoing conversation by bringing attention to a set of historical practices that emerged in the founding and consolidating period of settler-colonial rule. The missionaries documented that, in seventeenth-century *Nouvelle-France*, many Indigenous women converts took up ascetic practices, specifically self-mortification practices. What can ascetic practices, especially self-mortification practices, tell us about desire and subjectivity, about colonial subjugation and investment in the production of docile and domesticated subjects?

As feminist historian Caroline Bynum observes, scholars have commonly dismissed women's ascetic practices, or see them simply as manifestations of their self-victimization or "false consciousness" or evidence of patriarchal oppression. As she writes,

> "Late medieval women hated their bodies and their sexuality, we are told, and punished them through fasting and other forms of self-mutilation. They internalized misogyny to which the philosophical, scientific, theological, and fold traditions and the structures of church and society all contributed. Some historians have responded to women's ascetic practices with embarrassment or even anger; others have responded with compassion. Conservative historians of theology have sometimes blamed the women. Historians of medicine or psychiatry have sometimes blamed society. Marxist and feminist historians have often blamed the church."[326]

In response to these rather reductive readings, Bynum urges feminist scholars to examine women's ascetic practices and piety anew, by attending to the historical and political contexts in which they emerged and proliferated, and the simultaneous political and personal significance of such practices.

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[325] Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*; Hagar Kotef, *The Colonizing Self*; Glen Coulthard and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Grounded Normativity/Placed-Based Solidarity;" T.J. Tallie, *Queering Colonial Natal*; Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*.

[326] Caroline Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 208-9.

These practices, borne from religious piety, nonetheless hold varied meanings and are often transgressive and disruptive. More recent works in feminist theory and history have followed this path to attend to the immanent, contextual, and *political* meaning of feminine piety and feminine practices more broadly. They attend to the contours of feminine piety in specific cultural and historical contexts, and reinterpret piety as a site of feminine (if not feminist) agency and a form of self-fashioning. In early modern Europe and the transatlantic Christian context, for example, many women mystics, including Marie Guyart, founder of the Ursuline order in New France, crafted a space for themselves by inhabiting piety, which both unintentionally *and* necessarily posed challenges to existing norms and church hierarchy.

Somewhat in a different vein, Saba Mahmood has explored how (Islamic) feminine piety poses challenges to "Western" feminist ethos and understandings of agency in relation to power and resistance.[327] Mahmood points out that there has been an overwhelming tendency within "Western" feminist scholarship to equate agency with resistance or subversion of norms, which she argues leads it to fail to see agency in religious piety appearing to uphold or comply with (patriarchal) norms, power, and authority. Mahmood contends that the meaning of agency cannot be fixed in advance but must "emerge through an analysis of the particular concepts that enable specific modes of being, responsibility, and effectivity" because "the ability to effect change in the world and in oneself is historically and culturally specific."[328] To grasp such specificity, she calls on feminist scholars to better attend to the embodied capacities and bodily acts through which one "inhabits norms" to "cultivate various forms of desire," which will enable us to "see and understand forms of being and action that are not necessarily encapsulated by the narrative of subversion and reinscription of

[327] Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*.
[328] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 14.

norms."[329] Mahmood draws on Butler to argue that "norms are not only consolidated and/or subverted" but "performed, inhabited, and experienced in a variety of ways."[330]

While Mahmood tends to draw an opposition between inhabiting and subverting norms, between challenging and upholding or accepting what she calls "patriarchal assumptions,"[331] her ethnographic work rather shows that Egyptian women who participated in the mosque movement negotiated and redefined the meaning of religious piety, and enacted unique forms of self-making in response to religious mandates. Although Butler does tend to privilege acts that would subvert norms in her earlier work, I read Mahmood and Butler as converging—rather than disagreeing—on the point that the possibility of subversion and disruption precisely lies *within* the inhabitation and embodiment of norms and power.[332] Since to inhabit norms rising from particular regimes of power is to continually embody such norms through repetitive bodily acts, the possibility of displacing, disrupting, and exceeding such norms, and therefore of challenging existing structures of power and authority, is always immanent to such repetition.[333] Inhabiting piety, for example, entails repetitively performing and embodying piety through various bodily acts. Piety thus embodied through repetition could take many different forms, including ones that could challenge religious—and political—orthodoxy; or, without ostensibly challenging it, those who engage in pious practices could come up with different ways to negotiate the demands of such orthodoxy. Many have explored how religious women disrupted or subverted power hierarchy and norms, and claimed a space for themselves, by *enacting* piety in different historical, cultural, and religious contexts.[334] While

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329 Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 15, 9.
330 Mahmood, *Politics of Piety,* 22.
331 Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 153.
332 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*: *Feminism and Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999).
333 Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 185. See also, Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no.4 (Dec. 1988), 519-531; Samuel Chambers, "An Incalculable Effect': Subversions of Heteronormativity," *Political Studies* 55 (2007), 656-679.
334 Bruneau, *Women Mystics Confronting the Modern World;* Elizabeth Rapley, *The Dévotes: Women and Church in Seventeenth-Century France* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990); Davis, *Women on the Margins;* Allan Greer and Jodi Bilinkoff, eds., *Colonial Saints: Discovering the Holy in the Americas, 1500-1800* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Lila

(European) women mystics in the early modern period often challenged male religious authorities and the evolving hierarchy within the church, indigenous[335] peoples also widely appropriated Christianity in unexpected ways to contest colonial power and gain material and political interests for themselves.[336]

For Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island, as Joel W. Martin succinctly puts it, "the history of Native American conversion is inextricably interwoven with a brutal history of colonialism and conquest and its aftermath."[337] Detailed historical studies of Indigenous conversion to and experience of Christianity on Turtle Island have especially espoused, in Michael McNally's words, "Christianity as, on the one hand, part of the equation of domination of native peoples and, on the other, an important religious resource in native struggles to act as agents in a history conditioned by that very domination."[338] Joanna Brooks, in a similar vein, remarks that "the history of Christianity in indigenous studies [is] a tumultuous, variegated, highly differentiated field of activity fraught both with zones of soul-harming subjugation, coercion, and indoctrination and with opportunities for vision, innovation, imagination, and articulation."[339] Many Indigenous converts, "tap[ped] Christianity to oppose forces of destruction, to defend Native American communities, and to strengthen Native American sovereignty, in spite of the odds."[340] For example, Christianity often

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Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiment: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society*, 30th Anniversary Edition, With a New Afterword (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2016).

[335] I use lower case "indigenous" as an umbrella term to refer to all non-European white population, and "Indigenous" to refer to original inhabitants of lands that had been and still are occupied by European settlers.

[336] Elizabeth Elbourne, *Blood Ground: Colonialism, Missions and the Contest for Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain, 1799-1853* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002); Miles Richardson David, editor, *Beyond Conversion and Syncretism: Indigenous Encounters with Missionary Christianity, 1800-2000* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012*);* Heather J. Sharkey, editor, *Cultural Conversions: Unexpected Consequences of Christian Missions in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2013); Tallie, *Queering Colonial Natal*. There is also a vast literature on conversion and Islam that I do not directly engage here.

[337] Joel W. Martin, "Introduction" in *Native Americans, Christianity, and the Reshaping of the American Religious Landscape* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2010), edited by Joel W. Martin and Mark A. Nicholas, 2.

[338] Michael McNally, *Ojibwe Singers: Hymns, Grief, and a Native Culture in Motion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[339] Joanna Brooks, "Hard Feelings: Samson Occom Contemplates His Christian Mentors," in *Native Americans, Christianity, and the Reshaping of the American Religious Landscape*, 24.

[340] Joel W. Martin, "Introduction," 3.

rapidly grew out of control of the missionaries and colonial authorities. Many Indigenous and colonized persons became proselytizers and religious intermediaries themselves, threatening to wrest control over spiritual matters from the missionaries and destabilize the colonial order and hierarchy.[341] Some, such as Samson Occom and William Apess, even grew to be Christian ministers while acting as influential Indigenous community leaders and literary figures.[342]

The centrality of gender and the importance of gendered differences to mission and conversion have not been lost, and have been gaining more attention in recent scholarship. While women—both settler and indigenous—were largely missing from historical, anthropological, religious studies, as historian Elizabeth Elbourne points out, recently many have especially paid attention to "the importance of a gendered account of religious experience, especially with regard to conversion."[343] Gender, religion, and power closely intersect in the contexts of civilizing missions, meaning that women's relation to and experience of Christianity necessarily involves complex processes of negotiation of power. Some have shown that colonial civilizing efforts severely restrained indigenous women's possibilities in various ways, such as punishing and disciplining those

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[341] Donald B. Smith, *Sacred Feathers: The Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby) and the Mississauga Indians* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987); Winona Wheeler, "The Journals and Voices of a Church of England Native Catechist: Askenootow (Charles Pratt), 1851-1884," in *Reading beyond Words: Contexts for Native History*, ed. Jennifer S.H. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert, 2nd ed (Peterborough: Broadview, 2002), 237-62; Peggy Brock, *The Many Voyages of Arthur Wellington Clah: A Tsimshian Man on the Pacific Northwest Coast* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011). See also, Tolly Bradford, *Prophetic Identities: Indigenous Missionaries on British Colonial Frontiers, 1850–78* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2012).

[342] It is telling that while Samson Occom (Mohegan) and William Apess (Pequot) were exceptional and influential figures of their times, only very recently did scholars start to pay attention to their lives and writings. The completed writings of Apess were published in 1992, and the writings of Occom were only compiled and published in 2006. See William Apess, *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, A Pequot*, edited by Barry O'Connell (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992); Samson Occom, *The Collected Writings of Samson Occom*, edited by Joanna Brooks; foreword by Robert Worrier (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). Joel W. Martin (10; 13) has argued that such lasting lack of interest in native converts reflected a reductive understanding of Indigenous conversion solely in terms of assimilation—loss of authenticity—and decline. Joanna Brooks has noted that non-Native critics tend to dismiss Native Christianity in ways that they would not dismiss African American Christianity. See *American Lazarus: Religion and the Rise of African-American and Native American Literatures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). There has since been considerable shift in works published in the past decade across many disciplines.

[343] Elizabeth Elbourne, *"Gender, C*olonialism, and Faith," *Journal of Women's History* 25, no.1 (Spring 2013), 184.

whom they perceived to have threatened the colonial order,[344] or imposing "a restrictive form of femininity."[345] Many see missions as spaces and processes that subjugated women in particular. In fact, many earlier works on New France take this position.[346] The violence and destruction of civilizing efforts notwithstanding, others have paid more attention to how Indigenous and colonized women struggle to "exploit ambiguities in religious language to negotiate better positions for themselves."[347] For instance, Indigenous women proselytizers, in particular, by virtue of doing apostolic work, also refused to be cloistered, maintaining the freedom of movement denied to settler *femmes religieuse*. For many, religion is not "merely a reflection of material power"[348] but is made meaningful to them in their life-world through creative—and most often un-sanctioned---re-deployments. Michael McNally thus has contended that Indigenous use of religion should be understood as meaning-making.[349] Women do not simply use religion strategically. Rather, they engage with religion in ways that generate meaning and possibilities.[350] In the context of civilizing missions, wherein conversion is simultaneously the means and goal of colonization, religious piety is fraught, ambiguous, and multivalent, requiring careful and contextualized analysis.

Building on theoretical reflections on gendered piety and historical and anthropological reflections on the social and cultural politics of mission and conversion, I look at Indigenous women's ascetic practices as a creative form of self-making that disrupted and displaced religious orthodoxy and the settler-colonial mandate aimed at domesticating Indigenous peoples into subjects

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[344] Barbara O. Reyes, *Private Women, Public Lives: Gender and the Missions of the Californias* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009).
[345] Eliza F. Kent, *Converting Women: Gender and Protestant Christianity in Colonial South India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
[346] See for example, Karen Anderson, *Chain Her by One Foot*.
[347] Elbourne, "Gender, Colonialism, and Faith," 184.
[348] Elbourne, "Gender, Colonialism, and Faith," 184.
[349] Michael McNally, *Ojibwe Singers*.
[350] Jon Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival: Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2005); Dorothy Hodgson, *The Church of Women: Gendered Encounters between Maasai and Missionaries* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2005).

of empire. My goal is not to develop a more expansive account of (feminine/feminist) agency nor to completely redefine it. Rather, I'm interested in how embodied gendered practices cultivate desire and generate meaning. Locating moments of disruption and forms of meaning-making that go beyond the dictate of biopolitical control, I contend, does not reinforce the assumption that "all human beings have an innate desire for freedom."[351] Rather, attending to these specific practices helps to reveal that desire is always cultivated and lived in particular historical and political contexts, that it takes shape in concrete relations, and that it can initiate unexpected forms of self-making and contestation and disruption of colonial power. It shows that the possibility of subversion and disruption of dominant power is *immanent* (rather than innate) *to* piety. It is precisely by practicing piety through repetitive bodily acts that colonial coercion and oppression can be challenged or disrupted.

Indigenous feminists argue that decolonial feminist theorizing needs to start *from* Indigenous women's particular experiences that have been uniquely shaped by settler colonialism.[352] Dian Million points out that the segregation and suppression of "feminine" experience, which is labeled as (merely) "polemic, or at worse as not knowledge at all,"[353] masks the profound political and epistemological meaning of such experience and reproduces the colonial epistemological framework that still informs feminist studies. Decolonization, and specifically the decolonization of feminist studies, means that scholars ought to seriously take into account "feminine" experience as thoroughly political, as meaning-making, and knowledge-producing. Responding to Million's call, I develop a critical feminist and decolonial rereading of Indigenous women's ascetic practices.

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351 Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 5.

352 Dian Million, "Felt Theory: An Indigenous Feminist Approach to Affect and History," *Wicazo Sa Review* 24, no2. (Fall 2009), 53-76; Lisa Kahaleole Hall, "Navigating Our Own 'Sea of Islands': Remapping a Theoretical Space for Hawaiian Women and Indigenous Feminism," *Wicazo Sa Review 24*, no.2 (Fall 2009), 15-38; Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, Angie Morrill, "Decolonizing Feminism: Challenging Connections between Settler Colonialism and Heteropatriarchy," *Feminist Formations* 25, no.1 (2013), 8-34; Joanne Barker, ed. *Critically Sovereign: Indigenous Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017);

353 Dian Million, "Felt Theory," 54-55.

Reconstructing these practices within—and against—colonial archival sources, I argue that Indigenous women's ascetic practices show us a creative and productive way of being-in-the-world and being-with-others.

While many historians, anthropologists, and religious studies scholars have examined how Indigenous and colonized women engaged with Christianity and conversion empirically, I bring an explicitly decolonial feminist lens to look at how Indigenous women inhabited religious piety, particularly by engaging with and devising ascetic practices. Doing so in turn enriches feminist theoretical understandings of subjectivity and gendered forms of self-making. I show that by incorporating aspects of Christianity into existing Indigenous spiritual and cultural practices,[354] Indigenous women not only disrupted colonial authorities' continuing disciplining of their desire but also indirectly challenged the attempted control of their bodies and flesh. Their body, or rather bodily surface or flesh, became the last frontier–quite literally–and the most contested site of colonization and self-crafting. Through these bodily practices, Indigenous Christian women re-directed their attachments from the objects that the missionaries wanted them to be attached to, and instead sustained and cultivated communal relations and attachments to land, kin, and community. Existing discussions of ascetic practices often by default take the individual body and the individual as the proper unit of analysis. In these discussions, notable women mystics such as Julian of

[354] This process can and is often referred to as syncretism. Many also use terms such as hybridity, amalgamation, bricolage, creolization, etc. Syncretism is especially widely used in discussions of local adaptions of Christianity. Many embrace the term and framework and use it descriptively to describe the process of "mixing," or use it analytically to illuminating how "mixing" takes place. But the term and the framework has been subjected to much criticism and is often viewed negatively. Some have pointed out that syncretism is often used pejoratively in the contexts of Christian missions to signal adulteration and distortion. For debates on syncretism, see for example, Charles Stewart and Rosalind Shaw, editors, *Syncretism/Anti-syncretism: The Politics of Religious Synthesis* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Kenneth M. Morrison, *The Solidarity of Kin: Ethnohistory, Religious Studies, and the Algonkian-French Religious Encounter* (New York: NYU Press, 2002); Rose Kane, *Syncretism and Christian Tradition: Race and Revelation in the Study of Religious Mixture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020). Homi Bhabha also critiques syncretism in *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994). Others have questioned that term's applicability in other contexts. See, for example, Farina Mir, "Genre and Devotion in Punjabi Popular Narratives: Rethinking Cultural and Religious Syncretism," *Society for Comparative Study of Society and History* 48, no.3 (2006), 727-758. Because the fraught status of the term and the framework, I do not explicitly engage with it in this chapter, although I understand that some might see the processes I am examining here on its terms.

Norwich, Catherine of Siena, Margery Kempe, Marie Guyart, and best known among Indigenous peoples, "the Mohawk Saint" Catherine Tekakwitha, stand out as exceptional individuals.[355] In contrast, I underscore that Indigenous women engaged in these practices communally, and through them cultivated communal attachments that further grounded their communal sense of self and forged new relations.

Ascetic practices offer us an especially opportune window in illustrating the political salience of desire in relation to gendered self-making under duress for several reasons. First, empirically speaking, such practices have not only been predominantly undertaken by women within different religious and cultural traditions but also are gendered feminine. These practices thus show us something specific about how piety is inhabited to craft gendered selves. Second, ascetic practices seem to be premised on self-annihilation and denote a pursuit of self-effacement. Hence it seems ironic to speak of these practices as demonstrating a mode of "self-making." How can a practice premised on self-annihilation be read as self-making? Relatedly, ascetic practices seem to demonstrate attachment to one's injury *par excellence*. Nietzsche, for instance, takes women's asceticism as demonstrating what he calls the "desire to suffer." I will unpack his account briefly and

[355] Ulrike Wiethaus, eds., *Maps of Flesh and Light: The Religious Experience of Medieval Women Mystics* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1993); Marie-Florine Bruneau, *Women Mystics Confronting the Modern World*; Natalie Zemon Davis, *Women on the* Margins; Allan Greer and Jodi Bilinkoff, ed., *Colonial Saints*; Jennifer Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard: Reading Catherine of Siena in Late Medieval and Early Modern England* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2019). Aside from historical scholarship, many have paid attention to these women mystics' writings and attempted to recuperate as early women or feminist writers, highlighting their literary self-expression, achievement, and in some cases, political engagement. While this body of work is extremely helpful, and the authors do a great job contextualizing their life and work, it also tends to make these women stand out as exceptional individuals. See, for example, Claudia Rattazzi Papka, "The Written Woman Writes: Caterina da Siena Between History and Hagiography, Body and Text," *Annali d'Italianistica vol.13, Women Mystic Writers* (1995), 131-149; Karma Lochrie, *Margery Kempe and the Translation of the Flesh* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991); Anne Winston-Allen, *Convent Chronicles: Women Writing About Women and Reform in the Late Middle Ages* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004); Kerra Gezerro Hanson, "St. Catherine of Siena: Dominican Tertiary, Spiritual Author, and Doctrinal Model," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2007; Jane Tylus, *Reclaiming Catherine of Siena: Literacy, Literature, and the Signs of Others* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Rebecca Krug, *Margery Kempe and the Lonely Reader* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017). Colonial historiography—and hagiography—especially tends to glorify Catherine Tekakwitha as an exceptional—saintly—native woman.

point out the problems when left critics appropriate his critique without paying attention to how it pathologizes women's embodied practices.

In general, women who engage in ascetic practices appear as self-denying, mad, delusional, and pathological. I contend that it is precisely because these practices are coded as such that a feminist and decolonial reading of them is fruitful. As Bonnie Honig has argued, *depathologizng* women's acts that are conventionally painted as "mad or deluded" enables us to understand them as *political action* and restore women as political agents.[356] Such a reading of ascetic practices shows us that political action always takes place in a web of relations we do not authorize, and in a world that is not (solely) constituted by our sovereign will. This unconventional reading of ascetic practices in a particular context sees such practices as ways of 'act[ing] politically in conditions of impossibility."[357] As such, it illuminates the complex interplay between freedom and servitude, between independence and captivity. It does so by exploring the political uses of pain. My analysis thus calls into question the Nietzschean claim that self-inflicted pain stems from the desire to suffer and from attachment to one's injury. By doing so I also problematizes the Elaine Scarry's well-known assertion that the experience of pain is necessarily private and world-destroying because it forecloses the world unto oneself.[358] Instead, I foreground the complex ways in which pain is put to political use. As Ann Cvetkovich reminds us, "trauma [is] a collective experience that generates collective response."[359] Talal Asad's anthropological, historical, and religious study of pain has shown the complex political and social uses of pain, and the significance of pain in both Christian and Islamic traditions. In doing so he problematizes the opposition often drawn between agency and pain, in which pain is often

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[356] Bonnie Honig, *A Feminist Theory of Refusal* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2021), 2-3, emphasis mine.
[357] Bonnie Honig, *Antigone, Interrupted* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 8.
[358] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).
[359] Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 19.

equated with passive suffering and inaction.[360] While Asad does not specifically discuss asceticism, a contextualized study of asceticism can enrich our understanding of the political uses of pain. For those who live in a world of severely circumscribed possibilities, pain can be taken up, both in embodied practices and political claims, to cope with and work through injury and domination. Rather than world-destroying, it instead can (re)make a world that is being destroyed.

