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Another America, Another Literature: Narratives From Louisiana's Colonial Experience.

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ANOTHER AMERICA, ANOTHER LITERATURE:
NARRATIVES FROM LOUISIANA'S COLONIAL EXPERIENCE
VOLUME I

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in
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Abstract

This dissertation attempts to establish a literary canon for the first French period of Louisiana's colonial history (1681-1763). The study examines works by writers who heretofore have not been analyzed as colonists of long residence in the New World but as Continentals who happened to spend some time in the Americas and then wrote about their experiences. The present analysis argues that many of these authors, by virtue of the significant time they spent in Louisiana, their devotion to and interest in the promotion of the colony, and their common concerns, should be examined principally not as European literati but as American (i.e., New-World) writers. Viewed as such, the first colonial scribes push Louisiana literature's birth to a date much earlier than that traditionally upheld by scholars. Instead of Julien Poydras' poems in the late 1770s, Henri de Tonti's and Nicolas de La Salle's narratives of the 1680s can be viewed as inaugurating Louisiana literature. One of the themes treated throughout eighteenth-century Louisiana writings -- the relationship between French and Indian -- commences in Tonti's and Nicolas' discourses. Another common theme, that of the relationship between those who rule and those who are ruled, develops soon after. These themes of Franco-Indian and governor-governed relationships give rise to the first great fiction of Louisiana literature: the legend of Louis Juchereau de Saint Denis, an historical figure whose activities inside and outside Louisiana embody popular notions of how French and Indian and how rulers and ruled should interact and whose deeds some authors hyperbolize into tall tales expounding idealized myths. As black slavery becomes an integral part of colonial life, issues concerning black-white relations and disenfranchisement enter into the writings.
Authors examined in the dissertation include Henri de Tonti, Nicolas de La Salle, Marie-Madeleine Hachard, Mathurin Le Petit, Pierre Vitry, Bernard Diron Dartaguiette, André Pénicaut, Le Page du Pratz, Dumont de Montigny, Jadart de Beauchamp, and Jean-Bernard Bossu.
Introduction

For the most part, the writings in French from the first phase of Louisiana’s colonial history (the French domination of 1682-1762) have not been studied as Louisiana or New-World literature (that is, as writings by long-term, “naturalized” residents of Louisiana or the New World). Rather, when these writings — the bulk of which histories, travel narratives, and quasi-official journals or “relations” rather than poetry, drama, or other belletrisms — have been considered as literature at all, they have been viewed as French writings about Louisiana. Thus, they have not been distinguished as a body of literature separable from Continental works about the Americas, works by such authors as the Abbé Antoine-François Prévost and the Vicomte François-René de Chateaubriand, two of the most famous French writers to bring fiction set in Louisiana to an international audience.

As late as the 1950s, scholars such as Richebourg Gaillard McWilliams, who wrote on André Pénicault, were pioneering critics for considering Louisiana’s colonial authors to be American (i.e., New-World) writers and for viewing the colonial compositions as literature in the sense of belles-lettres.¹

For his part, Auguste Viatte points out in Histoire Littéraire de l’Amérique Française (1954) that the poetry and prose written in the French colonies of the New World are both American literature and French literature but inseparable from the French literature of Europe.

C’est une littérature française autant qu’américaine. Écrite en Amérique ou au retour d’Amérique par des Français, elle s’adresse presque toujours à leurs compatriotes du Vieux Monde, pour les intéresser aux choses du Nouveau.

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Distinguer à cette époque, comme on l’a tenté, entre écrivains français d’Amérique et de France, ce serait commettre un anachronisme qui n’aboutirait qu’à brouiller les idées. En réalité, des échanges continuels se faisaient entre les deux continents (2-3).

While it is true that French colonists of Canada, Louisiana, and the Caribbean were French men and women in the same way that Anglo-American colonists were British subjects before their respective colonies became the United States of America or various members of the Commonwealth of Nations, it is not an anachronistic action, as Viatte claims, to distinguish long-term colonists who committed themselves to and were changed by their second home from compatriots who merely performed stints in one or more colonies and then returned to Europe. By the same token, it is not an insupportable imposition of twentieth-century perception onto earlier discourse to distinguish New-World literature in French from Continental literature in the same language.

Clearly, the Frenchmen who merely passed through what is now — or, better yet, what was formerly Louisiana — or who worked in the region for only a short time (e.g., simply in a military capacity or in other service to the Crown, without the intention of making the colony a second home) and who then wrote about their brief Louisiana experiences should not be considered Louisiana writers but, rather, writers about Louisiana. On the other hand, those who were fervently engaged in the development of the colony, who had decided to make the territory their second homeland, who resided in the region for a considerable and significant part of their lives, and who wrote about their experiences in hopes of promoting Louisiana should be thought of primarily as Louisianians, as members of one of various socio-regional groupings of French subjects “Americanized” by their particular New-World home.
These Louisiana colonists' writings -- whether they are of the same or different genres, composed by persons who knew each other or not, or created at the beginning of French occupation or at the end -- are remarkable for the common themes and concerns that connect them over spatial and temporal distances. The similarities must surely derive, in large part, from experiences held in common by the authors in their New-World home. These similarities color the writings to such an extent that together the compositions must be viewed as forming an individual body of literature. It is a literature written in French, but not French literature. It is a literature of one of the colonial Americas, yet a literature not heretofore examined as such.

Prior to this study, the critical consensus has been that Louisiana-French literature had remote beginnings in the Spanish colonial period, which followed the first French domination, but that this literature did not flourish until United States acquisition of Louisiana. Everything composed during the founding years of French rule was dismissed as writings by Continentals (or Canadians) who had spent some time in the Louisiana colony. The actuality, however, is that many of these Continentals and Canadians had become naturalized to a geographic and political entity that was developing its own identity, evolving in its own fashion among the many Americas. Their writings, equally unique, constitute another literature from another America whose contributions to the United States, the New World, and other global cultures have yet to be fully recognized. It is a literature in need of definition and delineation through creation of a canon, and to such a need this study responds.

Unfortunately, the criteria for the formation of the literary canon suggested above have not generally been considered by those who have examined the Francophone writings of colonial Louisiana. Thus, a
much later consensual date has been assigned to the naissance of an identifiable Louisiana literature. Generally, Louisiana literature is touted as beginning with the poetry of Julien Poydras in the 1770s, the decade after the colony had passed from French to Spanish rule.

In his 1991 study, Viel. *Louisiana’s Firstborn Author*, Charles Edwards O’Neill groups the writings of Pénicaud, Dumont de Montigny, Le Page du Pratz, and other Louisiana residents anteceding Poydras with the works of various travelers (such as Pierre-François-Xavier de Charlevoix), who spent only a short time in the colony before writing about the place. O’Neill indiscriminately comments, “This body of literature was the composition of outsiders-looking-in” (3). That O’Neill fails to distinguish adequately the writings of Frenchmen who lived for a considerable time in Louisiana from the accounts of Europeans who simply ventured through the region results from his being heir to a body of thought that places the birth of Louisiana literature at a much later date than that of the origins proposed by this study.

In their 1981 *Anthologie*, Mathé Allain and Barry Ancelet break with convention to a certain extent in their consideration of the beginnings of Louisiana literature. They claim that

On peut dire que la littérature française de Louisiane est née en même temps que la colonie. En effet, dès les premières explorations françaises, les découvreurs écrivirent des rapports, des lettres, et des journaux de voyage dans une langue dépourvue d’artifices rhétoriques, mais non pas de charme et de vigueur (1).

By ascribing the possible beginnings of Louisiana literature to the colony’s very date of birth, Allain and Ancelet make a bold proposal. After all, at the time that the first explorers and colonizers were writing, they had not yet established a permanent settlement in Lower Louisiana to call home. Henri de Tonti and Nicolas de La Salle were
then still operating from bases in the Illinois region of Upper Louisiana (the place where the Louisiana colony actually began), from Canada, or from France. Hence, in the section of their anthology entitled “Les Débuts: 1682-1814,” Allain and Ancelet quickly move from excerpting accounts of the activities of René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle and Pierre Le Moyne, Sieur d’Iberville at the turn of the 1600s and 1700s to highlighting Le Page du Pratz’s *Histoire de la Louisiane* (1758) as a showpiece specimen for their next section, “Les Premiers Colons et Leur Littérature.”

Still, it is not until the appearance of Poydras’ poems in the Spanish colonial period (1763-1802) that Allain and Ancelet detect “les premières oeuvres écrites dans un but littéraire” (4), a view that the two anthologists share with most of the critics before them. Further in accord with their scholarly predecessors, Allain and Ancelet hold up Le Blanc de Villeneuve’s play *La Fête du Petit-Blé, ou l’Héroïsme de Poucha-Houmma* (1814), produced after Louisiana’s acquisition by the United States in 1803, as Louisiana’s first play. As will be seen in the course of this study, both Poydras’ and Le Blanc’s claims to primacy no longer hold. Rather, the two poets actually emerge at the end of a century of colonial compositions in both prose and verse.

The views of critics preceding McWilliams, Allain, Ancelet and O’Neill formed a lasting consensus that those colonists writing before Poydras were more Frenchmen writing about Louisiana for compatriots back in Europe than Louisianians creating a literature about themselves, based on their unique New-World experiences, to be shared with Continentals as well as with fellow colonists. By the time they began to write their accounts, many of these New-World Frenchmen had actually lived in Louisiana longer than Poydras had before he composed his
poems. Still, the fact that these colonists did not publish their works in Louisiana or did not end their lives in the colony seems to have deprived them of the type of recognition lavished upon Poydras by virtue of his being the first littérature published in Louisiana.

Beginning with Louisiana Studies (1894) by the venerable Alcée Fortier, who asserted, based on the limited material available to him, that during the French domination there was "no literary enthusiasm" and "no works written in Louisiana except the reports of officers," critics have tended to refer to Poydras as "the author of the earliest work in our literature" (6-7). To his credit, however, Fortier does acknowledge that another document is also of great importance; it is the celebrated "Mémoire des Négociants et Habitants de la Louisiane sur l'Événement du 29 Octobre, 1768," written by Lafrénière and Caresse, two of the chiefs of the revolution of 1768, which was so heroic and ended so unhappily (7).

Although preceding Poydras' work, Nicolas Chauvin de La Frénière's protest over Louisiana's new ownership was composed after the colony had been transferred from France to Spain and, hence, after the works of the authors examined in this study. Obviously, Fortier upheld as a requisite for "our literature" that works be both composed in their entirety in Louisiana and then published in the colony, a two-fold stipulation that many subsequent savants seem to have maintained but that few eighteenth-century Louisiana writers met. For while most of the accounts actually were composed primarily in the colony, the texts were invariably taken back to France for publication or manuscript circulation, conditions in Louisiana at the time not permitting printing and distribution of large amounts of reading material.²

The strength of Fortier's critical legacy is evident in the views of scholars after him. In her 1929 annotated bibliography
appended to *The French Literature of Louisiana*, Ruby Van Allen
Caulfield lists writers such as Tonti, Marie-Madeleine Bachard, Pénicaud, Dumont, Le Page, and Jean-Bernard Bossu alongside the likes of Father Charlevoix and the infamous Father Louis Hennepin under the heading "Journals and Accounts of Voyages by Explorers and Travelers in Early Louisiana." And while she does include Louisiana patriot La Frénière and the French-born Poydras, Guy Soniat du Fossat, and Le Blanc de Villeneufve (the latter two of whom wrote as Louisiana was being tossed between Spain, France and the United States at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) in the section entitled "Louisiana Writers," Caulfield only reluctantly places Louisiana-born dramatist, academician, and classical scholar Étienne Viel there, maintaining that the latter is really out of place (due to his moving to France at an early age for schooling and his beginning a career there).

Auguste Viatte in *Histoire Littéraire de l'Amérique Française* (1954) also sees Louisiana literature as beginning in the Spanish period and cites Soniat du Fossat's *Histoire de la Louisiane* and Poydras' "La Prise du Morne du Bâton-Rouge" as examples of "deux ou trois textes" that "présagent un commencement d'activité littéraire" (223). Later, in his *Anthologie Littéraire* (1971), Viatte, dividing Louisiana Francophone literature into three periods (1800-1840, 1840-1865, and 1865-1930), ascribes the commencement of Louisiana literature to an even later date: "Sa littérature s'ouvre par une tragédie, le Poucha-Houmma de Le Blanc de Villeneufve" (251).

Edward Larocque Tinker, still the most handy guide to nineteenth-century Louisiana Francophone literature, fails in his 1932 bibliographic study, *Les Écrits de Langue Française en Louisiane au XIXe Siècle*, to view the writings of the eighteenth-century colonists
as literature and overlooks the fact that many works were begun and even completed in Louisiana, not in France.

Tout d'abord il n'y eut pas de littérature. Les pionniers n'ont jamais produit d'œuvres littéraires avant de cesser d'être pionniers; et ces hardis colons étaient trop occupés à combattre les Indiens, à dompter une nouvelle contrée, à lutter en vue de l'existence pour trouver le temps d'écrire, -- même s'ils avaient eu l'instruction suffisante (1-2).

A closer look at the writings of the "pioneers" predating Poydras, none of whom Tinker mentions as forerunners of the nineteenth-century writers included in his study, might have shown to Tinker that the early colonists were not as busy fighting the Indians as might first be believed and that many were well enough versed in classical works and literary conventions of the day to vie with the average Continental writer of the time in quality of production. And while Tinker allows any French journalist who might have passed through New Orleans in ante- and post-bellum years entrance into his bibliography of Louisiana-French writings of the 1800s, his disregard of writers who spent years carving out the civilization to which later French exiles would be able to flee from revolutions and political oppression in Europe is highly negligent.

In sum, Tinker concludes,

On peut dire en vérité que ce fut seulement après que la Louisiane eut été séparée de la France par trente-quatre ans de domination espagnole effective, et à partir du moment où elle fut placée sous la domination américaine, qu'une littérature créole commence à fleurir (3).

Tinker is absolutely correct in asserting that a Creole literature -- that is, a body of writings by natives of Louisiana -- did not result until acquisition by the United States, for the great majority of writers of French and Spanish colonial Louisiana (Viel being a major exception) were émigrés from France. In addition, these European-born
residents of Louisiana who anteceded Poydras published their writings on the Continent, with primarily (but not exclusively) a European audience in mind. The desired readership notwithstanding, it must not be overlooked that the tall tales, assorted anecdotes, historical events, and factual information that the colonial authors recorded were part of a body of oral lore and learning that naturalized Louisianians held in common even when they did not know each other personally. Writings by Creoles, published in Louisiana mainly for Creoles, did not become commonplace until Louisiana was a United States possession. Nevertheless, the Creole literary flowering of the early 1800s did not mark the first era in which a group of writers identifiable as Louisianians shared their strikingly similar views on the same subjects, subjects that pertained to their lives in Louisiana, that were of concern to French readers in both Old and New Worlds, and that even appealed to non-Francophone audiences to such an extent that translations of some of these texts into English occurred in the authors' lifetimes.

While most of these writings that span a century of colonial activity cannot be easily grouped into the same literary school (written for the most part independently, separated by many years as well as by their authors' ignorance of each other and employment of varying forms of composition), some were created by colonists who knew each other, who borrowed information from each other, and who then offered different versions of occurrences that had already become local oral legend before having been put to paper. For example, Pénicaut, Dumont, and Le Page (with Bossu following closely) offer their own exclusive reports on the one hand while on the other they record some of the same historical events, the same Indian anecdotes, and the same strange experiences of colonists. Furthermore, the aforementioned
authors and others expand upon the life of the first great hero of Louisiana literature, Louis Juchereau de Saint Denis, creating in their treatment of this explorer, commandant, trader, and negotiator Louisiana's first historical fiction.

Saint Denis, a historical figure idolized in colonial literature for fair and beneficial dealings with French, Spanish, and Indian populations of the Louisiana frontier, concretized a two-fold myth held by the colony's first writers: that French, Indian and other non-French, nonwhite groups could live harmoniously under French rule or even as politically different neighbors and that those who ruled could govern in such a way that all might prosper or at least be content with the degree of independence and material possession possible and appropriate to their station in life.

Excepting Viel and Poydras, neither of whom writes about Native Americans, the French-language writers of French, Spanish, and United States colonial Louisiana show a consistent acceptance and sympathetic treatment of Indians. The Louisiana writers' tolerant and even favorable sentiments about aboriginal groups -- ranging from an understanding of some reds' aggression against whites to criticism of only those aspects of New-World cultures that offend Old-World notions of civility and moral rectitude, but characterized most often by either compassion and affection or objectivity and tolerance -- predate the movement in Anglo-American literature from Neoclassical Christian prejudice against aboriginal uncouthness and recalcitrance to Romantic pity and nostalgia for the disempowered and nearly extinct Native American.

Concern for the masses of all colors living under the dominance of the few -- for their right to prosper economically, live freely, and be spared abusive authority -- also permeates the writings of Franco-Louisianians throughout the eighteenth century. This concern
links poets such as Poydras and Viel, Neoclassical rhymers who have the least in common with colonials who write about Indians and occurrences in the colony, to their fellow Louisianians.

During the later golden age of Louisiana Francophone literature before and after the United States Civil War, the concerns and interests set forth by the colonial writers of the preceding century continue to express themselves and even extend to other areas of life.

Perhaps it was a common Gallo-Catholic background that contributed to the humanitarian spirit binding Louisiana writings together regardless of when or where they were composed. But perhaps it was also the "Americanization" or "Louisianization" -- that is, the change in thinking, believing, and behaving brought about by accommodation of Continental lifestyles and attitudes to existence in the New World -- that informed and therefore connects the naturalized authors and their writings to each other, to the later Creole writers, and to New-World literati in general. Such a shared Americanization is especially noticeable in the treatment of Indians and in the overall depiction of life in the Western Hemisphere. In fact, many of the writers state that they composed their works specifically to correct Continental misconceptions about America, above all unfavorable notions concerning indigenous peoples.

Perhaps the necessity of people from all ranks of life in fledgeling societies to depend upon each other and even upon members of other societies simply to survive may have also encouraged the Louisiana writers' more or less democratic spirit, a trait that even Viel, a Creole who chose to make the Continent his home, displays. These writers -- most of whom envision a future in which persons of all levels and races can work together for individual and collective well-being, albeit the work and well-being matching the person's
station in life -- could appreciate, perhaps more than their peers on the Continent could, a society built upon the horizontalizing interdependence of its constituents.

I have quoted at length many passages from the works examined in this study. The reason for such long quotations is twofold. First of all, while I am not concerned with defining literature and, hence, do not feel the need to distinguish fiction and other literary art forms from history, science, diary, or governmental/ecclesiastical record as a first step in deciding what should and should not be considered Louisiana literature, I realize that for many scholars and ordinary readers alike literature carries a very narrow connotation, however hard the connotation may be to define and defend; therefore, I have presented long excerpts that, because of their fictive, imaginative, and artistic qualities, prove that much of what was written prior to Poydras' verse is actually literature in the popular sense of the term. Secondly, I intend this study to be not only a thesis on the common characteristics linking the writings of the first Louisiana authors together but also a type of anthology. A comprehensive anthology is desperately needed for Louisiana Francophone literature at every stage of its development, especially considering the fact that many of the French texts from Louisiana's colonial periods as well as from its first phase of statehood, its secession from the United States and "reconstruction" by the same, and its post-Reconstruction statehood are not easily accessible and continue to be at risk of permanent loss.

Fortunately, the need to preserve and re-examine Louisiana's literary artifacts is being more fully realized, with republications and studies focusing on various epochs of a 300-year-old legacy being produced. Recently, the Mississippi Department of Archives and
History offered *Rencontres sur le Mississippi, 1682-1763*, a wonderful reader for students of French as a second language that includes many of the texts examined in this study. What is still needed, however, and what I hope to begin in this examination of writings from the first stage of Louisiana history (the first French period, 1680s-1760s), is a multisectioned, comprehensive analysis of Louisiana Francophone literature from start to present, a work that identifies Louisiana writers and writings and discusses both the characteristics that define the canon's uniqueness and the qualities that link Louisiana writings to other literatures.

Even though I intend to highlight some of the artistry in Louisiana Francophone literature, a detailed analysis of the aesthetic quality of the works is not a major purpose of this study. Rather, I wish to point out common characteristics in the writings of persons whom I am claiming to be Louisiana's first authors. I have found the shared characteristics to be most noteworthy in three areas: the development of the Saint-Denis legend; the treatment of Indians and later the treatment of blacks; and the interest in universal welfare, which entails discussions of the proper relationship between those who rule and those who are ruled, between the monarchy and its representatives and the masses.

The third area links practically all of the writers of the first and later colonial periods together in a common concern. The second area, dealing with race relations, figures in a great majority of the compositions as well, Viel's and Poydras' being major exceptions. The first area, the expansion of the Saint-Denis myth, involves fewer, but nonetheless a substantial number, of writers. It is also more temporally confined, whereas concerns about race and ruler-ruled relations span the entire first French era, becoming more pronounced, of
course, as colonial society becomes more defined. The discussion of the colony’s very first writers may emphasize more of a prefiguring of common characteristics that become more pronounced as the eighteenth century progresses. Finally, because of the role that priests and religious played in keeping the far-flung, sparsely settled colony together in its earliest years and in checking its morality as Louisiana developed, a special chapter devoted to the writings of certain people of the cloth appears near the beginning of this presentation of Louisiana’s first literature.

An observation of Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* applies wonderfully to Louisiana history as reflected in Louisiana colonial literature: “All cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic” (xxv). Said’s remarks, which can be used to describe the overlaying of races and cultures in pre-statehood Louisiana, can be applied to the country into which Louisiana was subsumed, thanks as much to United States acquisition of the former French and Spanish colony as to both United States expansion into other territories and to wave after wave of immigration to the United States from all parts of the world. Thus, as Said further notes,

> The fact that the United States contains so many histories, many of them now clamoring for attention, is by no means to be suddenly feared since many of them were always there, and out of them an American society and politics . . . were in fact created (xxvi).

Just as United States academia should not fear to give attention to contributions coming from without the original thirteen states and from without White-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant culture, so it should also not fear to acknowledge fully that regions beyond the Atlantic Seaboard and non-Anglo groups currently making up the country have histories and developments separable from those of the United States and,
hence, deserving of analyses that do not necessarily have to be linked to the study of United States evolution. Somewhere in between the examination of Louisiana’s contributions to the United States’ national fabric and the analysis of Louisiana’s separate development is this present study of the literature from Louisiana’s first colonial period to be placed.5

Although comprehensive, this study does not purport to be exhaustive. I have sought to represent thoroughly the literature of Louisiana’s first French period, excepting writings that are strictly governmental, military, and ecclesiastical in nature. However, even certain of these documents have entered into the analysis, as for example, when diaries of military campaigns and journals of missionary activities that were seemingly written for general consumption begin to approximate what many consider to be “literature” and reflect themes and interests common to lay, civilian writers. I admit that in highlighting those whom I believe to have been the most prominent colonial writers I may have overlooked or been completely ignorant of persons who deserve attention. Hence, I offer this study as an organic beginning upon which further study of early Louisiana literature may be cultivated.6

When English translations exist for the various texts examined in this study, the best will be used in citations. Otherwise, quotations will appear in the original French, without accompanying translation by the author, as this analysis is intended specifically for a bilingual audience.
The Beginnings of Another Literature:
The Writings of Henri de Tonti and Nicolas de La Salle

The next day M. de Tonty returned, saying that the middle channel emptied into a great sea of fresh water. We hewed a tree, making a stake, which was planted, and to it we fastened the King's arms, made of the copper of a kettle. We planted a cross also, and buried beneath it a leaden tablet inscribed with these words: "In the name of Louis XIV., King of France and of Navarre, the 9th of April, 1682." At the planting of the cross, the Vexilla Regis was sung, then the Te Deum, and there were three discharges of musketry. Provisions were lacking, and we had only a handful of maize each day (Nicolas de La Salle, Relation of the Discovery of the Mississippi River, 45-47).

In determining whom to include in the literary canon of colonial Louisiana and whom to exclude, I have used several criteria to distinguish Continental authors who spent some time in Louisiana and then wrote about the colony from émigrés who became men and women of the New World. The latter have been distinguished by their desire to make the colony a second home (and, hence, by their living there for a significant number of years); by their writing about Louisiana in order to promote this second home; and by the various similarities connecting their writings, above all the concern for the well-being of all persons in the new, complex colonial society.

In addition, I have found it necessary to distinguish those colonist-writers who lived and worked almost exclusively in Upper Louisiana from those who covered the entire, vast Louisiana territory before or during the time that they concentrated their attentions on Lower Louisiana. For even though Louisiana was conceived when
La Salle and his men moved beyond the Great Lakes and down the Ohio River Valley from Canada (that is, well before they reached the Mississippi and the Gulf of Mexico) and even though the colony first took form not on the Gulf Coast but between the Ohio and the Great Lakes (when French forts and settlements were established in that region), the vast southern expanse of New France, soon after its being distinguished from Canada, was itself divided into Upper and Lower Louisiana once colonization began on the Gulf Coast and in the Lower Mississippi River Valley. Since Louisiana in the minds of most people today means the land constituting the eighteenth member of the United States, only those authors who lived in and wrote about this area (or the larger surrounding area formerly known as Lower Louisiana, where La Salle’s, Tonti’s, and the Le Moynes’ first settlements on the Gulf Coast and in the Lower Mississippi Valley began in what are now the states of Texas, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Alabama) will be examined here. After all, many of the pioneering Frenchmen who worked in and wrote about only Upper Louisiana were more closely affiliated with Canada than with the distinctive civilization that developed in Lower Louisiana. Hence, their absence from the present study is hardly an omission.

Considering the above, I have debated whether or not to include the writings of Louisiana’s founder, René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, in this study. Although La Salle brought the colony into existence and gave it its name, although he remained determined, through much adversity, to see Louisiana populated with French men, women, and children, and although he died (at the hands of his own men) in Lower Louisiana, the actual time that La Salle spent in Lower Louisiana was minimal, and it is hard to determine if the restless Cavelier would have ever remained permanently in the colony. Furthermore, at the
time of La Salle's murder, the French grasp of Lower Louisiana (in the sense of both control and knowledge of the region) was not firm, and the Gulf-Coast settlement that La Salle established in 1684 would soon be wiped out by Indians.¹

The total time that La Salle spent traversing and residing in areas that could be considered to have been part of either Upper or Lower Louisiana at one time or other amounts to an unstationary residence of only several years, and that interspersed with trips back and forth to Canada and France. Hence, La Salle, like many commandants, governors, and other key figures from Louisiana history, cannot be examined as a Louisiana writer. Although he and other administrative writers (such as Governor Antoine Laumet de La Mothe, Sieur de Cadillac, who wrote prolifically) filled important positions in the colony, they did not commit themselves to Louisiana as a permanent new home, nor were they so changed by life in the territory that they could be said to have assumed a Louisiana identity.²

Furthermore, La Salle, like Cadillac and other officials, epitomized many aspects of bad leadership that Louisiana writers of the eighteenth century unilaterally condemn. In depictions of both benevolent and harmful administrations that were written in order to encourage good government in the colony and elsewhere, La Salle himself is sometimes held up as an example of the negligent, abusive, self-centered, ineffective, restless, and paranoid dictator who does harm to many people before suffering tragically for his own faults. For writers like Bossu, La Salle was the quintessential bad leader to be repelled from any shore. In addition to the criticism and condemnation of later writers, La Salle comes under fire from his own contemporaries who forsook the Louisiana venture (e.g., Henri Joutel and Jean Couture) as well as those who remained true to their second home.
(the Talon brothers). Tonti, La Salle’s devoted and defensive right-hand man, and Hachard, a pious nun starstruck by her famous fellow Norman, are salient exceptions to the norm, producing hagiographic portraits of the controversial conceiver of Louisiana. As a leader who did not reflect the ideals of governance espoused by most Louisiana writers and who is exposed for his shortcomings by some of these writers, La Salle is greatly distanced from the patriotic continuum of colonial Louisiana literati.  

As stated, a key exception in his treatment of La Salle is Henri de Tonti. Just as Tonti remained true through his many labors to La Salle’s Louisiana enterprise, devoted as much to the man as to the colony, so in his writings “Iron Hand” idolizes his leader at the same time that he hopes to further the colony (and himself, to be sure) through his accounts. It was Tonti, the man left behind to do all the work orchestrated by La Salle, who held fragile, embryonic Louisiana together during La Salle’s many absences and after Cavelier’s death. Bridging La Salle’s endeavors of the 1680s and the Le Moynes’ of the late 1690s and early 1700s, remaining in Louisiana from the time of its inception in the north until the time that its southern flank was under definite French control, traversing almost all of the vast territory, willing to serve the Le Moynes in Lower Louisiana as diligently as he had served La Salle in Upper Louisiana, dying, too soon, in Lower Louisiana as did his hero before him, Tonti, along with another La Salle not related to Louisiana’s founder, records Louisiana’s expansion from Great Lakes to Gulf Coast and likewise signals this other America’s literary beginnings.

Here it must be conceded that Tonti, like the majority of Louisiana’s colonial authors, was not primarily a writer. Many of these rustic scribes did not even write well and come to us filtered
through editors. Typical of the colonial Americas, few if any of the authors of pre-statehood Louisiana were writers exclusively, and Viel stands out not only for being a serious writer but also for being an academician. Still, these men and women took their literary endeavors seriously and, displaying greater or lesser talent and polish, created a corpus that is remarkable for the similarities binding texts that were often written without the author's knowledge of the other constituent manuscripts and publications of the Louisiana canon.

Like the Louisiana authors who follow him, Tonti shows in his memoirs and letters a concern for his fellows, be they red or white, and a desire for sound leadership so that the entire population of the colony may prosper. Tonti depicts himself as manifesting the correct type of leadership in his attitude toward his subordinates and toward those not under his jurisdiction but with whom he must contend. Tonti depicts himself as being so attentive to the advice, and sometimes simply the wishes, of his underlings that he puts his own will aside on occasion in order to do theirs. His depictions of Native Americans and Franco-Indian relations also foreshadow later Louisiana writings in that the author shows a willingness to cooperate with Indians in order to secure their good, the colony's good, and his own good. Also like the later writers, Tonti is just as willing to relate what he perceives to be the admirable qualities of Native-American life as he is to condemn the harsher realities, above all, what he views as red cruelty. Finally, Tonti begins an endeavor that continues in Louisiana literature (be it written in French or in English) to this day: clarifying misconceptions of the place that have been perpetrated by writers who do not know it well. In this last instance, Tonti also begins a criticism of literature that later Louisiana writers offer as well.
Nicolas de La Salle's resemblance to eighteenth-century Louisiana authors (with the major exceptions of Poydras and Viel, of course) rests primarily in his depiction of Native Americans and Franco-Indian relations. Like Pénicaud, Dumont, Le Page, and Bossu, La Salle (henceforth referred to as Nicolas so as not to confuse him with René-Robert Cavelier de La Salle, who will be mentioned as La Salle or as Cavelier) capitalizes on the exotic and the gruesome aspects of aboriginal societies to add suspense to his narrative and to whet the Continental appetite for the unknown and the macabre coming out of the New World. Like the aforementioned writers, Nicolas displays a generally tolerant disposition toward "savages," a stance that keeps him from condemning red persons for their distance from European norms. However, as with the later writers, Nicolas' relative openness does not prevent him from criticizing specific "barbarities" when he observes them, nor does it cause him to question what he and his coloni­alist contemporaries view as the right of France to acquire American lands and the obligation of Native Americans to convert to Catholicism.

Peers of each other, writing at approximately the same time, Henri de Tonti and Nicolas de La Salle, both of whom accompanied Cavelier de La Salle down the Mississippi to claim the river and its tributaries for France, manifested their commitment to the colony by serving it until dying there. While others in Cavelier de La Salle's party, including Cavelier de La Salle himself, wrote about the claiming of Louisiana for France,5 these others may still be viewed in the way most scholars have formerly studied the persons that I am now asserting to be Louisiana Americans: as Frenchmen who spent some time in the colony but who were more Continental or Canadian than they were Louisianian. Tonti's and Nicolas' life, death, and letters prove
their dedication to the colony, and their accounts of Cavelier de La Salle’s famous voyage inaugurate the corpus of Louisiana literature. Furthermore, as Baron Marc de Villiers du Terrage notes in his article on the history of Louisiana’s name and boundaries, Tonti’s quill was one of the few that saved the mentioning of Louisiana from oblivion following Cavelier’s disasters.

Dès lors [the annihilation of La Salle’s Gulf-Coast colony], pendant près de dix ans, on n’entendit plus guère parler de la Louisiane, sauf par Tonty qui, à plusieurs reprises, notamment en 1694, demanda “à accomplir la découverte de M. de la Salle”, et par MM. de Louvigny et de Mantet qui proposèrent la même année, de reprendre les projets de La Salle (40).

Since Nicolas claims to have kept the journal that would become his narrative while making the journey with Cavelier in 1682, his relation will be examined before Tonti’s accounts.

Nicolas de La Salle, who had joined with Cavelier de La Salle in 1678, was in his early twenties at the time of Cavelier’s 1682 descent of the Mississippi. Nicolas accompanied Cavelier back to France in 1683, only to return to the New World when the ill-fated Gulf-Coast colony was attempted in 1685. Being on a ship whose captain quarreled with Cavelier, Nicolas was forced to leave the Lower-Louisiana coast. He served for fourteen years on ships before being assigned as a clerk at Toulon. Along with his family, Nicolas returned to Louisiana permanently in 1701 and served as the colony’s first commissioner, the authority in charge of finances and supplies.

As commissaire, Nicolas was thrown into a power struggle with Commandant Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville, one of the most formidable figures in early Louisiana history, who with his brother Pierre Le Moyne, Sieur d’Iberville succeeded where Cavelier de La Salle had failed in establishing permanent settlements in Lower
Louisiana, a feat that led the Le Moynes to view Louisiana as something of a family possession. The feuding, which involved mutual accusations of corruption, split the colony into two destructive factions and resulted in France’s conducting an official investigation of the situation. Siding with Nicolas was Father Henri Roulleaux de la Vente, a Bienville foe. Nicolas’ opposition to Bienville and his affiliation with a priest over a military/governmental man link him to later writers such as Dumont, who openly blasts Bienville with scathing depictions of abuses of power, or Pénicaut, Le Page, and Bossu, who, presumably adhering to Christian ideals of government and morality, appreciate the work of priests and religious and decry the corruption, negligence, and abuse of certain civil/military authorities.

After a decade of hard work, permanent residence, and much controversy, Nicolas de La Salle died in Louisiana in September 1711 (Hoffman, 33), leaving his heirs in the new land that he had struggled to make their home.

Some may question the inclusion of Nicolas’ narrative in any literary canon since the original document is lost and the extant version is apparently someone else’s retelling. As Patricia Galloway notes in “Sources for the La Salle Expedition of 1682,”

This account as published by Margry [in 1876] purports to have been written down by an anonymous collector of exploration accounts on the basis of some sort of narrative given to him by young Nicolas de la Salle. . . . Margry says that he obtained the account from a collection of travel descriptions, but . . . we know very little else about Margry’s source, and its whereabouts are presently unknown. The original source, that is Nicolas’ diary . . . , also seems to be lost (18).

Despite the way the account has been preserved, Galloway remains confident of Nicolas’ authorship and of the edited extant version closely resembling the original manuscript.
In support of her contention, Galloway points out that in the journal we have the closest thing to a day-by-day description of the journey that we are likely to find. Although cast by its editor in the third person, with frequent reference to what “little La Salle” says, in substance the text makes no equestival claims to special knowledge or close connection with the leaders of the expedition, and indeed the importance of the events is clearly not always understood by the observer, as would be likely from this young man, accustomed to the ways of the French military hierarchy but nevertheless new to the scenes of the American wilderness. This very limitation of the point of view of the teller vouches for the sincerity of his narrative... but the reader must not forget the fact that the diary has in fact been recast, since for example the numbering of the days seems to have been done without regard for the fact that Nicolas seems to have written at each halt, not just at the end of the day, and there are far too many days in this version of his diary. This fact, however, argues even more strongly for the nearness of this version to its original source (18-19).

In her later article, “The Minet Relation,” Galloway continues to defend Nicolas’ authorship by asserting that “the existence of a journal kept by Nicolas has never seemed to be in doubt” by other scholars from Margry’s time to the present (19).

Adding further credence to Nicolas’ authorship has been the discovery of the Minet Relation and subsequent study of this account. As Galloway notes in her article on the recently found document, there is no reason to doubt Minet’s assertion that Nicolas had kept a journal and that Minet had seen it during the voyage to and from the Gulf of Mexico;... and many passages [from Minet’s relation] follow word for word the [Nicolas] text printed by Margry (19).

In fact, “Nicolas’s testimony does account for the bulk of Minet’s relation” (22). Not surprisingly, then, Galloway concludes, “The best all-around account of the 1682 exploration of the Mississippi is the one represented as coming from Nicolas’ diary” (27). Furthermore, while the recent discovery of the Minet Relation is casting a different light on Cavelier de La Salle scholarship, one can assert that
Nicolas, upon whom much of Minet is based, is likewise playing an im-
portant role in this latest modification in historiography.

Nicolas' narrative begins with descriptions of the Great Lakes
region and its Indian and French inhabitants. The author relates how
Cavelier de La Salle and his Franco-Indian party of explorers move
from the Lakes to the Mississippi via the Illinois country in the
winter of 1681-1682. As the expedition proceeds down the Mississippi,
Nicolas also describes that river and the land it traverses.

Throughout the descent, Cavelier's party attempts to forge
friendships with the new Native-American groups it encounters, leaving
them presents as tokens of good will. At one point, Nicolas says of
two Indians who venture into the Franco-aboriginal company,

One of the two Chickasaws wished to remain with the
Frenchmen, although he was told that he was free to go
away. The other had been sent back with presents to his
people, soon after his capture, to find out whether the
lost Frenchman was not with them, and had not returned.
But this one who was a little, elderly man, and very
resolute, wished to follow the Frenchmen (17).

The amicable nature of the encounter between an old member of a tribe
that would later cause much trouble as French colonization progressed
in Lower Louisiana is especially touching in light of the ugly epi-
sodes that typify subsequent accounts of Franco-Chickasaw relations.

Shortly after this initial contact with the Chickasaw, the
French startle the Arkansas upon arriving in their territory down-
stream. The Europeans quickly assure these Indians that they want
peace, and the Arkansas begin the calumet festivities. Nicolas, like
all Louisiana writers who concentrate on Native Americans, dutifully
describes the calumet ceremony, an elaborate manifestation of red pro-
tocol that greatly interests French observers. The ubiquitous calumet
procedures that marked early Louisiana life and literature will be de-
scribed in more detail in the Pénicaud, Dumont, and Le Page
discussions of this study. For now, it should be noted that when Nicolas remarks that "we were well received and feasted" (19), he indicates that he, like many Frenchmen to follow him, derives much pleasure from interaction with Native Americans. Relating the departure from the Arkansas, Nicolas asserts that "these are good folk who were willing to do anything for the French" (23), a testimony to the creation of a lasting friendship between the French a particular red group, a friendship especially favored by Bossu and figuring prominently in Bossu's two books.

Despite the immediate amity that develops between the French and the Arkansas, further proven by various Arkansas' joining Cavelier's expedition and by the Cavelier party's favorable reception in another Arkansas village, Nicolas portrays La Salle as initially wanting no part in his red allies' wars. Nicolas says of Cavelier's response to the desires of the new members of his exploratory group:

> The two Arkansas wished us to take the left branch . . . in order to make war upon their enemies, the Tonicas, who have a village there. But M. de La Salle would not go that way, not wishing to have war with anyone whatever (26-27).

Not only does Nicolas' Cavelier want no part in intertribal warring, he also desires peace between the red groups so that, united among themselves, they may be combined into a strong French alliance.

When he comes to the Tensas, the Natchez, and the Koroas, whom he finds to resemble each other in many ways, Nicolas brings up two Indian practices upon which later Louisiana writers elaborate: red slavery and red-on-red cruelty. With regard to the former, Nicolas records how Indian slaves belonging to both the red and white members of La Salle's band show differing reactions to their disenfranchisement. Some, like "M. de Tonty's little slave," flee at the first chance, while others remain in the expedition as helpful informants.
and guides. Concerning Indian brutality toward fellow Indians, Nicolas starts a refrain that echoes throughout Louisiana colonial literature: "The people are kind, hospitable to strangers, but cruel to their enemies" (35). Nicolas shows that from the beginning of their contact with American aborigines, Louisiana writers have mar­velled at what they consider to be a paradoxical peculiarity of red-on-red relations -- the ability to assume complete friendship or en­mity with the simple declaring of war or the making of peace.

Also like the later writers, Nicolas capitalizes upon the pruriently entertaining quality of Native-American wartime inhumanity. Fully aware of the Continental curiosities to be satisfied by relating the most macabre manifestations of "savage barbarity," Nicolas reports the deepening descent into Lower Louisiana,

The next day, after making five leagues, we found nine ca­noes moored to the bank upon the right. No one was to be seen, but the tracks were still fresh. We waited there an hour; hearing nothing of these Savages we went on for a league, when we saw Savages on the right engaged in fishing. They fled to their village, abandoning their fishing and leaving a basket containing a fish, a man's foot, and a child's hand, all smoke-dried. We landed and sent them a Frenchman and a Wolf [Indian] to tell them that we came in peace; but they shot arrows, desiring war. We reem­barked, and had made a league and a half, when we saw on the left another village, and near it many eagles and crows. We went to the village and saw only the carcasses of men, and ruined lodges. Some were still entire, but filled with dead bodies. The canoes were all broken up; they seemed to have been cut with very good axes (39-41).

After having reached the mouth of the Mississippi and claimed its drainage for the King of France, Cavelier's party returns to the above-mentioned sight of carnage as they ascend the river.

After voyaging seven days, we arrived at the ruined vil­lage, where we encamped. The Wolf Indians saw a canoe on the other side of the river. . . . We went thither, and found a beaten path, and four persons lodged on the ground under a great tree. The next day all the Frenchmen went over, resolved to fight in order to obtain food. We found there four women naked as your hand; we returned with them
to the ruined village; they made us understand that it was the Oumas and the Chigilousas who had destroyed this village. They said that there was no village where they had been captured. The same day we departed, and with these four women, we landed opposite the spot where we had met, as we descended, the Savages who discharged the arrows. A short time after, some of these Savages came within bow-shot, indicating that they desired war.

M. de La Salle went to them in a canoe with a calumet of peace. But they did not understand that. We put ashore on their side two of the four women, giving them two axes and two knives to carry to these Savages; then they sent two hostages.

M. de La Salle also sent them two. We went to encamp on their side, and they sent a little Indian corn, but by their warriors. The two French hostages returned at evening, and said that the Savages had shut up all their lodges, danced, taken the calumet, then their caps and shirts, — for they gave each one the scalp of a man and a dress. . . . These Savages are called the Quenipissa. . . . We sent to them the two other women. That night these Savages, to the number of three hundred, attacked the French by land and with nine canoes. They shot arrows all night long. The French replied with gunshots, which prevented them from coming near. Daylight being come, they all took flight. . . . We found two Savages killed. The French scalped them and set their heads upon stakes at this place. The Wolf Indians desired to eat the bodies; but they took only the hearts, which they dried, in order to show in their country that they had killed men, and, according to their custom when they have gained a victory, they killed their dogs and made a feast upon them (47-51).

Such passages as the above give Nicolas' narrative the same suspense and gruesome appeal that later Louisiana writers hope to achieve in order to sell their works to a Continental audience thirsty for exotic anecdotes from the strange New World. The morbid attraction of what Europeans perceive to be aboriginal barbarity gains another dimension with Nicolas' addition of cannibalism, a practice of some Native Americans that later Louisiana writers also depict and discuss in greater detail.

Nicolas' account of one of the earliest Franco-Indian skirmishes in Lower Louisiana is also significant for its illustrating both
French adaptation to New-World exigencies and Native-American accultur­
turation under French influence. While the French prevent their red
partners from engaging in anthropophagy, the white men begin to match
their Indian allies in "savage" activities associated with indigenous
forms of warfare. On a brighter and perhaps more important side, the
French have become so Indianized by the time of their arrival in low­
est Louisiana that they share in common with most Native Americans an
appreciation for a civilizing practice of which the Quinipissas are
ignorant. The Quinipissas, oblivious to the calumet ceremony (whose
importance with regard to pacification the French have quickly
learned) and desirous of war, do not resemble the majority of Native­
American groups with whom Cavelier's party comes into contact in both
descending and ascending the Mississippi River. Despite the uncouth­
ness of the Quinipissas when judged by Native-American norms, Tonti
will gradually bring these belligerent Indians into the French fold.
This feat and Tonti's many other achievements suggest that if Tonti
had been present at Cavelier's Fort Saint Louis on the western Gulf
Coast, the settlement might never have been annihilated by Karankawa
Indians.

The ongoing Indianization or Americanization of the French,
especially with regard to their learning how to interact with Native
Americans, is further evinced when La Salle's party encounters a tribe
that more than one writer spotlights for its cruelty. When Nicolas
focuses on the Koroa, he brings up another aspect of many Native­
American societies that colonial authors after him also touch upon:
treachery and deceit. At the same time that he is highlighting this
device of self-preservation and war making that many Europeans misin­
terpret as inherent red dishonesty, Nicolas uses the encounter with
the Koros to create another suspenseful, highly entertaining passage.
After seven days' travel, we reached the Coroas; we em­
camped and cleaned our arms, for fear of needing them. The Frenchmen were very weak. The next day, . . . we reached the part of their bluffs where there is a great beaten road. The chief of the nation was at the water's edge, with three of his men. He gave M. de La Salle a thousand caresses. For some time we refused the flour which they offered, in order to make them think we had no need of it; but hunger compelled us to accept it. They had prepared a feast in the public place of their vil­lage. . . . At their instance we went and seated our­selves. . . . They set before us much maize, prepared in several manners. There appeared only some fifty or sixty men and six or seven women. After having half eaten, we saw ourselves suddenly surrounded by some two thousand men bedaubed with red and black, armed with bows and arrows, and tomahawks in hand. They seemed to have an ill design. They inquired what the Frenchmen had seen upon their jour­ney. The Coroa slave whom the Wolf had bought of the Taensas, told them all, -- how we had killed two of the Quinipisas, their allies; the scalps were given them. They believed the Frenchmen to be immortal. M. de Tonty said that we must retire; but M. de La Salle wished to sleep there. We ate with gun and hatchet at hand. -- The chief advised us to go on to the Natchez, saying that these young warriors had an ill design (53-55).

Passages such as the above give the impression that Nicolas' narrative is as much a presentation of Louisiana Indians as it is an account of La Salle's Mississippi River expedition. In fact, the relation of the voyage sometimes seems merely to link descriptions of Native Americans to those of the topography, fauna, and flora of France's vast new ter­ritory. Beginning with Nicolas and continuing throughout Louisiana's colonial period, certain episodes of Franco-Indian interaction are presented in well-formed, highly entertaining anecdotes, which, true to this subgenre (whose role in New-World literatures still offers fascinating opportunities for further study), read like independent literary gems that decorate and often give more insight into the au­thor's point of view than does the longer, more prosaic main text in which they are found. In the passage quoted above, for instance, Nicolas seems to illustrate Cavelier's inferior leadership by showing
the hapless adventurer resisting and then acquiescing to Tonti’s and the Koroa chief’s well-founded fears. It is an inferiority that Tonti never dares to suggest, not even subconsciously in an anecdote.

Proceeding in their ascent of the river, Cavelier’s men continue to exhibit an ever-increasing awareness of how to approach and interact with different tribes under varying circumstances. Their reporter, Nicolas, also shows how even the earliest colonial scribes were aware of the many differences distinguishing Indian nations and paid particular attention to them in their accounts. Impressed by the social stratification, religion, architecture, and art of the Tensas, Nicolas elaborates upon their customs, their exaltation of the chief, and their village. Nicolas’ attention to the Tensas resembles, on a smaller scale, the detailed descriptions that later Louisiana writers lavish upon the Natchez, a society that impresses many authors for the same reasons that the Tensas impress Nicolas: a greater degree of refinement and a greater social complexity than was generally believed to be found among Native Americans. Such impressions will be discussed in more detail later on.

Continuing the ascent, Cavelier’s party is feted by Arkansas and then Illinois Indians who are happy to see their new white friends return safely from a journey into unknown territory. The amity of these two red groups, cited first by Nicolas and Tonti, remains a constant throughout Louisiana colonial literature. Nicolas’ account of his first venture in Louisiana ends, but his interest and involvement in the colony do not.

Two decades after his historic trip down and back up the Mississippi River, Nicolas states his commitment to the Louisiana colony in a long letter. The document is also noteworthy for illustrating Nicolas’ ideas on proper colonial leadership, ideas that connect him
more closely to the Louisiana writers who follow him. Written from Mobile on April 1, 1702, to the "Ministre de la Marine," the letter (as published by Pierre Margry in Découvertes et Établissements des Français dans l'Ouest et dans le Sud de l'Amérique Septentrionale) also describes the Mobile Bay region and its potential for development. Nicolas makes it clear that Tonti's and Iberville's endeavors to join the area's Indians to the French and to counteract English influence among red groups in eastern Louisiana have been vital to such development.

Describing one successful attempt at making peace between various tribes, Nicolas notes,

M. de Tonty fut envoyé, avec huit hommes, pour aller au travers des terres à 120 lieues du fort de la Mobile, afin de maintenir l'union parmi toutes les nations sauvages de cette estendue de pays, et surtout aux Chicachas, qui sont fort redoutés en ces pays-là, pour les engager à quitter le commerce qu'ils ont avec les Anglois, qui les excitent à faire la guerre, en veue d'avoir des esclaves à très bon marché, qu'ils envoient aux isles de l'Amérique, dans leurs colonies, où ils en retirent beaucoup d'argent. Il en fut de retour ... avec cinq chefs de cette nation, qui se joignirent avec les chefs des Chactas, Thomèés et Mobiliens, avec lesquels ils étoient en guerre. Ils se promirent la paix en nostre présence. M. d'Iberville fit des présents à chacun de ces chefs de la part du Roy. Ils en tesmoignèrent beaucoup de reconnoissance et promirent d'estre toute leur vie attachés aux Français, et que dor- esnavant ils n'auroient aucun commerce avec les Anglois. Je puis dire que la colonie naissante a toute l'obligation de cette union à M. d'Iberville et à M. de Tonty, qui ont agi dans cette negociation en hommes bien intentionnés pour la réussite d'un des plus fameux établissements que le Roy ait par la suite (IV, 531-532).

In extolling Tonti's and Iberville's mediation among Native Americans, Nicolas seems to express a desire for peace between Indian nations not only so as to strengthen the French alliance but also to insure red well-being. Nicolas' is a two-fold concern characteristic of most Louisiana authors. At the same time that he is applauding
Franco-Indian diplomacy, Nicolas also criticizes the British for causing wars among tribes so as to procure slaves.

In addition to praising the efforts of two personal heroes, Nicolas highlights his own unflagging work in the colony and the personal hardships it has entailed.

In light of what he has suffered for "tout ce pays, où je désire m'installer," Nicolas continues,

His dedication to Louisiana surviving his difficulties with Bienville and the many other tribulations that such quarreling entailed, Nicolas, like Tonti, committed the rest of his life to the colony (and, like the rest of his opportunistic colonial peers, to his own interests and to those of his progeny), working hard for the advancement of his second home until the day he died there.

The second author to be examined, Henri de Tonti, was born around 1650 at Gaeta, Italy.7 He entered the French army in 1668 and in 1677 lost his right hand in action in Sicily, a loss which would eventually gain him the sobriquet "Main de Fer" or "Bras de Fer," thanks to the amputation's replacement.

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Tonti sailed with Cavelier de La Salle to Québec in 1678 and remained loyal to the controversial explorer and his plans for colonization until long after Cavelier’s death in 1687. Prior to 1700, Tonti served primarily in the Illinois and Great Lakes regions of Upper Louisiana. He had been part of Cavelier’s expedition down the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico in 1681-1682 to claim the entire Mississippi Valley for France, and in 1686 he descended the river again to search for his leader after La Salle had returned from France to found a Gulf-Coast colony. Unable to locate Cavelier, Tonti left behind the famous letter to La Salle that Iberville would retrieve at the turn of the century. Learning of Cavelier’s death in 1688, Tonti left the Illinois region again and spent much of 1689 heading southwestward in search of survivors from La Salle’s western Gulf-Coast venture.

After the Le Moynes’ successful establishment of settlements on the north-central Gulf Coast, Tonti moved to Lower Louisiana for good in 1700. He rendered Iberville and Bienville four years of inestimable service as a liaison between the French and the Indians before succumbing to yellow fever at Mobile in 1704.

As historian Jean Delanglez notes in his article on the Tonti letters,

When Tonti wrote [a series of letters in 1700] he knew the course of the [Mississippi] river from the Illinois to the Gulf better than any living man. He had gone down the river four times, twice to the sea, once within fifty miles and once within a few hundred miles of its mouth (213).

In addition to his familiarity with the Mississippi River, Tonti’s knowledge of both Upper and Lower Louisiana took many other forms, as is manifested not only in his letters but also in his memoirs of 1684 and 1691. His memoir-like letter of July 23, 1682, gave the outside world one of the first mentions of La Salle’s discovery of the

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Mississippi's mouth. Furthermore, as Patricia Galloway notes in "Sources for the La Salle Expedition of 1682" concerning the various narratives relating Cavelier's claiming of Lower Louisiana, "Only Tonti's accounts are certainly from his hand alone" (24).

In his person, Tonti bridged a gap into which all French plans for colonization on the North American continent below Canada could have easily fallen. That is, his presence throughout the vast Louisiana territory salvaged the efforts of La Salle, linking Cavelier's failures to the Le Moynes' successes, tying the establishments of Upper Louisiana to those of Lower Louisiana. Tonti was an anchor of stability during La Salle's roamings over a continent, the man left behind to secure newly claimed territory while La Salle went off to make more discoveries. Calling Fort Saint Louis of the Illinois "Fort Saint Louis de la Louisiane" in the 1680s, Tonti already considered the extensive colony that he was helping to create very real and very much his home.

Henri de Tonti's role in Louisiana and North American history has been overshadowed by the likes of La Salle, Iberville, and Bienville. Tonti's role in Louisiana literature should no longer suffer a similar disregard. Through his devotion to red and white subordinates, which often entailed great personal sacrifices, Tonti epitomized the selfless leader idolized in Louisiana literature. Such a leader was also a loyal servant to higher authorities, viewing his commitment to them as a way of promoting the masses they governed. Tonti's writings embody the humanitarian spirit that produces such a devoted leader and servant. And while it may be wondered why Tonti idolized a man whom many others have criticized for blatant negligence, abuse, and inefficiency, it must be remembered that Tonti was not always by La Salle's side and, therefore, did not witness
everything that Cavelier did. Had he been, his attitude toward La
Salle might have been very different, or, better yet, he might have
worked his influence over Cavelier to such an extent that many of the
latter’s flaws would not have resulted in such huge failures.

Before a detailed examination of Tonti’s writings, attention
should be directed to Delanglez’s article “La Salle’s Expedition of
1682,” in which Delanglez proposes that the Abbé Claude Bernou, a
Continental scholar keenly interested in French exploration in the New
World, was the anonymous compiler of the “official report” of
Cavelier’s discovery of the mouth of the Mississippi and that Bernou’s
composite report incorporates Tonti’s letter of July 23, 1682 (one of
the first mentions of Cavelier’s famous expedition). Delanglez
asserts,

The official report resolves itself into three parts:
(1) Tonti’s letter of July 23, 1683; (2) Membré’s letter
of June 3 of the same year, and (3) several paragraphs in
neither of the above. Tonti’s letter forms about sixty
per cent of the report, and the other two about twenty per
cent each (18).

The report was discovered in French archives in the mid-1800s and pub-
lished in R. Thomassy’s De la Salle et Ses Relations Inédites de la
Découverte du Mississippi (Paris, 1859). Before Delanglez’s studies,
scholars attributed the official report to various authors (including
La Salle himself), but Delanglez’s arguments concerning the compila-
tion and its overwhelming reliance upon Tonti’s letter are the most
convincing.

Tonti’s July 23, 1682, letter appears in both the original
French and in English translation in Rev. Marion A Habig’s The Fran-
ciscan Père Marquette (1934). Written from Michilimakinac in the
Great Lakes to inform New France’s Governor Louis de Buade, Comte de
Frontenac of La Salle’s successful expedition to the mouth of the
Mississippi, the correspondence briefly relates much of what Tonti later recounts in longer narratives. Yet even in this sketchy account, detailed references to Indians constitute a considerable portion of the document, indicating the importance of red men and women to Tonti and other Frenchmen in a sparsely populated, Continental-sized possession and foreshadowing the prominent place that Native Americans maintain throughout colonial Louisiana history and literature.

Tonti's interest in Indians is indicated when he slows down the rapid pace of his discourse somewhat as the narrative of the river's descent reaches the Tensas, a tribe that, along with its apparent relative nation of the Natchez, impresses the author and other Frenchmen because of its sophistication and cultural uniqueness among Native-American groups. Since Tonti expands his descriptions of the Tensas in later narratives, they will be examined in the analysis of his longer texts, where enlarged references to many other Indian contacts will also be viewed more closely. For now it is enough to say of these contacts that Tonti early on acknowledges what he perceives to be admirable red qualities and tokens of friendship when he encounters them, such as when he relates that even a Koroa chief (from a tribe that will soon cause the French much trouble) "gave a calumet to M. de la Salle and generously regaled him as well as his company" (221).

The quickly moving letter slows down even more when Tonti digresses so as to illustrate how Cavelier de la Salle procures corn from Native Americans for his starving party during the remounting of the Mississippi. The episode in question corresponds to one mentioned by Nicolas. Tonti's account, replete with suspense and verging occasionally on dialogue, is an entertaining dramatization that adds interest to the letter.
Provisions failing us there, we lived only on potatoes and crocodiles as far as the village of the Quinipisa. The country is so bordered with canes, that we could not go hunting. On the 12th we slept at the destroyed village, called Tangibao; and since M. de la Salle wished to have corn either by agreement or by force, the Abenakis said that they had seen smoke sufficiently nearby. We thought, it might be the Quinipisa, the same who had shot arrows at our party. We set out to reconnoitre among them; and having taken four of their women on the following day, we encamped opposite their village. After dinner, a canoe passed over to intimidate us. M. de la Salle went after the calumet; but the savages having retired, he took one of the women to the [other] bank with hatchets, knives and a bumper, giving her to understand that the other three would proceed to the bank on the morrow, and that she should bring corn. A troop [of Indians] having appeared on the bank, the next day, M. de la Salle betook himself thither with two canoes and made a peace; two Quinipisa came into our camp, and André Hunaut and a Loup went into their village; and we encamped in the vicinity at a distance of 5 arpens. At that place we sent back the women, and the Frenchman and the Loup returned. In the evening the Quinipisa brought us a little corn; and the next day, before daybreak, Colin, who was on sentinel duty, heard a cane snap and said: "I hear the canes breaking." The Sieur d'Autray replied, it might be some dogs. But having heard still another break, M. de la Salle called all his men to arms; and forthwith we heard war cries [saacouest] and the shooting of arrows, and we even distinguished them [the Indians], so near were they to us. We made a big fire, although it was raining a little; daybreak came, and after two hours of fighting and the loss of ten of their men who were killed and of several wounded, they took to flight, while none of us had received an injury. About midday M. de la Salle with half of the Frenchmen and the Loups destroyed their canoes. They were lying in ambush very close by, but they contented themselves with taking to flight while raising the war-whoop. We considered in the evening whether we should proceed to their village on the next day; but the small amount of ammunition we had left caused us to depart the same day, the 16th, while shouting death-threats at them. The Loups took two scalps, but failed to find the other corpses, since the tribesmen [of the killed] had carried them away. We suffered from hunger as far as the Koroa, upon whom apparently had devolved the obligation of playing a mean trick on us, because we had killed their allies. They had assembled four villages; but they noticed that we were on our guard; and fearing our guns, they changed their resolution. We departed on the same day, the first of May, and took along the corn which we had left there (224-227).
In addition to the interest it stirs, the anecdote above shows the French learning to negotiate with Native Americans by using tactics familiar to the latter, an indication of the Franco-Indian hybridization beginning to mark Louisiana colonial society even in its earliest days.

After mentioning how French association with Koroas and Quinipissas downriver leaves much to be desired, Tonti draws the epistolary narrative to a close by citing happier Franco-Indian relations. Up-river, the French renew their alliance with the Tensas, and once he returns to Upper Louisiana, Tonti alludes to Miami and Illinois cooperation as well.

In 1898, Melville B. Anderson published Relation of Henri de Tonty Concerning the Explorations of La Salle from 1678 to 1683, which consists of both an English translation of Tonti's 1684 narrative and the French version that appears in Margry's Découvertes. Tonti begins his 1684 relation, written at Québec, by recounting his trip with La Salle from Old to New France in the summer of 1678. The author does not deem it necessary to describe Québec and Montréal, for they are well-known; however, when he reaches the Niagara area, Tonti begins to recount the adventures, the sights, and the encounters with Indians experienced by La Salle's party.

Tonti's first account of reception among Native Americans reveals much about the author's and his nation's attitude toward Indians.

Towards the evening we arrived at the mouth of the Niagara River, and, having called the Savages who were on the further side, they crossed over to us in their wooden canoes, received us hospitably into their lodges, and gave us some fish to eat with Indian meal porridge. These dishes seemed to me insipid and even strange. Nevertheless there was nothing to do but to give up bread, wine, salt, and pepper, and to subsist upon venison, fish, and Indian corn; and such our food often is to this day (11).
This first mentioned sharing of cultures in the narrative shows the French desire and need for red friendship. It also illustrates the immediate adaptation to environment that Frenchmen must make in order to penetrate the interior and subsist without accustomed foodstuffs. As the narrative progresses, Tonti continues to record how La Salle's Frenchmen strive to make peaceful contacts with all the tribes whose lands they cross. Even when they are being enticed into battle, La Salle's men try for as long as possible not to engage in fighting.

One of the "problem" tribes to surface early in the narrative is the Iroquois. In a passage highlighting an indigenous prairie group's reaction to the French when the Indians ironically mistake the white men for Iroquois, Tonti relates,

On rounding a point, we came upon a small hunting-camp. They were much alarmed, mistaking us for Iroquois. The women and children fled to the woods; but when they saw that we were Frenchmen, they held out the calumet, which is the token of peace among them. We also showed them one, and landed; they received us humanely and caused the fugitives to return. The men go without clothing, have the nose and ears pierced, and the hair cut within an inch of the scalp. The females only are clad. Their disposition is much like that of the French (29-31).

The quotation above shows another early adaptation that the French make to Native America: using the calumet or peace-pipe ceremony to establish, maintain, and re-establish friendly contact with Native Americans. More elaborate descriptions of these ceremonies resound throughout Louisiana's colonial literature. In the calumet accounts, as the French and Indians begin to exchange initial civilities through introductory rituals, they also begin to share other aspects of their lives with each other. In relating his impressions of these encounters, Tonti, like his scribal heirs, also compliments red people and points out the peculiarities of each group. The above-mentioned prairie tribe, for instance, impresses him with its manner of
self-adornment. In addition to the favorable remarks expressed above, which include likening "savages" to compatriots, Tonti earlier says of the prairie Indians, "The Savages are extremely well formed" (29). Tonti uses the Iroquois, however, to spotlight the cruelty, treachery, and deceit that Louisiana writers highlight as typical of many red groups.

In addition to giving attention to Indians early on, Tonti also wastes no time in defending his controversial hero, Cavelier de La Salle. Tonti’s secular hagiography is another quality that draws this pioneer’s writings closer to subsequent works of the Louisiana canon, for nearly all of the colonial authors engage in some form of hero worship. For his part, Tonti defends his unpopular superior’s worth by exposing subversive forces at work against La Salle from the start of Cavelier’s Louisiana enterprise. Tonti notes that “the privileges which M. de La Salle had been granted by the Court had made him many enemies, who did what in them lay to wreck his enterprise, debauching his men and sowing suspicion among the Iroquois” (15). At the same time that he is exposing the obstacles set in motion against his superior, Tonti also seeks to enhance Cavelier’s reputation by showing La Salle’s expedition in Indian affairs.

As a faithful follower of La Salle and as the expedition’s second in command, the one whom Cavelier often left in charge of the wilderness party when he ventured off to other business, Tonti too rises to heroic stature. In fact, Tonti relates his own outstanding deeds as much, if not more than, La Salle’s. When juxtaposed against the plottings and desertions of others, Tonti’s loyal activity seems even bigger and brighter than it would otherwise appear. Overcoming countless difficulties in a raw new land, delighting in the triumphs and camaraderie of everyday pioneer life, Tonti regrets that not all
in his company are as committed to La Salle the man, to La Salle's mission, or to each other as he is.

Unfortunately, dark episodes too often mar happier occasions, as illustrated below.

Our men all together again, there was great joy. We were in all twenty-nine Frenchmen; but this joy was near being cut short, for (as there are always dissatisfied persons in enterprises of this nature) while we were making the portage, M. de La Salle chanced to be walking in front of one named Duplessis, when this man had the effrontery to take aim with his gun at M. de La Salle with the intention of killing him. But this design was frustrated by one of his comrades, and it was not until long afterwards that we learned of the circumstance (27).

At another point, Tonti notes,

A conspiracy was formed, including two-thirds of our men, to run away by night with the boats and reduce us to wigwam life, but, by some presentiment, M. de La Salle had the boats discharged of their cargoes, and so the plot was foiled (27).

Not granting any credence to his comrades' grievances, Tonti continues to elevate his hero instead. Like the Louisiana writers to follow him, Tonti desires that people work together under the direction of a capable leader. For him, such a leader exists in La Salle, and Tonti laments the fact that others do not recognize Cavelier's abilities and work under him to make La Salle's and their own dreams come true.

While luck and his own measures help La Salle elude disaster in many instances, one unfortunate episode foreshadows the treachery that will end Cavelier's life.

Apparently one of the deserters had poisoned the food of M. de La Salle, for, in the morning, upon eating his porridge, he was seized with all the symptoms of poisoning. We refrained from pursuit of the fugitives for fear of making a bad impression upon the Savages (31).

Despite the successful effort at maintaining a strong front before Native Americans on this occasion, the French in future all too often
reveal their lack of strength and, worse, their lack of union before powerful indigenous nations, to the whites' detriment. For instance, when La Salle later attempts a colony on the Gulf Coast in the mid-1680s, he and his men give the local Indians such a bad impression thanks to their disunity that red neighbors show no mercy in picking off the pitiful survivors of the failed French settlement.

As 1680 dawns, La Salle's problems with white and red men alike add to the difficulties of his trekking across the prairie to the Mississippi River. The interpersonal complications, possibly weighing more heavily upon Tonti than upon La Salle, create tensions that, when recounted by Tonti, produce a highly readable section, one in which the author and his idol continue to gain in heroic stature while combattng mounting difficulties.

M. de La Salle also determined to undertake a land journey of four hundred leagues to Fort Frontenac. This he did, setting out on the 10th of March with five men, and leaving me in command in his place. On his way he met the men whom he had sent to Missilimakinak, who told him the sad news of the destruction of the second vessel, by which his loss amounted to about forty thousand livres. He did not flinch from continuing his journey, and sent me orders to go back to the Illinois village and build a fort upon an eminence a half-league from there. For this purpose I set out, leaving at Fort Crèvecoeur those who had brought me the orders. But they had been won over by the enemies of M. de La Salle, and a man named Noël Leblanc debauched them almost all. I found myself with two Recollet priests and three young men, deprived of everything and compelled to take pot-luck with the Savages, the deserters having stolen all that we had. I drew up reports of this and sent them to M. de La Salle, who caught the deserters on Lake Frontenac, where two of them were killed. All this delayed his return. As he had promised to be back by the last of May, we tried to pass the time as best we could (33-35).

When a rumor of La Salle's death reaches Tonti's miserable party, Tonti must deal not only with that distressing news but also with increased Indian suspicion of the French.
Tonti uses suspense, mounting difficulties, and dialogue to dramatize his efforts to hold the La Salle project together in the difficult days following the rumor of Cavelier's death.

We were informed . . . by many Ottawa braves that M. de La Salle was dead, and they gave us proofs pertinent enough to make us believe it to be true. Meanwhile my own situation was very embarrassing, for the Illinois had been told that M. de La Salle had come into their country to give them to the Iroquois to devour; and that, as for me, I was not a Frenchman. Nevertheless, whatever the difficulty might be, I was resolved to go to Missilimakinak to get news; accordingly, on the 2nd of September I set out, against the wishes of the Savages, but, finding the water extremely low, I was forced to give over the attempt. On the 10th, the river having risen on account of rain, I had our boat pitched again, intending to start the next day. But a Shawano who had set out at night for his own country, having met the army of the Iroquois, came back on the 11th with the news. This news, with my departure, confirmed for the Savages the truth of what had been told them of us. A chief of the nation said to me: -- "We now see plainly that you are the friend of the Iroquois. The Frenchmen who told us this were not wrong; now we are dead, for the Iroquois are many and you are their friend." I replied: -- "To prove to you that I am not the friend of the Iroquois, I will die tomorrow with you; I will fight him with the young men who are with me." Upon this reply they all declared me their comrade. This being settled, scouts were sent out, who, upon their return, reported that the army consisted of six or seven hundred men. The young men spent the night in feasting; the women and children were sent to a place six leagues below the village; the next day the Iroquois were upon us. When the two armies were a half-league apart, the Illinois chiefs begged me to carry a necklace to the Iroquois and to try to make peace with them. "We see, plainly," they said, "that we shall be defeated, because a part of our young men have gone to war and we have only bows and arrows." My position was embarrassing, inasmuch as I could not speak Iroquois; however, hoping to find some slave among them to whom I could make myself understood, I took a porcelain necklace and went, accompanied by an Illinois. When within gunshot of the Iroquois I exhibited the necklace, which serves among them as a summons to a parley. As soon as they saw us so near, they discharged at us a volley of musketry. Then I said to the Illinois: -- "Go back. As for me, if I die for it, I will speak to the Iroquois to save your life." He went back out of range and I continued to go to them. They did not cease to fire upon me, but, as I was entering among them, a Mohegan
chief, taking the necklace I held in my hand, embraced me and cried out: -- "It is a Frenchman."

Notwithstanding what the Mohegans did to defend me, a warrior of the village of the Onondagas plunged a knife into my left breast, severing a rib; they then robbed me and stuck my hat on the end of a gun. The Illinois who had accompanied me, perceiving how I was treated by the Iroquois, and seeing my hat upon the end of a gun, imagined that I was dead and carried the report into camp. The Illinois prepared to charge; the Sieur de Boisrondet and Estienne Renault placed themselves at their head. Meanwhile the Iroquois war-chiefs had seated themselves in a circle, and had made me sit down before them. Making use of a Sokokis who could speak French as an interpreter, they inquired of me what had led me to them. I replied that I was much surprised to see them at war with their brothers; that the Comte de Frontenac had adopted the Illinois, as well as themselves, as his children. There arose a noise among them. It was occasioned by an Iroquois who brought word that the Illinois had driven back their left wing, that the French were at their head, that nine men had been wounded by arrows and one killed by a gunshot. I assure you, Sir, that I have never been so much at a loss; for, at the moment when this news came, there stood behind me an Iroquois, knife in hand, who from time to time seized me by the hair. I then believed that there was to be no quarter for me, and my greatest hope was that they would knock me in the head, for I thought they meant to burn me. As I turned toward him who was holding me by the hair, the chiefs assured me that I had nothing to fear, and asked me to tell them the number of the Illinois and of the Frenchmen who were with them. Although there were only five hundred, I asserted that they had an army of eleven hundred men, besides fifty Frenchmen. This disturbed them and they threw me a necklace, requesting me to ask the Illinois to return to their village and to bring them corn, for they were hungry. Never have I experienced so great a joy, and, having caused the two armies to fall back, I carried the necklace to the Illinois, who retired to their village and I with them (35-41).

The harrowing episode recounted above reveals much concerning the fashion in which Franco-Indian relations developed in Louisiana. In his person Tonti represents the outnumbered Frenchman in Native America, one who must depend upon his red allies and attempt to pacify his red foes in order to survive in the New World. His embracing
Native-American ways insures that survival and draws him ever more into both a resemblance to aborigines and an appreciation of indigenous persons. While he is actively engaged in promoting the interests of his country in the New World, Tonti, the ideal Frenchman envisioned by Louisiana writers, puts the welfare of red allies (who are often weak tribes in need of support against more powerful and more aggressive red nations) first when it comes to a life-and-death situation, willing to sacrifice his own life in order to save theirs. Even his outward appearance reflects Tonti's closeness to Native Americans, so much so that members of one tribe mistake him as belonging to another, a mistake that nearly costs more than one Indianized Frenchman his life in Louisiana's colonial literature. Like Saint Denis in later colonial texts, Tonti mediates not only between French and Indians, but also between various Native-American groups. Through his testimony of such selfless diplomacy, Tonti proves himself to be interested in everyone in the vast territory. Such universal concern and far-reaching activities prefigure those of Louisiana literature's first great hero, Saint Denis.

Tonti's adventures and sufferings continue as the narrative progresses. The mighty Iroquois dally in peace making with the Franco-Illinois alliance, and eventually the former turn on the latter. When Tonti finally ventures from the Illinois region to seek La Salle, who is still alive, he must make the arduous journey with unhealed wounds and in ill health. He does not fail to mention that along the way his weakened party is saved by both red and white intervention.

Some Kiskakon Savages, who were looking for the Pottawatamies, seeing our smoke, came to us by land. When we saw them, we made an extraordinary bonfire. They embarked with us in their canoes and conducted us to the village, which was at a distance of only two leagues. There we found five Frenchmen, who received us humanely, and the
whole tribe of Savages, who manifested great pleasure in
supplying us with food; so that, after thirty-four days of
extraordinary fasting, we passed from starvation to abun­
dance. We wintered with the Savages, who were pleased to
succor us in our distress (55).

The Franco-Indian bonding depicted by Tonti attests to the rustic,
Euro-aboriginal foundation upon which Louisiana’s hybridized colonial
society began.

After Tonti reunites with La Salle, the two embark on separate
explorations as soon as possible. Later, as another year dawns, La
Salle rejoins Tonti in the Illinois country to begin the trek to the
Mississippi. Tonti gladly reports the biracial composition of the
groups upon whom the two leaders depend. The author gives the male
Indians’ names along with the Frenchmen’s when he lists the members of
La Salle’s party, stating, “I think, Sir, it is well that I give you
the names of those who have borne the labors of so great an enter­
prise” (59). In addition, Tonti does not fail to note that red women
and children also take part in Cavelier’s long overland and downriver
journey to the sea.

The famous descent of the Mississippi begins midway through the
narrative. When Tonti relates the encounter with the Arkansas Indi­
ans, the author’s readiness to acknowledge fine qualities in Native
Americans resurfaces. For instance, Tonti says of the Arkansas’ ap­
pearance, “It may be affirmed that these are the best-formed Savages
we have seen” (75). With regard to their reception of the French,
Tonti notes, “These Savages received us very civilly and, after having
regaled us with everything that could be expected in the village, they
danced the calumet before M. de La Salle” (74-75). The Arkansas are
so courteous and sincere in their bonding with the French that they do
not object even to the presence of a mortal enemy among the whites.
As Tonti observes, “We ascertained the civility of these people by the
good reception they gave to the Chickasaw who was with us, although they are always at war with his nation” (75).

When the narrative proceeds downriver to the Tensas, Tonti, like Nicolas de La Salle, conveys the extent to which this nation’s refinement impresses him.

Never have I been so surprised as upon entering the dwelling of their chief, for the lodges of other Savages are not built in the same way. In this nation, one recognizes some of the qualities of civilized races (77).

Tonti marvels at the artistry, architecture, and social stratification of the Tensas. Then he focuses on their refined protocol.

We were made to sit upon a delicately worked cane mat which was laid for us upon the ground. Our interpreter arose and, after a harangue, gave a buffalo-robe, with which he was clad, to the chief, who invested him with his; and when we had made known that we were come to make an alliance with them, and that our commander was in need of victuals, he sent orders at once that all the women should make Indian meal and preparations of a certain fruit called by them Paquimina, which is excellent. I gave the chief a knife, which he received as a very considerable gift. He regaled us as best he could. I noticed that one of his little children, attempting to pass between the chief and the torch, was hastily drawn back by the mother and made to go around; this is a mark of respect which they show him. He was served by slaves. No one eats from his vessels except himself (79).

The passage quoted above is one of many from Tonti that has a variant version in Nicolas. Both authors’ attentions to the elevation of the Tensas chief foreshadow the interest that later writers show in the hierarchy of the Natchez, a Native-American group often linked to the Tensas. As Nicolas does, Tonti also mentions the loss of his little slave “whom I had bought of the Taensas, who escaped at night with his mother” (87).

Continuing downstream, Tonti mirrors Nicolas again by relating the unfriendly Quinipissa shower of arrows and the discovery of the gory leftovers of the Tangipahoas’ massacre. The author then briefly
mentions the arrival at the mouth of the Mississippi and the claiming of the river for France before quickly moving the narrative to the ascent of the great stream. La Salle’s party engages in a skirmish with the Quinipissas after having been deceived by “ces canailles” (96). In Tonti’s version, the Frenchmen suffer the same dangerous deception among the Koroas that they do in Nicolas’ account. Tonti says of his unease among the Koroas and of La Salle’s reaction to it:

Hereupon I could not refrain from saying to M. de La Salle that he saw plainly the way matters stood and that, having made his discovery, he should not put himself in the power of wretches who might play him an ill turn. He intimated to me that one must always show the Savages that one is not afraid of them (101).

By this time, Tonti’s relation of France’s discovery and claiming of the Lower Mississippi Valley has become an Indian-centered narrative focusing on the trials, triumphs, and failures of La Salle’s initial contacts with indigenous persons.

After eluding the dangerous Quinipissas and Koroas, La Salle’s party saves a Tensas also fleeing the latter red group. The rescue and return of this Indian leads Tonti into another favorable reference to the Tensas.

We found upon a raft a Taensa who was escaping from the Coroas. M. de La Salle took him into his canoe. And having arrived on the 30th of April at the portage of the Taensas, I conducted him to his village, where we renewed friendship, the chief knowing by this act that we were his true friends. I admired for the second time their behavior. For, so long as there were people in the chief’s lodge, this man had nothing to say; but, after we had supped and the company had retired, the chief had the door closed and, calling me to him, sent for the Taensa whom I had brought, who told him his story and then went to bed (103).

Tonti’s relief over being free of dangerous tribes downstream only enhances his appreciation of Tensas friendship, and he reacts to the Tensas chief’s reception as would someone returning to family and
friends -- and as an underling moved by his patriarch's special attentions. Tonti's cherishing his adoption into Native-American society on this and other occasions is a sentiment that many other Louisiana writers share and that is perhaps best expressed by Bossu in his Arkansas accounts.

After dwelling on encounters with various red nations bordering the "Father of Waters," Tonti hastily relates the La Salle party's ascending the rest of the Mississippi before describing his own trek across Illinois country to the Great Lakes. Tonti's popularity among Native Americans is illustrated further when an Illinois saves the Frenchman from Tamaroas who do not know him by crying, "This is my comrade; these are Frenchmen!" (107)

While being a Frenchman saves Tonti in some instances, the author indicates how by the spring of 1683 Frenchmen have harmed La Salle's reputation among Upper Louisiana Indians.

I will not weary you, Sir, with all the difficulties we encountered in collecting these tribes, whose minds were preoccupied with the evil reports which the French enemies of M. de La Salle had spread among them (113).

In addition to defending La Salle's integrity against white-spread slander, Tonti must also confront other damage done to France's image among Native Americans because of various forms of French maliciousness, insensitivity, or neglect. Two officers' doings in particular rub Tonti the wrong way:

This Chevalier de Baugy reached the Fort with letters from M. de La Salle, who advised me to receive him well and to live with him in perfect harmony; but as, in the course of time, I saw that he was doing all he could to debauch our people, and as the Sieur de La Durantays, when he came, did not refrain from efforts directed to the same end, it was impossible for me to avoid some disputes with them, and we passed the winter at variance with one another (113-115).

Clearly, Tonti believes that a superior must always ponder how his
actions and example affect those under his jurisdiction. The fact that other French leaders do not possess this sensitivity infuriates Tonti and incurs his condemnation.

In the spring of 1684, Iroquois attack Tonti's fort. The siege lasts six days before France's red allies rout the enemy. Soon after, Tonti must face more problems with fellow Frenchmen. As he states near the close of the memoir,

On the 21st of May, the Sieur de La Durantays, upon pretext of coming to our relief, communicated to me, on the 23rd, orders from M. de La Barre obliging me to leave the place and to return here. But as the Court has taken up the enterprise of M. de La Salle, and as orders have reached M. de La Barre from the King to the effect that we are to retake possession of the domain of M. de La Salle, the latter, empowered by His Majesty, has named me Governor of Fort St. Louis, and the King has honored me with the command of a company of marines. I had set out to go to the Fort, but, on account of the ice, I find myself compelled to lie over. I hope to set out again next spring (115-117).

Despite the difficulties that fellow Frenchmen pose to a project already made hard by Indian foes and environment, Tonti persists in his desire to remain in his second home, actively serving the colony in any capacity that La Salle and the king see fit.