This chapter is structured as follows: first I unpack more fully the political and theoretical problems inherent in Wendy Brown's appropriation of Nietzsche's account of ressentiment, drawing attention to the fact that Nietzsche's critique is largely built upon his appraisal of asceticism, which has hereby been ignored. Drawing attention to the centrality of flesh to asceticism, I construct an alternative feminist, queer, and Indigenous theoretical repertoire that enables a rereading of ascetic practices. In the next section I then reconstruct the social and political context in which Indigenous women's ascetic practices proliferated. I then draw on the theoretical repertoire I gather in the first section to closely examine such practices as documented by the missionaries to unpack the meaning that the missionaries tried but ultimately failed to contain. I bring attention to the continuity between pre-contact Indigenous practices of inflicting bodily pain and subsequently developed self-mortification practices. I argue that these practices were both enabled by, and demonstrated, Indigenous women's attachments to kin, community, and homeland. In other words, they enact a form of communal and worldly desire that is lived and cultivated among bodies. Last, I offer some concluding remarks on how this historically-grounded study of ascetic practices can enrich our understanding of and enable us to rethink the relation between desire, subjectivity, and self-making.

Ressentiment, **the Desire to Suffer, Flesh**

Pain. Injury. Suffering. These are usually what to come to mind when people think of asceticism. These are also what have been deemed central to subjectivity and subject formation. In

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[360] Talal Asad, "Agency and Pain: An Exploration," *Culture and Religion* 1, no.1 (2000), 29-60.

the now classic essay entitled "Wounded Attachments," Wendy Brown elaborates—and critiques—a form of political subjectivity constituted by attachment to one's injury. Brown argues that using one's injury as the rallying point in identity politics makes one purely reactionary to oppression and fixes one onto the past wrongs, therefore unable to move forward or envision an alternative future in which one would no longer be defined by one's injury. Drawing heavily from Nietzsche's critique of (slave) morality in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Brown argues that being attached to and defined by one's injury "breed[s] a politics of recrimination and rancor, of culturally dispersed paralysis and suffering, a tendency to reproach power rather than aspire to it, to disdain freedom rather than practice it."[361] For Brown, identity politics is rooted in one's *desire* for one's subjugation and suffering. Brown puts forward an account of subject formation through recourse to desire understood as attachment formed in particular relations to power. She foregrounds the centrality of these—non-erotic/sexual—attachments in constituting subjectivities, an insight that I share.

At the same time, Brown's critique has been as controversial as influential. While many continue to draw from her account to critique identity politics and point out its limits, others have questioned it both on theoretical and political grounds. Many feminist, queer, and critical race studies scholars have called into question her troubling use of Nietzsche and argued that her account is effectively victim-blaming.[362] Glen Coulthard differentiates resentment from *ressentiment* as elaborated by Nietzsche, and argues that it is problematic to characterize the emotive and affective state of the colonized as one of *ressentiment*. He suggests that the resentment Indigenous peoples feel towards the settler state is a productive and emancipatory force for decolonization. Schotten, on the

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[361] Wendy Brown, "Wounded Attachments," *Political Theory* 21, no.3 (August 1993), 390.

[362] Alexander Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); Grace Kyungwon Hong, *Death beyond Disavowal: The Impossible Politics of Difference* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2015); Glen Coulthard, "Resentment and Indigenous Politics," in *The Settler Complex: Recuperating Binaries in Colonial Studies,* ed. Patrick Wolfe (Los Angeles: UCLA American Indian Studies Centre, 2016), 155-172; C. Heike Schotten, "Nietzsche and Emancipatory Politics: Queer Theory as Anti-Morality," *Critical Sociology* 45, no.2 (2018), 213-226.

other hand, charges Brown for conflating "the cry of the oppressed" with that of the oppressor, thereby eliding "fundamental distinctions between the powerful and powerless, oppressor and oppressed."[363] Moreover, as Weheliye points out, since access to full personhood by those who have been historically excluded from it due to the physical violence they had been subjected to actually requires one to "leave behind physical suffering so as to take on the ghostly semblance of possessing one's personhood," what Brown identifies as the problems of identity politics is "less a product of the minority subject's desire to desperately cling to his or her pain but a consequence of the state's dogged insistence on suffering as the only price of entry to proper personhood."[364] Since they do not desire to suffer but are grappling with the effects of suffering, *ressentiment* as theorized by Nietzsche does not appropriately capture their desire vis-a-vis their injury.

In addition to these critical engagements, I want to draw attention to another aspect of Nietzsche's elaboration of *ressentimen*t that neither Brown nor her critics have discussed, namely, the centrality of asceticism to Nietzsche's articulation of *ressentiment.* In her criticism of identity politics, Brown uses identity-based *claims* that previous disenfranchised and marginalized groups pose to the liberal late-capitalist state to demonstrate "wounded attachments." She sees these claims as not only representing their injury, but also reinscribing it via the state. As illuminated by Nietzsche's criticism in *Genealogy*, the logic underwriting these claims is one of *ressentiment*—the desire to suffer. The language Nietzsche engages is quite visceral (burn, flagellation) rather than metaphorical or abstract, and the examples he gives focus rather on practices instead of on the claims abstracted from them, more specifically, in corporeal practices and feelings. The body, flesh, senses, and feelings, are all central to Nietzsche's account. To be wounded is primarily a fleshy experience ("be burnt in'"),[365] and nowhere does he demonstrate it more clearly in his appraisal of Christian asceticism, which he

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[363] Schotten, "Nietzsche and Emancipatory Politics," 216.
[364] Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus,* 77.
[365] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1989) 61.

introduces in the second essay and fully elaborates in the third essay of *Genealogy*. Curiously, neither Brown nor her critics address what Nietzsche says about asceticism, which is the most concrete example of *ressentiment* as self-inflicted injury. Such inattention, I contend, obfuscates the bodily/fleshy nature of any particular wound, and elides the embodied process through which injury is incurred and sustained.

I suggest that only through the elision of both the embodied nature of the wound and the fundamental difference between self-inflicted pain and other-inflicted wounds can Brown read the politics of those who have been wounded only as discursive (or rather linguistic) claim-making that reinscribes a reified identity category through an uncritical (or not thoroughly critical) appropriation of Nietzsche's account of *ressentiment.* Reading identity politics through this Nietzschean lens rather uncritically makes Brown's diagnosis and the critique of identity politics problematic.[366] Brown, and others who either agree with her or critique her, also do not problematize Nietzsche's reading of ascetic practices, which is quite central and in fact the only concrete example he gives in elaborating *ressentiment.* For Nietzsche, asceticism epitomizes "the desire to suffer."[367]

While Nietzsche ridicules asceticism in general terms and places the will to nothingness and the desire to suffer at the center of ascetic ideals that define Man and humanity *as such*, he finds women's ascetic practices even more ridiculous. He explicitly states that the meaning of ascetic ideals, for women, is "at best one more seductive charm, a touch of morbidezza in fair flesh, the angelic look of a plump pretty animal."[368] He goes on to lament, "The sick woman especially: no one can excel her in the wiles to dominate, oppress, and tyrannize. The sick woman spares nothing,

[366] Fully unpacking the debates around identity politics is beyond the scope of this chapter. While I find some aspects of identity politics troubling, especially in terms of how it is sometimes articulated through reified identity categories, my goal is not to recuperate or redeem identity politics, but to offer a different theoretical lens to read pain—against injury—in relation to desire, subjectivity, and community.
[367] Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, 162.
[368] Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, 96.

living or dead; she will dig up the most deeply buried things."[369] It is also worth noting that Nietzsche reads gendered asceticism as peculiarly fleshy, and as demonstrating a *perverse* relation to power. In Nietzsche's framework, the will to power is posited as the highest desirable goal. Yet when embodied by women, it becomes the *pathological* will to dominate and tyrannize (presumably men). Since Nietzsche's verdict on asceticism as such is only the asceticism of modern white European Man (and particular men), which he problematically uses to *stand in* for the human and humanity as such,[370] and his discussion focuses on abstract ascetic ideals rather than actual practices, it becomes clear that different ascetic practices need to be untethered and salvaged from his general evaluation and dismissal of asceticism.

In contrast to Nietzsche's dismissal of women's ascetic practices, recently feminist scholars have carefully attended to them and revealed that instead of being purely nihilistic and a sign of self-victimization, these practices are deeply meaningful. Bynum argues that "the extreme asceticism and literalism of women's spirituality were not, at the deepest level, masochism or dualism but, rather, efforts to gain power and to give meaning."[371] Specifically attending to medieval women's use of food in their ascetic practices, Bynum shows the various ways in which religious women found ways to manipulate their environment to exert power and control over their own lives and those around them in a world in which such power was systemically (and increasingly) denied to them. Other feminist historians such as Marie-Florine Bruneau have similarly looked at how early modern women mystics, including Marie Guyart, negotiated the corporeal and spiritual constraints placed upon them by the church and male religious authorities through their bodily (including but not

[369] Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, 123.
[370] While outwardly Nietzsche's work is anti-humanist, as he relentlessly calls into question humanist principles, his discussion of Man as such remains firmly tied to sexist and Eurocentric notions of particular *men* and leaves little room for alterity of the Other. See Kelly Oliver, *Womanizing Nietzsche: Philosophy's Relation to the "Feminine"* (New York: Routledge, 1994).
[371] Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, 208.

limited to ascetic) practices.[372] Bynum has shown that flesh was both instrumental and monumental in medieval religious (Christian) women's self-making. She argues that religious women's ascetic bodily practices should be interpreted as "elaborate changes rung upon the *possibilities* provided by fleshliness than as flights from physicality."[373] Bynum contends that rather than indicating the denial or renouncement of flesh, religious women deliberately engaged with those practices to enact piety, generate meaning, and craft possibilities for themselves and other women in their communities.

Flesh, I contend, is both central and particular to women's embodiment, desire, and subjectivity. Black feminist theorist Hortense Spillers has argued that the distinction between "flesh" and "body" is "the central one between captive and liberated subject-positions."[374] The Atlantic slave trade, she points out, transformed black bodies into flesh. As she puts, poignantly,

> "Before the 'body' there is the 'flesh', that zero degree of social conceptualization that does not escape concealment under the brush of discourse, or the reflexes of iconography. Even though the European hegemonies stole bodies…we regard this human and social irreparability as high crimes against the *flesh*, as the person of African females and African males registered the wounding."[375]

In this paragraph that has been widely cited to denounce the cruelty and damage of the slave trade, the flesh appears as the last front of dehumanization, the sign of ultimate objectivation and abjection. To be reduced to pure flesh is to be completely objectified, to be evacuated of all meaning, to cease to be a body.[376] Black (African) women are robbed of their names, gender and or any signs of singularity. Spillers elaborates,

> "The flesh is the concentration of 'ethnicity' that contemporary critical discourses neither acknowledge nor discourse away. It is this 'flesh and blood' entity, in the vestibule (or 'pre-view') of a colonized North America, that is essentially ejected from 'The Female Body in Western Culture,' but it makes good theory, or commemorative 'herstory' to want to 'forget,' or to have failed to realize, that the

[372] Marie-Florine Bruneau, *Women Mystics Confronting the Modern World;* Elizabeth Rapley, *The Dévotes;* Natalie Zemon Davis, *Women on the Margins.*
[373] Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, 6.
[374] Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics* (Summer 1987), 67.
[375] Spillers, "Mama's Baby," 67, emphasis original.
[376] Saidiya Hartman discuss this poignantly in "Venus in Two Acts.".

> African female subject, under these historic conditions, is not only the target of rape–in one sense, an interiorized violation of body and mind,--but also the topic of specifically externalized acts of torture and prostration that we imagine as the peculiar province of male brutality and torture inflicted by other males…This materialized scene of unprotected female flesh–of female flesh 'ungendered'--offers a praxis and a theory, a text for living and for dying, and a method for reading both through their diverse mediations."[377]

Yet it is precisely because flesh has been a site of disgendering and dehumanization that it ought to be–but has not been–taken up as a critical analytic of power, if we were to come to terms with such power. Paradoxically, that the objectification of flesh *disgenders* enslaved black female bodies precisely testifies to flesh as a gendered and gendering, racialized and racializing, mechanism. Spillers is rather ambiguous on this account, for while she laments the damage of being reduced to pure flesh, she also contends that "th[e] materialized scene of unprotected female flesh—of female flesh 'ungendered'—offers a praxis and a theory, a text for living and for dying, and a method for reading both through their diverse mediations."[378] Her ambiguity probably testifies to the extremely fraught nature of flesh as both materiality and as a concept. As Amber Musser contends, "flesh occupies a fraught position within studies of difference. It oscillates between being a symptom of abjection and objectification and a territory ripe for reclamation."[379] Precisely because the flesh is "fraught," it is an important space to think about and theorize differences and power, as "flesh connects bodies to the external world by emphasizing the various conditions that make bodies visible in particular ways."[380]

I propose that we do not read flesh as the opposite of the body, but as a dense transfer point of power, the locus wherein external violence and self-making simultaneously are sensed and felt. I understand flesh to specifically denote bodily surface, demarcating the porous boundary between the

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[377] Spillers, "Mama's Baby," 67-8.
[378] Spillers, "Mama's Baby," 68.
[379] Amber Musser, *Sensational Flesh: Race, Power, and Masochism* (New York: NYU Press, 2014), 20.
[380] Musser, *Sensational Flesh*, 19. While I find Musser's account of the flesh helpful, it is worth noting that she develops it through an investigation of masochist desire and practices, which I contend is quite distinct from asceticism. Some might and have read ascetic practices as masochist "deep down" as stemming from erotic attachment. But I contend with Bynum and Allan Greer that such reading is too reductive and does not adequately attend to the specific meaning of ascetic practices.

inside and the outside but also functioning as the contact point between the two. Flesh is the place wherein corporeality and desire most intensely manifests. It is not (only) a sign of pure negation or destruction but also a place where different potentialities clash, where the effects of colonization are most intensely imposed and felt, but also where alternative—decolonial and anti-colonial—meanings can be generated.

Fanon's account of the lived reality of the colonized under colonial occupation also calls attention to bodily surface. While Fanon's account is often read as a psychological or psychoanalytic one that explores how the colonized internalizes colonial ideology, and he does occasionally evoke the psyche, I contend that Fanon's account is more productively read as showing how colonization demarcates the bodies and produces affect that is written on the bodily surface and takes shape in the world. Fanon writes that in the colonial world, "the emotional sensitivity of the native is kept on the surface of the skin like an open sore which flinches from the caustic agent."[381] Even the breathing of the colonized is "an observed, an occupied breathing."[382] Oliver suggests that Fanon shows that the colonized "do not internalize but rather *epidermalize* racial ideology."[383] The bodily surface—flesh--operates as the plastic and porous surface through which power and desire are transmitted, materialized, and take concrete shape in the world and shape the world in turn. In a paradoxical way, it is almost as if the psyche is externalized: it does not rest in the metaphysical and metaphorical space deep within the individual, but rather is enacted on the bodily surface. In Fanon's words, "the psyche shrinks back, obliterates itself and finds outlet in muscular

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381 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 56.
382 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 65.
383 Kelly Oliver*, The Colonization of Psychic Space* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2004*)*, 51, emphasis mine. Though Oliver overall is interested in mapping the colonization of psychic space, as the title of the book suggests, both her account and her reading of Fanon emphasize the colonization of bodily surface.

demonstrations."[384] Colonization shapes subjectivity and forms desire by marking the contours of the body, imprinting on bodily surface, and conditioning the texture of embodied lived experience.

The violence of slavery and colonization that was actualized through the flesh, or turning body into flesh, can only start to be accounted for once the flesh is accounted for. Flesh, as a dense site of transmission of both power and affect, is a site where different sets of desire clash. Yet at the same time, flesh is the last frontier of gender, racial and colonial domination, and abjection, denoting the effacement of humanity; yet on the other hand, perhaps because of this, it is also a site of self-making. Through sensing, feeling, and desiring, one could manipulate and transform one's relation to the world and others. In seventeenth-century Indigenous-French interactions, a world characterized by war, epidemics, displacement, and growing colonial encroachment, flesh was the contested frontier of both spiritual and worldly matters.

Contextualizing Conversion

As many scholars have noted, in moments of profound unrest and catastrophes often produced by colonization in the first place, conversion can seem a viable or even desirable option not only because it can offer spiritual solace, but perhaps importantly, material security and access. In seventeenth-century *Nouvelle-France*, conversion to Christianity as a process offered new social and economic opportunities to many Indigenous women. As historian Kathryn Labelle notes, after the dispersal of the Wendat, "Christianity was a source of power for the Wendat in general, but for Wendat women in particular."[385] Christian Wendat women took on many new roles such as "teachers, interpreters, seminarists, hospital nuns, and Ursuline Sisters."[386] By doing so they renewed and even increased their power within the diasporic Wendat communities. While many Indigenous seminarists saw confinement as a form of deprivation and punishment, the cloistered life offered

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[384] Fanon, *Wretched*, 56.
[385] Kathryn Labelle, *Dispersed but Not Destroyed: A History of the Wendat People* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013), 175.
[386] Labelle, *Dispersed but Not Destroyed,* 175.

some safety and stability that they desired in a period of upheaval. For example, Cecile Arenhatsi, a twenty-three-year-old Christian Wendat widow, brought her daughter, Marie, who was six or seven years old to the Ursulines. She voluntarily engaged herself as a servant of the Ursulines and put her daughter in the seminary.[387] While the missionaries interpreted her choice as solely motivated by her devotion and will to "satisfy God," it is not hard to discern that the seminary life primarily allowed her to escape from warfare and potential captivity, make an independent living, and allowed her daughter to receive an education.[388]

There were at least hundreds of Wendat and Algonquians who, just like Atenhatsi, sought refuge with the French during the Iroquois attacks. For those displaced and endangered by war, particularly Wendat and Algonquian refugees and later on Haudenosaunee women who were forced to leave their villages due to ongoing conflict and disarray, conversion and alliance with the French provided them with economic and social opportunities and stability, while Christianity offered spiritual consolation as well. The Jesuits themselves were fully aware of the social condition that drove many to the French and embrace Christianity. As Superior Ragueneau lays bare in the 1652 *Relations*,

> "When the Hurons were in affluence, and the Algonquians in prosperity, they mocked at the Gospel, and tried to murder those who proclaimed it in their country,--accusing them of being sorcerers, who made them lose their lives by secret means, spoiled their gran, and caused drouths and inclement weathers, and regarding them as traitors, who held communication with their enemies to sell their country (*leur pays*). As soon as the Iroquois had cast them into the abyss where they still are, these poor people came to throw themselves into our arms,--asking shelter and protection from those whom they had regarded as traitors; seeking the friendship of those whom they had tried to murder as sorcerers….The Algonquians, the Hurons, and numerous other nations whom we have instructed, would have been lost if they had not been ruined; that the greater part of those who came in quest of baptism in affliction, would never have found it in prosperity…"[389]

[387] JR, 36, 213.
[388] In this sense, the convent in Canada served a similar purpose in Europe—housing the poor and the displaced, and offering basic education to girls.
[389] JR 38, 45-47.

In a time of turmoil and when one's life was threatened, it is most reasonable to assume that outward manifestation of piety was not exclusively motivated by religious reasons alone. The Jesuits and Ursulines, however, most often disavowed the earthly—social and political—conditions that made conversion attractive or even necessary and interpreted the pious acts of the converts as exclusively spiritual. But it is not hard to grapple with the fact that conversion and pledging to French colonial authorities offered these converts social stability and economic security.

This external world was nothing short of hostile to Indigenous peoples, and especially had adverse effects on Indigenous women and put new challenges upon them, as they were the ones who traditionally took care of the household and communal affairs. As Greer comments,

> "people who had lived through—and were continuing to live through—the epidemics, wars, and dislocation occasioned by colonization were purposely adding to their pain. To all appearances, they sought not only to invest their suffering with meaning... they…waged covert struggles, with one another perhaps, but certainly, as the missionaries' correspondence makes abundantly clear, with the clergy."[390]

It was in this particular context that some Indigenous women integrated Catholicism into their world, and some also took up ascetic practices. This gendered practice enables Indigenous women to pursue a particular form of self-making and community-building without waging a direct revolt against the colonial authorities.