Tonti's dedication to the Louisiana colony and to its red and white inhabitants marks the letters spanning the years between his 1684 memoir and his 1691-1693 narrative. In a letter written August 24, 1686, from Montréal to the Minister of the Navy, for instance, Tonti relates French activities among Lower-Louisiana Indians and mentions that in Upper Louisiana he plans to join the Illinois against the Iroquois, "l'ennemi commun" (III, 554). In addition to helping weaker tribes combat a formidable red aggressor, Tonti also works for peace among indigenous nations and between Native Americans and France. He stabilizes the prickly situation with the Quinipissas, who
had harassed La Salle's Franco-Indian party on both its descent and ascent of the Mississippi River. In the "Procès-Verbal du Voyage de Henri de Tonty à l'Embouchure du Mississippi à la Recherche de M. de La Salle" (April 13, 1686), Tonti gladly relates the friendly calumet ceremonies danced for him at the villages he encountered on a later trip down the river in search of his leader. In another August 24, 1686, letter, this one to Cabart de Villermont, Tonti reports keeping the Illinois and Miamis from fighting each other so that they might help the French battle the Iroquois, again referred to as "nos ennemis communs" (III, 559). And in a March 28, 1689, letter from "Fort Saint-Louis de la Louisiane" (in the Illinois country) to De Viller­mont, Tonti again refers to troubles with the Iroquois.

In her "Sources for the La Salle Expedition of 1682," Patricia Galloway says of Tonti's two main memoirs:

The discrepancies between the accounts of 1684 and 1691 seem to be of a kind easily attributable to the probabili­ties that Tonti did not have the 1684 account to hand when he composed that of 1691, and that with the passage of ten years, during which time he had made another trip over the same route, his memory of the original events had altered to fit what he learned at a later date. If this is true, given Tonti's tendency as a keen-eyed trader and Indian diplomatist to record much detail about the Indians met along the way, the two accounts may preserve two "snap­shots," four years apart, of the native polities of the lower Mississippi, so that it would be advantageous for the two accounts to be compared carefully (22-23).

While the present study does not attempt to probe in depth the histor­ical accuracy of the texts under discussion, it is nonetheless help­ful, as in the case of Tonti's two texts, to review from time to time some of the analyses and comparisons that historians such as Galloway make concerning the veracity of documents that were sometimes written as much to entertain as to inform.
In the first part of the "Memoir Sent in 1693, on the Discovery of the Mississippi and the Neighboring Nations by M. de La Salle, from the Year 1678 to the Time of His Death, and by the Sieur de Tonty to the Year 1691," Tonti repeats much of what he said in the 1684 narrative. That includes exalting his hero La Salle, whom he calls "a man of great intelligence and merit" (49). As in the earlier memoir, so in this one Tonti stresses how others have hindered La Salle's noble endeavors as early as the time that Cavelier left Canada to found Louisiana. In the Niagara region, for example, "the boat we came in was lost through the obstinacy of the pilot, whom M. de la Salle had ordered to bring it ashore" (50). As Cavelier's company makes its way toward Illinois country, it gets slowed when La Salle is forced to send Tonti "to look for some men who had deserted" (51). Moving through the Illinois region, Tonti mentions more trouble: "During this journey some of our Frenchmen were so fatigued that they determined to leave us, but the night they intended to go was so cold that their plan was broken up" (52). Throughout the reporting of these difficulties, Tonti does not imply that the discontent is La Salle's fault. Rather, he regrets that some of his fellows do not wish to work under such a leader in the building of a new society in the New World.

In his first reference to Native Americans in the 1693 narrative -- Native Americans who happen to be Iroquois, which tribe (as has already been seen) eventually makes serious trouble for the French -- Tonti notes that initially these Indians "received us well" (50). However, as the La Salle party makes its way out of familiar Canada into the upper extremities of unknown Louisiana, it learns, in attempting to establish peace with all the indigenous groups it encounters, the fearful regard that other Indians have for the Iroquois. For example, one group of Indians
thought we were Iroquois, and put themselves on the defensive and made their women run into the woods; but when they recognized us the women were called back with their children and the calumet was danced to M. de la Salle and me, in order to mark their desire to live in peace with us. We gave them some merchandise for the corn which he had taken in their village (53).

By experiencing problems with the Iroquois, the French simply share a situation that has plagued many indigenous groups for a long time. And by bonding with the smaller nations against a mighty foe, the French become even more like the native peoples whose lands they have come to share.

Unfortunately, the French attempt to unite with Native Americans is hindered by dissension among La Salle’s men, a lack of solidarity that aboriginal Americans do not understand and an example of white incohesion that more than one Louisiana writer has cited as working to the detriment of the French. Tonti testifies to the lack of unity when he notes that while wintering at the newly established Fort Crèvecoeur in 1679,

> Part of our people deserted and they had even put poison into our kettle. M. de la Salle was poisoned but he was saved by some antidote a friend had given to him in France. The desertion of these men gave us less annoyance than the effect which it had on the minds of the savages. The enemies of M. de la Salle had spread a report among the Illinois that we were friends of the Iroquois, who are their greatest enemies. The effect this produced will be seen hereafter (53).

Despite the references that most Louisiana writers, including Tonti, make concerning what they perceive to be Native-American treachery and lack of honesty, few depictions illustrating the disingenuousness of any group are as disturbing as the appalling scene of Frenchmen attempting to kill fellow Frenchmen in a wilderness that necessitates whites’ working together for self-preservation. Just as Louisiana’s colonial writers readily portray the many instances of deception at
the hands of Indians, so they also do not hesitate to point out the obstacles that Frenchmen lay before each other. The fate of La Salle is a favorite example of such fratricidal activity. Not surprisingly, La Salle's own sidekick, Henri de Tonti, uses his hero's tragic end to show the evils that man can inflict upon fellow man.

Later in 1679, Tonti himself, sent by La Salle to build a fort on a "high rock," experiences difficulties with his subordinates.

Whilst I was proceeding thither all my men deserted and took away everything that was most valuable. They left me with two Recollets and three men, newly arrived from France, stripped of everything and at the mercy of the savages. All that I could do was to send an authentic account of the affair to M. de la Salle. He laid wait for them on Lake Frontenac, took some of them and killed others, after which he returned to the Illinois (54).

This instance of French disunity and outright internal enmity in a passage reiterating an episode that has already been recounted elsewhere illustrates the endangering of French influence among Native Americans through inner turmoil, a disharmonious state that Tonti exposes for its threat to national/colonial security.

In another version of the episode of his near death that he mentions in his earlier memoir, Tonti gives a long account of increasingly complex Franco-Indian relations. When the Iroquois beset the Illinois, even these latter allies wonder about French commitment to them.

The desertion of our men, and the journey of M. de la Salle to Fort Frontenac, made the savages suspect that we intended to betray them. They severely reproached me on the arrival of their enemies. As I was so recently come from France and was not then acquainted with their manners, I was embarrassed at this event (54).

When Tonti goes to the Iroquois camp to sue for peace, the Iroquois and their allies are divided over what to do with him.

Tégantouki, chief of the Isonoutouan, desired to have me burnt. Agoasto, chief of the Onnoutagues, wished to have me set at liberty, as a friend of M. de la Salle, and he carried his point. They agreed that, in order to deceive
the Illinois, they should give me a necklace of porcelain beads to prove that they also were children of the Governor, and ought to unite and make a good peace (55).

Tonti returns to the Illinois with a message from the Iroquois, "adding, however, that they must not altogether trust them" (56).

Thanks to Tonti's Indian-like bluffing, the Iroquois believe the Illinois to have more warriors than they actually do. Therefore, "they pressed me to return to the Illinois and induce them to make a treaty of peace" (56). All is going well until an Illinois accompanying Tonti back to the Iroquois speaks unwisely.

When we got to the fort, instead of mending matters, he spoilt them entirely by owning that they had in all only 400 men and that the rest of their young men were gone to war, and that if the Iroquois really wished for peace they were ready to give them the beaver skins and some slaves which they had. The Iroquois called me to them and loaded me with reproaches; they told me that I was a liar to have said that the Illinois had 1,200 warriors, besides the allies who had given them assistance. Where were the 60 Frenchmen whom I had told them had been left at the village? I had much difficulty in getting out of the scrape (56-57).

The Iroquois and Illinois then make peace, but Tonti has become so good at reading the Iroquois that he knows something is amiss even when the Illinois Indians do not. As Tonti relates,

The Iroquois gave them presents of necklaces and merchandise. . . . They then separated and the Illinois believed, after these presents, in the sincerity of the peace, which induced them to come several times into the fort of the Iroquois, where some Illinois chiefs having asked me what I thought, I told them they had everything to fear, that their enemies had no good faith, that I knew that they were making canoes of elm-bark, and that consequently it was intended to pursue them; and that if they should take advantage of any delay to retire to some distant nation for that they would most assuredly be betrayed (57-58).

The Iroquois call Tonti to council and regale him with gifts. However,
I asked them when they would go away themselves. Murmurs arose, and some of them said that they would eat some of the Illinois before they went away; upon which I kicked away their presents, saying, that I would have none of them, since they desired to eat the children of the Governor. An Abenakis who was with them, who spoke French told me that I irritated them, and the chiefs rising drove me from the council. We went to our cabin where we passed the night on our guard resolved to kill some of them before they should kill us, for we thought that we should not live out the night. However, at daybreak they directed us to depart, which we did (58-59).

At one point during the flight, an important Frenchman falls victim to the foe by failing to heed Tonti’s advice.

The Father Gabriel told me he was going aside to pray. I advised him not to go away, because we were surrounded by enemies. He went about 1,000 paces off and was taken by 40 savages, of a nation called Kikapous, who carried him away and broke his head. Finding that he did not return, I went to look for him with one of the men. Having discovered his trail, I found it cut by several others, which joined and ended at last in one. I brought back this sad news to the Father Zenoble, who was greatly grieved at it. Towards evening we made a great fire, hoping that perhaps he might return; and we went over to the other side of the river where we kept a good look out. Towards midnight we saw a man at a distance and then many others. The next day we crossed over the river to look for our crew and after waiting till noon we embarked and reached the Lake Illinois by short journeys, always hoping to meet with the good father (54-59).

This account of growing complications in Franco-Indian relations shows Tonti’s effectiveness as a negotiator between red nations. Although he is still “green” to the New World, Tonti is nonetheless Americanized enough to have a better feel than even some aborigines do for the deceit that other tribes exert against red and white alike. What is more, Tonti proves himself to be such an apt mediator that important reds on both sides of a conflict seek him for either advice or information. Of course, what we are reading is Tonti’s own account of his activities in service of crown, country, and colony, and he undoubtedly paints a flattering picture of himself so as to secure promotion.
and possessions in the New World. All the same, Tonti's dealings with Native Americans and his travels over the North American continent were extensive, more extensive than those of most reds and whites of his day, and they must have assuredly contributed to a familiarity with different indigenous peoples that few persons of any color could have matched. From the beginning of his years in North America, then, Tonti proved to be an effective liaison between Continental and native groups, a quality that caused him to resemble Louisiana literature's first great hero, Saint Denis.

Tonti and crew survive the winter of the Iroquois-Illinois episode thanks to the help of Frenchmen and Indians that they encounter on their journey. Reunited at last, La Salle and Tonti waste no time heading for the Mississippi. Offering another account of the descent of the river, Tonti relates the same encounters with the Chickasaw, Arkansas, and Tensas that he mentions in the earlier memoir.

Digressing again upon Tensas sophistication, the author offers information that he has not previously provided. Some of that includes exposing shams in some Indian religions, above all the duping of the masses by certain witch doctors and medicine men, personages whom Bossu particularly detests. Tonti says of the Tensas religious hierarchy,

Two old priests (jongleurs) . . . are the directors (maîtres) of their worship. These old men showed me a small cabinet within the wall, made of mats of cane. Desiring to see what was inside, the old men prevented me giving me to understand that their God was there. But I have since learnt that it is the place where they keep their treasure, such as fine pearls which they fish up in the neighbourhood, and European merchandise. At the last quarter of the moon all the cabins make an offering of a dish of the best food they have which is placed at the door of the temple. The old men take care to carry it away and to make a good feast of it with their families. Every spring they make a clearing, which they name "the field of the spirit," when all the men work to the sound of the tambour. In the autumn the Indian corn is
harvested with much ceremony and stored in magazines until the moon of June in the following year, when all the village assemble, and invite their neighbours to eat it. They do not leave the ground until they have eaten it all, making great rejoicings the whole time. This is all I learnt of this nation. The three villages below have the same customs (66-67).

Even though he is exposing the self-serving practices of some red religious leaders, Tonti, unlike Jesuit Father Mathurin Le Petit or Bossu, does not deride Native-American priests for looking after their material welfare under the guise of serving their people’s god. Rather, Tonti simply relates these practices and other curiosities as interesting aspects of a newly encountered people’s customs.

The narrative next proceeds to the Natchez, who receive the Frenchmen well. Then Tonti moves on to the famous Quinipissa conflict, the discovery of the massacred Tangipahoa village, and the finding and claiming of the river’s mouth.

Relating the potential for development of lands watered by the lower Mississippi and its tributaries, Tonti also expresses his hopes for red involvement in French colonial enterprises. With regard to one activity in particular, the author speculates that as these savages are stationery, and have some habits of subordination, they might be obliged to make silk in order to procure necessaries for themselves; bringing to them from France the eggs of silkworms, for the forests are full of mulberry trees. This would be a valuable trade (70-71).

Curiously, while Tonti seems hopeful of Lower Louisiana’s indigenous population’s taking part in French exploitation of native and imported resources, he envisions less cooperation from Illinois Indians, a population whose productive acculturation later writers such as Pénicaud highlight.
Tonti says of Upper Louisiana's residents,

The savages there are active and brave, but extremely lazy, except in war, when they think nothing of seeking their enemies at a distance of 500 or 600 leagues from their own country. This constantly occurs in the country of the Iroquois, whom, at my instigation, they continually harass. Not a year passes in which they do not take a number of prisoners and scalps (71).

Even though the Illinois serve Tonti well in military campaigns against common enemies, the author remains pessimistic about their assimilation into colonial society. In addition to labeling the Illinois as "extremely lazy," Tonti accuses them of not converting easily to Christianity. After all,

polygamy prevails in this nation, and is one of the great hindrances to the introduction of Christianity, as well as the fact of their having no form of worship of their own. The nations lower down would be more easily converted, because they adore the sun, which is their divinity (71).

Ironically, while Tonti at the close of the seventeenth century believes that Lower Louisiana's tribes will make better Christians and sounder workers (thanks to their closer approximation to a European sense of cultural sophistication), Pénicaut and others in the first quarter of the eighteenth century highlight Illinois Catholicism and Franco-Illinois hybridization as models for Euro-aboriginal coexistence throughout the vast colony. These later writers also deplore the lack of acculturation and conversion among many of the southern red groups of whom Tonti seems particularly hopeful.

Relating La Salle's ascent of the Mississippi, Tonti explains why the French did not linger at the river's mouth once they had claimed it for their nation: "Provisions failing, we were obliged to leave it sooner than we wished, in order to obtain provisions in the neighboring villages" (71-72). As do many later writers, Tonti here attests to French dependence upon Native Americans for the barest
essentials of life, a dependence that extends from the first years of exploration to well after colonization has begun. For many years, Gulf-Coast settlers have recourse to Indian foodstuffs and other provisions that neither the colony nor the mother country can supply, and early authors do not hesitate to point out that without red intervention the white establishments would have all disappeared.

In its desperation, La Salle’s group again attempts to make peace when it passes through Quinipissa territory a second time. The French show that they have become Indianized enough to know how to approach a still unknown and potentially dangerous tribe — with caution, cleverness, and a display of power.

We did not know how to get anything from the village of the Quinipissas, who had so ill received us as we went down the river. We lived on potatoes until six leagues from their village, when we saw smoke. M. de la Salle sent to reconnoitre at night. Our people reported that they had seen some women. We went on at daybreak and taking four of the women, encamped on the opposite bank.

One of the women was then sent with merchandise to prove that we had no evil design and wished for their alliance and for provisions. She made her report. Some of them came immediately and invited us to encamp on the other bank, which we did. We sent back the three other women, keeping however, constant guard. They brought us some provisions in the evening and the next morning, at daybreak, the scoundrels attacked us (71-72).

When all else fails, the French fight back — like Indians.

The Franco-Indian party proceeds to the Natchez, where their provisions are and where “M. de la Salle made them a present of the scalps we had taken from the Quinipissas” (72). Even among these supposed friends, the French encounter the treachery that Louisiana writers view as the bane of Franco-Indian relations.

They had resolved to betray and kill us. We went up to their village and as we saw no women there, we had no doubt of their having some evil design. In a moment we were surrounded by 1,500 men. They brought us something to eat, and we ate with our guns in our hands. As they were afraid of firearms, they did not dare attack us. The
chief begged M. de la Salle to go away, as his young men
had not much sense, which we very willingly did -- the
game not being equal, we having only 50 men, French and
savages (72-73).

As in Nicolas de La Salle's and his own earlier account, so in this
version Tonti depicts the Franco-Indian party's rescue from menacing
young reds as occurring through the intervention of an older Native
American. Thus, the author continues a pattern that later Louisiana
writers also employ: consistently showing that even in a small, given
group of Indians not everyone thinks or behaves in the same way.

As they continue up the Mississippi, the red and white explorers
make stops among the Tensas and the Arkansas, "where we were very well
received" (73). When they reach the Illinois, however, their progress
is hindered by Iroquois aggression and the paranoia it induces among
other tribes. Tonti says of one curious encounter,

In passing near the Ouabache, I found four Iroquois, who
told us that there were 100 men of their nation coming on
after them. This gave us some alarm. There is no pleas­
ure in meeting warriors on one's road, especially when
they have been unsuccessful. I left them and at about 20
leagues from Tamaras we saw smoke. I ordered our people
to prepare their arms, and we resolved to advance, expect­
ing to meet the Iroquois. When we were near the smoke, we
saw some canoes, which made us think that they could only
be Illinois or Tamaras. They were in fact the latter.

As soon as they saw us, they came out of the wood in great
numbers to attack us, taking us for Iroquois. I presented
the calumet to them -- they put down their arms and con­
ducted us to their village without doing us any harm. The
chiefs held a council, and, taking us for Iroquois, re­
solved to burn us; and, but for some Illinois among us, we
should have fared ill. They let us proceed (73-74).

Strangely, even after the Tamaroa chiefs have the French in custody,
the former still confuse the latter with Iroquois Indians. Had La
Salle's party by this time become so Indianized that American aborigi­
nes mistook them for red men even up close? This is not the only oc­
casion in Tonti's work to recount confusion of race. Luckily in this
instance, the white men are saved by Illinois who can attest to their being French and not Iroquois.

Back to work in the Illinois-Great Lakes regions of Upper Louisiana, Tonti notes that in the winter of 1683-1684

I gave all the nations notice of what we had done to defend them from the Iroquois. . . . They approved of our good intentions, and established themselves, to the number of 300 cabins, near the Fort Illinois, as well Miamis as Chawanons (74).

Thus does Tonti chronicle the beginnings of Franco-Indian communities resulting from Franco-Indian alliances in Upper Louisiana, communities that later colonial writers laud for peaceful coexistence and for productive melding of two old cultures into a new American society.

The Iroquois constantly threaten the new, hybridized society that La Salle conceived and that Tonti brought into being. As Tonti notes,

The winter passed, and on the 20th of March, 1684, being informed that the Iroquois were about to attack us we prepared to receive them. . . . The savages appeared on the 21st, and we repulsed them with loss. After six days' siege they retired with some slaves which they had made in the neighborhood, who afterwards escaped and came back to the fort (75).

In addition to showing the constant intertribal conflicts into which the French were drawn from the start, passages such as the one quoted above indicate that red-on-red, white-on-red, and even red-on-white slavery was an important part of early Louisiana life well before black slavery began to shape the economy and culture of the Lower Mississippi and Gulf Coast.

Tonti continues to attest to the role that Frenchmen play in reconciling Indians to each other. After the Iroquois have been repulsed, for example, he relates that "the Miamis having seriously defeated the Illinois, it cost us 1,000 dollars to reconcile these two
nations, which I did not accomplish without great trouble" (76). The French effort to make and keep peace among indigenous groups continues throughout the next century and figures prominently in the writings of authors such as Pénicaout and Le Page.

Upon hearing that La Salle (who had returned to Lower Louisiana via Canada, France, and the sea and had established a colony on the Gulf Coast) was having difficulty finding the Mississippi by overland routes, Tonti ventures in 1685-1686 from the Great Lakes to the Gulf to find his leader. He travels with both Frenchmen and Indians and relates that he was "very well received" (77) by red groups along the way. At the Gulf, not having found La Salle, Tonti reveals an attentiveness to underlings that makes him a better leader than the superior to whom he shows unswerving devotion. The author relates that

as it would take us five months to reach the French settlements, I proposed to my men, that if they would trust to me to follow the coast as far as Manatte, that by this means we should arrive shortly at Montreal, that we should not lose our time, because we might discover some fine country and might even take some booty on our way. Part of my men were willing to adopt my plan; but as the rest were opposed to it, I decided to return the way I came (77).

This almost democratic willingness on the part of a superior to hear and heed the wishes of subordinates is a quality that many Louisiana writers encourage in their depictions of good and bad leaders.

Before leaving the Mississippi River's mouth, Tonti re-erects the monument that La Salle had constructed in claiming the river for France a few years earlier. The passage poignantly reads,

We encamped in the place where M. de la Salle had erected the arms of the King. As they had been thrown down by the floods, I took them five leagues further up, and placed them in a higher situation. I put a silver ecu in the hollow of a tree to serve as a mark of time and place. We left this place on Easter Monday (77-78).

The remains of La Salle's monument and Tonti's touching rebuilding of
it are fitting metaphors for the work of both La Salle and Tonti in Louisiana. For the former established frameworks dependent upon the latter's support, and when Tonti was not there to prevent collapse, La Salle's creations fell into ruin. Unable to locate La Salle or his settlers on the Gulf Coast, Tonti returns to Illinois. As the former are annihilated, Tonti, back in the north where Louisiana was begun in the early 1680s, keeps the colony alive until the Le Moynes secure the southern flanks in the late 1690s and shift concentration in that direction.

Phoenix-like new beginnings and new hope for the colony at the time of La Salle's demise seem to be forecast by the Quinipissas' changed attitude toward the French during Tonti's second ascent of the Mississippi and by other favorable developments.

When we came opposite the Quinipissas Village, the chiefs brought me the calumet and declared the sorrow they felt at the treachery they had perpetrated against me on our first voyage. I made an alliance with them. Forty leagues higher up, on the right, we discovered a village inland, with the inhabitants of which we also made an alliance. These are the Oumas, the bravest savages of the river. When we were at Arkansas, ten of the Frenchmen who accompanied me asked for a settlement on the River Arkansas on a seignory that M. de la Salle had given me on our first voyage. I granted the request to some of them. They remained there to build a house surrounded with stakes. The rest accompanied me to Illinois, in order to get what they wanted (78).

From the Quinipissas to the Illinois, another era seems to be dawning for Louisiana under its unwitting new leader -- and all at the same time that the colony's founder and his latest projects are being obliterated.

Tonti next relates how in the spring of 1687 he rallies French and Indian forces from around Upper Louisiana against the Iroquois. Despite the assistance of several Indian nations in this campaign, Tonti realizes that had his Franco-aboriginal party not opportunely
surprised and captured two different groups of Englishmen among the Iroquois, the red allegiance to France might have waned. After all, the English, from the great quantity of brandy which they had with them, would have gained over our allies, and thus we should have had all the savages and the English upon us at once (80).

Tonti's refreshingly realistic views about loyalties and how they are shaped help him to administer pragmatically, a quality necessary for holding the colony together during its precarious founding years.

Such pragmatism sometimes leads Tonti to drop sensitivities and be firmly expedient. For example, he says of his attitude toward a dangerous Indian element during the march against the Iroquois:

The Poutouatamis, Hourons, and Ottawas joined us there, and built some canoes. There was an Iroquois slave among them whom I proposed to have put to death for the insolent manner in which he spoke of the French. They paid no attention to my proposal. Five leagues on our march he ran away and gave information of our approach, and of the marks which our savages bore to recognise each other, which did us great harm in the ambuscade, as will be seen (80).

Despite his desire for wartime capital punishment, Tonti yields here as he did at the Mississippi's mouth to the preferences of underlings, an acquiescence that La Salle would have never made, but one that allows Tonti to operate successfully for decades in frontier Louisiana. Later, Tonti's designs are again thwarted when he must obey the desires of a superior: "M. de Denonville directed me to let the savages do as they liked, and to do nothing against the Iroquois" (83).

After hearing of La Salle's death in Lower Louisiana, Tonti shifts attention away from Iroquois problems in the Ohio River Valley and Great Lakes regions. He next focuses on finding survivors of La Salle's Gulf-Coast settlement and on exploring the southwest. Recording his overland voyage toward the Caddo and, hopefully, to La Salle's colonists, Tonti gives evidence of both the cooperation and the lack
of support that a pioneer leader can expect from red and white subordinates.

Regarding the more favorable category, Tonti notes that when his Franco-Indian band reached the Kappas,

we were received with demonstrations of joy, and for four days there was nothing but dancing, feasting, and masquerading after their manner. They danced the calumet for me, which confirmed the last alliance (84).

Reaching the "Tongenga," Tonti relates, "They wished to entertain us as the Kappas had done; but being in haste I deferred it until another time. I did the same with the Torremans, on my arrival" (84). As for the "Assotouë," "These savages had not yet seen me, as they lived on a branch of the river coming from the west. They did their best, giving me two women of the Cadadoquis nation, to whom I was going (84). In light of the problems that Tonti earlier experienced with La Salle's and his own white underlings, the string of positive Indian receptions seems all the more remarkable.

As fate would have it, after these fortunate encounters with reds, Tonti's luck fades again thanks to white disloyalty and Indian complexity.

On the 29th, finding one of our men asleep when on duty as sentinel, I reprimanded him, and he left me. I sent two of my people to Coroa, to spare myself the fatigue of dragging on with our crew six leagues inland. The Frenchman, with whom I had quarreled, made with them a third. We slept opposite the rivers of the Taencas, which run from Arkansas. They came there on the 2nd, this being the place of meeting. My Chaganon went out hunting on the other side of the river, where he was attacked by three Chacoumas. He killed one of them . . . . On the 4th the rest of the party arrived. On the 5th, being opposite Taencas, the men whom I had sent to Coroa not having brought any news of the two Frenchmen whom I was anxious about, I sent them to Natchés. They found that this nation had killed the two men. They retired as well as they could, making the savages believe that we were numerous (84-85).
Fortunately, Tonti’s luck improves when he reaches the Natchitoches, where assembled reds serve him better than his own white men have done.

Having garnered new red recruits, the author relates that they made us stay at the place which is in the midst of the three villages called Natchitoches, Ouasita, and Capiché. The chiefs of the three nations assembled, and before they began to speak, the 30 Taencas who were with me got up, and leaving their arms went to the temple, to show how sincerely they wished to make a solid peace. After having taken their God to witness they asked for friendship. I made them some presents in the name of the Taencas... After their departure they gave me guides to Yataché; and after ascending the river..., we found 15 cabins of Natchés, who received us pretty well. We arrived on the 16th of March at Yataché, about 40 leagues from thence. The three villages of Yataché, Nadas, and Choye are together. As they knew of our arrival they came three leagues to meet us with refreshments, and on joining us we went together to their villages. The chief made many feasts for us (85-86).

Undoubtedly, the assistance of red allies keeps the white man’s projects alive in this and countless other episodes from Louisiana history that show the inadequacy and/or unwillingness of Frenchmen to help each other.

Difficulties arise again in Tonti’s last stretch to the Caddo. There the author encounters less cooperative Native Americans.

I gave presents to them, and asked for guides to the Cadadoquis. They were very unwilling to give us any, as they had murdered three ambassadors about four days before, who came to their nation to make peace. However, by dint of entreaties, and assuring them that no harm would happen to their people, they granted me five men, and we got to Cadadoquis on the 28th (86).

As Tonti’s journey to the southwest shows, Franco-Indian relations were predicated upon a chain of highly mutable inter- and extra-tribal friendships and enmities, with the French often being sucked into alliances or divisions based on whom they first encountered. As
incredible as the favorable initial contacts with newly discovered tribes sometimes seem, so also is Tonti's ability to pass through and repair ruptures in America's line of red nations.

The string of trying and gratifying Indian encounters and the difficulties that Tonti faces with fellow Frenchmen do not end at the Caddo. Rather,

at the place where we were encamped we discovered the trail of men and horses. The next day some horsemen came to reconnoitre us, and after speaking to the wife of the chief whom I brought back with me, carried back the news. The next day a woman, who governed this nation, came to visit me with the principal persons of the village. She wept over me, demanding revenge for the death of her husband, and of the husband of the woman whom I was bringing back, both of whom had been killed by the Osages. To take advantage of everything I promised that their dead should be avenged. We went together to their temple, and after the priests had invoked their God for a quarter of an hour they conducted me to the cabin of their chief. Before entering they washed my face with water, which is a ceremony among them. During the time I was there I learnt from them that 80 leagues off were the seven Frenchmen whom M. Cavelier had left. I hoped to finish my troubles by rejoining them, but the Frenchmen who accompanied me, tired of the voyage, would go no further. They were unmanageable persons over whom I could exercise no authority in this distant country. I was obliged to give way. All that I could do was to engage one of them, with a savage, to accompany me to the village of Naovediché, where I hoped to find the seven Frenchmen. I told those who abandoned me, that to prevent the savages knowing this, it was best to say that I had sent them away to carry back the news of my arrival, so that the savages should not suspect our disunion (86-87).

It is interesting to note that at the same time that Indians are seeking the author's aid in intertribal predicaments, Tonti's own men are rejecting his leadership completely. Apparently, even being a commander who was attentive to his underlings' needs and desires was sometimes not enough to keep the dubious characters who often made up a great percentage the French, Canadian, Louisiana expeditionary forces content.
Diverting attention away from communal difficulties (be they red or white or a mixture of both), Tonti describes the Indians around him.

The Cadadoquis are united with two other villages called Natchitoches and Nsoui, situated on the Red River. All the nations of this tribe speak the same language. Their cabins are covered with straw, and they are not united in villages, but their huts are distant one from the other. Their fields are beautiful. They fish and hunt. There is plenty of game, but few cattle (boeufs). They wage cruel war with each other -- hence their villages are but thinly populated. I never found that they did any work except making very fine bows, which they make traffic with distant nations. The Cadadoquis possess about 30 horses, which they call "cavali" (sp: caballo, a horse). The men and women are tattooed in the face, and all over the body (87-88).

Here, as in the Tensas descriptions, Tonti deems it worthy to speak at length about aspects of a particular tribe’s culture that interest or impress him. In this instance, the depiction serves also as a digression from the disheartening monotony of white insubordination and red instability. Furthermore, the items that Tonti brings up reflect facets of Native-American life that Louisiana writers continually highlight: approximation to or acculturation of European norms (e.g., the beautiful fields and the presence of Spanish horses and Spanish terminology in Caddo villages); the persistence of red-on-red cruelty; and the potential of red lands and red inhabitants for French enterprises.

Returning to his quest for La Salle’s men, Tonti leaves the Caddo “with a Frenchman, a Chaganon, a little slave of mine, and five of their savages, whom they gave me as guides to Naouadiché” (88). For Tonti, the journey is a continuation of red complications and white obstacles. His party, typical for early Louisiana in that it consists of red and white, free and slave, soon gladdens at the news of the desired Frenchmen’s whereabouts. As Tonti relates, “On our road we found some Naouadichés savages hunting, who assured me that
the Frenchmen were staying with them. This gave me great pleasure, hoping to succeed in my object of finding them" (88). Tonti's joy fades, however, thanks to the ineptness of a fellow countryman.

On the 19th the Frenchman with me lost himself. I sent the savages who were with me to look for him. He came back on the 21st, and told me that, having lost our trail, he was near drowning himself in crossing a little river on a piece of timber. His bag slipped off, and thus all our powder was lost, which very much annoyed me as we were reduced to 60 pounds of ammunition (88).

After this latest French hindrance, Tonti must confront another occasion of Indian deceit as well as a possible Spanish threat.

Relating the newest difficulties from without the insecure French group, Tonti states,

On the 23rd we slept half a league from the village and the chiefs came to visit us at night. I asked them about the Frenchmen. They told me that they had accompanied their chiefs to fight against the Spaniards seven days' journey off; that the Spaniards had surrounded them with their cavalry, and that their chief having spoken in their favour the Spaniards had given them horses and arms. Some of the others told me that the Quanouatins had killed three of them, and that the four others were gone in search of iron arrow heads: I did not doubt but they had murdered them. I told them that they had killed the Frenchmen. Directly all the women began to cry, and thus I saw that what I had said was true. I would not, therefore, accept the calumet. I told the chief I wanted four horses for my return, and having given him seven hatchets and a string of large glass beads, I received the next day four Spanish horses. . . . Horses are very common among them. There is not a cabin which has not four or five. As this nation is sometimes at peace and sometimes at war with the neighbouring Spaniards, they take advantage of a war to carry off the horses. We . . . departed on the 29th, greatly vexed that we could not continue our route as far as M. de la Salle's camp. We were unable to obtain guides from this nation to take us there, though not more than 80 leagues off, besides being without ammunition, owing to the accident which I related before (88-89).

The passage above, which highlights Indian acculturation in the possession and trading of Spanish horses, also shows Tonti's
Indianization in his ability to read and bargain with all types of Native Americans.

Nearing the site of La Salle’s murder, Tonti finds it fitting to eulogize his late leader by offering his version of the founder of Louisiana’s sad fate.

I will say a few words of what I have heard of this misfortune. M. de la Salle having landed beyond the Mississippi, on the side of Mexico, about 80 leagues from the mouth of the river, and losing his vessels on the coast, saved a part of the cargo, and began to march along the sea-shore, in search of the Mississippi. Meeting with many obstacles on account of the bad roads, he resolved to go to Illinois by land, and loaded several horses with his baggage. The Father Anastatius, M. Cavélier, a priest, his brother; M. Cavélier, his nephew; M. Moranget, a relative; MM. Duhaunt and Lanctot, and several Frenchmen accompanied him, with a Chaganon savage. When three days’ journey from the Naouadiché, and short of provisions, he sent Moranget, his servant, and the Chaganon, to hunt in a small wood with orders to return in the evening. When they had killed some buffaloes, they stopped to dry the meat. M. de la Salle was uneasy, and asked the Frenchmen who among them would go and look for them. Duhaunt and Lanctot had for a long time determined to kill M. de la Salle, because, during the journey along the sea-coast, he had compelled the brother of Lanctot, who was unable to keep up, to return to the camp; and who, when returning alone, was massacred by the savages. Lanctot vowed to God that he would never forgive his brother’s death. As in long journeys there are always discontented persons, he easily found partisans. He offered, therefore, with them, to search for M. Moranget, in order to have an opportunity to execute their design. Having found the men, he told them that M. de la Salle was uneasy about them; but the others showing that they could not set off till the next day, it was agreed to sleep there. After supper they arranged the order of the watch. It was to begin with M. Moranget; after him was to follow the servant of M. de la Salle, and then the Chaganon. After they had kept their watch and were asleep, they were massacred, as persons attached to M. de la Salle. At daybreak they heard the reports of pistols, which were fired as signals by M. de la Salle, who was coming with the Father Recollet in search of them. The wretches laid wait for him, placing M. Duhaunt’s servant in front. When M. de la Salle came near, he asked where M. Moranget was. The servant, keeping on his hat, answered, that he was behind. As M. de la Salle advanced to remind him of his duty, he received three
balls in his head, and fell down dead. The Father Recollet was frightened, and, thinking that he also was to be killed, threw himself on his knees, and begged for a quarter of an hour to prepare his soul. They replied that they were willing to save his life. They went on together to where M. Cavelier was, and, as they advanced, shouted, "Down with your arms." M. de Cavelier, on hearing the noise, came forward, and when told of the death of his brother, threw himself on his knees, making the same request that had been made by the Father Recollet. They granted him his life. He asked to go and bury the body of his brother, which was refused. Such was the end of one of the greatest men of the age. He was a man of wonderful ability, and capable of undertaking any discovery. His death much grieved the three Naouadichés whom M. de la Salle had found hunting, and who accompanied him to the village. After the murderers had committed this crime, they seized all the baggage of the deceased, and continued their journey to the village of Naouadichés, where they found two Frenchmen who had deserted from M. de la Salle two years before, and had taken up their abode with these savages.

After staying some days in this village, the savages proposed to them to go to war against the Quanouatinos, to which the Frenchmen agreed, lest the savages should ill-treat them. As they were ready to set off, an English buccaneer, whom M. de la Salle had always liked, begged of the murderers that, as they were going to war with the savages, they would give him and his comrades some shirts. They flatly refused, which offended him, and he could not help expressing this to his comrades. They agreed together to make a second demand, and, if refused, to revenge the death of M. de la Salle. This they did some days afterwards. The Englishman, taking two pistols in his belt, accompanied by a Frenchman with his gun, went deliberately to the cabin of the murderers, whom they found were out shooting with bows and arrows. Lanctot met them and wished them good day, and asked how they were. They answered, "Pretty well, and that it was not necessary to ask how they did, as they were always eating turkeys and good venison." Then the Englishman asked for some ammunition and shirts, as they were provided with everything. They replied that M. de la Salle was their debtor, and that what they had taken was theirs. "You will not, then?" said the Englishman. "No," replied they. On which the Englishman said to one of them, "You are a wretch; you murdered my master," and firing his pistol killed him on the spot. Duhault tried to get into his cabin, but the Frenchman shot him also with a pistol in the loins, which threw him on the ground. M. Cavelier and Father Anastatius ran to his assistance. Duhault had hardly time to confess himself, for the father had but just given him
absolution when he was finished by another pistol shot at the request of the savages, who could not endure that he should live after having killed their chief. The Englishman took possession of everything. He gave a share to M. Cavelier, who having found my abode in Arkansas, went from thence to Illinois. The Englishman remained at Naouadiches (90-93).

Unlike later Louisiana writers, Tonti does not criticize La Salle's personality and actions, nor does he excuse the discontent of those serving under Cavelier. La Salle for Tonti approaches the status held by Saint Denis for Pénicaud and Dumont, and Tonti villainizes La Salle's murderers with a passion similar to that in which Dumont transmogrifies Bienville into Saint Denis' diabolical nemesis. Curiously, in spite of his earlier problems with the British who are among the Iroquois, Tonti here makes an Englishman a minor hero, along with red men loyal to La Salle, a concession that foreshadows the Louisiana literati's willingness to credit their sometimes enemies (be they British, Spanish, or Native American) with admirable qualities.

Leaving the region where his hero met his tragic end, Tonti relates more strange difficulties.

We . . . went away on the 17th, with a guide who was to take us to the village of Coroas. After four days' journey he left us, in consequence of an accident which happened in crossing a marsh. As we were leading our horses by the bridle, he fancied he was pursued by an alligator, and tried to climb a tree. In his hurry he entangled the halter of my horse, which was drowned. This induced him to leave us without saying anything, lest we should punish him for the loss of the horse. We were thus left in great difficulty respecting the road which we were to take (93-94).

The passage above indicates both the fragility and intensity of Franco-Indian co-dependence.

Tonti's problems and the prickly situations in which he finds himself only multiply as he heads eastward, back to the Mississippi.

When our guide was gone I told the Chaganon to take the lead; all he said in answer was, that that was my
business; and as I was unable to influence him, I was obliged to act as guide. I directed our course to the southeast, and after about 40 leagues' march, crossing seven rivers, we found the River Coroas. We made a raft to explore the other side of the river, but found there no dry land. We resolved to abandon our horses, as it was impossible to take them on account of the great inundation. In the evening, as we were preparing to depart, we saw some savages. We called to them in vain -- they ran away, and we were unable to come up with them. Two of their dogs came to us, which, with two of our own, we embarked the next day on our raft, and left our horses (94-95).

Where problems with Native Americans leave off, more troubles with the environment set in.

Tonti says of the arduous trek through flooded, rainy country where no Indian friends can be found,

It would be difficult to give an idea of the trouble we had to get out of this miserable country, where it rained night and day. We were obliged to sleep on the trunks of two great trees placed together, and to make our fire on the trees, to eat our dogs, and to carry our baggage across large tracts covered with reeds; in short, I never suffered so much in my life as in this journey to the Mississippi, which we reached on the 11th of July. Finding where we were, and that we were only 30 leagues from Coroas, we resolved to go there, although we had never set foot in that village (94-95).

With nothing left to lose, Tonti enters an unfamiliar red community without knowing what to expect.

His perseverance and leadership severely tested (in trial by earth, water, and man), Tonti is rewarded for his enduring mettle at the Coroa village.

We arrived there on the evening of the 14th. We had not eaten for three days, as we could find no animal, on account of the great flood. I found two of the Frenchmen who had abandoned me at this village. The savages received me very well, and sympathised with us in the sufferings we had undergone. During three days they did not cease feasting us, sending men out hunting every day, and not sparing their turkeys (95).

While the Coroas may be villainized for their cruelty in other texts
from Louisiana colonial literature, here they administer balms to a man who, it would seem, could withstand no more affliction. But Tonti does face further adversity, a fever staying with him from the Arkansas to the Illinois.

Although his narrative of difficulties finally comes to a close, hard work and disappointment will keep Tonti company until he dies of disease at Mobile in 1704.

Tonti ends his text of trial, tribulation, and unsung triumph in nascent Louisiana with the following apology:

If I had not been hurried in making this narrative, I should have stated many circumstances which would have gratified the reader, but the loss of my notes during my travels is the reason why this relation is not such as I could have wished (96).

While the memoir may not be as Tonti would have preferred and, hence, the reader may be the poorer for its not having met the author’s standards, this founding father of Louisiana has still left a precious record of life in the colony’s earliest days and has helped inaugurate a body of literature that is striking for its thematic consistency over a period spanning three centuries.

Tonti’s contributions to history and literature do not end with the memoir discussed above. In a September 11, 1694, letter to Cabart de Villermont Tonti talks about the need to follow upon La Salle’s initiatives by founding settlements in Lower Louisiana. And of Tonti’s two 1700 letters discussed in “Documents: Tonti Letters,” Delanglez affirms that the second “may be considered as Tonti’s third memoir on the geography of the Mississippi Valley” (213).

The literary relevance of Tonti’s two 1700 letters is enhanced by the fact that Tonti wrote them to clear his name after the fictitious Dernières Découvertes dans l’Amérique Septentrionale de M. de la Sale (1697) had been attributed to him. As Delanglez notes,
Tonti needed to vindicate his good name. A few years before a romantic account had been published under his signature. This fiction — perhaps because it was fiction — was very popular in France. Iberville had a copy of it on his first voyage and harshly criticized the fancies with which this and other similar accounts in print at the time abounded. A few weeks before Tonti wrote his letters, he had been asked to explain the discrepancies of the fiction and had disclaimed authorship. He realized how harmful the romance published under his name was to be to his interests when further comparisons were made between the inventions of the Dernières découvertes and reality. Hence, with fire in his eye, he sat down to tell his brother "exactly what he knew" of the country (213).

The need to clear up misconceptions about Louisiana and to depict the region realistically is another literary impulse that connects Tonti to the long line of Louisiana authors following him. Even well after statehood (and to this day), Louisiana writers have attached primary importance to the bashing of fantasies and stereotypes and the promotion of truths about their homeland.

English translations of Tonti's two 1700 letters are included in Delanglez's "Documents: Tonti Letters." The first appears entitled as "Extract from a Letter of M. Tonti to His Brother, Dated from the Quinipissa Village in Mississippi, 60 Leagues from the Sea, February 28, 1700." Delanglez's translation of the "Extract" opens with an account of Bienville's famous confrontation with the captain of an English ship in the lower Mississippi River in 1699. In the most popularized versions of the "English Turn" incident, Bienville, venturing downstream, encounters the British vessel headed upstream, whereupon the former orders the latter to leave the area, claiming that there are more Frenchmen in the region than there actually are. The British comply, and their about-face gives that stretch of the Mississippi the name English Turn.

In a note to the February 28, 1700, "Extract," Delanglez affirms that in the March 4, 1700, letter Tonti becomes the first to give the
name English Turn to the area of the river where Bienville's effective bluffing occurred (215). Tonti's mention of the event in the "Extract" from the February 28 letter reads simply,

A small English vessel ascended the river 30 leagues, August 3, 1699. M. de Bienville ordered the captain, in the name of the king, to withdraw, which he did, saying, however, he would come back to establish himself on the River (215).

Later writers would add Bienville's bluff to the episode, and the event would quickly become one of the most memorable anecdotes from Louisiana history and lore. However, some authors such as Le Page du Pratz downplay Bienville's role in the naming of the "turn," and their accounts will be examined later as possible subversions of Bienville's reputation as an effective leader of Louisiana. Delanglez refers to some of these possibly subversive renditions as "the fanciful account of the meeting in Dumont, Mémoires Historiques sur la Louisiane ... and the still more fanciful narrative in Le Page du Pratz, Histoire de la Louisiane" (footnote, 215).

Bienville's encounter with the British on the Mississippi aside, Tonti attests to his own continued dedication to fellow countrymen, king, and Old- and New-World homelands when he relates going to meet Iberville in Lower Louisiana upon hearing in Upper Louisiana that Le Moyne had arrived on the Gulf Coast. At the same time, Tonti also boasts of his familiarity with all of the vast Louisiana territory.

I resolved to go meet him, hoping to be of service to him, since I have a perfect knowledge of this country, although I felt some jealousy seeing another in a country where I had the right to hope for everything after the expenses I underwent for the service of the king. I came down here and I am well pleased I made 900 leagues for such a purpose. When M. Iberville told me he was going to the Cenis, I made him offers of service, having formerly visited these people. This pleased him much (217).

Putting his personal interests behind those of the colony (yet well
aware of what he deserves because of his faithful and efficient service to crown and fellow man), Tonti displays the qualities that Louisiana colonial writers consistently laud in their works and hope for in their leaders. That is, Tonti exudes self-sacrificing devotion to the immediate needs of both colonists and natives while at the same time serving without reproach the interests of monarch and empire. While it may be true that, in part, Tonti is striking a rhetorical pose in the passage quoted above so as to promote his interests along with those of everyone else, the admiration that Tonti has won from scholars indicates his true devotion to the colony and its residents. Furthermore, Tonti's confession of jealousy suggests genuineness and a down-to-earth humility that Louisiana authors treasure in their heroes.

Just as Tonti's humility does not keep him from reminding important readers of what he deserves, so it also does not prevent the author from defending his reputation against detraction. Such is the case when Tonti relates a particular confidence from Iberville.

When he was ready to leave for this country, since it was necessary that a number of Frenchmen should come from Canada to meet him, he mentioned me to M. de Latouche. The latter replied that I would not do, that I was a debauchee. I don't know who they are who painted such an ugly portrait of me. I have had a few quarrels with the Jesuits about matters which had nothing to do with debauchery. I can only accuse them of the bad services rendered me, directly or indirectly, in the [colonial] office, or M. the Intendant of Canada who has always opposed us (217-218).

Tonti's defense is not only a complaint against defamation of his own person, it is also a protest against corrupt powers -- be they ecclesiastic or civil -- that hinder the colony's progress and well-being. In addition, Tonti's self-defense illustrates the moral uprightness that Louisiana colonial writers feel compelled to maintain personally, promote communally, and disseminate among Native Americans. As
evinced in Tonti, however, this fervently Catholic stance does not prevent the authors from criticizing clergy and religious orders when they deem such criticism necessary.

Tonti, like Louisiana artists up to this day, felt compelled to clarify misconceptions about his home, especially after the authorship of the highly inaccurate *Dernières Découvertes* had been attributed to him. Concerning the latter, Tonti tells his brother,

I am very sorry to see a relation [published] under my name to which much has been added and in which the memoirs I sent you were not followed point by point. It is disagreeable to pass for a liar. It would please me if you could retrieve my memoirs and exhibit them when necessary. My letter having been found at the Quinipissa village by M. Iberville, I think there will be no doubt of my having come several times to the sea and to the lower part of this river (219)\(^9\)

Later in the text, Tonti’s desire to expose falsehoods concerning Louisiana leads him to attack another notorious work and its author.

I do not know how Father Hennepin had the boldness to lie so impudently in his relation. He was insupportable to the late M. de La Salle and all of M. de La Salle’s men. [La Salle] sent [Hennepin] to the Sious as to get rid of him. He was taken on the way by these Indians with Michel Aco and Pierre Dugué. Afterwards the three of them were freed from servitude by M. Dulude, who was passing through that country, and brought back by him to Canada. How can a man have the front to write that he went down to the sea? Aco who is married in the Illinois country and who is still alive is able to prove the contrary to him. I think Pierre Dugué is in France. It is said that there are many falsehoods in my relation. I haven’t seen it. It is a cause of sorrow to me. I am sorry the memoirs I sent you were not followed (234-235).

Tonti’s remarks on Hennepin’s published relation and the published account wrongly attributed to Tonti indicate the presence of some form of literary criticism even in Louisiana’s earliest writings. Tonti does not stand alone in attacking Father Hennepin. The latter’s spurious account receives condemnation from Tonti’s contemporaries,
from later writers in both the New and Old Worlds, and even from scholars today.

The "Second Letter Written by M. De Tonti to His Brother, from Fort Mississippi, March 4, 1700" begins with Tonti's relating how, once again, he is compelled to serve others' interests rather than his own. Reluctantly yet obediently, Tonti follows Iberville's changing orders rather than pursue his own desires, suspecting all along that Jesuits have set authorities against him and his designs. He again relates all that he has done in Louisiana and mentions the paltry recompense he has received for his expenses, hoping that his brother will plead his case and secure some reimbursement from the Court. Tonti then devotes the rest of the letter to a description of Louisiana and its inhabitants.

Describing his second home, Tonti often refers to the "admirable land." He calls the Mississippi River "the most beautiful in the world" (223), and he gives brief listings of the Indian nations to be found along the "Father of Waters" and its tributaries. When he gets to the Natchez, Tonti does not fail to mention the peculiar social hierarchy upon which later writers elaborate, a hierarchy highlighted by Tonti and the subsequent authors for the mass human sacrifices of its royal funerals. Focusing on the Tensas, whom he had given considerable attention in his earlier memoirs, Tonti, with seemingly less admiration for the tribe than formerly exhibited, remarks, "Same customs as the Natchez. But now that M. de Montigny has his mission among them, it may be hoped that these two nations will change their cult, their customs, and will despise their temples" (227). Like the Louisiana writers to follow him, Tonti expresses a desire for Christianization of Native Americans. This hope for red religious conversion and, subsequently, red "civilization" indicates the role that
Frenchmen such as Tonti wish American aborigines to have in the future of the colony. Instead of removing or eradicating Indians, the Louisi­
siana French want and need red alliances, not only in the form of mil­
itary coalition but also in cooperative building of a new society.
For most writers of the colonial period that new society is very con­
ciously a Franco-Indian one. Of course, the new civilization envi­
ioned by Tonti and other writers is to be run by the French, but Tonti's and others' respect for and confidence in the Indian contribu­
tion cannot be denied, even if their respect does not allow for con­
tinued paganism.
When his narrative reaches the Arkansas Indians, Tonti attests to his interest in Lower Louisiana. For example, he mentions his in­
volvement in colonization along the Arkansas River (also called the Tonti River), which was "given to me by M. de La Salle, which I set­
tled, and where I had a house built" (228). Delanglez notes, "It seems that as early as 1686, Tonti was making land grants along the Arkansas River" (footnote, 228). When stable French settlements were finally established on the Gulf Coast, Tonti's operations moved even farther south.
Delanglez's presentation of Tonti's second 1700 letter ends as follows.
All the voyages I made for the success of this country have ruined me. I hope the Court will take it in consid­
eration. . . . Even if you do not obtain what I am ask­
ing, if troops are sent to this country as M. d'Iberville tells me they will, at least, secure a company for me (235).

With or without any recompense secured by his brother, Tonti would spend the remaining four years of his life serving king and colony under Iberville.

In her article "Henri de Tonti du Village des Chacta," Patricia
Galloway examines two letters from Tonti to Iberville written during the former’s mission to the Choctaw and Chickasaw in late winter, 1702. Galloway notes that, the originals of these letters no longer existing, the copies extant today were made by the geographer Claude Delisle for use in mapmaking. In addition, Galloway states that the letters were originally longer, possibly describing in more detail the events of the journey to the Choctaw (150).

In the February 23, 1702, letter, Tonti speaks favorably of the Choctaw. “The men there are rather handsome,” he notes, “and I can compare this nation with the Natche. They are very satisfied that you want to have peace made for them with the Chicacha; they have received us very well” (167). Fairness and reciprocation toward the Choctaw on Tonti’s part are shown when the author relates, “I gave a gun to the chief of this village before taking from here the things that we need” (167). In addition, “I have promised each of the two Chaqta 6 knives, 2 hatchets, and two fathoms of large rassade to carry you this letter” (167-168). In short, the first 1702 letter shows Tonti getting off to a good start on his Indian mission.

In the March 14, 1702, letter, Tonti recounts his entrance into Chickasaw territory, where he hopes to mend rifts in Chickasaw-Choctaw relations. When he learns of an Englishman’s presence among the Chickasaw, Tonti admits, “I believed my journey useless” (168). Tonti comments on the gaucheness and on the cold, capitalistic interests (which include red slave trading) that preoccupy the Englishman even during the Chickasaw’s ritualized reception of Tonti’s party into their village.

Our Chacta notable made his speech and then the Englishman whom I had regarded with nothing but anger came up to me and asked me if I knew how to speak Chouanon; I had told him no and that I had come to seek the chief on your behalf. That since I knew him by reputation for a wretch that he had better not make any speech against us, that if

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I noticed it he would be sorry. He had me asked why I believed he was so bad. I had him told that he had wanted to kill M. Davion [a missionary priest] when he was at the Chicacha (which he denied) and then that he was having all these nations destroyed in order to obtain slaves and that he ought to be sated with human flesh, which he similarly denied, saying that it was the savages who had brought them to war, but when I asked him why his comrade was leading 400 warriors he had no answer to give me (168-169).

Clearly, the procuration of red slaves is a main cause of Tonti's condemnation of the Englishman. Tonti vents his rage and disgust by confronting the Anglo trader with the latter's doings and by exposing them to the outside world in this letter.

As Tonti's Choctaw party leaves with accompanying Chickasaw to return to the French, the Englishman is caught red-handed, so to speak, in slave snatching.

A warrior informed us that a young Chacta had been taken away. Straightaway I made the chief understand that it was necessary to have him back and that you would pay as much for him as the Englishman could.

The 7th the Englishman had the slave sent by another road, but the chief having gone to the village he brought him to us; he was about 15 or 16 years old. The chief told me that as he arrived at the village the Englishman was cutting the slave's cords and that he had snatched him from his hands; that the Englishman had threatened him with leaving and that he had answered get out; that the French had only one mouth and that he [the Englishman] had two; that he made them kill every day in order to get slaves, that the French only wanted skins and peace with all the nations and that the Englishman had put his head between his knees.

I assure you, sir, that this Englishman is a very bad character; his cabin is full of slaves that he abuses. He has some influence, and I noticed that when the chiefs divided the presents I gave them on your behalf, he received the greatest share (169-170).

Tonti gloats over exposing the Englishman’s corrupting influence, unjustified power, and merciless abuse of Native Americans. At the same time, the author delights in extolling, through the mouth of a red
spokesman, his own nation's more humane disposition toward indigenous peoples. Lest the reader begin to think that Tonti is exhibiting considerable Anglophobia in the discourse quoted above, it must be remembered that in his account of La Salle's end, Tonti depicts an Englishman as being on the side of his hero and fellow Frenchmen as being Cavelier's villainous executers.

As the Franco-Choctaw-Chickasaw party proceeds toward Mobile, some of the Chickasaw become concerned for their safety when they hear of problems between the tribes back home. Tonti says of the Chickasaw fears and his efforts to allay them,

They were afraid that the Chacta would kill them, and there was one of them who wanted to return. I made the others understand that I was hired to come and seek them; that if they did not come with me to see the great Chief their wars would continue forever; that the French would not go any longer among them, whereas on the other hand there would always be many among the Chacta; that they [the Chacta] would have much powder and guns and that the 2 nations would destroy one another quickly; and that the English would come then to take the rest; that if they came with me you would give them some presents and some Frenchmen to escort them to their village; that you would send them boats loaded with merchandise by the Mobile river...; that they would have nothing to fear for themselves.

This speech reassured them (170).

In reassuring the Chickasaw, Tonti speaks frankly and honestly, pointing out the constant English threat and the unending cycle of red-on-red butchery and proving true the chief's remarks about the French having only one mouth. As a remedy for Chickasaw problems, Tonti offers alliance with the French and their friends, making it seem that the offer stems simply from France's interest in the welfare of each red group and in peace between every red nation.

Closer to his multinational group's destination, Tonti says, "At noon I will send the Chacta chief with Dubournai in order to persuade the savages to receive well the Chicacha who are with us" (171).
Later, Tonti reports happily,

On the same route we arrived at the first village where the Chiefs were all well received; they all appeared happy with the peace and to go and meet you to confirm it, and since I am well aware that you might have left for France before my return I am sending you Denboursier to carry you this so that you might be informed of everything that has happened in my journey and that you might have the generosity to give orders for the reception of the savages whom I am bringing you and for the presents that you wish to give them (171-172).

Clearly, Tonti takes great pains to make sure that nothing is amiss in the reception of the Indians among whom he has worked hard to establish peace. His sensitivity to proper protocol is one of the many qualities that make him an invaluable mediator between the French and Native Americans and even between various red groups.

As the letter nears a close, Tonti emphasizes the urgent need for France to establish sound relations with the Choctaw and the Chickasaw.

Permit me to tell you, sir, that . . . in making allies for ourselves of these people none of the other nations will dare to stir, and if they are not satisfied with the French one must doubt that the English will do all they can to attract them and cause all your neighboring savages to be destroyed, and that they will strike the iron while it is hot (172).

Tonti then relates how the Englishman whom he had encountered among the Chickasaw had already threatened to go to another tribe, where "he would invite them to destroy the Chicacha" (172). Clearly, Tonti fully realizes the importance of building sound alliances with as many tribes as possible. In Tonti's prioritization of colonial activities, few surpass the primacy of Franco-Indian diplomacy.

Tonti closes the extant extract from the second Choctaw letter by again offering his selfless service in Lower Louisiana.

If the explorations to the West of which I have spoken to you do not please you and if you judge me to be useful elsewhere you know what my brother told you in France, and

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what I have told you also: use me however you will and be assured that I will always take pleasure in doing what you wish (172-173).

While Tonti's labors in the New World were fueled in part by capitalist interests and hopes of personal gain, Tonti's life in America was characterized more by difficulties than by comforts. His willingness, just two years before his death, to endure further hardships (be they on exploratory expeditions or as an ambassador to Indian nations) for the sake of the colony's advancement and not solely his own benefit caps Tonti's long list of services dedicated to forging a sound and secure society for all in his new home, Louisiana.

In closing this chapter on two of Louisiana's earliest authors, men who were with Cavelier de La Salle when he established the colony and who accompanied him from one end of the new territory to the other, I would like to highlight Patricia Galloway's observations of the significance of La Salle's journey from Upper to Lower Louisiana. In La Salle and His Legacy, Galloway affirms that "probably the most important accomplishment of La Salle's journey was the establishment of peaceful relations with the Native American groups the party met along the way" (ix-x).10

Instrumental in maintaining and strengthening those peaceful relations and in repairing strained or hostile situations was Henri de Tonti. In fact, as Galloway also notes in La Salle and His Legacy, "It is certain that the title of first Indian diplomatist of the lower Mississippi Valley must be awarded to La Salle's partner, Henri de Tonti" (xi). Beginning with Tonti and Nicolas, the reviewer of Louisiana literature can trace the primacy that Franco-Indian relations have had throughout the writings of the colonial period. The same concern expressed by Tonti and, to a lesser extent, Nicolas about indigenous Americans and Euro-American responses to them preoccupy the
artists and color the art of Louisiana from its beginnings as part of New France in the late 1600s to its entrance as the eighteenth member of the United States in the early 1800s.
The Narratives of Priests and Religious in Colonial Louisiana

The preceding chapter on Tonti and Nicolas was envisioned in part as an analysis of literary forerunners. After all, the writings of the two prefigure rather than exemplify the literature to come. In many ways, this second chapter, which focuses on the compositions of select priests and religious, also has the nature of a preliminary chapter. For while the scribes of the cloth cannot be said to prefigure the early eighteenth-century colonial authors in the way that Tonti and Nicolas at the end of the seventeenth century do, the clergy and nuns' writings nonetheless stand apart by virtue of the authors' vocations. Hence, the literary productions of persons in vows are often commented upon in this chapter as "reflecting" or "corresponding" to the writings of persons currently being offered as the major authors of Louisiana's first colonial period (i.e., Pénicaut, Dumont, Le Page, Bossu, and so on).

A major exception to this seeming relegation of a whole group of writers to secondary importance is to be made in the case of Marie-Madeleine Hachard, who, if Tonti is to be disassociated from the 1697 Dernières Découvertes, may be considered Louisiana's first published author. Hachard's letters appeared in print in her native Rouen, Normandy, France shortly after her arrival in the colony. Because of her double primacy as the first published female writer in Louisiana letters, a primacy that both Roger Baudier (7) and the Reverend J. Edgar Bruns (31) have noted, Hachard deserves the attention accorded
the most important authors of the first French domination and subsequent regimes.

Although Hachard would spend more than half of her life in a New Orleans convent, she composed her Relation only while venturing to and then settling down in her new Louisiana home. The letters comprising the Relation were published in 1728, merely a year after Hachard had landed in the colony. Admittedly, they spring from only the beginnings of Hachard’s Louisiana experience, from that time when she was making the transition from young French woman to Louisiana missionary nun. Therefore, they could rightly be labelled marginal New-World writings were it not for the following facts: the author, before beginning the first letter, had committed the rest of her life to the spiritual and physical development of Louisiana, without ever having seen the land; the Relation would be the first composition by a long-term Louisiana female resident to be published anywhere (albeit Hachard had not been a long-term resident of the colony at the time of publication); and most significantly, perhaps, the letters share important qualities with a whole body of Louisiana writings spanning the rest of the eighteenth century.

Marie-Madeleine Hachard was born to a pious bourgeois family of Rouen in the first years of the eighteenth century. Proud of her Norman heritage and of the part Normans played in colonizing and proselytizing the New World, Hachard joined the Ursuline order at Rouen with the intention of venturing to the Americas as a cloistered missionary. In 1727, at the age of 23, Hachard, under her new religious name of Sister Saint Stanislaus, came to New Orleans with the city’s founding community of Ursulines.

Myldred Masson Costa briefly summarizes Hachard’s life in Louisiana from 1727 to 1760 as follows:
Madeleine's disposition and ability to work had endeared her to Mother Tranchepain, her superior. In addition to her teaching duties, she acted as Secretary for the Community. After years of teaching, she died in her sleep on August 9, 1760 at the age of 56, regretted by all (no page number).

The "teaching" that Costa mentions included everything from instructing children of all shades in spiritual, academic, and domestic matters to serving on the staff of an orphanage, hospital, correctional institute, and women's prison. Such were some of the indispensable roles of the Ursuline Convent in early New Orleans.

Before leaving France in 1727 and up until May 1728, Sister Saint Stanislaus wrote five letters to her father back in Rouen. The elder Hachard promptly published the letters in the latter year, thereby securing his daughter's primal spot in Louisiana literature. The Relation du Voyage des Dames Religieuses Ursulines de Rouen à la Nouvelle Orléans was reprinted in France in 1865 and 1872. In 1974, Costa offered her English translation, and in 1988 another French edition appeared.

The letters may rightly be called literature, for it is evident throughout the collection that they were crafted to supply Hachard's father with information on Louisiana that he requested not only to satisfy his own interests through private perusal but also to gratify the curiosity of others through publication. In an attempt to please her father, Hachard dutifully offered factual data and informative descriptions of her new home. In addition, she included entertaining depictions of colorful characters she encountered along the way, most notably the Portuguese inhabitants of Madeira, who both intrigued and amused the young French woman. Furthermore, Hachard's rendition of La Salle's tragic story leads her letters into a secular hagiography that matches Tonti's and others' hero worship. Finally, the author's
interest in the welfare as well as the peculiarities of all peoples mirrors a similar interest shared by Louisiana writers who follow her, and the Louisiana canon of such writers gains a special dimension because of Hachard’s sex.

In the first letter, “Written at L’Orient, this 22 of February 1727” (1), Hachard hastens to express her desire to be in Louisiana. Still in France, she speaks anxiously of “Louisiana, that fortunate country for which I sigh as I do for the Promised Land. I long with all my heart to be already in the Monastery which they are building for us” (2). Hachard spends most of the first letter detailing the long ordeal of travel and delay merely in getting from her hometown in Normandy to Paris and then to Lorient on the Breton coast. Held up in Paris, Hachard relates, “This delay caused us real grief. I thought, both day and night, only of our Mission” (4). Despite her desire to be in the colony, the young Norman postulant admits the effect that a prolonged wait amid the relative splendor of a Parisian nunnery had on her:

I shall not deny that I was tempted in that earthly Paradise and that the temptation was of the most delicate kind, but the Lord sustained me and, fortified by His Grace, I continued to prefer the abode of New Orleans to that of Paris (4).

Finally on the French coast, having become a novice en route, Sister Saint Stanislaus Hachard says of her group of Ursulines bound for Louisiana, “In all we are eleven, without counting two servants; there are many communities in France that are not so numerous, but I doubt strongly that there are any as united or happier of their destiny” (9). After the difficulties of wintertime land travel in early eighteenth-century Europe, the mobile cloister next endures the discomforts and dangers of a sea voyage filled with storms, pirates, dwindling supplies, and shipwrecks. Even the venture up the
Mississippi River presents its trials in the form of weather and insects, but the nuns remain firm and eventually reach their new home.

In the second letter, "Written at New Orleans, This twenty-seventh of October 1727" (15), Hachard continues to affirm her commitment to Louisiana. She refers to family and friends who tried to talk her out of going to the colony, but her only regret is that one of her sisters did not accompany her. Louisiana is not only Hachard's home of choice, it is also her destiny, for "the Lord gave . . . to me a vocation for our establishment in Louisiana" (16). Hachard's vocation to service in Louisiana is a fate that delights her. In addition to the "first fervor" of her religious ministry in the colony, Hachard takes in her new surroundings with excitement and optimism. An able reporter for her father, she describes Louisiana's food, land, climate, and vegetation with relish. She is sure that

if the land were cultivated there would be no better in the world, but for that it would have to be otherwise inhabited and France would have to send workmen of all trades. A man working only two days a week digging the ground and planting wheat would harvest more than he would need to feed himself all year (20).

In the passage quoted above, Hachard prefigures Dumont, Le Page, and others whose awareness of Louisiana's natural abundance and potential for development causes them to envision what Dumont terms a "Second Paradis" in the colony.

Along with her early enthusiasm for Louisiana's progress, however, Hachard also voices immediate criticism of the colony's white inhabitants. She maintains that "the majority of the people here live in idleness and apply themselves only to hunting and fishing" (20). Hachard cannot condone such easy living, for lack of industry keeps her dream for the colony from coming true. In addition to a general absence of motivation among the colonists, Hachard soon perceives
behavior and social affectations that she views as vices. She notes that "there is much politeness and magnificence here as in France and the use of cloth of gold and velvet is very common, even though it is three times as expensive here as in Rouen" (17).

Indians seem to fare better in Hachard's first stated impression of Louisiana residents, for she refers to them initially as "the savages, the majority of whom are very sociable" (20).²

Hachard initially speaks more positively of the white Creoles of the West Indies than she does those of Louisiana. She says of a woman encountered during the nuns' stay on "the Island of Santo Domingo" while on the way to the Mississippi Valley: "We dined ... with a young Creole Lady of that country who was in no way different from a Parisian -- the best bred Parisian, at that" (33-34). Reflecting on the islanders further, Hachard expresses "desire for education for the young Creole girls who have naturally happy dispositions but who must be sent to France to be taught in Convents" (34). Such approval of West Indian Creoles contrasts sharply with Hachard's opinion of Louisiana women. Still, Hachard decries the West Indies along with Louisiana for "the little Religion which it has" (34). She notes that on French Hispaniola "the most devout are those who do not publicly lead scandalous lives! In the whole of this country there is but a single priest" (34-35).

Hachard becomes most critical when referring to the morals of white Louisianians, especially women.

I shall not speak to you, my dear Father, of the morals of the lay people of this country. I do not know them very well and have no desire to meet them, but it is said that they are quite corrupt and scandalous. There are also a great number of honest folks. One does not see any of these girls who were said to have been deported here; none seem to have come as far as this. You say, my dear Father, that all the devoted parishioners of the Reverend Father de Houppeville are entering the Religious Life. We
have a great need of this Reverend Father here -- not to inspire women to become Nuns but to gather faithful followers because, as one of the Reverend Capuchin Fathers assured us the other day, there are none in all the country or its environs (21).

When Hachard says that she has "no desire" to meet the unreligious "lay people of this country," she speaks, in part, as a cloistered nun whose ministry and interests are centered in her convent.

It is from within the walls, primarily by instructing the young, that Hachard is to serve the colony. As she notes,

"We are cloistered here with as much regularity as in the Convents of France, and if we had the misfortune of Father de Beaubois falling ill and not being able to say Mass, we would miss it on Easter Sunday or even for six months rather than leave the Convent and attend the Parish Church (21)."

What cannot be accomplished in the sphere of the convent must be left to those with other vocations. The strict observance of the cloister notwithstanding, the nuns are kept so busy from morning to night meeting the needs of New Orleans that Hachard finds time to write her father only before going to bed at night.

While remaining true to the guidelines and customs of their order, the Ursulines must adapt to their new homeland. One of the first accommodations they make, interestingly, is the adoption of slavery to meet their need for servants. In the first letter, as her community is leaving France for Louisiana, Hachard asks, "My dear Father, please do not be scandalized at this, but we are taking with us a Moor to wait on us -- as it is the custom of the country" (10-11).

After arriving in Louisiana, Hachard notes of the rest of the nuns' slaves:

"When we arrived here, the Reverend Father de Beaubois told us that he had just lost nine Negroes who had all perished at one time from a North Wind; this was a loss of nine thousand livres. Fifteen days ago, the Company gave us eight, two of which have already escaped into the woods or..."
elsewhere. Fourteen or fifteen ran away from the Company on that same day. We kept a handsome woman to wait on us and the rest we sent to our plantation which is only about a league from here to cultivate the land. We also have over there an overseer and his wife who are careful to protect our interests (20-21).

Even before they set foot in Louisiana, the Ursulines become involved in the plantation system of the New World. They soon reap the benefits as well as the headaches of slave-owning as their involvement in the "peculiar institution" deepens.

Hachard adds at the end of the second letter, "This package will leave on the Prince de Conty which has just brought us Negroes from Guinea" (22). Hachard's references to slavery correspond to the general acceptance of the institution on the part of eighteenth-century Louisiana writers, practically all of whom refer to the institution matter of factly, some of whom offer guidelines for the care of slaves, only a few of whom (notably Bossu) come close to questioning black disenfranchisement at any given point, and none of whom approves of harsh forms of slavery.

Thus, while she may bashfully beg her father's pardon for her order's possession of only one slave when she is still in France, shortly after she arrives in the colony Hachard has already gone from apologizing for her involvement in slavery to tallying up the monetary costs of lost slaves -- and without a word of pity for the temporal or spiritual agony of those in bondage before their loss. All of this indicates the quick adaptations to her new home that the nun is making.

In addition to fitting their lifestyles to an American setting, the Ursulines, like all Continentals wanting to succeed in the New World, must adjust their preconceptions concerning indigenous peoples, Creoles, and émigrés to reality. Hachard gives evidence of such an
adjustment process while relating the trip up the Mississippi River from Balise to New Orleans:

We saw a large number, a number beyond expectations, of honest folk who had come from France and Canada to settle in this country. They promised us boarders everywhere and several already wanted to give them to us. We spent the last night at the home of Monsieur Massy, brother of our postulant, where we were as comfortable as we would be in our own homes (44).

Shortly after her arrival in New Orleans, Hachard reports happily that Fathers and Mothers are carried away with joy when they see us because they no longer fear they must return to France since now they have the means of assuring an education for their daughters. This good disposition of the inhabitants makes them very attentive to our needs and they vie to see who can send us the most, which makes us obligated to almost everyone (45-46).

In a very short time, Hachard has gone from criticizing the Louisianans' moral and occupational laxness to praising their "good disposition," energetic charity, and desire for self-improvement.

Thus read some of Hachard's views on the New and Old Worlds expressed in three letters written as of October 1727 -- that is, up until the end of her first three months of residence in Louisiana. The collection's last two letters, written on January 1, 1728, and April 24, 1728, respectively, were both composed in New Orleans. They show that by early 1728, Hachard still speaks both approvingly and criticizingly of the new land that is quickly becoming her home.

When she appraises the appearance of New Orleans in the spring of 1728, Hachard attests further to her own swift naturalization to her new home.

Our city is very pretty, well constructed and regularly built, from what I know and saw of it the day we first arrived in this country. Since that day we have remained in our Cloister. Before our arrival, we had been given a very bad impression of the city, but I admit that those who spoke so had not seen it for several years. The people have worked and still work to perfect it (54).3
New Orleans has become “our city,” just as the convent is “our clois­
ter.” Having seen and lived in the municipality for nearly half a
year, Hachard feels compelled to correct false notions of the place.
She thereby participates in the ongoing effort on the part of Louisi­
ana writers (which began with Tonti and continues to this day) to
clarify misconceptions of the region and to present its people, cus­
toms, and physical appearance as they truly exist. The clarification
of misconceptions involves changing her own ideas too. As in her re­
port of the people inhabiting the Mississippi River banks below New
Orleans, so in her observation of town dwellers, Hachard begins to
acknowledge incentive on the part of Louisiana residents to improve
both their own lives and the state of their society.

Hachard has become such a part of New Orleans by the time of her
first spring in the city that she partakes of local enthusiasm for the
place when relating a song and a comparison made common by civic
pride.

It suffices to say that there is a song sung openly here
in which the words proclaim that this city is as beautiful
as Paris. Does that not explain to you how the people
feel? In fact, it is very beautiful, but if I do not have
enough eloquence to convince you of all the beauty claimed
in the song, it is because I find that there is a differ­
ence between this city and the city of Paris. While the
song may persuade people who have never seen the Capital
of France, I have seen it and the song does not persuade
me to believe this opinion. It is true however that it
grows daily and could therefore become as beautiful and
large as one of the principal cities of France — if more
workmen come over and it becomes populated in proportion
to its size (54-55)

Not only does the passage quoted above aptly illustrate Hachard’s con­
fidence in New Orleans’ potential for greatness, it also refers to one
aspect of the city that is still touted: its being the so-called
“Paris of America.”
Hachard cites another peculiarity of New Orleans that continues to distinguish the city with the passage of time: its unique Louisiana architecture.

The houses are very well built of "collombage et mortier." They are white-washed, paneled and filled with sunlight. The roofs of the houses are covered with tiles which are little pieces of wood in the shape of slate. One must see this to believe it, for this covering has all the beauty and appearance of slate (54).

Having already mentioned local foodstuffs and song earlier in the narrative, Hachard rounds out her ever improving estimation of Louisiana by adding architecture to a trinity that still calls attention to the place.3

Despite her increasing awareness of the positive aspects of Louisiana culture, Hachard still lashes out at the values and morals of Louisiana residents.

While the women ignore facts pertaining to their salvation, they ignore nothing when it comes to vanity. The luxury in this city is such that one can distinguish no one; everyone is of equal magnificence. Most of the women and their families are reduced to living only on sagamite, a sort of gruel. However, notwithstanding the expense, they are dressed in velvets and damasks covered with ribbons, materials which are regularly sold in this country for three times their cost in France (55).

In deploring the fact that "everyone is of equal magnificence" and that, hence, "one can distinguish no one," Hachard is not necessarily voicing elitist sentiments, feelings which would put her at odds with subsequent Louisiana writers, most of whom envision the well-being of everyone in society as resulting from the breakdown of discriminatory authority. Rather, Hachard is condemning the spread of unaffordable, self-centered luxury, which causes children to go hungry simply so that adults may compete for the best outward appearance. In this instance, then, as in her day-to-day commitment to the moral,

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academic, and material improvement of children of all races, Hachard links herself to other humanitarian writers, speaking and acting for a more just as well as a more progressive Louisiana.

Even Hachard's most biting attacks -- directed at female immorality -- are made in the hopes of helping those being criticized.

Continuing her observations on women's vanity, Hachard notes,

> The women here, as elsewhere, use red and white paint and patches, too, to cover the wrinkles in their faces. The devil here possesses a large empire, but this does not discourage us from the hope of destroying him, with God's love. There are certainly an infinite number of examples for his strength to show through our weakness. The more powerful the enemy, the more we are encouraged to engage him in combat. What pleases us here particularly is the docility of the children whom one can mold as one wishes. The Negroes also are easy to instruct once they know how to speak French. It is not the same with the savages. They are baptized with grave doubts as they are so prone to sin, especially the women, who, under a modest air, hide the passions of beasts (55).

While Hachard decries the vanity and religious laxity of white females and stands aghast at red female sexuality, she expresses nothing but hope for white children and black slaves.

At the same time that she is becoming more familiar with Indians, Hachard is also getting more used to blacks.

> We are accustomed to seeing black people. We were given a short time ago two Negress boarders, one of six and the other of seventeen years, to instruct them in our Religion. They will stay to serve us. If it were the custom here for Negresses to wear patches [to enhance facial beauty], they would have to be given white ones, which would be rather funny (59).

Youth and newness to religious life are reflected in Hachard's attention to cosmetics, and good humor is evident in her awareness of the comedy resulting from the clashing of dissimilar cultures and races.

Thus, despite the cloister, Hachard observes the world about her. Recognizing the good in the public, she gratefully acknowledges
the reception that her order has received from everyone -- high and low -- in Louisiana society.

Monsieur Perier [the commandant] and Madame his wife, who is most amiable and very pious, do us the honor of visiting us often. The Lieutenant of the King is also a perfect gentleman and a past Officer. The people smother us with all sorts of presents. . . . The inhabitants, seeing that we do not wish to take money to instruct our day students, are filled with gratitude and help us in every way they can. The marks of protection that we receive from the important people of the colony make us respected by everyone. Of course none of this would continue if we did not nourish with our actions the great esteem that they have for us (56-57).

In light of the colonists' reactions to the Ursuline presence in their midst, Hachard humbly admits that she and her sisters must work hard to maintain their position of prestige as well as to return the favors of the populace.

The brighter side of the colony's collective personality notwithstanding, Hachard yet perceives the long, hard road to societal reform lying ahead for the sisters. For although the priests' and nuns' ministries have started to bear good fruit, there are still many bad apples with which to contend. Hachard notes of the progress,

Our Reverend Father is of such an admirable zeal it seems that he has taken it upon himself to convert everyone here and is determined to accomplish his goal. But I assure you, my dear Father, that he will have a lot of work to do before he succeeds because not only do debauchery, lack of faith and all other vices reign here more than elsewhere, but they reign with an immeasurable abundance! As for the girls of bad conduct, they are watched closely and severely punished by being placed on a wooden horse and flogged by all the soldiers of the Regiment that guards our city. In spite of all this there are still just too many of these women to be put in a house of refuge (58-59).

Hachard seems to approve of harsh measures to curb promiscuity. She likewise reports of attempts to fight crime: "A thief is brought to trial in two days and is either hung or broken on the wheel. Whether he be White, Indian or Negro, there is neither distinction nor mercy"
Interestingly, just as she found it fitting earlier to comment that there was no distinction in the way high and low Louisianians presented themselves in public, so Hachard now deems it worth noting that there is likewise no distinction when it comes to dealing colonists justice.

To her credit, Hachard realizes that the moral plight of the colony is due mostly to ignorance. Hence, she speaks with special satisfaction of the primary mission of her order.

I cannot express the pleasure that we get from instructing all this youth, especially when we remember the great need they have. These boarders of twelve and fifteen years of age have never been to Confession, nor even to Mass. They were brought up on their plantations, a distance of five to six leagues from the city, and consequently had received no spiritual help. In short, they had never even heard of God. For them the most ordinary things we tell them become oracles out of our mouths. We have the consolation of finding in them much docility and a great interest in learning. All of them would like to become Nuns. This is not at all to the liking of Reverend Father de Beaubois, our very worthy Superior. He finds that it would be better for them to become Christian mothers and thereby establish Religion in this country through their good examples (59-60).

Hachard proceeds to affirm,

I am still very happy to be in this country and following my vocation. My joy redoubles with the approach of my Final Vows, to be made in a foreign land where Christianity is nearly unheard of. It is true that there are many honest people in this country, but there is not the slightest indication of devotion, nor even of Christianity. How happy we would be if we could establish it here. With the aid of our Reverend Father Superior and a few Capuchin Religious who are also dedicated to this cause and do everything in their power to accomplish it, I assure you that we spare nothing (60).