Contested Bodily Frontier and Gendered Self-Making

Before contact with the Jesuits and before Christianity made an impact on Indigenous communities, self-inflicted bodily modification that was painful was already a common practice that, although sharing some similarities with medieval and early modern Christian ascetic practices, grew out of Indigenous cultural and spiritual traditions. Jesuit Bressani observed that in Canada, many "paint their faces in various styles" and "their whole bodies,--some superficially and temporarily,

[390] Allan Greer, *Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 123.

others permanently."[391] Those who "paint themselves permanently do so with extreme pain, --using, for this purpose, needles, sharp awls, or piercing thorns, with which they perforate or have others perforate, the skin."[392] In some nations, this practice was so common that Bressani knew "not whether a single individual was found, who was not painted in this manner, on some part of the body."[393] He saw this practice as dangerous as it had caused death. Bressani referred to the one who died because he had practiced bodily modification as "a martyr to vanity and a fantastic caprice."[394] This observation is notable as it shows that for many Indigenous peoples, self-inflicted corporeal pain was a traditional and common practice that constituted their Indigenous selfhood. Although it seemed extreme and unnecessary to the Jesuits, it had a particular meaning attached to it. While for the Jesuits, corporeal pain was essentially associated with punishment and specifically religious penance, such association did not exist for Indigenous peoples. Many Indigenous peoples also believed that bodily ailment was caused by evil spirits being attached to their bodies, which could only be driven out by violent means that caused considerable pain.[395] Sometimes by themselves, sometimes being instructed by medicine men and women, they would impose painful measures such as walking "barefoot over the live embers."[396]

The Jesuits had also recorded other incidents of the Haudenosaunee inflicting pain and discomfort on their bodies before Christianity had any real impact on their communities. In one incident, during the 1655 mid winter festival at Onondaga, the Jesuits observed that "men, women, and children, running like maniacs through the streets and cabins…naked; they seemed insensible to the cold which is nearly unbearable even to those who are warmly clothed."[397] In another one, after a

[391] JR 58, 250.
[392] JR 58, 251.
[393] JR 58, 251.
[394] JR 58 251.
[395] JR 50, 293.
[396] JR 50, 293.
[397] JR 42, 156-7.

man of the (Cayuga) town of Oiogouen had a vision, he recounted his dream to his friends, and immediately they acted out his vision: they "went to the river and pierced the ice, making two holes fifteen paces apart. The divers stripped. The first man led the way, jumping into one of the holes and emerging, most, fortunately, from the other one. The second man followed suit and then the others, until the tenth, who paid the price for all the rest: he could not find his way out and perished miserably under the ice."[398] Although how frequently Indigenous peoples took up these practices is uncertain, we do get a sense that they were rather commonplace in Indigenous village life and were also spiritual in nature. Indigenous peoples engaged with them to communicate with the spiritual and sacred realm and to strengthen attachment to their kin and community.

Though there are some similarities between these (older) Indigenous practices and Counter-Reformation Christian ascetic practices, Indigenous peoples also practiced a particular form of bodily mortification that the missionaries had never heard of and were shocked by: burning of the flesh. Gabriel Sagard noted in his travelogue to the Wendat country that seventeenth-century Wendat (a Haudenosaunee people) routinely used fire in their curing rituals. The shamans would plunge their hands into the fire and bring out burning coals and ashes with their burning hands.[399] During ceremonial preparations for war, the Haudenosaunee also widely deployed fire in anticipation that warriors would likely be captured by their enemies, whereas women and children would be taken as captives.[400] A Jesuit observed that "Sometimes, to show that they have courage, a Savage will bind his bare arm to that of another; then putting between the two arms, upon the flesh, a piece of lighted tinder, they leave it until it is entirely consumed, burning themselves to the bone.

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[398] JR 42, 152-3.
[399] Gabriel Sagard, *The Long Journey to the Country of the Hurons*, ed. G. M. Wrong, trans. H. H. Langton (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1939), 200-1. See also William N. Fenton, *The False Faces of the Iroquois* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 73.
[400] JR 42, 171.

The man who withdraws his arm and shakes off the fire is considered lacking in courage."[401] The same Jesuit also specifically mentioned that he heard a Frenchman, who was among the Wendat, almost lost his arm "in trying to play at this fine game with a Savage."[402] Interestingly, the Jesuits' reaction to extreme bodily mortification practices was not very different from their reaction to body piercing and tattooing—both deeply troubled them. Bressani's evocation of the native man who (allegedly) died because of his bodily piercings brings the similarity between the two sets of bodily practices to the fore.

If Indigenous self-mortification practices proved hard to understand and were met with the missionaries' disapproval, the situation did not change much when Indigenous neophytes took up ascetic practices after baptism to practice and embody piety. While the Jesuits hailed them as exceptionally pious, their anxiety and confusion were palpable in their discussion of these practices. Somewhat ironically, another major source of Indigenous Christian converts' ascetic practices were saintly stories and examples of penance—including the suffering of Jesus Christ—that were introduced by the missionaries.[403] While these examples were introduced to cultivate obedience and piety among the Indigenous neophytes, these neophytes took them to a different level and to places that thoroughly surprised the missionaries. It is worth noting that since the days of Loyola, the founder of the society, the Jesuits not only did not practice self-mortification but also frown upon them.[404] Loyola himself, in his *Spiritual Exercises*, regards the health of the body as the precondition of cultivating true faith and did not see complete renunciation of bodily pleasure, certainly not through mortification, as necessary for attaining it.[405] Subsequent Jesuit education followed suit and

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[401] JR 5, 130-33; Joseph-François Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times*, ed. & trans. William Fenton and Elizbeth L. Moore, 2 vols (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1974), 2: 158; 160-1.
[402] JR 5, 133.
[403] JR 27, 191.
[404] John O'Malley, *The First Jesuits*.
[405] David Fleming, *Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola: A Literal Translation and a Contemporary Reading* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1978).

the Jesuits who went to Canada did not practice self-mortification, aside from mild forms of ascetic practices such as occasional fasting, and celibacy of course can be seen as a form of asceticism in itself. In very rare occasions, individual Jesuits did engage in self-mortification for penance. Some, such as the famous Gabriel Lalemant, for instance, wore *cilices*—wire hair shirts—to mortify the flesh.[406] But the *cilices* were always wore beneath clothing, which is to say, these occasional mortification practices were done in strict secrecy and the fact that they did so was not to be communicated with anyone. It thus should be safe to infer that though Indigenous women learned about the suffering of Christ and other saints from the Jesuits, they did not observe self-mortification nor directly learn about those practices that they would later take up from the Jesuits. As we will see, the means they developed represented a significant departure from the European ones and were consistent with the bodily modifications they already practiced before being introduced to Christianity.

Some Indigenous women observed the ascetic practices of hospital nuns. Marie Skarichions, a native woman who went to settle in Kahnawá:ke in 1678, told other Indigenous women that while she was being nursed at the Hôtel-Dieu de Québec, she witnessed the sisters there using iron girdles and hair shirts to mortify their flesh in private.[407] Many Indigenous women were also likely to have heard of the saintly stories of the hospital nuns, such as Catherine de St. Augustine, known for her extreme ascetic practices.[408] Others had either seen or heard of the ascetic practices of hospital nuns at the hospital in Montréal.[409] Marie Guyart also engaged in self-mortification practices, such as bleeding herself, fasting, and smelling of infected wounds, both before and after her arrival in

406 We know about this from archeological evidence. See Gregory Dowd, "Indigenous Catholicism and St. Joseph Potawatomi Resistance in 'Pontiac's War,' 1763-1766," *Ethnohistory* 63, no.1 (January 2016), 147.
407 Greer, *Mohawk Saint*, 135.
408 *JR 52*, "Lettre Circulaire de la mort de la Révérende Mère Catherine de saint Augustin, Religieuse Hospitalière de Québec, décédé le 8. May 1668," 56-79; *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), 1: 607-10.
409 "Letter of Father Claude Chauchetière, 14 October 1682," in Allan Greer, ed., *Jesuit Relations: Natives and Missionaries in Seventeenth-Century North America* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000), 150.

Canada.[410] While it was unclear to what extent the Ursuline seminaries learned and witnessed such practices from her, self-mortification practices had a particular appeal to Indigenous converts and provided them guidance in their spiritual pursuit in a time of extreme turmoil and duress. Medieval and early modern women mystics, especially saints practiced asceticism in imitation of the suffering of Jesus in their ascetic practices.[411] Indigenous women neither aspired to nor imitated Jesus or European women they had observed and heard about in Canada. Instead, they explored their spiritual path by incorporating aspects of Christian mysticism into existing Indigenous cultural and spiritual traditions. As such, they developed self-mortification practices that were distinctly Indigenous.

At Tadoussac, a mission wherein native converts from several different nations gathered, for example, after learning about the penitential practices from the mission Jesuit, they collectively decided to impose greater penance on themselves, though they had already done public penance for committing a "somewhat pardonable offense."[412] They "made a great discipline of heavy cords, full of large knots, which they tied to the end of the stick, to serve as a handle."[413] They then voluntarily took turns to be whipped by this device to perform their penance, "some asked to be given twenty blows, others ten,--some more, some less."[414] Even the children were not spared from being whipped. The Jesuit as the Mission was surprised "at the sight of this new devotion" and had to step in to ensure that "it did not go beyond the bounds of prudence, and that there were no excesses."[415]

The Jesuits observed such practices in many missions. Aside from Tadoussac, ascetic practices were also common in Lorette and the Wendat Country. In Wendat Country, Jesuit

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410 Davis, *Women on the Margins*, 132-3.
411 Ellen Ross, "She Wept and Cried Right Loud for Sorrow and for Pain: Suffering, the Spiritual Journal, and Women's Experience in Late Medieval Mysticism," in *Maps of Flesh and Light: The Religious Experience of Medieval Women Mystics*, edited by Ulrike Wiethasu, 47-48; Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, 255-258.
412 JR 27, 191.
413 JR 27, 193.
414 JR 27, 195-7.
415 JR 27, 197.

Ragueneau remarked that there were numerous pious Christians who had "applied to upon their bodies coals and burning brands." He also gave a specific example of a young man who "ran into a neighboring wood, stripped himself quite naked, threw himself into the snows, and rolled in them a long time" until his body was dejected and he scarcely had enough strength to return to the village.[416] Though Ragueneau did not comment on these practices, we know from other sources of the same period that the use of fire in the mortification of the flesh was extremely disturbing to the Jesuits, and he very likely would try to stop such practices. Native converts incorporated this Indigenous practice into their Christian penances, though it is safe to speculate that their understanding of sin and penance was different from how the Jesuits wanted them to internalize. In the *Relation of 1663-64*, Lalemant wrote that at the Wendat Church at Québec, "a good Huron woman" urged her companion to "scourge each other," just like Jesus had been scourged, and offered her shoulders first. While the others refused because the Jesuit Father had not given his permission, she resolved to carry the action out herself. Alone in her cabin, she became the 'master' of her own body and soul, bypassing the approval of the Jesuits, taking "the discipline with such severity that the marks of it remained for a long time engraven on her shoulders."[417] Her zeal affected many others, and the Wendat community in Québec was presented as imbued with a general pious atmosphere. Another widow, "who, "suffering from a violent toothache that caused her much pain, refused a remedy offered her for her relief, saying that she was glad to endure the suffering."[418]

Nowhere were such practices more prominent than in Kahnawá:ke (Sault St. Louis), a primarily Haudenosaunee settlement. This village became well-known because it was the place where the renowned Mohawk Saint, Catherine Tekakwitha, spent her final years, roughly from 1677 to 1680. Tekakwitha practiced extreme self-mortification in those last years of her short life, with a

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[416] JR 30, 39.
[417] JR 30, 77.
[418] JR 38, 36.

circle of Indigenous women who all took vows of chastity and engaged in ascetic practices together. Though she seemed exceptional to the Jesuits in many ways, especially her two seventeenth-century biographers who took pains trying to get her canonized, both her selfhood and embodied being-in-the-world were shaped by the Haudenosaunee Catholic community. Before her arrival, Jesuit Chauchetière already noticed that there was a close circle of women who led lives that involved "the avoidance of the pleasures of the body and the mortification of the flesh" to what in his opinion was great excess.[419] The one who initiated the ascetic practices in Kahnawá:ke "went to the foot of a large cross that stands beside our cemetery, took off her clothes, and exposed herself to the air. This was during a snowstorm and she was pregnant at the time, and the snow falling on her back caused her so much suffering that she nearly died from it."[420]

[419] JR 38, 115.
[420] JR 38, 116.

Figure 4: Portrait of Catherine Tekakwitha, by Jesuit Claude Chauchetière, 1690

In the *Relations* of 1682, Jesuit Claude Chauchetière gave an account of Tekakwitha's bodily practices. In the harsh weather of Canadian winter, when "the snow was falling," Tekakwitha, in order to do "penance for her sins," "divested herself of her clothing, and exposed herself to the air at the foot of a large Cross that stands beside our Cemetery," and she almost died afterward.[421] Along with her close friend Tegaiaguenta, Tekakwitha practiced extreme flagellation. They took turns to flagellate each other until one's shoulders were covered in blood, then it would be the other person's turn. Pierre Cholenec, the other Jesuit who interacted closely with Tekakwitha, found out that such "bloody disciplines" consisted of between one thousand and twelve hundred blows at each session.[422] Tekakwitha's use of fire especially disturbed the Jesuits. Chauchetière wrote that she burned herself with brands from the fire, starting at the toes and continuing up to her knees. One time, she burned herself with a burning coal in a "dare" with Tegaiaguenta. The next day Tegaiaguenta saw that there was a large black hole in the flesh of her foot.[423]

The other women in Tekakwitha's circle, Chauchetière noted, were "in her fervor" and imitated her. Two of them "made a hole in the ice, in the depth of winter, and threw themselves into the water, where they remained during the time that it would take to say a Rosary slowly and sedately. One of the two, who feared that she would be found out, did not venture to warm herself when she returned to her cabin but lay down on her mat with lumps of ice adhering to her shoulders."[424] These invented mortification practices constituted "their usual exercises of penance" that the Jesuits had to tell them to stop.[425] Cholenec also mentioned a woman who not only practiced flagellation but also would freeze herself by rolling in the snow and then cut herself with a

[421] JR 62, 175.
[422] Pierre Cholenec, "Lettre du Pere Cholenec, Missionnaire de la Compagnie de Jesus...Procureur des Missions du Canada, 1715," 131, accessed at William Clements Library, Ann Arbor, MI, USA, 2022.
[423] Cholenec, "Lettre du Pere Cholenec," 132.
[424] JR 62, 177.
[425] JR 62, 177.

knife. Her behavior was so extreme that Cholenec tried to stop it, but she would go into the woods "where these Christian women believed that anything was permitted."[426] He imagined her saying to herself "At least in the woods I shall be mistress of my own body."[427] In the lifeworld of her village, Kahnawá:ke, devoted women converts quite commonly practiced such bodily mortifications. Religious piety can be said to characterize the social milieu of the whole community. These women were portrayed as embodying "the desire to suffer" in the extremist form.

Worried about the implications of such excess, the missionaries tried to introduce more moderate means of penance, including whips, irritating hair shirts, and iron girdles, but to their dismay, native women only added these measures to the practices they were already engaged in, thereby defeating their purpose. Unable to fully discipline Indigenous women's bodily practices and their bodies more generally, the Jesuits had to resort to disciplining the meaning of such practices in their texts, extolling these women as exceptionally pious. In their words, these practices showed "an ardent desire to suffer in expiation of their sins."[428] Yet since the Jesuits did not practice self-mortification nor see it as a necessary way of demonstrating piety, the extreme self-mortification practices Indigenous women took up, we could imagine, must have been perplexing and somewhat disturbing to the Jesuits. Their attempt at interpreting—and representing—the meaning of these distinct Indigenous practices within the parameters of Catholic orthodoxy only shows their anxiety in (failing to) containing, as both the forms of these practices and their excesses challenged such interpretation. I suggest that self-mortification practices could be seen as a means for Indigenous women to express their piety and penance directly to God, without the mediation of the missionaries, especially once we situate their practices in the havoc and uncertainty they found themselves. In this regard they posed challenges rather than affirmed religious and colonial

[426] JR 62 123.
[427] JR 62, 123.
[428] JR 38, 36.

authority. Several Jesuits mentioned their unease learning that Indigenous women had been engaging in self-mortification practices without their knowledge and their control. Some, like Cholenc, saw the women at Kahnawá:ke as engaging in a power struggle against him and challenging his control over their bodies.

Drawing from both Indigenous and Christian traditions, Indigenous women developed these practices dynamically. They pointed to a creative way of self-crafting and meaning-making that subverted without directly waging wars against colonial mandates. Rather than displaying complete obedience, which the missionaries intended to cultivate, Indigenous women converts' bodily mortification practices contained more complex forms of desire and meaning. The female body, while being a target of disciplinary control and colonial transformation, was also a crucial site for practicing Indigeneity. In particular, it is the incalculable subversive of the flesh that makes disruption possible. The experiential, sensing, feeling, and affected bodily surface is the venue through which pleasure and freedom can be experienced in unpredictable ways. Feminist philosopher Johanna Oksala, drawing on Foucault's account of the body, argues that "The experiential body is the locus of resistance in the sense that it is the possibility of an unpredictable event. The experiential body materializes in power/knowledge networks, but the limits of its experiences can never be firmly set because they can never be fully defined and articulated. It can multiply, distort, and overflow the meanings, definitions, and classifications attached to experiences."[429]

The subversive power of the body always takes shape immanently in the field of politics, within concrete relations of power. The flesh, or bodily surface, as the most contested 'frontier' that both demarcates the self and connects it to the world, further testifies to the incalculable power of

[429] Johanna Oksala, "Anarchic Bodies: Foucault and the Feminist Question of Experience," *Hypatia* 19, no.4 (2004), 114.

subversion. Flesh, as "both the cornerstone and potential ruin of the world of Man,"[430] to use Weheliye's phrase, is the sensing and relational surface through which power and affect are transmitted, through which a boundary is tentatively established and unmade at once through communal relations and the locus of desire and self-making and self-fashioning. Instead of demarcating stringent bodily boundaries that enclosed the self and isolated it from others, the self that was being crafted through these practices was fundamentally constituted and rooted in communal existence.

So the Community Will Survive

Under the ascending settler-colonial order, while the body was an intense target of biopolitical control, it was also the medium through which one experienced the world and formed kinship and communal relations with others. Though the missionaries tend to portray these practices as individualistic pursuits, such a portrayal belies their own ideological background than reflecting the nature of these practices. When read against the grain, we are able to see that these practices were not only developed and practiced communally, but also enabled Indigenous women to maintain pre-existing attachments to land, their bodily being, and their kin and communities.

If the porous body was a space for the cultivation of desire and self-making, so was the physical space of mission settlement. Mission settlements were established near French colonies with the explicit goal of severing Indigenous kinship ties and inculcating French *mœurs* and manners through imitation.[431] Yet both Le Mercier and Lamberville acknowledged that separating Indigenous children from their parents and communities was very difficult. Lamberville stated that the strong bonds Indigenous peoples had to their communities and kin as part of their "natural affection that they have for their country (*leur patrie*)" was the biggest 'obstacle' to conversion.[432] The existence of

[430] Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 44.
[431] JR 52, 47; JR 57,61.
[432] JR 57, 71.

strong communal bonds made resettlement difficult and unappealing, which was precisely why it was deemed by the Jesuits to be necessary to make them pious and 'civilized.' Indigenous bodies that embodied such bonds and were disposed towards their communities needed to be redisposed towards Christian piety and loyalty towards the colonial religious authorities. Those who migrated to these missions were interpreted by the Jesuits as having "forsak[en] their country, their relatives and friends, their lands, and the few goods and conveniences that they possessed in their country, to leave their country, to come into a strange land, to live there for the most part in poverty, and stripped of everything, in the hope of securing their faith."[433]

However, the Jesuits failed to understand, or at least to acknowledge, that many maintained their kinship ties and commitment to their family and communities after they resettled, and resettlement also enabled the converts to cultivate new communities and affective attachments that were thoroughly Indigenous. Indigenous women almost always practiced self-mortification collectively, with other Indigenous women converts, both from their own nation and other nations. Tekakwitha herself, as her biographers note, was called on by an "older sister by adoption", who had resettled to Kahnawá:ke a few years before and sent her husband to convince Catherine to join the other Mohawks.[434] A Haudenosaunee warrior, who resettled in the Wendat Colony, "returned to his own country, and brought back all his relatives to procure The blessing of the faith for Them."[435] Marie Tsaouente, a Haudenosaunee woman, who was "the most notable of those" and came to the Wendat Colony near Quebéc, wrote to her father in her village to join her and asked a Haudenosaunee Catechumen to bring "a thousand porcelain beads" to attract her father to bring his whole family to the Colony so that "they might be instructed and baptized all together."[436] That

[433] JR 61, 167.
[434] Greer, *Mohawk Saint*, 58.
[435] JR 57, 75.
[436] JR 57, 55.

kinship and family ties still held great importance even for the converts who resettled. While the Jesuits saw resettlement as breaking of the strong bonds to their native country and kin, resettlement also enabled many to preserve the integrity of their family, when Indigenous village and domestic life were disrupted gravely due to social chaos and political turmoil caused by settler colonialism. It is also telling that many Indigenous women who were extolled as exceptionally pious individuals, were also active community members who undertook significant communal and social responsibilities. The aforementioned Wendat woman who scourged herself to manifest her penance and piety also took great pains to visit the sick and take care of them, shelter orphans, while also taking great care of her children. As Jesuit Lalemant put it, she "acts as father, mother, and even spiritual father."[437] Inhabiting piety did not turn her away from her community to religious and colonial authorities alone; nor did it make her withdraw into herself. Rather, these practices enabled her to (re)build her Wendat community during war and dislocation from Wendake, Wendat homeland. Such communal attachment, we could infer, continued to play an important role in sustaining her selfhood of being a Christian Wendat woman.

At Kahnawá:ke, a settlement of primarily Haudenosaunee converts, resettlement of Indigenous converts from various nations and communities also enabled Catherine to maintain close relationships with other Christian Indigenous women, including her closest friend, Marie-Thérèse Tegaiaguenta, a young Oneida widow. It is to them, especially Tegaiaguenta, not the Jesuit authorities, that she regularly confessed and with whom she discussed spiritual matters and confided in.[438] Their group consisted of several other Indigenous women. Cholenen also mentioned a woman named Anastasie, "a fervent Christian with whom she spoke with and with whom she had established a very close friendship."[439] These Indigenous women oversaw each others' mortification

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[437] JR 49, 77.
[438] Allan Greer, *Mohawk Saint*, 133; 144.
[439] Cholenec, "Lettre du Pere Cholenec," 157.

practices and encouraged each other. The Christian community, in other words, was entirely Indigenous. Indigenous women converts remained attached to other natives and forged alternative native communities. The community, rather than the individual, was the proper unit of practicing piety. The settler-colonial cultivation of desire, perhaps ironically, enabled them to form a different kind of community and generated a form of communal embodied existence that was thoroughly Indigenous in nature. These women, while engaging in behavior that made the Jesuits hail them as the most devoted Christians, also continued to take part in Indigenous village life, including going hunting and preparing feasts.[440] These women found their own ways, in a world hostile to their existence and selfhood, to navigate their spiritual commitments, community obligations, and practice and embody Indigeneity.

While many Indigenous women cultivated close ties with those in their mission community, others worked as agents of conversion both within their own nation and among other Indigenous peoples. Along with engaging in extreme forms of bodily mortifications, pious women converts were also eager to convert people of their own and other nations. For example, the Jesuits remarked that the Kiskakous Christian neophytes at the Outaouais Mission "fulfilled the duties of apostles in their own country, with such glory and such profit."[441] They also noted that very commonly, those who were baptized first through their contact with the Jesuits went back to their communities to "spread the gospel."[442] As early as 1643, in a letter to her son, Marie mentioned a "Christian woman" who traveled to a quite distant nation to catechize those who lived there. She succeeded so well that she led them all here, where they were baptized. She must have had apostolic courage to face the dangers to which she was exposed for the purpose of thus serving our Lord."[443] A few years later,

[440] JR 62, 175.
[441] JR 61, 63.
[442] See, for example, JR 54, 55, 56, 57, 58.
[443] Marie de L'Incarnation, *From Mother to Son*, 59 (Letter 73, 1643).

Marie again noted that the Attikameks, for example, were not only "converted and live[d] extraordinarily innocent lives," but also converted a great number of pious Algonkin women, and left the seminary to preach to her relatives and friends at Sillery and women of her tribe at Trois-Rivières.[444] The Jesuits, similarly, gave many examples of native converts converting others of their own nation. In the *Relations* of 1663-64, they mentioned a "noble spirited" Wendat woman (who also engaged in self-mortification practices) who was "very zealous for the conversion of her compatriots, instructing them, exhorting them, and confounding them with her gentleness, to reclaim them for sin; and her charity makes her so eloquent that she *penetrates the most rebellious hearts* to make of them hearts wholly Christian."[445] What is implied is that this woman was more capable than the Jesuits themselves to convert her fellow Wendat. For her country people, it was she, not the Jesuits, who held spiritual authority. Even conversion, in other words, had become an Indigenous endeavor, a means to bind her community together.

It could be said that these women's exceptional piety and apostolic ambition aided the civilizing mission to some extent. Yet it is quite apparent that both the means of and reasonings they would have given for conversion and the communities they thus built were thoroughly Indigenous. Since there were only at most a couple of Jesuits at each mission and their presence was quite sporadic, while the Ursulines were confined in Québec, most of the time it was Indigenous women who acted as authorities over religious and spiritual matters. This again was the continuation of an Indigenous tradition. Though Guyart and the Jesuits might be intended to make them appear as blind yet fervent followers of religious instructions that simply reproduced the dictates of colonial religious authorities, putting into context, it is not hard to see that these women were drawing on Christianity and the resources provided by the missionaries, both material and spiritual, to remake

[444] JR 49, 101.
[445] JR 49, emphasis mine.

and sustain their communities, which had been wrecked by wars, epidemics, forced migration, and colonial interventions in all aspects of their lives. Moreover, Indigenous women who made long arduous trips to convert others certainly could not be said to be passive or blindingly following the religious teachings. What was interpreted as religious piety that was supposed to re-dispose them to the settler-colonial order rather allowed them to maintain kinship ties to their communities, and brought them in contact with distant foreign Indigenous nations. It could thus be seen as instrumental in forging international relations and forming new Indigenous communities. More importantly, though Guyart and the Jesuits did not explicitly put in writing, these women's apostolic ambition challenged the mandate of being cloistered. While the missionaries regarded cloistered life as indispensable to female piety, many Indigenous girls and women refused to be cloistered, just by virtue of engaging in apostolic endeavor. This is also indirectly corroborated by Guyart's complaint that closure simply could not be imposed Indigenous girls, as they would leave as they wish.[446] Even after conversion, Indigenous women and girls still enjoyed mobility and freedom and maintained considerable influence and authority within their own communities. At the same time, by acting as active proselytizers, Indigenous women also effectively wrestled power from the missionaries and by doing so challenged colonial hierarchy that the missionaries took for granted.

While the missionaries imagined that embodying religious piety would indoctrinate Indigenous converts to colonial authorities, thereby replacing their attachment to their families and communities, native converts refused such association and practiced piety in their ways to craft a distinct religious subjectivity that was distinctly Indigenous. Though resettling in mission communities and converting one's country people could be said to serve the missionaries' intended goals and the settler colonial order, it also enabled Indigenous women to form a different kind of

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[446] Marie Guyart, Lettre CCXXXV (août 1668), in *Correspondance*, 802; *Selected Writings*, 272. I also discussed this in Chapter 2.

Indigenous community that disrupted the individualizing and civilizing (Frenchifying) effects that missionaries pursued. The settler-colonial cultivation of desire enabled Indigenous women to practice Indigeneity in creative ways and forge new Indigenous communities. Specifically, ascetic and bodily mortification practices became a means that they engaged with to exert control over their own lives and bodies. Indigenous bodies remained *disposed* towards and attached to their kin and communities, and Indigenous women converts continued to embody such ties in their existence.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that ascetic practices and the mode of subjectivity and desire constituted by them enabled Indigenous women to negotiate the various disciplines and domination imposed on them both made their own lives meaningful and enabled them to create new communities and sustain Indigenous kinship. Indigenous women maintained and recreated attachments that disrupted and displaced settler-colonial cultivation of desire, and re-directed the energy invested in shaping their nature and disposition to alternative ends that enabled them to practice Indigeneity in new and unexpected ways. The disruptive force and creative ways of self-making via desire, I contend, is what makes subjectification a complex process that inevitably escapes the dictates of power that seeks to dominant and pacify.

Through a feminist and decolonial reading of Indigenous women's ascetic practices, I have made the case that desire is not a deeply ingrained psychic attribute internal to the individual subject, but is cultivated, lived, and moves among bodies, and takes shape and shapes the world. While pain is integral to wound, pain itself does not necessarily indicate injury or wounded attachment. I suggest that self-inflicted pain can serve as sensing and feeling circuits that are ripe with possibilities, openings, and desire. Their self-mortification practices, in particular, instead of displaying the desire to suffer, were engaged by Indigenous women to create ways of desiring to escape the mandate of settler-colonial biopolitics and to pursue their self-making under duress. Ascetic–fleshy, embodied–

practices, when engaged by the oppressed and colonized, could generate productive vitality, rather than making one purely reactionary; can give rise to positive affects rather than only producing rancor; can serve emancipatory purposes and challenge hierarchical power relations rather than reinscribing one's oppression and upholding oppressive power relations; can lead one to *experience* freedom rather than impotence.

Examining Indigenous women's ascetic practices in the early period of settler-colonial rule thus reveals much about how Indigenous women crafted their communal selfhood under duress, and how subjectivity was constituted through the formation of particular attachments. While the practices I examined here are peculiar to a specific historical and geopolitical context, thinking about the self-making and world-making capacity of practices that are often deemed "pathological" or simply "mad" has much broader political implications. Perhaps paradoxically, what is inherent in self-annihilation practices is the desire to live, to thrive, to ground one's existence in the world and in relation to others. Such attachments, in other words, can bind communities together. Looking at these feminine pious practices has much broader implications for other feminine practices and gendered desires that might be labeled as upholding and perpetuating patriarchal structures and norms. Only by immanently examining how these practices and desires take shape in specific contexts and concrete relations of power, I contend, can we begin to understand their meaning, both for the agents themselves, and for feminist political theory. The fact that these practices and their experiences of them that we have access to are entirely mediated by colonial discourses the goals of which are never to properly present them present considerable challenges for us to access their meaning. I want to again emphasize that I am not claiming that I—or we—can recover how those who engaged in them subjectively. Neither am I celebrating or advocating these practices—it should not be lost that ascetic practices often proliferate in times and places of turmoil. Rather, I sought to unearth their political meaning and efficacy in a particular context.

Feminine piety and feminine practices more broadly speaking, have meaning-making, self-making, and world-making capacities that greatly broaden our understanding of feminist subjectivity and gendered self-making. Likewise, these practices demonstrate why settler colonialism as a political project will always be incomplete, as the intense investment in the cultivation of desire nonetheless gives rise to, or rather fails to sever, alternative forms of desire and the communal sense of self that is sustained by it. How such desire is sustained through embodied practices under tremendous duress, I suggest, compels us to rethink what *counts* as (meaningful) political action, and how they give rise to particular forms of political subjectivity. These practices and actions themselves, and attachments cultivated through them, demonstrate a different account of subjectivity, one that does not rest on reified identity categories but is articulated and sustained through desire and its enactment. Moreover, while communal relations are instrumental in giving rise to this mode of subjectivity, it does not presume exclusionary community boundaries but rather enact communal attachments and thus constantly redraw the very contour of community through the very embodied practices themselves. What coheres community and communal relations is not metaphysical attachment to one's injury or subjugation, but rather concrete and embodied attachments to the very substance of community, such as (home)land and kin. These attachments, in turn, are world-making in the sense that they help sustain the world within which these attachments could thrive. They continue to provide the condition of possibility of Indigenous community survivance and the horizon that generates anti-colonial and de-colonial meaning. In the next chapter, I will continue to explore how Indigenous practices sustain attachments to land, kin, and community by turning to another set of practices—agricultural labor.

Chapter 5. Desire in Land: Indigenous Women's Agricultural Labor as Decolonial Praxis

Colonization: etymology (Latin): *colere*: to cultivate, to till, to inhabit; *colonia*: a farm; *colonus:* a tiller of the farm, a farmer.

"We women, are the true owners [of land]. We work on it and it is ours."
--Red Jacket (Seneca Chief), Speaking on behalf of the Clan Mothers (1798)[447]

Sovereignty: "Kina Gchi Anishinaabe-ogaming"[448]—"the place where we all live and work together."[449]

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I examined how conversion enabled Indigenous women to cultivate alternative attachments to enable their gendered self-making that disrupted settler-colonial cultivation of desire. In this chapter, I continue to explore the disruptive power of desire but turn to a different set of Indigenous women's embodied practices: agricultural labor, or labor in land. While I have argued that Indigenous women creatively incorporated Catholicism into their lifeworld and developed ascetic practices in ways that exceeded and troubled the missionaries' intentions, Catholicism and Christianity were, after all, outside forces that colonists brought to pacify and domesticate Indigenous peoples. Indigenous women pursued their self-making by engaging with

[447] Red Jacket, "To Joseph Ellicott and Capt. Chapin on Dissatisfaction with the Treaty of Big Tree and Requests for Boundary Adjustments to the Reservations," in *The Collected Speeches of Sagoyewatha*, *or Red Jacket,* ed. Granville Ganter (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 99.
[448] The equivalent word of sovereignty in Anishinaabemowin.
[449] Leanne Simpson, "The Place Where We All Live and Work Together: A Gendered Analysis of 'Sovereignty,'" in *Native Studies Keywords*, ed. Stephanie Nohelani Teves, Andrea Smith, and Michelle Raheja (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2015), 18.

these colonial forces in unexpected ways. In this Chapter, I turn to examine embodied practices that were rooted in and emanated from Indigenous philosophies, politics, and lived relations. I read agricultural labor as a decolonial praxis that directly and actively resisted settler colonial dispossession.

Starting in the sixteenth century, French explorers and colonists such as Samuel de Champlain, Gabriel Sagard, and Marquis de Denonville left vivid descriptions of Wendat agricultural practices in the area that would be claimed as Nouvelle-France. They recounted in great detail the large acres of cornfields and apple orchards they saw, recording Indigenous methods of cultivation as well. They also universally noticed that women (and sometimes girls too) were the ones who cultivated the land and undertook (almost) all agricultural labor, while men's primary realm of activities was the forest, where they hunted, fished, traded with other nations, carried on diplomacy, and waged war. Their observations are corroborated by Indigenous oral history, and scholars today agree that the accounts they gave accurately reflect the division of labor among these Indigenous nations.[450]

In the eighteenth century, European colonists continued to describe Indigenous agriculture and women's agricultural labor in their travel accounts in the vast region the French called *pays d'en haut*. Indigenous agriculture not only persisted through ongoing colonial intrusion, disease, and endless warfare, but thrived among the Illinois, the Wabash, the Wendat, the Haudenosaunee, and many Algonquin Nations, just to name a few. That in many parts of Turtle Island, women were the ones who cultivated land and performed all kinds of agricultural labor is a well-documented fact in historical, anthropological, and ethnographic literature,[451] though up until recently many referred to

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[450] Bruce Trigger, *The Huron: Farmers of the North* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1990), 2nd Edition; Daniel Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse*.
[451] Bruce Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660* (McGill-Queen's University Press: Montreal and Kingston, 1987); *The Huron: Farmers of the North*; Daniel Richter, *The Ordeal*; Gregory Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1992); Susan

their practices as horticulture, which implied that women tended small vegetable gardens and thus minimized the scale and importance of their labor. Previous critiques of (settler) colonialism and empire in political theory have tended to examine European and settler discourses self-referentially. That is, scholars tend to focus on identifying contradictions and gaps between European (especially liberal) political ideals and colonial reality.[452] Recently many political theorists, in conversation with settler-colonial and Indigenous studies, have started to pay more attention to Indigenous history, knowledge, and material practices.[453] In conversation with this body of work, in this chapter, I turn to look at the *presence* of agriculture and women's labor as it appears in colonial discourses and is conceptualized in contemporary Indigenous studies scholarship. I reconstruct the presence of Indigenous agricultural and specifically Indigenous women's agricultural labor from colonial archival sources to probe the meaning and political implications of this specific form of embodied labor.

Many have argued and shown that settler colonization is an inherently gendered process relying on logics of heteropatriarchy, heteropaternalism, heteronormativity, and compulsory heterosexuality.[454] As such, nonheteronormative and nonheteropatriarchal social systems, organizations, and practices have been under attack since the very early days of settlement. Rendered "queer" and "abnormal," these practices and social formations were deemed uncivilized and threatening to the settler-colonial order and thus in need of erasure and eradication. Such processes of transformation-as-destruction specifically involved "diminishing Indigenous women's power,

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Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001);

[452] Barbara Arneil, *John Locke and America*; David Armitage, "John Lock, Carolina, and the Two Treatise of Government," *Political Theory* 32, no.5 (2004), 602-627; Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*; Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*; Sunil M. Agnani, *Hating Empire Properly*; Jeanne Morefield, *Empires Without Imperialism*; Duncan Bell, *Reordering the World*. This is not to fault them in any way but simply to point out a methodological orientation.

[453] Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*; Barbara Arneil, *Domestic Colonies*; Robert Nichols, *Property is Theft: Dispossession and Critical Theory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020).

[454] Bonita Lawrence, "Gender, Race, and the Regulation of Native Identity in Canada and the United States: An Overview," *Hypatia* 18, no.2 (2003), 3-31; Mark Rifkin, *When Did Indians Become Straight? Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Qwo-Li Driskill et. al, (eds.), *Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011); Scott Lauria Morgensen, *Spaces Between US: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016).

status, and material circumstances."[455] Since the gendered division of labor in Indigenous societies was considerably different from European and settler ones at the time of contact, Indigenous women's work and labor were subjected to intense settler-colonial intervention. Colonial agents were simultaneously dispossessing Indigenous land and domesticating Indigenous peoples as subjects of empire by attempting to turn Indigenous women into housewives and men into farmers. Domestication denotes a particular logic involving a gendered process that targeted Indigenous women and men differently. Colonial agents attempted to domesticate Indigenous women's desire by severing the embodied attachments central to Indigenous ways of being and redirecting them to settler and domestic ones. As such, domestication was instrumental to dispossessive colonial practices.

Yet Indigenous women continued cultivating land and engaging in extensive agricultural labor. What does it mean for Indigenous women to carry on a practice that is directly under attack? Moreover, what is the political meaning and efficacy of doing so? This latter question can be further parsed in two ways: on the one hand, how are we to interpret the meaning that such labor conferred to people who practiced it? What kind of desire and subjectivity underwrote it, and were in turn shaped by such practice? How was it different from the meaning that colonists assigned to what appears to be the same practice, given that we know agriculture and agrarian labor were so central to the articulation of settler masculinity and the material foundation of settler colony? On the other hand, what were the external political effects of undertaking such labor? How did it in turn shape the material conditions? These are the questions that I address in this chapter. Given the near archival silence on Indigenous women's labor, I do not mean to give any final or definitive answer but rather provide interpretive possibilities that involve a considerable degree of speculation and subjective judgment. I do so by first thoroughly reconstructing the historical and discursive context,

[455] Bonita Lawrence, "Gender, Race, and the Regulation of Native Identity in Canada and the United States," 3.

and restoring the presence of Indigenous women's agricultural labor within and against archival sources. I also engage with an explicitly decolonial feminist lens that accentuates the decolonial possibilities of such practice.