Relying upon the receptivity and assistance of the “many honest people in this country” as well as the ministry of priests and religious, Hachard rests assured that her dreams for Louisiana will come true.
As must be obvious by now, Hachard's comments on the roles of women are noteworthy, for they reflect the bourgeois values of her day and grant insights into the mentality of a young, early eighteenth-century lady and nun. In addition to her treatment of women, Hachard's observations of non-French cultures are also worthy of note. Particularly interesting is the depiction of the Portuguese whom Hachard encounters on Madeira while in transit to Louisiana. Intrigued and amused by these southwesternmost Europeans, Hachard portrays them from a stance quite similar to that from which Pénicaud's Saint Denis recounts his dealings with Spanish Mexicans. That is, Hachard and Pénicaud's Saint Denis, both imbued with a detectable sense of French superiority, present the foreigners as drollly excessive and so absorbed with their own magnificence, generosity, and politeness that they are blinded to the humor of their ways. While Hachard and Pénicaud's Saint Denis both admire the hospitable nature of Latins, the two seem to derive satisfaction and diversion in discovering the underlying egocentricism to which their hosts are oblivious.

As soon as the Ursulines' boat arrives at Madeira after having been battered by a storm off the European coast, the French nuns are barraged with male attention, from clerics to laymen and from young to old.

Those who had come to see us in the small boat informed the town that there was a Convent of Nuns and several Jesuit Missionaries on board. This news aroused the curiosity of the people and drew many visitors to us. The Fathers of the Company of Jesus who had a famous College in that city were among the first to come aboard; they did not even give our Fathers time to be advised of their arrival.

No one could be more gracious than those Fathers. There was only one who spoke French but he told us a thousand considerate things in the name of all of them. They would have liked us to disembark and lodge with them but we thanked them and declined. Our Reverend Fathers went
the next day to dine with them at their College. They were received with great politeness and were treated with magnificence and, for a present, our Fathers were given a ram.

We also shared in the generosity of the Island Fathers as they themselves brought us large baskets full of all sorts of refreshments such as lemons in abundance, salads, preserves and others. During the three days we remained in the port, these generous and gracious Fathers paid us several visits, apparently taking great pleasure at seeing us and praising the zeal which had caused us to undertake such a long and painful journey. The greatest sorrow which they said they had was not being able to give us more assistance; I estimate that everything they did for us was as nothing compared to their good wishes. Several of those Fathers wore large glasses on their noses in the Portuguese manner and I noticed a young one who took his off to read something — which to us seemed most extraordinary. On the whole, their ways are much like those of our own Fathers in France, except that they wear their hair shorter.

We saw many of the most important gentlemen of the City, including the Intendant of the City, all of whom came to visit us. They were all dressed in black, each carrying a reliquary and wearing holy beads around the neck, the Inquisition being on this Island as in Portugal and Spain. The students of the Jesuits were also curious and obtained permission to come to see us. We were overwhelmed. They each carried beads to make them look devout, but we have been told that they are not really that devout (28-29).

Although the cloistered sisters do not seem to mind the attention of the men of Madeira and are genuinely grateful for the presents and assistance showered upon them, their young Sister Saint Stanislaus critiques the Portuguese men as both a girl and a maturer woman would. Hachard is old enough to see beyond the pretense of eyeglasses and rosary necklesses but young enough to deem hairstyles an important thing to mention.

While the male islanders are outgoing and generous to the point of ostentation, the female Madeirans lead a very different life. The double standard does not escape Hachard, for she notes,

We did not see any women at all. They are not visible; one sees them only through grills. They only leave their
homes to go to Mass and then they all go at the same time so that they form a sort of Procession, walking covered with long veils and in complete silence, unless they are saying their beads (29).

Ironically, the island's cloistered nuns are more liberated than the unprofessed Madeiran women. Hachard notes that there are on that Island two Convents, the principal one being the order of Saint Clare. The Abbess is a Portuguese Princess and, since the Religious on the Island are freer than the lay women, they got wind of our arrival very soon (29-30).

Being more like the men than like their secular counterparts, the ecclesiastically cloistered Madeiran women likewise vie for the Ursulines' attention.

This Abbess wrote a very gracious letter to our Reverend Mother Superior to invite her and her whole Community to come to visit her. She praised us all very highly -- her style was very eloquent, at least our Officers translated the letter in this manner. It was written in Portuguese and our Reverend Mother Superior answered in French. The Abbess received the letter of our amiable Mother with a show of friendship and esteem despite the fact that she certainly could not understand it, unless perhaps it had been translated for her by someone who spoke both French and Portuguese. The next day, a young woman who was on board with us went to pay the Abbess a visit in the name of our Community. She was showered with attentions and presents; the Nuns of that Convent, numbering more than three hundred, embraced her at the convent door and reiterated their requests that we come to visit them. We, however, decided it would be improper as we had taken in the supply of water we needed and we felt we should edify the public by remaining confined to our cloister in La Gironde rather than appear in a city where even the lay women do not show themselves. Finally we thanked the city with a cannon shot and set out on the deep again to continue our course. I believe that if we had remained at anchor any longer, the Nuns less attached to their cloister than we to ours, would have left their Convent to come to see us. They had been told of the modesty of our Habit which is very different from theirs and were fascinated by it, as were the Reverend Jesuit Fathers (29-30).

In comparing the Madeiran religious communities to those of her own
country, Hachard's sense of French superiority manifests itself clearly. Even before reaching Louisiana, the Ursulines, always conscious of their role as teachers, take advantage of any opportunity to correct local shortcomings, those of fellow religious included, by offering, through example, the way of correctness. Interestingly, once the Ursulines, who refused to enter the Madeiran convent, reach the French West Indies, they waste no time leaving La Gironde to be housed in a company store! The excuse, however, is that after such a long voyage their linens are in need of whitening.

Hachard's characterization of the Madeirans, like the Pénicaud Saint Denis' depiction of the Mexicans, does not simply shed light on an early eighteenth-century French frame of mind. The Madeiran interlude, like the Ursulines' brief sojourn in the Antilles, adds an international dimension to Hachard's work. While few Louisiana writers confine the scope of their attention to Lower Louisiana, taking into account as they do occurrences in France, the West Indies, and all the lands bordering the vast extremities of the entire original Louisiana territory, Hachard, like Bossu in his second book, takes the global-to-specific quality of Louisiana literature a step farther by incorporating events from Europe hors de France. Later, Le Page and then Bossu will increase the world coverage of Louisiana literature even more by casting their narratives into Asia and the Far East.

As she ends her letters, Hachard reveals that the state of Louisiana women of all races remains a primary concern both for her and her fellow religious sisters.

Our little Community increases each day. We have twenty boarders, eight of whom made their first Communion today, three ladies who are also boarders and three orphan girls whom we took in out of charity. We also have seven slave boarders to instruct for Baptism and first Communion, a large number of day students and Negroes and Indian girls who come two hours each day for instruction. The
custom here is to marry girls of twelve to fourteen years of age. Before our arrival a great number of these girls had been married without even knowing that there was a God (you can imagine how everything else is here) but since we are here, girls are only married if they have come to our instructions (59).

In addition to teaching women in spiritual, academic, and domestic matters, thereby upgrading the morals, learning, and quality of life in the colony, the Ursulines provided Louisiana females with a degree of protection previously unavailable to them. Not only could homeless female adults board at the Convent, but young girls could also be held back from early marriage and have their spouses scrutinized thanks to the nuns' intervention.

Another revealing passage on the roles of both the Ursulines and early Louisiana women also occurs in the last letter, dated April 24, 1728.

Monsieur Perier, our Commandant, a few days ago made use of our home as a prison to confine in it one of our lady boarders, whom he had himself given us previously, because she was separated from her husband. This lady began to be bored at the Convent and wanted to have secret relations with a layman. Monsieur Perier, therefore, had her imprisoned, with her husband’s consent, until she could be sent back to France. Such is the manner in which they act here (61).

One could wonder about the personal opinions behind the statement “such is the manner in which they act here.” While Hachard definitely does not approve of the married woman’s conduct, does she condone the type of restraint and threat of banishment that seem to be the norm for handling such a case?

A later passage answers any questions one might have concerning Hachard’s stance on the issue. In praising the Perier administration, she notes of the commandant,

He has established a regular police for this area and declared war on vice. He sends away anyone who leads a scandalous life and has corporal punishment for girls.
leading a bad life. He hangs and breaks on the wheel for the least theft. Trials are finished here within three to four days. The Council is Sovereign. There is no appeal from it (46).

Hachard's approval of Perier's war on vice may well stem from a bourgeois severity toward promiscuity, theft, and other "deviant behavior." More importantly, however, Hachard's approbation indicates her views on how to gain control of a rambunctious frontier society. When love and good example fail, use force; after that, make sure the punishment matches the crime.

The April 24 letter does not leave New Orleans before May 8, 1728, at which point Hachard adds,

We have gotten rid of the lady who had been prisoner in our house. A Counselor of the country let it slip out that he would be willing to take her into his home so Monsieur Perier, our Commandant, had her conducted there and charged the Counselor with her guard (66).

It seems that by May 1728, Hachard and her fellow Ursulines have resolved any individual or communal concerns they may have had about their role in ministering to women such as the one imprisoned in the Convent -- let the authorities care for them! The sisters, after all, have more than enough work to do.

As for Hachard's views concerning civil authority, a passage from the third letter praising Perier (a controversial commandant whom some Louisiana writers adore and others deplore) suggests the author's ideas on the relationship between those who rule and those who are ruled.

We have above all Monsieur Perier, the Commandant, and Madame, his wife who are persons full of merit and of amiable manner. This gentleman has, in three months, acquired the esteem of the entire country. No one can find fault with his behavior because he takes pains to administer justice and carries on the interests of the Company in such a mild and ingratiating manner that he has nearly appeased the troubles and disunion which plagued this city (46).
In Hachard's opinion, anyone who rules or assumes a position of importance should be a person "full of merit and of amiable manner" -- in other words, someone who is qualified for the post and approachable at the same time. The two qualities go hand in hand to insure successful government, the latter enabling the person of authority to be in touch with the people's needs, the former allowing him to address those needs effectively. Furthermore, the ideal administrator "takes pains to administer justice" and works hard for the progress and well-being of his city, colony, country, or empire; that is, he thinks less of himself and more of those over whom he rules. Such humility, "such a mild and ingratiating manner" wins the leader "the esteem of the entire country." Foremost in importance, the chief official must serve the needs of everyone in his society and act as a mediator between factions so that "troubles and disunion" will not plague the domain.

In holding up an early head of the colony as the embodiment of the ideal ruler, Hachard helps pave the way for a long succession of Louisiana writers who voice their concerns on universal welfare, on the administration of government, on the relationship between those who rule and those who are ruled, and on the roles of the monarchy and the masses by spotlighting important personages from Louisiana history who have displayed ideal leadership qualities by their being servants of society.

Hachard brings her letters to a close by offering an historical sketch that links her even more closely to other Louisiana writers. Preoccupied as they are with detailing the activities of shapers and builders and powers that be in the colony, the Louisiana authors differ as well as agree on who are the place's truly great men. Curiously, some of the persons whom the passage of time has afforded a significant place in Louisiana history receive negligible attention or
complete omission from the colonial writers' creations. Also noteworthy is the way the early authors alternately bolster and blast the reputations of prominent, well-targeted benefactors and malefactors of the colony. While the writers usually concur on who deserves praise and who warrants condemnation, they are sometimes at variance over certain figures.

One such questionable character, whose tragic qualities are perhaps most beautifully conveyed by Bossu, is the conceiver of Louisiana himself, La Salle. Whereas most of the other émigré authors refer to La Salle in strictly historical references, Bossu and Hachard use the ill-fated man's life for much deeper -- and greatly differing -- purposes. While Bossu believes the La Salle story exemplifies the individual and societal downfalls that occur when a talented and capable man of prominence gets carried away with himself, Hachard views the La Salle tragedy as the martyrdom of a secular saint. In her depiction of La Salle's doomed activities in the New World, Hachard attempts to lift a controversial character to heroic stature through her own brand of profane hagiography. Such attention to the author's personal favorites from Louisiana history manifests itself throughout the colony's literature, from Pénicaud's expansion of the Saint-Denis legend (accomplished through his recording and embellishing an oral tale upon which subsequent authors also write) to Poydras' encomiums to Spanish Governor Bernardo de Gálvez.

Hachard's pious vignette of the man who gave Louisiana its name and its beginnings reads as follows.

I have already noted in one of my preceeding letters that Monsieur Robert Cavelier, Sieur de la Salle, native of Rouen, had come in 1676 and 1685, by order of the King Louis XIV, to this country of Louisiana, in the capacity of Viceroy of the Mississippi, with a number of other people from the same city of Rouen, to explore the country before anyone else. That is all that I knew at that time,
but I have since learned certain circumstances that I think will interest you.

After the first discovery made by Monsieur de la Salle of the lands of the Mississippi in the year 1676, the King learned of the esteem which he, Monsieur de la Salle, had acquired with the savages, that he was loved by the Illinois, the Hurons and the majority of the other Indian nations of the Mississippi, and that he had found a means to make the Iroquois, the most cruel and barbarous nation of all America (they eat the Whites), fear and respect him. The King therefore named Monsieur de la Salle, in 1684, Viceroy of all Louisiana, permitted him to raise troops and gave him four vessels commanded by Captain Beaujeu. The embarkation took place at La Rochelle around the month of July of the said year, 1684.

Monsieur de la Salle took with him workmen of all trades to establish a colony, and also six Apostolic Missionaries. . . . He also brought with him a large number of volunteers who offered to come with him, all handpicked young men, children of families of Rouen . . . , amounting to about two hundred and fifty, including one hundred soldiers and their Officers, of which Monsieur de la Sablonniere was the Lieutenant. . . .

Monsieur de la Salle had planned to land at the mouth of the Mississippi River, but some disagreement which occurred during the voyage between Monsieur de la Salle and Sieur Beaujeu, Captain of the vessel of the King, prevented them from finding the river’s mouth. Monsieur de la Salle found it necessary to disembark with his troops about one hundred and fifty leagues further down on the western coast, between the river and New Spain. That territory of America is occupied by the Spaniards and has several gold and silver mines which produce a very considerable profit for the Spanish King every year. Sieur Beaujeu abandoned Monsieur de la Salle there and returned to France with his vessel.

Monsieur de la Salle and his troops marched north and, after having crossed a number of rivers, forests and plains, found themselves near a fort of the Illinois, at a spot now called Little Rock. They did not even approach our district. Of course, at that time there was no city of New Orleans, only a deserted and wild place -- until the time of the Regency of the Duke of Orleans, when the foundations of this city were first laid. It is for this reason that the city is called New Orleans. Not until 1723 did New Orleans begin to take on the appearance of a city -- before that work depended on the availability of workers.

But let us return to Monsieur de la Salle. Since this brave Captain knew how to make himself feared and esteemed by the savages, it seemed that everything favored his undertaking; but in the month of March, 1687, the very
day he was preparing to send Monsieur Cavelier, the priest and his brother, to France to inform the King of the state of his expedition, he was assassinated by the sinister plot of five of his own men, due to some sort of jealousy. The crime of Duhault, the man who dealt the cruel death blow, did not remain unpunished. A short time later Hians reproached him of his perfidy and killed him. The four accomplices have since died miserably in this country, not daring to return to France.

After the troops had lost their brave Captain, who alone knew the country, they became disoriented and desolate; they dispersed. Monsieur Cavelier, the priest, Sieur Cavelier, his nephew, sixteen years old, Father Anastase, the Recollect, and the Sieurs Joustel and Tessier resolved to return to France. Passing through a village of the Accanas, they found a dwelling in which lived a carpenter named Couture and a cook named Delaunay, both natives of Rouen. Monsieur Tonti, at that time the Commander of the Fort Saint Louis in the Illinois had left them at the Accanas post to watch it. The party finally made their way to Canada, passing through Fort Saint Louis and Montreal. At Quebec they embarked for France.

The Sieurs Desloges, Oris, Thibault, le Gras, Liotot and le Carpentier were killed by the savages. The remainder of the troop escaped one by one. Monsieur de Chefdeville, the Missionary, stayed at the same spot, Little Rock, until April 1688. He then advanced on the side of the Illinois toward the Iroquois where he baptized and converted a great number of souls to God. He died in their village in great sanctity — to be crowned in Heaven as a reward for the ardent zeal which he showed for the salvation of the souls of those poor savages. He had been one of the first who had the consolation of opening Heaven to the first Christians and Saints of this nation.

It is thus that the noble and glorious expedition of Monsieur de la Salle failed. Without that perfidy he would have explored all the country of the Mississippi, which he had named Louisiana, and an infinity of families would have come from France and Canada to settle here and plant the faith. One of those in the company of Monsieur de la Salle at Little Rock, a man named des Liettes told the above story in the manner I have had the honor of telling it to you. Des Liettes stayed at Little Rock until he died, only two years ago. There you have all that I could learn of these events.

Is not your city of Rouen proud, my dear Father, of the honor which it has received from Monsieur de la Salle and his company, almost all natives of your city, who first discovered the Mississippi, from Monsieur de Chefdeville, Missionary, who first established the faith here and finally from the Priests and Ursuline Nuns of the same city who today do everything possible to instruct and
save the souls of these poor savages? This is surely something to excite your citizens and to encourage them to commit themselves to the continued discovery of still more unknown lands and the bringing of Christianity to them. I do not know if it is for this reason or some other that the savages of Louisiana have so much esteem for the Normans. They have more regard for people from that province than for anyone from any other and recognize them as capable of succeeding in all their enterprises. If they were told of the conquests of the Dukes of Normandy, the bravery of the Normans in the Holy Land during the Crusades, their conquest of the kingdom of England and of others, they would be even more convinced. We are not here for that, however. If they want to know these facts, let them get them from others or read them in history books (61-64).

Hachard’s Norman pride and, undoubtedly, her admiration for both La Salle’s piety and his ties to religious orders blind her to the tragic flaws leading to Cavelier’s ruin. Instead of presenting a well-rounded portrait of a man possessing strengths as well as shortcomings, Hachard’s sketch accentuates only La Salle’s fine qualities on the one hand and his assassins’ corruption on the other.

Interestingly, one of the admirable traits that Hachard chooses to highlight is La Salle’s ability to get along with Native Americans. In a move that places her more closely to the Louisiana writers who follow her, Hachard stresses La Salle’s relationship to the Indian as one of primary importance. Not only does Hachard believe that the king named La Salle “Viceroy of all Louisiana” because of the love and respect that Cavelier won from many indigenous nations, she also credits the aboriginal regard for La Salle with making it seem that “everything favored his undertaking.” Furthermore, to soften the shock of La Salle’s worldly failure (and, it seems, to defend his reputation against possible detraction), Hachard follows her hero’s foiled attempt at European colonization with spiritual successes (the most important kind to her!) among Native Americans. Moreover, as
Cavelier’s missionary converts and thereby saves red souls, he wins an additional degree of immortality for La Salle as well.

In sum, the young Ursuline’s idolization of the man who brought Louisiana into existence as well as her enthusiasm for the work that he began in the colony testify further to the many ways in which Hachard’s Relation heralds the arrival of another American literature. But just as Hachard’s letters are undeniably significant to the establishment of Louisiana literature, they are also an important contribution to global women’s literature.

Jean-Pierre Chaline notes of the extraordinary nature of both Hachard’s adventures and the recording of those adventures in her Relation:

Mesure-t-on ailleurs, outre l’expatriement définitif sur une terre encore à demi sauvage, l’aventure extraordinaire que représentait, pour une jeune fille de 23 ans, cette périlleuse traversée de cinq mois à laquelle ne manquent ni les rencontres de pirates ni, à deux reprises, un presque naufrage? De quoi faire réfléchir, à tout le moins, sur le bien-fondé des habituels clichés nous présentant la vie des femmes, avant le XXe siècle, comme étroitement cantonnée dans la sphère domestique, et celle des nonnes, en particulier, comme frileusement repliée sur l’univers clos du couvent. . . . Même remarque en ce qui concerne le degré d’instruction, bien plus élevé qu’on ne pourrait le croire, de cette jeune Rouennaise membre, il est vrai, d’une congrégation à la vocation enseignante mais faisant preuve de connaissances, d’un style, d’une curiosité historique (ainsi à propos de Cavelier de La Salle) certainement au-dessus de la moyenne (VIII-IX).

Considering the expectations that her century placed on women, Hachard wins acclaim for her brave and bold activities as well as for the degree of worldly knowledge displayed in her letters. Hence, one of the few female contributors to Louisiana’s colonial writings enhances the quality of that body of literature by adding her own exceptional merits to those of her male counterparts and increases the relevance.
of the Louisiana literary canon for contemporary studies by virtue of her sex.

Not long after Hachard and her order had arrived in New Orleans, the colony was rocked by one of the greatest calamities of the pre-statehood period: the Natchez massacre of the French at one of Louisiana's most prosperous settlements in late November 1729. Mathurin Le Petit, Jesuit superior for Louisiana, wrote about the event and its effects on missionary activity, colonization, Franco-Indian relations, and the mental and material well-being of survivors and other residents throughout the colony. Le Petit's personal contact with witnesses of the massacre increases the value of his narrative as a record of the disastrous event and its effect on individual and collective psyches in early Louisiana. What is more, his remarks on the Ursulines' response to survivors and the order's other works for the spiritual and material progress of the colony indicate the importance that Le Petit placed on the roles of religious communities in promoting societal welfare.

Le Petit's commitment to the Church and society in Louisiana, a commitment reflected in his literary contribution, demands a consideration of the Jesuit's work as Louisiana literature. Le Petit died in New Orleans in October 1739, after having served as the Louisiana superior of his order in the 1730s and as missionary to the Choctaws in the 1720s. The French version and an accompanying English translation of Le Petit's report on Louisiana in the wake of the Natchez Massacre appears in The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents as Lettre du Père le Petit, Missionnaire, au Père d'Avaugour, Procureur des Missions de l'Amérique Septentrionale. In 1950 Richard H. Hart published an English translation entitled The Natchez Massacre, from which the following quotations are taken.

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Le Petit's epistolary narrative purports to be written "At New Orleans, 12 July, 1730," to "My Reverend Father" (Father Louis D'Avaugour, Procurator of the Missions in North America) (1). The author immediately addresses the purpose of the composition and, at the same time, leaves no doubt as to his feelings concerning the Natchez Indians and their role in the catastrophe at the post bearing their name.

Since you have but a confused notion of the results attending such a dark act of treachery, I am going to make clear to you all the circumstances, but first I believe I should make you acquainted with the character of these perfidious savages called Natchez (1).

For Le Petit, writing in the heat of the annihilation of French men, women, and children, the Natchez are "these barbarians," "this barbarous tribe" about whom "none had reason to suspect their perfidy" (1). As will become evident when other texts touching upon the Natchez Massacre are examined later in this study, Le Petit's one-sided condemnation of the Natchez for their uprising is unique, for most Louisiana authors admit that the insurrection resulted from legitimate Natchez grievances over intolerable French abuses.

In addition to speaking disparagingly of the Natchez, Le Petit also criticizes the Choctaw extensively in his narrative. Meanwhile, he favors indigenous groups such as the Tunica and the Illinois. Yet even among the tribes that he is attacking Le Petit recognizes admirable members and finer collective qualities. This varying treatment of Native-American societies on Le Petit's part reflects the ability of most Louisiana writers to distinguish between red nations and between individuals of the same tribe and thereby to present the generalities and exceptions, the good and the bad (as the authors view such) in aboriginal America.

Despite his negative overture, Le Petit still acknowledges advanced qualities in the Natchez, advanced for him, of course, meaning
an approximation of European and classical types. As he relates,

This tribe of savages inhabits one of the most beautiful
and fertile regions of the world. They are the only peo­
ple of this continent who appear to have a cult with defi­
nite rules. Their religion at certain points approaches
very nearly that of the ancient Romans (2).

Like the more secular lay writers who also focus on the Natchez, Le
Petit feels compelled to mention the beauty of the Natchez landscape;
the sophistication of Natchez religion, artwork, and architecture; and
the unusual stratification of Natchez society. The priest goes on to
describe in detail both the interior and exterior of the Natchez tem­
ple, thereby betraying his unwitting admiration for at least one place
of pagan worship. Furthermore, the temple and its artifacts lead the
author to record instances of acculturation that began to occur in
Natchez society as early as Iberville's time: "In the year 1699, they
had a bottle and the foot of a drinking-glass which they guarded
religiously" (2).

When it comes to relating the Natchez caste system, Le Petit
voices disapproval of its overblown hierarchy. For example, he says
of attitudes concerning the chief (who considers himself to be a rela­
tive of the sun), "The credulity of the populace supports his arroga­
tion of despotic authority" (3). Le Petit goes on to say,

These people obey blindly the slightest wish of the Great
Chief; they regard him as the absolute master, not only of
their goods but of their very lives, and there is not one
of them who would dare refuse to give him even his head,
should the Chief demand it. For such labors as he orders
them to perform, he forbids them to seek pay. The French,
who often need hunters and paddlers on long journeys, nev­
er seek them except from the Great Chief. He furnishes
all the men they wish and receives payment without giving
any part to these unfortunates, who are not even permitted
to complain (5).

While speaking of the required killings for a Natchez Sun's funeral
ceremonies, horrors which Pénicaud and others graphically depict,
Le Petit says of those about to be murdered, "These blind ones submit willingly to this law, in the foolish belief that in following their Chief they go to enjoy the greatest happiness" (5). Le Petit's disapproval of heavy-handed and abusive authority is one that all colonial Louisiana writers share and that they quickly expose in any tyrant, red or white, that they encounter.

Despite his obvious dislike of oppressive government by the few, Le Petit still delights in relating the elaborateness of Natchez societal strata and the ornateness of accommodations for the man at its top. In addition to the chief's luxuries and the bloody homage due his death, Le Petit also focuses in detail on war making and on other ordinary and extraordinary aspects of Natchez life that other Louisiana writers highlight. Since the authors who best glimpsed Natchez society were perhaps Le Page (who lived at Natchez for years) and Pénicaud (who spent an extended sojourn among the Natchez), Le Petit's descriptions of Natchez customs and cultivation will not be examined in great detail here.

What is noteworthy, however, are the things that Le Petit decides to criticize and/or expose for critical public scrutiny. For one, he devotes considerable attention to the freedom and power of female Natchez Suns, noting that the Princesses of the blood wed only men of obscure family, and have but one husband, but they have the privilege of dismissing him when they please and taking another among those of the tribe, provided they are in no wise related. If the husband is guilty of infidelity, the Princess has him knocked in the head immediately. She is not subject to the same law, for she may take as many lovers as she chooses, without her husband having anything to say about it. He must maintain the greatest respect in her presence; he may never eat with her, and he salutes her with the same howl as do the servants. The only privilege accorded him is to be exempt from labor, and to have full authority over those who serve the Princess (6).
Undoubtedly, Le Petit's fascination with the female Suns derives from their rights and their husbands' deprivations being reversals of Old-World norms, reversals that might have proved distressing for the author.

When it comes to relating Natchez "superstition," Le Petit becomes overtly hostile, resorting to ridicule of something that he believes to be a great menace to society.

This nation, like the others, has its medicine-men; ordinarily, these are old men who, with no study and no science, undertake to cure all maladies. For this they use neither herbs nor drugs. All their art consists of various sorts of hocus-pocus... These mountebanks eat scarcely at all while working at the cure of their patients, but their chants and dances are accompanied by contortions so violent that, since they are stark naked and must suffer from cold, they are always foaming at the mouth. They have a small basket where they keep the things they call their spirits: little roots of different kinds, owls' heads, little packets of deerskin, teeth of animals, little stones or pebbles, and other like trash.

It seems that to restore the health of their patients they continually invoke the contents of their baskets (12-13).

It must be pointed out that Le Petit is not condemning all forms of Native-American healing here. The Louisiana colonists were well aware of the curative powers of many aboriginal prescriptions. In fact, writers such as Le Page often express their admiration for Indian medicinal practices so as to encourage French adoption of the same. What Le Petit, Bossu, and others attack in their depictions of witch doctors are deliberate deceptions of the people by religious and medical leaders in order to keep the masses in the darkness of ignorance and fear.

Le Petit offers a specific example of unethical healing in the following.

They cut the patient's skin with a piece of flint and suck therefrom as much blood as possible, discharging this upon a platter, and at the same time spitting out a bit of
straw, wood, or leather, which they have hidden under the
tongue. "Behold," they say, "this is the cause of the
illness!" These medicine-men always demand payment in
advance (13).

In addition to vehemently attacking Native-American medical quackery
and religious "magic" when the practices dupe society, Le Petit and
Bossu expose witch doctors for robbing and even physically harming the
masses with procedures that the medicine men know to be dangerous
shams.

Moving from Indians who treat health to Indians who treat
weather, Le Petit refers to the latter as "those other charlatans" and
notes that

these are usually lazy old men who wish to escape the work
entailed by hunting, fishing, and farming, and practice
this hazardous profession [which can mean death for the
practitioner if the desired outcome is not achieved] to
support their families (13).

Le Petit repeatedly refers to both health and weather doctors as
"charlatans" and seems to delight in mentioning the tomahawking they
suffer when their cures do not work. As will be seen later, the icon­
oclastic Bossu takes such exposés of witchdoctoring a step further by
describing how he uses his behind-the-scenes knowledge of "magic" both
to achieve his own ends among Native Americans (namely, to save his
life when he is in a bind) and to reveal the false claims to supernat­
ural and curative powers touted by priests and medicine men. The
anecdotes relating Bossu's antics as a would-be witch doctor are some
of the most entertaining passages in the colonial Louisiana canon.

Le Petit proceeds from practices that he condemns to ceremonies
that he views favorably. He elaborates, as most other colonial Loui­
siana writers do, upon the ubiquitous practice of calumet smoking, obvu­
ously impressed by the refinement and civility of peace-pipe proto­
col. As was the case in the discussion of Tonti, since other
Louisiana authors such as Pénicaud and Le Page are more notable for their presentations of this important ritual in intertribal and Franco-Indian relations, their depictions, rather than Le Petit's, will be examined in detail at the appropriate time.

Ending the discussion of peacemaking and other Natchez customs, Le Petit shifts the focus of his narrative by announcing: "After having given you some small idea of the character and customs of the Natchez savages . . . , I shall now embark upon the details of their perfidy and their treachery" (12-13). In beginning his account of the Natchez insurrection, Le Petit skillfully conveys how the "horrible event," the "unforeseen massacre," "this slaughter," the "savages' conspiracy" has New Orleans and the rest of Louisiana outside Natchez in fear of more Indian violence.

Unlike the majority of Louisiana writers who discuss the Natchez Massacre, Le Petit does not lay much of the blame for the bloody uprising upon Commandant Etcheparre or the other abusive Frenchmen residing at Natchez. Glossing over Etcheparre's culpability, Le Petit notes,

Some reason for discontent which the Natchez believed they had against Monsieur the Commandant, together with the arrival of several vessels bearing valuable cargoes for the settlers and garrison, determined the savages to start their enterprise (17).

Minimizing Etcheparre's and other Frenchmen's guilt by implying only imaginary Indian grievances and by placing avaricious motives on the Native Americans as well, Le Petit begins a vilification of the Natchez that is unusual for colonial Louisiana literature. After all, the majority of the colony's authors who treat the Natchez Massacre show extraordinary objectivity by admitting French causes for legitimate red grievances leading to the insurrection.
As he begins to relate the events of the massacre itself, Le Petit again highlights two qualities that many Louisiana writers also bemoan when they observe them in Native Americans: deceit and treachery. Le Petit asserts that the Natchez had been so good at giving the impression of friendship to the French that, "having no cause to distrust the savages, their poultry and maize were taken in exchange for the arms and munitions that were to serve them so greatly against our people" (17). Ironically, "the French were watchful of the Choctaws; but the Natchez were not distrusted at all, and were so well aware of it that it increased their boldness" (17-18).

To illustrate the horrifying limit to which the Natchez take their "boldness," Le Petit first dramatizes the murder of a priest.

On Monday he said Mass, and was taking the Holy Viaticum to one of the invalids who had confessed the day before when the massacre began.

A chief, Big Leg, seized him around the middle, threw him to the ground, and cut off his head with a tomahawk. As he fell, Father du Poisson cried out only: "Oh, my God! Oh, my God!" M. du Cordere drew his sword to defend him, then fell by a musket-shot from a savage whom he had not seen (18).

Le Petit follows this sacrilegious killing with other particularly offensive forms of slaughter: "They slashed open the abdomens of all pregnant women, and they slew nearly all those who were nursing infants, because they were annoyed by their screams and tears" (18). By first depicting the killing of a revered person and then following this murder with the butchering of the most defenseless people in society, Le Petit deepens the ignominy of the Natchez.

Whereas the Natchez kill most of the white men, they spare the majority of white women. Still, this refraining from more murders hardly lessens Le Petit's opprobrium for the Indians. Regarding the fate of the captured women, the author says the Natchez made them slaves, subjecting them to the greatest indignities during the two or three months they were their
masters. The least unfortunate were those who knew how to sew, for they were put to making shirts, coats, etc. The others were made to cut and carry wood for the cooking fires, and to pound maize...

But the two things that most intensified their suffering were, first, to have as masters those whose cruel hands they had seen drenched in the blood of their husbands, and, second, to hear them repeating continually that the French had met the same fate at all the other posts, and that the entire country had been rid of them (19).

If Le Petit’s account stopped here, the récit would be enough to condemn the Natchez in any viewer’s mind. But the story continues.

In addition to the nature of their murders and their treatment of survivors, the Natchez are vilified even more by Le Petit’s depiction of their attitude toward the deeds.

During the massacre, the Sun, or Great Chief, was calmly sitting in the Company’s tobacco warehouse. His warriors brought to his feet the commandant’s head, and surrounded it with the heads of the other principal Frenchmen of the post, leaving their bodies to be preyed on by dogs, buzzards, and other flesh-eating birds (19).

What is more, “while they had brandy, of which they found a large supply, they passed the days and nights in drinking, chanting, dancing, and in insulting -- in the most barbarous manner -- the corpses and the memories of the French,” not fearing “the vengeance which their cruelty and perfidy merited” (19).

As though his depiction of Natchez “barbarity” were not enough to convince the reader of the red threat to white colonization, Le Petit comments upon the “savage” behavior of other indigenous groups affiliated with the Natchez. After relating how the Yazoo favorably received a massacre survivor and swore allegiance to France, Le Petit then reveals the tribe’s treachery.

We believed for a long time that the promises of their chief were truly sincere, and had no further fear of Indian perfidy against the post of the Yazoos. Consider, my reverend father, the nature of these savages, and whether one can put faith in their word, even when accompanied by...
the greatest show of friendship! Scarcely had they re­
turned to their village when, loaded with presents which
they received from the Natchez, they followed their exam­
ple and imitated their treason. Joining with the Corroys,
they plotted to exterminate the French. They began this
work upon Father Souel their joint missionary, who lived
in their own village (20).

To his credit, Le Petit does note that not all tribes or red individu­
als fit what he seems to be expounding as the Native-American norm of
disingenuousness. For example, he relates that “the fidelity of the
Ofogoulas ... was not shaken, and they now dwell with the Tunicas”
(20-21). Mentioning the “Ofogoulas” residence with the Tunicas is
enough to label them loyal, for it went without saying in Le Petit’s
time that the Tunicas were tried-and-true French allies, the most
faithful red friends that Europeans could find anywhere.

Le Petit’s remembrance of the Tunicas’ and other aboriginal
groups’ steadfastness to the French leads the author to lessen his
tirade against the Natchez and their allies -- and to such an extent
that he acknowledges the remorse felt by some Yazoos after murdering
their missionary. As Le Petit states, “The savages, who until then
had seemed to feel the affection the missionary bore them, reproached
themselves for his death when they were capable of reflection” (21).

After this brief concession to Yazoo conscience, however, Le Petit re­
sumes his scathing portrayal of France’s red enemies. The priest’s
murder causes cosmic imbalance, forcing the Yazoos and the French un­
fortunate enough to live near them toward further violence and plunging
the Franco-Yazoo world into the same total destruction as that suf­
fered at Natchez. While some Yazoos momentarily regret the priest’s
death, Le Petit reports that,

returning to their native ferocity, they resolved to
climax their crime by destroying the French post.
“Since the Black Chief is dead,” they cried, “it is
as if all the French were dead; let us spare none of
them!”
After the Yazoo massacre the French in their midst, "one of the Yazoos who had despoiled the missionary dressed himself in the father's clothes, then announced to the Natchez that his tribe had kept its word, and the French established among them had all been massacred" (21).

The totality of the Natchez and Yazoo massacres, as reported by Le Petit, throws white Louisiana into a panic. Le Petit uses the uprisings, their unusual and horrible specifics, and the fear and uncertainty resulting from their countless atrocities to compose anecdotes whose strange occurrences prove highly entertaining.

One of these subnarratives reads as follows.

This story could scarcely be doubted in the city, especially after we heard what happened to Father Doutre-leau. This missionary had taken the time of the savages' hibernation to come to see us. . . . He departed the first day of this year, 1730, and believing he would not arrive in time to say Mass with Father Souel — of whose fate he was unaware — he decided to say it at the mouth of the little river of the Yazoos, where he had beached his boat.

While he was preparing for his sacred duty, a pirogue-load of savages accosted him. He asked them what tribe they belonged to, and they answered, "Yazoos, comrades of the French"; at the same time, they made protestations of friendship to the voyageurs who accompanied him, and presented them with food. While the father was preparing his altar, a flock of birds flew over, causing the voyageurs to discharge at them their only two muskets. They did not take time to reload, as the Mass was being commenced. The savages noted this; they placed themselves behind the voyageurs, as if intending to hear the Mass, although they were not Christians.

When the father was saying the Kyrie Eleison, the savages fired. The missionary felt himself wounded in the right arm, and seeing one of the voyageurs dead at his feet, and the four others likewise, he fell to his knees to receive the final death-stroke, which he regarded as certain. In this posture, he sustained two or three shots. Although the savages fired at close range, he received no new wound. Seeing himself unscathed by so many mortal strokes, he took to flight although encumbered by his sacred vestments, with no other shield than a great confidence in God, of whose special protection he was to receive proof. He threw himself into the water and within a
few yards overhauled the pirogue in which two voyageurs were fleeing, they having given him up for dead after seeing so many muskets fired at him.

As he climbed into the pirogue, he turned to see how closely he was followed, just in time to receive a charge of birdshot against his mouth. Most of the pellets flattened themselves upon his teeth and a few entered his gums, where they long remained; I myself have seen two of them. Father Doutreleau, wounded as he was, undertook to steer the pirogue, and his two companions set to paddling. Unfortunately, one of them received a broken shoulder from a musket-shot as he left, from which he has remained crippled.

As you can well guess, my reverend father, the missionary and his companions had no thought of going upriver; they descended the Mississippi as fast as they could, and at last lost sight of the pirogue-load of enemies, who had pursued them for more than an hour, firing continually -- later boasting to their village that they had killed them. The two paddlers were often tempted to surrender, but the missionary so encouraged them that, in turn, they frightened the savages. They had an old firearm which was not loaded -- nor could be -- and by pointing this from time to time they caused the savages to throw themselves flat in their pirogue, and at last to give up pursuit.

When they were quit of their enemies, they dressed their wounds as well as they could, then jettisoned the pirogue's cargo, so as to flee more easily from that murderous vicinity, keeping only a few pieces of raw bacon for sustenance.

They planned to stop at the Natchez, but finding the houses of the French were torn down or burned they judged it unwise to listen to the blandishments of the savages, who invited them from the bank to come ashore. They sheered off as quickly as possible, thus getting out of range of the muskets fired at them without effect.

It was then they commenced to distrust all the savage tribes, and resolved not to approach land again until they reached New Orleans, and in the event that this city had been taken by the savages to disembark only at the Balize where they hoped some French vessels might be gathering up the remnants of the colony.

In passing before the Tunicas, they kept as much distance as possible between them and the savages' shore; but they were discovered, and a pirogue that had been sent out to reconnoitre was not long in approaching them.

Their fear and defiance were both renewed and they were far from halting, until they perceived that excellent French was being spoken in the other pirogue. Then they recovered from their fright and the despair they had fallen into, and were happy to find they could put foot on
land. There they found the little French army that had been formed, some compassionate and altogether gracious officers, a surgeon, and some refreshments; they recuperated a little after so many dangers and miseries, and took advantage next day of a pirogue which was setting out for New Orleans (21-24).

Through Father Doutreleau’s story of flight and narrow escapes, Le Petit demonstrates how the complicitous activities of certain tribes can cause Europeans and Euro-Americans to become suspicious of all Native Americans. Doutreleau’s unfortunate contacts with reds upriver cause the missionary to distrust and fear even the Tunicas, friends of long standing, among whom the priest is at first unable to detect fellow Frenchmen. The latter, for their part, blend in so well with their red hosts that they are recognized as white men only when their accents are perceived.

Following upon his rendition of Father Doutreleau’s horrifying adventures (which, intentionally or not, lift the priest to heroic stature and almost superhuman endurance), Le Petit brings up “the sorrow I felt at the loss of two other missionaries whose merits you know as well as I” (24). Despite the destruction of French settlements and missions, which leads Le Petit to condemn the Natchez and the Yazoo, the author does not grow bitter against all Native Americans, nor does he discourage further colonial or evangelical enterprises. For “nothing befell these two excellent missionaries, whom we mourn, for which they were unprepared when they consecrated themselves to the Indian missions of this colony” (25). Le Petit affirms further,

I am also quite sure that fear of a similar end will not at all diminish the zeal of those of our fathers who are of a mind to follow us, nor will deter our Superiors from yielding to the holy desire they will have to partake of our labors (25).

Le Petit’s commitment to Louisiana as his second home cannot be better

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expressed than through his repeatedly stated wish for increased proselytization of the colony.

Le Petit next reveals his views concerning the colonial government’s cooperation with Native Americans. Relating “the insight of Monsieur our Commandant,” Le Petit approves the fact that, far from suspecting a conspiracy on the part of all Indians because of what the Natchez and their allies have done, the French leader, by seeking red help to respond to the Natchez crisis, “has surpassed himself in the maneuvers he has set in motion and the measures he has taken to avenge the spilling of French blood and to prevent the ill fortune with which nearly all the posts of the colony have been threatened” (25). That is,

as soon as he learned of the unexpected outbreak of the Natchez savages, he sent word of it to all posts, and even to the Illinois . . . on one side through the Natchitoches and Arkansas, and on the other by way of Mobile and the Chickasaws. He called on our neighboring allies, particularly the Choctaws, to avenge this treachery; . . . he sent upriver to the Tunicas two vessels (25-16).

Despite the help that the French get from certain Indians, Le Petit alludes to white paranoia against nonwhites pervading the colony after the Natchez Massacre. The paranoia undoubtedly results from a practical realization that should the various, feuding tribes shirk alliance with the French and other European groups in favor of banding together against all nonreds, the continued existence of a white Louisiana would be in serious jeopardy. Le Petit mentions “fear that the Choctaws might decide to fall upon the city, or that, to free themselves from slavery, the negroes might join with them, just as some had joined the Natchez” (25).

Racial phobias aside, Le Petit fully credits reds with helping both blacks and whites out of the Natchez disaster.
While our little army was taking position at the Tunicas,
700 Choctaws, recruited and led by Monsieur le Sueur,
marched against the Natchez. Information was given by a
party of their people that those savages were far from be­
ing on guard, and that they spent every night in dancing.
The Choctaws surprised them, falling upon them at daybreak
on January 27th. Within less than three hours they res­
cued 59 persons, about equally divided between women and
children, as well as the tailor and the carpenter, and 106
negroes and negresses with their children. They made 18
Natchez prisoners and lifted 60 scalps; they would have
lifted more if they had not been intent on rescuing the
prisoners as they had been ordered. They lost only two
men killed and seven or eight wounded. They made camp at
Ste. Catherine Concession, in a simple enclosure of pal­
ings. Victory had been complete, without waiting for the
French army as had been agreed with their representatives
(26-27).

The embattled Natchez respond to red assistance to whites by calling
the Choctaw traitors and by preparing for their own certain deaths.

The French and their Indian allies continue to work together to
combat their common red foe. At one point, a band of Natchez encoun­
ter a French group that, very Indian-like, is venturing to “make a
peace-offer to the savages, to be able under this pretext to learn
their strength and disposition” (27). The Natchez war party, “giving
them no chance to speak, killed three of them and took the three oth­
ers prisoner” (27). The Natchez then make impossible demands for re­
lease of the French hostages, supply of merchandise, and return of
their own captured people. Le Petit affirms that “their intention was
to murder the French and carry off the merchandise. On that same day,
they burned Sieur Mesplex and his companion with the utmost inhuman­i­
ty” (27). To bolster their efforts against the Natchez, the Franco-
Choctaw alliance soon finds itself “accompanied by the Tunicas and
some other small tribes from the lower Mississippi country” (27).

Despite increased acumen acquired through association with reds,
the French still make a mistake in agreeing to negotiate with the
Natchez. Le Petit blames this imprudent acquiescence on both red and
white weaknesses.

The impatience and indocility of the Choctaws, who, like nearly all savages, are only capable of a sudden onslaught followed by retirement; the insufficient number of French soldiers, and these worn by fatigue; the lack of provisions in the face of stealing by the savages; the shortage of ammunition, of which the Choctaws never received enough, wasting part and reserving the rest for hunting; the resistance of the Natchez, who were well protected by fortifications and who fought with the courage of despair; all these things persuaded the French to hear terms proposed by the Natchez after seven days in open trenches (27-28).

Because of their difficulties, the French and Choctaw, both of whose shortcomings are criticized by the author, arrange a cease-fire with the Natchez. But the war hardly ends.

At this point, Le Petit deems it appropriate to offer extensive criticism of France's powerful red ally, the Choctaw nation. Not surprisingly, the author's first object of attack is the Choctaw's sharing in the Natchez disrespect for sacred Catholic objects. As the priest relates,

Before the Choctaw decided to fall upon the Natchez, they took a calumet to them for a parley. They were received in a very novel manner; that is, they found them, and their horses, adorned with sacred vestments and altar-cloths; several wore chalice-covers around their necks and were drinking brandy from chalices and other sacred vessels. The Choctaws themselves, when they despoiled our enemies, repeated this profane sacrilege, by using in the same way our sacred ornaments and vessels in their dances and sports. We were able to recover but a small part of them (28).

Were the Choctaw ignorant of Catholic religious practices, Le Petit's ire might have been lessened. However, having served as a missionary himself to this aboriginal group, Le Petit knows the depth of their familiarity with his religion. In his eyes, then, the Choctaw desecrations are especially painful and condemnable. Interestingly, Le Page recounts a similar episode of Indians donning sacred items in
western Upper Louisiana. Despite his Catholicity, though, Le Page focuses more on the comedy rather than the blasphemy of the event, undoubtedly because the robbed priests and their slaughtered flock were Spaniards on a campaign to dupe and subdue Native Americans.

The Choctaw defilement of religious objects primes Le Petit for other criticisms.

The greater number of their chiefs have come here to be paid for the scalps they had taken and the French and negroes liberated. We have paid dearly for their slight services, and scarcely desire to employ them again, especially since they appear much less brave than the small tribes, whom they overawe only by their great numbers. . . . Since these savages have made their character known here, they can be scarcely tolerated. They are insolent, ferocious, disgusting, importunate, and insatiable. Our missionaries are to be both pitied and admired for renouncing all society save that of these barbarians (28-29).

While earlier he gladly acknowledged the Choctaws' rescuing French survivors of the Natchez Massacre, Le Petit changes his tone when recounting events that smack of French inability to "civilize" the powerful group. But whereas his contempt for the Choctaw grows, the author still speaks favorably of the other tribes that, smaller and less proud, remain more loyal and render better service to the French.

Having been a missionary to the Choctaw, Le Petit has gotten to know the group in a way that most whites have not. A glimpse into the priest's relationship with the Choctaw, into what the relationship has meant to him, and into the conclusions he has drawn from it are evident in the following passage.

I have renewed acquaintance with Paatlako, one of the chiefs, and with a great number of other Choctaws; they have made me many interesting visits, and have often repeated nearly the same compliment which they paid me more than a year ago when I left them.

"Our hearts and those of our children weep," they tell me, "since we do not see you any more; you begin to have a mind like ours; you understand us, and we

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understand you; we love you and you love us. Why have you left us? Why do you not return? Come back with us!"

You understand, my reverend father, that I cannot respond to their wishes; hence I tell them simply that I will rejoin them as soon as I can; that after all I am here only in body, and my heart remains with them.

"That is well," one of them replied to me, "but your heart never speaks to us and never gives us anything."

Always that is what they return to: they do not love us or pay any mind to us, except to the extent that we make gifts to them (29).

The Choctaw compliment Le Petit by asserting that he has become like them. In fact, Le Petit is familiarized enough with them to know how to respond to the Choctaw: with skepticism. Le Petit, like other naturalized Frenchmen, is able to detect what lies behind some Indians speaking and acting as they do on certain occasions. Unfortunately, Le Petit’s familiarity with the Choctaw and his perception of their ulterior motives hardly foster his affection for the tribe.

Le Petit uses Chief Paatlako to represent what he dislikes most in many Choctaws.

It is true that Chief Paatlako fought with great valor against the Natchez; he even received a musket-ball in the loins; to console him for his wound, he has been received with greater esteem and friendship than the others. He had scarcely returned to his village when, puffed up by these slight marks of distinction, he said to Father Baudoin that all New Orleans had been in strange alarm at his condition and that M. Perier had informed the king of his bravery, and of the great services he had rendered on the last expedition. In such traits I recognize the character of this nation: they are both presumptuous and vain (29).

Undoubtedly, vanity and presumptuousness are qualities that Le Petit would not like to see in anyone, red or white. Thus, the cocky attitude observed by the missionary among the Choctaw, compounded by their irreligion and mercenary attitude, has resulted in Le Petit’s contempt for Lower Louisiana’s largest and most powerful indigenous group.8
Le Petit concedes that at least one appalling quality that the Choctaw share with some other red groups serves the French well. As the author relates,

Three of the most mutinous negroes, those who had been most outspokenly for the Natchez, were turned over to the Choctaws, who burned them alive with a cruelty which has inspired in all the negroes a new horror of the savages; this benefits the safety of the colony. The Tunicas and the other small tribes have already reported new victories over the Natchez, and have made several of them prisoners; they burned three women and four men after taking their scalps. It is said that people begin to become accustomed to such barbarity (30).

While Louisiana writers (including Le Petit himself) universally decry red-on-white and red-on-red cruelty, the priest does not condemn “barbarity” to “mutinous negroes,” for “this benefits the safety of the colony” by making blacks so afraid of punishment that they will not attempt insurrection. Le Petit’s and Hachard’s attitudes show that priests and religious accept and even strongly defend the slavery-based status quo.

Moving from problems caused by questionable allies such as the Choctaw, Le Petit spotlights the sounder loyalty of the Illinois. Illinois fidelity (expressed by reliable and efficient service to France) may have been a result of the tribe’s advanced state of acculturation. A number of colonial writers highlight Illinois acculturation as manifested in agriculture, religion, sedentary living, and intermarriage with the French. As will be seen when writers such as Pénicaud are examined in this study, the fusion of French and Indian worlds into a novel, hybridized culture produced a progressive new society that many Louisiana authors uphold as a model for colonial civilization because of its fitting French/Christian cultural standards.

Le Petit’s lengthy expression of admiration for the Illinois begins by the author’s offsetting the tribe’s fidelity to France
against the treachery of other red groups.

The Chickasaws, a brave nation but treacherous, and little known to the French, have attempted to win away the Illinois nation; they have even sounded out several individuals, to see if they could not draw them to the side of the savage enemies of our country. The Illinois have replied to them that they are nearly all praying people — that is, according to their manner of expression, that they are Christians — and that, besides, they are inseparably attached to the French by alliances which several of this country have cemented by espousing their daughters.

"We shall always throw ourselves," they added, "before the enemies of the French; they will have to get the better of us to come at them, and we would stab ourselves to the heart before we would strike them a single blow."

Their conduct sustains and not at all belies their vows; at the first word of the war with the Natchez and the YazooS, they came here to warn the "Black Robes" and the French, and to offer services of their nation to M. Perrier, to avenge the death of the French. I was at the Governor's house when they arrived, and I was delighted with the speeches they made (31).

If Le Petit's ability to view Native Americans fairly (that is, by acknowledging their finer qualities and by not attributing the faults of some to all) might have been questioned earlier because of negative commentaries on the Choctaw, Natchez, and other indigenous groups, it is now proven by the delight with which Le Petit relates the collective and individual characteristics of the Illinois he has come to know. Le Petit's favorable depiction of the Illinois also proves that the pejorative generalizations that the author earlier directed at all Native Americans are not to be taken seriously. Such derogatory estimations of all aboriginal Americans, like those coming from Dumont, were written in anger, haste, and without revision. Furthermore, they conflict with more rational passages from the same author that reveal positive attitudes toward indigenous persons and, hence, an awareness of differences (both for the better and for the worse) between red individuals and red groups.
Le Petit’s esteem for the Illinois is further revealed when the author dramatizes Illinois addresses to the French in New Orleans following the Natchez Massacre.

Chicago, whom you have seen at Paris . . . spoke first. . . .

"See," he said, indicating the two calumets, "two words that we bring you: the one of religion, the other of peace or war, according to your commands. We listen with respect to the Commandants, because they bring the word of the king, our father; and even more to the Black Robes, for they bring the word of God himself, who is the King of Kings. We are come from afar to lament with you the death of the French, and to offer our warriors to strike the enemy nations whom you point out; you have only to speak. When I went to France, the king promised me his protection for religion, and adjured me never to quit it; I shall always remember that. Give us also thy protection for ourselves and our Black Robes."

He went on to expound the edifying sentiments that religion had caused him to feel, of which Baillarjon the interpreter gave us a half-understanding in poor French.

Mamantwensa spoke after him; his speech was laconic, very different from the usual style of the savages, who repeat the same thing a hundred times in the same speech.

"See," he said, addressing the word to M. Perrier, "two young Paducah slaves, some peltries, and other trifles; it is a present, but I do not design to extract a greater; all I ask of you is your heart and your protection; I am more covetous of them than of all the goods in the world, and all I ask of you is your prayers. My sentiments on war are the same as those of Chicago who has just spoken; I would be repeating what you hear, to no purpose."

Another old chief, who had the air of an ancient patriarch, rose also; he contented himself with saying that he wished to die, as he had always lived, in prayer.

"The last word," he added, "which our fathers give us, at the point of drawing the last breath, is to be always attached to praying, and there is no other means of being happy in this life, and even more happy in the other after death" (31-33).

Illinois refinement (in the European sense) and seeming lack of self-interest come as a welcome relief to the author after his dealings with the Choctaw. The Illinois prove themselves to be inextricably linked to the French, first and foremost by a common Catholicism and
secondly by allegiance to the French king, his representatives, and his allies. The primacy of Christian religion for the Illinois, more than anything else, wins them Le Petit's admiration, and he depicts the degree of their spirituality as surpassing the skill of the poor French interpreter to translate. Undoubtedly, in Le Petit's view at least, the advanced state of Illinois religious devotion has elevated the reds' sentiments and behavior to a level above that of most French men and women in the colony. Hence, Le Petit lavishes upon the Illinois encomiums matched only by those bestowed upon one white group -- the Ursuline nuns.

The effect of the red patriarchs' speeches on Louisiana's secular leader resembles the impression left upon the author, who is one of the colony's religious superiors. As Le Petit relates,

M. Perrier, who has a great deal of religious feeling, heard these savage speeches with evident pleasure. He let his heart be his guide, without having to resort to the subtleties and subterfuges so often necessary when dealing with the common run of savages. To each speech he made such response as these good Christians could have wished. He thanked them for their offers of their services for war, saying that we were strong enough to deal with our enemies on the lower river, but counseling them to remain on guard and to look out for our defense on the upper part of the river (33).

Obviously, the controversial Périer has won Le Petit's favor along with Hachard's. Le Petit's Périer possesses the religious dispositions that most Louisiana authors deem necessary for fair and fruitful public service and that they promote at every opportunity in their writings. Far from dulling their administrative effectiveness, the leaders' piety, as depicted by the colonial writers, enables them to act with tact and justice in all circumstances, wisely sizing up and appropriately responding to various situations, persons, and requests. As Le Petit and Hachard do, Dumont also extols Périer for sound leadership resulting from sound morality.
Breaking from his account of the favorable impression that the Illinois have left upon him, Le Petit returns to relating more Indian difficulties, listing nations of Upper Louisiana that have given the French trouble. The author pays particular attention to the captivity of "Father Guignas" among two of those groups.

On October 15th, 1728, he was stopped in mid-journey by Kickapoos and Maskoutins. During the five months he was captive among these savages, he had much to suffer and everything to fear; he saw the time when he was doomed to be burned alive, and he prepared to finish his life in this horrible torment, but just at that moment he was adopted by an old chief, whose family saved his life and secured his liberation. Our missionaries among the Illinois no sooner learned of his sad situation than they hastened to provide all the comfort they could for him.

All of these that he received, he used to win the goodwill of the savages. He succeeded in this, to such extent that they volunteered to conduct him to the Illinois who were coming to make peace with the French and the savages of that section. Seven or eight months after the conclusion of this peace, the Maskoutins and Kickapoos returned again to the Illinois and took Father Guignas to pass the winter with them, whence probably he will return to Canada. These fatiguing journeys have aged him very much, but his zeal, full of fire and activity, seems to give him new strength (33-34).

Despite his attention to the actions of red enemies against France and Louisiana, Le Petit still shows a willingness to acknowledge the corrigibility of some red foes. Not only do certain of the "Kickapoos and Maskoutins" spare Father Guignas from torture and death at the hands of their fellows, but Le Petit also depicts the tribes as a whole as growing friendly toward the holy man in response to his good example.

Finished with the more troublesome tribes of Upper Louisiana, Le Petit returns to describing the beloved Illinois. He highlights how their response to Catholicism has become so admirable that they serve as an example of piety for people of any race and any station.

The Illinois, during the three weeks that they lived in this city, remained only at our house; they charmed us
by their piety and their edifying mode of life. Every evening, they recited the Rosary in two choruses, and every morning they attended my Mass, during which they chanted different prayers of the Church, conforming to the different Offices of the day. At the end of the Mass, they never failed to chant with all their hearts the prayer for the king. The nuns sang the first Latin couplet to the usual tune of the Gregorian chant, and the Illinois continued the other couplets in their language to the same tune. This novel spectacle drew a great crowd to the church, inspiring a tender devotion.

During the course of the day and after supper, they often sang, either alone or together, various prayers of the Church. . . . Hearing them, it was easily perceived that they had more relish and pleasure in singing these sacred hymns than most savages, or even than many of the French in singing frivolous, often dissolute, songs.

One is astonished, just as I was myself on arriving at this mission, to see that many of our French are not by a great deal so well instructed in religion as some of these neophytes, who are ignorant of scarcely any stories in the Old or New Testaments; they are well-behaved in attending Holy Mass and receiving the Sacraments. Their Catechism . . . is a perfect model for those who need it in their new missions. One can not leave these good savages in ignorance of any of our Mysteries and devotions. They are fundamentally and essentially attached to religion, which has been expounded to them in a manner equally instructive and practical.

The first thought that comes to one who knows these savages is that it has been, and is still, costly to the missionaries to form them in the Christian fashion. But their assiduity and patience are abundantly recompensed by the blessings which it has pleased God to bestow upon their labors. Father le Boulenger sends me word that for the second time he is obliged to considerably enlarge his church, by the great number of savages who receive baptism each year (34-35).

It is difficult to imagine many Puritan writers of Le Petit's time and earlier speaking with such enthusiasm of like evangelical progress among New-England Indians, much less of Indians inspiring "tender devotion" among or surpassing the fervor of the white elect. Yet Le Petit's optimism for missionary endeavors among tribes such as the Illinois is not a unique sentiment in Louisiana colonial literature and one not confined to the writings of priests and religious.
Le Petit dramatizes an exchange between an Illinois and an Ursuline nun to illustrate further the religious zeal of both a red and a white group that he greatly admires.

The first day that the Illinois saw the nuns, Mamantwensa perceived near them a troop of little girls.

"I see very well," he said to them, "that you are not nuns without reason."

He meant that they were not merely female hermits, who work only for their own perfection.

"You are," he added, "like the Black Robes, our fathers; you labor for others. Ah, if we of the upper river but had two or three of you, our wives and daughters would have more piety and would be better Christians."

"Well," replied the Mother Superior, "choose those whom you wish."

"It is not our place to choose," Mamantwensa returned, "but for you, who know them; the choice should fall upon those who are most devoted to God, and who love Him the most."

You may well suppose, my reverend father, how much these sainted daughters were delighted to find in a savage sentiments so reasonable and so Christian. Ah, the time and trouble that would be necessary to teach the Choctaws to think and speak similarly! This could only be done by Him who, when He pleased, could change the stones into children of Abraham! (35).

Interestingly, while the Choctaw among whom Le Petit has labored in vain impress the priest as being almost inconvertible, the author observes the Illinois to have become so Catholic that at least one of them is able to correct a religious superior on the proper way to "station" members of her order.

While Le Petit is interested primarily in Native-American embrace of French religion, he does not fail to notice the more worldly ways in which American aborigines come to appreciate French culture. Just as he earlier delighted in recording the value that the Natchez attached to artifacts from the days of Iberville's first contact with their tribe, so Le Petit also gladly reports how one Illinois cherishes a gift from a regal French lady.

Chicago jealously guarded, in an especially made case, the magnificent snuff-box which Madame, the late Duchess of
Orleans had given him at Versailles. No matter how much was offered him, he would not part with it (35-36).

Le Petit adds that Chicago’s attachment to this souvenir from his trip to France “is truly remarkable in a savage, whose nature is to tire quickly of everything that he has, and to desire passionately whatever he sees that he has not” (36). While the author’s racism is readily apparent in this last statement, also easily perceived is his awareness of exceptions to his pejorative generalizations.

When Le Petit begins to relate Chicago’s views concerning his trip to France and other Native Americans’ responses to the reports, the narrative gains another dimension: It becomes a valuable record of aboriginal reaction to initial contact with the European continent. Le Petit’s interest in red perceptions of Europe leads him to document aspects of an indigenous psyche that might have otherwise been lost to posterity.

All that Chicago has told his compatriots about France seems incredible to them.

“Someone has paid thee,” they say to him, “to make us believe all these pretty stories.”

“We should like to believe,” say his relatives, and all those whose sincerity can not be doubted, “that thou hast seen all that thou telleth us, but it must be that some charm has bewitched thine eyes, for it is not possible that France should be such as thou hast pictured it to us.”

When he told them that in France five houses are set atop one another, and that they are higher than the tallest trees; that there are more people in Paris than there are blades of grass in a meadow or mosquitoes in a forest; that people go about, and even make long journeys, in traveling leather houses; they did not believe him at all. And when he added that he had seen long houses full of sick people, on whom skilful surgeons wrought marvelous cures, “Listen,” they told him pleasantly, “you are lacking an arm, a leg, an eye, a tooth, and a lung; if you were in France you could have them replaced with others, without its even showing.”

What baffled Mamantwensa most, when he saw the ships, was understanding how these were moved from the land where they were built and launched upon the water, and where enough human arms could be found to cast, and
above all to lift, such enormously heavy anchors. These
things were explained to him, and he admired the genius of
the French, who were capable of such clever inventions
(36).

As Le Petit does above, Bossu also records the reactions of Native-
American travelers to France and reports that the incredibly novel
sights led some Indians to believe that Europeans had cast them under
a hallucinogenic spell in order to see such things.

As the narrative draws to a close, Le Petit again highlights
both the cooperation and complications characterizing Franco-Indian
relations. He gladly reports how the Arkansas have joined the Illi-
ois in aiding the French against the Yazoo and the Koroa. Likewise,
he happily relates how the Choctaw and the Chakchiuma have freed
French women and children (as well as Frenchmen’s scalps) bound for
the Chickasaw. The Arkansas also liberate women and scalps. This and
what the author perceives as the Arkansas’ Illinois-like fidelity to
French Catholicism cause Le Petit to speak admiringly of the tribe.

At one point, Le Petit notes that

on their return, these good savages met some pirogues of
the French hunters, and following their custom patted them
from head to foot, in token of mourning for the French
dead and that of their father in Jesus Christ. They swore
that, while there was a single Arkansa in the world, the
Natchez and Yazoos would never lack enemies. They showed
a bell and some books which they brought, and which they
said belonged to the first “Black Chief” who came to their
village. That was all they had found in the cabin of
Father Souel (37).

Le Petit continues,

The faithful Arkansas mourned in their village the death
of Father du Poisson. They ask, with the greatest insis-
tence, for another missionary; this would be impossible to
refuse to a nation so lovable and always so attached to
the French and having a modesty unknown to the other
tribes; and who posed no special problem to Christianity
save their extreme penchant for jugglery (37).

While he consistently speaks favorably of the Arkansas (Bossu’s
favorite tribe) and the Illinois (a favorite tribe of almost everyone), Le Petit can refer to the Natchez only as "those barbarians." In addition, he continually voices his skepticism about the Choctaws.

After having mentioned the deaths of missionaries and lay people by the Natchez and their accomplices, Le Petit reveals the main reason for his lasting prejudice against the Choctaw. A fellow priest "is defenseless in the midst of the great nation" (38). Le Petit adds,

We have always much distrusted these savages, even at the time they were making war for us against the Natchez. Now they are so proud of the victory they claim, that we have more need of troops to repress their insolence, and to hold them to their duty, than to achieve the extermination of our open enemies (38).

Le Petit ends his narrative of the Indian situation in Lower Louisiana by offering his own recommendations for defeating the Natchez and strengthening the weakened colony. In sum, Louisiana needs "troops from France, which we look for unceasingly" (39). Remaining hopeful for Louisiana's future, Le Petit asserts near the end of his account, "We flatter ourselves that this misfortune [the Natchez Massacre] will produce a greater benefit, by determining the Court to send the forces necessary to tranquilize the colony and make it flourish" (39).

Before finishing this examination of Le Petit's contribution to Louisiana literature, I should pay some attention to the author's treatment of blacks as well as his concerns regarding the welfare of the masses, areas that link Le Petit's work further to Louisiana's other colonial writings.

Just as he comments upon Indians who are faithful to the French as well as those who are enemies, so Le Petit also presents blacks who are loyal to white masters and those who defect to France's red foes. Le Petit, of course, condemns the latter. For example, he disapproves of the way some slaves failed to aid a French woman attempting to take
advantage of her red captors' intoxication.

On one night, while they were plunged into a drunken sleep, Mme. des Noyers tried to persuade some Negroes to avenge the death of her husband and the other French, but she was betrayed by those to whom she had confided her design, and very narrowly escaped being burned alive (19).

Unable to appreciate the fact that black slaves, in all likelihood, viewed the Natchez insurrection as either an avenue to freedom or just another switch to new masters, Le Petit views their unwillingness to fight to the death for the French as ungrateful and cowardly. Clearly, any idealized hybridized society that Le Petit might envision is a Franco-Indian one, with Frenchmen controlling a variously shaded red-white society and blacks serving the free Euro-aboriginal populace. Such is the schema in the minds of most other Louisiana writers who touch on interracial relations in the colony.

Across the spectrum from those blacks who do not feel obligated to fulfill the demands of disenfranchisement is the defensive inter­vention of a black slave during the Natchez-Koroa attack on the prop­erty of his master, who is also the Indians' own missionary priest. Le Petit lauds the slave's "heroism" in defense of his master's house­hold as follows.

The 11th of December, Father Souel was returning in the evening from a visit to the chief; he was caught in a ravine, received several shots, and fell dead instantly. The savages immediately rushed to his cabin to plun­der it. His Negro, who was his sole companion and only defender, armed himself with a butcher-knife to prevent the pillage, and wounded a savage. This zealous act cost his life. Happily, he had been baptized less than a month before, and he led a very Christian life (21).

In the passage quoted above, Le Petit pays the highest homage that he is capable of making to anyone when he says that the slain priest's black slave had lived "a very Christian life." Few whites, indeed, receive such a eulogy from the author. And when Le Petit reports
subjectively that "happily" the slave had converted before the "zealous act" that cost his life, the former's desire for black salvation and, hence, his interest in African-American welfare both within and without the confines of slavery is made evident.

Le Petit's concern for the welfare of the masses, be they white, red, or black, is evident when he praises the selfless manner in which the Ursulines serve not only the Natchez orphans but also the entire multi-hued Louisiana populace in a variety of ministries.

The little girls whom none of the colonists wished to adopt have swelled the cherished troop of orphans that the nuns are rearing. The great number of these children serves only to increase their charity and their attentions. . . .

There is not a single one of this saintly community who is not delighted to have crossed the seas, nor believes she can do greater good here than to keep the children in innocence, and to give the young French a polite, Christian education, since these are in danger of being hardly better reared than slaves. . . .

. . . To the instruction of the boarding scholars, the homeless girls, and the negresses, they will add the care of the hospital's sick and of a house of refuge for women of suspect virtue. . . .

So many works of charity would suffice in France to occupy several societies and different institutions. What a great zeal can accomplish! These diverse labors do not at all astonish seven Ursulines. . . . For my part, I am much afraid that, if more help for them does not come soon, they must succumb to the weight of so many fatigues. Those who, before knowing them, said they came too early, and in too great numbers, have indeed revised their sentiments and their language; testifying to their inspiring conduct and the great services they are rendering to the colony, they now find they were too slow in coming, and that too many of the same virtue and the same merit could not possibly come (31).

Through his depiction of the Ursulines and their labors, Le Petit expresses what almost every eighteenth-century Louisiana writer desires for the colony: more people of integrity (be they in the general populace or affiliated with the government, military, or Church) who are
committed to working tirelessly and effectively for progress and well-being in the new society.

The Jesuit priest Pierre Vitry, like Hachard and Le Petit, played an important role in recording singular episodes from Louisiana history. Hachard, a hard-working woman of the veil, devoted her attentions to the Ursulines’ arrival and early works in New Orleans, and Le Petit, an Indian missionary who would also serve as religious superior, concentrated on the infamous Natchez uprising and its effects on Jesuit evangelization in the early colony. In addition to relating the activities of their respective orders, Hachard and Le Petit also report on the condition of the early colony. Vitry, on the other hand, focuses almost exclusively on the proceedings of the French war against the Chickasaw Indians, with few discussions or depictions of colonial society outside the specific military campaigns at hand.

Although the scope of Vitry’s narrative may not be as wide as that of Hachard’s and even Le Petit’s, the former composition has a unique value. As Jean Delanglez notes in “The Journal of Pierre Vitry, S.J.,” “Of the several journals kept by various individuals who took part in the second expedition against the Chickasaw, that of Father Vitry . . . is the only one which covers the whole time of the war against those Indians” (23). Obviously, Vitry’s account of a war that Le Page also treats in his history and that Dumont holds up as a show-piece of Bienville’s incompetence deserves considerable examination in any study of Louisiana history or literature. Furthermore, as Delanglez’s concise summary of Vitry’s life (quoted below) indicates, Vitry the priest (aside from Vitry the writer) was a significant figure in Louisiana’s historical and religious development.

Father Pierre Vitry . . . was born on May 2, 1700, and entered the Society of Jesus at Nancy on October 18, 1719. At the end of his novitiate, he taught the lower classes at the college of Nancy for four years, and for two years taught humanities and rhetoric at the college of Langres.
From 1727 to 1732, he studied philosophy and theology in Paris. In 1733, he left for Louisiana, and landed in New Orleans at the end of July of that year. From New Orleans, he went to Mobile to take the place of the absent parish priest, a Capuchin. After his return to New Orleans, he was sent to take care of the French settlers of Natchitoches. While in this post he performed a marriage that nearly caused international complications. He arrived in New Orleans while preparations were being made for the second campaign against the Chickasaw, of which he was appointed chaplain of the vanguard. A few years later, he was made superior of the Louisiana Jesuit mission, and held this post till his death in New Orleans in 1749 (23-24).

Clearly, Vitry dedicated himself to and served the colony to such an extent that he can safely be labelled a Louisianian and his journal a work of Louisiana literature.

Prior to Delanglez's publication of the English translation of Vitry's journal, the document was published in its original French for the first time in 1929 in *Nova Francia*. It relates one of the French campaigns against the Chickasaw after that tribe took into its ranks the Natchez (following the latter's massacre of the French in 1729) and after the Chickasaw-Natchez's continued harassment of French colonists and French travelers along the Mississippi River. Simply by virtue of its attention to Franco-Indian relations, Vitry's text resembles those of other colonial Louisiana authors. While Vitry's racial prejudices may be more sharply expressed than those of more objective writers (possibly because of the frustrations that he shared with Le Petit as a missionary and his involvement in a war against a red group), Vitry's caustic remarks are aimed chiefly at vices that nearly every early Louisiana writer decry in both reds and whites: cruelty and dishonesty. Furthermore, like the typical naturalized writer, Vitry makes distinctions between red groups as he discusses them. A perceptible appreciation of democracy and the horizontalization of society also causes Vitry's narrative to approach the more
overt pleas of other writers for unilateral cooperation and respect of the rights of all persons.

Vitry begins his account with an excuse for war making, stating why the French had to take the offensive against the Chickasaw.

These Indians kept worrying our voyageurs, and made our colonists uneasy. In 1735, they waylaid one of our convoys killing some Frenchmen and taking an officer prisoner. They furnished asylum to our enemies, the Natchez and the Koroa (30).

After defending France's military response to Chickasaw aggression, Vitry points out that "between seven and eight hundred Indians from the northern tribes" (30) came to aid the international white forces rallying against this particular red threat. Clearly, the French were not the only ones bearing grievances against the Chickasaw.

Even before focusing on the intimate mixing of red and white allies during the war, Vitry keeps an eye open for instances of Franco-Indian coexistence in the civilian population and considers that element of Louisiana society worthy of mention. For example, as he moves up the Mississippi River from New Orleans with the military party in September 1738, Vitry observes the Euro-aboriginal make-up of rural regions: "For forty-five leagues we passed by a series of scattered plantations, on both sides of the river, and also three Indian villages, until on September 15, we arrived at a rather large French settlement, which is called Pointe Coupée" (31). When the diary-like account reaches the Tunica, Vitry refers to at least one form of acculturation to have occurred there when he relates that "it is an Indian tribe where there was formerly a missionary. Christians whom he baptized are still among them" (31).

In addition to pointing out the proximity of red and white inhabitants to each other and the Christianization of some Indians, Vitry also describes Native-American protocol and hospitality. He
relates that "it is customary for the chiefs and a few warriors to
greet the officers. They bring some fowls and vegetables, which we
cannot refuse, and after rewarding their generosity with other pres-
ents, we take our leave" (31). Thus, even though the author is taking
part in a campaign against a particularly troublesome group of Indi-
ans, he does not shut himself off from mentioning tribes with which
the French have more favorable relations.

Vitry’s awareness of both the good and the bad (according to
French standards) in indigenous American societies continues in his
description of the Natchez, who had wreaked havoc on the colony only a
few years previously. After commenting upon the imposing beauty of
Natchez, Vitry admits to the pain of being at the site of massacre.

The heart of a Frenchman bleeds at sight of the land which
was dyed in blood at the time of the general massacre per-
petrated by the Natchez Indians, who slaughtered all the
inhabitants, men and women, of what was then the most
prosperous settlement in the colony. The story is well
known to the public. I only wish to speak of what I saw
in the Natchez village (32).

Vitry, like Le Petit, shows less objectivity concerning the Natchez
uprising than do writers such as Le Page and Bossu, who, along with
Dumont, blame the French Commandant Etcheparre more than anyone else
for the insurrection. It must be remembered, however, that Vitry, ar-
iving in Louisiana after the massacre and during the time that the
colony was still at war with the Natchez, did not know the group prior
to the unfortunate turn of events that drastically changed the Natch-
ez’s relationship with the French and that even threatened the future
of the colony. Such ignorance of the former Natchez may account for
the priest’s prejudice against latter-day members of the tribe. Con-
versely, Le Page’s intimacy with the Natchez before the uprising leads
him to craft beautiful depictions of the pathos inherent in the chang-
ing relations between French and Natchez friends after the disaster.
When Vitry comments upon the lingering Native-American presence at Natchez, he makes it clear that whites have not been the only ones to suffer from the Natchez retaliations.

The remnants of an Indian tribe called Ofogoula live in five or six huts under the guns of the fort, which protect them against the onslaught of the prowling Natchez, who managed to live through the war which we have carried on incessantly against them ever since their treason (32).

By presenting, early in the narrative, various red groups that differ in their affiliations with the French, Vitry shows a desire, from the start, to distinguish between Native-American nations in order to prevent the reader from condemning all groups based on the troubles the colony is experiencing with some.

When the author's party ascends the Mississippi to the Yazoo region, Vitry relates Indian atrocities that are particularly horrifying to him because of the sacrilege involved.

We are now at the mouth of the Yazoo River. Four leagues up this river can still be seen the site of a fort which was built by the French, but which no longer exists since the Natchez massacre. It was there that in 1728, the Jesuit Father Souel was murdered, and several Frenchmen slaughtered. On the site of our camp here, they tell me, the Jesuit Father Doutreleau was saying Mass when he and the voyageurs accompanying him were attacked by the Yazoo. One man was killed, another had his thigh broken, and the Father with a bullet in his arm had to flee in a canoe, still clad in his sacerdotal vestments (33).

Fathers Souel and Doutreleau's fates, mentioned earlier by Le Petit, are repeated only in abbreviated fashion by Vitry. Upriver, when he relates his sojourn with the missionary at the Franco-Indian Arkansas post, Vitry recounts happier, more personal stories, such as his recuperation from sickness (contracted at Natchez) through the help of his host, a fellow priest. It seems as though the author hopes to counterbalance the unhappy account of the two earlier missionaries (one of
them killed and the other nearly murdered) with sunnier depictions of contemporary clergy.

The sojourn among the Arkansas affords an occasion for Vitry to add dialogue to his narrative, dialogue that further shows the French need and desire to cooperate with Native Americans so as to insure successful undertakings in the New World.

On November 1, M. the Commandant [Jacques de Coustillhas] called together the chiefs of the three [Arkansas] villages. Since the Indian is naturally curious and selfish, there was a numerous gathering. The first speech made to them was accompanied by a display of the presents which M. the Governor [Bienville] had sent them in the name of the king.

"You have always been faithful to the king," M. the Commandant told them, "your father the great chief (M. the Governor), has sent me today to make these presents, so that you may become more and more loyal. You know that we are on our way to wage war against the Chickasaw, your enemies and ours. We come to your country, and we ask that you show us those places whence we can easily reach the enemy. Assemble your warriors, persuade them to accompany us and to stay with us during the time necessary to act as guides. Your father expects that you will give us 200 men."

"The Frenchman is our father," they answered, "we were worthy of pity, and he has supplied our needs. We listen to the words of our father, but you know that we are not the masters of our warriors. We speak to them, but we cannot compel them to listen to us. We will hold councils in our villages, and will invite our people to follow you. Do not blame us chiefs, if we do not give you the men whom you ask for" (35).

In spite of the fact that the French are dependent upon Native-American alliances in the colonial enterprise, especially when it comes to waging war, the relationship of the whites to reds is still (but not surprisingly) one of condescension. The hegemonic stance, which seems almost absurd in these early years, when an Indian conspiracy could have easily wiped out the entire French population of the colony, is totally supported by Vitry, other priests and religious, and lay writers, all of whom view French rule and religion as
viable agents of aboriginal civilization and salvation. Equally conventional are the priests’ and religious’ racism, expressed in Vitry’s remark that “the Indian is naturally curious and selfish.” But white racist condescension aside, the dialogue quoted above is perhaps most important for showing the nature of Franco-aboriginal bonding and mutual dependence in a land where small white colonies and small red tribes both feared the designs of large aboriginal confederations.

The chiefs’ remarks concerning their inability to force young men to do anything indicate the democratic tendencies at work in Arkansas society. Continuing the depiction of that tendency, Vitry mentions how the Indians hold council for a month. The warriors inquire about the chiefs’ needs and then volunteer their services, but “the agreement may be arbitrarily broken at any time” (35). In the end,

> We got Indians from only two villages, twenty-one in all. Among these there was a chief very devoted to the French, but he did not have more influence in his village than the other chiefs in theirs. The Indian is independent and likes his freedom; if you press him for one thing, he will choose the other (35).

Regarding those Indians who join the French, Vitry relates,

> Our Indian guides were to lead us to a spot suitable for our first entrepôt. Relying on them we continued to advance until December 8, but our hopes were far from realization when they stopped: we ourselves had to look for the sort of place we wanted (35-36).

Vitry’ depiction of Arkansas democracy comes to a screeching halt when the Indians, allowed to do as they please, decide to end their services and the French, the victims of freedom and open-ended commitments, are forced to fend for themselves.

At the new military “entrepôt” established in Arkansas country, the Franco-Indian forces receive supplies from Frenchmen in both the Arkansas and Illinois posts. Entertainment they receive from Arkansas Indians.
The hunt is over, and the Indians offer to entertain us. Our officers are curious to see their dances and to hear them tell their war exploits.