In recent years, many Indigenous scholars in Indigenous and settler-colonial studies have emphasized the deeply political meaning and implications of quotidian Indigenous women's practices, from ceremonial dances to artistic creations to literary practices.[456] According to Cutcha Risling Baldy, the revitalization of ceremony and ceremonial practices is a way of "(re)writing, (re)righting,[457] and (re)riteing of Native feminisms."[458] Baldy presses on the politics of the prefix (re), which risks reifying the narrative of loss and purity perpetuated by settler-colonial myth-making, which posits that there was a pristine form of Indigenous "culture" or "tradition" that had been lost. Following this narrative, decolonial and Indigenous revitalization entails the retrieval or recreation of this lost object. Baldy clarifies that by putting (re) in parenthesis, she means to convey that Indigenous feminist analysis can "build a future with the past" and show that Indigenous "epistemological foundations speak to a lasting legacy that is both ancient and modern."[459]

One might wonder: since Indigenous feminist studies look at Indigenous revitalization and decolonizing efforts that take place at the present,[460] why turn to a historical practice? Moreover, in what ways can agricultural labor be read as a decolonial praxis, enkindled by decolonial *desire*? Given the centrality of relations to land in Indigenous cosmologies, philosophies, and political lives, what forms of attachment did they cultivate through the cultivation of land? Did such attachments enable

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456 Mishuana Goeman, *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013); Michelle Jacob, *Yakama Rising: Indigenous Cultural Revitalization, Activism, and Healing* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013); Cutcha Risling Baldy, *We Are Dancing For You: We Are Dancing For You: Native Feminisms and the Revitalization of Women's Coming-of-Age Ceremonies*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018*;* Stephanie Nohelani Teves, *Defiant Indigeneity: The Politics of Hawaiian Performance* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018).
457 This is the term Baldy uses. I understand it to mean (re)making right.
458 Cutcha Risling Baldy, *We Are Dancing For You*, 7.
459 Baldy, *We Are Dancing For You,* 8.
460 Dian Million, *Therapeutic Nations: Healing in an Age of Indigenous Human Rights* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013); Michelle Jacob, *Yakama Rising;* Baldy, *We Are Dancing For You;* Teves, *Defiant Indigeneity.*

them to disrupt and resist the settler-colonial cultivation of desire that I have discussed in Chapter 3? If so, in what ways?

I contend that reconstructing and retrieving Indigenous women's agricultural labor from the early period of Indigenous-settler interactions helps to "build a future with the past" by showing how contemporary revivals of Indigenous foodways, ecologies, and relations to land both have a long history and are deeply rooted in the present. As historians Susan D. Amussen and Allyson M. Poska have argued, "work provides one important context for understanding the limits of European patriarchy in the Atlantic world."[461] Examining Indigenous women's agricultural labor sheds new light on the colonial management of Indigenous gender and sexuality. Doing so also opens a window to Indigenous peoples', especially women's, lifeworld, which remained firmly guided by Indigenous traditions and philosophy. In this period wherein settler-colonial rule was being consolidated, Indigenous peoples' embodied relations to land and embodied practices guided by Indigenous gender norms were under sustained colonial attack. A decolonial feminist analysis, as Baldy contends, is "foundational to complex epistemological frameworks of decolonization, self-determination, sovereignty, and survivance."[462]

Bringing these historical practices into focus thus enriches our understanding of what counts as decolonial praxis by showing that in every period of settler-colonial attempts, there have been *concurrent* decolonizing efforts troubling and disrupting colonial encroachment and thus making

[461] Susan D. Amussen and Allyson M. Poska, "Restoring Miranda: Gender and the Limits of European Patriarchy in the Early Modern Atlantic World," *Journal of Global History* 7 (2012), 346. For my purpose here, I collapse the analytic distinction between work and labor that Hannah Arendt painstakingly draws in *The Human Condition*. I instead treat them as interchangeable. Arendt's account has been criticized by many for advancing a Eurocentric and androcentric notion of work that elevates it above labor, which according to her is primitive because it is embodied and (solely) concerns bodily needs, and is thus unworldly. She does so through a (mis)reading and criticism of Marx. Contrary to her verdict, I take labor to be thoroughly worldly and world-making (understood not in Arendtian terms). In academic as well as colloquial use, people tend to use these two terms interchangeably.

[462] Baldy, *We Are Dancing For You,* 8. "Survivance" is a key term coined by Anishinaabe literary scholar Gerald Vizenor. See *Manifest Manners: Postindian Warriors of Survivance* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1993); and his edited volume *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).

space for Indigenous survivance and resurgence. Examining Indigenous women's agricultural labor in this particular time and place sheds light on how quotidian embodied practices are crucial means of self-crafting and anti-colonial meaning-making and resistance. I contend that it is necessary to purposefully unsettle the temporality of colonization, to not see decolonization (as well as resurgence) as what happens after colonization but as always *concurrent* with it, and unsettle the telos of colonization by showing that it is always incomplete, both empirically and logically speaking. We might recall that one of the founding premises of settler-colonial studies is that settler colonialism is always incomplete.[463] Indeed, if, as Michelle Jacob argues, a vision of decolonial praxis "understands indigenous bodies as sites of critical pedagogy, centers social justice praxis to build a moral community, and utilizes grassroots indigenous resistance as a mechanism to dismantle colonial logics," then there is no reason that historical Indigenous practices should be excluded from examination. In fact, I would suggest that it is particularly fruitful to examine these practices in the period wherein settler-colonial power and logics were in the process of being consolidated while under contestation, because it highlights the contingencies of settler-colonial development.

Building on this body of work, I further theorize the ways in which Indigenous women cultivated a form of decolonial desire through one specific form of embodied labor that is not often examined as such, namely, the cultivation of land. I reconstruct Indigenous women's agricultural labor in this part of the world from–and against–travel writings and colonial archival sources. As feminist theorist Mishuana Goeman has pointed out, Indigenous feminist practices "call into question and disorient colonial narrations."[464] For my task here, decolonial/Indigenous feminist theory enables two interlacing forms of disorientation: first, it effectively counters the trivialization

[463] Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no.4 (2006), 387-409.
[464] Mishuana Goeman, "(Re)mapping Indigenous Presence on the Land in Native Women's Literature," *American Quarterly* 60, no.2 (2008), 295.

and erasure of Indigenous women's labor; second, it points to alternative ways of interpreting the *meaning* as well as political efficacy of such labor both in its historical context and in light of contemporary Indigenous struggles.

Early modern moral and political theorists and colonists understood the cultivation of land–agrarian labor–as the hallmark of civilization and settler-colonial futurity. Meanwhile, cultivating–and protecting–Indigenous land was also central to Indigenous women's self-making and anti-colonial resistance. We see that desire manifests politically in very different ways. My central claim is that cultivating land, as a form of embodied labor, enabled Indigenous women to cultivate a decolonial form of desire and desiring. Such desire was both cultivated by, and reflected in, the maintenance of Indigenous land and land-based relationships, as well as resistance to settler-colonial dispossession and defense of Indigenous sovereignty.[465] These attachments to land, kin, and community, are the

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[465] Sovereignty is of course an incredibly fraught concept, especially in political theory. The common narrative is that sovereignty as such emerged in the modern "West" through the treaty of Westphalia and is bound with the modern state form, which becomes the basis of the modern international order. This thesis has been subjected to much scrutiny and critique. See for instance, Andreas Osiander, "Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian Myth," *International Organization* 55, no.2 (Spring 2001), 251-287; Benno Teschke, *The Myth of 1648: Class, Geopolitics, and the Making of Modern International Relations* (London: Verso, 2003); Jordan Branch, "'Colonial Reflection' and Territoriality: The Peripheral Origins of Sovereign Statehood," *European Journal of International Relations* 18, no.2 (2011), 277-297; Sebastian Schmidt, "To Order the Minds of Scholars: The Discourse of the Peace of Westphalia in International Relations Literature," *International Studies Quarterly* 55, no.3 (2011), 601-623. Without getting too deep into the weeds, I just want to bring attention to one major insight I take from these critical studies of sovereignty: instead of being formed in seventeenth-century Europe and then spread to the rest of the world through European colonial activities, the idea (and ideal) that territorial exclusivity is the sole basis for state sovereignty only *emerged through* European colonization, especially of the 'New World.' On this point especially see Branch. Interactions with Indigenous peoples were integral to how sovereignty became reified in the territorial state form, suggesting that sovereignty itself is a contingent concept born through politics, rather than one that has intrinsic or essential characteristics.
On the other hand, while the term as such does not exist in any Indigenous language, many Indigenous peoples and nations have their own notion of what sovereignty entails and embodies. While such a notion is incredibly difficult to translate across linguistic, philosophical, and cultural texts, many Indigenous scholars have attempted to do so. The definition that Leanne Simpson gives that I have cited in the epigram of this chapter is one example. While Simpson tries to locate a notion of sovereignty rooted in Anishinaabe philosophy, others, such as Lenape scholar Joanna Barker, have emphasized the political efficacy of framing contemporary Indigenous struggles in terms of sovereignty. Food sovereignty movements that I mention later in the chapter is one integral part of such struggles. See *Critically Sovereign*, introduction, I think we are missing the point if we get stuck on asking whether the way sovereignty is defined and evoked in these contexts is equivalent to how sovereignty is used in "Western" political thought and philosophy, but to pay attention to the political work sovereignty does. I personally think it's interesting that in an era that Indigenous scholars and activists frequently appeal to sovereignty, many settler scholars are calling the concept obsolete, even arguing that it should be retired. I'm speaking of this from my anecdotal experience–I've heard this argument many many times in different academic settings.

substance of decolonial desire that carried Indigenous peoples through war, epidemic, violence, dispersal and displacement, conversion, and dispossession. I call such desire decolonial because although it was cultivated through the same practice that colonists also deemed essential to the settler-colonial order, the attachments Indigenous women cultivated and the meaning they assigned to such practice were distinct, and thus disrupted and resisted the settler-colonial enterprise. Such desire in turn enabled their continuous cultivation and caretaking of land when both the gendered division of labor and land itself was under attack.

Though according to settler-colonial ideology, cultivating land would 'prove' Indigenous peoples' civility and dominion in land, I want to underscore the importance of comprehending this material and embodied labor on Indigenous peoples' own terms. By continuing to cultivate land, Indigenous women were simultaneously protecting their tradition, and creating different and new meanings of and through their labor. They were creating new ways of expressing their selfhood and inhabiting space in an evolving social and political world. In this sense, to desire was to resist, and such resistance was cultivated through their agricultural labor. For them, desire embodied sovereignty, both in land and in themselves. If creatively incorporating aspects of settler-colonial teaching and indoctrination enabled Indigenous women to disrupt and displace settler-colonial cultivation of desire, Indigenous women's embodied labor in land remained firmly guided by Indigenous traditions, philosophies, and cultural and social norms, which were in turn strengthened and affirmed by such labor. As such, cultivating land was a form of political action through which Indigenous women rejected the civilizational value and meaning the colonists assigned to it and resisted colonial attempts at destroying and remaking Indigenous gender relations and norms. I suggest that such Indigenous women's agricultural labor is best read as a *political* response to the shifting landscape of power in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Northeastern Turtle Island. As such, the desire cultivated through such practices was also political. By focusing on the continuous

practice of agricultural labor in the consolidating period of settler-colonial rule, I do not mean to romanticize pre-contact or "traditional" Indigenous social relations and cultural norms in any form but rather seek to highlight the political nature of their desire.

This chapter is structured as follows: in the first section I sketch Indigenous understandings and relations to land, crystallized by the term "landbody." I specifically focus on Indigenous women's intimate relation to land, a relation at once cosmic, spiritual, material, and political. I then recount early modern European political articulations of the relation between land and labor in the early modern French empire by Jacques Benige Bossuet, court preacher to Louis XIV, and French Jesuits in New France. Then I recount Indigenous practices of agriculture and women's agricultural labor by examining seventeenth- and eighteenth-century travel writings and other colonial archival sources, contextualizing the significance of such gendered labor in relation to Indigenous relations to land. Lastly, I theorize Indigenous women's agricultural labor both as self-making—cultivation of desire as attachment to land—and an active way of resisting settler colonial dispossession.

Landbody

If territoriality is one of the central pillars of modern European sovereignty and has been pivotal in European settler-colonial activities, land is perhaps the most crucial concept both in Indigenous studies and activism.[466] While territoriality evokes a particular conception of land—as inanimate, divisible, and subject to exclusive ownership–land is conceived very differently in Indigenous philosophical systems.[467] As Mishuana Goeman suggests, it is urgent that those who work in Native/Indigenous studies reconceptualize land and sovereignty, which would necessarily

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[466] Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native;" Lisa Ford, *Settler Sovereignty: Jurisdiction and Indigenous People in America and Australia, 1788-1836* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011); Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive*; Robert Nichols, *Theft in Property*.

[467] I am of course not suggesting that all Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island, let alone the rest of the world, have the same understanding of land, but there are shared values and relations to land that are fundamentally distinct from European ones. Moreover, such shared values and relations are more pronounced among Indigenous peoples of Northeastern Turtle Island, who have lived in close contact and formed lasting relations with each other.

unsettle the logic of containment intrinsic to settler-colonial definitions.[468] While early modern Europeans commonly referred to Indigenous peoples as "nomadic," they in fact followed seasonal migration patterns and developed sophisticated trade routes. As Daniel Richter notes, for many Indigenous peoples, their hunting and fishing grounds were the most permanent, more so than their dwellings, which would be moved due to the depletion of soil roughly every two decades. The hunting and fishing grounds, on the contrary, remained steady as migrating fishes, birds, and animals would return predictably to the same venues every year.[469] Movement and return formed a dynamic that reinforced the attachment to homeland. Movement was not the opposite of attachment to the same land but was integral to how such attachment was formed and sustained. Dominion in land, in other words, was not characterized by fixed boundaries and permanent dwellings, but by this very dynamic between movement and return. Aiming to combat settler-colonial dispossession of Indigenous land, many have defined indigeneity as "rooted and static, located in a discreet place,"[470] in contrast to "western" or diasporic relations to land, which are marked by mobility and migration. But as Chickasaw literary scholar Jodi Byrd argues in *The Transit of Empire*, migration is not antithetical to Indigenous sovereignty, inasmuch as the latter is often articulated through the former.[471] By telling a migration story of the Chickasaws in search of a new homeland, she shows that migration was not opposite to rootedness, but should be understood as an integral part of it.

Migration and free movement were also integral to the understandings and relations Indigenous peoples of Northeastern Turtle Island had with land. It was through migration and travel that new relationships were forged, and growth and transformations took place. This is

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[468] Mishuana Goeman, "Land as Life: Unsettling the Logics of Containment," in *Native Studies Keywords*, ed. Stephanie Nohelani Teves, Andrea Smith, and Michelle Raheja (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2015), 71-89.
[469] See Richter, *Ordeal*, 24.
[470] Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire*: *Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), xvi.
[471] Byrd, *The Transit of Empire*, xvi.

reflected in the importance of hunting and seasonal migration, as well as ceremonies such as the Feast of the Dead and the Edge of the Woods, which all required routine extensive travel crossing tribal boundaries. As Jon Parmenter notes, Haudenosaunee mobility, which predated colonial contact and continued afterward, "enabled successful Iroquois engagements with the pressures and opportunities generated by settler colonialism on the borders of their homeland,"[472] as it "not only embodied Iroquois values of hospitality and the attentiveness to renewals of reciprocal human relationships, it created a vital spatial contest for the exercise of Iroquois power."[473]

The Feast of the Dead, held every eight to ten years, at which the Wendat took bones of the dead out of their graves and brought them to a new location to be reburied, was the most important event in seventeenth-century Wendat society. A condolence ceremony to send blessings to the dead, it was also an occasion to build alliances with neighboring nations, which later on included the French.[474] As French Jesuit Sagard remarks, "they contract new friendships and unions amongst themselves, saying that, just as the bones of their deceased relatives and friends are gathered together and united in one place so also they themselves ought during their lives to live all together in the same unity and harmony, like good kinsmen and friends."[475] The ceremony, later on, was also borrowed by the Anishinaabe and the Dakota to signal truce and goodwill, and cement alliances between them. These ceremonies enabled participating nations to incorporate the space of their allied nations as space they could safely travel and reaffirmed the close relation between human

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472 Jon Parmenter, *The Edge*, xxvii.
473 Jon Parmenter, *The Edge*, xi.
474 The Jesuits were invited by the Wendat to bury the bones of the two French men who had died in the past year at the 1636 Feast of the Dead, in the pit at the village of Ossossane. The French refused and abstained from the burial ceremony. See JR 10, 289-305. Kathryn Labelle argues that this signaled to the Wendat that the French refused an alliance with them. See "Faire la Chaudière: The Wendat of Souls, 1636," in *French and Indians in the Heart of North America, 1630-1815,* ed. Robert Englebert and Guillaume Teasdale (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2013), 1-20.
475 Gabriel Sagard, *The Long Journey to the Country of the Hurons*, ed. & intro. & notes. George M. Wrong; trans. H. H. Langton (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1939[1624]), 213-4.

bodies and land. Michael Witgen notes that the Feast of Dead Ceremony, in the seventeenth century, enabled the Anishinaabe people to form new alliances with other Indigenous Nations, which then "expand[ed] the physical and social world of the Anishinaabeg,"[476] reconfiguring their spatial order. The new alliance "possessed the ability to control the circulation of people, animal pelts, and trade goods throughout the heartland of North America."[477] Indigenous relations to land, we see, disrupted the very binary between permanence and mobility in early modern settler colonial thinking and civilizational discourses.

Being able to move freely within one's territory marked by fluid yet clearly identifiable boundaries, and sharing it with friends and allies was—and still is—an indispensable part of Indigenous peoples' embodied relation to land. This is also the guiding principle behind one of the most ancient treaties signed among Indigenous nations of this part of the world, known as the Dish with One Spoon.[478] The dish refers to a common hunting ground, where all are free to hunt and eat the game and fish with one spoon. It is common insofar as land is indivisible and cannot be individually owned, but access to and use of land is highly regulated and restricted to treaty parties only. Commonrated in Indigenous oral history, the treaty is regularly renegotiated and renewed through trade, diplomacy, and ceremonies.[479] For Indigenous nations, allowing other nations and

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[476] Michael Witgen, *An Infinity*, 31.
[477] Michael Witgen, *An Infinity*, 32.
[478] The original Dish with One Spoon agreement can be dated back to the twelfth century. It was commemorated in Indigenous oral history. Later on, a peace treaty concluded during the Great Peace of Montreal in 1701 would use the same language in the same spirit, mainly between the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the Anishinaabe Three Fires Confederacy. This latter treaty was concluded partly in response to problems incurred by colonial intrusion. This treaty was recorded in (phonetic writing), and commemorated in Indigenous oral history as well as in a wampum belt. See Victor P. Lytwyn, "A Dish with One Spoon: The Shared Hunting Grounds Agreement in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Valley Region," in David H. Pentland, ed., *Papers of the 28th Algonquian Conference*. Toronto, 1997; Leanne Simpson, "Looking after Gdoo-naaganinaa: Precolonial Nishnaabeg Diplomatic and Treaty Relationships," *Wicazo Sa Review* 23, no.2 (2008), 29-42. Jose Antonio Brandao and William Starna, "The Treaties of 1701: A Triumph of Iroquois Diplomacy," *Ethnohistory* 43, no.2 (1996) 209-244: Lisa Brooks, *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).
[479] For Indigenous nations, a treaty most often does not denote a finished (written) document but entails a series of events, ceremonies, and ongoing relationship-building. A treaty is often subjected to constant revision and renewal. On treaty philosophy, see Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, "Marked by Fire: Anishinaabe Articulations of Nationhood in Treaty Making with the United States and Canada," *American Indian Quarterly* 36, no.2 (2012), 119-149; John Borrows and

communities to move through their land, and sharing hunting territory with them, is as much asserting sovereignty as claiming exclusive proprietary relation to land.

Meanwhile, in many Indigenous societies, women's relation to land and agriculture is commemorated in many Indigenous Creation Stories and oral history. In the Iroquoian (a linguistic category that encompasses the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat, among others) story, after the death of the Woman Creator, corn grows from her physical body and becomes the food staple of her offspring henceforth, while her body becomes the land that they have since lived on. Such a profound spiritual relation is lived and reflected in Indigenous social and political lives. As Anishinaabe knowledge keeper Basile Johnston testifies,

> "It is not man who owns the land; it is land that owns man. And we, the Anishinabeg, were placed on this land. From beginning to end it nourishes us: it quenches our thirst, it shelters us, and we follow the order its seasons. It gives us freedom to come and go according to its nature and its extent-great freedom when the extent is large, less freedom when it is small. And when we die we are buried within the land that outlives us all. We belong to the land by birth, by need, and by affection."[480]

The intimate relation to land means that such relation defines what a people is. In a recent symposium published in *Theory & Event* entitled "Landbody: Radical Native Commitments," Diana Rose, Robert Geroux, and Kennan Ferguson write:

> "'Who are a people?' and 'What is land'? may seem to be separate questions, but they are not," as "Place is not a neutral backdrop, 'where something happens.' Connection to a specific land comprises a central component of indigenous being, a commitment to site specificity contrary to the current celebrations of migration, individualism, and cosmopolitanism. Land and body—both of them collective, both of them transformative—cannot therefore be separated.'"[481]

Michael Coyle, editors, *The Right Relationship: Reimagining the Implementation of Historical Treaties* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017).