The 24th is the day fixed for the entertainment. A barrel with a roebuck skin stretched over one end is the instrument which keeps time for the dance. In the middle of the clearing, a stake is set up, to be struck with the blows which they struck against their enemies. The French also boast of their exploits, and freely distribute gifts of merchandise, which was what the Indians had in view. Next it is the women's turn to entertain us. The girls enter the circle, decently clothed in Indian fashion, loaded down with bells, and shod with buskins. With their arms hanging down, and their head bent on one side, they form a line and start at the first beat of the drum. They move up and fall back in cadence, crossing each other at intervals and adding their voices to the noise of the drum. The chief is satisfied, and renews his assurances of loyalty toward the French (37-38).

Indian entertainment interests the author-priest as much as it does lay writers, but not simply for reasons of amusement. Vitry, like other Louisiana authors, sees the political importance of partaking in ritualized Native-American merrymaking. Thanks to their sharing in the Arkansas festivities, the French acquire two Arkansas to guide them to the Illinois.

When the time comes to penetrate enemy territory, Vitry stresses French reliance upon red allies, especially the Arkansas, for any successful outcome. He reports that

M. de Benac thinks that it would be well to send reconnoitering parties in enemy territory. He knows that the success of this venture will depend on the Arkansas. When these Indians do not arrive at the time they had promised, he sent an officer and seven men on the 23d to invite them (38).

The needed Arkansas eventually do arrive and serve as guides for the French.

The Franco-Indian party constructs Fort de l'Assomption on the site of present-day Memphis, Tennessee, and red and white settle in to battle the Chickasaw-Natchez. The encounter between the two opposing
sides begins with suspense-building instigation on "the enemy"'s part. We no longer have the river between us and the enemy, for we are now in his territory. He knows that we are here, and begins to prowl about. On the evening of the 18th, he fired across the river on three boats commanded by two officers who were returning from Fort St. Francis where they had gone to fetch our vehicles.

The enemy even comes up to the gate of the fort, though he approaches if only during the night. On the morning of Sunday the 27th, a club, that is, a flat handle topped by a ball, was found in a workshop. The scratches on the handle indicated the number of men killed by the owner of the club. The same Indian also made seven red marks on a small board, which meant that there are seven Chickasaw villages (40).

At the same time that "the enemy" is making "his" first threatening contacts, Vitry notes, "Of our 200 men there is hardly one who is not down with fever" (41).

In light of the French deficiencies, it comes as no surprise that Vitry rejoices at the sight of more white and red reinforcements arriving at the fort.

The canoes of the French and those of the Indians are intermingled; all drift down the river on a single line. It is a beautiful sight. Now we can hear their drums; after firing three volleys, they shout three times "Long live the King." They number 600 men who traveled 800 leagues by two different routes to come here, the two groups met on the river (41).

The "beautiful sight" of white and red men together on the river gives way to another pretty scene when the Canadian Indians ask for an audience with the new white leader, Gilles-Augustin Payen, Chevalier de Noyan. As Vitry notes, "We see more than 300 well-built and good-looking [red] men sitting in two rows before the tent of M. de Noyan" (41).

Out of the above-mentioned assembly a chief rises and deepens the Franco-Indian bonding with both serious and lighthearted allusions.
"We love the King of the French, he is our father. The great chief of Canada (the Governor-General) told us that you wanted us to eat your enemies who are also ours. We saw our brothers, the French, leave to wage war against them, and we have followed. God, the Great Master of Life, has kept us in good health during our long journey, and we thank Him because you who have been here so long a time are well. It is a long time, Father (M. de Noyan), since you have seen your children; your milk must hurt you, we would like to relieve you."

It is his way of asking for brandy. When some is brought, two young Indians take the bottle and glasses and pass it out along the rows. During this time the elders shuffled down the rows in a war dance singing their war song.

When the brandy is drunk, the same speaker rises again and continues his speech saying: "Your milk is good, Father, but we only drank it on one side, we do not know how it tastes on the other side." It costs us a few more bottles, after which the gathering disbands (41-42).

Vitry is obviously both impressed and amused by the manner in which the Indian speaker acquires alcohol and other items from the French. The comparison of the French "father" who possesses the brandy to a lactating woman must have struck Vitry as rather odd imagery indeed.

As time wears on, a game of cat and mouse persists between the Chickasaw-Natchez and the Franco-Indian alliance. The Chickasaw-Natchez deposit tokens of peace here and there. "However, a band of these enemies crossed the river on logs of wood tied together (on cajeux), and on November 2, two leagues from the fort, they attacked our Indians who were returning from the hunt" (43). As a result, "small detachments of Indians and French often leave the place, and go out to find the best roads; others to take by surprise hunting parties of the enemy" (44). At one point, some Potawatomi bring back Natchez prisoners and a Natchez scalp, a feat that seems to the delight the Indians more than the French. As Vitry says, "This event gives great satisfaction to our Indians, and they all come to the assembly with joyful faces" (44).
By this time, Bienville has arrived at Fort de l’Assomption, and his encounter with those who have captured the Natchez makes for an interesting passage.

The Potawatomi chief addressed himself with the air of a conqueror to M. de Bienville:

“Father, the Great Master of Life has favored my warriors by delivering these enemies into their hands. Here is some meat for which you are hungry; it is not fat. I beg you to accept it at once.”

They push forward the Natchez man around whose neck is bound a slave’s collar while his body and arms are tied with the ropes that hung from the collar; they put a white stick in his right hand, and in his left a calabash in which there are grains of corn. They then force him to dance and to sing the death song. The women are not bound but stand by and watch the proceedings.

“I accept your present,” answered M. the Governor, “and I hope that you will enjoy yourselves. I now return your slaves, except this young girl who cannot have harmed the French.”

The Indians first fulfill the demands of etiquette. The Potawatomi leave the fate of the slaves in the hands of the Iroquois. The latter hand the men to the Missouri Indians, and the woman to the Mississauga. The Missouri have no intention of postponing their celebration. They have already put on their finery, wearing their headresses, which consist of long colored feathers and two horns of wood painted blue, they are also wearing a piece of white roebuck skin to cover their nakedness. The calabash and the drum, or rather the barrel, are sounding; the Indians come forward in the rhythmic cadence of their dog dance. They imitate the barking and ferocity of a dog; at certain beats of the drum they fall on the body of the victim and rise with a piece of his flesh in their teeth, their mouths full of blood. This is their prelude to the torture. During the night they show the wretched prisoner the brands with which they are going to burn him. Early in the morning two forked sticks are set up with a pole across them; the man is hung by his wrists from the pole; and fire-brands and torches are applied to all parts of his body until death.

The woman was also put to the torture by fire, but with less cruelty. The Mississauga shortened her sufferings by lethal blows. Human nature stands aghast and trembles with horror at the sight of these tortures. One asks oneself what force sustains these barbarians in the midst of their most horrible torments, to such a point that they neither shed tears nor cry aloud. The Natchez woman was striking instance of fortitude (44-45).
While he balks at the red allies’ cruelty to their captives, Vitry, oddly enough, does not condemn the French governor for allowing the gruesome fête to occur, for seeming to encourage it, or for possibly even taking part in it. The author-priest himself witnesses the event and does not deem it necessary to say whether or not he or any other clergy present attempt to spare the victims from ungodly torture before death. Even though he does not confess to or criticize French complicity in the Indians’ inhumanity, Vitry nevertheless joins the list of Louisiana writers who avidly expose the cruelty of some Native Americans toward both reds and whites with whom they are at war.

Vitry does not fail to note that Frenchmen -- above all, ordained Frenchmen -- have suffered tortures similar to those endured by the infortunate reds whom the French handed over to Indian friends.

The barbarians are equally cruel to the French who have the misfortune of falling into their hands. I must set down here the report which M. de Carqueville, a cadet from Canada, gave me of the death of Father Sénat.

"I was involved," he told me, "in the defeat of M. Dartagouette. Three of my brothers were killed and I was taken prisoner and led to their villages. On the day of the defeat, at four o'clock in the afternoon, I saw Father Sénat and M. Dartagouette bound on the cadre; they were the first among the French to be burned. I was not allowed to see the end of the tragedy, for I was dragged to another Chickasaw village where I had the good fortune of being pushed into the hut of a chief and having my life spared. I found means of escaping through the English colonies and of returning to Canada" (45-46).

After the account which he records above, Vitry comments, "Indians recognize distinction of rank among Frenchmen. . . ., but all those invested with leadership stir him up to greater fury in his revenge. This is why M. Dartagouette and Father Sénat were the first to be put to death" (47). In light of what Vitry has heard about the sufferings and deaths of compatriots and confreres at the hands of Native Americans, it comes as less of a surprise that the author does not
elaborate upon the wrongness of torturing Indian enemies when they are captured by the Franco-Indian alliance.

After exposing red cruelty in a fashion similar to that of other Louisiana writers, Vitry comments on the Choctaw alliance with the French against the Chickasaw-Natchez. The French depend particularly upon a devoted Choctaw individual who serves as messenger to his nation at a crucial moment in the campaign. In addition to acknowledging the important Choctaw role in the war against the Chickasaw-Natchez, Vitry also mentions the Illinois, Shawnee, Natchitoches, Missouri, Missisauaga, and even Iroquois contributions to the Franco-Indian confederation. The various red groups kill, scalp, torture, or spare for use as hostages the Chickasaw-Natchez they encounter on their joint and individual forays against the foe.

As winter continues to make the campaign difficult, Vitry concedes that some of the French begin to view situations as the red allies do.

I see measures being taken which make me understand that we will never set eyes on the forts of the Chickasaw. Our Indian guides have had this idea for a long time; they have assured us again and again that it is impossible to drag artillery and rolling stock through a country soaked by winter rains (49).

Implied in the above is a questioning of French leadership and a new respect for Indian expertise when it comes to war making in the American wilds. The change in attitude, the shift in confidence on the part of many in the French ranks shows that willing French adaptation to aboriginal procedure often occurs when the Indian way of doing something is perceived as being superior to the European counterpart. Hence, while reports of Indian acculturation fill Louisiana's colonial literature, references to French recourse to tried-and-true Native-American methods of survival also abound. The acculturation of Native
Americans on the one hand and the adaptation of Frenchmen and Euro-
Americans on the other facilitate the hybridization recommended by
many Louisiana writers.

While Vitry grows in respect for some aspects of what he per­
ceives to be red behavior and mentality during the anti-Chickasaw cam­
paign, his admiration most typically mixes with persistent skepticism
regarding many facets of what he views as Native-American character.
For instance, at one point he remarks that

these men who are fickle by nature have shown up to now a
constancy which surprises those who know their character.
It may be that their steadfastness was being sustained by
their interests, but not everybody agrees with their ex­
planation. I know that in general they are ruled by their
own interests (49-50).

Ironically, while Vitry hardly speaks flatteringly of Native-American
“self-interest,” his country and he himself pursue major enterprises
of self-interest in the colony -- France to expand empire and the mis­
missionary to expand Catholicism.

As he continues to point out other weaknesses among Native Amer­
icans, Vitry acknowledges at least one vice that Europeans have en­
couraged among reds.

Their passion for liquor renders them unbearable to their
fellow Indians and more so to the French. People who only
see them occasionally cannot help sympathizing with those
[missionaries] who by their state of life are obliged to
live with them. We should not, however, be entirely un­
just, and we must admit that, except for liquor, they are
tractable enough, and that not all are inclined to drunk­
eness (50).

While he does not blame Continentals outright for contributing to sub­
stance abuse among indigenous peoples, Vitry does not pass off all Na­
tive Americans as drunks dependent upon European spirits either. What
is more, Vitry sympathizes as much with reds who must endure Indian
alcoholics as he does with whites who are forced to exist amid a
European-introduced American social blight. The author even goes so far as to correct "unjust" public opinion about Native Americans by asserting that reds in general are "tractable enough."

Vitry shows an increasing understanding of Indian groups when he relates the red allies' impatience to fight the Chickasaw, who still leave indications that they would like to sue for peace.

These same men have a personal interest in attacking the enemy. They declare that such is their wish, that this is the reason why they came, and that they will not return until they find out what the enemy has in mind. They ask the volunteers from Canada, whom they call brothers, to go with them. Before leaving they have a feast, as is their custom when going on a war expedition. The Christian Indians have another way of preparing themselves; they receive the sacraments and ask the Lord's blessing. The work of making preparations is carried on in haste, and everything is ready by February 2. The volunteers and the Indians, lightly clad, and with scanty provisions, leave on that day. They are all gone before noon. The Recollect Father goes with them as chaplain, the whole party numbering 550 men (50).

In addition to showing Vitry's growing familiarity with the way some Native Americans think and act, the passage above indicates the author's deepening awareness of varying degrees of acculturation among Indians. The differing patterns of assimilation create further distinctions among already diverse indigenous peoples. Without a doubt, Vitry's eyes are opening to the complexities marking aboriginal cultures, and the objectivity deriving from such openness keeps the author from making more blanket generalizations than he actually does.

One Indian in particular pleases Vitry immensely and causes him to speak favorably of Native Americans and of Franco-Indian unity. The author rejoices at the return of this Choctaw chief to the French, for, in addition to bringing fifty-eight Indian warriors with him, the red leader arrives with two young Frenchmen in tow. Vitry gladdens at the prospect that one of the two white youths is learning "the Indian
language” and is “thus making a good record for himself so as to obtain advancement more easily later on” (51).

As for the general French reaction to the chief to whom the two young compatriots had joined themselves, Vitry happily relates,

They appreciated the generosity of this Indian as well as his attachment to the French. . . . We have given him a medal which is given to chiefs only. This medal is for the Indians what the Cross of St. Louis is for the French; for the Indians have been made to understand that it is the reward for conspicuous bravery and faithful service. This medal, which they wear around their neck, is made of silver, at least as large and as heavy as the crown of six livres; with the king’s picture on the reverse (51).

Remarks such as the above indicate that, despite conventional racism and occasional pejorative references to Native Americans, Vitry bears respect for red institutions, red persons of distinction, and even ordinary red individuals. It is a respect won by the countless occasions on which Indians, collectively or singly, have proven their loyalty to and affection for the French by both simple or heroic deeds.

On the particularly happy occasion recounted above, Vitry’s admiration for Native Americans overflows into relating the ways Indians travel.

The manner in which an Indian travels through the woods is remarkable. It is enough for him to know where the sun rises and where it sets at the place where he sets out, then he comes back to his starting point by ways which he has never seen (51).

The author then notes that “the Chakchiuma went by water and by land; the return journey was wholly by land across a country which he knew only in part” (51).

Vitry’s admiration for Indian modes continues as he recounts the Franco-Indian advance on Anglo-Chickasaw forts.

The Chickasaw had a great advantage over us, for they were protected by their forts, while our men were in the open. We compensated this disadvantage by adopting Indian tactics; that is, we constantly changed position and kept on
firing. In this way, although the battle lasted from nine in the morning until noon, only eight men were wounded, two Frenchmen and six Indians (53).

As other colonial writers do, Vitry may well be offering his glimpses into red battle maneuvers so that Continental militaries may learn from the successful New-World war tactics. Regardless, the priest openly acknowledges the necessity of whites adopting red means on at least this one occasion, a concession that seems to indicate the author's approval of the Indianization of Frenchmen in other circumstances as well.

Vitry's esteem for Native-American wartime strategies leads him also to admire the valor of many red men and women, so much so that he even relates the heroism of an enemy Indian.

Though it was not known then how many casualties were suffered by the enemy, our men were sure that they killed a woman. They saw her fall down from the top of a hut where she had perched herself; from this vantage point this heroine was urging her people to deeds of valor (53).

That the author can call a female foe a "heroine" and her people's activities "deeds of valor" seems to be more an admission of admirable qualities on the opposing side of the battle line than sarcasm.

Perhaps the above-mentioned instance of seeming objectivity results from Vitry's awareness that, even during declared war between the French and a given tribe, Native Americans cannot be easily divided into friend or foe. The blurring of clear-cut amity and enmity is apparent when, after a lull in fighting, Vitry mentions how some Chickasaws attempt to sue for peace. Furthermore, of the three Chickasaw forts under attack, two fly English flags and one the French flag. In addition, "it was noted that all during the battle, not a shot was fired from the fort over which the French flag waved" (54) and that during the lull various Chickasaws bearing French flags walked out of the fort at times as though to beg for peace. The known
recourse of many Native Americans to deceit during war only compounds
the French ability to interpret what they see and to decide how to
respond.

Caught in the lurch, the French rely upon their Indian allies’
opinions about what to do next.

After holding a council, our Indians decided that if any
more flag bearers came out of the forts, they would send
one of their own to find out what the Chickasaw wanted.
Since the Iroquois were in majority, they prevailed in the
council and brought the other Indians to their point of
view (54).

In highlighting the French recourse to Indian evaluation of a diffi­
cult situation, Vitry also spotlights the majority-rule brand of
democracy at work in and between various tribes.

Vitry next illustrates how the Indians’ strategy is put into
practice.

Two young Chickasaw of unquestioned loyalty had been
living with the Iroquois for the past six years. When the
attack was resumed on the 25th, as soon as the Iroquois
noticed a flag bearer coming out of the fort, they gave a
French flag to the more intelligent of these two Chickasaw
and sent him forward. Although two shots were fired on
him from the gate of one of the forts, this man went
straight ahead, without stopping or hastening his pace.
The shots had been fired by an Englishman who was dis­
pleased with what he knew was going to happen. The Chick­
asaw pushed him violently back into the fort, and came out
to meet the flag bearer. The latter told the assembled
Indians who he was and gave the following message:

“All the tribes have their hatchets raised over your
heads," said he, "they ask you to have pity on your women
and children, but we are willing to intercede for you. By
returning the French prisoners, and by delivering up the
Natchez in your villages, who are the enemies of the
French and of ourselves, you will dispose your father,
the Frenchman, to pardon you.”

“We are ready to do the bidding of the tribes,” an­
swered an Iroquois, an Illinois and a Piankashaw chief,
“and will visit your camp without fear. Leave your flag
with us, take our flag and tell your people that today we
are wise” (54-55).

Significantly, Vitry depicts an Englishman as more desirous of war
than are the Chickasaw. This comes as no surprise since throughout Louisiana colonial literature authors point out Englishmen as the sources of long-standing troubles between the French and the Chickasaw. Equally important is the fact that peace between the Franco-Indian and Anglo-Indian forces is first negotiated in Indian fashion and by Indians exclusively, without the help of any white envoys.

Vitry’s account of the French willingness to let Indians take the lead further evinces the value that the author places on accommodation to Indian ways when they are judged to be appropriate and beneficial. That Native Americans should take the first steps toward reconciliation also seems fitting since members of the same tribe can be found fighting on either side of the battle line in this war.

Vitry continues his account of the leading role that reds play in attempting to make peace between many nations in one complicated little war.

The deputy returned to our camp and was sent back with a wampum belt from the Iroquois of the Lake of Two Mountains and from the Nipissing. Among the Indians, wampum belts are the symbol of good faith and the best of guarantees. Thereupon, three Chickasaw chiefs trustingly came to our camp, protesting that they sincerely desired peace, and would endeavor to catch the Natchez and surrender them to us. We shook hands, a favor which they greatly appreciated. Before returning, they asked us to stop killing their horses. The Iroquois made them a present of two Limbourg blankets.

On the morning of the 26th, we deliberated whether we would send to the villages a French officer and the three Indian chiefs asked for by the Chickasaw. On noticing that there was some hesitation about sending the Frenchman, the Iroquois murmured so loudly that M. [Jacques le Guardeur] de Saint-Pierre, an officer from Canada, was sent at once. He was well received in a hut surrounded by Chickasaw and Englishmen. While he was detained in the villages, between sixty and eighty Chickasaw and five Englishmen came to our camp and were received outside the palisade. Afterwards the officer was sent back to us and the Chickasaw embassy returned satisfied. The presence of these enemies in our camp gave us a favorable opportunity to compel the acceptance of our
conditions by arresting them. This was favored by some of our Indians, but not all were willing to consent to it.

When the Iroquois saw that the Chickasaw were not fulfilling their part of the agreement, they wanted to break off the negotiations on the 27th. "You began these negotiations," the Potawatomi and the Nipissing said to the Iroquois, "we are not leaving until the matter is ended. Much may still happen today." In fact, a Chickasaw chief and four Englishmen came to our camp later in the day. The Englishmen, we thought, were responsible for the delay, and the chief, whom we suspected of intending to deceive us, was reproached for his bad faith. With regard to the missing Natchez, the chief explained how difficult it was to catch them, and promised that before the day was over, he would deliver some of them up. That evening he handed over two Natchez, and one more on the following day, together with two Frenchmen. He asked to be allowed to keep the third Frenchman as a safeconduct when going to see M. the Governor. His request was refused, and he brought back the third and last French prisoner.

These Frenchmen said that there were few Natchez in the Chickasaw villages during the battle, and that the few who were there had fled for fear of being handed over to the French, for they knew that this was the intention of the Chickasaw who had also resolved to wage war against the Natchez until the last Natchez had perished.

Presents were exchanged with the Chickasaw chief, who as token of reconciliation gave us a calumet. ...

Before we broke camp, two Chickasaw chiefs came and addressed us as follows: "Brothers, you are going back to the great chief, our father. Tell him that in two days' time we are coming to put ourselves in his hands." After this, we broke camp. ...

Hardly had we traveled one league, when we saw two Englishmen riding at full speed after us. They asked us to return their horses which our men were riding. More than 150 horses had been caught or killed, and some of them we had eaten. "Your men have surrendered," they were told, "we are taking your horses with us. If you want your horses so much, come along; but we intend to take them with us to the fort" (55-56).

If nothing else, the passage above indicates the complicated nature of the war at hand. While the different groups have varying expectations and desires which they wish to see met before establishing peace, only one is presented by Vitry as lacking the savvy and goodwill necessary for reconciliation. That group is the British, whose views do not
even approach the realistic attitudes of the Natchez, the culprits who supposedly began the conflict in the first place.

Despite the progress made toward resolution of differences, the French and their red allies remain distrustful of the Chickasaw. Vitry draws his account to a close by dramatizing further attempts at reconciliation.

Nobody can figure out the reason why the Chickasaw are delaying so long; no one had made an appearance by the 25th. Nevertheless, the troops are being sent away; the marine detachment embarked for New Orleans on the 30th.

In the morning of the 31st, just as the fort was about to be completely abandoned, a flag bearer and two Chickasaw were sighted. They announced that five more Chickasaw were about to arrive; they came at 2:00 P.M. bringing a Natchez woman and three little children.

"If we are late in coming," said the chief who had been here previously, "it is not because we wish to create difficulties. Our chiefs were about half way on their journey hither, when they noticed marks made by our enemies and returned to our village. (These marks were made by twenty-one Iroquois who killed five men and took four prisoners on their way home.) Have mercy on our women and on our children. We will act wisely, and you will have every reason to be satisfied with us."

"Your lives are in your hands," we answered, "you know the greatness of the Frenchman's power. We have armed all the tribes against you, and we will arm them again any time we choose. Do not force us to recall these warlike tribes, now that they are acquainted with your country. What would have become of you if we had brought the big guns (the cannons) and the big piles (the mortars) to your villages?"

"We would not have dared to wait," they replied, "we would have fled, and would not have returned until the storm had passed."

In the preceding December, a party of twenty Choctaw had gone to the Chickasaw villages, I do not know under what pretext. The mistrusting Chickasaw had treacherously killed most of them. "Have you thought of giving satisfaction to the Choctaw?" we asked them. "We will not attack them," they answered, "but if they attack us before means of settling this affair have been agreed upon, we will defend ourselves" (58-59).

As do many other selections from the Louisiana colonial literary canon, the passage above testifies to the French desire to establish...
peace between all tribes and to rally the old or newly created Indian confederations behind the fleur de lis. At the same time, the dialogue presented by Vitry shows the role that outbluffing plays in Franco-Indian relations and the way both French and Indian have elevated the tactic to something of an art form. Rather than annihilating a red enemy, the French as presented by Vitry would prefer persuading the foe to reconcile and join the Franco-Indian alliance, for the tribe's and for France's own good.

Vitry's attentions are not confined to the building of goodwill only between red and white forces. He seeks cooperation between Frenchmen as well. Vitry is especially impressed by humane acts between whites in the Louisiana military that defy rank and pay. When, for instance, the priest humbly informs Commandant Coustilhas of his illness and worriedly expresses his fear of becoming a burden, the leader responds in a manner that both soothes and touches Vitry:

"'Don't worry,' he said, 'You will have all the help that we can give you'" (33). This response prompts Vitry to comment,

Men who are indifferent to each other in all circumstances, have commiseration for those who while sharing their hardships, are victims of accidents that make them more worthy of compassion. I must gratefully acknowledge that I received help from everybody (33).

After Coustilhas' death in Arkansas country, Vitry notes of the other men whose company he has come to share: "I often ask myself what kind of men we have here. They are always on the go; neither rain, nor snow, nor ice interrupt their work; and yet the pay is very small" (37). The missionary has come to admire those who work tirelessly and as equals for the protection and well-being of his second home in time of war, and one can only assume that Vitry would have such cooperation extend to everyday life as well.
Vitry closes his account (part of which is dependent upon other sources for events that the author did not witness himself) by attesting,

My journal is true so far as the facts are concerned. With regard to the speeches, I have set down the sense, with possible additions or omissions here and there.

I have no intention of commenting on the events lest I should misinterpret them. I can only say that I saw a very good army at Fort de l'Assomption. All the officers were very kind to me, and the one thing they wanted was an opportunity to display their fighting spirit. Even gratitude will let me go no farther than the statement of this truth (59).

Despite his protestations, Vitry does go beyond the mere statement of truths and thereby reveals many of his personal feelings regarding the events depicted in his journal. And what he reveals is a deep interest in Louisiana and in all its inhabitants.

The reader familiar with the roles that priests and religious played in recording Louisiana history will readily note that the writings of such clergy as the Jesuits Paul du Ru and Jacques Gravier have not been included in this study. The omissions result from employment of the same criteria used to select or reject the works of lay writers: the authors either did not spend significant time in Lower Louisiana or did not commit themselves to the colony as a second home. Du Ru's residence of only a couple of years leaves little room for debate as to his status as a non-Louisianian. With regard to Gravier, hailed as the founder of the Illinois mission in the 1680s, it must be acknowledged that even though he worked diligently at the time of Louisiana's establishment in the very region where the colony first came into being, his order in Illinois was under the jurisdiction of Quebec until the 1720s (when they came under the New Orleans superior's control). Furthermore, between 1700 (when he came south) and his death in 1708, Gravier did not remain stationary in Lower Louisiana, working
as he did from the Mississippi River to Mobile Bay, with trips back to Illinois and to France.

Some might argue that the writings of Father François Le Maire, a member of the “Missions Étrangères” (the Foreign Missions, also known as the Seminary of Paris, hence the “Seminary Priests” or “Seminarians”) should be considered in the discussion of colonial Louisiana’s clerical and religious literature. After all, “M. Le Maire” served in both Lower Louisiana and Florida from ca. 1706 to ca. 1720 and wrote several memoirs concerning the French colony. What is more, as Delanglez points out in his article on Le Maire, the missionary priest was the inspiration for one of the characters in the Abbé Prévost’s Manon Lescaut, a popular eighteenth-century novel that focused international attention on Louisiana.

Furthermore, Le Maire took himself seriously as a littérateur, something not all of the writers examined in this study actually did. In a January 15, 1714, letter written at Pensacola and presented in Delanglez’s article on Le Maire, the priest affirms that

> during my leisure moments, as I had not my books here, I amused myself composing Latin hymns for all the Mysteries [of the life] of Our Lord, and for the feasts of the Blessed Virgin. The form I followed is that of certain odes of Horace that have not yet been used and to which I have adapted a melody that sounds harmonious enough. I was lucky to remember the rhythm of an Horatian archilochian well fit for the common melodies of the Pange Lingua, and the proses Lauda Sion, O Filii, Veni Sancte Spiritus, Stabat Mater. If I do not have them printed in Mexico, I shall send them to Paris, but they will be published anonymously. If I have time, I might send you a few extracts of this work. Excuse my digression. Mustn’t everything be forgiven a poet? (137)

Just as he was, undoubtedly, one of the most classically knowledgeable men in early Louisiana, Le Maire might have also been the first true poet to live for an extended period of time in the young colony. Such classical creativity as claimed by Le Maire would not be matched until
Viel, unique in the colonial canon because of his being a Louisiana native, began his scholarship, translations, and playwrighting in the latter half of the eighteenth century.

Adding to the attractiveness of placing Le Maire in the Louisiana canon is the fact that in the early 1700s France considered him to be one of the most important authorities on the colony. Marcel Giraud states that "it was the wish of 'the Court and the savants' that Le Maire condense all this wealth of information, all the data he had acquired on Louisiana, into an account that could decisively enlighten the public" (II, 17). The selection of Le Maire to be the one to compile a single, definitive study on Louisiana rested on the fact that the missionary had become, in a way, the official correspondent of everyone who was interested in the colony, providing them, to the best of his ability, with the elements of documentation that Iberville's contemporaries had sought earlier. Thanks to Le Maire and Guillaume de l'Isle and his friends, Louisiana came, by virtue of the size and novelty of the field of observations it seemed likely to make available, to outclass the older colonies in the mind of the world of learning (II, 17).

But even though Le Maire helped focus intellectual attention on Louisiana, he himself, as an intellectual, was an oddity in the colony.

Delanglez comments further on the ways Le Maire did not fit into Louisiana society.

If Le Maire was by far the best educated man in the colony, his character does not seem to have been as amiable as his learning was great. He was out of his element with the rough and tough pioneers of Fort Louis [Mobile], Dauphine Island or Pensacola (127).

The other writers of the first quarter of the eighteenth century were more pioneering men of unscholarly trades (such as the carpenter Péni-caut) or frontier officials (such as Derbanne and Bernard Diron Dartaguiette) than they were academic/artistic authors. Hence, they mixed better with the general population than did Le Maire. Le Maire's
priestly vocation and affiliation with a religious order cannot be viewed as the main causes of his apartness, for, as has been seen by now, other priests and religious integrated themselves into colonial society as much as their orders could allow and committed their lives to Louisiana as their second home.

Even Le Maire's priestly zeal suffered from his displacement in Louisiana. Giraud notes that Le Maire's dedication to Indians diminished shortly after the priest's arrival in the colony and that his efforts (like those of his confrères) among white inhabitants also bore little fruit. Comparing the missionary endeavors of the Seminary Priests to those of the Jesuits, Giraud observes,

By finally leaving the Seminarians in control of the mission of Louisiana [in the early 1700s], the Jesuits revealed [the Seminarians'] inadequacies all the more. None of the clergy destined for service at Mobile and Dauphin Island was prepared to do missionary work. . . . Le Maire, who wanted to dedicate himself to the Indians when he first arrived, soon lost all sympathy for them (I, 336).

Giraud goes on to note that Le Maire and the other Seminarians failed miserably at learning indigenous languages. On the other hand, in his letter published in Delanglez's article, Le Maire boasts of his swift acquisition of Spanish (137), an unimpressive feat in light of the priest's fluency in both French and Latin. Clearly, Le Maire was a classic Continental, unsuitable for and unwilling to undergo Americanization.

Giraud says further of Le Maire's outlook on Native Americans:

His correspondence does not support the theme of "the noble savage." He blames the natives for having no "passion" but self-interest, and although he allows them some good qualities, he invariably neutralizes these with defects or vices that counterbalance them (II, 30).

Perhaps Le Maire's own inefficacy among reds prompted him to speak unflatteringly of them.
This lack of effectiveness among both red and white inhabitants made Le Maire want to give up his work in the colony. Giraud elaborates.

Le Maire, who was too headstrong in his judgments and permanently at odds with the colony's leaders, proved unable to win the confidence of the population. Dissatisfied with the inhabitants and disappointed in the Indians who had not responded to his apostolate, he did not hide his intention to give up a task in which he was provided with no backing and the remuneration for which was subject to long delays that aggravated its inadequacy (II, 126-127).

Giraud continues to note that "though he declared his desire to return to France [in the 1710s], Le Maire did not contemplate immediate departure because he feared to leave the field free once more to the Jesuits" (II, 128).

Le Maire would leave Louisiana in the following decade, however. Giraud asserts that "son départ au début de 1720, priva la colonie de l'homme qui avait réuni sur son passé et sur sa géographie la documentation d'ensemble la plus étendue" (III, 137).

In the translation of Le Maire's letter-memoir written from Pensacola on January 15, 1714, and published by Delanglez, Le Maire confesses to a ministerial ineptness resulting from his being out of place in America. "I was somewhat successful in Paris," he says, "... but here I find myself out of my native land, the most barren of fathers" (129).

Le Maire's lack of sympathy for the Indian reveals itself fully when he asserts that

all the savages of these parts are light-headed, fickle, liars, thieves, traitors, and unfaithful to their word. They are great talkers and great teasers, and so revengeful that they remember to the third and fourth generation injuries done to their great grandfathers. They have not yet forgiven the Spaniards for what they heard Ferdinand de Soto did to their ancestors (143).

As Bossu does in a more extended fashion, Le Maire points out the
legacy of De Soto among Indians of what is now the United States South. Such observance of the lingering effect of the De Soto expedition adds credence to the idea that the first transformative white presence in a good part of the South dates to the early 1540s, when reds outside of Florida (where Spaniards had entered in the 1510s and 1520s), beyond the coastal extremities of the Gulf of Mexico (which Alonso Alvarez de Pineda circumnavigated in the 1510s and which Pán­filo de Narváez and Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca began circumnavigating in the 1520s before being shipwrecked on the present Louisiana-Texas coast), and east of Texas (where Cabeza de Vaca lived as an Indian captive until escaping to Mexico in 1537) initially encountered and were forever changed by Caucasians. Following upon De Soto’s expedition was the Spanish establishment of mission and military communities in Florida in the 1560s, not to mention Spanish repulsion of a French-Huguenot community in the same region in the same decade. Such change-effecting European penetration into Native America would not occur in the middle and upper British Atlantic Seaboard until much later. Le Maire’s attention to the memory of De Soto among indigenous peoples links him to Louisiana writers who dwell on the fact that the foundations — both sound and shaky — for the colonizing activities of their day were laid in considerable part by the region’s great explorer of the sixteenth century and that of the seventeenth: De Soto and La Salle.

Resembling the Louisiana writers further, Le Maire also attacks what he perceives to be Native-American dishonesty, treachery, cruelty, and abnormal sexuality. However, the fact that his negative views outweigh anything positive that he has to say about aboriginal Americans distinguishes him from most colonial authors. Delanglez’s estimation of Le Maire is, therefore, correct: He was one of many “other
Europeans who came, saw, and described America” (124) without becoming American.

It is tempting to add talented Europeans and Canadians to the Louisiana literary canon, overlooking their short-term residence in or disdain for the colony and justifying their inclusion on the basis of their having written about the region or on their impact upon the territory's history and development. The easiest rationalizations could be made for ecclesiastical, governmental, and military scribes. It has just been shown how Le Maire, falling into the ecclesiastical category, might be considered on various grounds by some to be a Louisiana writer. In the governmental-military realm, others might argue that Sauvole, commandant of Biloxi from 1699 to 1701 and author of an important journal on Lower Louisiana's founding, should also be examined.

Jay Higginbotham, who published and translated Sauvole’s journal, forwards favorable opinions on Sauvole’s literary merits, merits that (like Le Maire’s) gain in importance considering the rusticity of the early Louisiana milieu in which they were achieved. Higginbotham adds that “it may well be true that Sauvole was more literate than any of his colleagues in Louisiana” (18). Little is known about Sauvole (including his first name), but what is known is that he led nascent Louisiana in an important capacity, wrote in and about the colony, and died on its soil in 1701. Due to his residence of only a couple of years in the colony and the uncertainty of where he would have chosen to spend the remainder of his days had his life not been cut short, Sauvole, like a host of other military, governmental, and ecclesiastical writers, cannot be considered a Louisiana writer. Still, the value of his journal and that of the documents left behind by other commandants as well as by the many priests, governors, and travelers who

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came, saw, and left cannot be denied. These documents are integral and, in some cases, untapped resources for the ongoing process of determining Louisiana history. On such a note, this study leaves the writings of Continental and Canadian leaders and observers of Louisiana to focus on the works of those who can more surely be defined as Louisiana writers.
As evidenced in the narratives of priests and religious, people in orders used their letters and journals to do more than just render an official account to the appropriate superior on the proceedings of their respective canonical communities. To varying degrees they sought (or were at least aware of the possibilities for) wider dissemination of their works, as is obvious in the perceptible attempts at refinement and artistic embellishment that even the less gifted writers made. In fact, the notion that persons other than the immediate authority whom the author is addressing might read and distribute the text at hand informs almost all of the prose narratives composed by either lay or religious scribes in colonial Louisiana.

Although they might not have been great writers, Tonti and Nicolas, like the priests and religious as well as the secular authors, were aware of the importance of what they wrote. They knew that their accounts would both instruct Europe on important factual information about the New World as well as satisfy the Continent's curiosity concerning the unknown peoples and events of strange, distant lands. This twofold realization on the part of lay Louisiana writers continued into the first quarter of the eighteenth century and beyond in journals that are combination diaries and "official" reports.

Clearly, writers such as André Pénicaut and Bernard Diron Dartaguiette desired that their diary-reports move beyond a limited sphere of readers to a wider audience. For instance, both men, especially Pénicaut, digress at times from the "official" purpose of the narrative (for each, that purpose is a description of the state of the colony at a given time, plus an account of the author's services and
travels during that period) to present depictions of odd or humorous events that serve no purpose other than to entertain. Very often such digressions involve descriptions of Native Americans, evincing the author’s fascination with these people as well as his attempt to meet a public’s interest in indigenous residents of the New World. (The role of these Indian anecdotes and other anecdotal digressions will be examined in more detail in the chapter devoted to the depiction of Native Americans by the major writers of Louisiana’s first colonial period as well as in the chapter concerning the development of the Saint Denis legend.)

The scope, size, and format of Pénicaud’s narrative indicates that he intended it to be a major contribution to knowledge on Louisiana and that he, like Le Page, Dumont, and Bossu, took himself seriously as a writer. These four may rightly be considered the major writers of Louisiana’s first colonial period, and it is their compositions that will be most closely analyzed in the greater, remaining part of this study for the themes and interests already proposed as characterizing Louisiana colonial literature.

The smaller size and scope as well as the lesser “embellishment” of Diron’s narrative places it somewhere between the works of the authors examined thus far and those of more decidedly functionary writers such as Jérémie Jadart de Beauchamp, who documented a specific mission to the Choctaw and Chickasaw in the middle of the century. These latter, perfunctory writers, for whom De Beauchamp can serve as an example later in this study, were governmental/military personnel sent on particular assignments about which they were expected to write immediately. Hence, they may not have had great aspirations for their compositions and might not have even written at all were it not to report fulfillment of the assigned task(s). Nevertheless, these writers
who did not venture beyond the recording of the topic at hand and who do not seem to have cared about a wide circulation of their texts, represent an important part of the colonial enterprise both in their assignments and in the recording of the same.

For now, Diron will be highlighted as an example of those who wrote about their experiences in the service of Crown and colony both to provide important, requested information and to dabble in literature for personal and public enjoyment. Regardless of the “official” purpose of the composition or the person doing the composing, the texts for which Diron’s serves as a representative invariably manifest the themes and interests currently being held up as common to Louisiana colonial literature.

Bernard Diron Dartaguiette came to Louisiana in 1708 at age thirteen, accompanying his older brother, Jean-Baptiste-Martin Dartaguiette Diron, who was sent to investigate rumors of corruption and abuse by the Le Moynes.\(^1\) While Martin Dartaguiette Diron would return to France after several years of investigating and helping in the administration of the colony, Bernard Diron Dartaguiette and a younger brother, Pierre Dartaguiette d’Itouralde, remained to serve for years in the colony’s military.

Martin Dartaguiette Diron continued to oversee colonial affairs from the Continent; both Bernard Diron Dartaguiette and Pierre Dartaguiette d’Itouralde became officers in the colonial troops; and all three Dartaguiette brothers together attempted a concession at Baton Rouge.\(^2\)

In 1720 Bernard Diron became inspector general for the colonial troops. Diron returned to France briefly in 1724, received the Cross of Saint Louis, and was back in Louisiana in the same year to command Mobile. In 1726 he was made the colony’s second lieutenant de roy.
Speaking of Mobile society up to 1731, Giraud highlights an aspect of Diron's personality that connects him to the type of leader hoped for by Louisiana writers: modesty. Giraud asserts that Diron was "the individual who showed the least pretentiousness in stating his titles" (V, 352). Giraud elaborates.

As a rule he was content to list his functions without trying . . . to add to them some mark of special honor. To be sure, a list of his functions was quite enough by itself, and its distinction was only emphasized by the fact that he but rarely appeared among the witnesses of all kinds who appended their signatures to records of baptism or marriage. Yet he may well have suffered from comparisons with his eldest brother, who was responsible for his promotion and was always ready to help him . . . but who, as the family's eldest son, had inherited the name Dartaguiette Diron, the titles of nobility that went with it, and the fortune of their father. . . . All this put Bernard Diron, in his modest appointment at Fort Condé in the distant land of Louisiana, in a position of inferiority in relation to his brother who had done so well in France. But a younger brother was obliged to seem content with his lot, and this Bernard did -- although . . . without enjoying very much of the company of the humble folk around him (V, 352-352).

Undoubtedly the comparisons to his brother and to others who served as administrators in more desirable locales, as well as the awareness of how he acquired his own appointments and distinctions, must have kept Diron humble, as Giraud suggests, and encouraged his becoming the type of modest and efficient leader wished for by Louisiana writers. That he chose not to mix with "humble folk" in social settings does not mean that Diron neglected them in the fulfillment of his office.

Diron returned to France once again in 1731 -- as Giraud notes, "escaping from Périer's animosity" (V, 364). Diron's dealings with Indians, motivated in part by personal commercial interests, had incurred both Périer's and Bienville's critical observation that this Dartaguiette was preoccupied with his own affairs. Still, as Giraud asserts, Diron's activities served France and the colony well. Of
special importance was Diron’s skillful handling of Anglo-influenced troubles among the Chickasaw and Choctaw of eastern Lower Louisiana. Diron resumed the command of Mobile in 1732.

Giraud speculates upon the reasons for Périer’s distrust and eventual discrediting of Diron.

[Diron] perhaps made Périer feel that he was behaving as master in the region adjoining Mobile, and exposing the tribal chiefs to disagreeable procedures by surrounding himself with some rather unscrupulous persons to help in his operations. Finally, it is possible that Périer wanted to get rid of a potential rival in Diron, whom he may have suspected of intending to supplant him as commandant by taking advantage of his rank, his decorations, and his influential backers (V, 373).

To confirm his suspicions, Périer sent an envoy to the Choctaw to investigate Diron’s doings. Unfortunately, as Giraud notes, “in letting the envoy he had sent to their villages discredit Diron, Périer had lowered the prestige of France among the native populations” (V,376). Clearly, in the historian’s opinion as well as that of many colonial writers, Périer was not the impeccable person of integrity lauded by the likes of Hachard, Le Petit, and, later, Dumont.

To retaliate against Périer’s discrediting him, Diron, in turn, joined other colonists in disparaging the commandant for the latter’s response to the 1729 Natchez uprising. As Giraud relates,

In the colony, the realization that the victory over the Natchez had not been so great as officially was claimed now turned feeling against Périer and somewhat discredited his conduct of the affair. Diron was indefatigable in denouncing him, accusing him of bearing full responsibility for what had happened, for the semidefeat suffered by the French. He said that he, Diron, could have suppressed the revolt if he had been leading the Choctaws, who he alleged were wholly devoted to him (V, 427).

As evidenced in Diron’s personal life as well as in his writings, an official’s relations with Indians strongly determined how other colonials judged his leadership.
While the Dartaguiette family ranked for a time as one of the most illustrious of early eighteenth-century Louisiana, the glory gradually faded. Giraud points out that

Diron's career . . . suffered setbacks caused by the withdrawal of the Company of the Indies [1731]. A few years later, Captain Dartaguiette [Pierre Dartaguiette d'itour-alde] met his death in the war with the Chickasaws [1736]. These events seem to have begun the decline and eventually the end of this family's attempt at settlement in Louisiana (V, 176-177).

As the Dartaguiette plaque in Baton Rouge indicates, the family's activities in the colony extended to 1742. Their influence, however, lasted much longer.

Diron's 1722-1723 journal informs of reader of many aspects of early eighteenth-century Louisiana. Newton D. Mereness included an English translation of Diron's journal in his 1916 collection, Travels in the American Colonies, and it is from Mereness' publication that the passages quoted below are extracted.

Diron's journal is a report on the colony from 1722 to 1723, a time when Diron was based in New Orleans and made a trip from there to the Illinois country. As an official account, the document, not surprisingly, lists the grievances and the needs of colonists. In the sections entitled "Grievances" and "Memorandum of the Things Which Are Necessary for the Establishment of This Colony and Which Are Absolutely Indispensable," Diron offers what the "Sr. Faucon Dumanoir, director of the Concession of the Malouins" (19) presented him to report.

That Diron agrees with the sentiments expressed in Dumanoir's contribution is evident when he says,

You will see there the grievances which they [the Saint Malo merchants who settled near Natchez] have to allege against the company, what it has made them suffer in spite of the conventions and agreements made between them. You will also see enumerated the things which are absolutely necessary for the establishment of the colony (19).
In sympathizing with the colonists who have been unfairly treated by both Company and Council and in presenting what he deems to be "absolutely necessary" for the colony, Diron joins the other Louisiana authors who write so as to improve the lot of fellow settlers.

The list of "Grievances" bemoans not only a lack of provisions vital to farming and trading but also an absence of even the barest necessities of life. As a result of local and Continental administrative negligence, many colonists have died "in extreme wretchedness" (19). The memoir says of company members responsible for the dire circumstances: "They prefer to support a great number of people in idleness rather than to feed and maintain the concessionnaires, who are the pillars and the base of the establishment of this colony" (20). Thus begins an affirmation of the agrarian existence as the occupation most suitable and most beneficial to the colony. Diron’s favoring of the plantation way of life is shared by most eighteenth-century Louisiana writers who speculate on the colony’s future. Not surprisingly, then, the "Memorandum" of absolute necessities for the colony mandates a large importation of slaves so as to exploit the land to the full.

The memoir also complains against Council seizures of property and other authoritarian disturbances of free enterprise. The "Grievances" end with the assertion:

I can assure you, Gentlemen, without any partiality, that if the concessions are sustaining themselves, the credit for it is due alone to the steadfastness of those who direct them here, and to the manner in which the colonists have conducted themselves throughout the whole enterprise" (21).

Diron’s faith in the working colonist and his desire for the reform of corrupt and hindering hierarchical interference link his account to a
string of texts by other authors who seek to promote the honest laborer and to check intrusive authority.

The "Memorandum" following the "Grievances" continues the cause of the concessionnaires. While the first and tenth items of the memorandum plead for more black slaves to labor in the colony, the ninth item asks that disenfranchised nonwhites share in at least one of the comforts allotted to whites: "assortments of cloth and everything that is necessary to maintain the French of both sexes and the negroes and slaves, . . . each thing . . . given in proportion to the supply" (22).

In the thirteenth item, the argument that both the colony and the Company administration will benefit if the authorities first let their dependents prosper foreshadows the contention poetically expressed by Poydras decades later (but shared throughout the century by the colonial writers) that societal well-being can and should flow from the bottom up.

The company ought to think first of enriching the inhabitants before it can even think of drawing any profit for itself. The inhabitants once enriched, the company will find itself to be suddenly reimbursed for its advances, and it would make a large production upon which it would have a large profit, for if one counts upon stifling the inhabitant at the first moment he begins to breathe -- I mean to say, if one forces the inhabitant to give to the company his first crops for nothing -- this will not be the means of making him discharge his debt, but on the contrary, it will only thrust him deeper into the abyss, by which method the company will lose its advances and throw the country into the same condition in which it was formerly (23).

When Poydras later embeds in his poems a sort of subliminal suggestion of the above-stated convictions, he continues the hope expressed by even the earliest Louisiana writers that those who govern will be convinced that their own and their underlings' good lies in allowing people to prosper as they will.
Continuing the appeal for economic freedom and other rights, the fifteenth item affirms

that justice should be rendered equally to all without prejudice, revenge, or distinction. The company being sure of the success of this colony, as we show by the proofs we send to it, it ought not to hesitate one moment to procure the necessities above specified, if it wishes to see the colony in a little while rise to a flourishing condition (23).

After presenting this last item of the "Memorandum," Diron returns to relating his trip from New Orleans to Illinois in the diary proper.

That Diron believes only capable persons should be placed in positions of authority is made more clear when he reports on the condition of one man's troops in a particular Franco-Indian military campaign against reds causing trouble for the French alliance in the Illinois country.

The detachment which Bourdon commanded returned a few days afterward, but in a pitiable condition, having suffered severely from hunger on account of the bad leadership of Bourdon who is not fit for this sort of employment and is more skilful at goading oxen in the ploughing than in leading a troop of warriors (32).

Clearly, the welfare of underlings of all shades is the author's primary concern in this and other instances, and Diron links military success (like any other type of French gain in the New World) to seeking first the needs of the masses. Diron's derogatory remark ("more skilful at goading oxen in the ploughing than in leading a troop of warriors") causes this passage to resemble the caustic commentaries of a writer such as Dumont de Montigny.

Diron again speaks against the sated and powerful elite and in favor of the deprived and powerless masses in the November 22, 1722, entry. Not afraid to mention names, the author states,

We learned that at New Orleans it is a plague to get anything from the stores. Many respectable people can get nothing, not even brandy or wine. It is only the friends who have any, although there is plenty of it for private
individuals, like, and for example, Rossard, the notary, who some days past gave an entertainment at which was drunk a cask of wine and of the best (38-39).

While most colonial Louisiana authors decry abuses such as favoritism, few dare as Diron does to name the specific persons responsible for particular offenses. Obviously, Diron's elevated social status among colonials and his powerful backing on the Continent account in part for his lack of restraint in pointing out the perpetrators of corruption. Even so, Diron's criticism of certain named individuals does not begin to match the daring ad-hominem diatribes of the lower-positioned Dumont.

Considering his objections to the manner in which supplies are distributed in the colony and justice is meted out to colonists, it comes as no surprise that in the October 19, 1722, entry Diron relates with relish a supposedly supernatural event that may have very mundane explanations.

Two men, named Marlot and Boutteaux, the former storekeeper of the company and the latter formerly storekeeper of the concession of M. Law, are, it is said, tormented every night by spirits which appear to them, maltreat them and create disorder. The people believe that they are the spirits of those two men who were hanged, as I explained in the Journal of last month, because Marlot performed the duties of being procureur (public prosecutor) and Boutteaux made the accusations against them. It is easier to believe that it is some of their enemies, for those gentlemen, the clerks, make more enemies than they should (31).

As moralistic as any Louisiana writer, Diron seems to be using the notion of "what goes around comes around" to convince authorities further that transgressions against the disempowered are sure to result not only in unnecessary problems for the ruled but also in eventual punishment of the privileged transgressors.

Diron's criticism of inefficient and neglectful administration extends from civil leaders to the clergy. In the January 6, 1723,
entry, he refers to certain Jesuit missionaries as "those good fathers, who are at the Illinois, always attentive to increase their patrimony and never satisfied with it" (44). Diron deems one of the priests, "this Reverend Father Boulanger," to be "the least skilful of all the Jesuits" (44). While Diron may not be impressed with this particular missionary, the former nonetheless relates the number of times the latter celebrates Mass for Diron's travelling party. The author is also seemingly pleased to report the devout regularity of religious observances by the French in his journeying group.

In the January 7, 1723, entry, Diron blames lack of proselytization among at least one group of Native Americans squarely on their missionary. Speaking of the Tunicas, the author observes,

There may be in this village 200 warriors. . . . There are some of them who have a smattering of Christianity, but just as they were commencing to appreciate the Word of God, Father Davion left them, to such a degree did his own interests outweigh those of charity (44).

As is the case with other Louisiana writers, Diron's criticism of colonial clergy does not spring from irreligion or disrespect for the priesthood. Rather, he objects to religious leaders who, like civil or military leaders whom he also criticizes, fail to remain true to their primary purpose for being in the colony: to use the powers of their office to meet the needs of those whom they have been appointed to serve. While at the Tunica village, as at other stable Indian communities, Diron sounds a more positive note by observing the number of French settlements in the area, the proximity of red and white residents to each other indicating productive racial coexistence and possible hybridization.

Diron's religiosity, a devout Catholicism that he shares with the other Louisiana authors (in their writings at least), expresses itself further in the March 28, 1723, entry. Speaking of the Paschal
observances that he and his men make while venturing up the Mississippi, Diron relates,

We remained here to celebrate the holy Easter festival, and to give time to our men to make their devotions. The Reverend Father said high mass for us this morning, and, after noon, vespers. There were only two men in our boat who did not take communion (63).

Diron's recording of those who fulfill their Easter obligations and those who do not indicates the author's attention to religion as another ingredient of a wholesome society.

In addition to the similarities that he shares with other Louisiana writers in treating the relationship between the ruling elite and the governed masses, Diron resembles the colonial scribes further in his handling of Bienville. He relates that the store-house which M. Delatour, lieutenant-general of Louisiana, was having made over into a house for himself, will not serve him for this purpose. M. Bienville, Commandant general, having set himself against it with some haughtiness, has completely fallen out with M. Delatour on account of this matter and because of some other subjects for jealousy. This lumber has been reserved to build the director's house (31).

Diron, like many other contemporary writers, obviously had some reservations concerning the commandant's character.

Diron resembles other Louisiana writers further in his treatment of Native Americans. Early on he points out France's dependence upon Native Americans for military assistance. Typical of many colonial authors, Diron also exhibits tolerance toward aboriginals, even toward supposed enemies. When in the October 21, 1722, entry he relates the capture of four Frenchmen and an Indian slave of the Illinois country "by the Chicachats with whom we are at war" (31), he does not doubt reports of the captives' fair treatment. Diron states further that "these Frenchmen had written to M. Bienville that they were being well treated by the Indians, that the latter only asked for peace" (31).
On October 24, Diron adds,

The report has been confirmed that the men called Langevin, father and son, of whom we spoke in the entry of the 21st of the present month, had been taken by the Chicachats, ... and that they had been very well treated by the Indians, who did them no harm, and who even carried Langevin, the father, for days because he was ill and could not walk. He died of sickness four days after his arrival at the village of the Chicachats. This is surely a sign that the Indians want peace, for when a prisoner cannot work, it is their custom to kill him (33).

In addition to his openmindedness toward Native Americans and his willingness to acknowledge the positives even in red foes, Diron also shows a considerable understanding of the ways of many Indians.

As soon as peace is made with the Chickasaw, problems begin with the Natchez. Diron relates the escalation of events, beginning with white overreaction to red resistance and proceeding to attacks by the Natchez in retaliation against the killing of one of their tribesmen by a French soldier who witnessed the Indian defending himself against an irate white to whom the red was in debt. Although he remains lenient toward the Chickasaw throughout the French difficulties with them, Diron assumes a critical stance against the Natchez. The entry for October 28, 1722, reads,

We have been informed that the Natchez Indians every day offer insults to the French who are in this port, and that they have even attacked twenty soldiers, who had been detailed to go to meet a cart which was coming from the settlement of Sieur Guenot to get things and the people who drove it had been attacked by the Natchez (34).

On October 31, Diron relates further:

We have learned from a pirogue which has just come from the Houmas ... that the head chief of the Natches, called the Great Sun, with a band of his people who were coming from New Orleans, had sung the Calumet for M. Bienville, but having learned what had taken place at Natchez, he had resolved to return with all his people to his village without having been willing to open up their minds to the French, nor to offer any opinion on this affair (34-35).
Whether or not the Natchez may have been justified in their grievance over a French soldier’s killing their fellow tribesman, Diron can tolerate neither the group’s ongoing sneak attacks on the French nor their refusal to settle for peace.

Not surprisingly, then, in the November 22 entry, Diron praises the Acolapissas upriver from New Orleans for holding the returning Natchez chief and his entourage captive upon hearing of the difficulties between the Natchez and the French. The author comments, “This is a mark of attachment to the service of the French which deserves praise” (35). Throughout the entries for November 1722, Diron recounts the worsening relations with the Natchez before mentioning peace in a December passage. In the entries for January 1723, the Natchez and the French are depicted as again cooperating in colonization.

As his literary peers do, Diron takes interest in the peculiarities of Native-American life, relating everything from alligator wrestling to warfare, foodstuffs to self-adornment. Like Le Petit and Bossu, Diron exposes the fate of medicine men whose cures do not work. In fact, part of Diron’s account narrates a course of events that almost leads to war between two tribes when a witch doctor from one group ends up harming rather than curing the chief from another. Diron spends more time describing the Natchez than any other indigenous group — and for the same reasons that his fellow colonial scribes do: the Natchez strike the author as being more sophisticated than the average tribe, even approaching some European norms. For example, Diron notes that “they have several festivals. One among others which they call ‘La Thonne,’ is a little like our village festivals in France” (47).
Typical of colonial writers who describe the Natchez, Diron pays particular attention to religion and royalty. Sounding a common assertion, he affirms, "These are the only Indians among whom I have noticed any kind of religion" (47). The tribe's hierarchy, with its unique manner of succession, especially impresses Diron, just as it does many other authors, and Diron, like them, describes with relish the regal Suns and their funeral ceremonies. Since Pénicaud's dramatization of the horrific funerary killings honoring the dead Suns will be presented in detail, it suffices here to say that Diron notes of the strange homage: "The French are little by little weaning them away from these barbarous customs" (48). Implied in the preceding comment is a desire on Diron's part to see the Natchez freed of what he deems a terrible custom for their own good, ignoring the fact that a decimated Natchez population would actually mean less of a threat to French security as well as a reduced obstacle to French designs in the fertile Natchez region. Coming just a few years prior to the Natchez Massacre, Diron's remarks indicate the good will of many French toward a tribe that would shortly attempt to eliminate whites from their midst.

In line with the male literati of the colony, Diron is also fascinated by Native-American women and their sex lives. Continuing his analysis of the Natchez, he says of the female members,

The women are fairly passable [as to looks] for Americans, and are all precocious in matters of love. One sees among them very few girls, twelve years old, who have not several lovers, all of whom they make happy. They blacken their teeth with a certain root, a practice which is greatly esteemed among them. This, together with their tawny color, renders them rather disagreeable to those who are not prejudiced in their favor. Nevertheless, they have rather regular features, and generally like all the Frenchmen, to whom they refuse none of their favors, in return for a few glass beads or other trifles; but the malign influences of Venus are so common that those who are the wisest restrain themselves and go bridle in hand.
They know how to cure all sorts of venereal diseases and have healed many Europeans (48).

While Diron falls short of condemning outright the promiscuity of both red women and their white lovers, he makes it clear that he views restraint from free love as a healthy practice for both reds and whites.

The author's relative tolerance does not permit him, however, to condone the sexually explicit entertainment sometimes staged by the Indians. Rather, he relates disapprovingly that

in the house of the great chief . . . in the evening, by the light of a cane torch, when the chief so orders, a sort of comedy is performed. There are some which one can look at and which are very bizarre, but there are some also which are full of all sorts of license and in which they make no difficulty in representing the most indecent actions. So much for what I more especially observed at the Natchez, both among the French and among the Indians (49).

Significantly, Diron acknowledges the role of Frenchmen in perpetrating Native-American practices at odds with Continental Christian morality.

Diron seems to have commanded respect from Native Americans and to have played a role in correcting some of what the Louisiana writers refer to as "barbarity." This is detectable when he describes a stopover in an Arkansas village while travelling up the Mississippi in February 1723.

I found my detachment very much incensed at the Indians, who were playing a thousand tricks upon them. This forced me to make them promise to discontinue these practices, which promises they observed very religiously all the time that I remained there (57).

Despite his acknowledgement of their corrigibility, Diron does not compliment the Arkansas in the way that he does other red allies. According to him, "these are surely the coarsest and the most superstitious savages that I know in Louisiana" (57). Bossu and others...
enamored of the Arkansas prior to the degradation witnessed by Soniat du Fossat at the end of the century would not have agreed with such a disparaging assertion.

Diron does become more complimentary of the Arkansas, however, when he mentions their women.

The women are passable for Americans, and are all very well-behaved, for I do not believe that there is a man in the colony who can boast of having had any gallant relations with any Arkansas girl or woman. The reason which is offered for this is rather curious, if one cares to believe the interpreters, who say that their men make them believe that they would die if they had the least intercourse with us (58).

In praising Arkansas female chastity, Diron also implies disapproval of French male promiscuity.

With regard to the Illinois, Diron, like Pénicaut and others, is impressed with the Franco-Indian settlements to be found in their region because they approximate European villages more than any other Louisiana communities do. Diron reports that “the French village called the Cascakias” is composed entirely of farmers who live there very comfortably. French wheat grows very well there and of a fine quality, of which they gather a fairly large quantity. . . . All the other vegetables necessary to life grow very well there. Their houses are all built of frame timbers on the ground. The chimneys are of stone, of which they could very easily build their entire houses, as the stone there is of very good quality and ready at hand, but the scarcity of men has prevented them from undertaking this work. Several inhabitants also have horse tread mills of their own with which they grind their French wheat. There is also a church there, which is certainly the finest in the colony (67-68).

Diron then describes other French and Indian settlements in the Illinois region, paying particular attention to the seeming prosperity of the area.
Unfortunately, Diron reports, the Indians who helped the French get a foothold in Illinois and with whom the French mixed on all levels are on the decline. He relates that "the Illinois Nation was formerly numerous, but the continual wars, and principally the one against the Iroquois . . . , have so enfeebled them that they number at present not more than 700 warriors" (71).

The author says further of these French allies,

The Illinois are in general the handsomest and the best built savages that I have seen. Proud and arrogant at home, they are the most cowardly of men when they are out of sight of their own village. . . . After a while when the French came among them, they began to learn the French way of dressing (71).

Typical of himself and other colonial authors, Diron treats even ac culturated Indians who are friends of the French with as much criticism as praise. However, Diron criticizes the Illinois (beloved by almost everyone who mentions them) more than any other Louisiana writer does.

While others extoll Illinois conversion to Catholicism, Diron is less impressed. He reports disapprovingly that they recognize a good and an evil spirit, to whom they give a few attributes. They believe also in metempsycho sis. The Jesuit fathers who have for more than thirty years been among them, have up to the present failed in their attempts to make them understand that God made himself man and died for us (71).

Moving to more mundane matters, Diron continues to relate with equal disapproval that "they prepare their food in the filthiest manner and make no objections to eating after their dogs, which they have in great number, and which they eat when they have their war feasts" (72). Diron's unsavory depiction of a tribe that elsewhere receives unilateral adulation and hardly any criticism does not end at religion and alimentation.
Rather, the author proceeds to assert that

the men concern themselves only with hunting and with making war, employing the remainder of the time in eating and in staining themselves (or in painting their faces). . . . Among them the most bizarre are considered the best painted. Their manner of making war is as barbarous as their persons. If they go to war and have the good fortune to capture any children, women or men, they kill them and remove their scalps, which they carry home in triumph. . . . When they have condemned their prisoner to be burned they tie him to a boat and burn him -- today one part of the body and tomorrow another, and sometimes for three days and three nights. I have seen some of these unfortunates, who kept singing up to their last breath (72).

Certainly, Diron’s Illinois are a far cry from those praised by other Louisiana writers. Perhaps the unfavorable depictions arise from Diron’s seeing in the Illinois the same cruelty that colonial authors universally condemn in other red groups.

In addition to blasting what he views as uncouthness and inhumanity, Diron criticizes the Illinois for lacking what he would deem strong authority. As he notes, “They recognize no chief. There are chiefs, however, but they have so little authority that they do not deserve to bear this title, for the last in the tribe considers himself as great a master as the first” (72). Clearly, a completely egalitarian society is not the type to win Diron’s endorsement. After all, he himself is an authority figure who sees the value of strong, albeit benevolent, leadership.

In addition to his disapproval of Illinois government, Diron is hardly more impressed by the Indians’ courtship and marriage. In fact, he takes advantage of the discussion of male-female relationships to put in another jab at Illinois Catholics. As he says of the Illinois men,

They can have several wives, except the converts who are not numerous, and even they prefer (so they say) to refrain from going to the good fathers rather than deprive themselves of the pleasure of having two or three wives (73).
Furthermore, the husband has full power and authority over his wives, whom he looks upon as his slaves. . . . However, they separate one from the other, upon the consent of both parties. The married women indulge very little in gallantry (although they are all naturally inclined towards love) because of their fear of punishment, for their husbands, who are more jealous than the Spaniards, scalp them upon the least proof of their infidelity. As for the young girls, they are the mistresses of their own bodies (to use their own expression). The good Jesuit fathers are endeavoring as much as possible to instill virtue in them, but they have not as yet succeeded (73).

At the same time that he is putting down the sexuality and conjugal dealings of a culture at odds with his own, Diron is also promoting the cause of Native-American women, either deliberately or inadvertently. Finally, with regard to one form of Illinois entertainment that must have undoubtedly had sexual overtones, Diron pronounces, "I do not speak here of their dances. They are as barbarous as their manner of living is unrefined" (74).

Balancing his depiction of the Illinois, Diron moves to more favorable aspects of the culture. He speaks positively when he mentions Illinois medicine and use of roots to make "very good dyes" (74). Diron even goes so far as to admit negative French influences on the tribe when he relates that "as for the . . . diseases which come from the corruption of the blood, they did not have them at all before seeing the French" (74). Finally, Diron illustrates the depth of Illinois friendship for whites when he reports how Indians descend upon Fort de Chartres in May 1723 to help secure pardon for a Frenchman imprisoned for having killed another Frenchman.

At the same time that he is showing Indians acting on behalf of whites, Diron also recounts the mounting friction between Renard (Fox) Indians and the Franco-aboriginal alliance in Illinois country. After having ambushed some of France's red allies, the Fox provoke the
French even more by striking at whites. In the June 1, 1723, entry, Diron illustrates how the Renard threat gruesomely hit home.

At noon we perceived in the middle of the river a French canoe, with a man in it who seemed to us not to be rowing. We sent out a pirogue which brought back this canoe in which was a man called Ponpon, a soldier detailed to the Cahoskias. He had received two gun shots, one in the head and the other in the arm, and several other arrow shots and had his scalp torn off to the skull (78).

Needless to say, the French and their red allies prepare for war with the Renards as a result of such affronts. In the June 5 entry, Diron states that "our purpose was to go to the aid of the Cahokias, whom we believed to be at that very time in close battle with the enemy" (80).

When Diron reaches the Cahokias, he delivers a speech in which he tells the Indians that if the Fox are coming after them they, together with their wives and children, should retire to the fort of the French, who would not fail to defend themselves vigorously; that I exhorted them to imitate the French and to defend themselves strongly against the common enemy; that for this purpose I was going to give them a French flag; that they ought, as soon as they were attacked, to send their best runners to Fort de Chartres and that their father, De Boisbriant, would not fail to come with all the French warriors to aid them (81).

Diron says of his red audience's response: "They answered me with shouts of joy" (81).

As the French, Cahokias, Kaskaskias, and other Indians commence skirmishing with their common foe (the Fox) and acquiring prisoners of war, Diron, either wittingly or unwittingly, implicates Frenchmen in the same type of postwar "barbarity" that he decries among Indians. The June 20, 1723, entry relates that "the prisoner who was given to the Nekchiquamias was burned for four hours at the end of which a Frenchman killed him with a gun shot. The one who had been given to the soldiers has had his head broken" (83). Diron reports the torturings without commenting upon the role of fellow Frenchmen in
observing and even participating in forms of wartime cruelty that he earlier condemned. This omission of commentary on the author’s part indicates that what may have formerly struck Diron as peculiar to Native Americans is now recognized as being shared by his compatriots. The “barbarity,” therefore, seems more “normal” in this case and less worthy of comment.

In July 1723, Diron’s party begins descending the Mississippi. From problems with the Fox, the author proceeds to relate continuing troubles with the Chickasaw, Natchez, and other indigenous groups downstream. Not only reds but also whites encountered along the way prove to be bothersome. Diron says of “four boats and two pirogues full of Canadians” bound for the Missouri under Messieurs Bourgmont and Pradel’s leadership: “This convoy seems to me very badly conducted” (84). He adds,

Furthermore, they hardly are given time to eat maize cooked in water, although they are surrounded by Buffalo. They tell me by way of excuse that they have not found any, but I am much more inclined to think that it is a case of laziness, for the most worthless Frenchman can kill a buffalo in this region. They told us that they had degraded one of their sergeants two leagues below for mutiny. We found him two leagues below resolved to die in the woods rather than to rejoin them (84-85).

Interestingly, the passage above is embedded in a section whose entries relate the alarming number of buffalo killed by Diron’s party daily. In fact, so many beasts are slaughtered merely for their tongues that the reader is repeatedly reminded of this creature’s near extinction thanks to Euro-American waste.

Back in Lower Louisiana, Diron relates both the hindrances and the cooperation he experiences with various Native-American groups. One reference in particular stands out as atypical in the collection of colonial Louisiana literature.

We were informed that the Natchitoches Indians had intended to fall upon the garrison of the Natchitoches because
M. St. Denys, who is the commandant there, had broken the head of an Indian of this nation because he had killed about a year ago a man called Perrier. I have spoken fully of the death of this man in my journals, and in the memoirs which I drew up at the time of my trip to the Natchitoches (89).

This August 2, 1723, mention of difficulties between Saint Denis (who was ordinarily idolized, especially by the next three writers to be examined in this study, for his incredible mediatorial skill with all kinds of Native Americans) and the very Indians with whom he was most closely associated is unusual, although it is echoed in accounts such as the one attributed to Bénard de La Harpe, a Frenchman who forsook the Louisiana mission. As will be seen presently, the majority of Louisiana writers who touch on Saint Denis exude admiration for his uncanny diplomatic abilities among the non-French and for his indomitable leadership within the Louisiana colony.4
The Saint Denis Legend

In Regeneration Through Violence, Richard Slotkin says of Anglo-American literature and literary scholarship from the late eighteenth to the twentieth century,

American writers have attempted the Homeric task of providing, through epic poetry or epic fiction, a starting point for a new, uniquely American mythology. Even scholarly critics who address themselves to the problem of the "myth of America" have a marked tendency to engage in the manufacture of the myth they pretend to analyze in an attempt to reshape the character of their people or to justify some preconceived or inherited notion of American uniqueness. Such critics are themselves a part of this national phenomenon of myth consciousness, this continual preoccupation with the necessity of defining or creating a national identity, a character for us to live in the world (4).

Perhaps I am engaged in myth-making by pointing to a continuum of concerns and interests that I perceive as characterizing colonial Louisiana literature, a string of similarities linking individual works into a canon and helping to define Louisiana identity. Thus far I have attempted to show that in addition to the French awareness that colonials had to get along with Indians in order to survive in Louisiana, whites also believed that French and Indian could coexist in a mutually beneficial new society.

For the writers at hand, that coexistence meant -- in its most ideal manifestation -- happy Indian submission to French rule, genuine conversion to Catholicism, and willing cooperation in the colonial enterprise. However, as will be seen in the chapter devoted specifically to the Indian in Louisiana literature, writers differed on the degree to which Indians should submit and French should dominate, on how much and how fast reds and whites should accommodate each other, on how intimate the relationship between the two races should be, and on the extent to which the melding of European and Native-American worlds into new,
hybridized communities should determine the evolution of the colony. Despite their differing views on specifics, Louisiana writers agreed that French and Indian could succeed where other Euro-aboriginal ventures had failed to benefit both red and white equally. This "myth" was believed in to such an extent that some writers even offered as a utopic model for the colony's development the Franco-Indian communities where hybridized cultures were already beginning to take shape and where peace and productivity prevailed.

In addition to the "myth" of a Franco-Indian Louisiana evolving into a powerful political entity, it could also be argued that another belief of the colonial writers that was mythic in character involved the notion that the then current structure of government (i.e., the monarchy with its hierarchy of authorities spread out over an empire of underlings) could benefit everyone -- the governed (even enslaved) masses as well as the governing few -- when functioning properly. Perceptible in the earliest writers, more evident in the major writers about to be examined, and then fully developed in later writers such as Viel and Poydras is the idea that a proper balance between the powers/privileges of existing authorities and the rights/needs of all peoples would result in a contented and prosperous society at all levels. According to the writers, what is needed for this universal well-being to occur are leaders who do not abuse their authority so as to satisfy selfish impulses but, rather, who are wise enough to realize that their positions are made even more secure and that they prosper along with everyone else if the lot of the masses is improved and if people are allowed to engage in individual and collective commercial endeavors without hierarchical hindrance. Fittingly, Viel and Poydras treat the idealized relationship between rulers and ruled, between monarchy and masses in exalted, almost epic fashion, using the classical conventions and (in Poydras' case)
pagan mythological elements at their disposal to lift their idolized leaders to realms where only mythic greats abide.

But perhaps the clearest case of intentional creation of mythology in colonial Louisiana occurred in the deliberate expansion on several writers' part of oral lore concerning the exploits of Louis Juchereau de Saint Denis, a man who embodied for these authors and apparently for many others in the early colony the fusion of French and Indian worlds into an Indianized white man who served and led both Native America and French America and who thereby exhibited the qualities of leadership and service that Louisiana writers hoped for in their officials and in their fellow colonists.

Slotkin's explanation of the myth-making process may well apply to the genesis of Saint-Denis oral lore and Saint-Denis written fiction as well as to the beliefs concerning the progress of the colony through Franco-Indian cooperation and rehabilitation of existing government.

Myth-making is a primary attribute of the human mind and . . . the process of mythogenesis in a culture is one of continuous activity rather than dramatic stops and starts. True myths are generated on a subliterary level by the historical experience of a people and thus constitute part of that inner reality which the work of the artist draws on, illuminates, and explains (4).

That the Louisiana writers were part of the very historical experiences about which they were writing likewise means that they participated in the mythogenesis of the colony, both in their interactions with other colonists and in their conscious or subconscious recording of colonial sentiment and thinking. This closeness of all the writers to the creation and evolution of the physical colony as well as its mentality explains the similarities to be found in works by authors who did not know each other or who were not contemporaries. The writers' and their non-literary fellows' feelings for Saint Denis and the mythology that he represents can be deduced from the way each author departs from reality
to craft Louisiana’s earliest fiction and a near-epic in the tale of this folk hero.

According to Richebourg Gaillard McWilliams, the editor and translator of the English version of Pénicaud’s narrative, Pénicaud came to Louisiana in 1699 in his late teens and resided in the colony until 1721. In the closing chapter of his narrative, Pénicaud states that he returned to France only to seek medical attention for an illness that had blinded him. In addition, he makes it clear that he intends to return to Louisiana, where his wife awaits him. Obviously, Louisiana had replaced France as home for Pénicaud, and a desire for the continued development of the colony, which Pénicaud (like Dumont) considers a potential second paradise, serves as an impetus for Pénicaud’s account of the region’s colonization.

Pénicaud (whose first name has also been given as Jean and whose last name has appeared as Pénigaut and Pénigault) came to Louisiana as a ship carpenter. However, in the “Advertisement to the Reader,” Pénicaud notes that his labor was not confined to his profession, for “in those faraway lands workmen have to serve in every capacity for the defense of the country” (n.p.). Thus, Pénicaud served in a variety of positions from soldier to farmer and participated in military campaigns and exploratory expeditions throughout both Lower and Upper Louisiana. He even ventured across Texas with Louis Juchereau de Saint Denis to reach the border of Mexico proper. Pénicaud also owned land in the colony as well as slaves.

McWilliams believes that Pénicaud began writing his narrative while still in Louisiana and took the manuscript with him to France, where he finished it by late summer 1723. It is dedicated to Jean-Baptiste-Martin Dartaguiette Diron, the man sent by France to investigate the squabble between Louisiana’s military leader, Bienville, and...
Nicolas de La Salle, the colony's commissioner of finances and supplies. Dartaguiette Diron lent his copy to Father Charlevoix, who used its information for his 1744 history of New France. Before McWilliams' translated edition, Pierre Margry included the narrative as "Relation de Pénicaud" in Découvertes et Établissements des Français dans l'Ouest et dans le Sud de l'Amérique Septentrionale (1614-1754). B.F. French translated and published part of the narrative as "Annals of Louisiana, . . . by M. Pénicaud" in Historical Collections of Louisiana and Florida.

It is noteworthy that in an article preceding the publication Fleur de Lys and Calumet, McWilliams highlights the fictive aspects of Pénicaud's narrative when arguing for its placement in the United States literary canon. Pointing out that "his book is chiefly memoirs mixed with historical fiction" (53), McWilliams may well be the first to praise the fictional sections for containing everything from short stories to a novella (56-57). The latter, of course, involves the Saint-Denis saga.

While part of the present concern is to view a major section of Pénicaud's narrative (along with smaller passages) as fictional literature, Pénicaud himself does not consider his work to be such. Furthermore, he strongly wishes to distinguish it from one genre in particular: the novel. As he states in the "Advertisement to the Reader,"

The opening of this book will not have the attractiveness or the amusement given in novels, which usually begin with whatever is most pathetic and sublime but which, failing to continue in this vein, nearly always end by making the reader languid or bored. So, I am not giving this work to the public as an invented fable but as a sincere and true account of that to which I have been an eyewitness during the twenty-two years I have lived in Louisiana — of everything I have put in it; and proof of its authenticity is in the fact that I report the [events] year by year (n.p.).

In his argument to be separated from novelistic writers, Pénicaud, like
Tonti, who spoke out earlier on the difference between his writings and the inaccurate text wrongly attributed to him, offers some of the colony's earliest literary criticism.

Regardless of how ardently Pénicaud wishes to separate his narrative from novelistic literature, his "history" from fiction, the "Advertisement," with its protestation of historical veracity and its condemnation of fictional literature, is in itself a literary convention. One need only glance at the prefaces to Anglo-American narratives written before and during Pénicaud's time as well as at the first Anglo-American novels written decades later to see that a primary concern for these seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and early nineteenth-century writers was to establish historical credibility and to defend against accusations of "fancy." Such efforts to distinguish between history and romance on the part of both "historians" and romanciers have only led recent scholars to look more closely for similarities between early American travel-historical-captivity narratives and novels of the same period.

Pénicaud continues in the "Advertisement" to distinguish his narrative from novelistic literature by highlighting the qualities that a great part of his work shares with travelogues. Once he begins the narrative itself, he persists in defending the truth of what he is writing. Even though some of Pénicaud's "facts" have been proven incorrect by subsequent scholarship, a great portion of his narrative is still a layman's attempt at scientific observation of the physical New World and historical recording of the events therein. For the most part, Pénicaud strives to establish his credibility by relating what he has seen firsthand. As he notes, "I have always been along on all the expeditions that I have reported, and shall report hereafter, of which I have been an eyewitness" (32). A good example of his avoiding hearsay occurs when he tells the reader in Chapter 2, "I shall not speak of the customs of
those dwelling on the banks of the Missoury, as I have not gone up the
Missoury River at all" (42). Later, when relating the religious prac-
tices of the Alabamas, whom he believes to be devil worshipers, Pénicaut
states that although he has witnessed their magic, he will not elaborate
upon it since it would seem unbelievable to the reader (64).

Despite all his care to record only what he knows to be true,
there are instances besides the Saint-Denis story in which Pénicaut re-
lates events that he has not witnessed. One of these is De Boisbriant's
adventure with the Chickasaw and Choctaw, an episode that will be exam-
ined more closely in the chapter focusing specifically on Indians. But
these are mainly short, anecdotal passages, not long interruptions of
the flow of the narrative, as is the Saint-Denis section.

Pénicaut sets the Saint-Denis tale apart from the rest of the nar-
rative both in the title of the manuscript3 and in the "Advertisement."
In the "Advertisement," Pénicaut notes of the middle section of the
book,

It contains, too, the galante story of one of the leading
French officers of Louisiana and the daughter of a Spanish
captain of cavalry of the frontier of Mexico -- an event of
my time which I learned confidentially from his valet de
chambre, who was my friend (n.p.).

Undoubtedly, Pénicaut is indicating to the reader his awareness that the
Saint-Denis section by virtue of its source and content departs from the
more prosaic and factual main text in more ways than one. One of the
departures, of course, is from verifiable history.

In the Saint-Denis passages of his book, Pénicaut unquestionably
leaves travelogue, ethnology, and history behind to offer nothing short
of romance, a story of love and roaming adventure whose historical facts
had already been altered by another teller’s imagination before they
reached Pénicaut. The tale of Saint Denis, the bulk of which was pur-
pottedly told to Pénicaut by Saint Denis’ sidekick Jalot and
reinterpreted again as Pénicaut presented it to Dartaguette Diron, has
more in common with fiction than with history. For even though Pénicaut
did accompany his hero on some of the storied exploits, he did not wit-
ness the main part of what he recounts firsthand; rather, he relied on
the words of another, who was not always at Saint Denis' side himself.
As McWilliams first observed, then, Pénicaut's Saint-Denis section, one
writer's rendition of an oral tale from early Louisiana, lifts a good
part of the narrative in which it is found from the confines of histori-
cal writing to the realm of imaginative, that is, fictional, literature.
And from Pénicaut's version the rest of the Saint-Denis legend in both
Anglo- and Francophone literature derives.

In Pénicaut's narrative the Saint-Denis legend makes its literary
debut. Dumont and Le Page follow immediately upon Pénicaut in expanding
the Saint-Denis legend. Delanglez notes in "A Louisiana Poet-Historian"
that Dumont "adds more marvelous details to the already incredible odys-
sey of Saint Denis as told by Pénicaut, etc" (49). In comments accompa-
nying his publication of Dumont's long poem, De Villiers, ignoring Pénici-
caut's skill as a storyteller and criticizing the same's historical ac-
curacy, says that Saint Denis' "aventures singulières ont donné lieu à
bien des légendes, dont la plupart proviennent des récits, très fantai-
sistes, faits par son domestique Jalot au trop crédule Pénicaut" (434).
The Saint-Denis legend continues in Louisiana-French literature to the
time of Charles Testut's Veillées Louisianaises in 1849 and even carries
over into Anglo-American literature in the twentieth century.

Perhaps the most concise and comprehensive critical summary of
Saint-Denis lore and scholarship is Ruffin Gray's "Louis Juchereau de
Saint Denis" in Papers of the Sixth Grand Reunion of the Descendants of
the Founders of Natchitoches. From Gray much of the following biograph-
ical information on Saint Denis derives.
The historical Louis Juchereau de Saint Denis was born in Beauport, Canada, in 1676. He went to France with a group of Canadians in 1698 and arrived on the Gulf Coast with Iberville not long after when the colonization of Lower Louisiana was first attempted. In fact, Saint Denis' family was tied by marriage to the Le Moynes. With Bienville, Saint Denis explored the Red River, whereupon he first encountered the Natchitoches and Caddo Indians. He commanded the fort on the Mississippi prior to New Orleans' founding and played important roles in stabilizing Indian relations there.

Governor La Mothe Cadillac chose Saint Denis to act upon a 1711 letter that Cadillac received in 1713 from Father Francisco Hidalgo, a Spanish missionary who, ironically, requested French assistance in re-establishing his missions in what is now East Texas. In addition to helping Father Hidalgo, Saint Denis' expedition up the Red River and over-land into Spanish territory west of Louisiana was to be exploratory and to determine the possibility of conducting trade with Mexico.

Saint Denis travelled to the Spanish post of San Juan Bautista on the Rio Grande, arriving in July 1714, and eventually proceeded to Mexico City, where his projects were officially viewed as a violation of Spanish sovereignty and where he was held in a polite form of arrest for three months. Paul Hoffman notes that in Mexico he had agreed to lead a Spanish expedition to the Red River. The Spaniards had decided that they would block French expansion up the Red by creating their own post on the frontier. St. Denis seems to have taken this step as the only way to return to Louisiana and to escape his house arrest in Mexico (44).

Saint Denis' days in Mexico, where on the border he met and eventually married the granddaughter of Diego Ramon, the commander of San Juan Bautista (the Presidio del Norte on the Rio Grande), and where in the capital he was detained under a curious form of arrest, are historically
sketchy and, not surprisingly, serve as the focus for the lore that developed around this international hero of early Louisiana.

In addition to leading the Spanish from the Rio Grande to the borders of Louisiana under the Viceroy’s appointment so that Spain could regain its foothold in the Texas region, Saint Denis also strengthened the French frontier by fortifying Natchitoches and using it as a trading post between the French and their Spanish and Indian neighbors. Saint Denis’ skill in dealing with the Spaniards and the Indians soon became legendary. Saint Denis returned to Mexico to trade in 1717, was arrested, and was imprisoned a second time in Mexico City. Later, reaching Louisiana again, he defeated the Spanish at Dauphin Island and Pensacola. He was appointed Commandant of Natchitoches in 1722 and served for twenty-two years there. In recognition of his services to France, he was knighted by Louis XV. Toward the end of his career, he helped defeat the Natchez Indians and bring an end to the Natchez War. Saint Denis died in 1744.

Gray claims that in addition to forty-four years of service in the development of Louisiana Saint Denis “actually brought about the beginning of Texas” (11) by traversing the distance between the Sabine River and the Rio Grande and leading Spaniards back to colonize the region.

Although Pénicaud mentions Saint Denis throughout the narrative, he does not give the hero primary focus until Chapter 14. Even then, the discourse remains very factual, centering on Saint Denis’ grouping different Indian tribes at Natchitoches and on his making the first journey to Mexico in hopes of opening up trade between the French and the Spanish. Pénicaud accompanies Saint Denis to the Presidio del Norte before being sent back to Natchitoches with others. Saint Denis and his valet, Médar Jalot, remain in Mexico.
Toward the end of Chapter 14, Pénicaut breaks from the subject of Saint Denis and assures the reader, "I shall give an account of his galante story in its place" (152). Two more chapters elapse before Pénicaut returns to Saint Denis, and, for all practical purposes, Chapter 17, "The Year 1715," could be considered the beginning of the fictional tale, with everything preceding it serving as preliminary advertisement.

When the "galante story" actually begins, the question of sources again comes to the forefront. That is, Pénicaut announces the start of the Saint-Denis saga by declaring,

M. de St. Denis arrived at Mobile during this year with Segnor Don Juan de Vilesca, uncle of his wife, and three other Spaniards. He had been away three years on his Mexican voyage, an account of which he gave to M. de la Mothe, as follows (184).

Pénicaut suggests that here he is relating Governor La Mothe Cadillac's version of the Saint-Denis story. Later, he states that another part of the tale was told to him by Saint Denis' valet Jalot. McWilliams speculates that "there is a slight possibility that Pénicaut, through his friendship with St. Denis' valet Jalot, had unauthorized access to the memoirs of St. Denis" (footnote, 185, Fleur de Lys and Calumet). Further along, McWilliams offers another possible source by stating that perhaps "Pénicaut has copied a romantic narrative that Jalot wrote about his master in order to protect him from an accusation of treason, since St. Denis accepted, and did not reject, the Viceroy [of Mexico]'s offer of employment" (footnote, 226). If nothing else, the uncertainty of Pénicaut's sources only lends itself to more speculations on the fictive nature of the Saint-Denis section of the narrative.

As the tale begins with Saint Denis' suspenseful sojourn in Mexico City, all of the drama typical of a novel begins to unfold. After having spent some time at the Presidio del Norte, where he had been well
received, and having travelled deeper into Mexico in the company of Spaniards enamored of him, Saint Denis is surprised at being imprisoned by the Viceroy upon reaching the capital. Pénicaud wastes no time lifting his protagonist to heroic stature and creating a crafty antagonist when Saint Denis and the Viceroy meet. The latter immediately throws the former into prison without giving Saint Denis a chance to explain his reasons for venturing to the city. Three months later, at the prompting of several Frenchmen employed by Spain in Mexico, the Viceroy agrees to hear Saint Denis out. Saint Denis' honesty in revealing his designs instead of concealing them for fear of Spanish reaction and then his expressing unswerving loyalty to France despite constant temptations to go over to the Spanish are juxtaposed with the Viceroy's cunning to create the desired effect: hero versus villain, good versus evil.

While the historical Saint Denis might have acquiesced to some of the Viceroy's pressures either for personal gain or simply to get out of Mexico, Pénicaud's Saint Denis does not undertake any service to Spain that would compromise his good standing as a French subject. At a time when soldier, colonist, and slave, as Gwendolyn Midlo Hall notes, "fled in all directions, grasping at straws to get away" (131) from Louisiana, Pénicaud idolizes in Saint Denis the worker and leader who ignores riches, special appointments, and material comforts of more advanced countries to endure the difficulties and frustrations that remaining true to the colonial enterprise in Louisiana entails. In addition to his honesty and fidelity to a trying colonial project, Saint Denis in his initial imprisonment (as well as at other stages of his mission to Mexico), a period of disempowerment and even voicelessness in a foreign land, experiences the plight of the underprivileged and abused masses, particularly Native Americans who have been displaced and/or enslaved; French men, women, and children who have been brought to Louisiana
against their will; and, of course, Africans who have been forced into a life of servitude in a land far from home. Through this attention to an incarcerated Saint Denis and later a Saint Denis who struggles to get home, Pénicaud further illustrates the desire of Louisiana writers for leaders who are close to the humble folk, either by shared experiences of hardship and misfortune or by an understanding of misery.

The very fact that the head of rich and powerful New Spain wants to win over the representative of weak and impoverished Louisiana calls more attention to Saint Denis' reputation as an uncommon leader whose capabilities the high and the low both at home and abroad recognize. The Viceroy offers Saint Denis freedom and a company of cavalry if he will swear allegiance to the King of Spain. Despite the luring offer, M. de St. Denis -- far indeed from being attracted enough by the Viceroy's offers to be persuaded to quit the service of the King of France -- told him that he had taken an oath of fidelity to his King, whose service he would quit only at death (184).

The Viceroy next attempts to persuade Saint Denis to join the Spanish by telling the latter that he is aware of Saint Denis' love for Doña Maria, daughter of "Segnor Dom Pedros de Vilesca" of the Presidio del Norte and that he can easily arrange their marriage. Here Pénicaud adds love to trial, tribulation, temptation, and suspense, typical ingredients of novelistic literature that help fuel this fast-moving section of the narrative. With regard to his lady, Saint Denis, desired by French, Indian, and Spanish worlds to play an important role in their societal evolution, humbless himself by conventionally expressing his unworthiness of her affections. In addition to such devices of early eighteenth-century fiction, the use of dialogue and shifts in narrative voice also enhance the "literary" distinctness of the portion of Pénicaud's narrative devoted to the author's and the colony's hero, a hero whose desirability Pénicaud does his best to internationalize.
Unable to sway Saint Denis, the Viceroy finally sets his prisoner free under surveillance in Mexico City to think matters over for two months. The text then switches from third person and from dialogue to a first-person account by Saint Denis which lasts five pages. (Among other things, the rift in literary structure may well signal Pénicaud's moving from one source before him to another.)

In giving voice to his hero, Pénicaud adds an element that both places Saint Denis on top of events and keeps him near the level of the common man: humor. In recounting his closely monitored "liberty" and detailing the abundant provisions furnished him as bribes, Pénicaud's Saint Denis amuses himself and the listener/reader at the expense of the Spanish, making their proud and lavish ways as well as their conviction that they can actually buy a foreign patriot's defection the butt of his humor. The result is that through Saint Denis' tongue-in-cheek comments to his listeners Pénicaud's egotistical Mexicans come across as more comic in their obliviousness to their ridiculous affectation than do Hachard's Madeirans.

Furthermore, as Pénicaud's Saint Denis states, "I knew from experience that, to get along well with Spaniards, one had to heap honors upon them and show them much deference" (185). Knowing that flattery will eventually get him anywhere with the Spanish, Saint Denis dutifully ingratiates himself toward his detainers as a means of securing his exit from Mexico. Saint Denis' undetected duplicitous behavior, added to his facetious comments and his depiction of the self-assured hosts' overconfident words and actions, expose the captors' comic blindness to the captive's awareness of what they intend as well as to his reverse manipulation.

Although at the beginning of his sojourn in Mexico City Saint Denis was presented as admirable because of his honesty (at a time when
dishonesty might have served him well), in the end Pénicaud's hero must resort to a mild form of self-preserving deceit that proves highly entertaining to the listener or reader. As Saint Denis flatters the Spaniards' immense egos through overpoliteness, his disingenuousness escaping them all along, the speaker's dry wit continues to surface. For example, following three months of imprisonment without having been given a chance to put in a word of defense and facing two more months of close monitoring amid expectations of a "correct" decision, Saint Denis notes, "I expressed my great thanks to Monseigneur the Viceroy for all his kindness and especially for the freedom that he gave me" (185).

Though feigning humility, Saint Denis obviously feels superior to the Spanish, and he enjoys pointing out instances in which French refinement outclasses Spanish skill and taste. For instance, with typical Gallic hauteur, he throws this condescending jab:

I found a Spanish officer who, speaking rather bad French, told me that he had been ordered to take me to lodge at his house and to be my companion in town when I wished to go out for a walk. I told him, in Spanish, which I spoke better than he spoke our language, that I was very much obliged to him and that that would give me a great deal of pleasure (185).

A sense of French superiority also reveals itself when Saint Denis appraises the possessions displayed at the Viceroy's dinner parties. For instance, although Saint Denis has never seen anything to equal the Viceroy's material wealth, everything is "crudely wrought" (187).

Despite the asides to the reader/listener that reveal his true impression of things, Saint Denis reacts to the Spanish only in the fashion that he knows they expect him to do. After being shown his lodgings and upon receipt of a monetary allowance from the Viceroy, Saint Denis responds as follows to the henchman: "I thanked him very much and requested him to tell His Excellency that I was overwhelmed by all his generosities; and then I accompanied him downstairs, where, after a
great many compliments, he made his departure" (186). Saint Denis does and says everything that the Spanish could desire, save giving in to the main wish for which all of their "hospitality" is extended. Saint Denis' reciprocation of that hospitality is also expected and accepted. He relates at one point, "I then told the Spanish officer with me to direct me to a house where one could buy something to eat, for I wished to have the honor of taking him to dinner. He did not require much pressing" (186). Even though Saint Denis realizes that both the French and Spanish residents of Mexico City who daily lavish favors upon him are "being egged on, I think, by the Viceroy" (187), he still enjoys their company, albeit "I took great care to guard my words and to say nothing that would be prejudicial to myself" (187).

When it becomes apparent that bribes and a well-padded detention will not work, the Viceroy grants the endearing Saint Denis permission to leave Mexico. Fittingly, the departure gets bogged down in ritualistic loquacity and excessive protocol.

Next morning I was beginning to dress when Monseigneur the Viceroy's master of the horse entered my room and told me that His Excellency was sending me a horse from his stable, which he was giving me to use on my journey. I thanked him courteously and told him, in the Spanish language, that I was ever under obligation to His Excellency for all the good things he had heaped upon me, that I would not fail to acquaint the Governor of Louisiana and all the French with the magnitude of his generosities and of his magnificence. Then I went downstairs to see him off and to receive my horse, which a page of the Viceroy was holding by the bridle. I exclaimed, and exclaimed, about the value and the beauty of this present. The master of the horse, having heard the word magnificence, which I had let slip in my first flattery, seized the occasion to unfold to me the riches of his master, whom he elevated to equality at least with the grandest kings in the world. He gave me a detailed account of the great number of his servants and his horses, saying that he had more than two thousand more, handsomer than the one he had given me, not to mention the prodigious quantity of furniture and services of silver. I did not dare interrupt him, although his speech had already lasted nearly half an hour and I was beginning to be quite bored, when, luckily for me, the officer with whom I was lodged, who had the
order to escort me, called through the window to tell me
that I must go to breakfast, as we had to leave within an
hour. I then left that big talker of an equerry, thanking
him for having acquainted me with the might of Monseigneur
the Viceroy, which I would not fail to proclaim to all the
French officers when I got back to Louisiana (188-189).

Clearly, by the end of his detainment in Mexico City, Saint Denis has
grown weary of the game he has been playing so as to return home, and he
cannot leave the Mexican capital and its residents quickly enough!

Despite his annoyance over what he perceives to be flaws of the
Spanish personality, his justified resentment over the form of his ini­
tial imprisonment, and his impatience over his subsequent restricted
liberty, feelings which he channels into comic criticism of his “hosts,”
Saint Denis does not fail to recognize and elaborate upon the real gen­
erosities extended to him. Nor does he shy away from admitting that he
enjoyed the company of Spanish soldiers in hostleries and higher-ranking
elite in their luxurious residences. Hence, Saint Denis’ genuine good­
naturedness as much as his tactful playing upon Spanish egocentrism wins
him the hearts of those he likewise disappoints by refusing their ulti­
matum. When the Viceroy lets Saint Denis return to Louisiana, giving
him plenty of money for the trip (and for a wedding as well!), the Span­
iard expresses the conciliatory hope that Saint Denis’ Mexican sweet­
heart will do a better job of persuading the Frenchman to join the Span­
ish. However, the Viceroy does not grant the trade rights that Saint
Denis hoped to establish between Louisiana and Mexico. Perhaps this
failed aim of Saint Denis’ mission accounts for the jabs (deriving ei­
ther from Pénicaut or from the historical Saint Denis himself) at Span­
ish character, which color the Mexico-City monologue of Pénicaut’s Saint
Denis.4

Saint Denis’ trip back to the Presidio del Norte takes several
months because “we went by easy stages” (189). In “Cauíl” (Coahuila)
Saint Denis is reunited with Jalot, who has become well-known for serving the Mexicans as a fine surgeon but who can still cook Saint Denis the best meal to be had in Mexico! Saint Denis proceeds to the Presidio del Norte, where he is housed at “Dom Pedros de Vilesca”’s home. Still functioning as narrator for Pénicaud, Saint Denis then begins to recount the events leading up to his marriage of Vilesca’s daughter, events that return Pénicaud’s protagonist to the status of an international hero, a universal moderator between authority and the masses.

The sequence of events leading to the crisis that Saint Denis corrects unfolds as follows. Because Vilesca’s troops have abused the Indians near the Presidio, four villages of Native Americans have decided to move to the Caddo territory on the Red River. Vilesca fears that if word of this situation reaches the Viceroy in Mexico City, Vilesca could pay for it by demotion and a tarnished image. Pénicaud breaks Saint Denis’ first-person discourse and resumes third-person narration to inform the reader of another heroic elevation of his main character. This time Saint Denis risks his life by venturing off into unfriendly Indian territory to regain the friendship of the four wayfaring villages and bring them back to Dom Pedros’ outpost. Saint Denis leaves Dom Pedros amid the latter’s melodramatic fears both for Saint Denis’ safety and for his own reputation but soon returns triumphantly at the head of four thousand red people, whose allegiance he has won by promising them that Spanish soldiers will no longer enter their villages for exploitative purposes. Saint Denis’ reconciliation of the Indians to the Spanish at the Presidio del Norte not only proves beneficial to both red and white Mexicans, it also insures Saint Denis’ marriage to Dom Pedros’ daughter Doña Maria.

After eight months of married life, Saint Denis, accompanied by some of his new Spanish kin, leaves his pregnant wife amid many tears.
and ventures to Mobile. Louisiana Governor "M. de la Mothe," realizing from Saint Denis' report that the Spanish will not allow open trade with Mexico, decides to fortify Natchitoches as an outpost against the Spanish. Saint Denis and Charles Claude du Tisné (Pénicaut's "M. de Tissenet") establish the fort at Natchitoches and invite neighboring tribes to settle around it. They keep the Spanish encroachment toward Louisiana at bay and create a peaceful Franco-Indian community.

The second Saint-Denis chapter, Chapter 18, "The Year 1716," probes deeper into Saint Denis' personality. Pénicaut says that specifically this section and its continuation in Chapter 20 were related to him by Saint Denis' valet Jalot (220). In these portions of the "galante story," Pénicaut ventures even farther from the events of Saint Denis' life that touch on Louisiana history and presents drama from his hero's private life that he considers interesting.

The beginning of Chapter 18 sees Saint Denis troubled over whether or not to accompany his father-in-law's brother, Segnor Dom Juan de Vilesca, from Mobile all the way back to the Presidio del Norte. Saint Denis goes with his wife's uncle as far as Natchitoches, the farthest point at which he is safe from Spanish arrest, and then fights the temptation to proceed to Mexico to see his spouse. Stuck in Natchitoches, Saint Denis remains in a quandary over what to do next.

In the passage that follows, Pénicaut presents Saint Denis' dilemma with all the poetry, romance, dialogue, and intrigue of the novels of the day.

One day M. de St. Denis was in a deep reverie in a little wood which is at the point of the Nassitoches' island on the bank of the Rivière Rouge, where he had the habit of going for a walk, often alone. Jalot, his valet, who was having a good time picking strawberries in this little wood, noticed his master in that reverie. After watching him a long time from behind a bush, where he was standing, Jalot became aware of M. de St. Denis' depressed spirits and, to cheer him up, took him some of the strawberries he had gathered in a little basket.
M. de St. Denis asked him where he had found them. "All the woods," Jalot told him, "are full of them now, and especially the woods of Mexico," Jalot added, ["where big ones are found, and better ones than these"]. "I should think so," M. de St. Denis told him. "Since the region is warmer, the fruit there should be better. And so I will tell you, Jalot, that I have a great yearning to go through these woods, not for that fruit, but to go and see my wife and her fruit, who is [my child that I have not yet seen.] Dona Maria was pregnant when I left her to go to Mobile with Dom Juan, her uncle, who accompanied me, as you know. Dom Juan left more than three months ago, but I have received no news of my wife or of Dom Pedros, my father-in-law, to whom I sent letters by Dom Juan. To tell the truth, I am so distressed that I have decided to go to see Dona Maria, even if I lose my life in the attempt, rather than languish here as I am doing."

"Why disturb yourself and worry for such a long time?" Jalot told him. "This journey is not so difficult or so dangerous as you imagine. I know all the roads through the woods to take you right into Dom Pedros' house without our ever being observed by anyone."

"You are crazy," M. de St. Denis told him. "Is there any likelihood of our being able to make a journey of nearly two hundred leagues without being discovered?"

"I know it so well," Jalot told him, "because I have made this trip more than four times in my life without ever having any unhappy experience. And if you wish," Jalot added, "we shall go by boat four leagues upstream under pretext of hunting. At that place we shall land on the right side of the river, in woods that extend as far as Rivière du Nord, where Dom Pedros' village stands" (198-199).

The section above contains many conventions of literary artifice that serve both to link Saint Denis further to everyman as well as to elevate his character by likening it to the heroes of literature, history, and lore. Saint Denis endures separation from his love interest, a form of suffering that links him to millions but which he experiences with the heightened agony of the man of sensibility, the artist and the hero. He engages in "reverie" and is in "the habit of going for a walk, often alone" in the woods, alongside the river, obviously communing with Nature. He makes poetic allusions, moving metaphorically from tangible objects before him (e.g., strawberries) to the non-present realities of
which they remind him. And the dialogue between Saint Denis and Jalot also provides exposition of events that have already transpired.

In addition to poetic suffering, imagery, and exposition, the symbiotic relationship of hero and sidekick is another age-old literary convention that continues the author's twofold attempt: to keep his hero both dignified and down to earth. While Jalot lives under Saint Denis' patronage and protection, Saint Denis depends on his valet's prodding for insight and a resolve to act. While in their intimacy the two men share many discomforts and misfortunes and are thereby drawn closer to each other, the distinctions between the two always remain. Saint Denis, for all his humbling dependence upon his valet's knowledge and actions, is still the man on top; Jalot, without whom Saint Denis would be unable to achieve certain goals, is still the one to provide comedy as only the lower class and the ignorant of contemporary novels could.

Like any good or bad writer of romance who wants to sell his product, Pénicaud for the moment leaves the reader wondering how Saint Denis' marriage to Doña Maria will progress. Cliffhangers such as this one heighten the suspense of the Saint-Denis section and further liken it to popular fiction.

The theatrical quality evident in parts of the gallant story reaches a peak when Saint Denis and Jalot resolve to return to Mexico, despite the possible risks to their lives that the trip entails. They sneak out of Natchitoches, and for four months the two men cover ground like common criminals on the run or like illegal aliens, fearing detection by French, Spanish, or Indian. When they near the Spanish presidio, Saint Denis asks Jalot how the latter will get him into his father-in-law's house without his being noticed. Here the story becomes a romantic comedy if nothing else.

"We must wait," Jalot told him, "until it is past midnight, since the Spaniards walk around very late in summer. As for the rest," he told him, "you just leave things to me..."
and follow me; I shall get you in through the garden behind Dom Pedros' house. It is surrounded by a hedge. At one end of the hedge is a place through which I have often got in at night when I returned from making a call on a little Spanish girl whom I used to know at the time of your marriage."

M. de St. Denis began to laugh and said to him: "Our trip has progressed well, and I have a good omen about it, since love leads the way."

Jalot replied to him: "This journey has different fates in store for us: you are assured of finding Dona Maria, a wife whom you love; and I -- I am not certain of finding my mistress; she may be married" (200-201).

In addition to his travelling like a fugitive, Saint Denis shares the part of humbled folk even more by participating in the humor and love interest of the common man. His chummy discourse with Jalot on the fringe of a foreign town, a far remove from the hero's formerly dignified, solitary musings alongside a Louisiana river or even his savoring of high society in Mexico City, reveals Saint Denis' social flexibility and his ability to relate to and enjoy those beneath him. Still, Pénicaut's hero must be kept from becoming too much like everyman. Hence, the author again elevates the protagonist, this time by indicating the surety of Saint Denis' happy reunion with his noble wife while leaving in doubt Jalot's success with a mere servant girl.

The distinctions between down-to-earth hero and the common man, with whom the popular leader can, should, and wants to rub elbows but apart from whom he should always be recognized, continue as the comedy progresses.

They talked to each other until about midnight; then Jalot took from his sack a piece of roasted venison wrapped in a napkin, which he unfolded before his master. But M. de St. Denis couldn't eat it. As for Jalot, who always had a good appetite, he ate a great deal of it and immediately fell into a deep sleep.

M. de St. Denis was too restless to sleep; every minute he woke up Jalot, telling him that it was time to go. At last Jalot went beyond the woods and saw by the stars that it was nearly midnight. He went back into the woods and told M. de St. Denis to wait for him and he would be back soon. He went off very speedily to Dom Pedros'
village to find out whether he could see anyone; then he came back, still running. During that time, M. de St. Denis was extremely impatient: he could not understand why Jalot did not return and he swore great oaths against him. When Jalot did get back two hours later, he said nothing other than to tell his master to follow him (201).

While elements of Cervantes' novel are detectable in Jalot's wanting to eat and sleep (like Sancho Panza) and Saint Denis' being agitated (like Don Quixote) by what is in his mind, these and other likenesses between Pénicaud's story and Cervantes' are only superficial and are employed solely to provide comedy. After all, Saint Denis and Jalot are both far more intelligent than Don Quixote and Sancho Panza.

While Saint Denis’ rank is manifested again by his impatience over what he perceives as his underling’s dilly-dallying, Jalot ends up serving his master very well indeed.

He guided M. de St. Denis for one league, walking very fast over a sunken road between two slightly elevated banks, on which there was a double row of trees leading up to a country house. They passed by this and went half a league farther into open country, where the back of the garden of Dom Pedros' house extended. Jalot stepped down into a little dry ditch and came up on the other side at the corner of the garden hedge. Here there was a bundle of thorn-bush [which shut in the end of the hedge. This he pushed down with the end of his gun]; then after climbing up on the bank at the edge of the garden, he gave his hand to M. de St. Denis and drew him into the garden with him.

While Jalot was putting the thorn-bundle back up, M. de St. Denis moved forward very slowly into the garden. In the little moonlight that was shining he saw his wife out walking there alone. He went to her to take her in his arms, but she was frightened and cried out and fell in a faint. Luckily M. de St. Denis had on his person a bottle of eau de la Heine d'Hongrie; he put some to her nose and revived her. She threw her arms around his neck, and after they had kissed each other, he led her -- supporting her under her arms -- to a little room which opened upon this garden, below the bedroom where she slept in summer; and, after talking with M. de St. Denis there for a while, she went to her father's bedroom and her uncle's. They came and embraced M. de St. Denis. Together they went up to Dona Maria's bedroom, to which they had supper brought for M. de St. Denis. He ate very little with his father-in-law and his uncle, who stayed there only a short time, seeing that
he was tired. They went back to their rooms to let him rest, and there we too shall let them rest until the year 1718, when for the second time he returned to Louisiana from Rivière du Nord Village (201-202).

The ending of the passage quoted above is untypical of other chapter stops in Pénicaux’s narrative and unique even in the entire Louisiana colonial canon. It serves as another example of the storytelling quality of the Saint-Denis chapters and functions as one of the best cliff-hangers of the Saint-Denis drama. In fact, the reader must wait one-and-a-half chapters before Pénicaux resumes the bedroom scene in Mexico. Clearly, Pénicaux’s minute detailing of Saint Denis’ maneuvers to maintain his marriage and the author’s glimpse into longed-awaited moments of marital bliss are a far cry from the more prosaic recording of events significant to the colonization of Louisiana that characterizes other portions of the narrative and other works of Louisiana literature when stripped of their anecdotes. But Pénicaux makes the departure to show his hero possessing both the common characteristics of everyman and the noble traits of the elite. Through these two categories, Pénicaux’s Saint Denis embodies the elevated and the earthy qualities that Louisiana writers like to see in their leaders.

After a return to historical accounts of Louisiana’s founding in Chapter 19 and the first part of Chapter 20, Pénicaux picks up the Saint-Denis story in the second half of Chapter 20. Dialogue between the characters resumes when Saint Denis’ father-in-law warns Saint Denis that he must stay hidden because the suspicious Viceroy in Mexico City has issued warrants for his arrest and sent soldiers to the border to capture him. Stay hidden Saint Denis does -- for an entire year, in Doña Maria’s bedroom, leaving only late at night to walk in the garden! Saint Denis’ servant Jalot conceals himself as well, in a little room under Doña Maria’s chamber. The differences between the protagonist’s
and his sidekick's confinement continues the author's distinguishing of Saint Denis from the common man whom he knows and with whom he is intimate. Saint Denis does not become bored with his incarceration because he and his wife "loved each other more tenderly than ever" (222) and because they are expecting their second child. For Jalot, however, the confinement imposes more difficulties.

Pénicaut switches the dialogue from Dom Pedros and Saint Denis speaking about the dangers they face to Jalot telling Pénicaut (the listener and recorder) of his personal ordeals.

"As for me," Jalot told me, "I have never spent any time that seemed to me longer, especially in winter when one could no longer walk in the garden because of the cold. Sometimes in the evening, when the door of the house was shut, I warmed myself by the fire in the kitchen, with a tall, lean and ugly serving girl named Luce, who had more pride than the daughter of the most famous barber in Mexico City" (222).

In addition to elevating Saint Denis further by distinguishing his fortunes from the amusing fate of a less important personage, Jalot's troubles continue the comedy running throughout the gallant story.

Despite his earlier fidgetiness and lack of patience, Saint Denis exerts almost superhuman self-control during his long concealment, seemingly content simply to be reunited with his wife. The pursuit of his own commercial interests and service to Crown, colony, or anything other than his marriage remains at a standstill. The man who loved adventure does not leave his room even to attend his new son's christening for fear the baptizing monk might betray his whereabouts. Six weeks later, however, Dom Pedros informs Saint Denis of suspicions circulating about his hiding in the house. Knowing the danger that his presence places on his wife's family, Saint Denis, with Jalot, leaves Mexico, but not after shedding "a great many tears" and exchanging "expressions of affection"
with his wife and her kin. Doña Maria’s father and uncle promise that in a short time they will take Doña Maria to meet Saint Denis in Mobile.

For six weeks Saint Denis and Jalot travel at night, eating and resting during the day, without encountering anyone. Eight leagues beyond the last Spanish outpost and fifty leagues from the first French fort at Natchitoches, Saint Denis and Jalot are surprised, as they begin to skin a deer that they had bagged, by two Spanish cavalrymen. The Spaniards charge the Frenchmen. Jalot and Saint Denis kill one, forcing the other to retreat “at full gallop in the direction of the Assinaïs” (225). Saint Denis and Jalot travel quickly in the direction of Natchitoches, aided along the way by a camp of friendly Yatasi Indians. They leave Natchitoches after two weeks of recuperation there and take a boat to New Orleans, where they remain for twelve days, “examining the construction in progress” (227). The two then go on to Dauphin Island.

Pénicaud concludes the Saint-Denis tale by saying,

Those are the details Jalot gives me of his master’s amours. M. de St. Denis did not stay long at Isle Dauphine. He went away and settled at old Fort Biloxi, making all his slaves come and live there and having all his belongings brought (227).

Although Saint Denis appears again in the remainder of the narrative, he is brought up in the same fashion that he is mentioned before the fictionalized tale actually begins: as one of the significant persons active in the historical development of the Louisiana colony. Thus the narrative and its favored personage return to the normalcy of a travelogue-history after Pénicaud has made a fully developed character and novelistic drama out of the life of a particularly important man of early Louisiana.

As Delanglez asserts, Dumont de Montigny, the next Louisiana author to take up the Saint-Denis legend, expands the literary lore set forth by Pénicaud (49). Dumont arrived in Louisiana a few years before
Pénicaud’s departure, as did Le Page, who would write about Saint Denis after Dumont, but the degree of the three authors’ familiarity with each other may be difficult to ascertain. All of the men probably knew Saint Denis personally, and the three held him in high esteem. Aside from their acquaintance with the historical man, the writers might have heard the same stories circulating about the living legend of their time. (Saint Denis would be dead by the time Le Page wrote.) Regardless of their sources or their knowledge of each other, the Saint-Denis raconteurs tell three unique stories — stories that are as interesting to examine for their differences as for their similarities. Of course, the most obvious similarity is that Dumont and Le Page, like Pénicaud, hold up Saint Denis as the mythic embodiment of the ideal servant and leader respectively of Crown and colony, monarchy and the masses.

Before examining how Dumont’s versified version of the Saint-Denis tale expands the mythology begun in writing by Pénicaud, it is necessary to present more biographical information on the author. De Villiers surmises that Dumont was born in France toward the close of the seventeenth century. He arrived in Louisiana in the summer of 1719 as a soldier, engineer, and cartographer. Dumont participated in the development of several posts scattered across the colony and took part in various exploratory and military campaigns against the Spanish and the Indians. Excepting the Red River region, he knew the vast Louisiana territory as far as the Osage and the Illinois country. He had been at Natchez for a time but was in New Orleans when the Natchez Indians massacred the French on November 28, 1729. After marrying a survivor of the massacre, a widow held prisoner for a time by the Natchez, he fathered two children and resided in New Orleans before taking his family to France in the late 1730s. Dumont died in France in the 1750s.
Although he got along well with and was delegated some authority under colonial officials such as Engineer-in-Chief Ignace-François Broutin and François-Louis de Merveilleux, Dumont encountered difficulties with Commandant and later Governor Bienville, and Lieutenant Etcheparre (also spelled D’Echepare or Chépart), commandant of Natchez. Because of such personality conflicts, compounded by the destruction of his property, various unsuccessful ventures, and certain deficiencies of character, Dumont endured years in Louisiana that were not very lucrative.

Dumont’s long Poème en Vers, Touchant l’Établissement de la Province de la Louisiane was begun in 1728 in Louisiana and completed in 1742 in France. Although the poem was not published before 1931, much of it was rendered into prose and published by the Abbé Jean-Baptiste Le Nascrier in 1753 as Mémoires Historiques sur la Louisiane.

Part of the chapter devoted to the relationship between the rulers and the ruled will examine how Dumont incorporates Saint Denis into his crusade in the interest of the common man by holding up Saint Denis as a leader for all people. For now, the analysis will focus on how Dumont’s version of the Saint-Denis story both approximates and departs from the legend as set forth by Pénicaut. In both the departures and the approximations Dumont continues the evolving myth concerning Saint Denis.

As Pénicaut does in his narrative, Dumont also mentions Saint Denis elsewhere in his long poem before devoting an entire section to the illustrious relative of the Le Moynes. In Dumont’s text, Saint Denis appears at the very beginning, coming to the aid of the French at Mobile who are fighting the Spanish from Pensacola. Saint Denis brings more than one hundred Indians with him from the interior to turn the war from a Spanish to a French victory. In essence, both Pénicaut’s narrative and Dumont’s poem emphasize one of Saint Denis’ most important roles — that of liaison between Europeans and Native Americans. For
Dumont just as for Pénicaud, the skill of being an effective moderator between reds and whites is important for any colonial leader, and the ideal model is to be found in Saint Denis.

As is the case with Pénicaud’s version, Dumont’s Saint-Denis section proper begins with Saint Denis’ imprisonment in Mexico City after the protagonist has ventured there in hopes of establishing trade between the French and Spanish colonies. Whereas Pénicaud casts the Spanish Viceroy as chief antagonist, Dumont creates an even worse villain, Saint Denis’ own “cousin” Bienville. While Pénicaud depicts a crafty Viceroy who jails and then attempts to bribe Saint Denis into serving the Spanish crown, Dumont holds Bienville completely responsible for his innocent relative’s incarceration. That is, Bienville writes the Spanish Viceroy, warning him “Que le sieur Saint-Denis avoit mauvais dessein,/ De prendre garde à lui sur la terre espagnole” (425). The Mexican leader, believing that Bienville acts in genuine international goodwill and having no other choice than to defend his country, reluctantly throws Saint Denis into jail. Despite this official disgrace, the highly appealing Louisiana adventurer gains a popular Mexican following in Dumont’s as in Pénicaud’s story, proving that Saint Denis is a man of all people. In both texts, Saint Denis “étoit estimé comme un brave étranger” (426). In both, it is not long before “Chacun plaignoit son sort, et tous alloient prier/ Pour lui leur gouverneur” (426). Like many just men of history, literature, lore, and religion, Dumont’s Saint Denis must suffer injustice, the lot of the masses of the day (and certainly the lot of the author, Dumont believed), so that by identifying with common misery he can resolve to work to end it once he is in a position of power.

Pénicaud only briefly mentions that Saint Denis spends some time in prison before being set free under surveillance in Mexico City.
Dumont, on the other hand, shows his character in cell-bound misery. Although Pénicaut's version soon becomes almost a comedy of wills between the Spanish Viceroy as tempter and Saint Denis as resister, Dumont's account of Saint Denis in the dungeon makes for the darkest passage in the Poëme en Vers, with Bienville sinking to devilish vil­lainy in his attempt to exterminate his cousin. Still, even Dumont's story does not lack comedy. Just as Pénicaut's witty, undupable Saint Denis turns the table on the Spanish who attempt to buy and control him, so Dumont's Saint Denis plays the final joke on his treacherous cousin. With the help of Bienville's Indian messenger, who luckily goes to see Saint Denis before taking Bienville's mendacious letter to the Viceroy, Saint Denis rewrites the document so as to escape execution and secure his freedom. Significantly, Dumont's Saint Denis works with an Indian to save his life from the plottings of a white man.

Dumont's handling of Saint Denis' love interest differs greatly from Pénicaut's, but in Dumont's as in Pénicaut's version the social status of Saint Denis' future wife, not to mention her virtues, enhances the prestige of the protagonist as well.

As a reminder, it should be pointed out that in the prose nar­rative, Pénicaut's Saint Denis becomes enamored of "Dona Maria," daughter of "Captain Dom Pedros de Vilesca" of the Presidio del Norte, whom Saint Denis meets on his way down to Mexico City. By the time he leaves Vilesca's post on the Mexican frontier, Pénicaut's Saint Denis is already courting Dona Maria. In fact, Pénicaut's Viceroy tells Saint Denis, once the latter is freed from prison, "You are already more than a half-naturalized Spaniard, since you are to be married to Dona Maria, the elder daughter of Dom Pedros de Vilesca, when you return" (184). As noted earlier, Saint Denis answers with the conventional humility of a gentleman suitor, stating "I will not conceal from you, Monsieur, that I
love Dona Maria, since it has been told to Your Excellency, but I have never fancied myself as worthy to marry her" (184-185). The Viceroy then slyly promises to secure Saint Denis' marriage should he shift allegiance from France to Spain, one of many temptations that Pénicaud's Saint Denis deftly overcomes.

Dumont's account of Saint Denis' romance does not begin before Saint Denis has been freed from prison after pledging to remain under watch in Mexico City. Only then does the hero encounter his future wife.

Ayant donné parole, il se retire en ville
Où l'amour, enfin, lui fit voir une fille
D'une bonne naissance et de nobles parents;
Il en vint amoureux, la demande à l'instant,
Pour prouver son amour, à son père, à sa mère,
Après avoir reçu, comme c'est là l'ordinaire,
L'aveu de sa maîtresse. "Ours quand la liberté
Sera venue pour vous, en cette qualité,
Répondent ses parents, avec cet avantage.
Vous aurez notre fille aux fins du mariage".
Il se voyoit amant, même futur mari,
Il passe avec plaisir son temps en ce pays,
Faisant ainsi l'amour. . . (427-428).

Saint Denis' love goes unnamed, identified only as "une fille/ D'une bonne naissance et de nobles parents." That is enough (in the author's thinking) to elevate Saint Denis through the woman affixed to him. The love affair in Dumont's text takes place in the Mexican capital and not on Pénicaud's frontier. Interestingly, Saint Denis' Mexican fiancée has a mother in addition to a father in Dumont's story, but neither unnamed parent matches the political importance of the male kin of Pénicaud's motherless Dona Maria.

In short, Dumont's love story is hardly more than the mention quoted above plus another few lines brought up toward the end of the Saint-Denis section. In that final reference to Saint Denis' love life, Dumont depicts his hero's marriage as occurring not while he is still in
Mexico but after he has returned to Louisiana. Following the victory over the Spanish at Pensacola and the thwarting of Bienville's plans to ruin his reputation (not to mention end his life!), Saint Denis, fully vindicated with decoration as a Chevalier de Saint Louis, establishes himself at Natchitoches. Dumont notes,

A peine fut-il là, qu'après cet avantage,
Il voulut à ce coup finir son mariage;
Il demanda la fille, accomplie en vertus,
Du pays du Mexique et, de biens revêtue.
Elle fit le voyage, et vint, avec tendresse,
Recevoir son amant qui lui fit mil caresses
Et qui se maria dans son gouvernement,
Victorieux en tout et, tous deux très contents (432).

Whereas Pénicaut stages a lavish wedding in Mexico, where Saint Denis has won his lady's hand by helping her father put down an Indian rebellion, Dumont transports Saint Denis' lady love quickly to Louisiana, downplaying Saint Denis' courtship and marriage in order to return to attacking Bienville. What is important for Dumont is that Saint Denis' wife compliments the hero by being "accomplie en vertus" and "de biens revêtue." In other words, both spiritually and materially she mirrors her husband, reflecting his inner and outer exalted state.

Dumont's concentration on Saint Denis' hardships in Mexico might have had more in common with the Continental understanding of Saint Denis' exploits than did Pénicaut's depiction of good (albeit confined) times south of the border. Concerning Saint Denis' reputation in Europe, Ross Phares surmises in his biography of Saint Denis entitled Cavalier in the Wilderness that

his romantic courtship and marriage in Mexico were not the events of Saint Denis' career most publicized in the French capital, but rather the hardships and imprisonments he had borne at the hands of the Spanish while attempting to open up trade for the Company (172).

Notwithstanding Dumont's deficiencies as a historian, the episodes from Saint Denis' life that the poet chose to emphasize may have coincided

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with or even contributed to European conceptions of early Louisiana's hero Saint Denis more directly than did the escapades presented by Pénicaud.

The circumstances of the hero's departure from Mexico differ in the two Saint-Denis texts. The Viceroy allows Pénicaud's Saint Denis to leave when he realizes that bribes will not persuade the Frenchman to change his loyalties. Pénicaud's Saint Denis leaves Mexico City amid great ceremony nonetheless, and his progress toward the border takes several months because "we went by easy stages" (189). His exit slows down further at the border when he comes to Dom Pedros' aid in quelling an Indian rebellion and restoring peace between the Spanish and their disgruntled and discouraged Native-American allies, the feat that assures him the hand of Dom Pedros' daughter. Once he gets married in a lavish, prolonged ceremony, Pénicaud's Saint Denis enjoys a blissful honeymoon for many months before finally resolving to return to Louisiana. When he reunites with the French at Mobile, Pénicaud's hero does so in the company of high-ranking Spanish officials, his new kin.

Conversely, Dumont's Saint Denis, after forging one letter to save his life, must flee Mexico quickly when a second condemnatory note arrives from his cousin. Whereas Pénicaud's character enjoys pomp and a hero's farewell, Dumont's protagonist suffers all the hardships of a refugee in flight (hardships that Pénicaud's hero suffers at other times). He must lie low, fearing death at any moment, be it from starvation or discovery. He resorts to violence as a means of self-preservation, waylaying a would-be almsgiver so as to acquire a horse and stealing sheep for sustenance. In short, he becomes "Notre sauve-qui-peut" (429), but the temporary, life-preserving degeneration has been necessitated because of what others have done to Saint Denis. Reduced a second time to misery far worse than Pénicaud's character
could imagine, misery not far removed from the suffering of perhaps the majority of persons who lived (many against their will) and perished in French colonial Louisiana, Dumont's Saint Denis again descends the social ladder before rising more victoriously than ever. Only when Dumont's Saint Denis reaches the distant Missouri Indian village do his troubles end, and the protagonist regains his former prestige. Significantly, the resurrection of the Indianized hero begins in an Indian village, and Saint Denis later appears glorious as he comes down from Upper Louisiana to save the French who are losing the battle to the Spanish in the lower colony precisely because he is at the head of an Indian horde.

In Péniacaut's account, Saint Denis ventures to Mexico a second time, the only purpose being to see his wife. Since Péniacaut's Saint Denis has been refused a trade agreement, his presence in the Spanish colony is illegal and would subject him to arrest. Thus, Péniacaut's hero moves clandestinely throughout his second Mexican adventure. Péniacaut uses the episode to delve deeper into his hero's personal life and thereby strays farther from real events of Louisiana history. Dumont, on the other hand, does not feature a return to Mexico, which for Péniacaut also provides an opportunity for romantic comedy. Rather, Dumont shows Saint Denis rallying Upper-Louisiana Indians to come to the aid of the French fighting the Spanish at Pensacola. As a leader of Indians, Dumont's Saint Denis becomes a victor for the French as well.

In Pensacola, Dumont's Saint Denis makes Bienville's plot known to "Le Sieur de Chamelin" (Commodore Desnos de Champmeslin) by showing the two letters that the "ami Sauvage" had brought to Mexico. Champmeslin assures Saint Denis, in turn, that he will make the latter's innocence known to the king. Dumont adds,

Sans doute ce qu'il fit, car, presqu'au bout de l'an
De cette même année, il reçut, en présent,
La croix de Saint-Louis, pension accordée,
Avec ordre du Roy qu'elle seroit posée
Par la main de Bienville. Ah! quel funeste coup!

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Thus, in Dumont's tale of good versus evil, featuring Saint Denis against Bienville, good triumphs over evil. In the end, God and King are on Saint Denis' side, and both accord glory to the formerly humbled leader and servant of all. Saint Denis and company (both red and white) live happily ever after in Natchitoches, and the rest of Louisiana would enjoy similar felicity, Dumont argues, should Saint Denis be elevated to full command of the colony. Truly, in Saint Denis Dumont has found a mythic head for his people.

As he brings his "Remarques sur le Quatrième Chant" to a close, De Villiers sums up his criticism of Dumont's Saint-Denis section as follows: "Dumont devait tenir beaucoup à ce coup de théâtre, et on le retrouve, à peine modifié, dans les Mémoires Historiques, mais intercalé, cette fois, dans le récit, également très fantastiste, des curieuses aventures" (436-437). Obviously unappreciative of Dumont's Saint-Denis section as fictive art, De Villiers repeatedly criticizes its lapses from historicity and its personal invective against Bienville.

Nous avions un instant songé à remplacer simplement par quelques lignes de points toutes les aventures de Saint-Denis; toutefois, il valait mieux les publier, ne fut-ce que pour montrer quelle étrange mentalité régna, au XVIIIe siècle, en Louisiane, comme, hélas! dans toutes nos autres colonies (437).

Notwithstanding De Villiers' opinion of the "étrange mentalité" that composed the Poème's Saint-Denis tale (in this writer's opinion the most entertaining portion of Dumont's long poem), the section's importance as
a continuance of the literary legend begun by Pénicaud cannot be overlooked. Hence, its inclusion in De Villiers' publication only enhances the value of that critic's work and enriches the published selections from early Louisiana literature that are accessible to the present-day reader.

Le Page's rendition of Saint Denis' saga contains elements not shared with Pénicaud's and Dumont's versions as well as story lines common to the two earlier texts. Likewise, while Le Page offers details that Pénicaud and Dumont do not, he fails to give some of the information that his predecessors provide. Obviously, the three authors share a mutual store of knowledge, but each also uses sources of which one or the other writer may be ignorant. In imparting both their shared and exclusive accounts, the writers create their own unique stories while contributing to an organic colonial myth.

Antoine-Simon Le Page du Pratz came to Louisiana in 1718 as an architect. He settled as a concessionnaire initially on Bayou Saint John near New Orleans but moved to Natchez in 1720. He gained the friendship of his Natchez-Indian neighbors and studied them for the eight years that he remained in their vicinity. Le Page returned to New Orleans in 1728, thereby escaping the Natchez massacre of the French on November 28, 1729. He left Louisiana for France on May 10, 1734.

From September 1751 to February 1753, Le Page wrote a series of articles entitled "Mémoires sur la Louisiane" for the Journal Oeconomique. In 1758 the articles were expanded into a three-volume publication entitled Histoire de la Louisiane. The British found the history a valuable source of information on the New World, and in 1763 and 1774 English editions appeared, with many alterations done to the original French text so as to make it serve British ambitions in the Americas. Joseph G. Tregle, Jr., republished and edited the English version in
At the end of Volume I's Chapter 19, Le Page indicates that he would have liked to have gone back to Louisiana. He asserts, after recounting a return to Natchez from an exploratory trip that he once made up the Mississippi,

J’avois eu des raisons pour cacher mon voyage, j’en eus de plus fortes pour garder le secret sur ce que j’avois pu dé­couvrir, afin de pouvoir en profiter dans la suite; mais les traverses que j’ai essuyées, et les infortunes de ma vie, m’ont empêché jusqu’à présent de profiter de mes découvertes en retournant dans ce charmant Pays, et même de les faire connaître au Public (I, 264).

Undoubtedly, Le Page loved Louisiana not just for the material gains he sought to procure there but because he also considered it his second home, a place to which he wanted to return. At one point he speaks of "mon zèle pour cette Colonie" (II, 257), and the primary purpose of his writing the Histoire in the first place is to convince others to make Louisiana their home.

Le Page's sixteen-year residence in Louisiana, his active engagement in the colonization of the region, his publication of articles and a multivolume work on the territory, and his desire to return to his second home make him more than just a Frenchman who spent some time in the colony. He, like Pénicaut and Dumont, is truly a Louisiana writer.

Le Page offers his Saint-Denis story shortly after commencing the multivolume Histoire. Father Hidalgo, the Spanish priest working on the Mexican frontier, sends three letters in the direction of Louisiana, hoping one will reach a French official. He asks for help in establishing a mission among the Assinais Indians. Louisiana Governor Cadillac receives one of the letters and thinks Hidalgo's request would provide a good excuse for opening up trade between poor Louisiana and rich Mexico. Cadillac proposes that Saint Denis make a trip by land from Louisiana to
Mexico to explore the possibilities of conducting commerce between the two colonies.

When he brings up Saint Denis for the first time, Le Page speaks of him admiringly, in the fashion of Pénicaud and Dumont, with attention to Saint Denis' relationship with Native Americans. In fact, Le Page outdoes Pénicaud and Dumont by expanding his hero's ego across a continent right away, before Saint Denis even ventures to Mexico.

Le Page immediately makes his character larger than life through Saint Denis' relationship to the land of Louisiana and to its native peoples. Le Page's Saint Denis has travelled the vast Louisiana territory from one end to the other, learning the languages of all the nations therein and making himself so loved by them that they universally consider him their great chief. Because of his exalted Indianization -- and the fact that he is a proper French gentleman as well, both of which qualities endow him with courage, prudence, and force (ideal ingredients for leadership and service) -- Cadillac appoints Saint Denis as representative of French Louisiana to Spanish Mexico.

Le Page continues to lift Saint Denis to heroic proportions as the latter proceeds with the mission to Mexico. But as with Pénicaud's and Dumont's character, Le Page's must suffer misfortunes, like everyman, as well as savor the successes and enjoyments of a privileged noble. Both fates Saint Denis takes in stride as between the two his destiny vacillates. As Le Page states, "Quelque pénible que fût l'entreprise, M. de St. Denis s'en chargea avec plaisir" (I,12). Despite being abandoned by
more than half of his original party, Saint Denis arrives at the Mexican
outpost where "D. Diegue Raimond" receives him favorably. When Saint
Denis tells the Spaniard of Father Hidalgo's letter and of his own de-
sire to proceed to Mexico City, Don Diego says that they must wait for
the Viceroy's permission to continue. While lingering at the Presidio
del Norte in anticipation of that official pronouncement, Saint Denis
"gagna plus que les bonnes graces du Gouverneur" (13).

Le Page's account of Saint Denis' "très-long séjour au Préside de
S. Jean Baptiste" incorporates and changes the same border romance that
Pénicaud features.

D. Diegue avoit avec lui sa famille, qui consistoit en un
fils, une fille veuve, la fille d'une autre de ses filles
qui étoit morte. Cette jeune personne étoit déjà d'âge à
être mariée; et dès au sortir de l'enfance elle avoit dans
l'esprit qu'elle n'épouseroit point d'Espagnol, mais qu'elle
étoit destinée à un Étranger. Cet Étranger se trouva être
M. de S. Denis. La tante l'ayant pris en affection, lui fit
connoître sa nièce,\(^9\) et s'étant convenus de part et d'autre,
on prit des mesures si justes pour en parler à D. Diegue,
qu'il y consentit avec plaisir. Ainsi il fut arrêté que M.
de S. Denis au retour de Mexico épouseroit la Demoiselle (I,
13-14).

Le Page adds a supernatural element to Saint Denis' courtship of Don
Diego's granddaughter. Saint Denis' fulfillment of Doña Maria's premo-
nition concerning her future spouse further enhances the superhuman
qualities with which Le Page endows his hero early on. Le Page's ver-
sion of the love story is also significant not only for mentioning the
Spanish commandant's other female kin but also for affording them an
important role in arranging Saint Denis' marriage.

Saint Denis' good fortune continues, and he gets permission to
proceed to Mexico City. There, the Viceroy, who "aimoit naturellement
la France, et se proposoit, lorsque le temps de son Gouvernement seroit
fini, de venir à Paris passer le reste de ses jours" (I, 14), receives
Saint Denis well. Le Page's Spanish Viceroy, "Le Duc de Linarez,"
promises a treaty of commerce with Louisiana once the Spanish are established at the Assinaïs. Always rising to the occasion in any author’s account, Saint Denis in Le Page’s takes it upon himself to help the Spanish build the Assinaïs mission on his return to Louisiana.

As in Pénicaud’s and Dumont’s versions, intrigue and suspense soon enter Le Page’s tale as well. The Spaniards working with Saint Denis must cooperate cautiously because of their countrymen’s suspicion of foreigners. Even the Viceroy must speak with Saint Denis

à quelques précautions près, que le Duc jugeoit à propos de prendre, pour ne point effaroucher quelques officiers de Justice qui l’environnent, et dont le coeur conservoit encore dans toute sa force l’ancienne antipathie qui n’a que trop longtemps régnée entre les deux Nations (I, 14).

Priests also must keep their cooperation with Saint Denis a secret from their compadres. Le Page notes that Father Hidalgo,

sachant ce qui étoit arrêté avec le Vice-Roi et lui [Saint Denis], il le pria d’en taire le secret à son Compagnon le P. Olivarez, esprit jaloux, inquiet et dangereux, dont il voulait se débarrasser. M. de S. Denis le lui promit, lui tint parole, et ne pensa plus qu’à retourner au Présidé de S. Jean-Baptiste. Le P. Ydalgo de son côté ne tarda pas à s’y rendre (I, 15).

Soon after returning to the northern presidio, Saint Denis marries his sweetheart, but even this alliance with the Spanish does not save him from the plot being hatched against him by some Mexicans. The complicity only enhances Saint Denis’ integrity while deepening the malignity of his detractors.

Despite the unfounded grievances some Spaniards bear against him, Saint Denis renders great service to the Mexicans. In fact, he cuts his honeymoon short to help establish the Spanish post among the Assinaïs in Texas. Saint Denis urges the Assinaïs to cooperate with the Spanish. Le Page notes, “La vénération que ces peuples avoient pour lui, les fit plier sous ses volontés, et la promesse qu’il avoit faite au Duc de
Linarez fut ainsi fidélement accomplie" (I, 16). In Le Page’s version as in others, Saint Denis proves himself to be primarily a selfless servant and leader of all people, not just his own. If he can fulfill personal interests at the same time, that is all well and good, but Saint Denis for the Louisiana writers is never an opportunist at the expense of those who need his help and protection.

The outcome of Saint Denis’ first trip pleases Le Page’s Cadillac to such an extent that the latter proposes a second venture to Mexico. For his part, “M. de S. Denis, toujours prêt à aller, et à qui son mariage avec une Espagnole devait donner de grandes prérogatives accepta la Commission que lui donnait son Général” (I, 17-18). Wishing to get a jump start on trade with the Spanish, Cadillac allows some business associates to accompany Saint Denis to the Presidio with their goods. Saint Denis proceeds to Mexico City, arriving in the capital on May 14, 1717. His good fortune, however, runs out.

Le Page’s protagonist finds the friendly Duc de Linarez on his deathbed. Le Page says of the new viceroy, “C’était le Marquis de Baléro, aussi contraire aux Français que le Duc leur était favorable” (I, 20). To make matters worse,

Le P. Olivarez se trouvant alors à la Cour du Vice-Roi, ne vit pas de bon oeil celui qui avait établi le P. Idalgo aux Assinaïs, et résolut de se venger sur lui du chagrin qu’il conservait toujours, de n’avoir point été de cette Mission. Il s’unit avec un Officier nommé D. Martin D’Alarcon, particulièrement protégé par le Marquis de Baléro; et ils travaillèrent si bien auprès de ce Seigneur, que dans le temps qu’il s’y attendait le moins, M. de S.Denis se vit arrêté et mis au cachot. Il n’en sortit que le 20 Décembre de cette année, par un ordre du Conseil souverain de Mexico, auquel il avait trouvé moyen de faire présenter plusieurs Requêtes. Le Viceroi forcé de l’élargir, lui donna la ville pour prison (I, 20-21).

Even though the Spanish set him free under surveillance in Mexico City,
Saint Denis realizes that the opinion of him as a dealer in contraband is not good. Thus, he plans an escape from the country.

The second departure of Le Page’s Saint Denis from Mexico City blends separate episodes from Pénicaut’s and Dumont’s accounts. Le Page’s version brings Saint Denis down from the level of a superhuman to that of the fleeing societal outcast already depicted by Dumont.

Aytant donc médité les moyens de sa fuite, il sortit de Mexico le 25 Septembre 1718, lorsque la nuit approchoit, et s’étant mis en embuscade à une certaine distance de la Ville, il attendit que sa bonne fortune lui donnât le moyen de faire la route autrement qu’à pied. Vers les neuf heures du soir, un Cavalier passa fort bien monté. Fondre sur lui à l’improviste, le démonter, sauter sur le cheval, tourner bride et prendre le galop, ce fut l’ouvrage d’un moment pour M. de s. Denis. Il courut jusqu’au jour, et s’écartera alors du chemin pour se reposer. Ce fut sa precaution continuelle jusqu’à ce qu’il fût près du Préside de S. Jean Baptiste, dont il n’approcha que la nuit, et uniquement pour parler à sa femme, dans un endroit du jardin de D. Diegue, où il sçavoit qu’elle avoit coutume de prendre le frais; de-là il continuèrent sa route à pied, et enfin arrivé le 2 Avril 1719 à la Colonie Françoise, où il trouva de grands changemens (I, 22).

The escape of Le Page’s Saint Denis from Mexico City resembles that of Dumont’s hero, albeit for Le Page’s protagonist the flight occurs after a second trip to the Mexican capital, not after a first and final sojourn. Like Dumont’s, Le Page’s hero becomes a waylayer and a thief out of necessity. In addition, Le Page’s character is forced to see his wife secretly en route to Louisiana and finds great changes once he makes it back home.

Whereas Dumont’s Saint Denis makes only one unfortunate voyage to Mexico, Le Page’s and Pénicaut’s make two. In both Le Page’s and Pénicaut’s versions, the first trip is a more fortunate, openly conducted one, whereas the second involves intrigue and clandestine behavior. Le Page’s Saint Denis returns to Mexico with more hope of trade than does Pénicaut’s; hence, the former ventures all the way back to Mexico City
before being imprisoned, set free under surveillance, and then forced to flee. Pénicaud’s Saint Denis, jailed and then seemingly restored to good graces during his first venture, realizes earlier than does Le Page’s character the risks of a second trip and returns under cover only to see his wife at the border. Le Page blends the secret visit to the wife at the frontier as depicted in Pénicaud with the flight from the capital as portrayed in Dumont. And while Dumont’s viceroy is somewhat saintly and Pénicaud’s slightly sinister, Le Page presents two viceroys, the first one favorable to Saint Denis, encouraging the latter’s return to the capital for further negotiations, the second malign, forcing the Frenchman to leave the Spanish colony for good.

When Le Page’s Saint Denis returns to Louisiana, one of the “grands changemens” that faces him is Bienville’s replacement of Cadil­lac as chief power in the colony. Le Page notes,

Le peu de succés qu’il [Saint Denis] avoit eu, n’était pas propre à engager le nouveau Gouverneur à suivre les idées de son prédécesseur; d’ailleurs il avoit les siennes propres et un plan de conduite tout différent, qu’il a constamment sui­vi pendant le temps qu’il a été en place. Ainsi M. de S. Denis n’eut qu’à se retirer à son habitation, où quelques années après les Espagnols lui envoyèrent sa femme, avec un équipage de douze bêtes de Somme. Dans la suite le Roi lui donna la Croix de S. Louis, pour reconnoître et récompenser ses services (I, 23-24).

Bienville’s desire to do things his way and no one else’s brings Saint Denis’ international adventures to an end. However, instead of blasting Bienville’s prerogative as Dumont does, Le Page, like Pénicaud, brings Saint Denis’ life to a happy conclusion in Louisiana.

Le Page devotes most of the latter part of Volume I to describing Louisiana’s natural features. However, when his description reaches the Natchitoches area, he does not fail to digress upon Saint Denis. In fact, Le Page digresses to such an extent that a good part of Chapter 22 becomes a continuation of his Saint-Denis tale.
Le Page resumes the Saint-Denis story by highlighting the fine qualities of the late Commandant of Natchitoches.

M. de S. Denis qui a été longtemps Commandant de ce Poste des Natchitoches qui ont toujours été amis des Français, aurait mérité d’être Gouverneur de toute la Colonie; il était aussi prudent dans sa manière de Gouverner qu’il était brave Officier; il a su toute sa vie se faire aimer et respecter, tant des Français que des Naturels. Ces derniers lui étoient si attachés, que rien ne leur coûtait, dès qu’il étoit question de son service. Ces peuples n’ont rien de plus cher que leur liberté, et préfèrent la mort à l’esclavage, et même à la domination d’aucun Souverain, quelque douce qu’elle puisse être. Cependant vingt ou vingt-cinq Nations avoient trouvé en la personne de M. de S. Denis un charme si puissant, qu’oubliant qu’elles étoient nées libres, elles s’étoient données à lui volontairement; les Chefs et le peuple, tous voulaient l’avoir pour leur Grand Chef, ensorte qu’au moindre signe il aurait pu se mettre à la tête de trente mille hommes tirés de ces Nations, qui de leur propre mouvement s’étoient soumises à ses ordres (I, 299-300).

As Dumont passionately believes, so Le Page also feels that Saint Denis would have served Louisiana well as governor. Le Page views Saint Denis’ governance of Natchitoches as a model for governing the entire colony. That is, the late Saint Denis was as prudent an administrator as he was brave a soldier; above all, he was as good to the Indians as he was to the French. Here there is no mention, as there is in Diron’s and Bénard de La Harpe’s accounts, of any trouble ever surfacing between Saint Denis and the Natchitoches Indians. Rather, the latter “ont toujours été amis des Français.” The fact that Saint Denis could win the loyalty and the service of dozens of nations of freedom-loving Native Americans, who do not even like to have a sovereign from among their own tribe rule over them but who would gladly make Saint Denis their grand chief, indicates the type of government the mythic hero represents: one that both “les Chefs et le peuple” want, one that is pleasing to both high and low, to rulers and the ruled.
Aware as he is of the historical Saint Denis' death, Le Page eulogizes his deceased hero, something that Pénicaud and Dumont, writing earlier, cannot do. Le Page uses the reaction of Native Americans to Saint Denis' passing to indicate the degree to which the man was universally loved because of his uncanny skill as a leader for all people.

Lorsque M. de S. Denis est mort, tous ces peuples l'ont pleuré et regretté, comme de bons enfants pleureroient leur père; mais ce qui doit encore surprendre dans le changement de sentiments de ces peuples en faveur de M. de S. Denis, c'est que la plupart de ces Nations sont sur les terres des Espagnols, et qu'ils auroient dû plutôt s'attacher à eux qu'aux Français. Les qualités personnelles de M. de S. Denis l'avoient emporté sur toute sorte de considérations; et telle est la force de la vertu qui se fait respecter par tous les hommes, quoique peu la pratiquent. J'aurai occasion de parler dans peu du caractère de ces Peuples, et de ceux-ci en particulier, à l'égard de M. de Saint Denis, pour faire voir que leur dévouement à ce Commandant étant sincère, puisqu'ils faisoient leurs efforts pour lui rendre service à son insu comme sous ses yeux, avec désintéressement inconnu parmi les Nations policées (I, 301-302).

The Native-American reaction to Le Page's hero's death is surpassed in Louisiana colonial literature only by the recordings of the forced Natchez mournings of their dead Great Suns. Hence, the Indian sorrow at Saint Denis' death marks the greatest genuine outpouring of sympathy by indigenous peoples for anyone in the colonial canon.

Saint Denis resurfaces in Le Page's work as late as Volume III's Chapter 14, when Le Page relates the Natchez massacre of the French in late 1729. After annihilating the French at Natchez and waiting for other Indians to join them in routing all of the French from Lower Louisiana, Le Page's Natchez move on to Natchitoches. Le Page depicts the Natchez as wanting to destroy the Natchitoches Indians because the former believe the latter to be "amis inviolables des Françoises" (III, 271). Although the Natchez fear Saint Denis, they believe that by feigning a visit to Natchitoches to make peace and to hand over a captured French woman they can lure the white leader into ambush.
The exchange of bluffs between the Natchez and Saint Denis shows that the latter has mastered this Native-American war tactic, a further illustration of how Indianized this Franco-American hero has become.

Having arrived at Natchitoches, the Natchez se rendirent par terre à une petite distance de ce Poste avec le Calumet de Paix: ils envoyèrent des Députés à M. de S. Denis, pour lui dire qu’ils venaient lui présenter le Calumet de Paix, le rendre l’arbitre de la Paix entre eux et les Français, et qu’ils lui amenaient une Esclave Française pour constater la vérité de ce qu’ils lui proposoient.

M. de S. Denis qui dès sa jeunesse avait appris la Langue et qui la parloit parfaitement, leur fit réponse lui-même qu’il le voulait bien, pourvu qu’ils ne vinsent qu’au nombre de dix avec l’Esclave Française; qu’alors il recevroit leur Calumet de Paix et la femme Française, et qu’il la payeroit bien; mais qu’il voyoit à leur grand nombre qu’ils étoien des fourbes et des traîtres; que cependant il voulût bien les laisser retourner chez eux, à condition qu’ils lui ameneroient tout à l’heure la Française, laquelle il payeroit; il les menaça que s’ils y manquoient, il leur apprendroit à qui ils se jouoient. Néanmoins M. de S. Denis n’avoient pas quarante hommes de Garnison et tout au plus une vingtaine d’Habitans; mais voyant qu’ils n’amenoient point l’Esclave Française, il envoya au Village des Nactchitoches avertir le Grand Chef de cette Nation de lui envoyer quarante de ses meilleurs Guerriers pendant la nuit. Le Grand Chef qui n’avoit garde de désobliger M. de S. Denis, lui envoya le nombre d’hommes qu’il lui avoit demandés; ils furent rendus chez ce Commandant vers minuit.

D’un autre côté les Députés des Natchez ayant rapporté à leur Troupe la réponse de M. de S. Denis, ils furent tous au désespoir la réponse de M. de S. Denis, ils furent tous au désespoir d’avoir manqué leur coup: ils déchargeront leur rage sur la pauvre Française qu’ils brûlerent à la vie du Fort, après avoir fait un retraitement à la hâte, pour ne point être surpris durant le temps du martyre de cette femme (III, 272-273).

Outbluffed by Saint Denis, the Natchez resort to violence. The Natchez’s cruel killing of the French captive causes Saint Denis to respond, many times over, on their level of violence.

The Natchez provocation of Saint Denis proves to be the tribe’s last gasp.

M. de S. Denis Officier, d’un courage à toute épreuve, et qui sçavoit la manière de s’y prendre pour battre les
Naturels, fit armer les quarante Guerriers de ses Voisins, laissa vingt hommes pour garder le Fort, marcha aux Ennemis un peu avant le jour, et les attaqua avec tant d'ordre et de valeur, qu'il en resta plus de soixante sur la Place: les autres prirent la fuite; on les poursuivit; les blessés qui n'étoient pas en petit nombre, furent achevés; M. de S. Denis rentra victorieux dans son Fort sans avoir perdu un seul homme (III, 273-274).

With this mortal blow to one of the greatest threats to colonial Louisiana's security -- the presumed Natchez-led conspiracy of Indian nations against the French -- Le Page ends his Saint-Denis tale. Saint Denis' vengeance upon the Natchez serves French Louisiana and its Indian alliance well.

During his encyclopedic presentation of Louisiana Indian groups in Volume II of the Histoire, Le Page elaborates upon Saint Denis' role as ransomer of "M. de Belle-Isle" (Simars or Simard de Bellisle), a young Frenchman who became a slave of supposedly cannibalistic coastal Indians in 1720-1721 after leaving ship on the Texas coast. Le Page's version of this episode will be treated later in the chapter devoted to Louisiana writers' portrayals of Native Americans as it has more to do with Le Page's depiction of Indians than with his extension of the Saint-Denis myth. However, it may now be worthwhile to offer Jean-Bernard Bossu's version of Saint Denis' intervention in the De Bellisle crisis because the captivity-rescue affords the only instance in which Bossu, who will be introduced more fully elsewhere, focuses on Saint Denis. Bossu was in and out of Louisiana from the early 1750s to the early 1770s and published two books, one in 1768 and one in 1777, on his twelve years of cumulative residence in the colony. Even though Bossu's first book (which includes the De Bellisle episode) appeared in print after Spain had received control of Louisiana from France, Travels in the Interior of North America, 1751-1762, as its title suggests, relates Bossu's
experiences during Louisiana’s first French colonial period and, therefore, may be added to the current study.

The Saint-Denis section of Bossu’s De Bellisle story reads as follows.

After about two years of his captivity, envoys of another nation came bearing a peace pipe to the Attacapas. What a providential stroke of luck! These people lived in New Mexico and were the neighbors of the Natchitoches, whose territory was commanded by Monsieur de Hucheros de Saint-Denis, who was loved and respected by the envoys even though they themselves lived in Spanish lands. After they had studied Monsieur de Belle-Isle very closely, they told the Attacapas that there were white men like him in their own country. The Attacapas replied that they had found this “dog” near the big lake after his companions had died of hunger, they had brought him to their village where he had become the slave of one of the women, and they had taken him to war against an enemy tribe, whom they had defeated. He had distinguished himself in battle by skillfully killing one of the foe with an arrow. Because of this deed, he had been adopted by the tribe and made a warrior.

Belle-Isle pretended not to hear the conversation, but he was determined to get back to his native land. He took one of the envoys aside and questioned him thoroughly on the white men he had seen. Monsieur de Belle-Isle had fortunately kept a box containing his commission as an officer. He wrote the following message on it with ink made of soot and a pen fashioned from a crow’s feather: “To the chief of the white men: I am so-and-so who was abandoned at Saint Bernard’s Bay. My companions died of hunger and misery before my eyes. I am a prisoner of the Attacapas.” The poor man gave his commission to the Indian, assuring him that it was “talking bark” or paper. If the Indian gave it to the chief of the Frenchmen in his country, he would be well received. The native thought that the letter was a sacred thing since it was going to speak for him among the French. The others wanted to take it away from him, but he escaped by swimming across a river. He held the letter over his head to keep it from getting wet. After having traveled 150 leagues across country, the Indian arrived among the Natchitoches, whose territory was then commanded by Monsieur Hucheros de Saint-Denis, a distinguished officer who was the first to have gone from Louisiana to Mexico by land. He married the Spanish governor’s niece in Mexico. The messenger was showered with gifts after he delivered Monsieur de Belle-Isle’s letter to the Commander. Then Monsieur de Saint-Denis began to weep like an Indian. When the natives asked him what was wrong, he answered that he was grieving over his brother who had been a prisoner of the Attacapas.
for two years. Since the tribes of this region thought highly of Monsieur de Saint-Denis, the messenger volunteered to go for Monsieur de Belle-Isle, and other Indians joined him.

Monsieur de Saint-Denis gave them some shirts and a hat for Monsieur de Belle-Isle. Ten of them, armed with rifles, rode off immediately. They promised Monsieur de Saint-Denis that within two moons they would bring back his brother riding on the extra horse they were taking with them.

The shots this group fired to announce its arrival made the Attacapas think it was thundering. The envoys gave Monsieur de Belle-Isle a letter from Monsieur de Saint-Denis telling him that he had nothing to fear from the bearers of the message and that the writer was looking forward with joy to seeing him. I cannot tell you how happy the officer was to receive this letter. He was afraid, however, that the Attacapas would oppose his leaving. The chief of the envoys made him mount up immediately and they all took off together. The Attacapas, frightened by the envoys' rifle shots, did not dare protest, and the woman who had adopted Monsieur de Belle-Isle broke into tears. In this way, he escaped from a captivity which might have lasted his entire life.

The Indian who managed Belle-Isle's escape was as proud as Hernando Cortez when he conquered Montezuma, the last emperor of Mexico. They rode to the Natchitoches territory but found that Monsieur de Saint-Denis had left for headquarters in Biloxi, which was the capital of Louisiana at that time, since New Orleans had not yet been built.

Monsieur d'Orvilliers, who commanded the territory in Saint-Denis' absence, sent Monsieur de Belle-Isle and his party to see Monsieur de Bienville, who was then governor of Louisiana. Delighted to see Belle-Isle, the General gave him a warm welcome and generously rewarded his liberators. Upon the former captive's arrival, everyone crowded around to congratulate him on his escape from slavery. Monsieur de Bienville then gave him some clothing (189-191).

As the Louisiana writers before him do, Bossu first attributes Saint Denis' greatness to his ability to get along fabulously with Indians. So skillful was the late Saint Denis at dealing with Native Americans that even those reds residing outside of Louisiana knew, loved, and respected the legendary commandant of Natchitoches. In addition to highlighting the great esteem for Saint Denis in Native America, Bossu elevates the former Natchitoches commandant by mentioning his service to Euro-America as well. Saint Denis was "a distinguished officer who was
the first to have gone from Louisiana to Mexico by land. He married the
Spanish governor’s niece in Mexico.” Just as he remains an internation­
al hero of the red Americas, so Saint Denis also continues to be held in
high regard by whites of different European colonies.

Ever blending the red and white Americas in his person, the Saint
Denis of Bossu’s account “began to weep like an Indian” upon learning of
a fellow Frenchman being held prisoner among dangerous Native Americans.
Saint Denis’ reaction to De Bellisle’s plight moves his red allies so
much that they take it upon themselves to venture to a notorious tribe
and free a white man whom neither they nor Saint Denis knows. Almost
like a supernatural force operating through red bodies, Bossu’s Saint
Denis never sees the white captive whom he liberates. While many Indi­
ans and French welcome De Bellisle back into free society, it is the un­
seen but powerful Saint Denis, working through red men, to whom the
young white owes his life. Bossu’s account of the De Bellisle episode,
showing as it does Saint Denis’ power in absentia continues the trans­
formation of the deceased historical figure into protean myth.

The historical Simard de Bellisle also offered an account of his
captivity and his rescue through Saint Denis’ intervention. It is part
of his “Relation,” which recounts his voyage to and experiences in the
New World from August 1719 to February 1721.

Giraud identifies De Bellisle as “l’enseigne Simard de Bellisle,
le fils du maire de Fontenay-le-Comte en Poitou” (III, 380). In an
article in which he includes both the “Relation” and a letter by De
Bellisle, Henri Folmer states that as a young officer aged twenty-four,
De Bellisle left France in August 1719 to serve in Louisiana. When the
ship he was aboard experienced difficulties on the western Louisiana
coast, De Bellisle and several other men remained on land in hopes of
reaching a French settlement instead of heading back across the Gulf of
Mexico to the Caribbean with the rest of the passengers. Gradually, De Bellisle’s companions perished, and De Bellisle himself was on the verge of death when coastal Indians (some say the Attakapas) encountered him and took De Bellisle as a captive into their tribe.

Through the Assinais Indians, De Bellisle was freed from his captors and reached Natchitoches in early 1721. In the same year, De Bellisle took part in Bénard de La Harpe’s exploration of the Texas coast. In the spring of 1723 De Bellisle made up part of Étienne Véniard de Bourgmont’s expedition to Upper Louisiana. Giraud describes De Bellisle as one of the officers “who were going to the Missouri country mainly in the hope of trading with the natives there and who were indifferent to Bourgmont’s orders” (V, 447).

Giraud relates that the Missouri expedition was plagued with difficulties, due in part to De Bourgmont’s “authoritarian conduct.” However, De Bellisle’s disposition also hampered matters.

Difficulties worsened through the insubordination of the officers, who were unwilling to obey some of the orders Bourgmont issued in conformity with his instructions. Pradel and Bellisle were principally responsible for these dissensions. Long before the expedition reached the Illinois country, they sought to lower Bourgmont in the eyes of the tribes whose territories they traversed, by refusing to acknowledge him as leader of the expedition. Things got worse when the convoy reached the Missouri (V, 448).

De Bellisle and Jean de Pradel continued to pose problems for De Bourgmont as the latter undertook establishment of a post on the Missouri River. Giraud asserts that the recall of De Bellisle and De Pradel “put an end to their constant obstruction” (V, 450).

De Bellisle got along better with other key figures in the colony. Folmer maintains that “Le Page du Pratz met de Bellisle and, after his return to France, became a friend of de Bellisle’s family there” (footnote, 204).
In 1733 De Bellisle obtained a year’s leave for France, at which time, Folmer relates, Bienville spoke highly of the former’s colonial military service and of his holdings both in Louisiana and in France (230). De Bellisle likewise speaks favorably of Bienville in his "Relation" as well as in the letter that touches on his captivity and release therefrom. In the former document, in which De Bellisle mentions Saint Denis’ intervention on his behalf without complimenting his rescuer, the author praises Bienville. De Bellisle says of his meeting and subsequent association with Bienville following his arrival at Biloxi:

I went to Mr. de Bienville, to whom I had the honor to give an account of my adventures and who had the kindness to make me an officer. Since my acceptance into the service, I found so much pleasure in serving under such a general that I am already cured from all my ills from which I suffered during my ill fortune (225).

Obviously of the Bienvillist faction, De Bellisle ends his “Relation” by thus kissing up to the real power in the politically split early colony. In his letter of October 6, 1721, however, De Bellisle praises Saint Denis along with Bienville. Such favorable references to Bienville are unique in the colonial literary canon. Most of the early Louisiana writers are curiously quiet about such an important figure as Bienville, and some, like Dumont, who held Bienville personally responsible for his own destitution, openly criticize the commandant-governor. Dumont even molds the controversial leader into a colorful fictional villain. The questionable Bienville and the opportunistic De Bellisle, whose self-will Giraud highlights and whom Folmer describes as “not a very easy person to get along with” (230) seem to have gotten along marvelously with each other.

De Bellisle was promoted to lieutenant in 1734, captain in 1740, and commander of New Orleans in 1753. He was recalled to France in 1762 because of a quarrel with Governor Kerlerec. De Bellisle died in Paris.
in 1763. Interestingly, Bossu, one of De Bellisle’s “biographers,”
would also be recalled, imprisoned, censored, and finally vindicated for
quarrelling with Kerlerec.

Margry included De Bellisle’s “Relation” and the letter of October
6, 1721, in his Découvertes. Polner translated both documents into
English and published them in his 1940 article on De Bellisle.

De Bellisle’s narrative offers shorter and more realistic refer­
ences to Saint Denis than do the previously examined texts. This may
result in part from the egocentric De Bellisle being caught up in his
own story. However, it also results from De Bellisle’s elaboration upon
the role that Native Americans played in his liberation. (De Bellisle’s
attention to indigenous Americans will be examined in more detail in the
chapter devoted specifically to the portrayal of Indians in Louisiana
literature.)

With regard to Saint Denis’ intervention on his behalf, De
Bellisle simply mentions that after the Assinais received his notes
requesting help from the first Frenchman encountered (notes that De
Bellisle says his captors circulated among neighboring tribes as a kind
of joke on the white man),

they decided to take them to Mr. de Saint Denys, who lives
at the fort of Saint Jean the Baptist de Naquitoche and at
a distance of seventy leagues from these Assinais. Conse­
quently, they left home to carry out this decision and when
they arrived at Naquitoches and Mr. de Saint Denys, they
gave him my letter and our commissions. Mr. de Saint Denys,
when he had examined them, told these Assinais that he would
answer me, and ordered them to go and bring me and that he
wanted me dead or alive. They answered him not to worry and
that they would carry his answer to me and would bring me.
These two Indians took leave of him and left immediately to
return home (221).

The Assinais then venture to find De Bellisle.