[480] Basil Johnston, *Ojibway Ceremonies,* illustrated by David Beyer (Lincoln: Bison Books, 1990), 170.

[481] Diana Rose, Robert Geroux, Kennan Ferguson, "LandBody: Radical Native Commitments," *Theory & Event* 23, no.4 (October 2020), 973.

Indigenous conceptions of sovereignty, not surprisingly, are also land-based. As Leanne Simpson tells us, in Anishinaabemowin, the word for "sovereignty" is "Kina Gchi Anishinaabe-ogaming": "the place where we all live and work together."[482]

Within this close and mutually constituting relation between land and body, it is commonly acknowledged that women were the caretakers of land and held the ultimate authority in regard to all issues regarding land.[483] Not surprisingly, women played important diplomatic roles in treaty negotiations, though their influence and the extent of their participation were often downplayed by the European party in these negotiations and thus not reflected in the written records of formal treaty proceedings.[484] As Galloway summarizes, women

> "signed their names to land deeds and petitions. They functioned as peace emissaries and mediators in the Texas borderlands as well as in the northeastern woodlands. They accompanied delegations to treaty councils and wove wampum belts. At the treaty grounds, they erected and took down lodges, kept an eye on the children, and cooked food…. Often, women had their say back in the villages before the male delegates departed for the treaty grounds or in the evening during breaks in the negotiations."[485]

Despite their importance, only occasionally was women's ultimate authority over land pronounced as clearly as during the negotiation between the Seneca Nation and representatives of the Holland Land Company regarding dissatisfaction with the Treaty of Big Tree that I cited in the epigraph of this chapter. Such authority, while rooted in Indigenous spiritual and cultural traditions, also had a material basis in their role as actual caretakers of land and thus food providers through their embodied labor. This practice, as we will see, was

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[482] Leanne Simpson, "The Place Where We All Live and Work Together," 18.

[483] This is widely supported by Indigenous oral history. On the other hand, colonists tend to downplay or ignore women's authority both in practice–for instance, they often negotiated treaties exclusively with men–and in writing. So direct corroboration of women's authority over land is rather scant, but they do occasionally either appear directly or can be inferred.

[484] Colin G. Calloway, *Pen and Ink Witchcraft: Treaties and Treaty Making in American Indian History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 18.

[485] Calloway, *Pen and Ink Witchcraft*, 18.

both widely acknowledged by the missionaries and colonists and subjected to continuous criticism and intervention.

Moral Critique of Idleness, Cultivation, and Masculine Settler Selfhood

Labor assumed tremendous moral meaning and became a political issue in seventeenth-century European political discourses. Articulation of the moral importance of labor has been deeply entangled with European colonialism since then. Barbara Arneil has traced the emergence of a colonial ideology coalescing around engaging the "idle" in "agrarian labour on uncultivated soil with the express purpose of 'improving' both the people and the land through such labour" to this period, more specifically to John Locke's theory of property.[486] As she puts it, "Locke best articulates/crystallizes a particular thread of colonial thought–one that identifies 'idleness' and 'irrationality' as the problem and views agrarian labour as the key to improving both people and land."[487] Arneil reveals that this particular political configuration of the relation between labor, land, and moral improvement is "foundational to the nineteenth-century ideology of domestic colonialism"[488] according to which many domestic colonies were created within the borders of various European settler states. Others have similarly noticed the centrality of labor and the proper way of inhabiting land in Locke's political thought, which is also reflected in his involvement in colonial affairs.[489]

While this colonial discourse is often thought of and associated with English colonialism and imperialism in particular, the political and colonial significance is articulated in early modern French

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[486] Barbara Arneil, *Domestic Colonies*, 1.
[487] Arneil, *Domestic Colonies*, 25.
[488] Arneil, *Domestic Colonies,* 25.
[489] James Tully, *A Discourse on Property: John Locke and His Adversaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Barbara Arneil, *John Locke and America*; David Armitage, "John Locke and America;" Duncan Bell, *Reordering the World: Essays on Liberalism and Empire*.

political discourse. The French political discourse on labor grew out of Counter-Reformation Catholic orthodoxy and early modern French state-building after decades of religious and civil wars.[490] In this era, labor was primarily, if not exclusively, valued because of its moral importance and the reforming effects—improvement—it had on the laborers. It mattered little how much one produced or what one was producing; what solely mattered was the act of laboring itself. In Foucault's words, an "ethical consciousness of labor" emerged.[491] Labor defined the laborer; labor was intrinsic to the self-making of the laborer as a moral being. Reversely, poverty, mendicancy, and idleness also assumed profound moral meaning. In a rhetoric rooted in the Christian doctrine of the Fall,[492] poverty was posed to be caused by idleness, which was a moral failure that could only be corrected by labor itself. More important to the settler-colonial project, idleness as a moral failure was connected to the cultivation of land. This is distinct from the Lockean articulation, wherein agrarian labor does carry moral weight, his foremost concern is rather to transform "the idle" into "industrial and rational" citizens and thereby improve the land, generating economic prosperity.[493] As we will see, for French elites and colonists alike, idleness itself is the problem, and needs to be 'corrected' through civilization (as a verb, a process). For the colonists, such correction primarily entailed the imposition of proper gender relations, especially gendered division of labor.

Jacques-Benige Bossuet, court preacher to Louis XIV, claims: "The land had not sinned, and if it is accursed, it is by the labor of the fallen man who cultivates it; from it no fruit is won, particularly the most necessarily fruit, save by force and continual labor."[494] Here secular and religious demands converged on the moralization of labor, especially the cultivation of land. Idleness

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[490] François Bluche, *L'Ancien régime: Institutions et société. Collection: Livre de poche* (Paris: Fallois, 1993); James Ricard Farr, *The Work of France: Labor and Culture in Early Modern Times, 1350-1800* (Lahman: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008).
[491] Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason,* trans. Richard Howard (New York: Vintage, 1961), 55.
[492] Without going into too much detail, it is sufficient to say that the French Catholics and English Protestants held very different views on this matter, which is then reflected in their respective view on the moral meaning of labor.
[493] John Locke; Arneil, 22.
[494] Jacques Benige Bossuet, *Élévations sur les mystères*, Sixth Week Twelfth Elevation, quoted in *Madness and Civilization*, 55.

was not only considered a moral failure but also potentially as rebellion, as the cause of social unrest and spiritual disobedience. This is why, in the early modern period, vagabonds posed such a threat to nation-states that were only becoming centralized in Europe.[495] As a result, vagrants were a major group of people increasingly subject to confinement in institutions such as the *Hôpital Général* in what Foucault characterizes as the so-called "Age of Confinement."[496]

Understanding this context helps to make sense of missionaries and colonists' moral abhorrence to Indigenous peoples 'failure' to (properly) cultivate land and their 'idleness,' and their desperate efforts to make Indigenous men abandon hunting and take up agriculture. This Old World problem found a new expression in the New World when the Jesuits and colonists viewed Indigenous peoples who were engaged primarily in hunting and trade as vagabonds and nomads.[497] The sophisticated understanding and complex relation to land and use of land that I reconstructed in the last section, was, not surprisingly, beyond the comprehension of the colonists. Though they noticed that many Indigenous peoples did cultivate land and had elaborate agricultural systems and that Indigenous women were the ones who took care of land, they did not appreciate this gendered division of labor. While this observation made individual explorers and some Jesuits acknowledge or

[495] The problem of vagrancy and 'idleness' more generally was pronounced in debates in England and the growing British Empire since early modern times. Thomas More addressed this issue in his *Utopia*, published in 1551. See also David Hitchcock, Beat Humin, and Brian Cowan, *Vagrancy in English Culture and Society, 1650-1750* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2018). The problem also became increasingly pronounced under efforts of centralization of the state in early seventeenth-century France. See Emanuel Chill, "Religion and Mendicity in Seventeenth-Century France," *International Review of Social History* 7, no.3 (1962), 400-425. Recently scholars have drawn out the connection between the management of vagrancy in Europe and European colonialism and racial domination. See David Hitchcock, "'Punishment is All the Charity that the Law Affordeth Them': Penal Transportation, Vagrancy, and the Charitable Impulse in the British Atlantic, c. 1600-1750," *New Global Studies* 12, no.2 (2018), 195-215; Sal Nicholazzo, *Vagrant Figures: Law, Literature, and the Origins of the Police* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021). On Idleness and early modern colonial ideology, see Barbara Arneil, *Domestic Colonies*, especially Chapter 2.

[496] Foucault, *Madness and Civilization:*.

[497] *JR* 5, 174. It is interesting that their eyewitness account shares striking similarity with Locke's characterization of Indigenous peoples as "idle" in the *Second Treatise of Government* (Chapter 5), revealing the powerfulness of the epistemological frame through which these missionaries viewed the empirical world, as well as the deeply ideological meaning of labor and idleness.

even appreciate Indigenous women's labor, which I will discuss in detail later, it only made them see Indigenous men as 'lazy,' 'idle,' and 'indolent.'[498]

Among Indigenous Nations who had contact with the early modern French, a clear gendered division of labor existed. While the "forest" was men's realm, the "clearing" was exclusively women's domain, and men sometimes would help with clearing the land before cultivation.[499] The Jesuits learned how labor was divided in many Indigenous nations. Andehoua, a Wendat and former Jesuit seminary student who "has a good mind and vigorous judgement," told the Jesuits in 1637 that in their nation "it is the women who sow, plant, and cultivate the land, and prepare food for their husbands."[500] From the very beginning, the Jesuits disapproved of this gendered division of labor in Indigenous societies, which led the early modern Europeans to devalue both men's and women's work. They dismissed the many arduous activities and forms of labor men engaged in and saw hunting and fishing merely as indulgence in idleness and 'play.' This impression, itself an ideological construction, proved extremely tenacious, consistently appearing in colonial discourse from the early seventeenth century into the eighteenth century, and later on in the settler state era as well. In Lafitau's (proto-)ethnographic study published in 1724, entitled *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times*, in which he praises many aspects of Indigenous lives, especially their government,[501] he remarks: "they are the idlest people in the world, except that

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[498] Sagard, 96; Lafitau, 15.
[499] Arthur Parker, *Parker on the Iroquois: Iroquois Use of Maize and Other Food Plants; The Code of Handsome Lake, the Seneca Prophet; The Constitution of the Five Nations,* eds. William Fenton (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1968[1910]), 21. Though Parker had Seneca ancestry on his father's side and was born at the Cattaraugus Reservation, he was not a tribal member. He was adopted into the Seneca Bear clan at Tonawanda and given the name Gawasowaneh, meaning "Big Snow Snake." Margaret M. Bruchac has argued that Parker's first wife, Abenaki performer Beulah Tahamont (Dark Cloud) contributed to his work on Haudenosaunee agriculture, as there were some traditions that were only shared among Indigenous women, and the Beulah came from a family of renowned Abenaki herbalists. Parker, however, did not acknowledge Beulah at all. See *Savage Kin: Indigenous Informants and American Anthropologists* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2018), 48; 62-63.
[500] JR 14, 235.
[501] See Joseph Français Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times*, ed. William Fenton and Elizabeth Moore (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1977[1724]), vol.1, Chapter V, "Political Government."

they busy themselves in doing certain little things which do not take much time and still less discipline and application. Almost always they have their arms crossed and are doing nothing except holding meetings, singing, eating, playing, sleeping, and loafing."[502]

While what Lafitau presents here could be read as descriptive–that is, he is describing what social life in subsistence societies looks like– put in context, it feeds into the still ascending colonial discourse that paints Indigenous peoples as idle. Lafitau in particular pathologizes the gendered division of labor among Indigenous nations and simultaneously downplayed the labor of Indigenous men and women. Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, an early nineteenth-century US Indian agent who was married to an Ojibway woman, Jane Johnston Schoolcraft (Bamewawagezhikaquay), and hence had more intimate knowledge of Indigenous societies, clarifies that Indigenous women's agricultural labor "is not compulsory" and is "assumed by the females as a just equivalent in their view," because of "the onerous and continuous labor of the other sex, in providing meat, and skins for clothing, by the chase, and in defending their villages against the enemies, and keeping intruders off their territories."[503] Schoolcraft also acknowledges that this is the case among "all the still uncolonized tribes,"[504] directly linking colonization with the transformation of gendered division of labor in Indigenous Nations.

In the settler-colonial imaginary, Indigenous male idleness was posed against both Indigenous female labor and settler male selfhood, and the latter was defined by the cultivation of

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This sets him apart from many colonial agents and European thinkers of the same period, who claimed that the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island did not have government.

[502] Lafitau, *Customs,* vol. 2, 15. Lafitau contrasts men's idleness with women's labor, which I will discuss later in the chapter.

[503] Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, *The Indian in His Wigwam, or Characteristics of the Red Race of America. From Original Notes and Manuscripts* (Buffalo: Derby & Hewson Publishers, 1848), 179. It has been noted that Henry received plenty of instruction from Jane Johnston Schoolcraft throughout his career, both as a government agent and as a writer. She translated many Ojibway oral traditions for Henry, who published them in his literary journal *The Literary Voyager*, without properly acknowledging her authorship. Jane Johnston Schoolcraft was also a writer in her own right, being the earliest Indigenous woman author that has been recovered to date. She wrote poetry, stories, and essays in both Anishinaabemowin and English. For her own work, see *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky: The Writings of Jane Johnston Schoolcraft*, ed. Robert Dale Parker (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

[504] Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, 179.

land. In this early period, such an identity was a normative ideal and aspirational goal, as settlers were still few. This moral critique, which was also a prescriptive calling that aimed to bring the ideal it posed into reality, took labor to be synonymous with the cultivation of land. Seen through the missionaries' eyes, the nascent settler colony had vast uncultivated land and idle bodies.[505] Idleness and especially failure to cultivate land was coded as the highest sin. This moral framework would continue to guide settler colonial agents and form a central part of the "civilizational" and assimilation agenda. Making Indigenous men into farmers (with dispossessing and domesticating Indigenous women as its corollary) was a consistently deployed settler-colonial policy. At the same time, agrarian labor was also what defined settler male selfhood, and would also foster the "natural" growth of the settler colony. Hence, while the early colonial agents lacked sufficient resources and means to actualize systematic settler colonization, the ideological design was the same as the one that would underwrite later settler state-building.

For settlers, both in theory and in practice, cultivating land—mixing one's labor with it to improve it—creates private property. This serves as a justificatory mechanism for denying Indigenous dominion in land and gaining exclusive titles to it. While in popular imaginary the early English settlers were primarily farmers rooted in land whereas French settlers were primarily *coureur de bois* engaged in trade and thus highly mobile, cultivating the land was similarly regarded as central to the making of French settler male selfhood. Such selfhood formed the basis of settler heterosexual nuclear family. The Jesuits and colonists, starting in the seventeenth century, encouraged settlers to cultivate land and set down roots, which they imagined would serve as the basis of the colony.[506] The Jesuits, in particular, were in fact very against the presence of *coureur de bois*, because they often engaged in questionable—illegal—trade (especially liquor, which brought

[505] See, for example, *JR* 3, 59, 65, 111.
[506] JR 3, 161.

tremendous social unrest) and had problematic morals (mainly sexual) that offended these religious authorities.[507] The Jesuits explicitly complained about French traders many times in the *Relations*, blaming them for corrupting the natives and stalling their spiritual growth. In their letters to authorities in France, the Jesuits repeatedly told the authorities that more single men and families should be sent from France to cultivate land, set down roots, and establish nuclear families.[508] It was believed that these French settlers would set favorable examples for the "nomadic" "savages," who would then follow suit and make it easy to civilize them.[509] This is ironic given that many Indigenous peoples had long been practicing agriculture and knew much more about how to cultivate land in this part of the world than the settlers. The Jesuits also successfully persuaded the King to ban the fur trade, which started in 1696 and lasted for nineteen years. The ban ironically deepened the French fur traders' reliance on their native kin and further integrated them into Indigenous communities.

We see that in the early modern French settler-colonial imaginary, it was actually agriculture, rather than trade, that marked the quintessential settler selfhood, which was explicitly gendered masculine. This, I contend, is what distinguishes the colonization of New France as a distinct settler-colonial project, fundamentally different from enterprises of the same period that were solely commerce-orientated, wherein the slave trade played a big part such as in Santo Domingo and Jamaica.[510] The settlers did "come to stay,"[511] and natives were envisioned to be eliminated through

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[507] See for example, *JR 24*, 139; *JR 26*, 147; *JR 44*, *93*; *JR 52*, 39; *JR 53*, 257; *JR 58*, 83; *JR 63*, 267. The Jesuits also often accused Dutch and English traders of selling liquor to Indigenous peoples.

[508] JR 4, Chapter XXXVIII, "Reasons Why the Cultivation of New France Ought to be Undertaken in Earnest." Kotef has argued, through her reading of Locke, that the settler colonial household, rather than the (masculine) individual, is the basis of property claim and it has an intrinsic tendency to seek expansion through dispossession (*The Colonizing Self*, 102-107). If we look at actual settler colonial discourses, we see this is not just a theoretical justification but manifests in concrete settler colonial practices.

[509] JR 6, 151.

[510] Saliha Belmessous, *Assimilation and Empire: Uniformity in French and British Colonies, 1541-1954* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[511] Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," 388.

assimilation, a logic that I parsed in Chapter 2. Land would be naturally transferred from Indigenous women to settler men and cultivated by them, while women—both Indigenous and settler—would take care of all things domestic, including reproduction. On the most fundamental level, early modern moral critique of (male) idleness and settler colonial desire of (dispossession) converged in settler selfhood, especially settler masculinity. By the late seventeenth century, when the Five Nations raided the French settlement at Montreal, "terrorizing the entire colony," agriculture had become one of the two main ways of providing sustenance for the colony's settler population, the other being the fur trade.[512] While the fur trade was condemned for its corrupting influence on Indigenous peoples and the fur traders were labeled as morally corrupt, agriculture was envisioned as the solution and foundation of a prosperous settler colony.

"It is the Women Who Sow, Plant, and Cultivate the Land"

While agriculture was conceived as the hallmark of civilization and served as the justificatory reason for settler colonialism, long before contact with the Europeans, many peoples of Turtle Island had already been practicing sustenance-based agriculture. As Lewis Henry Morgan plainly puts in his nineteenth-century ethnological study,

> "Corn has ever been the staple article of consumption among the Iroquois. They cultivated this plant, and also the bean and the squash, before the formation of the League.[513] From the most remote period to which tradition reaches, the knowledge of the cultivation and use of these plants has been handed down among them. They raised sufficient quantities of each to supply their utmost wants, preparing them for food in a great variety of ways, and making them at least the basis of their sustenance."[514]

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[512] *The French Regime in Wisconsin, I*, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Madison: Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1902), 133.

[513] Established around 1570.

[514] Lewis Henry Morgan, *League of the Ho-De-No Sau-Nee or Iroquois*, reprinted (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files, 1954[1851]), I, 190-191. While Morgan emphasizes that agriculture had long been the source of sustenance for the Haudenosaunee since ancient times, he also describes their contemporary agricultural activities as new "initiatives" and "attempts (Ibid, II, 110)," which belies his ideological underpinning. Morgan's legacy is both profound and fraught. While his work inspired many and he's often regarded as a founding figure of modern ethnology, his work has been problematized and challenged by many, especially Indigenous scholars in recent years. In the preface of League, Morgan asks: "Can the residue of the Iroquois be reclaimed, and finally raised to the position of citizens of the State?" (Ibid, x).

Contrary to popular myths, agriculture, rather than hunting (what Morgan refers to as "the chase"), was the primary source of Haudenosaunee livelihood. This fact was not lost to early European travelers and colonists. Descriptions of Indigenous agriculture and women's agricultural labor abound in European travelogues and colonial discourses. Eyewitnesses commented in great detail on vast acres of cornfields cultivated by Indigenous women. According to Arthur Parker's comprehensive survey of early European travelers' descriptions of Iroquoian agriculture, Jacques Cartier, Henry Hudson, and Robert Juet all mentioned the large cornfields they saw.[515] Samuel de Champlain gave the first detailed account of the cornfields and Haudenosaunee methods of cultivation in the St. Lawrence and lower lake district in 1605. He observed that "They till and cultivate the soil, something which we have not hierto observed…We saw their Indian corn which they raise in gardens…With this corn they put in each hill three or four Brazilian beans which are of different colours…We saw many squashes and pumpkins and tobacco, which they likewise cultivate…"[516] During his journey near the Charles River[517] in the same year, he again commented that "there were, here and there, cultivated patches, interspersed with dwellings of the natives….In the fields were growing Indian corn, Brazilian beans, pumpkins, radishes, and tobacco; and in the woods were oak and hickory and red cedar."[518] Similarly, Gabriel Sagard, notes in the travelogue of his

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The underlying premise of his study and conclusion is the inevitable Indigenous decline and demise under civilization, and assimilation into the settler state. He asserts that the "two means of rescuing the Indian from his impending destiny" are education and Christianity (Ibid, II, 111). While his observation of Haudenosaunee societies is not completely negative, he nonetheless characterizes them as a relic of the past, thus both reflecting and feeding on the "vanishing Indian" myth that permeates the nineteenth century. See also I, 4; II, 108-109. For critiques of Morgan, See Andra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across Settler Borders* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); Susan Hill, *The Clay We Are Made Of: Haudenosaunee Land Tenure on the Grand River* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).