De Bellisle relates the restoration of hope that the arrival of
the Assinais Indians and Saint Denis’ letter bring him.
One day, when I was near the fire, I heard a rifle shot. This surprised me. I asked what it meant. They answered that no one knew. At this moment I saw two Indians on horseback arrive, who were the ones who brought life to me. As soon as they were near me, all the people of the tribe with which I was living approached. Then the two Assinais showed the letter, which Mr. de Saint Denys had given them for me. The Indians with whom I was could not understand what all this meant. They took this letter and after they had looked at it, one after another, my turn came also. I wanted to take it, but they told me that they would give it to me, but the next morning. The two Indians who had brought the letter, seeing that the ones with whom I was would not give it to me, snatched it out of their hands and delivered it to me. These people are very much feared by the tribe with whom I lived.

When I saw the letter, and when I read what it contained, what a great joy did I feel at that moment! I leave it to the reader to imagine it. When these Indians noticed the joy I felt, they asked me the cause. I told them that a chief had written to me and had told me that if they all wanted to go to him with me, they would be well rewarded. They answered me that I could go alone, but that they did not want to go. The two Assinais told me not to worry and that we would leave the next morning. They showed me a little wood at a distance of a quarter of a league where I should wait for them at daybreak. That night lasted longer to me than a year (222).

Although De Bellisle reads Saint Denis' letter with "a great joy," he credits the Assinais Indians as being "the ones who brought life to me." As De Bellisle proceeds to relate his rescue, it is Indians who continue to play the dominant role in his progress toward freedom.

When De Bellisle finally makes it back to white society, he says simply, "We reached Naquitoches and the French" (225). Without elaborating upon the details of his welcome to French civilization, he adds, "I leave it to the reader to imagine whether I did not return to life after being dead" (225). Differing from Bossu’s account, De Bellisle's states that Saint Denis was at Natchitoches when De Bellisle arrived there in February 1721. With regard to Saint Denis, De Bellisle begins the concluding paragraph of his "Relation" by noting only that "when I came to this first French fort I went to the Commander, who made me
leave at the end of eight days in a carriage which was going to New Orleans" (225). From New Orleans, De Bellisle proceeds to Biloxi and to complimenting Bienville.

In the October 6, 1721, letter, which De Bellisle has Saint Denis cosign, De Bellisle, not surprisingly, speaks more glowingly of Saint Denis, in a manner more typical of the authors already examined. Addressing the Company of the Indies on his adventures in Lower Louisiana, De Bellisle states that

I was rescued by Mr. de Saint Denys, knight of the military order of St. Louis and Commander of the Red River or the St. Bernard Bay, to which honors he has been called by the King and the Council of Marine. He had the kindness to order the Assinais to fetch me, saying that he wanted me, dead or alive. These Indians did come, according to the orders they had received, and they took me to their villages, and from there they took me to Natchitoches, to Mr. de Saint Denys. I had the honor to thank him for having brought me back to life (229).

Unlike the "Relation," the letter gives Saint Denis full credit for rescuing De Bellisle.

De Bellisle takes matters a step further and, increasingly resembling Louisiana compatriots in his compliments of Saint Denis, adds, "Mr. de Saint Denys did me the pleasure to confirm what I had the honor to tell you, by signing my letter. He understands these Indians perfectly, and has inquired into everything that I have the honor to write" (229-230). Finally, De Bellisle closes on a note that echoes both an often expressed consensus and a common starting point for the glorification of Saint Denis in Louisiana literature: "I forgot to have the honor to tell you that all the tribes consider Mr. de Saint Denys as their chief" (230). Whether De Bellisle felt compelled to sound universal opinion as a means of getting Saint Denis to endorse his word (and thereby to promote his career) or whether the egoistic and opportunistic author is voicing real praise, the fact that De Bellisle, who is quick
to criticize both Frenchmen and Native Americans and ready to praise only those who act in his behalf, lauds Saint Denis to the degree that he does further enhances the position of the legendary figure both in Louisiana history and in Louisiana literature.

In the same letter in which he praises both Saint Denis and Bien­ville, De Bellisle offers criticism of the man under whom he returned on an official exploration to the coastal region where he had been a wan­derer and a captive.

I see that Mr. de la Harpe, in his journal, wants to attrib­ute to himself all the credit of the discovery of such a beautiful country, though it is due but to me. That is why I take the liberty to inform you of this and to ask you, gentlemen, very humbly to give me my promotion in this coun­try (230).

Interestingly, Saint Denis, by backing up De Bellisle’s letter, also en­dorses criticism of a man who came to Louisiana, forsook the place after a short while, and then may have become one of the few to blight Saint Denis’ image in his writings.

The Historical Journal of the Establishment of the French in Louisiana, which was not published until 1831 in New Orleans, has been attributed by some to Jean-Baptiste Bénard de La Harpe. In his annota­tions to the 1971 English translation of the Historical Journal, Glenn Conrad says that Bénard de La Harpe may not have written this work and cites De Villiers’ and Giraud’s assertions that Bénard definitely is not the author (1).

Whether Bénard is the author of the Historical Journal or not, he cannot be considered a Louisianian. His years in Louisiana span only 1718 to 1723, during which time La Harpe travelled extensively in Lower Louisiana and even made a trip to France and back. When his ventures in the colony failed, Bénard forsook Louisiana and returned to France permanently.
Whoever wrote the *Historical Journal* obviously was not a fan of Saint Denis, and the blighting of the colonial hero's image starts early in the narrative. For instance, the author relates that on August 10, 1702,

M. de Bienville learned that M. de Saint-Denis, with a few Canadians and Indians, had attacked an allied nation [the Chitimachas: allied with the French] to secure slaves. M. de Bienville ordered the slaves returned, but his orders were poorly carried out (40-41).

The author fails to note that the Chitimachas were hostile toward the French in the first days of Lower Louisiana's founding, and if there had been some kind of peace struck with the tribe at the time that Saint Denis with a band of white and red men attacked them (a peace of which Saint Denis might not have been aware or which through foresight he might have ignored), later in the first decade of the eighteenth century France would declare total war against the Chitimachas, enslaving great numbers and forcing the rest to flee toward the Gulf. Saint Denis did take an active part in defeating the Chitimachas, just as he would later help to bring an end to the Natchez problems. If Indians would not be friends of the French, Saint Denis, as a last resort, treated them as foes, with the help of both red and white residents of Louisiana.

Later, when recording events of early 1704, the *Historical Journal* author again casts Saint Denis -- and along with him even Henri de Tonti -- in a bad light. Saint Denis and Tonti, two of the most Indianized men of Louisiana history, are blamed for giving bad advice to Bienville during a campaign against Alabama murderers of four Frenchmen.

M. de Bienville took counsel with M. de Tonty and M. de Saint-Denis. They were of the opinion, contrary to M. de Bienville's, that the French should await nightfall to attack the Indians. The Alibamons were camped on a height difficult to ascend. The night was dark and the French took an almost inaccessible path full of roots and vines. About a dozen Indians, posted as sentinels, heard noise and fired into the brush. They killed two Frenchmen, wounded another, and fled immediately to join their party (46).
In late 1704 the author reports Saint Denis' botching yet another delicate situation involving Indians.

The Tunica chiefs, after receiving gifts, returned to the lower Mississippi where they planned, with M. de Saint-Denis, a rendezvous with the Natchez Indians.

After the chiefs' departure, the French continued assembling their pirogues. The company found itself reinforced by more than thirty Canadians. Everything was ready for war when M. Saint-Denis changed his mind (49).

What is evident thus far in the Historical Journal's record of Saint Denis' activities is that the author believes Saint Denis fights when he should not and does not fight when he should. In other words, Saint Denis cannot please the Historical Journal's author no matter what he does.

The relation of Saint Denis' first trip to Mexico is a matter-of-fact account in the Historical Journal that hardly glorifies or romanticizes Saint Denis' venture. The author merely provides dates that mark the progress of the journey, states the places visited, and names the people encountered. He mentions Saint Denis' assisting Spanish missionaries and marrying a Mexican with no commentary and with no more interest than that which he shows when telling where and how many recruits Saint Denis picked up along his route. The only subjective remark occurs when the author reports that Saint Denis was "cordially received" by the viceroy in Mexico City.

The Historical Journal also relates Saint Denis' second trip to Mexico with little flair. On top of that, Saint Denis takes a back seat to "M. Graveline," "M. Derbanne," and other Frenchmen making the journey for purposes of trade. In the first six paragraphs relating this excursion, Saint Denis is mentioned only twice. In the seventh paragraph, he is presented as venturing from the border to Mexico City to redeem merchandise that had been seized from him. While thus far the author reports Saint Denis' mission to Mexico with seeming lack of interest, the
text livens up when the narrator sees an opportunity to cast Saint Denis in a bad light.

After leaving Saint Denis for several paragraphs, the author returns with an unsavory depiction, mirroring earlier uncomplimentary passages that focused on Saint Denis' inept Indian relations back in Louisiana.

March 24, 1719. M. de Saint-Denis returned from Mexico. As previously stated, he had left the Presidio del Norte on April 15, 1717, to go to Mexico City to claim the merchandise seized from him by Captain Ramon. He arrived in Mexico City on May 3. The Marquis de Vallero, the viceroy of New Spain, a worthy replacement for the Duke of Linares, made M. de Saint-Denis expect the release of his merchandise. Shortly afterward, however, Don Martin de Alarcon, captain-general of the province of Texas, learned at Saltillo that M. de Saint-Denis had ignored his authority. Angry that M. de Saint-Denis did not deal with him, Don Martin wrote to the viceroy representing M. de Saint-Denis as a suspicious person, and stating that the merchandise he claimed did not belong to him. This letter induced the viceroy to have M. de Saint-Denis arrested on October 25, 1717. He remained in prison until a royal decree ordered his release on the condition that he should remain in the city. He again sought the release of his merchandise and this was accorded him by another decree in the month of December. Later he sold his merchandise at a good price, but the friend to whom he entrusted the money wasted the proceeds. Shortly afterward, because M. de Saint-Denis had spoken angrily against the Spaniards, and boasted of his influence among the Indian nations on the frontiers, the viceroy, informed of this, ordered his arrest a second time. Relatives of M. de Saint-Denis' wife, however, informed him, and he took flight on September 25, 1718. He arrived at the Natchitoches post on February 24, 1719, and at Dauphin Island on March 24 (79).

The Saint Denis of the Historical Journal is hardly the deft diplomat, efficient mediator between red and white nations, or endearing personality of the tales written by Louisiana colonials. Rather, the author of the Historical Journal depicts Saint Denis as petty, angering the Spaniards by speaking badly of them and bragging on himself by boasting of his influence among Indians. Ironically, the Historical Journal author highlights Saint Denis' dealings with Native Americans as one of the...
trader's biggest flaws, and, inverting what the Louisiana authors do, uses Saint Denis' Indian relations as the starting point of defamation rather than glorification. Saint Denis' associates hardly enhance his image either. After all, Saint Denis' partner in trade (the only thing in which Saint Denis excels in this narrative) squanders Saint Denis' earnings. And instead of coming to the rescue of Spanish friends and kin in the manner that Pénicaud depicts, the Historical Journal's Saint Denis is dependent upon Mexican relatives to get him out of the country before being jailed a second time.

When the author of the Historical Journal mentions Saint Denis again, it is during the account of Simard de Bellisle's captivity and attempted rescue. Not surprisingly, the ending of the Historical Journal's version of this episode differs from that of other narratives reporting of the affair. The author relates that De Bellisle's papers, sealed in a tin box, had been taken by one of the Indians and had subsequently fallen into the hands of the Assinais. By chance, these Indians took the papers to M. de Saint-Denis, who was then at Natchitoches. Saint-Denis, informed of M. de Bellisle's slavery by a letter enclosed in the box addressed to any European, had begged the Assinais to go and free him. Fear of war [with the other Indian tribe, probably the Attakapas], however, decided them not to agree to his request (121).

Defying even De Bellisle’s personal account of his own rescue, the Historical Journal's author rewrites history in order to discredit a man for whom others depart from history into artistry so as to glorify. Fittingly, the author of the Historical Journal also consistently employs the same thing to underscore Saint Denis' ineptness that Louisiana colonials use to build their folk hero into a lasting myth: his relationship with Native Americans. And the fact that the same author, while bashing a universal idol, continues to speak favorably of Bien­ville throughout the narrative adds to the dubiousness of the latter's integrity.

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The difficulties between Bienville and Saint Denis that Dumont blows out of proportion in an attempt to villainize Le Moyne and that others indicate more subtly are also suggested in the *Historical Journal*. For instance, in the autumn of 1721, Bienville learns that the Spanish in Texas might overpower the Natchitoches and he [Bienville] might be blamed for this because he had not given command of the post to M. de Saint Denis, whom many people believed had a great influence over that Indian nation. Thus, M. de Bienville decided, against his will, to put M. de Saint-Denis in command of the post and to relieve M. Renaud of his duties (133).

In the passage above, the *Historical Journal*’s author verifies Saint Denis’ widespread popularity. At the same time, in “The State of the Colony of Louisiana in 1724” (added to the end of the *Historical Journal*) the author indicates that many do not hold Bienville in high esteem when he states that “M. de La Harpe . . . knows the hardships he himself suffered because of his defense of M. de Bienville’s irreproachable conduct” (170).

Whether La Harpe wrote the hagiography of Bienville in the *Historical Journal* or not, his admiration for Bienville did not mirror Le Moyne’s opinion of Bénard. Conrad quotes Bienville as saying,

> It appears to us that one must not count much on the marvels of which he [La Harpe] makes a rather ample narrative since his account is based only on simple conjectures and his zeal to succeed in an establishment that was entrusted to him might well cause him not to foresee the obstacles that might be found in the execution (131).

With both De Bellisle and Bienville discrediting La Harpe and with an atypical depiction of Saint Denis damaging the credibility of the *Historical Journal*, La Harpe and whoever wrote the *Historical Journal* stand as aberrations from the colonial norm. Interestingly, when the *Historical Journal*’s author discusses La Harpe’s own activities in Natchitoches and the Red River region, the area so closely associated in many
minds with Saint Denis that discussions of it often lead to discussions of Saint Denis, he does not even mention Saint Denis or that person's groundbreaking work and lingering importance there. Rather, Bénard becomes the important mediator among Native Americans, Spaniards, and Frenchmen of the Louisiana-Texas frontier, elevated to prominence in the same fashion that Saint Denis is exalted by the Louisiana writers -- for his ability to win the respect of Native Americans.

Like Bénard de La Harpe, Charlevoix cannot be considered a Louisiana writer. Nevertheless, this man's work was for a long time the main source of information on Louisiana for eighteenth-century French, English, and Anglo-American intellectuals. Not surprisingly, Charlevoix also touches on the Saint-Denis legend. Even though Charlevoix spent only a year travelling the vast Louisiana territory with extended stopovers at certain settlements, he must be given some attention in this study because of the prominence of his work among the writings about colonial Louisiana and, more importantly, because of the fact that his concerns match and mirror those of the Louisiana writers of his time and later. In addition, some of the letters of his epistolary Journal may have actually been composed in Louisiana.

Echoing Tonti before him, mirroring his contemporary Le Page and even Bossu, and foreshadowing many Creole writers of Louisiana's antebellum literary renaissance roughly a century after him, Charlevoix wishes to refute inaccurate depictions of the New World and to present its peoples and places as they are. He takes the interests of the people of the Americas to heart and offers a sympathetic portrayal of their lives and their lands in hopes that they will benefit from the attention. Spotlighting Louisiana toward the end of his voluminous study of New France, Charlevoix even focuses on their heroes, offering his summary of the life of their great idol and colonial legend Saint Denis.
Before looking at the sections from Charlevoix's *History* and *Journal* that touch on Louisiana, particularly Charlevoix’s sketch of Saint Denis, one must learn more of the life of this Jesuit savant.10 Pierre-François-Xavier de Charlevoix was born in Saint-Quentin, France, in 1682, at the very time of Louisiana’s founding. Sixteen years later, he entered the novitiate of the Society of Jesus to begin an ecclesiastical and academic career. (Interestingly, Charlevoix's entrance into an order -- like that of Marie Tranchepain, another French religious destined to venture to Louisiana -- occurred at the same time that the permanent settlement of Lower Louisiana was being put in motion.) Charlevoix was sent to Québec in 1705 and returned to France in 1709. Ordained in 1712, he served his order at different academic institutions in France. He published his first book, *A History of Christianity in Japan*, in 1715. In 1720 Charlevoix returned to Québec to conduct an exploratory expedition of New France for the French government. In 1721, he ventured up the St. Lawrence River, into the Great Lakes, and down through Illinois country to the Mississippi River. By late 1721 he was at Natchez and would remain in Lower Louisiana until he left Biloxi for the Caribbean in the summer of 1722.

Back in France, Charlevoix began serving his order more and more as an editor and writer. His work in publications and his American travels eventually led to the compilation of his sweeping treatise on New France. In Charlevoix's *Louisiana* O'Neill notes that the impetus for the *Histoire et Description Générale de la Nouvelle France* had much in common with what inspired many Louisiana colonists to write: the need to clarify misconceptions about the New World. O'Neill says of the task facing Charlevoix,

> The historian would have to select the essential and interesting from out of the abundance of source materials; he would keep useless trivia from drowning "what is truly worthy of the reader’s curiosity," and he would sift through...
the contradictory reports. There would then result "a just
discernment which would separate the authors of Relations
and Travels who merit the discredit they have [unfortunate­
ly] brought down upon all, from the authors who by their
sincerity and instructional diligence have proved worthy to
be regarded as sure guides and irreproachable witnesses."
It was high time, Charlevoix judged, to make this triage
among the plethora of writings. To wait longer would be to
risk losing in the course of time some of the critical cri­
teria that could weed out the unreliable works produced only
by "the itch to write." The scholar had to search out and
save the veritable lest it be eclipsed under the "monstrous
heap of fables." The unreliable productions, Charlevoix
further complained, were often spiced up with "the perni­
cious seasoning of satire, libertinism, and irreligion."
Furthermore, if the New World heroes were to have their due
immortality, then New World history had to be critically
evaluated lest creation of the fabulous undermine the read­
ings of their exploits." "This was the historiographical
mentality in which he produced his History of New France and
Journal (xx-xxi).

Charlevoix's careful attention to presenting Louisiana and New France as
they truly are instead of capitalizing on the sensationalism that many
other French writers employed distinguishes him from countless Continen­
tal peers and aligns him with those Louisiana writers of his time and
later who sought to correct misconceptions about their homeland. At the
same time, Charlevoix joins the Louisianians in praising their heroes --
above all, Saint Denis.

The Histoire et Description Générale de la Nouvelle France avec
le Journal Historique d'un Voyage fait par ordre du Roi dans l'Amérique
Septentrionale was published in 1744. O'Neill notes that "the work was
seized upon in London and in Boston for purposes poor Charlevoix never
intended" (xiii). The work became so important to the Anglo foe that
"if in 1776 George Washington or George III wished to read of the histo­
ry and geography of Canada or Louisiana, it was Charlevoix's work that
he would have received" (xiii).

The Journal appended to the History was translated into English as
early as 1761, but the only English version of the voluminous History
itself did not appear until 1866-1872. The latter translation was done by John Gilmary Shea, and O'Neill uses the 1900 edition of Shea's work to excerpt sections from the History that touch on Lower Louisiana for use in the 1977 *Charlevoix's Louisiana*. For selections from the *Journal* that treat Louisiana, O'Neill uses Louise Phelps Kellogg's 1923 edited reprint of the 1761 translation.

Charlevoix continued to publish and to play a leading role in Jesuit affairs until he died in 1761.

In the portions of Shea's translation that O'Neill presents in *Charlevoix's Louisiana*, the Saint-Denis story begins in Book XXI. The first reference to Saint Denis echoes Louisiana texts by mentioning Saint Denis as "a man much esteemed by the Indians, and a fluent speaker of the languages of several nations" (18). When Charlevoix recounts Cadillac's appointment of Saint Denis to lead an overland expedition to establish trade with Mexico, he notes, "It could not have been placed in better hands" (25). Thus begins the author's admiring account of Saint Denis' exploits, which receive the subjective praise from the priest that the deeds of Bienville and others do not.

Charlevoix relates how Saint Denis induces Native Americans from various nations to settle in Natchitoches. Saint Denis then takes some Indians and Frenchmen with him to Mexico. As Saint Denis passes through Texas, the author cannot resist bringing up La Salle, the fate of whose colony still haunted the French of Charlevoix's time.

After twenty days' march he reached the Assinais . . . quite near the spot where de la Sale was killed. But the fact is, that these Indians did not recollect to have ever before seen Frenchmen, or know any other Europeans than some Spaniards, who went naked like themselves and lived miserably (26).

While he feels obliged to mention La Salle when recounting Saint Denis' trek across Texas, Charlevoix also cannot resist pointing out the deplorable condition of Spaniards in the sparsely settled region to which
France also laid claim, the implication being that the area would be better off under French control. Nevertheless, when Saint Denis reaches San Juan Bautista, the Presidio del Norte, Charlevoix depicts "Don Pedro de Vilescas," the Spanish commandant, as receiving the Frenchman well. Charlevoix mentions that "Medard Jallot" (St. Denis' "valet de chambre") and Pénicaud are also housed at the commandant's residence.

Saint Denis tells "Don Pedro" of his commission by the governor of Louisiana to propose trade with Mexico under Spanish terms. Don Pedro replies that he must inform his immediate superior, the governor of "Caouis" (Coahuila), of the negotiations, and he does so. The governor sends twenty-five horsemen to fetch Saint Denis to the regional capital. When Saint Denis arrives, the governor tells him to report to the Viceroy in Mexico City. Saint Denis does not leave with the twenty-five horsemen until the next year, taking Jalot with him and sending word to the Frenchmen back at the Presidio del Norte to return to Natchitoches.

Saint Denis' reception in Mexico City is ruder than the ones he received at the border and in Coahuila, precisely because the Viceroy is not aware of Saint Denis' rank.

On reaching the capital of New Spain, he was taken before the Viceroy, to whom he presented his passport. The Viceroy read and returned it, and without listening to him even, sent him to prison. There he remained three months, and would perhaps have never recovered his liberty, if some French officers, who were in the service of the Catholic King, who knew d'Iberville intimately, and knew also that Saint Denis was uncle to d'Iberville's wife, had not interceded in his behalf (27).

Once the Viceroy learns more about Saint Denis, specifically his importance in Louisiana, the Spaniard starts treating the Frenchman better.

In Charlevoix's as in the Louisiana texts, Saint Denis rises from common criminal in the mind of the Spanish authority to the level of an equal of Spanish officials.

He was then released; the Viceroy even gave him three hundred dollars and a commodious lodging, and often invited him
to his table. The more he knew Saint Denys, the more he esteemed him; at last he spared no effort to induce him to give up service in a poor colony for that of New Spain (21).

The Viceroy goes beyond dutifully treating Saint Denis as an equal to showing the latter the special attentions that an admirer would lavish upon his object of worship. The Viceroy tries to tempt Saint Denis over to the Spanish side by using the means recounted by Pénicaud: highlighting the lucrative nature of service to the Spanish as opposed to the destitution of life in Louisiana, pointing out the fact that many Frenchmen have had no difficulty allying themselves with Spain, and indicating that the Spanish know of Saint Denis' intentions with regard to Don Pedro's daughters and can precipitate their fulfillment.

Despite the Viceroy's attempt to lure Saint Denis away from Louisiana, Charlevoix does not depict the Mexican leader as the slightly sinister tempter encountered in Pénicaud's narrative. Nor are there two different viceroys, one good and one bad, as in Le Page's account. The Viceroy's final and strongest enticement and Saint Denis' humble response occur as follows.

The Viceroy told him that he was already half a Spaniard, as he sought the hand of the daughter of Don Pedro de Vilescas, and was to marry her on his return to Fort San Juan.

Saint Denys replied: "I cannot dissemble, since your excellency is informed that I love that lady, but I had not indulged the hope of winning her as my wife." "You will obtain it," said the Viceroy, "if you accept the offer I have made, and I give you two months to consider it." At the end of that time he sounded him again, and finding him inflexible, dismissed him, placing in his hands a purse of a thousand dollars, saying that it was for his wedding expenses. "I hope," he added, "that Doña Maria will be more fortunate than myself in persuading you to remain in New Spain. As for establishing trade with Louysiana, which you have come so far to solicit, it is not possible for me to grant it to you" (28).

By now it is obvious that Charlevoix must have relied upon Pénicaud for information on Saint Denis, a point that many critics have made. In any
event, Charlevoix's Viceroy gives Saint Denis such a large final sum of money not as another bribe but because the Spaniard has come to admire Saint Denis in the way that the Louisianian's fellow colonials have.

Charlevoix continues to depict Saint Denis in the same vein as Pénicaud, but the French priest does so in a more abbreviated fashion. Charlevoix's Saint Denis receives a fine farewell, but without the bloated Spanish pomp and excessive protocol that Pénicaud treats humorously. Also absent is the comedy of Saint Denis' sidekick Jalot. As in Pénicaud's narrative so in Charlevoix's, Saint Denis aids Don Pedro by bringing disgruntled Indians back to the Presidio del Norte with assurances of better treatment from the Spanish, a feat that wins Saint Denis Doña Maria's hand. In a fashion reminiscent of Pénicaud's text, Charlevoix's also creates a cliffhanger when the author interrupts the story of the two lovers to speak of other events in Louisiana's history.

Charlevoix breaks off the short romance as follows.

The newly-married pair remained there together six months, when Saint Denys thought that he should no longer delay in returning to report to de la Motte Cadillac the result of his mission. He set out for Maubile with Don Juan de Vilescas, his wife's uncle, leaving her with child and promising to return as soon as possible for her (29-30).

From Saint Denis' honeymoon, Charlevoix turns to Indian troubles back in Louisiana. He highlights Pénicaud's rescue of the younger La Loire brother from the Natchez, thereby making Pénicaud a hero along with Saint Denis. Charlevoix also brings up Bienville's bold dealings with the Natchez but does not afford Bienville the compliments that he showers upon Saint Denis. When Charlevoix returns to Saint Denis at Mobile, he does so only to mention that following the failure to establish overland trade with Mexico the French fortify Natchitoches against Spanish encroachment.
Much later, in Book XXI, Charlevoix brings up Saint Denis as part of a lengthy narration of the Franco-Spanish war in the Mobile-Pensacola area. As in other accounts of this event, Saint Denis leads a band of Indians to help the French defeat the Spanish. When the conflicts come to an end, Charlevoix notes how the "Count de Champmèlin" uses Saint Denis as a special liaison to the Indian allies.

Mr. de Champmèlin’s next thought was to reward the Indians for the zeal they had displayed for the French nation since the commencement of this war. Mr. de Saint Denys, who was greatly beloved by these tribes, received orders to assemble them, and he made them chant the calumet in honor of the general, who attended with all his officers. He then addressed them in the general’s name, exhorting them to remain ever attached to the French, whose superiority over their enemy they had just witnessed. When he had ended his address, presents were distributed to all in the King’s name, and they were sent off highly pleased (68).

Typical of the hero of other versions, Charlevoix’s Saint Denis emerges as the Indian favorite among French officers. Thus, like the Louisiana writers, Charlevoix uses Saint Denis’ esteem among and influence over Native Americans to color the overall depiction of the early Louisiana leader.

When the Spanish war comes to a close, Charlevoix spotlights “De St. Denys at the Natchitoches.”

Towards the close of this year de Bienville received orders from court to send back Mr. de Saint Denys, whom the King had honored with the brevet of Captain, and the Cross of Saint Louis, on the high testimony which Mr. de Champmèlin had rendered in his favor in the Council of the Navy. He set out at the commencement of the following year with a reinforcement of troops and munitions, and his wife soon joined him there (70-71).

Thus does Charlevoix restore Saint Denis to his wife and place them, with honors, at Natchitoches, where (other writers elaborate) they rule for many years, starting a large and prosperous dynasty.
Just as Charlevoix treats the Franco-Spanish war at length in Book XXI, he likewise devotes much of Book XXII to the Franco-Natchez conflicts. Thus, the "Louisiana chapters of Charlevoix's history of New France," as O'Neill calls them (xxxii), deal primarily with the two major wars of early Louisiana. Like Pénicaut, Dumont, and Le Page, Charlevoix mentions Saint Denis' role in the drawn-out defeat of the Natchez following their November 1729 uprising. Typically, Charlevoix condenses his commentary concerning Saint Denis to a skeleton of what the other writers offer. Charlevoix notes that Périer, worried about the safety of all the Louisiana settlements as 1730 dawned,

received letters from de Saint Denys, the commandant at the Natchitoches, about whom he was much concerned, as some Natchitoches were seen among the Natchez at the time of the massacre of the French; but he learned by these letters that the wisdom and vigilance of that officer had saved him from the disaster threatening his post (97).

No matter how briefly Charlevoix may mention Saint Denis, he always does so in a positive fashion, affording compliments that not all of the high-ranking Louisiana officials receive from him.

Even when Charlevoix does not drop his objective tone to slip into subjective praise of Saint Denis, Saint Denis' actions themselves convey the author's approval. For example, Charlevoix relates how the disadvantaged Saint Denis valiantly and effectively defends Natchitoches against Natchez attack in 1731.

The Flour Chief, after the miscarriage of his plot at the Tonicas, proceeded to join those of his nation who had escaped Perrier on the Black River, led them to Natchitoches, where de Saint Denys was with but a few soldiers, and besieged him in his fort. Saint Denys at once sent an express to the Commandant-General to ask relief, and on the 21st of October, Mr. de Loubois set out from New Orleans at the head of sixty men to reinforce him. He had advanced six leagues up Red River, and was only seven or eight days' march from the Natchitoches, when the Sieur Fontaine, sent by de Saint Denys to Perrier, informed him that the Natchez had been defeated; that the Natchitoches had at the outset wished to attack them, but being only forty against two
hundred, they had been compelled to retire, and even abandon
their village after losing four of their men; that the
Natchez had seized the village, and intrenched themselves
there; that then de Saint Denys, having received a rein-
forcement of Assinais and Attacapas, who were joined by some
Spaniards, had attacked the enemy's intrenchments and killed
eighty-two, including all their chiefs; that all the survi-
vors had taken flight, and that the Natchitoches were in
close pursuit (123-124).

Charlevoix's flattering version of Saint Denis' role in Louisiana histo-
ry fittingly ends with Spaniards, Native Americans, and Frenchmen rally-
ing behind a man who attempted to serve all of Louisiana's residents and
even Louisiana's neighbors well. In addition to showing the interna-
tional nature of Saint Denis' exploits in the New World, Charlevoix's
account of Saint Denis' life, appearing as it does in print before Le
Page's version, is perhaps most significant for introducing the Saint
Denis legend to a Continental readership.

In tracing the development of an Anglo-American mythology (which
ultimately leads to a notion of regeneration through violence), Slotkin
notes that racial divisiveness (i.e., between reds and whites) was at
the heart of the evolution. Slotkin asserts that "even at the source of
the American myth there lies the fatal opposition, the hostility between
two worlds, two races, two realms of thought and feeling" (17). Like-
wise,

it is a significant comment on our characteristic attitudes
 toward ourselves, our culture, our racial subgroupings, and
 our land that tales of strife between native Americans and
 interlopers, between dark races and light, became the basis
 of our mythology and that the Indian fighter and hunter
 emerged as the first of our national heroes (17-18).

While the Indian fighter may have emerged as the first Anglo-American
hero and tales of strife became the basis of an Anglo-American mytholo-
gy, in Franco-Louisiana something else occurred. Of course, tales of
strife and Indian-fighting heroes figure prominently in Louisiana's
colonial literature, but the aim of the texts and the deeds of the heroes was to promote reconciliation of reds with whites (under French rule, to be sure) and cooperation between the races in the building of the Louisiana colony. Not surprisingly, then, the first great hero to emerge from Louisiana literature is an Indianized Frenchman who works not only to bridge differences between Indians and French but also between feuding tribes, between European colonies, and between the varying and complicated combinations of the above.

Occurring as it does in Louisiana’s very first years, the emergence of an Indianized hero and a mythology that stresses unity rather than division happens earlier in Louisiana’s development than the taming of Anglo-American attitudes toward aboriginals occurs in Anglo-American history and literature. The differences between the two American literatures reflect not only dissimilar cultural/religious values and outlooks but also different colonial settings and exigencies that demanded two separate approaches to dealing with and thinking about Native Americans. Simply put, compact Anglo-American “pales” had no room for darker native inhabitants, whereas the string of Frenchmen flung over a continent relied upon “redskins” for support, life, and love. From this dependence and fusing of cultures grew a literature that likewise valued the melding of white and red worlds into one.
Indians in Colonial Louisiana Literature

Slotkin describes the first depictions of Native Americans in Anglo-American literature as follows: "It was within [the] genre of colonial Puritan writing that the first American mythology took shape — a mythology in which the hero was the captive or victim of devilish American savages and in which his (or her) heroic quest was for religious conversion and salvation" (21). Eventually, the portrayal of Indians as "devilish savages" ameliorated. As Slotkin continues to note,

If the first American mythology portrayed the colonist as a captive or a destroyer of Indians, the subsequent acculturated versions of the myth showed him growing closer to the Indian and the wild land. New versions of the hero emerged, characters whose role was that of mediating between civilization and savagery, white and red. The yeoman farmer was one of these types, as were the explorer or surveyor and, later, the naturalist (21).

As the Anglo-American hero slowly grew to resemble early Louisiana’s first great hero, Saint Denis, so also Anglo-American literary depictions of Native Americans began to approximate the portrayals of Indians in Louisiana-French literature.

Summarizing the Puritan attitude toward Native America, an attitude that Anglo-Americans took a long time to overcome, Slotkin states, "The Puritans were perhaps the archetypal colonizers; they were certainly the most extremely antipathetic to the culture and institutions native to the aboriginal population of America" (42). More specifically, "The Puritans, unlike the Spanish and the French, had come to the New World for land rather than for gold or furs; their aim was to fill up the land with a new people, not to start a few stations to trade with the natives" (42). Implied in Slotkin’s observations is a contention that there was no room in the Puritan plan for Native
Americans, whereas the French scheme, conversely, was dependent upon aboriginal participation.

Slotkin tracks the evolution of the Puritan view of the Indian as follows.

In order to survive in the Indians' world, the English settlers would have to adjust their habits and ways of thinking to that world; but this adjustment involved some diminution of their sense of Englishness, a figurative marriage with the Indians that threatened damnation. They might go to the Indians as missionaries bringing light, as warriors to scourge the devils, or as involuntary captives -- but never as husbands. The Indians, and perhaps the Negro slaves as well, were seen as peoples most closely associated with the "Spirit of Place" in America, but they became more and more strongly associated with devils, cannibals, and witches" (66).

Hence, the Puritan policy toward Native Americans soon became one of removal or extermination. As Slotkin notes,

The pressure of demographic expansion coupled with the psychological fear of acculturation, moved the Puritans toward a policy of exterminating the Indians or, at best, reducing them to a semicaptive status on strictly and narrowly delineated reservations (called at that time, praying towns). It is interesting to note the adoption of similar policies by Puritans colonizing in Ulster and on the Celtic border of Scotland. . . . [Cromwell's] wholesale slaughter of the Irish and his selling of many into West Indian slavery parallels exactly the policy adopted by the American Puritans in King Phillip's War two decades later. That the situation of the New Englanders -- whose opponents were racially and religiously more alien to them than the Celtic Irish were to the English Protestants -- evoked similar attitudes and policies is not at all surprising, given the character of their ambitions and their religious and cultural convictions (42).

Thus does Slotkin present "the Puritan world view -- the conception of natural man as a depraved creature, Indian-like, requiring rigid chastisement by God and government" (92).

As evidenced in the writings of its first authors, Franco-Louisiana shared with Anglo-America the belief in European superiority (especially religious superiority) over the Native Americas. The
belief was by no means confined to these two Euro-Americas. As Stephen Greenblatt notes in *Marvelous Possessions*,

With very few exceptions, Europeans felt powerfully superior to virtually all of the peoples they encountered, even those like the Aztecs who had technological and organizational skills that Europeans could recognize and greatly admire. The sources of the sense of superiority are sometimes difficult to specify, though the Christians' conviction that they possessed an absolute and exclusive religious truth must have played a major part in virtually all of their cultural encounters (9).

Greenblatt adds that in addition to these Continental convictions of superiority, "the European sense that the Indians are so different as to make them seem like beasts is widely reiterated" (154).

Despite their inherent, conventional feelings of superiority, Louisiana's earliest writers rarely equate Indians with beasts, even when the latter are refusing to convert to the former's religion. While Puritans may have used the "irreligion" of American aborigines to justify appropriation of native lands, Louisiana writers depict Frenchmen working with both Catholic and unconverted indigenous peoples to build a new civilization. In spite of the unwillingness or disinterest of reds to become Christians, Louisiana authors still propose a policy of interaction and even integration rather than one of dispossession and eventual annihilation as advanced by Puritans. Such is the approach advocated by Pénicaut, Le Page, Bossu, and even Dumont, the main writers whose depictions of Native Americans are to be examined in this chapter.

The Louisiana authors relate their encounters with the exotic inhabitants of the strange New World not only to whet Continental readers' curiosities about the unknown but also to instruct Europe on the beneficial novelties of Native America. Also of importance, and indeed often an impetus for the composition of some texts, is the perceived need to clarify misconceptions of the New World and especially
to correct negative European attitudes concerning indigenous peoples. To be sure, certain Indians are highlighted by Louisiana writers as dangerous threats to the colonial enterprise, but such reds are not depicted as being any more dangerous than the non-French European groups (i.e., the Spanish and the English) already present and threatening in America — or, for that matter, than the divisive elements within the French colonial population. Often the early French colonists are viewed as being sucked into additional alliances and unforeseen confrontations based on the allegiances and grievances of the Indians with whom the Europeans first made contact, near whom they have settled, and from whom they derive (and to whom, when possible, they also provide) livelihood, protection, and even enjoyment. As the French presence in Louisiana grows stronger, whites even take small red groups under their wings so as to protect the weaker aborigines from the mightier ones. When Frenchmen such as Lieutenant Etcheparre at Natchez attempt to confiscate Indian territory or abuse Native Americans in any way, these whites are villainized by the literati and blamed more than any Indian is for menacing French lives. Conversely, as has been seen in the examination of the Saint-Denis myth, men who serve and protect Native Americans as well as they do Euro-Americans rise to heroic stature. Finally, the vision of peaceful Euro-Indian communities — fully converted to Catholicism and obedient to French law, of course — becomes the dream of a number of Louisiana’s early littératuers.

In Louisiana Francophone literature, the right of the white man to dominate because he is heir to a tradition of moral and religious superiority is not questioned. However, early Louisiana-French writers do not condemn the Indian as quickly as the Puritans before or contemporary to them do. While the first part of the following assertion
from Greenblatt concerning Euro-Christians holds true for the Louisi­
anians, the end does not, at least-not for the majority of Louisiana’s
colonial literati.

Such was the confidence of this culture that it expected
perfect strangers . . . to abandon their own beliefs, pref­
erably immediately, and embrace those of Europe as luminous­ly
and self-evidently true. A failure to do so provoked im­
patience, contempt, and even murderous rage (9).

Derogatory generalizations do occur in Louisiana literature, espe­
cially regarding what is perceived as Indian irreligion, cruelty, and un­
trustworthiness, but open hostility against all red people (“murderous
rage”) is absent. In some cases, Indians are even cited as surpassing
whites in moral, religious, and practical matters. In essence, the
first Louisiana authors’ views of the red tribes of the New World are
much more objective and less condemnatory than those of the Puritans
in New England. The Louisiana writers’ relatively tolerant and open
disposition toward aboriginal Americans leads to the stated desire for
cooperation, coexistence, and even hybridization through the encounter
of European and Native-American cultures. Almost always, the favor­
able stance in Louisiana is born of necessity.

Colonial Louisiana writers more closely resembled early Virginians
in their attitude toward the Indian than they did New Englanders. In
The Ignoble Savage, Louise K. Barnett says of the ways “the more tol­
erant men who settled Virginia” differed from their New-England breth­
ren:

Virginia’s government regarded Indians as worthy opponents
rather than demons. However popular the gothic Indian en­
gendered by the Puritan chroniclers, another image of the
Indian, which would establish itself in nineteenth-century
thought, originated in the Virginia tradition. In the writ­
ings of Captain John Smith and his men, Powhatan was habitu­
ally and seriously referred to as “the great King” or “Em­
peror”. . . . In action as well as in title, the king
proved to be as wily as a European monarch, alternating
eloquent discourse about peace with plotting against and
attacking the colonists. Smith’s writings maintain a dual
attitude of respect and distrust toward Powhatan, just as they combine a judgment that Indian culture is essentially inferior with a recognition that it functions well in its own terms. . . (9).

Even though the milder antagonism of early Virginia toward Native Americans is not applicable to Louisiana, a few glimpses at Pénicaut’s Natchez chapters and Le Page’s work prove that these narratives share with the writings of Virginians such as Smith a respect for Indian civilizations and “royalty.” Even as early as Tonti’s and Nicolas’ accounts, the eyes of Louisiana authors are open to distinctions between Native-American societies, to anything in those societies that approximates European “civilization,” and to unique manifestations of aboriginal sophistication and artistry. Not only do Pénicaut, Le Page, Bossu and even Dumont concede that Indian cultures function well in their own terms, the writers also admit that French settlers can benefit from adopting some Indian practices. Le Page argues that certain European misconceptions and prejudices -- such as the belief that Indians are inferior brutes -- spring from ignorance and must be corrected. On the other hand, both Pénicaut and Dumont, like the first Anglo-Southerners, reveal a distrust of certain Indians deriving from unfortunate personal experiences with some Native Americans. Of course, while reactions to red persons vary with the author, one constant is that the Louisianians, as typical of all European colonists, consider their Continental legacy to be superior to the culture of indigenous neighbors.

Barnett notes further of the evolution of a Southern approach to the Indian at variance with the prevailing New-England view,

A century after Smith’s True Relation, Robert Beverley’s The History and Present State of Virginia (1705) attempted a thorough explication of all aspects of Indian life. What emerges is a noble savage concept of Indians before their contact with the English. . . . Understanding the impossibility of Indians returning to that felicitous natural
Just as Beverley attempted to explain all aspects of Indian life in his treatise, so did many Louisianians in theirs. And although the concept of the Noble Savage never really enters Louisiana Francophone literature because of a lingering legacy of familiarity between the Native Americas and French Louisiana (cf. the poetry and prose of Adrien Rouquette before and after the United States Civil War), Louisianian authors share Beverley's opinion that Europeans have debauched the Indian in many ways. Significantly, some writers offer the harmony of Euro-Indian communities such as Kaskaskia in the Illinois country (where hybridization and miscegenation contribute to communal stability) as a suggestion that intermarriage (such as that proposed by Beverley) may indeed be the way to go in the New World.

Barnett moves from Smith and Beverley to consider another Virginian's approach to the Indian. In his History of the Dividing Line (1737-1738), William Byrd, a contemporary of the main authors of Louisianian's first French domination, advances views similar to Beverley's. Barnett notes that even though Byrd shows an "enlightened view" and has an "optimistic theory of racial differences," he still advances the idea that "Indians as they exist -- either in isolation or in contact with the English -- are barbarians, clearly inferior to whites. They may be saved only by ceasing to be Indians in any discernable way." Hence, Byrd proposes racial mixing so as to water down the Indian into something that he/she is not. Thus fused into a new racial entity, the half-red would be no threat to white half brothers and sisters or to white interests. In short, with a tolerant approach and a different theory, Byrd arrives at a conclusion scarcely more satisfying . . . than
the Puritan position. Either view — definition as devil or as savage — led to the same end: a being identifiable as an Indian must cease to exist (10-11).

In the fashion of the eighteenth-century Virginians, whose brand of concern for the Indian peaks in Thomas Jefferson, the first Louisianians hope for Indian "civilization" through assimilation into the white world as an alternative to the seemingly inevitable extinction of those red groups that fail at acculturation. At the same time, however, there is not the urgency in Louisiana that there is in Anglo-America to have the Indian either cease to be a problem simply by being "other" or perish. After all, with the disappearance of the Indian (who, even if he/she is not an ally of the French, might at least not be an ally of the British or the Spanish), France's hold of the vast Louisiana territory would weaken, and the far-flung colony would become an even easier conquest for any other white power that might decide to take it. Thus, the necessary acceptance of Indian qua Indian is more evident in Franco-America than in Anglo-America. And as long as the recalcitrant tribes to not harass colonists, pose a threat to colonial security, or hinder important enterprises, they can be left alone and tolerated.

In summing up her argument on the Anglo-American approach to the Indian, Barnett notes that, despite the more tolerant Southern variant, the Puritan view dominated, and the "one-dimensional 'bad' Indian passed from the flourishing genre of captivity narrative into fiction" (11-12). The purpose of the ongoing dehumanization of the Indian was to justify white usurpation of red lands. Barnett points out that it was not until the antebellum years, when Indians were perceived as no longer being a threat to white dominance, that sympathy for the passing red person began to establish itself in Anglo-American letters.
Conversely, Louisiana literature, from its start, offers not a one-dimensional "bad" Indian, but a complex collection of all types of Indians -- good and bad; civilized and primitive; friend and foe; pre-Columbian and acculturated; assimilated and segregated; generative and extinct; Christian and unconverted. The following is a detailed analysis of the prominent position that Native Americans hold in colonial Louisiana's literary productions.

Actually, this study has already shown how two founding colonizers of the late seventeenth century, three religious missionaries of the early eighteenth century, and, to a certain extent, several tellers of the Saint-Denis tale viewed and then depicted Native Americans in their literary creations. The general tolerance and relative objectivity that these early Louisianians demonstrate continue in the writings that treat Indians in more detail. Likewise, the qualities deplored by everyone from Nicolas de La Salle to Pierre Vitry (i.e., cruelty, dishonesty, and "irreligion") continue to incur criticism from the likes of Bossu and others who most loved aboriginal Americans. Nevertheless, many writers of the mid 1700s begin to highlight what they perceive to be admirable red attributes so that European counterparts may be shamed by comparison. As indicated earlier, perhaps the most striking aspect of the colonial authors' stance regarding Louisiana's indigenous inhabitants is the ability to distinguish between and respond appropriately to the varying red groupings and to remain uncondemnatory at times toward even the problematic tribes that have caused wars and massacres.

As will be seen as this study progresses, the ability of many authors to treat the Natchez relatively objectively, refraining from blanket condemnations of the entire tribe in the wake of the infamous massacre of 1729, is followed by many of the same writers' blaming the
French for the disaster. Dumont, Le Page, and Bossu all point to the abuses of Etcheparre, the French commandant at Natchez, as direct causes of the Indian insurrection. This tendency on the part of Louisianians who have lived among Native Americans to sympathize with the latter and to excuse them for much of their "barbarity" by citing whites as the cause of "savage" discontent can be seen in the periphery of Louisiana literature as early as the Talon Interrogations of 1698.

Resembling the Louisiana writers after them, Pierre and Jean-Baptiste Talon, survivors of La Salle’s vain attempt to create the first permanent white settlement on the French Gulf Coast, blame inept French leadership for everything from the failure of colonists to get along with each other to the eventual Indian annihilation of Lower Louisiana’s first major European establishment. Just as the extermination of the remnant of La Salle’s coastal colony by Karankawas in the 1680s prefigures Natchez elimination of early eighteenth-century Louisiana’s most prosperous post, so the Talon brothers’ sympathetic treatment of American aborigines and the pair’s criticism of inefficient French governance foreshadow the colonial Louisiana literati’s relatively unbiased attention to indigenous Americans as well as their interest in right and wrong forms of Old- and New-World authority.

Although the Talons were members of Louisiana’s “first family” (that is, Talon being the first white family to make Lower Louisiana their home, arriving as they did in 1685 with La Salle to found France’s first Gulf-Coast colony, on what is now the Texas coast), the brothers’ testimony will not be considered in the same light as those texts that compose Louisiana’s colonial literary body. For, as Robert S. Weddle notes in his article on the Interrogations, the answers were given orally and written down by someone else, possibly with some distortion in the process. Questions inevitably arise, therefore, as to how much of what is
recorded in the Interrogations actually reflects what the Talons intended" (214).

Despite the inability to ascertain clearly what the Talons reported and what their interlocutor(s) added, the brothers' testimony bears examining at some length because of various characteristics that it shares with subsequent Louisiana literature. For instance, Weddle notes that

as they looked back on their previous life, so fraught with bizarre occurrences, they manifested no inclination for bitterness toward the Indians who made them orphans. Although acknowledging the Karankawas' cruelty and barbarity, they speak of these natives with sympathy and understanding, recalling that they themselves were always treated with love and kindness.

Only rarely do the Talons indulge in blame fixing, and that toward La Salle, rather than the Indians. The leader's callous disregard for his followers is suggested. . . . La Salle, therefore, is charged with responsibility not only for his own death but also for the Fort Saint-Louis massacre (224).

Similar to the Talons, who acknowledge good as well as bad qualities in Native Americans and who maintain a sympathetic understanding even for their family's red killers, the Louisiana writers do not allow treachery, lack of cooperation, and outright carnage on the part of some aboriginal Americans to convince them that all indigenous peoples are a threat to France's colonial enterprise. Rather, like the Talons, the colonial authors view impractical French policies and ill-suited French colonists (be they of high or low positions) as the main hindrance to France's successful creation of an offspring civilization in the New World.

With regard to the massacre of the remaining colonists at La Salle's coastal settlement, the Talon Interrogations relate that

they were nearly all massacred by the savages named Clamco-éhs, who had waged war against them because the said S² de la Salle, on arriving, arbitrarily took their canoes for ascending the river to establish a settlement. Even though

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they had made peace with them, they had no sooner learned of the Sr de la Salle’s death and the disunity that had arisen among his people than they came to surprise those who remained at the aforementioned settlement by the worst treachery in the world. As the French were no longer on their guard, believing them to be friends, these had little trouble slaughtering them. . . . [A few] were saved by some savage women who, touched with compassion by their youth, loaded them on their backs and carried them into their cabins while their husbands massacred the rest, after the said Talons had seen their mother fall before their eyes (237).

The pathos and paradox characterizing Franco-Indian relations in Louisiana, above all the strange, often side-by-side mixture of friendship and enmity, love and hate, affection and cruelty displayed between reds and whites, are evident in the passage cited above. Thus does the Talon Interrogations foreshadow Louisiana literature’s preoccupation with the precarious nature of red-white interactions in the colony’s first years. Moreover, the Interrogations further resembles later colonial works by implying that fragile balances between dominance and yielding, openness and caution, cooperation and self-preservation are necessary for a fruitful French penetration of Native America and that only through an able white commander (that is, someone who is capable of adjusting the European design to the American setting) can such balances and subsequent strengthening of the French presence be maintained.

The fury that some Native Americans direct against the French and the pity that other reds extend to their besieged white neighbors is further evinced as the narrative continues.

The aforementioned savage women also saved . . . the wife of a French officer. . . . They were likewise moved with tenderness at the sight of the three-month-old baby she had at breast, but the [male] savages returned to their cabins after the massacre, killed her first, and then her child, which one of them dashed against a tree while holding it by a foot. But they did not hurt the Talons . . . , who were reared and loved by these same savage women who had saved them, as if they were their own children (237-238).
As in colonial Anglo-American narratives of Indian captivity so in the Talon Interrogations and later Louisiana accounts there is depicted a strange symbiosis that often arises when the survivors and the perpetrators of a massacre become mutually dependent and even affectionate. While Mary Rowlandson, author of the most famous Anglo-American captivity tale, cannot forgive the red murderers of her family and friends and, subsequently, cannot resign herself to or admire anything in Native-American society, the Talons, who suffer similar losses at the hands of their captors, show greater resiliency, in part because of their youth but perhaps also because of a different cultural/religious mentality. Undoubtedly fully aware of their having been spared in all likelihood because the male Karankawas could see their potential for service to the tribe, the Talons nonetheless recognize that other Indians wished to save less useful French lives merely out of compassion. Furthermore, while Rowlandson, typical of her New-England peers, does not adapt to the red way of life, the Talons, like many Frenchmen of the Louisiana frontier, become so Indianized that they hold unassimilable Europeans in great contempt.

The Talons' degree of willing adaptation to Indian life can be gauged by red reaction to the boys.

The said Talons affirm that they were always treated by these savage people with the greatest kindness in the world, without ever having been maltreated with blows or otherwise. On the contrary, they loved them tenderly and appeared to be very angry when anyone displeased them in any way and took their part on these occasions, even against their own children (239).

Undoubtedly, the Karankawas' affection for the boys arises from the youths' easy assimilation into Native-American life (a point that makes one wonder if De Bellisle's mistreatment by his red captors in the same vicinity only a few decades later might not have resulted from his own attitude toward the captivity experience). In fact, the
Talons become so Indianized that they actually begin to fear fellow whites more than they do the reds who murdered their family. With regard to the Spaniards from Mexico, for example, the Interrogations relates that the Talons “wanted to evade them, fearing their cruelty” (240). However, once the boys are in Spanish hands, the ransomed La Salle survivors remember that they can be “treated . . . very humane-ly” (241) by whites. The fear of white cruelty that the Talons inher-ited from their Indian hosts is an interesting parallel to the concern over red cruelty that many Louisiana whites felt.

Repatriation to white society creates conflicting emotions and ironic reactions for both the white captives and their red captors. When the Spanish have the French in their possession, the Native Americans who perpetrated both cruel massacre and benevolent captivity respond as follows.

They felt so much regret on having to part with the brothers and sister of Jean-Baptiste Talon that the latter (who stayed yet some time with them . . . ) affirms that they all wept bitterly when the Spaniards took them; and they mourned them for a month afterward, especially the smaller ones, for whom they had greater attachment and tenderness than for the older ones. They cried no less when they parted from the said Jean-Baptiste Talon and Eustache Bréman and urged the former to desert the Spaniards and return to them as soon as possible, with a number of horses. This he promised them but without intending to keep his word, since he felt more at ease among Christians than with barbarians (242).

Even though the Talons had adapted well to Native-American life and had been initially wary of contact with the Spanish, a common Chris-tianity and Caucasian affiliation eventually draw the Indianized French back to Euro-America and finally the Continent, if the sentiments pro-posed in the Interrogations can be said to be truly from the brothers rather than from their recorder. In any event, the brothers’ attitude toward Iberians remains ambivalent. For instance, in the same par-a-graph that says of Mexico “the Spanish inhabitants there are pleasant
and courteous, and the savages who live in their vicinity are Christians, civilized, and hardworking" (245), the Interrogations also notes that "the Spaniards live there in excessive indolence and great idleness and are neither warriors nor well armed" (246). The brothers end up being treated well enough, if as servants to the Spanish, and seem to adjust as much to their status in Mexican society as they did to that in Native America. Then they are uprooted again and sent to Europe.

When the Talons are asked about the possibility of trade between the French and the Indians with whom the brothers are familiar, the two take advantage of another opportunity to blame La Salle for problems that eventually led to massacre.

M. de la Salle would never have had war with the Clamcoehs if on arriving he had not high-handedly taken their canoes and refused them some little article of use that they asked him in return for them and for other services that they were ready to render to him. Nothing is easier than winning their friendship (251).

Even though it has been proven on many occasions recounted throughout Louisiana literature that the friendship of many red groups and individuals is easy to win, leaders like La Salle and Etcheparre fail miserably in acquiring such favor. And the facility of gaining the amity of so many aboriginals makes the failures and resulting massacres all the more ignominious.

In the wake of La Salle’s disastrous dealings with Gulf-Coast Indians, the Talon brothers offer some advice on how to go about establishing friendship with indigenous inhabitants while at the same time maintaining colonial security.

An unfailing means, other than gifts, that the Europeans still have of winning the friendship of the nations whose alliance could help them the most in their settlements is to take part in the wars that they often wage against others. They believe themselves unconquerable when they unite with Europeans (251).
Furthermore, "if the French had made more of a mystery to them about firearms, they would have regarded the French themselves as prodigies and invincible men" (251). Thus, in addition to being open to and dependent upon Indian friendship, the French must also be prudent and keep a military edge by maintaining some degree of distance. Finally, La Salle's men might not have failed "if they had squandered their lives less, and if they had taken greater precautions to preserve themselves as the Spaniards shrewdly do" (251).

On a lighter side, the Talons, like the Louisiana writers after them, see humor in many episodes of initial contact between Native Americans and Continentals. Often these events are tragicomic life-and-death situations in which a European must do some fast thinking and take advantage of aboriginal ignorance in order to save himself. Such an occurrence involves "the Italian" who is among the captive French party.

The Italian, . . . having lived a long time with these same Clamcoehs, had learned their language perfectly. But it happened finally that he displeased them in something, so that they determined to kill him. He thwarted this with a trick, which marks the subtlety of his spirit and the credulity of these savages. Here it is. He told these idiots that they were going to kill a man who loved them so much that he carried all of them in his heart; and if they doubted it, he would prove it to them the next day, if they were willing to grant him these terms: he would show them his open heart, and they would all see themselves there. The savages, having spared his life until the next day to put him to the test, did not fail to come around him very early in the morning in great numbers to see the effect of his promise, or to kill him if he did not keep it. The Italian had so well affixed just over his heart a pocket mirror he had that the savages, who had never seen a mirror, did not suspect the trick; and, calling them all, one after the other, he said to each one: "There is my open heart. Look! Do you not see yourself?" And, each one in fact seeing himself in the mirror, they all remained amazed and allowed him to live. Jean-Baptiste heard this deed described by the savage Clamcoehs as a marvel they could not understand; and Pierre Talon confirms it, having heard the Italian himself tell about it when they saw each other in Mexico, as of a
stratagem he had conceived to save his life in an extremely pressing danger (253).

Bluffs similar to that of the Italian are repeated throughout the colonial Louisiana canon. In fact, some anecdotes of culture clash and lifesaving dupery seem to be offered merely for comedy’s sake. Such comic contributions to the literary body are considerable and enhance the entertaining quality of many texts.

As the later Louisiana writers also do, the Talons (or at least their interrogator) cannot pass up the issue of Indian sexual pairing -- and the place for Frenchmen in it.

One need have no fear about breaking relations with the savages over their wives and daughters, for they are not at all jealous of them and take no offense concerning their honor, willingly prostituting them and not being angry if they have intercourse with the Europeans. Some of M. de la Salle’s people had even taken wives among them. The French sailor named Rutre . . . had changed seven or eight times and left two children by one of these women, following in this, as in all the rest, the custom of the savages, who have in truth only one wife at a time, but who change them whenever they want to, which is to say often (253).

In mentioning the half-breed descendants of “Rutre,” the Talons testify to the miscegenation and resultant hybridization of races that may be viewed as the physical legacy linking the early French activities of La Salle’s day to the later permanent establishment of Franco-Indian communities during the Le Moyne era. Furthermore, in addition to the offspring of sexual exchanges, altered red lifestyles resulting from cultural exchanges between the early French (not to mention the Spanish before them) and the Indians whose territories they traversed began to change the face of Native America long before European-style trading posts, fortifications, towns, and farms did. Hence, La Salle’s followers; the voyageurs, coureurs de bois, and missionaries before, during, and after La Salle; and even De Soto’s Spaniards a century previously can be said to have created the hybridized
groundwork upon which the new, multicultural society of colonial
Louisiana was built.

In closing the discussion of the Talon Interrogations, it must be
noted that the brothers' degree of assimilation into Native-American
society was matched by that of few Europeans. As Weddle notes in his
general introduction to La Salle, the Mississippi, and the Gulf,

Not even Cabeza de Vaca, in his epic sojourn among the Texas
coastal Indians a century and a half earlier, was able to
view the Karankawas from the Talons' vantage point. Al­
though the vaunted sixteenth-century Spanish explorer lived
among the Indians, the Talons were Indians. They saw the
natives among whom they lived as no other European did (2).

One result of the brothers' incorporation into Karankawa life is the
fact that they grew to admire the unity and harmony of individual
Native-American societies. The Talons note that "people of the same
nation live among themselves in a marvelous union, never having scan­
dalous quarrels, and never striking each other, especially the men."
In addition, "they help each other when the need arises; and those
whose hunt was productive share it willingly with their unsuccessful
neighbors (253). Undoubtedly, the Talon brothers wish that the coop­
eration which they observed between reds of the same tribe could be
followed more successfully by their own more populous and more compli­
cated white nation.

As Slotkin notes of whites who had been captives of Indians,

Such characters, after their return to civilization, re­
mained divided in their attitudes and values between the
world they were born into and the world they had just been
educated to, between the European world to which they re­
turned and the Indian world they left. Like Cabeza de Vaca
refusing to join Coronado's hunt for Eldorado, they could no
longer be as blinded by their romantic mythology as they had
been; and many would maintain the patterns of thought and
behavior acquired in captivity. Such men and their accounts
were essential if the colonists were to learn enough about
the New World to be able to survive in it and to pursue
their search for Cibolas and fountains of youth. Yet such
men were a danger, positing within the European camp the alternative, Indian vision of the world (36).

Clearly, the Talon brothers were changed by their Indianizing captivity experience and had trouble re-entering the white world. Their remarks concerning French, Indian, and Spanish peoples show that they are no longer "blinded" by a European or even a Euro-American "romantic mythology." Rather, they see the world in a different light, an "Indian vision." What is remarkable is that the Talons' enlightened view, stripped of "romantic mythology," bears many resemblances to the new mythology involving French and Indian that will soon develop in Franco-aboriginal Louisiana.

In his introductory article to the Talons' narrative, Weddle speculates that Iberville may have had a transcript of the Interrogations with him on his first trip to Louisiana, in addition to a copy of Henri Joutel's journal (219). If so, Pénicaud and others accompanying Iberville or coming to Louisiana during the Le Moyne years may also have seen the text and been influenced by the Talons' comments on everything from Native-American temperament to the appropriate forms of New-World leadership. While the Talon Interrogations may have produced a real legacy in Louisiana literature, it may be more accurate to say that Pénicaud and other colonial writers, by living in the same region and under conditions similar to those experienced by the Talons, came to share opinions about red inhabitants and colonial French government that had been expressed as early as Tonti and La Salle's day. Shared experience, more than a direct knowledge of each other (and many of the colonial writers did know of each other), seems to have been the primary source of the Louisianians' common views on such issues as the relationship between authority and the masses and the interactions between reds and whites (and, later, between whites and blacks). An incredible literary consensus on these and other
matters is expressed as early as the 1680s and continues throughout Louisiana's colonial experience, from the time the region was Native American to the time it joined what the world popularly refers to today as "America."

Pénicaut's first reference to Native Americans occurs in Chapter 1, "The Years 1698 and 1699," when the author relates Iberville's founding of Biloxi. There Pénicaut states,

We went a full week working at our fort without seeing a single savage of the region. When part of our men went into the woods to hunt deer, the reports of their guns, which were heard by some savages staying in the woods, surprised them in the extreme. They resolved among themselves to draw near to see what this could be; and, having descried some of our Frenchmen who were felling trees not far from our fort in order to build themselves some houses, they hid behind trees and watched our men a long time, being quite surprised at our clothes and the color of our faces. Some of our soldiers, observing them, signaled to them to approach and to have no fear. They spoke to them in the Iroquois language, as most of our soldiers were, by nation, Canadians who had often had dealings with the Iroquois. After they had spoken to the savages a long time, they approached our men. When the savages had looked at them, a little reassured, our men led some of them to M. d'Iberville, who received them very well indeed, having food and drink from our supplies given them; but, either because these things were not to their taste or because they were still afraid, they would not eat these things or even touch them. They only kept gazing at us, astonished at seeing white-skinned people, some heavily bearded, some bald-headed, for such indeed there were among us. Thus we appeared to be quite different from them, who have very tawny skin and heavy black hair which they groom very carefully. These savages belonged to a nation called Biloxi; that is why M. d'Iberville gave the name Biloxi to the fort we had built in this place. They remained with us two days. M. d'Iberville gave them several little presents of awls, small mirrors, rings, combs, knives, vermilion and such; and he had them told the several uses of these things, which they carried off to their village, to their chief.

A week later -- as soon as news of the arrival of the French spread among the savages neighboring to these -- they came with the chiefs of several villages and sang their calumet of peace, as all the nations do with people whom they have not seen before, but with whom they wish friendship and peace (3-5).
Although this passage marks Pénicaut’s initial encounter with the Indian, the narrator remarkably neglects to offer his own feelings at seeing red men for the first time. He focuses instead on the Native Americans’ reactions to the strange sight of Europeans in their country.

Presenting the meeting of the two cultures from the Indian point of view is a significant aspect of this passage, for it inverts what Greenblatt says when he asserts that “wonder . . . is the central figure in the initial European response to the New World, the decisive emotional and intellectual experience in the presence of radical difference” (14). Of course, Greenblatt is speaking primarily of first European contacts with newly discovered indigenous peoples of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. By Pénicaut’s time, Europeans had established well-formed ideas and stereotypes of Native Americans, and much of the “wonder” at aboriginal Americans might have waned. Still, knowing that they were entering new territories of which they had only vague conceptions and where yet unknown indigenous peoples still lurked must have likened the experiences of the first French in Lower Louisiana to those of the first Europeans elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere. The presence of Canadians who were familiar with Native Americans must have certainly tempered the “wonder” of the young Pénicaut as well as the marvelling of other Continental arrivals to Louisiana, who were dependent upon Canadians to introduce them to their new home and who relied upon Canadian expertise for much of the progress they made in the new country. What was left for the Frenchmen who became Louisianians to do in their accounts, then, was to report the wonder of Louisiana Indians encountering whites for the first time. Thus, in Pénicaut’s narrative and others that relate first contact in Lower Louisiana, the Indians are often the ones
observing aberrations from the norm, responding in wonder to the presence of radical difference.

Furthermore, the reporting of Indian wonder shows the attempt on Pénicaud's part to understand and thereby to sympathize with Native Americans in the surprise and sometimes the trauma that reds experience in making contacts that will change their lives forever. Also evident for the first time here and carried out through the narrative's entirety is the fact that Pénicaud neither disdains Native Americans for being different from Europeans nor considers them inferior or a threat because of that difference. Rather, he, like many of the Continental and Canadian Frenchmen whose actions he recounts, basically accepts the Indians as they are and desires their friendship and cooperation in building the Louisiana colony.

As will be seen, however, major exceptions to this tolerant outlook on Pénicaud's part involve religion, red-on-red cruelty, and the ability of the Indian to keep his word. As a remedy to what he views as defects in the Indian character, Pénicaud unabashedly proclaims later in the narrative that Indians need French rule, which he believes would introduce them to the true religion (Roman Catholicism) and would provide them with more just and humane forms of government than the existing Native-American political systems do.

After the arrival of several tribes, each with their different chiefs, at Biloxi, Pénicaud proceeds to comment in detail on the customary smoking of the calumet and the three-day celebration accompanying it. Iberville and his French forces gladly acquiesce to this form of Indian protocol, and the ceremony is repeated throughout the narrative whenever Frenchmen encounter Indians at significant times. As early as Tonti and Nicolas, the calumet ceremony fascinates Louisiana
writers. In addition to Pénicaud, Dumont and Le Page especially elaborate upon the procedure in their respective texts.

The calumet ceremony is part of what Greenblatt calls "mimetic circulation -- the movement and uses of . . . representational machinery" (120). Greenblatt points out that "everywhere we look in the encounter of the Old World and the New -- in Protestant voyages and Catholic, in the squares of Aztec cities and in European palaces -- we find an intensive deployment of representations" (119). In fact, "European contact with the New World natives is continually mediated by representations; indeed contact itself . . . is very often contact between representatives bearing representations" (119). The use and importance of representations is nowhere more apparent than in the calumet ceremony, which establishes peace between two groups encountering each other for the first time, sustains peace between allies over an extended period of time, and makes peace between hostile parties that are tired of war. The vast majority of Louisiana colonial writers refer to the peacemaking procedure, and the best literary representations of this "deployment of representations" will be examined later.

The narrative's initial chapter indicates the genuine delight that Pénicaud, his leaders, and his peers take in Indians. After the first calumet celebration, the French offer the Indians goods that the latter have never before seen. The Europeans derive much amusement from the Native Americans' puzzlement over the items.

M. d'Hyberville went off to his quarters, leaving the savages before the fort dividing the presents and examining them with astonishment, not knowing the uses of the greater part of them. We took keen pleasure in watching their bewilderment. Someone told M. d'Hyberville, who came back to the clearing before the fort with the other officers. He could not keep from laughing. He commanded that the use of each article be demonstrated to them. Thereupon their shirts were put on them, and their braguets and their hats; their leggings were stitched together and put upon their legs, as our Canadians, of whom I have already spoken, were familiar with such things. Some powder was put in the
powder pans of the guns that had been given them; these were cocked and then fired. But when they saw the powder catch fire, they threw out their arms, dropped the guns, and shrunk back from the fear they had of them. M. d'Hyberville directed the French to fire blanks in front of them, which reassured them.

Now, as there are always certain ones bolder than the rest, one of the savages came over to us, making a sign with his hand that he wished one of their guns to be loaded, signaling that he desired to shoot. The Frenchmen who loaded for him -- out of mischief or for some other reason -- put too heavy a charge of powder in the gun; and the savage, in his eagerness to shoot, leaned backward instead of forward as one ordinarily does. The recoil of the gun knocked him down, the savage in one direction, the gun in another. This accident caused the savages to go more than two weeks without wishing to touch a gun (7-8).

The scene above is heartwarming in its depiction of Iberville joining in the camaraderie of his underlings and taking pleasure in the Indian as well. While the French entertain themselves at the Indians’ expense, it is clear that they do so without malice and that Iberville keeps the fun from getting out of hand. More importantly, the French leader seeks to educate red men so that, no longer ignorant of white possessions (some of which, especially the guns, could prove harmful to the French if turned against the latter), they may benefit from European invention. More humor will result from the awkward meeting of red and white cultures throughout the narrative, but at the expense of Frenchmen as much as that of Indians.

Although Pénicaud highlights Indian ignorance of modern conveniences, he also devotes much attention to Native-American ingenuity. For example, he relates pirogue-making in detail early in the narrative and seems especially astonished that “they cleared it out as smooth as we could have made it with our tools” (8-9). Continually, Pénicaud remains impressed by the fact that clothing, decoration, pottery, hardware, and crafts, “even though made by the hands of savages, are nevertheless very well made indeed” (19). The author’s admiration
even extends to Indian fare, modes of agriculture, and hunting and fishing practices. In fact, Pénicaut seems to record Indian way of life as a manual for French survival in the New World, something Le Page also does.

Generally, Pénicaut’s Indians come across as a pretty industrious lot. Often, Pénicaut even credits them with surpassing the French in certain skills, such as hunting and fishing. As the narrative progresses, Pénicaut increasingly emphasizes the reciprocity of French and Indian learning, above all the exchange of knowledge that will prove instrumental in establishing the hybrid colony of Louisiana.

After the initial encounters, some Indians become guides for French exploration of the Gulf Coast. Upon visiting the village of one group of guides for the first time, Pénicaut does not recoil in disgust at a particularly strange sight before him, as some Europeans might do. Neither does he stand agape in wonder. Rather, Pénicaut notes matter of factly that

as it was near the end of August and very hot, all the savages — the men and the boys — went as naked as one's hand; but the women and the girls wore a single hank of moss which passed between their legs and covered their nakedness, the rest of their bodies being quite nude. This moss is a very fine plant half an ell long, which the French in the region derisively name Spanish beard and the Spaniards, to return the favor, call French wig (18).

Instead of criticizing what some Europeans might view as Native-American indecency, Pénicaut chooses instead to change the subject to local flora and then to French and Spanish hostility. When he returns to the nude tribe, Pénicaut mentions that his Indian hosts (in this case the Pascagoulas) display no improprieties or lack of civility toward the French. “We were perfectly well received by their grand chief and by all the savages of the village” (18). Without the slightest disdain for its procurers, Pénicaut accepts Indian food and
then objectively states which staples are tastier than their counterparts in France and which are not.

In keeping with his relatively unprejudiced treatment of the Indian, Pénicaud offers something that he comes to like and something that he deplores about Indian table manners.

An observation that I have made about the savages is that, however abundant their provisions may be, they do not overindulge themselves, but eat only what they need, yet very untidily, most of them eating only with their fingers, though they possess spoons, which they make from buffalo horns (19).

In stating both his likes and dislikes, Pénicaud proves that he looks beyond nationality and skin color to observe the real qualities of individuals and their communities.

Throughout the narrative Pénicaud refers to the favorable reception of Frenchmen in Indian villages. On their trip up the Mississippi River's entire length in Chapter 2, Pénicaud and his peers receive nothing but the best hospitality from Indians along the way. Only when they have settled at the headwaters of the Mississippi for the winter do they run into trouble with Native Americans -- this time with the Sioux, who make a living from stealing as well as hunting and trading. Still, the French do business with these Indians and from them learn to survive in the northern reaches of Upper Louisiana.

Obvious by now is the fact that Pénicaud's text comes to life with human interest whenever the author focuses on Indians and what he believes to be their unique ways. In Chapter 2 the human-interest aspect of the Indian passages takes on another dimension -- that of horror. This facet of initial European encounters with indigenous populations figures in many subsequent chapters. The main causes of this horror in Pénicaud's narrative are the religious and war-related cruelties that the narrator discovers to be commonplace among many
Indians. After leaving the highly civilized Natchez (whose "barbarities" Pénicaud does not experience until later) and after being well received among the Tensas, the author warns the reader, "I have never seen a spectacle more dolorous or more frightful at the same time than what occurred on our second day in this village" (29).

Pénicaud then proceeds to give graphic accounts of a shocking occurrence in the Tensas village. Here and in the accounts of other gruesome religious reactions -- i.e., the Natchez funeral ceremonies -- negative manifestations of wonder as proposed by Greenblatt are definitely apparent.

A frightful thunderstorm suddenly arose: lightning struck their temple, burned all their idols, and reduced their temple to ashes. Immediately the savages ran out in front of their temple making horrible shrieks, tearing out their hair, and raising their arms aloft. Facing their temple, they invoked their Great Spirit, like men possessed, to extinguish the fire; then they seized dirt and smeared it on their bodies and their faces. Fathers and mothers brought their children and strangled them and cast them into the fire. M. d'Hyberville was so horrified at such brutality that he commanded us to put a stop to that frightful performance and to take the innocent children away from their parents. In spite of all our efforts they succeeded in throwing seventeen of them into the fire; and had we not hindered them, they would have thrown more than two hundred (29).

Indeed, nothing could have prepared Pénicaud or even the experienced Canadian Iberville for the Tensas reaction to a natural phenomenon. The Euro-Christians stand aghast at actions that go against one of the very things they hold most sacred: the relationship between parents and children. Here and elsewhere when innocent Indian lives are at stake, the French as depicted by Louisiana writers intrude with one object in mind: sparing reds from death. Pénicaud's Iberville, in this passage and many others, reveals a deep respect for Indian life, regardless of age or importance. Clearly, Iberville and Pénicaud do not understand the beliefs behind the Tensas' behavior and probably do
not want to understand them. Nevertheless, it is a significant indication of their valuing of red humanity that the French on this occasion and others do as much as possible to end what they perceive as red-on-red cruelty.

As the narrative progresses and Pénicaud becomes more familiar with the different Indian groups, he begins to criticize certain practices when he brings them up. For example, in Chapter 4 he attacks what he views as satanism among Mobilians, Tomez, and Waniabas.

As for me, who have seen them several times, I believe it is the devil they are invoking, since they issue forth from this hut with the fury of men possessed and then make magic such as perambulating the straw-filled skin of an otter dead for more than two years. They make much more magic which would appear unbelievable to the reader; that is why I do not wish to dwell on it; I would not even mention it if I had not been a witness to it -- I as well as many other Frenchmen who were there with me. The ones that do these kinds of tricks -- whether magical or otherwise -- are esteemed very highly by the other savages (64).

Here, as elsewhere when he criticizes Indian practices of which he does not approve, Pénicaud does not condemn the entire society in which the practice is found. Whole populations are not uniformly dismissed as legions of devils if some of their number are believed to worship the Devil. Even the individual practitioners of the black arts themselves are not likened to demons. However, as an eighteenth-century French Catholic, Pénicaud feels compelled to attack any belief contrary to what he views as the true faith.

Pénicaud quickly moves from black magic to mention a crueler practice of the apparent devil worshippers.

At the beginning of September they have a festival in which they show themselves, in a way, to be like the ancient Lae-daemonians: on the day of this festival they flog their children till the blood comes. The whole village is at that time assembled in the big square. All must come there -- boys, girls, old and young, down to the very youngest -- and if some child is sick, the mother is flogged in the place of the child. After that, they engage in dances that
last through the night. The chiefs and the old men exhort the flogged ones, telling them that they have been flogged to teach them to have no fear of the evils their enemies can do to them and to teach them to be good warriors that would never cry out or shed tears even in the middle of the fire supposing that their enemies should cast them into it (64-65).

Here Pénicaud first mentions what he sees as a troubling, universal aspect of many Native-American cultures -- Indian torture of fellow Indian. This abuse, which Pénicaud records as occurring especially in the wake of war, when captives are flayed, burned, and mutilated, is deplored throughout the narrative. While Pénicaud might suggest that such cruelty is commonplace, he does not conclude that all Indians who participate in it are incorrigibly barbaric and incapable of conversion to more humane treatment of their red fellows. In fact, Pénicaud will draw the narrative to a close by expressing a conviction that Indians can be led to better relations with one another through French rule and Roman religion.

An even ghastlier aspect of some Native-American cultures in terms of Euro-Christian norms of humaneness is also brought up early in the narrative. The first reference to Indian cannibalism occurs at the end of Chapter 5. There Pénicaud reports that some Frenchmen, after travelling unharmed through seven Indian nations along the Sabine River, finally suffer the loss of a comrade at the last tribe they encounter. The Attakapas kill and eat this unfortunate victim.

Chapter 14 presents perhaps the most graphic instance of cannibalism witnessed by Pénicaud. It takes place among the Assinaïs in Texas. After Pénicaud recounts in detail the Assinaïs' torture of prisoners of war, he notes,

All the men and women of the village congregated around the frames on which those poor, drooping men were tied. Each family lighted its fire and put a pot full of water in front of it to heat. And when the sun was risen, four of the oldest savages, each with a knife in his hand, made incisions
in the arms, in the thighs, and in the legs of the suspended men, whose blood ran down their bodies and fell off the ends of their feet, being caught in plates by four old men. They carried this blood to two other old men, who tended the cooking of it in two kettles; and when this blood was done, they gave it to their women and children to eat. After the blood had been eaten, the two dead men were untied from the frames and were put on a table, where they were cut up in pieces, which were distributed to all the congregation of the village, each family of which put some in its pot to cook. While this meat was cooking, they engaged in dancing. Afterwards they returned to their places and drew this meat from their pots and ate it (155-156).

After witnessing the spectacle recorded above, which transpired while Pénicaud was on a return trip to Natchitoches from Mexico, Pénicaud confesses, "I was so sickened at seeing this execrable feasting that I was squeamish for three days, and neither my comrades nor I could eat until after we had quit those cruel cannibals" (156). Wishing to protect a neighboring nation from the Assinaís (whom De Bellisle, for one, highlights as evoking fear in other area tribes), the retreating Frenchmen persuade the Yatasi to go live at Natchitoches. Pénicaud happily reports that the Yatasi, unlike the Assinaís and other groups that harass fellow Indians, have dwelt in unity with their red neighbors for years.

As a glowing example of the potential for moral amelioration of Indian communities through conversion to European values and outlooks, Pénicaud first offers the thoroughly Christianized Apalachees. They debut in Chapter 7, "The Year 1705."

Toward the end of this year, a savage nation named the Apalaches came to Mobile to ask M. de Bienville for a place in which to settle. They had deserted the settlement they had in Spanish territory. . . . As they had often been pillaged by the Alibamons without ever receiving relief from the Spaniards, they had been forced to abandon their settlement and come and put themselves under the protection of the French. They were excellent Catholics; therefore, as soon as they came, M. de Bienville had them given food to live on and then had some land assigned them close to the Mobilians and the Tomez, with seed corn for the first year. M. Huet,
one of our priests, has always taken good care of them, going among them quite often to preach and to administer the sacraments (102-103).

Pénicaut offers the passage above out of pride over his compatriots' protection of weaker Indian nations, be they Catholic or not. He also wishes to point out the scandalousness of Spanish neglect of loyal, Christianized Indians, a neglect that Pénicaut reiterates throughout the narrative both to enhance the image of the French in America and to justify whatever claims France may have to lands that Spain also declares to be its own.

In Chapter 12, "The Year 1710," Pénicaut presents a more in-depth glimpse into the religion and culture of these "good Catholic Christians," the Apalachees.

The Apalaches conduct divine service like the Catholics in France. Their big festival is St. Louis' Day. On the day before, they come and invite the officers of the fort to attend their village festival; and that day, with great feasting they regale all who come there, and particularly the French.

The priests from our fort go there and say high Mass, which the Apalaches hear quite reverently, singing the Psalms in Latin, as is done in France and, after dinner, Vespers and the Benediction of the Holy Sacrament. On that day the men and women are dressed very decently: the men wear a kind of cloth overcoat; and the women wear cloaks and skirts of silk cloth in the French style, but haven't the least headdress, going bare-headed. Their hair, which is quite long and quite black, is plaited and hangs down their backs in one or two plaits, the way Spanish girls wear theirs. Those whose hair is too long fold it up to the middle of their backs and fasten it with a ribbon.

They have a church to which one of our French priests goes and says Mass every Sunday and every feast day. They have a baptismal font at which to baptize their infants, and at the side of the church a graveyard in which there is a cross. Here they are buried.