[515] Arthur Parker, *Iroquois Use of Maize and Other Food Plants*, 15-6.

[516] Samuel de Champlain, *Voyages of Samuel de Champlain*, trans. Charles Pomeroy Otis, with historical illustrations and a memoir by Edmund F. Slafter (Boston: The Prince Society, 1880), vol.2, 64-65.

[517] Champlain referred to the area as the Coast of the Almouchiquois. He also used the term Almouchiquois to refer to the native peoples of the area.

[518] Champlain, *Voyages of Samuel de Champlain* (1880), 83-4.

journey to Wendat Country in 1624 that women were the ones who sow maize[519] and prepared food from it.[520] He noted that women "usually do more than the men" who are occupied with "fishing, hunting, and war, going off to trade, making lodges and cabins."[521]

In 1632, trying to convince the Wendat to ally with the French instead of the English, Champlain famously said that "Our young men would marry your daughters, and we shall be one people."[522] It should be noted that Champlain made this promise in response to the Captain's expressed fear that "it is that in the association of the French with our people, some one may be killed, then we would be lost." So it could be dismissed as merely a strategic remark to gain the alliance of the Wendat. Yet this statement does capture the essence of the French settler-colonial vision in the era, which is why it is often taken to represent the French assimilation policy in the seventeenth century that rests on the denial of Indigenous dominion both in land and in themselves.[523] Specifically, it shows that heterosexual interracial marriage is central to assimilation.[524] But taking Champlain's knowledge of Indigenous agriculture and women's agricultural labor into account, I suggest, shows something that has not been noted. Champlain is making a very subtle rhetorical move that reveals why the imposition of French patriarchal gender norms and gendered division of labor was so central to missionaries' interventions since the very beginning. I suggest that we need to pay attention to the fact that the gender ideology they tried to impose was material in nature: on the one hand, as I have argued in the last chapter, it directly targeted Indigenous peoples, especially women's, bodies;

[519] Maize and core are both used in these travel narratives; they denote the same food plant.
[520] Sagard, *Long Journey,* 103-4.
[521] Sagard, *Long Journey,* 103-4, 96.
[522] JR 5, 211. It should also be noted that Champlain's speech was met with laughter. The natives replied by saying, "Thou always sayest something cheering to rejoice us. If that should happen, we would be very happy."
[523] Belmessous, *Assimilation and Empire*.
[524] Belmessous, *Assimilation and Empire,* especially chapter 1;

on the other hand, it was aimed at undermining and eventually effacing the material foundation of women's power and authority.

By proposing that Indigenous peoples and the French would "become one people" through intermarriage between French settler men and Indigenous women, Champlain was actually suggesting that ownership and exclusive control of land would be conveniently *transferred* from Indigenous women to their settler spouses. The responsibility of cultivating the land—and the authority derived from it—would be transferred from Indigenous women to their male spouses. This settler-colonial vision, in other words, was specifically premised on the eradication, if not erasure, of Indigenous women's agricultural labor, which would disempower them. While many Indigenous women did marry or form intimate relations with French—and other European—settlers, their understanding of the social and political consequences of such unions were very different from Champlain's and the Jesuits'. According to Indigenous social and political norms, the outsiders were incorporated into their nations as fictive kin and occupied legitimate positions within Indigenous societies. They strengthened Indigenous societies by introducing new relationships and resources, rather than dispossessing their wives or intimate partners and by extension, the communities they were incorporated into. Indigenous women continued to cultivate land and were in charge of everything concerning land. Indigenous agriculture continued to flourish, and the extent of its prosperity was recorded in detail by Jacques-René de Brisay de Denonville, then Governor-General of New France.

In 1687, Denouville led a punitive expedition against the Seneca nation. In his notes, he recorded that the Seneca cultivated large fields that he ordered to be burnt to the ground, which constituted a bigger threat to their livelihood than anything else. With great pride, he wrote that at one village, the French and their Indigenous allies destroyed "a great quantity of fine large corn,

beans and other vegetables, of which there remained not a single field, and after having burned so large a quantity of old corn that I dare not tell the amount."[525] Then at the village Totiakto, they again found a "still greater number of cultivated fields, with which to occupy ourselves for many days."[526] At the small village of Gannounata, they destroyed all the new and old corn, and Denouville again commented that “One would hardly credit the quantity of grain which we found in store in this place, and destroyed by fire.”[527] A few days later, they went to destroy all the remaining cornfields “in the distant woods.” He recounted that “We had the curiosity to estimate the whole quantity, green as well as ripe, which we have destroyed in the four villages of the Sounontouans (what the French called the Seneca), and we found that it would amount to 350,000 minots of green, and 50,000 minots of old corn,[528] by which we can estimate the multitude of people in these four villages, and the suffering they will experience from the devastation.”[529] The scale of Seneca agriculture and the skill of the Seneca shocked the commander and was conceived as a threat to the settler colony such that the fields had to be destroyed.

Such destruction, however, did not put an end to Seneca and Haudenosaunee agriculture. As Lafitau observed in the 1720s, Haudenosaunee women continued to cultivate large corn and other vegetable fields. In the chapter entitled “occupations of the women,” he noted,

> “In Canada, the moment that the snows are melted the Indian women begin their work…All the women of the village join together for the heavy work…They keep their fields very clean. They are carefully to pull up the grass in them until harvest time. There is also a set time for this [task] when they work all in common…When harvest time has come, they gather Indian corm which they pull off with the leaves around the ears so they form the husk.”[530]

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[525] Jacques-René de Brisay de Denonville, *Narrative of the expedition of the Marquis de Nonville, against the Senecas, in 1687* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1848), 35.
[526] Denonville, *Narrative*, 36.
[527] Denonville, *Narrative*, 36.
[528] 1 minot is 3 bushels. They destroyed in total 1,200,000 bushels.
[529] Denonville, *Narrative*, 37.
[530] Joseph Françai̇s Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times*, ed. William Fenton and Elizabeth Moore (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1977[1724]), vol. 2, 54-55.

Other than corn, they also planted "horse beans or little lima beans, pumpkins of a species different from those of France, watermelons and great sunflowers."[531]

Around the same time, Sabrevois, in his 1718 notes, described Wendat, Odawa, and Potawatomi villages near the Fort of Detroit, noting their agricultural skill. He was especially impressed by the apple trees that were "planted as if it had been on purpose" he saw at the entrance of the Detroit River. The apples, he observed, were "as large as small sweet apples (*pommes d'api*)."[532] In a Potawatomi village, he noted that all the work was done by women, while "the only occupation of the men is to hunt and to adorn themselves."[533] The women "work in the fields, raising very fine Indian corn, beans, peas, squashes, and melons."[534] He was especially approving of the Wendat who settled in the area after their dispersal in the 1650s, referring to them as "an exceedingly industrious nation" as they "hardly dance at all, and work continually raising a very large amount of Indian corn, peas, beans, and sometimes French wheat."[535] All this work, he again emphasized, was done by women while men were "always hunting."[536] The Wendat, he noticed, built their cabins "all of bark and make them very substantial," and their fort was "well enclosed with a double row of palisades, and bastions, well strengthened everywhere, and has good gates."[537] This permanent housing structure further testified to the sedentary and agricultural nature of Wendat society even after they were rendered refugees and had to rebuild their homes elsewhere. The Illinois, living on the bank of the Illinois river, he noticed, was also "very industrious" and did "a great deal of work."[538] They raised "a great many French melons," "a great deal of indian corn," and "a great deal of French

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531 Lafitau, *Customs,* 55.
532 Sabrevois, "Memoir on the Savages of Canada as Far as the Mississippi River, Describing Their Customs and Trade," in *The French Regime in Wisconsin, I*, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Madison: Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1902), 366.
533 Sabrevois, "Memoir," 366.
534 Sabrevois, "Memoir," 367.
535 Sabrevois, "Memoir," 368.
536 Sabrevois, "Memoir," 368.
537 Sabrevois, "Memoir," 368.
538 Sabrevois, "Memoir," 374.

wheat."[539] They also raised livestock including "oxen, cows, pigs, horses, chickens," making him conclude that they had "everything necessary for their subsistence."[540] The Miami, similarly, were "very industrious" according to him, and raised Indian corn that differed in kind from the others nations.[541] The vast cornfields and apple orchards that in 1718 deeply impressed Bleury would be completely torched by US troops led by Secretary of War Henry Knox, with the approval of George Washington, after the US Revolutionary War.[542]

With such mass destruction came the erasure of Indigenous women's agricultural labor in subsequent settler colonial narratives and discourses. Such erasure, I want to emphasize, has served to entrench the myth of the "vanishing" Indian. But this particular erasure of agricultural labor had a distinctly gendered character. It both naturalized the effects of settler colonial intervention, which was the imposition of European patriarchal gendered division of labor, and the subjugation of Indigenous women. The long history of Indigenous agriculture has been erased, we see, because it was undertaken by women.[543] We see that it is *the dispossession* and *domestication* of Indigenous women's labor, which was accompanied by the systemic attack on Indigenous gender relations, that constituted their oppression under settler colonialism. Such domestication also contributed to their domestication as subjects of empire.

While settler colonial dispossession of land affected all Indigenous peoples, Indigenous women were affected in a specific way as not only was their spiritual and cosmic relation to land

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539 Sabrevois, "Memoir," 374.
540 Sabrevois, "Memoir," 374.
541 Sabrevois, "Memoir," 375.
542 Susan Sleeper-Smith, I*ndigenous Prosperity, and American Conquest, Indian Women and Ohio River Valley, 1690-1792* (Williamsburg & Chapel Hill: Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture & the University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 1-3.
543 Lewis Henry Morgan's account demonstrates this point well. Made himself an 'expert' on all things Haudenosaunee in the twentieth century, he would note that the Haudenosaunee have been planting corn since "ancient times," while claiming that agriculture is new to them and "their feeble attempts" prove that they have made 'progress' towards civilization. Lewis Henry Morgan, *League of the Ho-De-No Sau-Nee or Iroquois*, reprinted (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files, 1954[1851]), II, 109-110.

severed but they were also disempowered because they no longer were the ones who produced the agricultural products for sustenance. While their bodies became objects of disciplinary regulation and punishment, as I have discussed in Chapter 3, their embodied relation to land and embodied labor also became an intense site of colonial intervention. Indigenous women thus experienced two intertwining kinds of domestication: as subjects of settler empires and patriarchal households. Their bodies and desire also became objects of domestication. The settler-colonial policy of assimilation, in creating domestic nuclear families according to European gender ideology, paradoxically collapses the public and private/domestic and directly intervened in Indigenous domesticities.

To combat such ideologically-charged erasure, it is thus not enough to restore the objective reality of Indigenous women's labor. More importantly, we need to attempt to recover women's embodied labor as political acts, as acts of decolonial meaning-making and *anti-colonial resistance* that enabled them to cultivate alternative attachments and anti-colonial desire, by attending to its immanent meaning and profound political implications. To this, I turn to in the next section.

Resisting Domestication and Dispossession: Labor, Desire, and Sovereignty

While individual explorers and travelers recorded their observations of Indigenous agriculture and Indigenous women's labor since the sixteenth century, Indigenous women themselves did not leave any account, nor did the missionaries, who commented on all aspects of Indigenous lives, say much if at all about it. As I have discussed, while Indigenous women and their life-stories abound in colonial discourses, they mostly appear as exceptionally devoted neophytes whose radical transformation was taken to demonstrate God's mercy and the feasibility of the missionary and the colonial project. The Ursulines did not mention Indigenous agriculture, which makes sense as they were cloistered. While the Jesuits mentioned it in the early *Relations,* it usually only appears in the paraphrasing of Indigenous individuals' speech and is meant to be dismissed as

pagan and 'savage' heresy. Most importantly, these accounts and remarks did not touch on the *meaning* or experience of labor.

Recently, feminist scholars in Indigenous and critical race studies have theorized the political meaning and significance of embodied gendered labor. They have paid attention to how Indigenous and racialized women have navigated through—and survived—perilous and precarious political conditions including colonialism, cultural genocide, racism, heteropatriarchy, and rampant violence. As such, they have gone beyond the traditional discussion of women's labor in relation to modern liberal capitalist market economy and the resultant gendered oppression to explore how embodied gendered labor constitutes meaning, subjectivity, and attachments. Ann-Elise Lewallen, through her ethnographical work with contemporary Ainu women living under Japanese settler colonialism, has argued that they self-craft their personhood and Ainu identity ("becoming Ainu") by taking up gendered labor: crafting traditional Ainu clothes.[544] She reflects: "Clothwork can deeply personal: Ainu women, whose bodies are at once sites of continued racialization and self-loathing, may be transformed by donning ancestral embroidery. By learning the patterns and reproducing the methods of clothwork, women report that they are awakened to an Ainu sensibility, an awareness of Ainu identity, and a renewed sense of Ainu aesthetics."[545] Cloth work, in other words, is both a form of self-making and active resistance against settler-colonial assimilation and erasure, a material way of weaving and stating one's existence. Feminist anthropologists, in a different yet related vein, have argued that gendered and feminized labor, such as care work and erotic labor, enable women who engage in them to craft a sense of self that both

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[544] Ann-Elise Lewallen, T*he Fabric of Indigeneity: Ainu Identity, Gender, and Settler Colonialism in Japan* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico University, 2016), 12.
[545] Lewallen, T*he Fabric,* 13.

contests the stigmatized meaning attached to such labor *and* resists state violence that seeks to erase them.

As I have mentioned in the introduction to this Chapter, Indigenous feminist scholars have read embodied practices as decolonial praxis, as resistance to colonial and racial domination. Scholars of women's labor, on the other hand, enable us to see the specificity of embodied labor to Indigenous women's self-making and world-making. Bringing these diverse approaches together, I theorize embodied labor both as a form of self-making and world-making in its own right, and a site of anti-colonial resistance and decolonial meaning-making. I believe that this way of theorizing women's labor under duress is a productive way to foreground the political significance of Indigenous women's agricultural labor. First, just as the forms of labor these women engage in are explicitly gendered feminine, so was Indigenous women's agricultural labor (in Indigenous societies). The focus on the gendered meaning of labor helps to bring to the fore the political significance of women's labor. This approach is productive also because it does not rely on any transhistorical or universal definition of the meaning of labor. While feminist scholars have argued that women enact resistance through their gendered labor, why such is the case and what constitutes such resistance can only be grasped contextually and immanently. I specifically explore the relation between labor, desire, and the self. I situate my analysis in the social and political context, Indigenous philosophy, and contemporary Indigenous feminist theory.

In order to see Indigenous women's agricultural labor as resistance to settler colonialism, and desire as central to staging such resistance, I suggest that both labor and desire need to be *politicized* explicitly, rather than merely taken as an anthropological and social fact. Moreover, the political significance of such labor can only be revealed if fully contextualized. While settlers and settler states aspire to turn land into territory defined by exclusive possession and ownership, it remains the enchanted, affective, and embodied expression of Indigenous sovereignty. Indigenous

women, as caretakers of land, not only cultivated their selfhood and desire through agricultural labor but also provided nourishment for their communities.

By Sabrevois' visit in 1718, Northeastern Indigenous peoples had already had regular interactions with the French for decades, and the Jesuits had set up missions among these peoples for decades as well. The first mission to the Ottawa, for example, took place in 1673, and that to the Illinois in 1674. Missionaries usually stayed for a long period of time with them, sometimes up to a few years. Dominique Marie Varlet, for example, took up residence with the Illinois from 1712 to 1718. The Wendat were especially close to the French and visited the Jesuits at the French settlements in Québec and Montréal quite often. As Sabrevois corroborated, they were "the Nation most loyal to the French."[546] We know from the *Jesuit Relations* that the Jesuits condemned Indigenous gender relations and gendered division of labor and were invested in civilizing them, meaning turning Indigenous men into farmers and women into domestic wives. Continuous missionary activities and French influence did little to change the Indigenous gendered division of labor, rooted in their understanding of gender relations. Indigenous women continued to cultivate land, maintaining their close relation to land amid colonial intrusion, endless wars, and epidemics. Indigenous women's desire, as attachment to land, manifested in the rejection of settler-colonial biopolitical definition of what proper 'life' constitutes, while defending indigenous life according to their own traditions. Such tradition also assumed a new meaning and political significance in the evolving world where their homeland was under siege both materially and spiritually. By continuing to cultivate land when land was turned into an object of seizure and maintaining their embodied relation to land when their bodies became intense objects of disciplinary regulation, Indigenous women firmly rooted themselves in land. Their embodied relations to land not only allowed them to remain Indigenous according to their own traditions and social norms but also formed the material

[546] Sabrevois, "Memoir," 368.

base that sustained their peoples amid settler colonial desire to dispossess their land and their bodies. Desire, manifested in their deep attachment to land, was expressed through their embodied relation to land and labor in land. In turn, cultivating land also was the means by which they continued to cultivate their attachment to land. Labor in land, in other words, was both the concrete expression of desire and the means through which desire took shape. Such desire, while rooted in Indigenous cosmic and spiritual understandings of landbody, still needed to be taken up by Indigenous women themselves to become meaningful.

Indigenous women's labor was never understood as resistance but only as a social practice, one that the French codified as deviant and used to shame and criticize Indigenous men. Yet once we take into account the social and political context in which such labor took place, and the meaning it assumed in Indigenous societies, we immediately see its political significance. By taking care of land in the most material sense, Indigenous women were actively protecting their sense of self, as well as their community and kinspeople. Their desire was at once entirely normative–in keeping with their long-standing traditions and practices–in its own right, as they were simply carrying on their tradition, and non-normative according to the settler colonial logic, as it amounted to a refusal of its desire of (dis)possession and containment. It is a vivid demonstration of what Dene political theorist Glen Coulthard and Anishinaabe feminist Leanne Simpson call "grounded normativity." According to them, grounded normativity

> "refers to the ethical frameworks provided by these Indigenous place-based practices and associated forms of knowledge. Grounded normativity houses and reproduces the practices and procedures, based on deep reciprocity, that are inherently informed by an intimate relationship to place. Grounded normativity teaches us how to live our lives in relation to other people and nonhuman life forms in a profoundly nonauthoritarian, nondominating, nonexploitive manner. Grounded normativity teaches us how to be in respectful diplomatic relationships with other Indigenous and non-Indigenous nations with whom we might share territorial responsibilities or common political or economic interests. Our relationship to the land itself generates the processes, practices, and

knowledges that inform our political systems, and through which we practice solidarity."[547]

Grounded in Indigenous traditions for the goal of Indigenous resurgence *in the present*, this framework both asserts the desire for Indigenous futurity as normative, and actively rejects the settler colonial order, especially in relation to land, and thereby is rendered non-normative. As Mohawk anthropologist Audra Simpson argues, asserting Mohawk and Haudenosaunee sovereignty in contemporary times, while entirely normative in its own right, is also an active form of refusal against settler sovereignty.[548] The critical power of desire as both normative for oneself for it is what constitutes one in the first place and as critical when it resists the dominant power is thrown into relief. Since to desire is to become a certain kind of subject vis-a-vie power, by forming and shaping particular kinds of attachments, desire also always has critical and disruptive potential to affirm certain forms of life while rejecting others.

By refusing to be contained by settler colonial desire and futurity, Indigenous women in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were in fact asserting their desire to live, to protect their kin and community, and to defend a world in which those attachments could thrive. Continuing to cultivate land while the very relation to land and meaning embodied in it was under constant attack was an explicitly political response. In the most material sense, Indigenous women were protecting their homeland and providing for themselves and their kin, thereby simultaneously practicing sovereignty over their bodies, their community, and land. Their embodied labor enabled them to cultivate anti-colonial attachments that gave rise to a form of decolonial desire, manifested in their resistance to settler sovereignty (at the heart of which lies proprietary and possessive relation to land) and refusal to be assimilated and domesticated according to 'civilized' gender norms.

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547 Coulthard and Simpson, "Grounded Normativity/Placed-Based Solidarity," *American Quarterly* 68, no.2 (2016), 254.
548 Andra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*.