On St. Louis' Day, toward evening after the service is ended, they dress up in masks, men, women, and children. For the rest of the day they dance with the French who happen to be there and with other savages who come to their village on that day. They have cocked meat a-plenty with which to feast them. They love the French very much, and it
must be confessed that the only thing savage about them is their language, which is a mixture of Spanish and Alibamon (134-135).

Not only does Pénicaut applaud the Apalachees' embracing Catholicism and observing it better than many Frenchmen do, he also delights at the group's assimilation into European culture — or rather, their hybridization of European and Native-American cultures into a new cultural entity. Other colonists also delight over the Franco-Spanish-Apalachee melding, and the acculturated Indians' Saint Louis Day open celebration serves as one of those idyllic instances of Euro-aboriginal fusing that Louisiana authors offer as an example of what they hope will become more widespread in their second home. Curiously, when Pénicaut mentions that the only thing savage about the Apalachees is their speech, he seems to imply that its "savageness" derives from its being corrupted by having been mixed with a European language! (For a more recent historical study of Apalachee Christianity and the Franciscan mission system in Spanish Florida from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, see Jack Wintz's "The Franciscan Missions of Florida."
following stanza in Latin, and so on with the remaining ones, and in the key in which they are sung in Europe among Catholic Christians (139).

Clearly, for Pénicaut and a number of other Louisiana writers, the Catholicity of the Illinois is the starting point of their conversion to other European norms. More important than changing American aborigines into red Europeans, however, is the notion that if French and Indian can come together in church (as they do in Illinois), then they can join together in more worldly projects as well. In Illinois, the common Catholicity has led to cooperation in colonial, commercial, and military enterprises, as will be seen more fully later. It has also led to intermarriage. And as Pénicaut will point out, consciously or not, the Illinois posts prosper because of all this mixing, which often begins with and definitely is maintained best by a mutual religion.

The Christianized amelioration of Native America hoped for by many Louisiana writers can be seen in the Illinois’ treatment of prisoners of war. As Pénicaut says of the native Catholics of Upper Louisiana,

In regard to their warfare, they are very brave and use both gun and bow. They are not without feeling for their prisoners, as the rest of the savages are. If they capture young children, they raise them up in their village, having them instructed in the Catholic religion by the Reverend Jesuit Fathers; if the captives are men that could injure them, or are old men, they break their heads (141).

While the Kaskaskia, like their French neighbors, might have a long way to go before reaching a full understanding of Christian amnesty, Pénicaut still offers their more humane treatment of war captives as an example of what conversion to Christianity can bring about with regard to red-on-red cruelty.

On a more superficial level (yet significant for indicating French attitudes toward Native Americans nonetheless), Pénicaut does not fail
to mention Indian beauty when he sees it. Relating the trip up the Mississippi to the “Saut de St. Anthoine,” the author says of Arkansas women met on the way, “They are quite pretty and white-complexioned” (35). The Natchez Indians win Pénicaut’s approval too, for “Natchez men and women are very handsome and quite decently clothed.” In addition, “their speaking voices are quite pleasing, as they do not speak so strongly from the throat as the other savages” (85). Pénicaut says of another Indian group with whom he spends a sentimental sojourn, “The Nassitoches, men as well as women and girls, make no use of . . . punctures, which they loathe. That is why they are so much better looking; besides, they are naturally whiter” (110). Not surprisingly, Pénicaut finds Indians most aesthetically pleasing when they approximate Continental standards of beauty. His prejudices notwithstanding, Pénicaut’s European mind and eye are at least open to detecting the attractive in indigenous cultures.

While Pénicaut may cite instances in which Indian hygiene and sanitation fall below the European norm, he does not present Native Americans as a loathsome lot because of their substandard living conditions and differing personal attention. He comments, for example, that the Acolapissa-Natchitoches “are rather cleanly with their food” (111). Perhaps the greatest proof that Indian standards of cleanliness are not terribly far from those of the author is the fact that Pénicaut often shares living space, food, and intimate company with the Indians, especially in the Natchez and the Acolapissa-Natchitoches chapters. In these sections Pénicaut gives the impression that he could not be better housed or better entertained in Europe.

Once the French have made initial contacts with all the tribes of whom they are aware (or with whom they deem it necessary to acquaint themselves) and have established their first forts in Lower Louisiana,
Iberville attempts to create sound, lasting relationships with his new Native-American neighbors. As Pénicaut notes, "He made them understand . . . that they should come freely to our fort to barter their provisions and merchandise with the French and that they would be well pleased if they did. After this they went home quite satisfied" (61). While Franco-Indian relations seem to get off to a rosy start, complications eventually develop when misunderstandings between European and Native-American cultures arise and when the French become entangled in intertribal oppositions.

The first real problems the French encounter with certain Indian groups begin in Chapter 4, "The Year 1702." A man referred to as "M. D'Érâque" comes down from his fort at the headwaters of the Mississippi to report an attack by Algonquin tribes that left three Frenchmen dead. Pénicaut drops this matter as quickly as he brings it up and moves to more pressing issues closer to home. He relates the beginning of a seven-year war with the Alabama Indians by noting that four of five Frenchmen travelling from Mobile to the Alabama village with ten Alabamas were killed by their Indian guides. Bienville fails to get the Indian allies of the French to help in the first campaign against the Alabamas because these tribes are also Alabama allies. When Bienville and a band of Frenchmen undertake a second campaign against the Alabamas, it too ends unsatisfactorily.

Although Bienville cannot master the Alabamas in the narrative's first war of vengeance upon an Indian group, Pierre Dugué de Boisbriant successfully launches a third campaign. Pénicaut notes of it that "all the [male] savages were killed, only their women and children being spared; they were taken away as slaves to Mobile along with their boats loaded with their game" (69). Despite the fact that the French feel justified in carrying out this war of revenge, Bienville
still shows some clemency by giving the Mobilians (Alabama relatives who had refused to help the French) the Alabama captives destined for slavery. Ironically, this action wins the Mobilians' loyalty to such an extent that they aid the French in future campaigns against their Alabama cousins.

In Chapter 5, Bienville's brother Antoine Le Moyne, Chevalier de Chateaugué, launches a fourth attack on the Alabamas. Chateaugué's forces catch their foes as the latter head to war against the Choctaw, but the French campaign results in only partial success. Troubles with the Alabamas erupt again in Chapter 10, "The Year 1708," when three other Indian nations swell the opposition to a force that surpasses fifteen-thousand warriors. Several skirmishes take place before Pénicaut joins Chateaugué's militia of sixty Frenchmen and sixty Mobilians who attempt to protect the Pensacola area from further Alabama harassment.

Pénicaut uses an episode from the Alabama conflicts to show the type of warfare that Franco-Indian battling has become by that time.

We descried a party of Alibamons that had become separated from the others who were going toward Passacol. A Mobilien guiding us had us take a road that cut across their way and we overtook them. We fired one round at them, killing thirty and wounding seven, who were dispatched and were scalped as well as the others that had been slain. Nine were taken alive; but the others fled with such speed that they never could be overtaken. This compelled us to go back to the fort, to which we brought our prisoners. Their heads were immediately broken (125).

As other writers do, Pénicaut unwittingly tracks the evolution of French adaptation to Native-American warfare, adaptation both in the sense of white recourse to indigenous battle strategies and white involvement in indigenous conflicts.

The well-formed anecdote that ends Chapter 10 indicates a growing French appreciation of the Native-American war tactics of treachery
and connivance. Pénicaut introduces the anecdote in a manner that sets it off from the rest of the text, and he offers an apology at the end of it, aware that the sensibilities of Frenchmen who have become Louisianians differ from those of Continentals and that the latter Frenchmen might be offended by what has been recounted.

The passage reads in full:

At this point I cannot keep from telling the exploit of two Frenchmen, which I believe the reader will not find unpleasant. The Governor of Passacol for the King of Spain sent to MM. Dartaguet and de Bienville asking for three or four of their best hunters to kill him some game. MM. Dartaguet and de Bienville sent him four, who went on a hunt in the woods in the neighborhood of Passacol. While two of these, named St. Michel and Moquin, were hunting in the woods, they were encountered by a party of Alibamons, who encircled them and caught them and afterwards took them eight leagues away, where they stopped to camp till the next day. When the Alibamons got to that spot, they asked the two Frenchmen what they had come to the neighborhood of Passacol to do. The two Frenchmen, who had a good understanding of the Mobilien tongue in which the Alibamons had addressed them, replied that they had come to hunt game for the Governor of Passacol. Two of the chiefs of the party told them that they would take them hunting next day and see whether they were telling the truth.

And indeed the next morning the two savages gave their guns back to the two Frenchmen and took them hunting. Luckily for the two Frenchmen, they located a herd of buffalo, at which the two Alibamons in their eagerness fired at once; but the Frenchmen, who had not yet fired their shots, turned their weapons on the two savages instead of shooting at the buffaloes and killed them both. After scalping them, in keeping with the custom of war in that country, they went very far off and hid during the remainder of the day, carrying away the savages’ two guns and everything they had on their persons. When the day ended, they walked all night, and three days later reached Mobile, where they gave MM. Dartaguet and de Bienville an account of what had happened to them; and, for proof, they exhibited the scalps and the guns of the two savages.

This deed will perhaps seem cruel to Frenchmen [to those who] do not know the way of savages. The only reason why the savages had refrained from killing those two Frenchmen at once was that they intended to keep them for burning with slow fire in their village, which is the treatment those nations usually give their enemies, as I have already reported elsewhere (126-127).
Although many Frenchmen may be acquiring Indian forms of wartime cruelty (on top of the European battle barbarisms to which they are heirs) as part of the adaptation to life in Louisiana, Pénicaut, for one, has not lost a sensitivity to inhumaneness -- be it white on white, white on red, red on white, or red on red. He excuses the scalping in this instance only because it is an act done after a necessary killing. For Pénicaut, the two Frenchmen's actions (performed in self-defense) are far more humane than the fate the Alabamas had in store for them upon reaching an Alabama encampment.

In Chapter 11, Pénicaut recounts another instance of trouble with the Alabamas. This time the Choctaw Indians are embroiled with the troublesome tribe.

This year a party of fifteen Chactas who were on a bear hunt were encountered in the woods by a party of fifty Alibamons, their enemies. The Chief of the Chactas, named Le Dos Grillé, a man of courage, was not in the least shocked by the number of Alibamons; and although he was straightway shot from a very long range, the bullet piercing his cheek, he drew out the bullet, which had lodged in his mouth, put it in his gun, and with that bullet killed the man that had wounded him. Instantly he drew his fifteen men together in a rather high spot, from which, each posted behind a tree, they killed more than thirty of the Alibamons, who did not dare resist further and fled, deserting their dead and wounded. The Chactas had only three men killed and three or four very slightly wounded. They brought the thirty Alibamon scalps to MM. Dartaguet and de Bienville at our fort and two deer they had killed on the way. As a reward for their bravery they were presented with gifts of merchandise and were given much powder and lead. The Chief of these Chactas had killed eight as his share, badly wounded as he was by the shot in the mouth (130).

The passage above illustrates Pénicaut's willingness to cite valor where he sees it -- in red as well as white circles. Pénicaut is so impressed by the deeds of the Choctaw Chief and his outnumbered men that he cannot resist complimenting them with references such as "a man of courage," being "not in the least shocked," and exhibiting
"their bravery." Interestingly, the red chief and his men in this small paragraph receive more flattery from the author than Bienville does anywhere in the narrative.

Louis Juchereau de Saint Denis, who rises to heroic stature in part because of his sympathetic dealings with the Indians, at times becomes involved in difficulties with Indians himself. One of these difficulties begins after Saint Denis grants refuge to the Bayougoulas near his fort on the Mississippi following the loss of their village in a war with the Tensas. In Chapter 5, "The Year 1703," Pénicaud relates how the Chitimachas, missing the Bayougoulas in an attempt to make war upon the latter, come across Father Jean-François Buisson de Saint Cosme and three Frenchmen encamped on the Mississippi. The Indians murder the sleeping white men. Regardless of the questionable motives that the Historical Journal's author places on Saint Denis' combatting the Chitimachas, Pénicaud's Saint Denis in this instance feels compelled to demand revenge for French deaths. Pénicaud's Bienville (but not the Historical Journal's Bienville) grants Saint Denis the right to do so. Saint Denis, along with ten Frenchmen and two hundred Native Americans from three different nations, proceed against the Chitimachas.

Working together at every stage of the campaign, Saint Denis' Euro-Indian army defeats the Chitimachas in a fight that appears to be much more humane than De Boisbriant's battle with the Alabamas. While De Boisbriant spares only women and children, Saint Denis' forces kill only fifteen persons in the fighting, allow several of the wounded to escape, and take captive as many men as women and children. Saint Cosme's murderer is brought to Bienville at Mobile, and, even though this Indian had shot six arrows through the missionary, he receives only one fatal blow to the head.
As humane as the execution at Mobile may appear to be, the French join the Indians in a gruesome postmortem custom with which Pénicaut has only recently become familiar: scalping. After the killing of Saint Cosme’s murderer,

his scalp was taken and his body thrown into the water. M. de Bienville then had it proclaimed among all the savage nations friendly to us that they should make war on the Chitimachas and the Alibamons and that he would give them ten crowns for the scalp of each enemy slain or for each enemy brought back alive (72).

In starting the scalp bounty, Bienville also launches a full-scale war of obliteration against two Indian groups at either end of Lower Louisiana.

Pénicaut does not say whether or not he approves of this commencement of virtual genocide, but nowhere do his heroes Iberville and Saint Denis resort to such extreme tactics. Rather, the following episode aptly illustrates Saint Denis’ method of confronting Indian foes, at least as it is perceived by Pénicaut. After Saint Denis has come to the aid of the Natchitoches by settling them with the Acolapissas on Lake Pontchartrain, he begins another campaign against the Chitimachas. With only fifteen Frenchmen and eighty Acolapissa-Natchitoches, Saint Denis attacks the Chitimachas, killing only several, catching twenty women and children, and allowing many others to escape before the French finally retreat. Obviously, Pénicaut’s Saint Denis, unlike Pénicaut’s Bienville, does not consider annihilation to be a necessary component of warfare.

The French finally achieve peace with the Chitimachas through Pénicaut’s mediation in Chapter 20, “The Year 1718.” When Frenchmen in the Chitimacha region complain that they are not safe on their concessions as long as the French and the Chitimachas are making war on each other, Bienville sends Pénicaut to intervene. Pénicaut relates
his own heroic endeavor as follows.

Although this mission seemed to me highly dangerous, I did not fail to undertake it because I spoke their language fairly well and was acquainted with several of the savages. I made my plan, not to go straight to the Chetimachas village, but to go on up to the Oumas village, where I expected to run across several of the Chetimachas savages, who come there quite often, as they are the Oumas' nearest neighbors.

I was not at all mistaken in my expectations: I found three of them and talked with them. I told them that I had M. de Bienville’s orders to go to their chief for the purpose of making peace between them and the French. These three savages were quite delighted to learn this news because as long as they have been at war with the French they have had as enemies the savages friendly to the French, who were always on war parties against them, following M. de Bienville’s orders, and have killed a great many of their people; therefore, these three savages did not hesitate to follow me when I told them to come with me as far as the concession of MM. Paris, which was only seven leagues away.

When we got there, M. Dubuisson gave them some little presents to take to their chiefs and some food for their trip. I requested them to come back in ten days at the latest. . . . They did not fail to return ten days later, but they held back on the bank of their river. . . . Only the three savages whom I had set off came to the concession and informed me that the Grand Chief, with his wife and forty Chetimachas, was awaiting me at that place to talk with me. I hesitated somewhat to take the risk of going there alone; however, I made up my mind to do so, seeing no one that wished to accompany me. I went away with the three savages.

As soon as I got to the bank of their river and they saw me, they uttered a dreadful shout. I thought then that I was betrayed and that this was the last day of my life; but this strange shout was only a shout of joy, for the Grand Chief received me with perfect manners and told me that it would give him and all his nation great pleasure to make peace with the French. I told him that, to make peace, they would have to come to New Orleans to sing their calumet of peace to M. de Bienville, our commandant. They said they would follow me wherever I wanted to lead them. I led them first to MM. Paris' concession, where M. Dubuisson gave them some food; and after they had spent the night there, we set off with daybreak the next day to go downstream to New Orleans. They stayed there a week, as it was necessary to await the reply of M. de Bienville, who instructed M. de Pailloux to make them sing their calumet of peace and to grant peace (217–218).

The passage quoted above marks how far Pénicaud’s understanding of
Indian ways has evolved since his arrival in Louisiana two decades earlier. He knows now how to approach a rival Indian nation safely and how to negotiate with it. He has not forgotten the risks of relying on Indian word of honor, remembering that the red sense of promise differs from that of Europeans; yet, despite his memory of Frenchmen deceived by Indians in the past, Pénicaud acquiesces to Chitimacha plans for the sake of peace. He is rewarded with a satisfactory outcome.

Through the episode recounted above, Pénicaud comes to realize that some Indian foes want peace as much as the French do. The Chitimachas agree to settle near fledgling New Orleans, as do several other Indian groups, and Pénicaud notes that “all these nations are highly industrious and all are quite helpful in furnishing food to the French, to the troops as well as to the people on the concessions” (220). Clearly, Pénicaud sees the advantages of befriending -- not eradicating -- Indians.

An interesting episode in Chapter 5 shows how Indians at times use Frenchmen as pawns in intertribal strife. The Europeans are unwittingly caught in a deadly game between the Chickasaw and the Choctaw, two of the most powerful nations of Lower Louisiana. The passage in Chapter 5, full of action and suspense, plot and twists of events, is nothing less than a short story embedded in the longer narrative. McWilliams aptly remarks in a footnote in Fleur de Lys and Calumet that here “Pénicaud may have been guided by the art of fiction rather than by historical facts” (76) because Pénicaud does take an historical situation to weave an entertaining tale of red intrigue and white fear.

The story begins when thirty-five Chickasaw chiefs come to Mobile to seek Bienville’s help in establishing peace with the Choctaw, with
whom they have been fighting for many years. Bienville commands De
Boisbriant and a band of Frenchmen to accompany the Chickasaw to the
Choctaw village for negotiations. Here, a core passage of the account
is worth quoting as an illustration of the storytelling gems that stud
Pénicaut’s narrative.

When they got there, the Chief of the Chactas came to speak
to M. de Boisbrian. The Chief made him come into his hut, and . . . said privately: “Where are you going with those
Chicachas? Are you going to get yourself burned at their
village the way a little French boy was burned whom M. de
Bienville gave them last year to learn their language?”

M. de Boisbrian, being greatly surprised, replied that
he did not know that and that he did not believe the Chica­
chas spiteful enough or treacherous enough to have dared to
burn the little French boy that had been given them; that,
furthermore, he had come to mediate peace between them, so
that they might live in harmony in the future.

“I’ll make peace with them,” this chief of the Chactas
told him, “if they will bring your little French boy back
here. Therefore, believe me: go no farther,” added this
chief of the savages, “but send two of those Chicachas to
their village instructed to bring back your French boy; and
if they do not bring him back to you within one month, you
will know from that that I have told you the truth.”

The chiefs of the Chicachas, to whom M. de Boisbrian
then went to speak, assured him on their part that the lit­
tle French boy was alive, and they consented for two of
their men to be sent to fetch him. They sent these off at
once, ordering them to make all possible haste.

The Chief of the Chactas said something else to M. de
Boisbrian: “Permit us to put these Chicachas in one of our
huts; for if the others do not bring back your little French
boy, these will belong to us and as our enemies they will
have to die, since they then will be your enemies, too.”

The chiefs of the Chicachas further agreed to stay in
a hut while awaiting the return of the little French boy,
who they insisted was alive.

The month had almost slipped away, and still the two
Chicachas who had gone to their village for the little
French boy did not return. On one side, the Chief of the
Chactas said to M. de Boisbrian each day: “You see that
those Chicachas whom you sent to fetch your French boy are
wicked men: they don’t dare come back because they have
burned him, just as I told you.”

On the other side, the chiefs of the Chicachas, who
were shut up, said to him, “They had our comrades killed on
the way there, or they would have come back” (73-75).
Pénicaut breaks the dialogue to comment on De Boisbriant's dilemma as puppet between two very powerful and very hostile groups, neither of whom the French official can trust. Sent to the nations as France's mediator, De Boisbriant becomes the Indians' pawn in a deadly game that the tribes are playing with each other. At the same time that he breaks the story to comment on De Boisbriant's personal predicament, Pénicaut also alludes to the precarious position of the entire French-colonial population in the early days, when the outnumbered whites had to rely on powerful red neighbors for everything from simply being allowed to remain in America, to having additional military protection, to fending off starvation. Out of this troubling situation, Pénicaut produces art, dramatizing the plight of a titled but essentially powerless white man and of the puny white colony he represents by casting the French spokesman into a dialogic conundrum before red giants that, luckily for the whites, are fighting each other instead of banding together against the French.

When the French boy does not appear, De Boisbriant decides in favor of the Choctaw. Pénicaut subjectively relates the decision as follows.

I do not believe that M. de Boisbriant's prudence has ever appeared better than on this occasion; for after warning his men to get ready to leave on the morning of the next day, he sought the Chief of the Chactas in his hut and said to him: "I am sick and tired of waiting for the return of the two Chicachas, who do not bring back my French boy. This convinces me that you have told me the truth -- that they are wicked men; and since they have deceived us, do whatever you want to do with those in the hut; I leave them to you upon this condition -- that your chiefs and all your nation shall always be friends of the French. . . " (75-76).

Believing the Chickasaw to be guilty of the French boy's murder and, after a month of Choctaw attempts at brainwashing, beginning to consider the Chickasaw to be real enemies of the French, De Boisbriant sides with the Choctaw. Pénicaut will point out later that the
Choctaw have deceived De Boisbriant. Ironically but fortuitously, the deception proves to be of lasting benefit to the French. Pénicaud breaks off the story of the Chickasaw-Choctaw crisis to turn to other events, but not before pointing out that "M. de Boisbriant returned to Mobile quite satisfied with having bound the most dreadful nation of all the savages to be friends of the French. With the French they have never been at war" (76).

One of the events that interrupts the Chickasaw-Choctaw story is an episode concerning the Yazoo Indians. It illustrates the narrator's growing ability to discern causes for behavior on the part of some Indians and to discriminate between different types of Indians as he becomes more familiar with Native-American cultures.

Six men that M. de Bienville sent to M. de St. Lambert, reaching the village of the Yasoux on their way up the Mississippi, found M. Davion there, a missionary priest who had come from Canada to the Yasoux to try to convert them to the faith or at least to baptize their infants. Several times he had been in danger of being murdered by this nation, one evening particularly, when his zeal induced him to go into their temple and knock down their idols and break them in pieces. Afterwards he returned to his hut carrying the remaining idols, which he had not been able to break. There he found Brunot, a small boy who waited on him. M. Davion told him to take refuge with the French because the savages were coming next day to kill him. And they did not fail to rush there to kill him when they had seen the destruction he had wrought among the idols in their temple. But their Grand Chief, who loved that priest, made them go away and kept them from killing him or the little boy either, so that M. Davion is still alive, by the very special grace of God, and is Monseigneur the Bishop of Kébecq's grand vicar for Louisiana (77).

The Yazoo incident affords a glimpse into the causes of a clash between Indians and a French missionary. While Pénicaud presents the priest as doing what the latter feels he must do, the author also depicts the natives as responding in a way that is to be expected when their sacred items are destroyed. Furthermore, Pénicaud attempts to
save an entire tribe from the French reader's condemnation by presenting at least one of their members -- an important one of their members -- as a French sympathizer.

When Pénicaut returns to the Chickasaw-Choctaw story, he reports that toward the end of 1703 the Chickasaw finally arrive at Mobile, bringing the French boy whom the Choctaw swore had been killed! Even though the Choctaw have deceived the French and have murdered thirty Chickasaw hostages, Pénicaut does not lay the blame on De Boisbriant. Rather, the author believes that Divine Providence was at work in the deception. As Pénicaut comments,

"Here is cause to admire the wisdom of God, who destroys the schemes of men that appear to be even the most prudent for their greatest good; for if M. de Boisbrian had conciliated the Chactas with the Chicachas when he was there to make peace between them, according to his orders and his intention, these two nations -- our two neighbors and the most dreadful in all Louisiana, since they can by joining forces put as many as sixteen thousand warriors on the warpath -- would have had the power to destroy our colony in its infancy; whereas, by the grace of God, and contrary to our intentions, the two nations remaining at war with each other, as it happened, we have always been at peace with them, especially with the Chactas, who are the more powerful of the two nations and the one living closer to Mobile (78-79)."

The story of the grand Choctaw trick casts a different light on an aspect of Native-American self-defense that Louisiana writers often deplore, dishonesty. Now God can be seen as working through the sins of red men -- not as the Puritans would view the Divinity operating through "savages" (as a chastiser of whites' sins) but as a benefactor. The Choctaw lie is De Boisbriant's deus ex machina, for the events of this Indian anecdote end illogically but happily thanks to De Boisbriant's being duped by the trick. With regard to the injustices done to the Chickasaw, the French try to placate the wronged Indians as best they can.
As illustrated in Saint Denis' campaign against the Chitimachas recorded elsewhere, most of the first French skirmishes with Indian groups were not simply cases of white-red hostility. In practically every war that Pénicaud relates, the French depend on Indian forces for success. In fact, many French alliances are predicated upon the allegiances of the Indians from whom they derive support. Furthermore, as stated previously, if it were not for Indian help in countless endeavors even beyond the sphere of warfare, the French might never have established a lasting presence in Louisiana. For instance, in many cases the French overcome starvation only with the aid of Native Americans. As Pénicaud notes of supply vessels that arrive in 1707, "This relief came in the nick of time; for there was no food at Mobile, and the garrison there was living entirely off game brought in by the neighboring savages" (114). Be it battle or nutrition, the early colonists often find more lifesaving support in their red neighbors than in their white compatriots across the ocean.

As recorded by Pénicaud, the early wars between French and Indian groups in Louisiana, excepting the great Natchez massacre, do not result from a French master plan to remove Indians from areas whites wish to colonize. Rather, the battles tend to be skirmishes meant to avenge murders of Frenchmen or attacks on Indians who never intended to be anything but enemies of the French from the start. Never does Pénicaud hint at a French desire to eradicate all Indians or move them far away from French settlements. Rather, Pénicaud and his peers seem to want a peaceful coexistence -- and they need it in order to survive the first years in the colony. In their wars with certain tribes, the French simply take part in what Indians have been doing to each other all along -- albeit with more deadly weapons and the capacity for greater slaughter.
It should be noted at this point that Indians are not the only group with whom the French have conflicts. The English and the Spanish also present hindrances to French survival in the New World, the English often inciting certain Indian groups to make war upon the French. Problems with the Spanish come to a head in Chapter 21, “The Year 1719,” after France and Spain have declared war on each other. With the help of many Indians, the French seize Pensacola, only to have the Spanish regain control once the Indians leave and once ninety Frenchmen defect to Spain. Such a large-scale illegal attrition indicates how Frenchmen are often as great a hindrance to their own country’s colonial enterprises as are foreign whites. Only with the help of many Indian nations rallying once again to their rescue do Saint Denis and Bienville fend off Spanish aggression in the Mobile Bay area. The French and Indians attack Pensacola anew, and once definitively victorious, the Indians are allowed to plunder the two Spanish forts. Although the seventeen Spaniards captured during the attack on Mobile Bay have their heads broken, the fifteen hundred taken at Pensacola are sent back to Havana, a rather humane gesture on the part of Pénicaud’s Frenchmen.

While relationships with some Indian groups become more complicated and embittered as the years pass, a growing reciprocity begins to develop between the French and their red allies. The beginning of Chapter 7, “The Year 1705,” aptly illustrates this situation.

At the beginning of this year, a savage nation named the Taoúachas came to Mobile seeking M. de Bienville, to ask him for a place in which to settle. He assigned them a location a league and a half below the fort, where they remained as long as we maintained our establishment at Mobile. These savages are good hunters, and every day they brought us much game of all kinds. Besides their personal belongings, they had brought a great deal of corn with which to plant the fields that M. de Bienville gave them. They had deserted the Spaniards to settle in French territory because they had been daily exposed to raids of the Alibamons, and the Spaniards had not stood by them (98).
Not only does this passage indicate the white need for red game and produce in order to survive, it also shows what Pénicaud considers a French obligation to protect weaker tribes from the harassment of stronger ones. Clearly, in Pénicaud’s view, alliances should be formed not just with nations that can bolster French strength but with any tribe proving itself to be friendly and/or needy of French help. Pénicaud condemns the Spanish, in turn, for neglecting a small group deemed expendable. Worse yet, Spain even fails to defend the devoutly Catholic Apalachees against the Alabamas. These Christian Indians also come to Mobile, not just for French protection but also for more regular ministering to their spiritual needs. As late as Chapter 10, “The Year 1708,” Pénicaud tells of another Indian nation, the “Chaptos” (Chatot), who come to settle at Mobile because they are “disheartened by Spanish rule” (125).

In Chapter 2, Pénicaud first mentions the Natchez, an Indian nation that had a profound impact on French existence in Lower Louisiana in the early decades and with whom Pénicaud would come to spend much time. As Iberville leads a band of Frenchmen and Indians up the Mississippi River, Pénicaud notes that

we . . . went to this village, where we were received perfectly well. These savages are called the Natchez, and of all the savages they are the most civilized nation. They showed a great many civilities to M. d’Iberville and to all the officers (28).

Thus does Pénicaud echo the consensus of Louisiana writers before and after him with regard to the Natchez: They are the most civilized indigenous group to be found in Louisiana.

Pénicaud’s admiration of Natchez society continues in Chapter 6. However, as typical of passages elsewhere that track the narrator’s growing familiarity with Native Americans, the Natchez chapter
(Chapter 6) also reveals Pénicaud's shock over practices he considers barbaric or immoral from his Euro-Christian perspective.

Given official permission from Bienville to depart from the garrison and live in the wilds or with Indians because of food shortages, Pénicaud and a group of young Frenchmen head for the woods and the friendly tribes along the lower Mississippi River. As soon as Pénicaud quits the fort, the nature of his discourse changes. Immediately, the narrative becomes much more subjective. Instead of dutifully recording events significant to the founding of the colony or observations important to an understanding of the vast region occupied by France, Pénicaud lapses into a romantic, personal account of young Frenchmen at large among the Indians and in harmony with Nature.

The wilds and the "savages" match Pénicaud's relaxed, happy mood during this period of temporary freedom from garrison duty and colonial convention. Such a pairing of the environment and its denizens with Pénicaud's exalted spirits may be coincidence (that is, it may result from the time of year in which the episode occurs -- mostly during the spring, when both the face of the earth and human emotions are transformed), or it may be an instance of the author's projecting his liberated feelings onto his surroundings. Either way, Chapter 6 -- much like Chapter 8, another Indian chapter that will be examined later -- presents some of the happiest episodes from Pénicaud's memoirs. When both of these dream chapters end in virtual nightmares, the jolting effect only makes for more wrenching reader response.¹

The effects of liberty in Chapter 6 are apparent from the start. Most notably, Pénicaud, no longer an underling answering to higher authority, assumes an importance that he did not possess before this time. For example, he relates the outset of the hunting vacation as follows:
As I was young and passionately fond of rambling I went with the group. We went in several row-boats, all keeping together. . . . After a few days, I proposed to twenty of my comrades, the youngest ones, that we go back up the Mississippi together and visit some of the nations along the bank of the river. I was acquainted with all these nations because on my own account I had ascended it three times already . . . and because, too, I had learned their languages tolerably well during the five years I had been in Louisiana (80-81).

In essence, Pénicaut, former subordinate member of official expedi- tions and tag-along scribe, who was told where to go and what to do, becomes Pénicaut the leader. He and his friends pursue their own whims, with Pénicaut pointing the way. They answer merely to a chief that they elect from among themselves to oversee their only real obligations: morning and evening prayer and nightly sentinel shifts.

The young men's adventure resounds with superlatives. For example, Pénicaut vouches that in a prairie at Baton Rouge he saw more game than he had ever seen amassed at a given spot at one time. Later, when the hunting party reaches the Natchez, Pénicaut refers to these Indians as "the most courteous and civil along the banks of the Mississippi," their village being "the most beautiful that could be found in Louisiana" (83). Not surprisingly, considering his lapse into sentiment and subjectivity, Pénicaut allows a romantic rather than a neoclassical preference to show in his description of the Natchez village: "It is beautified by very pretty walks which nature, and not artifice, has formed there" (83). In addition to the exceptional beauty of the area, Pénicaut also describes its richness in natural resources and its abundance of agriculture. He highlights the refinement and handsomeness of the residents as well as the quality and tastefulness of their handiworks and personal adornments.

Pénicaut says further of the Natchez, "In this village one finds every amenity conducive to association with this nation, which does not at
all have the fierce manners of the other savages. All the necessaries of life are here" (84). On top of all this plenty, the young Frenchmen arrive among the Natchez at the opening of a dance festival, when "everybody in the village was happy" (83). It comes as no surprise, then, that Pénicaut confesses, "We remained for a very long time in their villages, where we all but forgot M. de Bienville's instructions because of the amusements we had" (83).

Despite the idyllic quality that characterizes much of Pénicaut's first Indian interlude, the tone changes when Pénicaut recounts Natchez sexuality. Indian sexual practices hardly conform to Pénicaut's Catholic sense of modesty, and he feels compelled to condemn them as horrible aberrations from decency. Above all, Pénicaut is appalled by the provision of ritualized fornication for unmarried Natchez youth. His revulsion/fascination over this aspect of the dance festival leads him into a long description of the practice. Despite the author's abhorrence or maybe because of it, Pénicaut's detailing of the sex dance and of Indian courtship leading up to marriage heightens the entertaining quality of Chapter 6. The sex section also grants further insight into the author's system of values.

Pénicaut notes that during the dance festival each one dances in turn till midnight, when the men go to their homes with their wives, turning the area over to the boys and the girls, who dance from midnight till broad daylight. The dances are repeated time and again, each one dancing in turn. . . . When a boy has danced . . . with the girl at his side or in front of him, he is permitted to escort her beyond the village and into one of the thickets out on the prairie, where he dances with her another cotillion à la Missicippene. Afterwards they go back to the village square and take their turn dancing as before. Thus they continue their dances till broad-open daylight, so that in the morning the boys in particular are like disinterred corpses, on account of the loss of sleep as well as the exhaustion caused by dancing with the girls.

I should not be at all surprised if these girls are lustful and devoid of restraint because their fathers and their mothers and their religion teach them that, when they
leave this world, they have to cross over a narrow and dif­ficult plank before they can enter their Grand Village, where they claim they go after death, and that in the Grand Village will be only those who will have made merry indeed with the boys -- they will pass easily across this plank.

From the tenderest age, what detestable lessons are instilled in them -- supported by the liberty and the idle­ness in which they are maintained! For until they are twen­ty or twenty-five, girls do nothing else, their fathers and mothers being obliged to keep their food always ready for them and, furthermore, according to their tastes and their demands, up until the time they are married.

If by these wretched prostitutions they become preg­nant and give birth to children, their fathers and mothers ask them whether they wish to keep their babies. If they answer that they do not and that they cannot suckle them, the poor little unfortunate newborns are strangled outside the huts and buried, without the slightest stir. But if a girl wishes to keep her baby, it is given to her and she suckles it.

When a boy agrees to marry a girl, they go into the woods together; and while the boy goes hunting, the girl makes a hut of foliage in the woods and builds a fire close to the hut. When the boy returns from the hunt, having killed a buffalo or a deer, he brings a quarter of it to the hut, and then together they go after the remainder. On getting back to the hut, they roast a piece of the meat and eat it for their supper. And the next day the two of them carry this game to the village, to the house of her father and mother. They notify her parents, giving to each a piece of the game, which they carry into their house. The boy and girl dine with the father and mother, and he afterwards takes her away to his hut as his wife, where she remains with her husband. After that, she is no longer permitted to go the boy-and-girl dances or to have commerce with any man other than her husband. She is obliged to do the housework. Her husband can repudiate her if he learns that she has been unfaithful to him, up until the time she has a child by him (86-88).

The passage just quoted focuses more on the part that women play in the Natchez mating game than on the role men exercise. Pénicaut elab­orates upon the expectations, privileges, and restrictions pertaining to female sexuality in Natchez culture and virtually ignores the soci­etal stipulations for men. Besides reflecting a male sexual interest in the female, Pénicaut’s fixation on the sex roles of Natchez women

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perhaps results from the novelty and bewilderment of witnessing societally sanctioned female promiscuity at odds with the familiar Judeo-Christian mandates for women.

Whatever Pénicaud's set of values or his views concerning women may be, the dance episode simultaneously shows attraction, revulsion, and confusion on the author's part as he observes an intimate aspect of Indian life differing greatly from its counterpart in his society. Perhaps what most shocks Pénicaud are the inversions that occur when the sexual practices of his society are compared to those of the Natchez people: the private becomes public, the forbidden becomes the expected, the sinful becomes the sanctioned.

Pénicaud's confusion over the failure of Natchez mores to match Catholic standards is seen further in some of the incongruities that occur in the Natchez chapter. For example, the same girls that Pénicaud denounces as sluts in the passage just quoted are earlier praised for their beauty and grace.

The girls are courteous and love the French very much. We found it fascinating to watch them dancing during their festivals, when they put on their most beautiful braguetts, and the women their pretty white dresses, all of them bareheaded, their long black hair hanging to their knees and as low as the heels of many of them (86).

Maybe Pénicaud's later condemnation of female licentiousness springs in part from a white man's jealousy over red men's opportunities with Indian women. For although the Indian girls "love the French very much," Pénicaud does not refer to a single young Frenchman being seduced into dancing "à la Missicipyene." More likely a factor than this hypothetical envy, Pénicaud's religiosity, which is revealed throughout the narrative, would not have permitted him to approve of free love as permitted in Natchez society.
Pénicaut moves from sexual mores to social stratification in his long account of the Indian nation that has both impressed and allured him more than any other. Much of the early scholarly understanding of Natchez social order derives from Pénicaut, and his relation of Natchez hierarchy is perhaps the most well-known section of the narrative.

After relating the famous Natchez caste system of Suns (nobles) and Stinkards (commoners), Pénicaut brings up religion. Not surprisingly, the author feels compelled to criticize this aspect of Natchez life, just as he criticizes Natchez sexuality. For instance, Pénicaut refers to the temple prophecies of the Grand Chief and his wife as "a thousand lies" (92). Furthermore, he recounts with horror the practice of killing many innocent persons as part of the funereal homage to a deceased noble. In fact, the funerary passage greatly surpasses the sex-dance section in luridness and shock effect.

Pénicaut’s description of the funeral ceremonies is worth quoting at length.

It happened in our time that the Grand Noble Female Chief died and we witnessed the funeral ceremonies, which were indeed the most horrifying tragedy that could be seen. It made us shudder with horror, me and all my comrades. . . . As soon as she died, her husband, who wasn’t at all noble, was immediately strangled by the first boy that she had borne him, so that he might accompany his wife to the Grand Village, where they think they go after such a fine beginning. . . . A kind of triumphal chariot was made inside the house, and upon it were placed the Dead One and her strangled husband. A little while later, a dozen little infants that had been strangled to death were borne in and arranged about the Dead One; the fathers and mothers took them there by order of the Dead Female Chief’s oldest child, who could then, as Grand Chief, bespeak as many persons as he wished to have put to death, honoring his mother’s funeral.

In the village square, fourteen scaffolds were erected. . . . Upon each scaffold was put a person who was to accompany the Dead One to the other world. On these scaffolds they are surrounded by their nearest of kin. Sometimes they are forewarned ten years in advance of their death; this is an honor to their kin. Usually they have offered their death while the Dead One was alive, out of the great love they bear her; it is they themselves who have
spun the cord with which they are strangled. Then -- dressed in their finest clothes, with a large shell in their right hand, and accompanied by their closest kinsmen (for example, if the father of a family is to die, his eldest son walks behind him carrying the cord under his arm and a casse-côte in his right hand, uttering a horrible scream called the death cry) -- then all these unfortunate victims come down from their scaffolds once every quarter hour and, meeting in the middle of the square, dance together before the temple and before the house of the Dead Female Chief; then they remount their scaffolds and take their places once more. They are highly respected on that day, and each one has five servants. Their faces are painted all over with vermillion. As for me, I believe their purpose was to hide their fear of death. . . .

Four days later they began the ceremony of the Corp­ses' March. The fathers and mothers who had brought their children picked them up and held them out on their hands. The oldest of these children did not seem to be over three years old. They took their places to right and left of the door of the Dead Female Chief's house. The fourteen victims doomed to be strangled came and took up similar positions. The chiefs and the Dead One's kinsmen appeared there, likewise, in mourning -- that is, with their hair cut off. At that time they made such frightful howls that we thought the devils had come out of hell just to get to this place and howl. The unfortunates, doomed to death, danced while kins­men of the Dead One sang. When they started off, two by two, in that grand funeral procession, the Dead One was brought from her house, four savages carrying her on their shoulders as on a stretcher. As soon as she was brought forth, the house was set on fire -- that is the grand fash­ion with nobles. The fathers with their dead children out on their hands marched in front at intervals of four paces, and after taking ten steps they dropped the children to the ground. Those carrying the Dead One walked on top of these children and three times marched around them. The fathers gathered them up then and fell back in line; and every ten steps they repeated this frightful ritual till they came to the temple, so that the children were mangled in pieces by the time that fine funeral procession got there.

While the Noble Woman was being buried inside the tem­ple, the victims were undressed before the door; and after they had been seated on the ground, one savage sat down on the knees of each while a second savage behind him held his arms. Cords were put around their necks and deer skins placed over their heads, and they were made to swallow three tobacco pills each, with a drink of water to moisten them in their stomachs, which made them lose consciousness. Then the Dead One's kinsmen lined up beside these poor unfortu­nates, to right and left; and singing the while, each pulled
an end of the cord about a victim’s neck as a slipknot until they were dead. They were then buried (92-95).

Obviously, Pénicaud feels compelled to condemn the religious practices, funeral rituals, and sexual activities of the Natchez not only because they are at odds with his morality but also because they cause the suffering and death of many innocent people. Thus, the humanitarian quality that permeates Louisiana-French literature makes itself evident in Pénicaud’s social concerns and desire for societal reform.

Pénicaud is not optimistic about social change among the Natchez, however. For example, he says of the slaughter inherent in royal funerals,

This nation follows this execrable ritual even to this day, in spite of all that has been done to dissuade them. Our missionaries have never been able to succeed in dissuading them: they have been able to do no more than get permission sometimes to baptize those poor little children before their fathers strangled them. Moreover, this nation is too stubborn in its religion, which humors the wicked inclinations of their depraved natures so that there has been no progress in converting them and in establishing Christianity among them (96).

Clearly, in Pénicaud’s view, Natchez religion not only permits murder and licentiousness, it even demands these practices on certain occasions. Pénicaud feels obligated to denounce what he sees as a demonic inversion of vices to virtues, and for this reason he allows long depictions of shocking behavior to enter an otherwise favorable portrait of a people he admires and enjoys. The Natchez interlude comes to an end when the young Frenchmen become so troubled by the funeral spectacle that they must leave their Indian hosts. Nevertheless, both the happiness and the horror of this entertaining chapter make it one of the most readable and most famous of the narrative.

Chapter 8 highlights a second occasion in which Bienville sets Pénicaud and a band of young men free to live among the Indians
because of diminishing food supplies at Mobile. As in the earlier Natchez section, the second Indian chapter also presents an idyllic picture of carefree youth enjoying the fat of the land and the company of doting "savages." But this time the young Frenchmen are spared the horror of regal funerals and sexual bacchanalia. In fact, Chapter 8 presents nothing less than an Indian utopia in the Acolapissa-Natchitoches village on Lake Pontchartrain. Unfortunately, that utopia is shattered in a later chapter. Nevertheless, in Chapter 8, as in Chapter 6, youth and fair weather again set the stage for a sentimental sojourn of freedom and pleasure. "The oldest among us was no more than thirty and the youngest twenty-four. It was the beginning of May, and the weather was the finest that could be desired" (105-106). Thus begins the nostalgic account of Pénicaud's second Indian interlude.

Bearing presents of game, Pénicaud's troupe enters the Indian village to the delight of the entire Acolapissa-Natchitoches population, all of whom embrace each member of the party. That delight leads to festivity, and some scenes from the feast add humor to the text. Pénicaud notes of a night of innocent dancing that is a far cry from the promiscuity of the Natchez dance festival,

We had in our group a companion named Picard, who had brought a violin with him. He could play it well enough to have these savages do some figure-dancing in step. They had us nearly dying of laughter, for the musical instrument had the whole village drawn up around Picard; it was the most comical sight in the world to see them open their eyes in amazement and every now and then cut the most comical capers ever seen. But it was quite another matter when they saw us dance a minuet -- two boys dancing together. They would gladly have spent the whole night watching us and listening to the violin (106-107).

On the second night of dancing, Pénicaud notes,

Our [French] musician endeavored to keep time with the drum and the [Indian] singers' voices. Although he made a most painful attempt that drew upon all his skill and caused us
all to laugh out loud, he never was able to approximate their rhythm; and, as a matter of fact, their singing is more savage than the savages themselves. Although it is an incessant repetition, Picard could not get their pitch; but he made amends by teaching many of the girls in the village to dance the minuet and la bourrée (109-110).

The joyful co-existence of red and white persons, which leads to good-natured humor at the expense of each other, continues for many months and sets the stage for the most happy lapse of time to be found in the narrative outside of Saint Denis’ reunion with his wife in Mexico.

As in the earlier Natchez episode, in the second Indian interlude Pénicaud assumes an importance that he does not have while in the company of older, higher-ranking Frenchmen. Pénicaud the self-appointed scribe of official explorations and military campaigns becomes Pénicaud the hero of youthful hunting parties and encounters with the Indians. Pénicaud obviously takes advantage of the second furlough to heighten his grandeur before the reader. For instance, the reason the group arrives at the Acolapissa shore is that

when I heard that we were to be given this liberty, I proposed to several of my comrades, not to go back to the Natchez, but to go among the Colapissas, with whom I was acquainted. During the preceding year I had escorted the Nassitoches there to live with them on the shore of Lake Pontchartrain. I understood and spoke their language well and was even a friend of the chiefs of both these nations (105).

Once the young men arrive among the Acolapissa-Natchitoches, Pénicaud receives special treatment.

For my part, I was lodged with the Chief of the Nassitoches. On my arrival, he had invited me to stay with him, and he led me away. I was the person that, acting for M. de St. Denis, had conducted this chief among the Colapissas the year before to live there with them. I knew him as one of the most honorable men among the savages of the region. Since that time, he had been indebted to me for saving his life, as I shall show later on (107).

Even though Pénicaud uses the account of the second sojourn among the Indians to enhance his image, he nonetheless attempts to be modest at
the same time, pointing out that he had earned special favors because of his faithful service to the Indians.

As the Acolapissa-Natchitoches episode progresses, it becomes even more personalized, reading in places like a private diary rather than a history or travel account meant for public edification. In addition to turning highly subjective, the text also resorts to superlatives, as is the case in the Natchez chapter.

Interestingly, Pénicaut seems as much at home in the Indian village as in a French province, and he relates to the Indians as he would to French peers. He notes of his lodgings with the Natchitoches chief, "I was not sorry that I was lodged with him, for in his house I received every possible favor. He had two daughters that were the most beautiful of all the savage girls in this district" (107). After a night of dancing with the Indians, Pénicaut wakes up late the next morning to feast on an exquisite dinner. The young Frenchman takes this opportunity to comment favorably on Indian fare, manners, and modesty, as though a Native-American soirée and grasse matinée could equal any Continental counterparts.

Acceptance of Native Americans reveals itself further in the young Frenchmen's vying for female Indian attention. Pénicaut confesses,

At this time two of my comrades came in to see me, one of them being Picard, the violin player. As soon as my host's elder daughter saw him, she kissed him. I was not so sorry about this as I would have been if it had been the younger daughter kissing him (108).

Not waiting around for affection in the Natchitoches chief's home, Pénicaut goes shortly thereafter to the house of the "Grand Chief of the Colapissas." He relates, "When we got there, I embraced his daughter and also gave her a present of half an ell of the same material that I had given the daughters of the Chief of the Nassitoches" (108). Pénicaut's intimate interaction with Indian women illustrates
not only a French attraction to Native-American females but also a French need to secure Indian affection along with Indian loyalty.

Pénicaud continues on his merry way through the tribe, noting that when his party left the Grand Chief of the Acolapissas, “we then went into all the huts of the savages, one after the other, they vying with one another in entertaining us” (109). Later, “when the sun had sunk low and all had eaten supper, we danced, as on the evening before, quite far into the night” (109). It seems that for these young Frenchmen New Year’s back home in Mother France could not be spent more agreeably than a May day among the Louisiana Indians!

For the Native Americans’ part, Pénicaud asserts that “the savages were delighted to have us with them” (110), and by wintertime the Natchitoches-Acolapissa are still enjoying the company of young Frenchmen. Regarding himself, Pénicaud affirms,

As far as I was personally concerned, I was just as happy there in winter as in summer, for, to keep myself busy whenever I returned from hunting, I would sit close by the fire and teach my host’s daughters to speak French. They made me die of laughing, with their savage pronunciation, which comes entirely from the throat whereas French is spoken solely from the tongue, without being guttural (113).

Pénicaud’s depiction of the unmalicious amusement that red and white persons share over their fumbling apprenticeship in each other’s culture underscores the acceptance that a good number of the French and Native-American inhabitants have for the opposite society. Such moments of comedy, festivity, work, and learning as exchanged between Pénicaud’s French and Indian personages are especially touching in light of preceding and subsequent generations of tragedy that mark the joint histories of Euro- and Native Americans.

The time comes for the young Frenchmen to leave the Indians, and they do so regretfully.

M. de Bienville ordered that savages be sent to all places where we had gone to subsist, to notify everybody to return
to Mobile. As soon as we learned the news, we became quite melancholy over it; but we had to make up our minds to leave. The savages, too were distressed, for they really loved us, the girls in particular, who were very sorry to see us leave, among them the ones Picard had been teaching to dance to the tune of the violin (115).

The white men leave amid many embraces and a shower of gifts. When they return to Mobile and tell Bienville and his officers of "our pleasant stay among the Colapissas," Pénicaux notes that "this pleased them" (115). What pleases Pénicaux and his group the most about their return to Mobile is the chance to taste wine again, for "the wine consoled us for the loss of the favors of [the Indian] girls" (116).2

In addition to Chapters 6 and 8, Chapter 13 is also an Indian chapter, detailing the life of the Kaskaskia Illinois. Unlike Chapters 6 and 8, however, Chapter 13 does not present a romanticized sojourn among the Indians. For, instead of venturing off in the company of young men who have been granted months of leisure, Pénicaux is sent to Upper Louisiana as part of an official detachment assigned to halt the scandalous behavior of French-Canadian traders among the Indians. Although interesting because of its account of yet another tribe's customs and livelihood, Chapter 13, unlike the two earlier Indian chapters, does not digress into personal, sentimentalized encounters with red people. Luxury, leisure, beauty, festivity, and horror (some of Pénicaux's main interests in Chapters 6 and 8) do not figure prominently here. Hence, the shock effect of Chapter 6 and the comic relief of Chapter 8 are not evident. Perhaps because the Kaskaskia more closely resemble Europeans in their way of life than do the Indians of Lower Louisiana, Pénicaux makes more comparisons with Continentals here than he does in previous descriptions of Native Americans. The Illinois country's closer resemblance to his homeland may cause Pénicaux to wax wistful, but the lack of the exotic keeps him from
being swept into engrossing accounts of the strange. More than any­
thing, the Kaskaskia chapter focuses on Illinois industriousness and
acquisition of European ways.

Of all the Indian groups presented in the narrative, the Kaskaskia
are perhaps the most Europeanized. For one thing, “The Cascassias
Illinois are hard-working and skillful in tilling the fields. They
plow them with a plow, which has not yet been done elsewhere in all
the Lower Missicipy” (137). Even the land the Kaskaskia occupy more
closely resembles Pénicaud’s birthplace than does Lower Louisiana.
“Wheat grows there as fine as any in France” (137-138), and there are
two horse mills and one windmill to grind the produce. Kaskaskia wom­
en render buffalo hair “as fine as wool off an English sheep,” and
“out of this they make dresses that are almost like the dresses of the
women of Brittany or else like the dressing gowns of our ladies of
France” (138). These red women also make deer tendon “as fine and as
white as the most beautiful Mechlin thread” (139).

By far, the greatest Kaskaskia approximation of European culture
is their conversion to Christianity. Most significantly for Pénicaud,
this conversion has reduced the instances of red-on-red cruelty in
Illinois. In addition, it forbids the ritualized premarital promiscu­
ity seen in the Natchez.

To counterbalance the unsettling report of the Natchez mating game
(unsettling, in part, for Pénicaud because women play a role equal to
that of men), Pénicaud gives an account of more orderly, male­
dominated Kaskaskia courtship.

When a Frenchman or an Illinois has the intention of marry­
ing one of their daughters, he sends a present in keeping
with his means to the girl’s brother. . . . If the brother
receives it and gives his consent, he invites his parents to
come to his house and asks their advice as to whether he
will be doing the right thing if he gives his sister in mar­
rriage to the suitor who asks for her. If the parents speak
of him as an honorable man, then the brother gives each parent a portion of the present . . . ; and this very same day the parents send the girl's brother a more substantial present than the one they have received. When the brother has received all the presents from his parents, he has them carried at once to the suitor's home; and the next day the suitor comes to pay his respects to the girl's brother and her father and mother. Together they go . . . to have themselves written into the marriage register. Three banns are published on three consecutive Sundays or feast days; and they are afterwards made man and wife at Mass, as is done in France. Ordinarily the suitor is expected to give the wedding feast, at his home; but on the day before the wedding, each kinsman that intends to be there sends a piece of meat to the suitor; and next day, the day of the wedding, when the party leaves the church, the kinsmen escort the bridegroom and his wife to his home and there the wedding feast is given. It continues till about night, with dances in the local fashion.

If, on the other hand, the suitor who has sent the present is not accepted, his gift is returned to him that very day (139-141).

Skipping over the fact that Kaskaskia women apparently do not have the freedom that Natchez women do in determining their marital fate,
Péniçaunt proceeds to comment,

If Christian parents in France, at the time their near kinsmen are married, employed the same charity that these Catholic savages practise toward their kinsmen -- in sending them, instead of a little present like the one they have received, another much more substantial, which serves to establish them in marriage and maintain them in their standard -- one would not see in France so many poor families ashamed of having to beg. There would not be so many girls, even of good family, confined against their will in a convent, where most of them, by their grumbling and despair, call down the curse of heaven upon themselves and upon those who have forced them to enter the cloister (141).

Although he does not argue for greater participation of the Kaskaskia female in the arrangement of her marriage and even though he deplores the privileged position of Natchez girls before their marriage (not to mention the power of female Natchez Suns long after their deaths, when ritualized killings are still being carried out in their honor), Péniçaunt still reveals himself to be socially conscious and sensitive to
women by exhorting the French to learn from the Kaskaskia. Obviously, the communal caretaking characteristic of this Native-American society impresses Pénicaud, and he chides French people for neglecting unrelated members of their society in addition to kin. Also evident in Pénicaud's remarks is a psychological insight that keeps him from being blindly pietistic in his religious outlook. Far from viewing the Church as a cure-all, a last resort, or an institution free of blemish, he sees it as an establishment in need of reform, like any other part of society. And one way to reform the Church is to stop forcing poor women without religious vocations into convents.

Clearly, the nearly utopian quality of Kaskaskia life causes Pénicaud, and Dumont to some extent, to hold this hybridized, racially mixed community up as a model for Europeans to emulate. Already whites in the form of "Canadian rakes" threaten the security and morality of the Illinois establishments, and Pénicaud would have them eradicated as swiftly as he would any red or foreign menace.4

As in the two earlier furloughs spent among the Indians before the Kaskaskia venture, Pénicaud again assumes an important position when Saint Denis sends him to gather the Natchitoches Indians living among the Acolapissas on Lake Pontchartrain. The plan is to take them to Saint Denis at Biloxi and then head to the Natchitoches' former home on the Red River. Unfortunately, Pénicaud's visit to the Acolapissa village is not as happy as the one in Chapter 8. The account of the pitiable event reads as follows.

The night I got there, I was given a fine reception by the chiefs of the Colapissas and the Nassiotoches; but the morning of the next day, when I set out with the Nassiotoches and their families, the Colapissas were seized with jealousy or, rather, with rage. Seeing that the Nassiotoches women too, were leaving and were going away with their husbands, they fell upon the Nassiotoches with blows of guns, arrows, and hatchets and killed seventeen quite close to me without my being able to stop them. All I could do was save the Chief
by keeping him behind me. They seized more than fifty women or girls — the others, men and women, having fled right and left into the woods, wherever they could. When night fell, they came like lost sheep and joined me on the shore of the lake. All that I could get together I took away to M. de St. Denis, who was greatly surprised at this grievous occurrence. He intended to take revenge for this at another opportunity and to make the Colapissas give back the women and the girls they had taken from the Nassitoches (145-146).

This terrible departure scene mars the memory of the utopian months Pénicaught spent among these same Indians earlier in the narrative. It also shows Saint Denis' intent on both establishing justice among Indians and protecting weaker, downtrodden tribes.5

After this sad return to the Acolapissa-Natchitoches, Pénicaunt also revisits the Natchez. Like the return to the Acolapissa-Natchitoches, Chapter 16 is not the romantic Indian interlude that Chapters 6 and 8 are. This time, in suspense-filled discourse, Pénicaunt highlights the beginning of troubles that lead ultimately to the Natchez massacre of the French in 1729. A far cry from the earlier sentimental sojourn, this stay sees Pénicaunt suspicious and fearful after hearing the news that Natchez guides have murdered some French traders and returned to Natchez with the traders' possessions. Serving as a warehouse guard at the time, Pénicaunt, along with the other Frenchmen at Natchez, feigns ignorance of the murders and pretends not to notice the stolen goods concealed in Indian huts. All the while, the French keep a close watch for their lives.

In a passage whose pathos and use of dialogue show literary artistry, Pénicaunt skillfully imparts the suspense and terror of those Frenchmen stationed at Natchez in the precarious days before a potential Indian uprising.

Before leaving, M. de la Loire had a good deal of trouble in persuading his young brother to stay to guard the warehouse of Company merchandise, for he saw the evident danger that he ran, which would have been still greater than we thought.
if God had not protected us. After embracing this young man, we left him at the Natchez greatly distressed over our having to leave him behind; and we went off with the eight savages the Grand Chief had given us to help us row up the river. When we got in our boats, that traitor of a Grand Chief instructed his savages, quite loud and in our presence, to do whatever we told them and not to approach the river bank if we should find any people on the bank signaling for us to come to them, for fear they might be people that would wish to do us harm or make an attempt upon our lives.

During the evening of the first day after we had left the Natchez to go up to the Illinois, and while we were camped on the river bank, one of the eight savages came and sat down close beside me and, after asking me for a pipe to smoke, which I gave him, he whispered to me in such a way that I alone heard him: "Where do you think you are going, Frenchman?" I replied: "To the Illinois." But, after thinking a moment, I inquired why he had asked me that question. The savage answered that his heart was weeping because we were to be killed the next day and that the chief named Le Barbu, the most wicked of the Natchez chiefs, was waiting for us at Le Petit Gouffre with one hundred and fifty men to break our heads. This speech did not surprise me, because one of their petty chiefs, a friend of mine, had already warned me about it before we left their village, although he had not said it so plainly. I had already reported this to M. de la Loire, but we had not taken that first warning seriously enough to break off our journey. However, the second warning forced us to pay more attention (168-160).

Despite the treachery of many Natchez who are led by a man whom the Natchez informant labels "the most wicked of the Natchez chiefs," Pénicaout acknowledges that the French still can claim a good number of Natchez supporters. Thus, Pénicaout does not condemn the entire Natchez nation for the crimes of some. In fact, the "petty chief"'s loyalty offsets the wicked chief's evil designs, and the fidelity of the eight guides accompanying M. de la Loire, who all admit the impending ambush and help the French avoid it, outweighs the deeds of the original Natchez murderers. After all, the eight reds possibly put their lives (not to mention their reputation among fellow tribesmen) on the line for the sake of helping white men.
When it comes to rescuing M. de la Loire's brother back in the Natchez village, Pénicaud becomes the hero of the day, again. The rescue is replete with melodrama and suspense.

M. de la Loire, the elder, was, beyond everything else, greatly perplexed about how he could withdraw his brother... He talked to me about this, all the while appearing to me to be greatly depressed. I told him that if he would permit me I would go after his brother by myself and would bring him back with me or perish in the attempt.

After making our arrangements to do that, we set out at three o'clock in the afternoon in order to get to the landing at the Natchez village one hour before sunset, so that I could go to the village by daylight, as it was one league from the river bank. When we got to the landing, I told our men not to get out of the boats and to wait for me till midnight and that, if I did not return then, they could count on it that I was dead and all they would have to do then would be to leave.

I took my gun, my powder flask, and my bullet pouch and got out of the boat to head for the village. M. de la Loire came with me as far as the edge of the prairie. He embraced me, weeping, and told me that if I brought his brother back he would not be the only one that would show appreciation for such a great service and that all his family would always be under obligation to me. I told him nothing, except to wait for me till daybreak and, God helping, I would do all in my power.

When I was in the middle of the prairie, in sight of the village, several Natchez savages saw me from afar and ran to tell the Chevalier de la Loire (for so he was called) that a Frenchman was coming... That young man... ran to meet me and flung his arms about my neck, asking me why I had come back. I told him, for the moment, that I had got sick, and when I got inside his hut I requested him to send for the Grand Chief. When he came a moment afterwards, I told him that six Frenchmen had got sick in our boats, which was the reason we had turned back to the landing, and that on the next day we would have to have thirty men to carry our merchandise into the Company's warehouse at his village. He replied to me that he would go and have them notified and that we had done the right thing to come back down the river because the Yasoux savages were no good and could have waylaid us to break our heads. I thanked him, telling him that he was right, although I well perceived all his treachery.

After he had gone, I told the Chevalier de la Loire that we had to think about a way to escape, even if we were guarded by three savages that were sleeping in the hut where we were sleeping. As soon as I told him that, the young man became greatly disturbed and every minute asked me if we would really be able to escape. To reassure him, I told him...
that he had only to leave things to me and we would certain-
ly escape. We got ready for the attempt: I made him load
his gun, [fill his horn with powder and his pouch with bul-
lets, and made him put his gun] by the head of his bed, so
that he would have no trouble in locating it.

When I saw that the three savages who were spending
the night in our hut were asleep, I was seized with an urge
to stab them in the heart with my bayonet; but the young man
restrained me, being absolutely opposed -- for fear, he
said, that there would be noise which would wake the other
savages, all of whom were then asleep. So, I used this time
to make him leave ahead of me, and after I had gently opened
the door I told him to take the road through the prairie to
the landing.

When I felt that he must be fully a league ahead, I
double-locked the door from the outside, shutting the three
savages up. I threw the key in a pile of ordure and began
to run after him, my gun in my hand. At the edge of the
woods, where I had told him to wait for me, I caught up with
him. As soon as he saw me, he asked me if the savages had
awaked. "They are all sleeping soundly," I told him; "so it
is now safe for us to walk." Even so, we ran on for nearly
a quarter of a league without stopping, so eager were we to
get to the landing. Every now and then the moon would come
out, and the Chevalier de la Loire would look behind him to
see whether any one was following us.

At last, thank the Lord, we reached the end of of the
prairie, which is quite close to the landing. Here we found
M. de la Loire, the elder, . . . keeping a lookout for us.
After embracing one another fervently, we got in our boats
and made the eight savages go ashore. M. de la Loire gave a
reward to each of the eight savages and a more substantial
present to the one who had first warned me. As we were
leaving, they asked us where we were going. We told them
that we were going to Mobile and that they would see us
again shortly.

As soon as we had gone, the eight savages we had left
on the river bank went back home to the Natchez and notified
the Grand Chief that the French had gone. The entire vil-
lage immediately became alarmed over this; but the Grand
Chief said absolutely that that could not be and that the
Chevalier de la Loire and Pénicaud had gone to bed in their
hut, with three savages; but the eight savages told him for
the second time that the Chevalier de la Loire and Pénicaud
had gone with the other Frenchmen. The Grand Chief got up
instantly and went and knocked madly on the door of the
Chevalier de la Loire's hut, and hearing the savages say
that they were inside, that they could not open up, that
they did not have the key, he had the door of the hut beaten
in. He rushed to the Chevalier de la Loire's bed. Failing
to find us, he ordered a rough handling for the three sav-
ages to whom he had given the responsibility of guarding
us. They gave as their excuses that we must surely have been wizards and that they had not heard the slightest sound. He seized all the merchandise in the warehouse and the clothes left in the Chevalier de la Loire's hut (170-173).

In the well-crafted story recounted above, an anecdote that harks back to the one relating De Boisbriant's pawnship among the Choctaw-Chickasaw, Pénicaut again knowingly or unknowingly conveys the pitiableness of Frenchmen in Native America, this time the state of his compatriots being represented by the desperate De La Loire brothers. At the same time, the author also indicates the apprenticeship in survival that the condition of the outnumbered French in Louisiana dictates for the very continuance of isolated white enclaves in the colony. Simply put, the French must become like the Indian, and in many cases that means outwitting the Indian through use of the Indian's own tactics, something Pénicaut, Le Page, Bossu, and others do on more than one occasion themselves and which they relate in entertaining anecdotes.

When Pénicaut's party proceeds to the Tunica village, the author further reveals an unwillingness to condemn all Indians on account of the treachery of some Natchez. Downstream from Natchez, the Frenchmen meet the missionary Father Antoine Davion. Shortly thereafter, three Natchez arrive with word from their chief for the Tunica to kill the missionary and join the Natchez and the English against the French. Pénicaut notes,

The Chief of the Tonicas -- as level-headed a man as a savage could be, but incapable of treachery, a virtue very rare among savages -- was quite astonished at such a speech. The first thing he wanted to do was have their heads broken. He wished to know M. Davion's feelings about this. M. Davion did not wish to permit it and advised him to send them back without doing any hurt (174).

The passage above illustrates one Indian chief's loyalty to the French
in the face of another chief’s threat. It also depicts the French as being more lenient toward treacherous Indians than a chief allied with the French would be.

After the Natchez murder another Frenchman and once Bienville is convinced of their threat to French security, the French march in earnest against the Natchez. Bienville erects a fort near the Tunicas and summons the Natchez leaders to meet him there. Frustrated in getting the main culprit in the plot against the French, Bienville settles for executing some of the murderers present in the delegation to his fort. Pénicaud notes,

> Among these four was a man by the name of Le Barbu, the most wicked of all the petty chiefs: he had treacherously committed a great many murders, and all the other savage nations dreaded him and for a long time had wished for his death (179).

Pénicaud obviously believes that Bienville rendered many Indians a favor in avenging the murders of five Frenchmen, for the white men were not the only ones to suffer from the whims of certain powerful Indians. Consistently, the Indian villains that Pénicaud presents throughout the narrative menace red as well as white lives.

Bienville draws up a treaty with the Natchez and sends a group of Frenchmen (Pénicaud included) to establish a fort at Natchez. Pénicaud notes, "We arrived at the Natchez village with our weapons in good condition, as it is always necessary to be suspicious of savages, who are greatly addicted to betrayal of their word" (181). Despite such comments, which experience has convinced Pénicaud to hold true, the narrator again does not condemn all the Natchez for the deeds of some of their number. Rather, he ends on a positive note.

We marched in with our drum beating, our flag unfurled, in proper order, so that all the savages were attracted from their other villages; when they learned of our arrival, they came. All of them seemed quite satisfied to see us arrive for the purpose of concluding the peace there, as the common run of the people liked the French very much and had had no
part in the murder of the five Frenchmen that had been killed (181).

Returning to the sentiments expressed in earlier passages, Pénicaud asserts that "we remained a week in the village, where we were very well entertained by the savages during that time" (181). The Natchez readily agree to Bienville's plans for a fort at Natchez, and, once completed, it houses Bienville for a year. Remarkably, Bienville even gives in to the Natchez plea to spare La Terre Blanche, who instigated the problems between the French and the Natchez in the first place. Clearly, in his depiction of problems in Franco-Indian relations, Pénicaud desires reconciliation over war or any other form of violent resolution of difficulties.

As seen throughout Pénicaud's narrative by now, the author's approach to Native Americans is one that stresses cooperation and mutual protection. Far from advocating racial separation, Pénicaud highlights the mingling of reds and whites on many levels. What is more, the author himself does not shrink from intimate interaction with the Indian, an indication that he views reds as essentially the equals of whites, albeit the former are viewed as less enlightened and less advanced in some areas. Throughout the narrative, Frenchmen learn as much from Indians as Indians do from Frenchmen, and the two groups not only live with, instruct, and rely on each other for military and economic support, they also partake of each other's festivities and pastimes. When Pénicaud criticizes the Indian repeatedly in three areas -- "irreligion," reliability, and inhumanity -- his prejudices indicate a conviction that the European way in these instances is the better and that Indians can only benefit by adopting it. In other areas, Pénicaud acknowledges the superiority of the Indian approach, and, outside of the domains to which the author hopes the Indian will convert, the narrative is remarkably free of bias and never condemnatory.
of Indians as a whole. In fact, Pénicaud's wish is that through the Catholic faith and French government Indians and Frenchmen may live peacefully side by side and even become one, as is happening in the Kaskaskia region. As will be seen in the analysis of the next author who treats Native Americans in depth, Dumont de Montigny holds to many attitudes regarding Indians as set forth by Pénicaud.

Some critics, such as De Villiers, have dismissed Dumont as being "peu flatteur" of Indians. Befitting his crude manner of expressing himself, Dumont does at times make caustic generalizations concerning Indians. However, the "poor poet" also contradicts those hasty stereotypes (prounced, for the most part, simply in passing) by citing immediate exceptions, by saying exactly the opposite of what he has just uttered, or by providing lengthy depictions of Indians behaving in such a way that prove his pejorative statements to be indicators of fleet emotions rather than deep convictions. In actuality, white people receive the bulk of Dumont's biting criticism, and in his long poem Frenchmen, Canadians, Spaniards, and Englishmen do as much harm as good, by turns, for the Louisiana colony as do the various Indian nations occupying the region. When it comes to religion, to reliability and truth-telling in the European sense, and to cruelty, Dumont, like Pénicaud, unabashedly views Native Americans as inferior, barbaric, and in need of Euro-Catholic salvation. Even so, Dumont's belief in a pardonable red "unenlightenment" spares most Indians the full fury of his quill. For Frenchmen who should know better (Dumont feels), it is a different story. And no one receives an attack that can compare with the long, bitter diatribes reserved for Dumont's arch villain Bienville.

In his "Avant Propos" to Dumont's Poème en Vers, De Villiers notes the importance of Dumont's Mémoires Historiques (the prose rendition
of much of the Poème) in supplying Europeans with early knowledge on Louisiana Indians (273). In his opening remarks to the Count d'Argenson, Dumont signals Indians as one of the most important components of his long poem, “Qui ne renferme en lui que des faits de Sauvages” (290). The poet informs his reader,

Vous connôitez, de plus, toutes les actions
Des Sauvages du lieu, leurs danses, leurs façons
D'agir en chaque chose, enfin la manière
D'enterrer leur grand chef -- elle est singulière (289).

These initial comments contain no pejorative references to the Indians other than the term sauvage (“savage”), which was used universally by Europeans at the time (Le Page being a major exception) to refer to Native Americans. Dumont’s advertisement leads his audience to anticipate a wondrous volume of curiosities concerning the exotic inhabitants of the strange New World, a thorough introduction, as it were, to Indian life. The audience is not let down.

Bypassing the Indian momentarily, Dumont begins the poem with something Pénicaud brings up toward the end of his narrative: the battle between the Spanish and the French at Pensacola in 1719. The skirmish actually occurred before Dumont arrived in Louisiana, De Villiers asserts in a note to the Poème en Vers (293). This first conflict mentioned in the poem involves the French and another European group, not the French and Native Americans.

The first villain to appear in the poem, the first character to speak any dialogue, likewise is European, not Native American. He is the Spanish captor of “Le sieur de Riquebourg” (Captain Louis Ponce- reau de Richebourg, whom Dumont depicts as being imprisoned with other Frenchmen during a mission to Cuba). Dumont refers to Richebourg’s Spanish host as “L’Espagnol inhumain,” an enemy who puts the French captives in chains, starves them, and insults them without ceasing. The Spaniard lures the Frenchmen into treason with the following:
Je parle à cœur ouvert:
Ah! prenez avec nous parti contre la France,
Rien ne vous manquera, vous aurez abondance
De tout ce qui peut seul contenter vos désirs;
En outre, vous aurez le plus grand des plaisirs
De nous avoir amis, au lieu de la misère
Que vous ressentez tous (293-294).

Many succumb to the temptation, but Richebourg remains true to France and thereby becomes one of the first heroes of the poem.

The early attention that Dumont places on Franco-Spanish plotting against French sovereignty in the New World is important to keep in mind later when the author begins to point out the damage that seeming disingenuousness and untrustworthiness on the Indians' part does to French security. French deserters, not Indian warriors who practice the martial art of deception, are the poem's first group to receive derogatory generalization because of their treachery. The former are blatantly corrupt and disloyal, the latter inheritors of a tradition of effective conniving in service of the tribe.

The French deserters are further villainized by the fact that long after the Spanish have started giving up the fight at Pensacola,

C'étoient nos déserteurs, qui, de fureur, de rage,
Amorçioient les canons et faisoient cet ouvrage.
Voulant vaincre ou mourir, plutôt que de tomber
Dans les mains d'un vainqueur, qui ne peut pardonner
A de lâches Français, qui, par un fait horrible,
Méritent le supplice et la peine terrible,
Qui doit être le prix d'un lâche déserteur,
Qui court, en désertant, à son triste malheur (299).

Even those Indians who will be portrayed as duplicitous and treacherous later in the poem are never labelled "lâches déserteurs." After all, they remain faithful to their own people, regardless of their seemingly disloyal dealings with the French.

While the Spanish and the French deserters in the opening scene heap warfare, imprisonment, and torture upon the loyal French, Indians come to the latter's aid and turn the conflict to a French victory.
As Dumont notes,

Trois heures on se bat de très belle façon,
Tant à coups de fusil qu’à grand coups de canon.
Celui qui commandoit le grand fort du rivage,
Sur le premier discours, craignant fort le Sauvage,
Se rendit à l’instant, sans en venir aux coups (297).

The depiction of European cruelty to fellow European juxtaposed with Indian loyalty to the French makes Dumont’s first portrayal of Native Americans in his long poem a favorable one. In fact, Dumont lifts Indians along with Richebourg to heroic stature by showing their efforts to help the French, a point not to be overlooked in light of the stress that De Villiers places on less complimentary references to Native Americans that occur later in the text.

Once the French and Spanish establish peace and Dumont shifts attention to the colonization of Biloxi, Indians make a second appearance in the poem, still as saviors of the French. While French officials back on the Continent fail to send Louisianians enough food, clothing, and other essentials for survival, Dumont’s colonists, like Pénicaut’s, escape starvation and a multiplicity of other miseries through recourse to Indian neighbors.

Le peuple, les soldats, tous s’en furent aux villages
Que, pour lors, avoient faits les barbares Sauvages,
Qui donnoient aux François force sagamite,
Et tout avec plaisir et affabilité.
Tout ce monde, pour lors, pendant cette misère,
Ne vivoit que comme eux, restant dessus leur terre (303).

Dumont ungrudgingly acknowledges the early settlers’ dependence upon Native Americans for survival and points out the cheerful willingness of Indians to assist and coexist with the French at Biloxi. Furthermore, Dumont sees nothing wrong with Frenchmen living like Indians at this time. And while he praises the Indians for their lifesaving support in this passage, elsewhere he condemns the wasteful projects that preoccupy some of the colony’s white leaders. Later, when Dumont
mentions the Arkansas post, he concedes that the settlement's success results from its proximity to "un superbe village" of Indians, who provide the French with "des rafraîchissements" (335).

When Dumont first mentions the Natchez Indians, he, like Pénicaud, does not allude to the mounting troubles that the French eventually face with this nation. (While Pénicaud finishes his account well before the Natchez Massacre of 1729, Dumont is very much acquainted with the uprising when he composes his poem.) Dumont focuses instead on Natchez social greatness and former friendship with the French. He refers to their community as

... un grand village
Où demeuroit alors la nation sauvage
Qui donnait aux François, pour un peu de butin,
Des volailles, du blé et des secours de main.
Elle trafiquait tout, servait à l'ordinaire
À tous les habitants à cultiver la terre (309).

This first reference to the Natchez shows them coming to the aid of the French in the fashion that other Indian groups already mentioned in the poem have done. However, Dumont soon shifts attention to the unfortunate turn of events in Franco-Natchez relations.

In recounting the reasons for the persisting "horrible guerre" that keeps Natchez from becoming the "Second Paradis" that he envisions for it, Dumont begins,

En mil-sept-cent-vingt-deux, un coup très téméraire,
Donné par un Sauvage, a déclaré la guerre.
Un François fut blessé d'un coup tiré sur lui,
Et un autre habitant tué pendant la nuit.
Un Sauvage, voulant s'attirer de la gloire,
Lève, avec les cheveux, la peau; c'est la victoire (309).

The French quickly seek vengeance upon the Indians responsible for the crimes mentioned above. Here and later, Dumont does not condemn the entire Natchez nation for the actions of some of its members. Rather, he digresses into the practice of scalping, for curiosity's sake as
well as for implicating both the English and the French in this "barbaric" practice.

Dumont says of the new role now played by Europeans in the scalping practice,

Parmi ces nations, chevelure levée,
Rend celui qui la prend riche d'un beau trophée,
Car une chevelure, arrachée d'un François
Par la main d'un Sauvage, est portée à l'Anglois;
Ce dernier la leur paye, en bonne marchandise,
Autant de dix écus une telle entreprise.
Le François donne autant de celle de l'Anglois
Ou d'un autre ennemi. . . (311-312).

European involvement in scalping has added another grisly dimension to an already inhumane tradition: Almost anybody's head can now be traded in goods of all kinds. French and English bounties enhance the popularity of scalping and insure its continuance by giving Indians more lucrative reasons to pursue it.

Despite his focus on scalping following the introduction of Indian problems into the poem, Dumont deflects attention from red crimes against the French by framing the first mention of Natchez difficulties in depictions of Indian friendship. In addition to the happy Indian episodes at Pensacola and Biloxi, presented before any references to Natchez problems, Dumont follows the first Natchez troubles with scenes of Tunica loyalty. And the Natchez as a whole are again spared blanket condemnation for the actions of some of their tribesmen.

Dumont blames a single Frenchman more than anyone else for inciting the eventual Natchez Massacre. That Frenchman is the infamous Lieutenant Etcheparre, commandant of Natchez, who forces Indians from their farms in order to seize the land for himself. As Dumont notes of Etcheparre's actions,

Hélas! cette injustice et condamnation
Fit prendre à ces gens la résolution
De tuer les Français pour conserver leur terre (315).
Although the Natchez agree to a surface peace with the French in the wake of the initial clash over the murdered Frenchmen, underneath the seeming return to normalcy they plot a major insurrection, at least in Dumont’s opinion. Etcheparre remains insensitive to obvious dangers and thereby rises in culpability. Even after he has insulted the Natchez with his demands, Etcheparre and his men are brazen enough to leave the fort one night to carouse in the Natchez village. Upon returning to the fort, the commandant ignores rumors that some Indians have leaked to the French about an uprising and imprisons those attempting to warn him. Etcheparre’s inattention to his underlings, his abuse of the Indians, and his preoccupation with gratifying himself make him the main culprit in the Natchez atrocity and worthy, in Dumont’s view, of the horrible death he eventually receives.

The qualities of the Natchez chief contrast sharply with Etcheparre’s blind and imprudent behavior. The Natchez chief and his retinue come with dignified ceremony to the fort the day after Etcheparre and his crew have debased themselves through drunkenness and sex in the Indian village. The chief comes under the guise of peace, but Dumont notes, “C’était le loup couvert d’une peau de brèbis!” (317). Dumont depicts the Natchez leader as sly and underhanded but very effective because of his ability to deceive. Here, for the first time, Dumont joins Pénicaut in stereotyping the Indian as prone to trickery, lying, and duplicity. What Pénicaut sees as a major flaw that makes most Indians unworthy of French trust (a pejorative generalization that Dumont also voices elsewhere), Dumont here presents as a clever war tactic that Etcheparre is unable both to perceive and to employ himself. Speaking nothing but peace up to the time that a signal sounds, the Natchez infiltrate the French settlement and effectively destroy the most prosperous white establishment in Lower Louisiana.
After recounting the events of the massacre, Dumont comments,

On ne dira jamais jusqu’où la Barbarie  
A porté les Sauvages à priver de la vie  
Tant de monde à la fois, et même leurs amis (318).

Despite the atrocities, Dumont does not use the Natchez Massacre as an excuse for proposing extermination of all Indians and usurpation of red lands. Rather, the experience almost silences him on the subject of French and Indian rights and relations. What troubles Dumont the most about the Natchez Massacre is its totality. While he might not have blamed the Indians for ridding the potential "Second Paradis" of a corrupt overlord who horded riches wrought by both red and white hands and while he might not have condemned deceit as a mode of effective warfare, Dumont execrates the Natchez for failing to separate the good from the bad in their dreadful act of vengeance against the French, many of whom were their friends.