Conclusion

Almost a century after Denouville's expedition against the Senecas, the nascent US state would repeat the scorched earth tactic against Indigenous peoples. As I mentioned in the introduction, Henry Knox ravished the Indigenous villages in the Ohio River Valley. In 1779, General John Sullivan led a series of raids against the Haudenosaunee. He recorded in detail the destruction of Haudenosaunee corn fields. In his letter to John Jay, he reports:

> "Colonel Butler destroyed in the Cayuga country…two hundred acres of excellent corn with a number of orchards one of which had in it 1500 fruit trees…The quantity of corn destroyed, at a modest computation, must amount to 160,000 bushels, with a vast quantity of vegetables of every kind….I flatter myself that the orders with which I was entrusted are fully executed, as we have not left a single settlement or a field of corn in the country of the Five Nations…"[549]

All of those fields were cultivated by Indigenous women; all the products were also harvested by them. While this is universally acknowledged by colonial agents and European observers, it was also corroborated that by the end of the eighteenth century, Indigenous men did not even know how to conduct agricultural labor. When the Quakers made their first mission to the Seneca in 1789, they discovered that Seneca men did not know those skills at all and resolved to teach them, while also teaching the women "useful arts" such as spinning and weaving.[550] Imposing this gendered division of labor, which directly entailed the disempowerment and dispossession of Indigenous women regarding land control and management, was a common strategy deployed by the United States during the early years of state-building. In all lands acquired through treaty-making under the conditions of coercion and deception, Indian agents were consistently invested in making Indigenous men into farmers and women into domestic wives.[551] Yet Indigenous peoples remained sovereign even

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[549] Quoted in Arthur Parker, *Iroquois Uses of Maize*, 19.

[550] Joan M. Jensen, "Native American Women and Agriculture: A Seneca Case Study," *Sex Roles*, 3:5 (1977), 428.

[551] Benjamin Hawkins was an important agent who thoroughly carried out this plan among the Creek. See *The Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins, 1796-1810*, ed. Thomas Foster (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003). The

though the settler states would consistently claim them as domestic subjects. While a full survey of how gender relations and gendered division of labor evolved within Indigenous communities since the late eighteenth century is beyond the scope of this chapter, it suffices to say that Indigenous women found various means to refuse such domestication by cultivating alternative—decolonial—attachments. Their corn fields and apple trees might have been gone, but their embodied relations to land and deep attachment to land persisted and today continue to serve as the basis of a resurgence of Indigenous food sovereignty through the recovery of Indigenous foodways on Turtle Island and elsewhere.[552]

The recovery of the long history of Indigenous women's agricultural labor and a decolonial feminist analysis of the meaning and desire such labor embodies provides rich resources for contemporary efforts at decolonization and Indigenous resurgence. Continuing to cultivate land became a crucial means for Indigenous women to cultivate their selfhood according to Indigenous cultural, social, and philosophical traditions, thereby unsettling settler-colonial attempts to domesticate them. Embodied agricultural labor in turn enabled Indigenous women to sustain attachments to land and community, thereby resisting settler-colonial dispossession of Indigenous land and protecting Indigenous sovereignty in land—the livelihood of Indigenous communities in the most material sense. I suggest that such desire, formed under duress, kindled resistance and anti-colonial world-making. As such, cultivating land can be understood as a thoroughly *decolonial praxis* that both gives rise to and is sustained by decolonial desire. In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Northeastern Turtle Island, decolonial praxis encompasses both refusal and resistance At the heart

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Canadian state used the same policy on the recently created reserves starting in the 1870s. Hawkins, just like the Quakers, saw implanting of the new gendered division of labor as a way to liberate—and further civilize—Indigenous women, which they regarded as slaves to their husbands. On Hawkins, see Dowd, *Spirited*, 150-154; Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[552] Michelle Daigle, "Tracing the Terrain of Indigenous Food Sovereignties," *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 46:2 (2017), 297-315.

of both lies decolonial *desire*: while refusal refers to the ways in which Indigenous women upheld their own understandings of and traditions relating to land against settler-colonial interventions and persisted in their own beings as Indigenous, resistance testifies to the *external* political efficacy of their labor as political acts, even though they may or may not assign such meaning to their labor in that explicit way. This historical decolonial praxis also has profound implications for contemporary Indigenous resurgence and decolonization. (Re)kindling, remembering, and renewing embodied relations and attachments to land has been central to much contemporary Indigenous scholarship and activism. Indigenous women have been (re)asserting their roles as caretakers of land, air, water, and the non-human world in numerous Indigenous movements on Turtle Island such as Idle No More, #NODAPL, and the ongoing Wet'suwet'en protest against the Coastal Gaslink pipeline in Wet'suwet'en land (interior British Columbia). In defending their hunting and fishing rights and traditional territory against state-sanctioned settler assault and intrusion, Indigenous peoples are cultivating and reaffirming their sovereign desire, and continuing a long tradition as caretakers of land.

Attending to Indigenous women's cultivation of land, I have sought to show through this chapter, enriches our understanding of women's labor and desire in feminist political theory. It also sheds light on the importance of food sovereignty for Indigenous peoples, which has become an urgent practical demand and an important topic of academic discussion in recent years.[553]

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[553] See, for example, *Keeping it Living: Traditions of Plant Use and Cultivation on the Northwest Coast of North America*, ed. Douglas Deur and Nancy J. Turner (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005); Sam Grey and Raj Patel, "Food Sovereignty as Decolonization: Some Contributions from Indigenous Movements to Food System and Development Politics*," Agriculture and Human Values*, 32, no.3 (2014), 431-444; Morgan L Ruelle, "Ecological Relations and Indigenous Food Sovereignty in Standing Rock," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, 41, no.3 (2017), 113-125; Michelle Daigle, "Tracing the Terrain of Indigenous Food Sovereignties," *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 46:2 (2017); Lauren Kepkiewicz and Bryan Dale, "Keeping 'Our' Land: Property, Agriculture and Tensions Between Indigenous and Settler Visions of Food Sovereignty in Canada," *The Journal of Peasant Studies,* 46, no.5 (2019): 983-1002; Tabitha Robin, "Our Hands at Work: Indigenous Food Sovereignty in Western Canada," *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 9: Issue B (2019), 85-99; Michelene E. Pesantubbee and Michel J. Zogry*,* ed., *Native Foodways: Indigenous North American Religious Traditions and Foods* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2021); Devon A. Mihesuah and Elizabeth Hoover, *Indigenous Food Sovereignty in the United States: Restoring Cultural Knowledge, Protecting Environments, and Regaining Health* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019).

Remembering the long history of Indigenous women's desire manifested in their embodied relations to land and desire, and recovering the spiritual, philosophical, and political significance inherent in such relations, help us better understand these actions, and the profound messages they convey. We see that decolonial desire has been, and will continue to, sustain Indigenous sovereignty, survivance, and resurgence.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

This dissertation is written from the settler-colonial present, making sense of which requires a deep understanding of the historical beginnings, developments, ruptures, and continuities of this distinct modality of power. This is the fundamental contention that guides my approach to the entire project. In the course of conceiving and writing this dissertation over the past several years, many exciting happenings around the world seem to suggest that we have entered into a new era of Indigenous-settler relations. Indigenous political issues, from land claims to cultural revitalizations to issues of environmental justice, have entered 'mainstream' political and academic discussion, although often in ways circumscribed by a settler-national framework. For instance, reconciliation continues to be the Canadian state's official political stance to Indigenous peoples; land acknowledgment has become a norm in many parts of the world; settler-
colonization has increasingly been framed as an ongoing condition rather than "a thing of the past," especially among radical political organizations and movements. This is of course not to exaggerate the 'progress' that has been made but to signal that there does seem to be a sort of transformation taking place, no matter how superficial, how inadequate, how symbolic it is. Scholars working in Indigenous studies and settler-colonial studies are doing all sorts of exciting work that offers tremendous intellectual and activist energy that aids contemporary Indigenous political struggles. Likewise, many have reexamined and reevaluated historical events and processes, as well as

principles that shaped the geopolitics of North America in the centuries to come from an explicitly Indigenous perspective, such as King Philip's War, Indigenous treaty-making with the US and Canada, the 1830s' removal, and Allotment.[554] Historians writing "new Indian history," of course, were already been doing this decades earlier. But now it seems that scholars take on a more unapologetically native-centric perspective. They enable us to reimagine the past and the relation between the past and the future. It is not hard to make the case that (re)examining the past—history—in this regard has direct implications for the present, and is done from this specific present. This is by no means to suggest that historical inquiries are only "useful" when they have direct bearings on the present—in fact, the normalization of instrumental reason is something that truly worries me, the primary reason *not* being that it has led some to dismiss this work. While this is a historically-grounded study, my approach is also deeply informed by scholarship that documents, describes, accounts for, and theorizes contemporary Indigenous resurgence and revitalization. The past is deeply connected to the present, making it all the more crucial to acknowledge the political and intellectual horizon from which one works.

Throughout this dissertation, I have examined how desire was narrated, cultivated, and lived. My investigation moves in between narratives and textual representations on the one hand, and concrete practices on the other, attempting to capture the dynamic between thought and practice, between politics and political thinking. Desire, as the process by which one becomes a subject vis-a-vis power, takes shape through the formation of concrete, embodied, attachments to objects or ideals. In this regard, desire is by definition relational, involving processes of forming

[554] Michael Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations*; Christine M. Delucia, *Memory Lands: King Philip's War and the Place of Violence in the Northeast* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019); Lisa Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Philip's War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019); John Borrows, *Law's Indigenous Ethics: The Revitalization of Canadian Law* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019); Mark Rifkin, *Native Writing and the Question of Political Form* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021); Jean O'Brien and Daniel Heath Justice, *Allotment Stories: Indigenous Land Under Settler Seige* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2022).

attachments to *others,* be it people, ideas, space, or the non-human world. My goal is not to develop "a theory of desire" of any sort, but to examine how desire is cultivated through the formation of different attachments and the political salience of such attachments. I do so by focusing on a specific field of politics, namely early modern French settler-colonialism. While there are traces of diverse theoretical reflections on desire in my account, including phenomenological, psychoanalytical, Deleuzian, Foucauldian, Hegelian, and Butlerian accounts, some of which I engage with (the phenomenological premise that desire is how we come to experience the world and establish reality for ourselves) and some of which I work against (in particular the influential Lacanian account of desire as lack), I do not impose any given account on the materials I examine but seek to immanently attend to the meaning of desire and how it manifests in specific time and place.

To this end, I bring together a diverse set of texts of different genres that nonetheless cohere in revealing the centrality of desire and its cultivation in early modern political thought: French neoclassical drama, missionary reports, women missionaries' letters, and travel writings. I approach the texts I examine as words that *do* things. Many scholars writing from many different vantage points have made this point. They have argued that authors use words—political arguments—to intervene in debates, construct (rather than merely represent) reality, advance and normalize one's own ideological formulations, engage and engender publics, and shape affect and subjectivities.[555] The last two aspects are especially salient in relation to desire and the focus of my investigation. Authors of the diverse sets of texts I examine here are all doing so in one way or another. Racine both engages and helps engender the theater-going public and through the public display of (violent) passions and intrigue paradoxically forecloses the political efficacy of passion and reinforces

[555] J.A. Austin, *How to do Things With Words*, ed. J.O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975); Jacques Derrida, "Signature, Event, Context," in *Margins of Philosophy,* trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*; Quentin Skinner, *Foundations*; James Tully, *An Approach To Political Philosophy: Locke in Contexts* (Cambridge University Press, 1993).

obedience to absolutist rule. The Jesuits engage the Church, the King, as well as the limited reading public of France, through the transatlantic circulation of their texts, which while carrying an obvious ideological function also tell us plenty about their investment in managing affect and cultivating piety and obedience. Marie Guyart's writings, while mostly circulating privately between her and her son and among her and her religious sisters, nonetheless are made possible by the existing religious community in France and her kinship ties, and reflect the new religious–as well as political–community she has built in *Nouvelle-France*. Her texts demonstrate the same motifs and investments as the Jesuits', but with a distinctly feminine voice and betray the gendered nature of subjectification. These texts thus also reflect the discursive, ideological, and political possibilities and constraints of the time of their production.

As texts that do things, these writings not only articulate imperial and colonial ideologies, but also give us access to various Indigenous practices that embody and reflect alternative forms of attachments and subjectivities, once we subject them to decolonial and feminist readings. These texts are thus crucial resources for reconstructing and recovering the *meaning* of these practices beyond and against the colonial agents' effort in containing or suppressing it. In so doing, I have shown how Indigenous women engaged with these practices to disrupt, displace, and resist the settler-colonial cultivation of desire by forming alternative attachments and different modes of desiring and desire.

As such, each substantive chapter focuses on a distinct moment in the articulation and cultivation of desire in early modern French imperial and settler-colonial politics. Each chapter has a different thematic focus:

Chapter 2 engages with Jean Racine's *Iphigénie* to tease out what I call the "imperial fantasy of consent" manifested through the enslaved foreign woman's attachment to her colonizer. Her sacrifice-suicide erases imperial conquest and naturalizes imperial rule, whereas the "good,"

domestic woman gets to live. This is an imperial ideology articulated through women's bodies that both reflects and contributes to contemporaneous French imperial and colonial activities.

The rest of the chapters focus on Indigenous-settler interactions in seventeenth-century northeastern Turtle Island. Chapter 3 examines settler-colonial cultivation of desire by specifically looking at settler-colonial educational practices. I look at how missionaries attempted to reconstitute Indigenous peoples' nature by regulating their bodies and affects, so that they would consent to settler-colonial rule. I call this logic recursive: the effect of colonization would then be posited as the justifying cause of it, as Indigenous peoples would have consented to be ruled in the first place. This chapter reveals the centrality of settler-colonial cultivation of desire to the settler-colonial enterprise.

Chapter 4 looks at Indigenous women's ascetic practices. Reconstructing these practices within—and against—colonial archival sources, I argue that they show us a creative form of gendered self-making that enabled Indigenous women to pursue a fruitful way of being-in-the-world and being-with-others. While the missionaries hailed Indigenous women engaged in these practices as exceptionally pious Catholics and subjects of empire, scholars have often dismissed these practices as pathological, demonstrating the desire to suffer and self-victimization. Yet when situated within Indigenous traditions and the political historical context of early settler-colonial rule, we see quite a different picture. I show that these acts rather point to rupture and displacement, and can challenge settler-colonial cultivation of desire and disciplining of bodies, revealing how colonial power was both embodied and contested, or rather contested through embodiment. Indigenous women's bodies, or rather bodily surface or flesh, became the last frontier–quite literally–and the most contested site of colonization and self-crafting. Through these gendered bodily practices, Indigenous women who converted to Catholicism re-directed their attachments from the objects and goals that the colonists wanted them to be attached to, and instead sustained embodied attachments and relations to land, their kin, and communities.

Chapter 5 examines Indigenous women's agricultural labor, i.e. labor in land. I read Indigenous women's agricultural labor as an enactment of anti-colonial refusal and resistance that was made possible by, and further nourished, attachments to land, water, the human and the non-human world. These attachments are the substance of decolonial desire that carried Indigenous peoples through war, epidemic, violence, dispersal and displacement, conversion, and dispossession.

Overall, I have shown that the cultivation of desire was as central to imperial ideology and settler-colonial founding and consolidation as to Indigenous peoples' self-making and resistance. By articulating and cultivating drastically different attachments, European thinkers, colonists and Indigenous peoples display radically different subjectivities, i.e. different ways of becoming subjects through desiring. They show us how subjectivity and desire can be cultivated through different relations to power. In this process, women's bodies and embodiment are at the focal point of both settler-colonial domination and Indigenous resistance. Not only is what I have called the "imperial fantasy of consent" articulated in and through women's bodies, but desire was also cultivated by the colonists and Indigenous women through the management of bodily comportment, disposition, habit, and affect. While the colonists attempted to sever Indigenous women's embodied relations to land, community, and kin and re-dispose their bodies towards obedience and consent to settler-colonial futurity (which is cultural genocide for Indigenous peoples), Indigenous women sustained and strengthened the very attachments the colonists tried to destroy. This process is fundamentally gendered because on the one hand, in early modern European political imagination, obedience and consent were intrinsically connected to women's nature and female embodiment. As such, Indigenous women's embodied being-in-the-world and especially embodied practices were subjected to heightened colonial assault, as the colonists were acutely aware that gendered relations, gendered ways of being-in-the-world, and gendered division of labor were critical to Indigenous socialites and political organizations and were that which lent vitality to the latter. As such, gender cannot be an

"afterthought or appendix" (as feminist historian Najambadi puts it) in (settler)-colonial studies. It must be placed at the center. Settler-colonial vision and practices have been, and still are, fundamentally gendered.

At the same time, it was also precisely by upholding these very practices and attachments that the colonists tried to eradicate that Indigenous women were able to sustain and cultivate different embodiment attachments and relations. Indigenous women's bodies and embodied experiences were both directly targeted by colonial power and formed a crucial site of contestation. By emphasizing this point, I hope to both complicate and enrich our understanding of the relation between power and resistance. I maintain that resistance is not reactionary to power but a means of actively creating and sustaining possibilities of forms of being-in-the-world. In this regard, resistance and self-making can be said to be two sides of the same coin. As such, power and resistance can only be separated analytically, not ontologically or empirically. In fact, from what I have examined in this dissertation specifically, we can see that resistance and power are intrinsically intertwined; they respond to each other and feed into each other. If Indigenous peoples were forced to reckon with settler-colonial intrusion in all aspects of their lives, the colonists were just as much forced to constantly respond and adjust to Indigenous ways of holding and exercising power.

The decolonial account of desire I work toward sees it as relational, cultivated through embodied relations and practices, through the formation of attachments. While the practices I examined are historical, belonging to a particular time and space, this account also has much broader implications for contemporary politics and political theory. We have witnessed tremendous violence emanating from the denial of attachments and the fantasy of being unattached, self-sustaining individuals. Although feminist theorists and philosophers have committed, over the past several decades, to point out the limits of this political language, it is still so powerful and all-encompassing that today even those who fight for emancipation often resort to it. Slogans such as "My body, my

choice," while aiming to affirm women's agency and autonomy (which as a legal term is premised on the individual), elide and deny that reproductive freedom is fundamentally made possible and sustained by social relations and a whole social web of support, ranging from personal relations such as family, friends, and kinship network, to health care and other forms of public support. This language severely limits our political imaginary by positing freedom as freedom from social relations. There is no doubt that social relations can be restraining and even violent–state-sanctioned assault on reproductive freedom being an obvious case. But I contend that the political solution and the language we deploy to fight against such assault cannot be sought through recourse to an utter denial of relations and attachments. In fact, contemporary political struggles, from anti-colonial and decolonial movements to struggles for racial justice and repatriation to queer rights, all espouse the fundamental fact that emancipation necessitates robust communal relations and social web of mobilization, and support, precisely when such communal ties and socialites–ways of holding and exercising power–are constantly under attack. Nonetheless, we ought to build relations and cultivate attachments to particular kinds of place/space, ideals, objects, and futurity that affirm, nourish, and sustain our embodied possibilities of being-in-the-world.

I would press feminist political theorists to reckon with the fact that settler colonization has been premised on the destruction of Indigenous relations and forms of attachments. As such, any theorization of relationality and relations needs to take such relations and attachments into account. Meanwhile, feminist political theorists have much to learn from Indigenous women's embodied practices and the attachments they cultivated through them. Buried within colonial narratives of containment and discipline, these practices show us that even under unprecedented and almost unimaginable violence and destruction, embodied attachments can enable communities not only to survive but also to thrive. It is through such attachments that they demonstrate an alternative account of desire, of becoming subjects through desiring, which has carried them through hundreds

of years of violence and assault but enables them to still persist in their own beings. It is thus my hope that this dissertation can, in addition to presenting a vivid picture of the politics of desire in early modern French Empire and settler colonialism, also contribute to developing a political language and imaginary that recognize and affirm, rather than disavow, the importance of embodied attachments and relations. This vision, of course, has general implications for decolonial political thought, studies of empire and colonialism, and political theory in general.

To return to the question that I introduced in the introduction: why do people desire their own servitude? I have argued throughout this dissertation that before we can even pronounce such a judgment, let alone pose the question in the way it has consistently been posed, we ought to look at how desire is cultivated in concrete relations of power. I have emphasized that desire and embodiment, while being intense sites of colonial intervention, have always functioned as sites of de-colonial meaning-making and world-making. It is perhaps because colonial and imperial agents are keenly aware of the latter that they have been so preoccupied with the former. Yet as the practices I have examined have shown, such intervention can never contain nor even comprehend the vitality and creativity of desire.

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