Dumont brings the Massacre episode to a close by mentioning a second characteristic that Pénicaud deplores in Indians: cruelty to war captives. Dumont notes that following the carnage at the French post,

Ce n’est pas tout, lecteur: nos femmes, aux villages,  
Servoient et travaillaient pour les cruels Sauvages,  
Qui, ne sachant que faire, y passoient tout le temps  
A brûler les Français ou les tirer à blanc.  
Or je dis des Français... (319).

Although in this instance Dumont shows Natchez wartime cruelty toward Frenchmen, he, like Pénicaud, elsewhere depicts Indians harming fellow reds in the same way. For their part, Dumont’s Europeans can be just as ruthless to fellow whites as Indians can. Dumont, like Pénicaud, after first depicting Indians in a positive light -- as friends and even as saviors of the French -- gradually brings up the problems that surface between Europeans and Native Americans as alliances and personal relationships become more complicated with time.
Dumont surrounds the account of the ultimate Natchez conflict with depictions of Franco-Indian alliances. As with the first Natchez skirmish, so in the major Natchez upheaval the Tunica stand by the French. Interestingly, one of the French spies sent to speak with those held captive by the Natchez is himself married to a Natchez, and he seems to be mentioned as a means of showing how close some Natchez still are to the French.

As the spies infiltrate the Natchez, speak to French prisoners, and even openly approach the grand chief, it becomes apparent that the chief, in the latter as well as the earlier instances of conflict, is the person leading some of his people into cruel acts of aggression against the French. In Dumont's opinion, the Natchez chief and Etche-parre are of the same ilk -- conceited tyrants who bring harm to their underlings. The masses obeying such overlords are not the ones to blame for whatever atrocities ensue.

In addition to the Tunicas, the French seek help from the Choctaw. Without Indian assistance, the French would not have been able to redeem prisoners, re-establish themselves at Natchez, or eventually annihilate the routed Natchez remnant. Following the French attack on the Natchez at their new location on the Black River, many Indians are captured and sold into slavery, but many also escape. Thus, the Franco-Indian offensive against the Natchez drags on.

The "Premier Chant" ends with the French turning against the Natchez who have allied themselves with the Chickasaw to the north, whereupon Dumont does not forego the opportunity to criticize the Frenchmen who have failed to bring the Natchez problem to a swift, definitive end.

Mais, malgré la dépense, ah! qu'est-ce que j'écris!
La Montagne en travail enfante une souris.
Je ne puis, cher Lecteur, écrire davantage,
Sinon que l'ennemi nous fait toujours outrage.
L'habitant est à plaindre en son particulier,
Sans appui, sans soutien et sans un bon guerrier
Pour vaincre l'ennemi. Lui déclarant la guerre,
Il faut agir en Mars, et d'une autre manière
Que celle qu'on a faite. Enfin donc je finis,
N'écrivant que trois mots: Veni, Vidi, Scripsi (329).

Thus does Dumont close the first major division of his long poem — by
highlighting French ineptness in responding to a costly Indian prob-
lem. Dumont takes it upon himself to record French waste and misman-
agement during the Chickasaw-Natchez campaign, and the poet does not
let up until he has thoroughly discredited the perpetrators, most no-
tably Bienville. When the “Deuxième Chant” opens with Bienville’s
campaign up the Mississippi to attack the Chickasaw-Natchez alliance
in Upper Louisiana, Dumont quickly unleashes his fury against Le
Moyne, above all because this leader who claims to have great knowl-
edge of Native Americans as a result of his Canadian birth and many
years among Indians does not know how to crush the red enemy.

Arriving at the Chickasaw-Natchez fort in the Illinois country,
Bienville and his men find English voyageurs there. Dumont gives a
long account of the ensuing battle against the Indians and their
English cohorts. He states at one point,

Dix heures du matin, fut le commencement
Que fit tous nos soldats en ce détachement
Pour aller sur les Chis, ruiner leur village
Et tâcher de pouvoir en mettre en esclavage,
Pour nous dédommager au moins de nos travaux,
Mais nous fumes trompés, car, ma foi, ces brutaux
Nous reçurent très bien et de telle manière
Qu'on peut dire de nous, avoir eu l'étivière (350).

In addition to expressing his seeming lust for battle and desire to
enslave the defeated enemy, feelings that an Americanized Frenchman
might come to share with his Native-American warmates and foes, Dumont
indicates another sentiment that association with Indians possibly en-
courages: admiration for a worthy foe.
Another passage in which Dumont expresses battle lust reads as follows:

Tout ainsi ramassé, tant hommes qu’instruments,
Les chariots finis, on attend le moment
De se voir commander pour aller au village,
Pour tuer et brûler notre ennemi sauvage.
Chacun le désiroit, l’habitant, le soldat,
Et l’officier lui-même, et même le goujat (370).

Such repeatedly expressed thirst for battle, revenge, and ruthless defeat of the enemy in Dumont’s epic poem is as much a poetic convention harking back to the time of Homer as it is a reflection of the author’s possible Indianization or of his personal desire to see justice done against a red foe. Dumont would wish to wreak such havoc upon any enemy — red or white — as the scathing remarks he directs toward the enemy Spanish and British and even against the deserting French indicate.

Despite Dumont’s support of pillage and enslavement of the foe, the author does not tolerate Bienville’s hasty execution of a group of enemy Indians who come seeking peace and bearing an important letter. As Dumont depicts it, Bienville’s unwise move has dire consequences.

Ors, pendant cette attaque, un parti de Sauvages
Avec le calumet, vint d’un autre village
Apporter une lettre à notre commandant.
Il ordonne aussitôt, sans autre compliment,
De tuer ce parti, ce que les nôtres firent,
Mais eux, devant leur mort, cette lettre ils déchirent (350).

Bienville’s indiscriminate execution of the red messengers (done with disrespect for the calumet they tote and without giving them a chance to speak) results in the death of Pierre Dartaguiette d’Itouralde, a worthy Frenchman whose life depended upon Bienville’s receiving the letter borne by the Indian envoys.

Farther along in the text, Dumont backtracks to inform the reader of events leading to the letter episode, one of many occurrences that
blackens the depiction of Bienville.

Tu sais que je t'ai dit qu'un ordre aux Illinois
Avoit été donné de venir, dans les bois,
Le dixième de mai pour joindre notre armée.
D'Artaguet obéit, voici sa destinée:
Il vint à point nommé, nous en étions bien loin;
Il resta là neuf jours, ayant toujours grand soin
Des Sauvages amis de sa troupe française,
Qui, ne nous voyant point, [...?] dedans l'angloise.
Et commencent de dire: "Il faut nous en aller;
Que faisons nous ici? l'on nous fait qu'amuser"!
Enfin, sur tels propos, le conseil s'assemble;
Après avoir réglé, l'on résolut ensemble
D'attaquer l'ennemi. Nos Français animés,
Attaquent tout partout, tirant de tous cotés,
Ils sont déjà, vainqueurs, l'ennemi prend la fuite
En leur tournant le dos, mais, dans cette poursuite,
D'Artaguet est blessé dans deux ou trois endroits;
Ce que voyant alors, les Sauvages Illinois
Abandonnent nos gens, se sauvent au plus vite,
Par différents endroits pour redoubler leur piste.
Nos Français, alors seuls, soutiennent l'ennemi
Qui revint desur eux, voyant, pour le profit.
Quarante-trois estoient le reste de l'armée,
Qui défendoient son chef pendant cette journée,
Laquelle, ayant usé toutes munitions,
Fut contrainte de céder avec juste raison.
On les prend, on les mène au travers du village
Les conduisant au fort sans aucun nul outrage,
Espérant que, par eux, ils auroient, désormais,
Au lieu de cette guerre, une agréable paix.
Lecteur tu dois savoir qu'une lettre apportée
Par un très petit nombre, et qui fut déchirée,
Avoit été signée ès [sic] mains du prisonnier
Qui demandoit en grâce à Bienville guerrier
De venir les tirer du lieu de l'esclavage.
Après notre action, sans fruit, sans avantage,
Nous gagnames bien vite et le camp et le fort,
Les laissant prisonniers, ce qui causa leur mort (353-354).

The degree of Bienville's negligence and culpability increases as
Dumont eulogizes the victim of Le Moyne's rashness. As depicted by
Dumont, Dartaguiette d'Itouralde shows up at the appointed time and
place with a Franco-Indian outfit ready to do battle, but Bienville's
army never materializes. With no other choice but to proceed against
the enemy, Dartaguiette d'Itouralde's disadvantaged forces fight
valiantly; however, they cannot win without the addition of Le Moyne's army. When Dartaguiette d'Itouralde's men do fall to the Chickasaw-Natchez and are held prisoner by the latter, Dumont asserts that the whites are treated "sans aucun nul outrage," that the red foes want peace, that Dartaguiette d'Itouralde writes Bienville to come finalize that peace and likewise free him, and that Bienville not only ruins the possibility for an end to the war by thus complying but also incurs Dartaguiette d'Itouralde's death and prolongs the war indefinitely by slaughtering the Indian ambassadors. Finally, Dumont juxtaposes Dartaguiette d'Itouralde's attentions to Indian allies under his care and his cooperation with red captors to Bienville's failure to differentiate between red armies who must be fought and red individuals with whom one must negotiate.

Dumont's depiction of the deaths of Dartaguiette d'Itouralde and his men does more to blight the image of the person responsible for them.

Mais, Grands Dieux! quelle mort! une mort très cruelle
Qu'a soufferte, en ces lieux, cette troupe fidèle.
Ma main tremble d'écrire un sujet si fatal;
Le voici cependant. De peuple très brutal,
Habitant des forêts, que l'on nomme sauvage,
Voyant que, desur nous il avoit l'avantage,
Et, ne pouvant pourtant se venger desur nous,
Ah! sur ce petit nombre, il déchargea ses coups.
Sans autre compliment, au milieu de la plaine,
Ils mènent d'Artaguiette et les autres sans peine,
Leur attachent les bras à des poteaux, exprès
Plantés pour ce sujet, et ces pauvres François
Sont brûlés à ce coup, servant, pour la victoire,
Et de feux d'artifice et de trophée de gloire.
Enfin les Chicachas, partout victorieux,
Ont fait que les Chactas se sont joints à eux (354).

Despite Dumont's citing Indian cruelty in the French deaths, the author blames Bienville more than anyone else for the undeserving end of a worthy Frenchman and his followers.⁶
Dumont returns from Dartaguiette d’Itouralde’s sad story to the battle at hand. As the fighting worsens, the poet presents a horrible scene.

Grand Dieu! qu’aperçoit-on sur le haut du village?
Les membres des Français que le cruel Sauvage
A coupés par morceaux et posés devant nous (351).

In response to this latest instance of barbarity, the Frenchmen rally themselves to take vengeance, but not against the Chickasaw alone. Englishmen also had a hand in the mutilation affront. The Choctaw and the Illinois join the French in assaulting the Anglo-Chickasaw forces, but despite their renewed fervor, the French are eventually routed and must retreat to Mobile.

In another campaign against the Chickasaw-Natchez in the Illinois country, Dumont highlights the unity and cooperation existing between the French and their Indian allies when confronting a common foe. In addition to noting the harmony between red and white men in the field, Dumont does not fail to mention the sacrifices that certain Indians make in travelling a great distance to come to the aid of their French friends.

Dumont continues to acknowledge Indian contributions to the colony’s defense and shows subsequent French gratitude. Mentioning the other tribes that converge on the Illinois post to swell the Franco-Indian alliance against the Chickasaw-Natchez, the poet notes,

Pendant cette conduite, au fort des Illinois,
Les nations amies, ascavoir Iroquois,
Epissingles, Hurons, venant de compagnie,
Arrivèrent enfin, respirant que l’envie
D’être vers l’ennemi. Le sieur de Céloron
Les avoir commandés pendant cette saison;
Ils étoient bien cinq-cents, tous d’une belle taille,
Avec trente cadets, n’ayant, comme attirail,
Que ce qu’est nécessaire à la vie, aux combats,
Cela ne peut causer aucun grand embarras.
Ils eurent le plaisir, après un grand voyage,
De trouver, à ce poste un très grand avantage
Vu, qu’étant arrivés, le brave commandant,
Sieur de La Bussonière, étoit là dans ce temps. Il les reçut très bien... (368-369).

Full of appreciation for the red allies’ loyalty, the sacrifices they make for whites, and the power of their presence, Dumont openly admires the appearance of these Indians and gladly reports their favorable reception into the French ranks. Such favorable references to red friends who remain faithful to the French counterbalance Dumont’s depictions of cruelties exerted by red foes and negate the poet’s condemnation of attrition on the part of less determined allies.

Instead of attacking the Chickasaw-Natchez with the vehemence endorsed by Dumont, by the majority of the French, and by all the Indian allies, Bienville (who earlier had rejected peace when it could have actually proved realistic) now opts for a dubious peace when the treacherous enemy offers it. Dumont does not fail to twist facts so as to make his villainous Bienville the archetypal coward in the episode of the inopportune treaty. At the same time, the author paints a favorable picture of the French army’s leader De Noailles (who had come to assist the Louisiana regiments) and the Indian allies by having them all oppose Bienville’s blind, unwise plans.

Cependant les Hurons, nos sincères amis, Avec quelqu’Iroquois donnèrent leur avis, En disant à Bienville: “Grand chef, notre maître Que viens-tu de donner aux Chis, l’ennemi traître? Une paix demandée? Où, sache que, pour nous, Nous ne la faisons point, qu’il sentira nos coups, Que nous lui ferons voir quel est notre dommage D’être venus ici d’un si rude voyage, Pourquoi? Pour leurs beaux yeux. Nous jurons désormais Qu’ils auront, avec nous, la guerre au lieu de paix”. Tel fut là leur discours, qui fut, dans le moment, Apaisé par Bienville en faisant un présent. Enfin, ce bel endroit, tout réduit ras de terre (374).

Even their reluctant acquiescing to Bienville ennobles the Indian allies, for, unlike Bienville, who takes counsel only with himself, they compromise with their French friends in an attempt to get along. But
no sooner does Bienville make the foolhardy peace than problems resume with the Chickasaw. In the “Remarques sur le Troisième Chant” De Villiers asserts that Dumont is not wrong in depicting the Chickasaw as untrustworthy, but the critic also maintains that Dumont’s characterization of Bienville is far from accurate (378).

While Dumont’s Bienville remains ineffective in vanquishing the Chickasaw, the poet’s Saint Denis has much greater success in routing the Natchez. As Dumont relates,

> Après que les Natchez, tous ces cruels Sauvages, Eurent fait, desur nous, tomber toutes leurs rages, Qu’ils eurent abandonné, pour se sauver aux bois Leurs maisons, leurs foyers, leur fort tout à la fois, Même après que Perrier eut sur eux l’avantage En la Rivière Noire, et mis en esclavage Tous ceux qui furent pris, les autres se sauvant, Et s’étant réunis, au bout de quelque temps, Un gros parti sauvage espérant qu’à l’approche, Il feroit des Français au fort des Naquitoche Le même traitement qu’à tous les habitants Des Français des Natchez, résolut hardiment De s’approcher du fort, espérant l’avantage. Saint-Denis, ce grand chef, reçut bien les Sauvages, Qui s’étoient vis-à-vis de lui fort bien campés, Et même qui faisoient des trous pour s’y loger, Afin qu’aucun Français ne put venir en plaine, Et, croyant que par là, nous serions fort en peine. Six ou sept jours passés, Saint-Denis, comme un lion, Fondant sur le parti de cette nation, Les vit et les vainquit, les renversant par terre, Tuant de tous côtés d’une telle manière Qu’il en prit prisonniers, leur fit faire beau jeu; Je crois que l’on m’entend, en les brûlant au feu; Depuis cette action, ils se sont tirés vite Devers les Chicachas; c’est là, qu’ils ont fait gîte. Ors, notre hérois Bienville y fut comme j’ai dis, Mais ne les traita pas ainsi que Saint-Denis (432-433).

In his full-scale, relentless, even bloodthirsty combat of the Natchez, Saint Denis acts in behalf of countless, less powerful Indian groups. The Natchez have harassed these smaller, weaker nations as much as they have threatened the French, and Saint Denis is driven to extremes of warfare as much by outrage over the Natchez’s injustices
to other Native Americans as by a desire to avenge and save French lives. It must be noted that Saint Denis does not unleash his full fury against the Natchez before they have pushed him to the limit through their aggression and cunning. Many Indians, in turn, assist Saint Denis in eradicating the Natchez menace in Lower Louisiana.

Even though Dumont does not condemn the Indian wholesale, he, like Pénicaud, still bears prejudices against Native Americans. Both men view the European aesthetic and Continental values as superior in the main, and many Native-American practices are dismissed as sauvage or barbare without much consideration. Dumont’s lament of the area beyond the Arkansas River typifies his outlook on America as occupied by aboriginal peoples.

... En un mot, c’est grand mal
Que de si beaux terrains ne soient que le partage
De tant de nations barbares et sauvages,
Qu’il n’y ait pas assez, de monde bien poli
Pour pouvoir s’établir dans ce charmant pays (336).

Undoubtedly, Dumont considers the entire New World in need of an increased European presence in order to achieve the potential that he envisions for the hemisphere — a realm of productive capitalist societies that benefit everybody, high and low.

It must be noted to his credit that despite his prejudices Dumont, like Pénicaud, distinguishes between tribes and between red individuals, referring to some as more “barbare” and “sauvage” than others. For example, before deploring the state of the “charmant pays” mentioned above, Dumont comments on the “superbe village” of Indians farther down the Arkansas, a village whose prosperity and apparent civility allow the French to maintain a stable post nearby. This juxtaposition of favorable and unfavorable comments concerning Indians and this differentiation of red groups typify Dumont’s approach to Native Americans throughout the long poem.
In the “Quatrième Chant,” entitled “Concernant les Moeurs des Sauvages, Leurs Danses, Leurs Religions, Etc., avec le Commerce du Pays, Enfin Ce Qui Concerne Tout le Pays en Général,” Dumont begins his in-depth examination of Native-American life outside the realm of Franco-Indian relations. Dumont opens this fourth section of the Poème en Vers by saying,

Après avoir décrit ces établissements,
Et les faits de la guerre et des gouvernements,
Je juge sainement qu’il est de l’avantage
De mettre par écrit, dans ce petit ouvrage,
Ce que renferme, en lui, de bon et de mauvais,
Cet aimable pays, en écrivant les faits,
Comme les actions et danses des Sauvages,
Et comme ils se comportent en leurs propres villages (383).

True to his promise, Dumont proceeds to focus on the good and the bad in Indian life in an attempt to present as objective a depiction of New-World culture as is possible for him to do.

Dumont begins his study of the Indian by evoking the idyllic years before the white man’s intrusion into the Western Hemisphere.

... Ce charmant pays
Très abondant en tout, ce Second Paradis,
Qui donc l’habitait, avant la Colonie?
C’étoient des habitants qui passoient là leur vie
À vivre de la chasse et passoient tout leur temps
Sans envies, ni chagrins, étant de tout contents (395).

Dumont’s reference to the “happy Indian” living in the pristine American wilds before the white man’s discovery contrasts with his previous lament over a lack of European colonization in the area beyond the Arkansas. This passage as compared to the earlier one testifies further to the complexity and ambivalence of Dumont’s views concerning Native Americans.

In his “Avant-Propos,” De Villiers says of the lines quoted above:

Dumont, qui pourtant décrit les Sauvages sous un aspect fort peu flatteur, a cru devoir néanmoins esquisser un petit couplet sur la vie heureuse menée par les Peaux-Rouges avant l’arrivée des Européens.
De Villier notes further of this "petit couplet": "D'Autres, avant Dumont, avaient déjà parlé de l'Âge d'or des habitants de l'Amérique, mais, en 1742, 'le bon Sauvage' n'avait pas encore encombré la littérature" (284). That De Villiers could, in a flurry of conflicting comments, label Dumont's depiction of the Indian as generally "fort peu flatteur" indicates that he did not examine the Poème en Vers in the same fashion that this essay attempts to do. Furthermore, De Villiers' remarks seem to suggest that he does not consider Dumont's mention of fine qualities inherent in the "unspoiled" Indian (i.e., the Indian who has not encountered the white man) to indicate seriously that Dumont has more than one outlook on Native Americans. Yet worthy of serious note Dumont's flattering comments in the "petit couplet" are, for they signal a dimension of Dumont's view on Indians that might be overlooked (by people such as De Villiers) when Dumont makes careless, angry statements elsewhere. In short, Dumont sees just as much good as he does bad in American aborigines.

Had DeVillier read the remainder of the above-quoted stanza with as much (or hopefully more) scrutiny as he did the portion that he chose to call "un petit couplet sur la vie heureuse menée par les Peaux-Rouges avant l'arrivée des Européens," perhaps he would have realized that Dumont's view is more flattering of the Indian than might be thought at first glance. After all, Dumont continues,

Ors ceux-là qui l'habitent, on les nomme Sauvages;  
Ils ont, dans ces forêts, fait chacun leurs villages,  
Ils ont tous de l'esprit; policiés nullement,  
Une peau de chevreuil leur sert de vêtement (395).

While Dumont's Indians might not be refined by European standards, they are still generalized at this point as people of spirit, intelligence, harmony, and good will, qualities that Dumont does not attribute to many of the white characters in his poetic drama. Furthermore, it must not be overlooked that Dumont here uses his favored term
"Second Paradis" not to refer to his dream of a utopia for Europeans in the Western Hemisphere but to describe the undeveloped land occupied exclusively by Native Americans.

Despite the rebuttal of De Villiers' facile dismissal of Dumont, it must be asserted that Dumont does make mistakes in relating the Indian way of life to his reader. While Dumont admirably points out that the varying Indian nations differ greatly in language, morals, and way of life, he also oversimplifies things and reveals much ignorance, such as when he affirms that Indians have no laws by which to abide. When it comes to religion, Dumont appears to be downright derogatory of the Indian. It must be remembered, however, that Dumont, like Pénicaut, views Catholicism as the only true religion and that anything else, even non-Catholic Christianity, is to be regarded with suspicion if not condemnation.

The following serves as an example of Dumont's hasty dismissal of Indian religion from serious discussion, a result either of Dumont's ignorance of the meanings behind certain symbols, his lack of interest in understanding more fully the reasons for various Indian practices, or his quick writing and subsequent lack of revision.

Ils n'ont aucune loi, mais cependant un temple, 
Dans lequel ils ne vont aucunement ensemble, 
L'un adore la lune et l'autre le serpent, 
En un mot ce qu'il veut, selon son jugement. 
Dans leur temple, pourtant, ils font des sacrifices, 
Que crois-tu que ce soit? sont, des fruits, les prémices (396).

To his credit, Dumont does see parallels between Indian practices and classical paganism: "Ils suivent des Romains, à l'égard de leur Dieu,/ Ce que ceux-là faisaient en conservant un feu,/ Un feu perpétuel" (396). Here, as elsewhere, Dumont displays self-contradiction: These Indians who, in Dumont's first stated opinion, have no religious laws remind him of the very law-bound ancient Greeks and Romans.
Elsewhere in the poem Dumont shows a deeper knowledge and appreciation of Indian religious practices than he displays at first. He says of one part of the Natchez festival,

Vis-à-vis du beau pot, on impose silence,
Lorsque l’on voit venir quelqu’un vers un poteau
Planté vis-à-vis d’eux. Alors, de son cerveau,
Il dit ce qu’il a fait tant aux champs qu’à la guerre,
Mais, après sa harangue, il lui faut, sans mystère,
Jeter quelque butin, et, pour remerciement,
On lui dit des Horn, Horn, répétés galamment.
Ors ce poteau, planté tout droit dedans la terre,
Renferme, en son symbole, un très puissant mystère:
C’est l’âme de leur Dieu, sur lequel est posé
Le fameux calumet; il est là respecté (405).

Later, when he recounts the same Natchez funeral practices that Pénicaut does, Dumont elaborates on some Indians’ concept of the afterlife. Obviously, Dumont is more aware of a deeper dimension to Indian customs, religion, and thought than he initially concedes. And despite the belittling generalizations that he occasionally makes in passing, Dumont’s lengthier depictions of specific facets of Indian life reveal a familiarity with and fondness for Native-American culture that far outweigh the caustic comments.

Dumont’s understanding of Indian spiritualities is perhaps best evinced when he explains what he has learned of one Native-American concept of Good and Evil.

Avant que de finir, parlons auparavant
De leurs divinités, disons leurs sentiments.
Selon tous leurs discours, c’est un Esprit suprême
Qui ne peut faire mal, étant la bonté même;
Qu’aussi, puisqu’il est bon, pourquoi donc le prier?
Qu’il n’est pas nécessaire aussi de l’invoquer,
Mais, qu’il faut bien plutôt adresser sa prière
A celui, selon eux, qui fait tout le contraire,
C’est à dire le mal, et que, par conséquent,
C’est lui qu’il faut prier; qu’en faisant autrement,
On l’irrite si fort, qu’alors toute la vie
Ne seroit que malheur, sujette à maladie;
Par là, l’on peut juger de leur aveuglement.
Que le Dieu de chez eux, soit soleil ou serpent,
Ou d’une autre façon, est, par cette figure,
Le tyran de son âme, ennemi de nature,
Le démon très cruel, qui, par sa trahison,
S’est emparé, chez eux, de leur corps et raison (417-418).

Lumping Native-American spiritualities into one category, Dumont views what he has simplified into one Indian religion as an overwhelmingly negative thing. After all, he considers it to be preoccupied with placating evil forces rather than with concentrating on the powers that come from the “Supreme Spirit,” which is “Goodness Itself.” Hence, Dumont offers Christianity as a means for directing Indian dependence away from negative powers to the stronger forces of Good.

Dumont’s dismay over Indian respect for evil results from an incomplete understanding of the Native-American cosmos. Slotkin summarizes the theology and world view of many North-American aboriginal groups by affirming that

to the Indian the wilderness was a god, whether its face at the moment was good or evil; as a god it deserved and received worship for both its good and its evil, its beauty and its cruelty.

Conversely,

For the Puritan the problem of religion was to winnow . . . the good from the evil, and to preserve the former and extirpate the latter. The evil was of the world, of nature; the good was transcendent and supernatural. Hence it was quite . . . inappropriate for anyone to worship, as the Indians did, the world or the things of the world, such things being evil by nature (51).

Obviously, Dumont’s French-Catholic outlook on good and evil has more in common with the Puritan dichotomy than with the Native-American appreciation of the whole. Dumont and Pénicaut, likewise, join the Anglo-Protestant colonists of New England in condemning Indian reverence for the darker side of Creation and advocate the imposition of Christianity as the sole corrective.
Although Dumont feels that the Indians need conversion to Catholicism, he remains doubtful of the success of proselytizing efforts.

Even though he does not foresee a majority of the Native-American population embracing Christianity, Dumont is not without hope for some Indian conversions.

As a glowing example of the potential for Indian conversion, Dumont holds up the Illinois, the same group that Pénicaut also lauds for becoming good Catholics. Dumont asserts that these Indians embraced Christianity as a result of the fine example of certain Frenchmen. Dumont likewise implies that the bad examples of other Frenchmen have accounted for the paucity of conversions as well as for the resentment that many Indians bear against the French elsewhere. Thus, Indians are “ainsi que nous, dans l’abîme tombés” (419). Just as both Indians
and Frenchmen have fallen into the abyss of sin, so also the converted "Sauvages du lieu/ Espèrent, comme nous, les promesses de Dieu" (419).

In other words, despite what Dumont might say about Indian religion and the general lack of conversion to Christianity among Native Americans, Indians and Europeans, in Dumont's real view, actually have the same potential for good and evil, salvation and damnation. The choice is up to the red and white individual.

Through adherence to the Catholic faith, French and Indian residents of Dumont's New World can be one. Similar to Pénicaut, Dumont offers a view of the utopia resulting from religious and racial unity in his depiction of the Illinois.

Depuis ce changement, les François, les Sauvages,
Ne se regardent qu'un, et, par les mariages
Qu'ils contractent entre eux, se trouvent très unis
Par ses sacrés liens et ses coeurs et esprits (419).

Perhaps no other passage in Louisiana literature, not even Pénicaut's lengthier portrayal of the Kaskaskia Illinois, sanctions Euro-Indian miscegenation and hybridization into a new culture as strongly as do the two couplets quoted above.

In addition to the depiction of Illinois Christianity, which serves as another example of Dumont's portraying the opposite of what he has earlier asserted, Dumont says of other Indian conversions elsewhere in America,

Du côté de Québec, on en voit encore d'autres
Qui suivent notre loi publique des Apôtres,
Mais, enfin, c'est assez de dire qu'ils sont peu
Qui connaissent, de foi, les attributs de Dieu (419).

The lack of conversions obviously saddens Dumont, for his hope is that the French and Indians will unite at all levels after first uniting on the spiritual plane.

Perhaps the worst thing that Dumont has observed in the un-Christianized Native-American population is cannibalism. However,
even when relating the instances in which Indians eat human flesh, Dumont makes it clear that the practice has been highly exaggerated in European reports.

Parmi ces nations, l'excessive licence
Leur fait faire le tout avec grande arrogance.
Quand il s'agit pour lors de meurtre, de combat,
Ce ne sont que bourreaux, mais Lecteur ne crois pas
Qu'ils soient carnassiers de notre chair humaine;
Ce sont des contes faits, la fable en est certaine;
Il est vrai cependant qu'étant dans la fureur
De brûler un esclave, ils arrachent son coeur,
Courent quelques morceaux de sa chair rôtie,
Et, possédés qu'ils sont de rage, de furie
Contre la nation, alors, sans sentiments,
Ils l'avalent soudain, la croquant dans les dents.
C'est pour ce seul sujet qu'ils sont anthropophages
Et ne le sont, grand Dieu! qu'en temps de tel carnage (419).

Dumont takes what would be a golden opportunity for racist denunciation of red persons and actually turns it into an apologetic clarification of Indian ways. This correction of what he perceives as European misconception and stereotyping of Indians makes Dumont, in part, a defender of indigenous peoples. Still, the occasional cannibalism and other forms of red-on-red cruelty that Dumont has observed prompt him to plead for aboriginal conversion to Christianity as a means of ameliorating Native-American life.

Dumont moves from religion to mention other sundry customs and curiosities of Indian cultures. He brings up one practice in particular that impresses him by commenting,

Ce qui peut étonner, parmi ce continent,
C'est qu'une même langue est, très certainement,
Connue en tout endroit, et, par cet avantage,
On peut se faire entendre en tout dans les villages (396).

Like Latin in Europe, the Indians also have a unifying language, and Dumont is duly impressed by it. After all, the universal Native-American language is one of a number of aspects of aboriginal
societies that, by having a European counterpart, redeem the author’s and his readers’ opinions of indigenous Americans.

As Pénicaut does, Dumont brings up the practice of smoking the calumet. At the same time, Dumont also highlights what he considers to be a lack of trustworthiness in Indians.

La pipe ou Calumet est le signe de paix; Quand on donne à fumer, c’est signe, désormais, Qu’au lieu d’être ennemis, vous êtes comme frères; Cependant, sous ce signe, ils nous ont fait la guerre; C’est peut-être les seuls qu’ils ont ainsi trahis. Cependant la méfiance est le meilleur parti, Car, pour dire en un mot, ils aiment qui leur donne; Ils sont traitres, voleurs et n’épargnent personne (396-397).

While it may seem in the last few lines quoted above that Dumont brands all Indians as liers, it must be remembered that elsewhere he presents many trustworthy Indians. Thus, as has been repeated previously, these fleet, unflattering comments should not be taken as seriously as Dumont’s full-fleshed characterizations. As in Pénicaut, these uncomplimentary remarks may result from the author’s having been hurt by or witnessed others suffering from Indian betrayal.

Dumont, like Pénicaut, finds it hard to figure out the Indian understanding of promise, and he is bewildered by red recourse to seemingly duplicitous speech. Both Pénicaut and Dumont witnessed much bloodshed at the hands of Indians who had presumably made peace with the French. Hence, to spare the Frenchman in Louisiana unnecessary hardship and even death, both authors warn that it is best to be cautious when dealing with Indians and not to take their words at European face value. “Car méfiez-vous d’eux, ils sont de vrais fripons” (413). It must not be overlooked, however, that Dumont admits, “C’est peut-être les seuls [i.e., only some Frenchmen] qu’ils [the Indians] ont ainsi trahis.” Later on in Louisiana literature, Le Page will vindicate the trustworthiness of many Indians and call into question
the reliability of many Frenchmen who have made the American wilds their home.

Even though Dumont does resort to generalizations of Indian cultures, he at least generalizes the good as well as the bad that he believes to be characteristic of a large number of Native Americans. For example, immediately after stressing the need to be suspicious of Indians, he asserts approvingly, “Chez eux, la patience est le vrai fondement” (397). And, most importantly, he points out exceptions to his generalizations.

While Dumont may, in passing, refer to Indians as untrustworthy, in one of the most literary sections of the poem, the Saint-Denis section (a well-rounded story of action, intrigue, and romance, replete with developed characters and dialogue), he gives an Indian a central role based on honor and reliability. Dumont’s Bienville (by now the villain of the entire poem) sends an Indian rather than a Frenchman to Mexico with a letter bearing lies meant to condemn Saint Denis in the eyes of Mexican authorities. The good Indian, unaware of the slanders he is carrying, dutifully makes the long, hard journey, his only infraction of obedience being that he stops by Saint Denis’ cell before going to see the Spanish governor. Saint Denis reads the letter, changes it so as to secure his freedom, and then hands it back to the Indian to deliver to the Viceroy. Dumont notes,

\[
\text{Ayant tranquillement} \\
\text{Écrit ce qu’il vouloit, il pria le Sauvage} \\
\text{D’aller, dès en sortant, sans craindre de dommage,} \\
\text{La rendre au gouverneur. Sitôt dit, sitôt fait;} \\
\text{Il part et va tout droit, toujours bien satisfait,} \\
\text{Demander à parler au grand Chef du Mexique,} \\
\text{Et, dès qu’il fut entré: “Je viens de l’Amérique} \\
\text{Exprès pour t’apporter, de l’ordre de mon chef,} \\
\text{Cette lettre pressante”. Il l’a mit, derechef,} \\
\text{Aux mains du Gouverneur... (426-427).}
\]

That Dumont places such pivotal action in the hands of an Indian does
not seem accidental. Rather, Dumont apparently intends to highlight an Indian's loyalty, innocence, service, and friendship in the face of European disingenuousness, envy, corruption, and fratricide. This single depiction of an Indian in positive relation to Dumont's hero makes up for the derogatory references that Dumont sometimes makes toward Native Americans.

Despite his occasional unflattering comments concerning Indians, Dumont proves himself to be as capable as Pénicaud of presenting reds as equals of whites, as confidants of whites, and even as superior and preferable to whites in certain circumstances. This flattering depiction of Indians is most evident toward the end of the poem, in the Saint-Denis section.

The Saint-Denis story follows shortly after the miserable accounts of what Dumont sees as repeated French failures to crush the Natchez-Chickasaw. Dumont turns from this futile struggle to the battle that opened the poem: the fight between the French and the Spanish in the Pensacola area. The poet reminds the reader,

Souviens toi, cher Lecteur, touchant cette campagne, 
Que les Français, pour lors, firent desur l'Espagne
Au fort de Pensacole, et que De Saint-Denis,
En suivant de Bienville, avoit, pour son parti,
Amené pour ce fait, oui, plus de cent Sauvages,
Qui, pour l'amour de lui, laissèrent leurs villages
L'accompagnant toujours (425).

The passage quoted above reiterates several notions that this study has been attempting to convey. First of all, the French fight fellow Europeans and fellow Catholics as much as they confront un-Christianized Native Americans. Hence, race is not the reason for wars with red groups such as the Chickasaw-Natchez. Secondly, Dumont realizes the French dependence upon Indian allies for everything from daily sustenance to battle victories, and he openly acknowledges the Indians' role in securing a French foothold in Louisiana. Thirdly,
Dumont shows how the vices of some Europeans and Euro-Americans can be replaced by the virtues displayed by many Native Americans. While Frenchmen betray each other in the fight against the Spanish and Bienville plots the death of his cousin, many Indians remain true to their French allies and make countless sacrifices to save the white men to whom they have sworn their allegiance. Finally, that Dumont can at times view the Indian as superior to whites is perhaps best illustrated in the episode involving the Indian messenger sent by Bienville to the Mexican governor.

While Evil leads Bienville to arrange Saint Denis’ imprisonment in Mexico City, Good works through the Indian commissioned with delivering more false indictments against Bienville’s cousin. As Dumont notes,

De Bienville, aussitôt, qu’il eût fini sa lettre,
Il dépêche un Sauvage afin de la remettre
À ce grand Espagnol. Le Sauvage arrivé,
Dès qu’il fut au Mexique, avant que de parler
À ce grand gouverneur, le Dieu de la puissance
Qui protège, en tout temps, la sincère innocence,
Inspire à ce Sauvage, étant en ce pays,
D’aller, auparavant, voir l’ami Saint-Denis;
Comme il parloit leur langue, et tout avec justesse,
Le Sauvage fit tant que, par sa seule adresse,
Il fût voir son ami dans sa triste prison (426).

While Dumont stresses that it is mainly God operating through the medium of an Indian who secures Saint Denis’ freedom, it is still significant that the author chooses an Indian to be the channel through which God works in a positive way.

Dumont’s bad whites are worse than his bad Indians, for the former have been exposed to Good in a way that the latter have not (i.e., through growing up in a Catholic culture) and have turned against it nevertheless. Hence, Dumont’s agent of the Devil, Bienville, is even worse than the myriads of one-dimensional Indian fiends of Puritan
literature, for Bienville does wrong through his own volition, not as unthinking vessel through which God allows Satan to work.

Just as he can place Indians in higher realms of goodness over whites, so Dumont can also lift red and white friendship to an ideal level of amity. When the Indian messenger arrives at Saint Denis’ cell, Saint Denis immediately forgets his own plight and shows concern for the red man’s welfare.

Après l’avoir salué et dit quelque raison,
Le Seur de Saint-Denis, en son propre language,
Lui demande aussitôt le but de son voyage:
“Pourquoi donc quittes-tu ton établissement
Que tu viens de si loin? Quel mécontentement
As-tu pu recevoir?” (426)

Saint Denis is intent on knowing what sort of unhappiness back home could have led the Indian to travel so far to see him. Obviously, Saint Denis believes at first that the Indian, like many of his race before him, has come to seek Saint Denis’ help in having some wrong redressed. While Bienville does not value the life of his own white kin, Saint Denis obviously cares about the lives of countless red non-relatives back in Louisiana. Dumont offers this concern for Native Americans as one of the many fine qualities that raise Saint Denis to heroic stature.

When Bienville hears of Saint Denis’ liberty, he rages over his thwarted plans and sends the Indian messenger back to Mexico with another condemnatory letter for the Mexican governor. Again, the Indian’s worthiness to be used as a medium of the Divine is juxtaposed with Bienville’s willful embrace of evil.

Mais Dieu, qui jusqu’ici protégeait l’innocence,
En cette occasion, en reprit la défense;
Le Sauvage arriva dans ce riche pays,
Fut, la seconde fois, revoir son cher ami,
Lui remettant la lettre, en laquelle l’envie
Avoit si bien marqué la trame de sa vie.
Il fit un beau présent à ce fidèle ami
God's selection of the red man as His agent and the friendship existing between Saint Denis and the Indian, who goes to great lengths a second time to be of service both to his abusive white overlord and his abused white friend, indicate the degree of esteem that Dumont confers upon individual Native Americans in his poem, an esteem that readers might forget when Dumont lashes out against Indians who displease him.

The value of Indian friendship is further evinced when Saint Denis, fleeing Mexico as a result of the second letter, finally reaches the Missouri Indian village.

Indian assistance to Saint Denis the refugee does not stop with the Missouri. Just as he has countless tribes as his friends in Lower Louisiana, so Saint Denis can claim numerous Indian allies in Upper Louisiana. With many Missouri men, Saint Denis ventures to the Illinois and adopts the Indian way of life while he is there. Eventually, he ventures down the Mississippi with a host of Indians from different nations to aid the French in the battle against the Spanish.

When the French commander of the fort at Pensacola spots Saint Denis and his band of Indians, Dumont presents the group in such a way that Saint Denis is indistinguishable from the Native Americans. The mistaking of white for red has already been seen in Tonti's and Le Petit's texts. It indicates the degree of Indianization undergone by many Frenchmen in Louisiana.

Qui, par son seul amour, ne se fiait qu'à lui, 
Plutôt qu'à son parent ou à d'autres Sauvages (428).

Il fit un long trajet et jusques au village 
De cette nation qu'on nomme Missouri, 
Qui, le reconnaissant comme un ancien ami, 
Le reçurent très bien. Il fut, dans leur village, 
Pendant deux ou trois mois (429).

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In becoming like Indians (in appearance and behavior when he lives among them and in attitude and speech when he administers to them), Dumont’s Saint Denis, predating James Fenimore Cooper’s “Deerslayer” by almost a century, unites the European and the Native American in his very person — so much so that one is indistinguishable from the other in the eyes of the outsider, the latter represented here by the French commander. Even the enemy Spaniard is embraced by Saint Denis’ global personality (and not just literally, by Saint Denis’ marriage to a Mexican), for Saint Denis is able and willing to relate on anyone’s terms, be it Spanish, French, or Native American. When the “grand chef des Français” listens to the tale of Saint Denis’ “malheur” later on, he will hear of the greed, prejudice, and treachery that divide not only relatives but also races and nations, leading to the types of intrigues, murders, and wars that fill Dumont’s long poem. It is of such “malheurs” as these that Dumont hopes to spare the colony by having Saint Denis placed in charge of it.

Backtracking for a moment, it must be noted that in his “Remarques sur le Quatrième Chant” De Villiers downgrades Dumont’s depiction of the Indian messenger to Mexico by dismissing it as an absurd fabrication.

L’histoire de l’Indien, qui entrait dans les prisons espagnoles comme dans des moulin, et, en moins d’un an, parcourut, sans encombre, quatre fois les cinq cents et quelques lieues séparant l’île Dauphine de Mexico, ne mérite même pas la peine d’être réfutée (435).
Instead of incurring more negative criticism from the Baron, Dumont’s imaginative creation of the faithful, lifesaving Indian friend should redeem the poor poet in De Villiers’ eyes. After all, such fabrication of a good Indian goes against De Villiers’ contention that Dumont is “peu flatteur” of Native Americans. Similarly, when De Villiers asserts later that Saint Denis’ detour through the Missouri-Illinois region on his flight from Mexico to Louisiana is also a fiction (436), the critic again misses the point of Dumont’s stretch of truth. That is, Dumont intentionally creates these situations to show that Indians can be friends of whites (and very important friends at that!) and to point out the advantages of French alliances with red groups.

As part of his thorough presentation of Native-American life, Dumont comments on Indian women. As Pénicaud and other Louisiana writers do, Dumont also finds much that is attractive in Native-American females. “Elles ont de l’agrément,” he notes as he describes their appearance, and “le beau cliquetis qu’en marchant elles font” (397) has obviously caught his attention. He admires their industriousness and relates that

Elles passent le temps au bien de leur ménage,  
C’est elles qui, toujours, ont soin du labourage.  
Même parmi les bois, elles vont rechercher  
Soit boeuf ou bien chevreuil que l’on a pu tuer (397, 399).

In addition to industriousness, Indian women also display great talent and intelligence.

Elles ont de la force, et même du génie;  
Elles filent la laine et font la poterie;  
Cette laine est le poil du boeuf de ce pays.  
Elles sèment le blé, c’est celui de maïs,  
Des fèves, giraumons (399).

That De Villiers could read such passages and dismiss Dumont as being not very flattering of the Indian is surprising, indeed. “Génie,” after all, is not something that Dumont would credit to just anybody.
And what is most significant, Dumont attributes this "génie," industriousness, and ingenuity to Indian women more than to Indian men. Perhaps it is Baron De Villier's own early twentieth-century sexism that blinds him to Dumont's most flattering references to Native Americans (relating as they do to red women) and that leads the critic not only to reveal his own flaws along with Dumont's but also to overlook the "poor poet"'s strengths.

A less flattering passage concerning Native-American women does crop up when Dumont touches on Indian female chastity, an area that all Louisiana writers behold with fascination. The poet notes,

... Pour peu de butin, on peut faire avec elles  
Ce que, dans notre langue, on nomme bagatelles.  
Si vous leur donnez gros, vous les aurez trois mois  
Pour vous servir de femme et d'esclave à la fois (397).

As with Pénicaud, Dumont views Indian women as sexually freer and easier to win over than their European counterparts. However, Dumont does not share Pénicaud's shock over the sexual laxity and refers to it in an almost humorous fashion. On a more serious, respectful note, Dumont adds to the comments quoted above, "On connoit cependant celle, qui, dans leur âge, Ont, malgré tout cela, gardé leur pucellage" (397). Just as he acknowledges earlier that not all Indians speak in a veiled fashion or fail to keep their part of a European understanding of promise and treaty, so Dumont here makes an exception to his generalization regarding the "looseness" of Native-American female sexuality.

As Pénicaud does in his Natchez chapter, Dumont comments on social stratification in Indian cultures. He points out the absolute power of chiefs in general and mentions what he believes is the exclusive privilege of polygamy for most Indian leaders. Focusing on Natchez culture, he relates, as Pénicaud does, the flow of aristocracy through the woman's line, the female Sun being so exalted that her customary
marriage to a Stinkard does not affect the royalty of her children in any way. Dumont notes of the Natchez privileged class, "Ils n’ont aucun défaut/ De corps, ni de stature, ayant, pour leur partage,/ Une très belle hauteur, la force et le courage" (399, 402). These admiring comments on the appearance and spirit of the Natchez higher class further prove De Villiers’ remarks concerning Dumont’s unfavorable opinion of the Indian to be rather hasty.

Not very admirable, in Dumont’s opinion, is the privileged male’s (the Considéré’s) right to as many women as he chooses to have. Dumont notes of a typical, all-male royal hunting party and the provisions made for it,

Quelques Considérés ou autres du village,
Voulant aller en chasse, ou bien faire un voyage,
Laissent à la maison leurs femmes et enfants;
Après un bon régal, ils partent, cependant
Emmenant avec eux un second Ganymède,
Qui leur sert, pour l’amour, de frein ou de remède;
Des femmes, pour leur chef il est considéré,
Et porte un alconan en cette qualité.
Il a même le droit, quand vient la pleine lune,
D’aller voir une femme, ou la blonde ou la brune,
De lui compter fleurette au lieu de son époux,
Pour lui rendre, du moins, le coeur non moins jaloux (404-405).

Part of the outfit for the hunt consists of a “second Ganymède,” a servant for the royal men who is also a chief of the women in that he has the right to pick from them “ou la blonde ou la brune” to satisfy his overlords while the latter are away from their wives. (While Dumont’s allusion to miscegenation by reference to “la blonde” is probably accidental, signifying simply that any type of woman is at the chiefs’ disposal, it is nonetheless significant for revealing how a discussion of sex leads Dumont to forget race.) Although he does not share the same religiosity that Pénicaud expounds, Dumont, despite his amusement over Indian sexuality, still disapproves of the Indian
noblemen's disregard of monogamy. That Dumont does not approve of such marital infidelity is made evident in the way he introduces the passage quoted above, by noting,

. . . Revenons aux Sauvages:
Parlant en général, disons leurs avantages,
Sans blesser nullement la pauvre vérité,
Et écrivons de suite, avec toute équité,
Leurs véritables moeurs. Ils n'ont nulle science
Que celle de nature et nulle conscience;
Ils sont tous scélérats avec intégrité,
Quoique justes pourtant, et tous sans équité (404).

As his words indicate, Dumont wants to speak of "leurs avantages" but "sans blesser nullement la pauvre vérité." That is, Dumont wishes to touch on everything in Native-American society -- the good as well as the bad. And the presence of what he views to be the latter leads him into exposés of vices upon which he feels compelled to comment negatively. That Dumont, in relating the morality of male Indians, refers to them as “scoundrels with integrity” and “just . . . without equity” reveals the confusion that red male sexuality as perceived by Dumont instills in the author.7

In addition to the amusement and perplexity that Dumont derives from observing Indian sex, the poet is shocked, as much as Pénicaud is, by red cruelty. Dumont depicts some of the tortures he has witnessed as follows.

Les pauvres prisonniers sont conduits vers le temple
La baguette à la main; le chef alors assemble
Tous les Considérés, qui, joyeux de leur proie,
Marquent leur vrai plaisir par l'accent de leur voix.
Après qu'on a fumé, l'on juge de la vie
De tous les détenus; alors, avec fureur,
On les condamne à mort; aussitôt on les prend,
On les mène, on les traîne au beau milieu d'un champ,
Un chétien ne peut voir nullement de sa vue
Cette course si triste, et là, sur leur chair nue,
On les tire à brûler, en les traitant ainsi
À poudre seulement, plusieurs coups de fusil.
Arrivés à l'endroit, avec des cris, outrages,
On les attache au cadre, on leur brûle avec rage.
Dumont's horror at Indian post-battle torture shows, among other things, his sympathy for the red men and women who suffer at the hands of their racial brothers and sisters and his desire to see an end to such cruelty. At the same time, Dumont cannot help expressing his marvel at women who hold up under incredible torture and even egg it on as much as the strongest men do. The author's marvelling at such reaction to great suffering is not far removed from the Native-American admiration of those who laugh at excruciating pain and thereby prove their true mettle.

Despite the customary cruelty, some captives escape torture and death through female intervention.

Par hasard, quelquefois, en de telle occurence,  
Il se voit que celui, qui se croit par avance  
condamné pour brûler, se voyant attaché  
Les deux bras à son cadre, il se trouve sauvé.  
Or, sache, mon Lecteur, que cela se peut faire;  
Pour te tirer de peine, en voici la manière:  
En attendant du chef le seul commandement,  
S'il paroit qu'une femme, avec quelques présents,  
Vient jeter du butin devant cette assemblée,  
On détache l'esclave, et, par grande huée,  
On nettoye son corps qui, pour lors, est tout noir;  
On le frotte, on le tourne, à tous on le fait voir,  
Après quoi, l'on le donne à celle dont l'envie

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Le sauva du trépas, en lui donnant la vie.
Il devient son esclave et, pour remerciement
De l'avoir sauvé du feu et du tourment,
Il travaille pour elle, et, de cette manière,
Il doit tâcher du moins à la bien satisfaire.
Si par malheur pourtant elle vient à mourir
Devant lui quelque jour, avec elle faut partir,
Sans se faire prier (404).

This passage, along with others from Louisiana literature that highlight the female role in securing clemency for war captives, shows some of the power of women in red cultures. Thanks to such power, persons such as De Bellisle and the Talons were able to live and recount their captivities to white audiences.

As a relief from the depiction of cruelty in some Native-American societies and as a respite from his criticism of various aspects of New-World cultures, Dumont speaks admiringly of Indian festivals. He says of red music at such events, "La symphonie est belle, agréable en un mot"; the singing is done "avec justesse en tout" (405). Moving from light issues to more serious ones, Dumont devotes much attention to Indian medicinal practices, as though deeply interested in the healing arts of people whom he has just labelled as having "nulle science/ Que celle de nature." Obviously, the more sober and rational Dumont is aware of a greater degree of culture and learning than the angry and emotional author is willing to concede.

Even when he brings up the practice of magic, Dumont speaks admiringly of red sorcerers. "Ils le font assez bien et même sans manquer," and "par leur bel esprit, remèdient aux malheurs" (406). Dumont assures the reader, "Ne crois pas que je mens, c'est toute la franchise/ Que je mets par écrit" (406). The author then relates one marvelous occurrence in particular.

... Vois quelle est ta surprise:
Au fort des Yachoux -- c'est l'habitation
De l'illustre Belle-Isle -- un jour, avec raison,
Celui qui commandoit, voyant la sécheresse
Qui ravageoit les biens, tout rempli de tristesse,
Fit commander au chef de venir lui parler.
Lorsqu’il fut arrivé: “Pourrais-tu me donner,
Dit-il, de l’eau demain”? On lui donne chemises,
Fusils, du vermillon, quelqu’autres marchandises;
Il promet, il le fait. Le lendemain matin
Les eaux tombent du ciel, couronnant son dessein.
Je n’en finirois pas si je voulais décrire
Des faits presque pareils; on en pourroit médire,
Mais c’est la vérité, je puis bien en jurer,
J’ai vu même la chose et je puis l’assurer (406-407).

Dumont, like Pénicaud, actually believes in the supernaturality of
the strange occurrences that he mentions, and he defends their reality
by asserting that he witnessed them firsthand. Thus, Dumont and
Pénicaud are a far cry from Bossu, who delights in exposing the shams
that he discovers in Indian “magic” (that is, the human realities
behind supposed supernaturality.)

When he brings up the Natchez funeral practices, Dumont, like
Pénicaud, feels compelled again to attack Indian cruelty to fellow
Indian. As related in Pénicaud’s narrative, the death of Natchez
royalty results in the executions of many members of the tribe, who,
it is believed, will accompany the Sun to the next world. Dumont
observes pityingly,

On jette des enfants vivants devant le corps,
Comme dignes victimes offertes pour les mânes
De tous ces pauvres gens qui vont comme des ânes,
Qu’on mène à la voirie. Ainsi toujours marchant,
Ils écrasent bientôt ces petits innocents;
Quiconque fait cela est reconnu ensuite
De Puant qu’il étoit pour homme de mérite (408).

Dumont continues to relate the deaths of many others in a passage that
is more ghastly than even Pénicaud’s account of the Sun’s funeral. At
the end of his version, Dumont laments, “De ses pauvres sujets, voila
le triste sort” (408). Dumont genuinely pityes the Indian underlings
who are fooled into believing that their temporal execution will bring
them eternal honor. Like Pénicaud, Dumont supports a French end to
such loss of innocent lives, incurred for the sake of pleasing a dead Natchez aristocrat. The author moves quickly from the Natchez to recounting the more humane mourning procedures for chiefs of other tribes.

Dumont continues mixing comments on the good and the bad that he has noticed in Indian societies. In relating manners, he laments that reds have "par un grand malheur, aucune politesse" (412). On the same page, however, Dumont speaks almost admiringly of Native-American complacency: "Ils sont heureux chez eux sans beaucoup de richesse" (412), and "En un mot, tout leur plait, et, pour eux tout est bon" (413).

Dumont believes that in the early years of the colony the majority of Native Americans were happy to help the French. As he states,

Quand on a commencé d'y poser colonie,
Ces gens là nous servoient, sans nulle jalousie,
A cultiver la terre, à nous traiter du pain;
Nous étions leurs amis pour un peu de butin (413).

Speaking primarily of the Natchez, Dumont notes that, unfortunately, many reds have become enemies of the French over time.

Grand Dieu! pour le présent, ce n'est pas tout de même,
Ils sont nos ennemis; une haine extrême,
Qui s'est emparée d'eux, à cause de vers nous
La perte d'un beau poste, et la fureur des coups
Rejaillit aujourd'hui sur cette aimable terre
Où l'on ne voit partout que meurtres et colère (413).

Despite this change of attitude among many Indians, the French still have some red friends.

Cependant, il est vrai, qu'un nombre fort petit
De quelques nations nous traite comme amis,
Que, pour quelque butin, il va, pour nous, en chasse,
Et, à ce métier, nullement ne se lasse.
Il nous fait encore plus, il nous traite du blé,
De l'huile dans des fans, le tout avec bon gré;
Pour le butin qu'on donne, il donne, en représaille,
Soit du boeuf ou chevreuil, ou bien de la volaille,
Du gibier encore ou bien des peaux passées,
D'autres avec leur poil. Enfin, c'est dire assez
Que le commerce est bon; tout vient en abondance,
Dans ce pays lointain, ainsi que dans la France (413).
Even reduced to a minimum of aboriginal alliances, the colony fares well, thanks to the quality of what the Indians produce. In fact, the curtailed commerce with reds is still so good that France has no edge on its colony with respect to trade and other advantages of good international relations. Of course, Dumont is exaggerating typically here, but the fact that he would speak thus positively of red allies and thus favorably compare the benefits of their friendship to any counterparts on the Continent indicates the degree of the poet’s esteem for the peoples of the Western Hemisphere. Elsewhere in the narrative, Dumont does not shrink from saying why many easygoing “savages” have turned against the French: It is because officials such as Etcheparre, of Natchez ignominy, have not treated them properly.

With regard to problems in Franco-Indian relations, it may be advantageous to view the wars that some Indian groups wage against the French in the context of a Native-American tradition of ritualized, sometimes seasonal and cyclic warring rather than as something peculiar to Euro-Indian interaction. As Dumont points out, perennial skirmishes characterize red-on-red interaction. By extension, Euro-Americans can also be viewed as at times being drawn into such routine conflicts.

Dumont explains how the ritual of war customarily begins.

Devant que de finir touchant ces nations,  
Il faut mettre en écrit, comme, ensemble, ils se font  
La guerre l'une à l'autre; elle est très singulièrè.  
Après avoir choisi, comme c'est l'ordinaire,  
Les plus forts parmi tous, ils s'en vont bien munis  
De haches, casse-têtes et de poudre et fusils;  
Quand ils sont arrivés à l'endroit qu'ils désirent,  
Ils se cachent très bien, sans qu'aucun d'eux ne tire,  
Attendant leur fortune ou bien quelque parti,  
Qui, venant à passer, est alors l'ennemi;  
Ils se ruent aussitôt, lèvent sa chevelure.  
Après ce bel exploit, jettent sur la verdure  
Plusieurs morceaux de bois, long d'un pied et demi,  
Sur lequel est gravé que c'est un tel parti  
De telle nation, qui déclare la guerre.
Ce n’est pas par écrit; par la seule manière
Dont ces bois sont gravés, ils connaissent le lieu
Du Sauvage ennemi, par l’image du Dieu
Qui se trouve gravée. S’ils ne trouvent personne
Pour pouvoir faire ainsi, que cela ne t’étonne;
Comme ils sont patients, ils seront des huit jours
Sans boire, ni manger, qu’ils n’aient fini leur tour.
Ils tournent, autour d’eux, une grosse ceinture,
Se serrant fort le ventre, et, par cette torture,
Ils disent que cela leur empêche d’avoir faim;
Ils se la lâchent un peu tous les jours au matin.
Quand, avec cette peine, ils n’ont nul avantage,
Avant que de quitter l’endroit de ce village,
Pour que les habitants sachent qu’ils sont venus
À cette occasion, et qu’ils soient d’eux connus,
Ils gravent avec fer sur l’arbre et son écorce
Le Dieu de leur village, et, fendent avec force,
Un bois par le milieu. Il est noir d’un côté.
Et de l’autre il est rouge; ainsi cela fait voir
Qu’avec ces habitants, ils déclarent la guerre,
Qu’ils viendront beaucoup plus armés desur leurs terres
(413-414).

In the depiction of Indian pre-battle games, Dumont obviously continues his attack on the centrality of warfare in Native-American life. The poet proceeds from this description to recounting how the Chickasaw attack a French family in the Yazoo area as a means of declaring war against whites at the fort. The attack occurs in much the same way that declaration of war against a red group would be carried out. The “war” likewise ends as quickly as would red-on-red conflict:

“Après quelque temps,/ La même nation vint, suivant l’ordinaire,/ Donner le calumet; par là, finit la guerre” (417).

In closing his long poem, Dumont does not label the Indian as the principal threat to a continued French presence in the New World. Rather,

Le pays est très bon, recherché de l’Anglois,
Et qui, quoique n’ayant avec nous nulle guerre,
Excite cependant le Sauvage à la faire,
Et si, par un malheur, cet abondant pays
Allait changer de face, et aussi de parti,
Oui, sans mentir Lecteur, ah! je plains le Mexique,
Car l’Anglois, ayant pris entrée dans l’Amérique,
A la suite, il pourrait fermer tous les chemins

(413-414).
Aux différents secours, pour servir à ses fins,
Qui sont, à bien juger ses actions, ses mines,
De pouvoir s'emparer des abondantes mines,
Soit de la Vera Cruz; celles de Santa-Fé
Se nomment Sainte-Barbe. En un mot, c'est assez
De dire, qu'ayant pris cette agréable terre,
Ah! l'Espagne, avec eux, auroit cruelle guerre.
Heureux, mille fois heureux, si ce charmant pays
Peut voir encore chez lui le trône de Thémis
Remis dans son vrai lustre et, par un grand courage,
Affermi dans la paix, réduisant le Sauvage
A reconnaître en tout, par un si grand exploit,
Ce qu'est le Français, soutenu de son Roy (433-434).

Dumont views the English rather than Indians as the real threat not
only to French but also to Spanish interests in the New World.8 As
for Louisiana, justice and peace will reign only when the French gain
full control of the land, something that will not occur, Dumont will
proceed to assert, as long as Bienville rules. What is needed is a
hero such as Saint Denis, a man who has proven himself to be a friend
to French, Spanish, and Indian, a man who can convince both white and
red non-Frenchmen that the most promising future for Louisiana and its
neighbors rests in the French securing unswerving control of their
vast New-World possessions.

By now, this section on the Indian has examined how two major
writers of Louisiana's first colonial period depict Native Americans
in their narratives. Halfway through this analysis -- that is, after
having looked at Pénicaud's and Dumont's portrayals and before turning
to Le Page's and Bossu's -- it may be worthwhile to observe how a
writer who had less ambitions for his compositions but who may have
been more characteristic of the average colonial scribe relates his
feelings about red persons while recounting his dealings with them.
That individual is Jérémie Jadart de Beauchamp.
Jérémie Jadart de Beauchamp, who served as commandant of Mobile, had been in Louisiana for decades by the time he composed his journal. Like most of his contemporaries, he was sucked into the perennial, polarizing quarrels of colonists, siding with Bienville when it was Périer’s turn to be at odds with the military leader around whom so much divisiveness in the colony seems to have been generated.

Speaking of events ca. 1730-1731, Giraud states,

The major Beauchamp, who had long experience of colonial life and was a strong supporter of Bienville, considered that Périer’s liberalities merely resulted in inflating the demands of the Choctaws, and that only the former commander would be able, through the respect in which they still held him, to make them see reason (V, 376).

More than ten years later, De Beauchamp, quite familiar with the Choctaw himself, thanks to long residence in proximity to the tribe, served as a mediator between Governor De Vaudreuil (successor to both Périer and Bienville) and an English-influenced band of Choctaw in the wake of Chief Red Shoe (or Red Sock)’s murder of three Frenchmen.

De Beauchamp’s journal recounts his excursion in late summer and early autumn of 1746 from Mobile to Choctaw territory for the purpose of inducing that nation to make amends for the assassination of three of our Frenchmen . . . committed the 14th August, 1746, by order of Ymatahatchitou, medal chief of that nation, who has thrown over the French in favor of the English hoping to procure greater favors from the latter (261).

Ymatahatchitou (Red Shoe) heads the faction of Choctaws who have become friendly toward the British and Chickasaws and antagonistic toward the French and other Choctaws. Both the atoning for the murders and the mending of the rift in Franco-Choctaw relations caused by the belligerent chief concern the author. Through his thorough references
to the numerous meetings that he conducted with many Indians who hold varying views concerning how the different groups relate to each other, De Beauchamp offers valuable glimpses into the thinking and speaking of some Native Americans, into both French and Indian perceptions of Franco-aboriginal relations, and into his own attitudes toward red persons. Apparent early on in De Beauchamp's text is the fact that this mediator and writer of mid-eighteenth-century Louisiana shares, among other things, the feelings toward Native Americans expressed by compatriots both before and after him.

De Beauchamp immediately sets Red Shoe up as the main villain around which everything in the journal rotates. Having just commenced his journey to the Choctaws, De Beauchamp learns at the Mobilians' village that there were 4 Tchactas, newly arrived, who said that the rebel Imatahatchitou had many partisans throughout their nations, adding that he did not seem satisfied as yet, with having caused the assassination of the three Frenchmen, and that he made no more of that affair than if he had killed the wood rats which ate their hens; that for that matter they [the victims] were traders and so of little account; that he would readily console himself if he had caused the death of a chief of some consequence, and would not have regretted dying afterwards (262).

De Beauchamp offers his opinion of Red Shoe when he asserts "that I had long known that that rogue sought only to bring trouble upon the nation by impoverishing it -- men, women and children" (262). The preceding assertion clearly indicates that the author dislikes the troublesome chief not only for the latter's aggression toward the French but also because of his menacing red society as well.

De Beauchamp wastes no time showing the variety of red responses both to Frenchmen and to fellow Indians, an attention to varying attitudes that characterizes the entire journal. He points out the Mobilians' devotion to him and to the rest of the French when he
relates that

the savages, who feared lest some accident befall me and my companions, implored me, with insistence, not to go beyond their villages, urging that my presence, far from advancing our affairs, could only serve to hinder them and to embitter feelings (262).

Despite their affection for and confidence in the white guests, the Indians have strong feelings about the right way to go about dealing with Native Americans.

[They said] that the nation, which seemed well disposed towards giving us satisfaction, must be left to act of itself, and that my presence might be a check on those who are the best disposed toward us. . . . They told me that I, as well as my people, ran great risks (262).

De Beauchamp responds

that I did not fear to go among a nation that was allied to us and that I had known for 28 years, and that, as I had never done it aught but good I could not persuade myself that it desired to do me ill. [I told them] that their arguments would not prevent me from proceeding on my journey, that, for that matter, I was not counting on going among enemies, but, on the contrary, among our allies, there to establish peace and union, so that they might live as in the past; that I feared nothing for my life when it was a question of rendering my service to my country [and] that I would sacrifice it willingly; [I said] that I was not going to the Tchactas to disseminate discord but to restore everything to order after that they should have made white the ground that some of evil purpose had reddened; that not for a moment did I doubt that that nation would give us satisfaction, even as we ourselves, six years before, had done by it (262-263).

Still, “the chief of this village, the chief of the Manibâ, and the red chief of the Chicachas, seconded by the chief of the Youany did all in their power to turn me aside from continuing my journey” (263).

De Beauchamp obviously places more trust in some Indians than fellow red men do, and his twenty-eight years of familiarity with Native Americans have made him as shrewd and prudent as he is trusting.
When De Beauchamp reaches the first Choctaw settlement, he notes that "the savages of this village received us exceeding well and displayed abundance of friendship for us" (264). The author then leads a band of Choctaw to the Chickasaw, "who received me, in appearance, with an evidence of friendship" (264). At the appropriate time, De Beauchamp speaks to the Indians.

I addressed them in these terms: ... that, having learned that there was discord in a nation which I had always loved, and which had on different occasions, given proofs of its attachment to the French, I came bearing the message of M. De Vaudreuil, their father, who exhorted them never to quit his band; that they saw perfectly that the rebel only sought to degrade his nation and to make it wretched; that the assassination of our three Frenchmen, which he had caused to be committed, was a more than sufficient proof of this, since the wretch had aimed at the life of our people only to the end of impoverishing them [the savages], their women, and their children. What would become of you, said I to them, if we abandon you; what resource will you have? If this nation does not make amends, by giving up a head for a head, you force us to abandon you. To whom will you have recourse? To the English? It is beyond all possibility for them to supply you with the fourth part of your necessities, [and] thus your women and your children will die of want. Whereas, upon giving up three heads, following the agreements made with your elders, M. De Vaudreuil, your father will forget that which has passed, and I, who am an object of your ingratitude, shall be overjoyed, before leaving you, to have restored the peace and union which have so long reigned between us. We ask of you nothing but what is just, seeing that in 1740 M. De Vaudreuil rendered justice to you on account of a man and a woman whom some Frenchmen had killed, and on that occasion you all promised to do the same by the French should the Tchactas commit any act of that sort. I well realize, I said to them, that it is not for the Chicachae to render this justice, but what I required of them was to support my words when the Tchactas, to whom I had given notice of my arrival, should be assembled (265-266).

In his discourse, De Beauchamp expresses concern for Indian welfare and warns against French reaction to Indian lack of cooperation. In addition, he attempts to instill a sense of guilt for what he
perceives as Indian ingratitude toward whites and brings up the idea of eye-for-eye justice, a notion as much at home in Native America as in the Old Testament.

As De Beauchamp continues his oratory, his concern for Native-American well-being is further revealed.

Then I read to them the intent of . . . M. De Vaudreuil . . . which tended only to their welfare and to that of their families. [I told them] that they should recall their first estate, that if today they are Men it is to the French alone to whom they are under obligation, they [the French] having put arms into their hands that they might defend themselves against the nations which were oppressing them and making slaves of them. This signal service has made them respected of the other nations, and has even made them, so to speak, the arbiters of their neighbors, both because of their numbers and because of the warriors which our munitions and our arms have formed (266).

De Beauchamp asserts, "I touched on the spots where they are most sensitive in repeating what I knew [of them] 28 years ago, and [in pointing out] what the Tchactas were then" (266). Throughout the journal, De Beauchamp reminds his red listeners that the French have both empowered them and eased their lives by giving them guns, whereupon the Indians themselves admit that they would not want to return to warring and hunting with the traditional bows and arrows. By repeatedly touching on a form of acculturation whose advantages are as apparent to reds as they are to whites, De Beauchamp uses a common point of agreement around which to base his argument for a solidification of Franco-Indian relations.

After presenting his own address to the gathered Indians, De Beauchamp next offers a red response. Mongoulachamingo's harangue, filled with "angered animosity" is a virulent example of Indian resentment. De Beauchamp comments upon this Chickasaw diatribe with relish and offers his own clever retort.
I do not think, he said to me, that the Tchactas are giving heads for those of your Frenchmen; that as for the head of the rebel Ymatahatchitou it was useless to count upon it. (I had taken care not to designate the heads which we demanded); that he had long known that we sought the ruin of the red men. That, said he, is how the French are, and to support his evil words, he cited to me [the case of] a chief of his race at the Thoméz, whom M. De Bienville, in the early days of the old fort of Mobile, had sent to the islands to die; and [he said] that he [Bienville] had had this man taken by force. This seditious discourse would have produced a very bad effect if I had not had the means of turning against him the trick he had made use of in order to prejudice the minds of the savages, for the lying rogue of whom he spoke had only been sent to the islands upon the demand of the Thoméz. This was confirmed by an Ymongoulacha who dwelt there when the man in question had been sent to Havannah, [and furthermore] M. De Chateauguay had since seen the man, at the house of a priest, and had asked him if he would not be glad to see again his kinsfolk, whereupon he replied that being a Christian he thought no more of the red men and esteemed himself happy to have quit them (266-267).

The knowledge of Native Americans that De Beauchamp has gained from years of contact with indigenous groups pays off in at least two ways in the encounter given above: First of all, the author knows how to respond on the level of the reds with whom he is speaking, using the latter's own techniques, and secondly, the white man's numerous red acquaintances allow him to verify events and situations of which many persons (both Indian and French) might not have intelligence.

De Beauchamp's ability to confront Indians in the fashion of the latter gets the best of the red orator in the present case.

The chief, who was not looking for this counter, was disconcerted for a moment. He began again to inveigh against us with unbearable reproaches adding that he well knew that he would never return to favor with us, since he had rejected our words; . . . that he had no great obligations to us since he had kept nothing of what had been given him. . . . Then he addressed his people and said that since the French were abandoning them they would have to take up again the bow and the arrow, that furthermore he was not going to seek the English but that he would remain at home [and be] poor. He followed with numerous extravagances, -- which revealed to me his evil heart expressing
itself in open hostility. I ordered him to desist, which he did not do until the second summons. It is true that a bottle of brandy . . . contributed not a little to making him vomit forth his indecencies and his insolence. He even said that if he had come to Mobille at the time of the [presentation of] gifts and M. De Vaudreuil had rejected him he would have said and done more; he even wanted to spring upon me after [I] had imposed silence upon him, [but] this he denied, afterwards, when he was in cold blood. I told him that had he been daring enough to do such a thing I should have killed him . . . . Finally he quitted the assembly without taking leave of anyone and went off home like a madman to tear down the French flag, which he had hoisted as soon as he saw mine at the Reverend Father Baudouin’s, and which, until then, he had left [flying] (267-268).

So much for the first -- and perhaps the most unpleasant -- of a number of harangues from Native Americans that express what De Beauchamp does not want to hear.

The author hardly flatters the next chief who speaks, probably because this orator defends as much as he apologizes for the bitter words quoted above. De Beauchamp relates Mingo houma Tchitou’s statement that “the nation must be left to act of itself, that it was not yet inclined to accord us justice, that it was necessary to have patience, [and] that he hoped we would have reason to be satisfied in the end” (268). De Beauchamp comments disparagingly,

In short his harangue was only a repetition of what he had said to M. De Louboey and to me before my departure from the Mobilliens; he only made me see that, in spite of all the fine promises which he had made me on the way, he was no more inclined to our interests than his chief, covering himself with the mantle of cowardice, saying that he was afraid and did not know which side to take (268-269).

In addition to the outright hostility of some, De Beauchamp early in his mission faces a lack of commitment from even supposed allies. Consequently, the red friends’ failure to rally decisively behind the French, be it for real or imagined fears, leads the author to assume a generally critical stance toward groups whom he had thought he knew.
De Beauchamp is more lenient on the next chief who speaks, probably because the latter "spoke with moderation" (269).

[He] said that the Tchactas were free to go to seek the English, that for himself he would never quit the hand of the French, that the evil deed of Ymatahatchitou was going to make them all wretched, that they would see themselves forced to take again their ancient weapons (that is the bow and the arrow), a sorry resource, said he to his people, for those who have a family to nourish and to support, and all the more so as we have [i.e. they had] completely lost the use of them; that as for himself we ought to be assured of his attachment, that he had given us convincing proof of it in the wounds which he still bears and which he had received in our service (269).

Although filtered through a white man's transcription, the Indian dialogue given above (along with other red speeches in the journal) is a Native-American endorsement of at least one form of acculturation and an indication of willing red rejection of some traditional ways in favor of conversion to more expedient European innovations.

As a testament to the evolving tone of the journal, De Beauchamp admits in the September 30 entry "how dissatisfied I was with the harangues which the Chicachaé had made to me and for which I was not prepared by the demonstrations of friendship which they had evidenced to me the day before" (269). While certain Indians obviously frustrate the author, he continues to exert patience in hearing them vent what he considers to be groundless grievances. To others he displays a strong friendship that stems from deep appreciation of their fidelity and support. For instance, he sends word to a Choctaw chief "that if he judged my presence necessary in those parts he had only to let me know [and] I would leave on the instant to repair thither" (269). De Beauchamp acknowledges the loyalty of some reds further when he relates, "I saw with pleasure that the Abékhas, very far from giving support to the rebel Ymatahatchitou, . . . had, on the contrary, regarded the treachery with horror" (270). The author then lists the
tribes that assure the French that they "detested with all their hearts the odious acts of the Tchactas" (270). These groups, in turn, promise "that if that nation refused to give us prompt satisfaction, they would . . . go there to persuade them to it; that they would utterly refrain from aiding such an ungrateful nation" (270).

Because of varying alliances between red groups -- and then between these tribes and whites groups -- dealings with Louisiana's eastern nations are complex, to say the least. De Beauchamp, like the majority of Louisiana colonial writers, fully realizes the dissimilarities of Native Americans and takes them into account in negotiations. For example, he says of the more troublesome red speakers: "I observed that the people who had comported themselves in that fashion were savages who had the English among them" (271). Never lumping all Indians into the same category as do some Continentals and Euro-Americans, De Beauchamp vents his anger exclusively at one group when he complains that "the Tchactas are great liars" (271). As for the Apalachees and their neighbors, the author gladly relates their report "that peace reigned throughout all the nations, that all the roads were white, that those people could go everywhere and that the Tchactas were the only ones who had reddened the ground" (271). Still implicating some Indians while avowing the loyalty of others, De Beauchamp comments, "This discourse, in harmony with mine, did not fail to disconcert somewhat the chief of the village as well as all those who had yielded in the first assembly" (271).

As the trying proceedings with troublesome reds continues at a taxing pace, De Beauchamp focuses again on the particularly offensive chief, who "repeated, being sober, the same nonsense that he had addressed to us, being drunk" (271). Despite such ongoing annoyances, the author reports that
with more gentleness I spoke to him about the flag which he had taken down and told him that the flag was not for himself alone but for all the village and that he must raise it again or else I would have it taken away from him (272).

Clearly, no matter what some enraged Indians might do with medals, flags, and other tokens bestowed upon them by the French, these objects of honor still carry importance for Native Americans in general, De Beauchamp believes. The belligerent chief in question complies with De Beauchamp's request. As for the rest of the assembled reds, some continue to speak in support of the French (meaning that they will seek atonement for the French deaths and have nothing to do with the British), others against the French, and still others speak not at all.

After De Beauchamp sends word of his arrival to groups that have not already gathered in his presence, he gets replies such as the following that show the depth to which some Indian friendships run.

Toupâou mastabé, the captain, had been rejoiced to learn of my arrival [and] was going to notify his great chief to repair hither with the notables; that he [Toupâou mastabé] was grateful to me for not having gone beyond this village, by reason of the risks which I and my men would have run in going to see them, for the heart of the red men was bad and had some accident befallen me it would have occasioned a war among them, for they would not have suffered me to be insulted, either while on the way or in their villages. The messenger told me that they begged me not to pass beyond this village, that I would expose them to being massacred by the Tchactas, their own factions being the weaker, [and] that they would come out at once to see me to receive the messages of the great chiefs of the French, their fathers (272).

Toupâou mastabé's words show further that many red groups, especially the smaller, weaker ones, were often more willing to ally themselves with whites than with other red societies, the latter sometimes having menaced the former more brutally than any whites had done.2

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De Beauchamp strongly reveals his flexibility and good intention regarding Native Americans when he urges adjusting French demands in recognition of Indian goodwill and/or change of heart. The author says of his dispatch to a compatriot,

I informed him that in view of the circumstances and of the attachment of the three nations of the Allibamonts, Abëkas, and Talapouches, it was no longer desirable to demand three heads, indiscriminately, but that, on the contrary, we must fix upon the head of the rebel Ymatahatchitou. I told him that if the deputies of the Allibamons arrived, he should receive them well — since they were undertaking that move only with the view of engaging the Tchactas to give satisfaction to the French — and to send them to me if that were possible (273).

Clearly, De Beauchamp, like other colonial Louisiana literati, attempts to change Continental or Euro-American thinking and behaving along with Native-American thought and behavior.

De Beauchamp then relates his meeting with "Allibamont mingo," and the chief's eloquent and friendly discourse does much to redeem the negative impression of Native Americans that might have been formed by the earlier, unflattering speeches.

Having learned that he had comported himself perfectly in this affair, I addressed directly to him the words of his father [De Vaudreuil], as he was the only chief to whom I could have recourse for support of my own, [and] that I begged him to tell me, without concealment, if what his father and I demanded, was not just. To this the chief, after rising and making two circles — one of which indicated the settlement of the French, and the other, larger, enclosed the Tchactas nations — made reply. He commenced his discourse in these terms: That I ought not in the least to doubt his attachment for us; that it was not his fault that this evil affair was not already ended, for he had represented all the consequences of it to the nation and particularly to the people of his village and dependency; that he perfectly remembered his first estate; that it was not necessary to spare people who had long sought only the loss and ruin of the Tchactas nation, and who had just capped the climax with their crimes; that all the red men must see clearly that all the promises of Ymatahatchitou were vain and chimerical; that he regarded all those projects as impossible; that as for him, his will was good but that he could not give us the satisfaction which we
justly demanded, fearing to set all the nation against
him; that if he were seconded he would do it with a good
heart, but that his village, and that of the Chicachae,
which are united from of old, could not give this satis-
faction, however great their desire, without running the
risk of being cut to pieces by the rest of the nation;
that it was necessary to await the chiefs of the region of
the west who are the most concerned in this affair, since
the Frenchmen who were assassinated lived in their vil-
lages; that it would be seen what they think of it; that
he would use all his influence to engage them to do jus-
tice by us and would speak to them outright and boldly to
bring them to it. In short this chief spoke with all the
eloquence possible on the side of our interests, often re-
peating that if the Tchactas lost the French they must
needs look upon themselves as dead, since their women and
their children would not only be naked as in the past but
would die of destitution and hunger (273-274).

De Beauchamp’s paraphrasing of Allibamont mingo’s speech is signifi-
cant for many reasons. First of all, it shows the depth of a red in-
dividual’s attachment to the French as well as his endorsement of the
acculturation process. Secondly, the degree to which the author sum-
marizes the speaker’s suggestion as to a French course of action indi-
cates the Frenchman’s respect for this Indian’s opinion. Thirdly, but
not finally, De Beauchamp’s transcription of this discourse is another
of the many invaluable recordings of Indian oratory preserved in
Louisiana colonial literature, all of which help to conserve Native-
American oral artistry and grant insight into aboriginal American
psyches.

Although Allibamont mingo’s speech pleases De Beauchamp, Toupâou
mastabé’s does not.

His discourse contained nothing but tricky terms, ambigu-
ities, and fear; he brought forth as many difficulties for
[the settling of] this affair as though I had demanded of
him things that were unjust. Such an harangue from a man
whom I thought wholly devoted to the French surprised me
extremely. His discourse was very long, stupid, and tire-
some; he repeated from time to time his great deeds, but
always refrained from saying anything satisfactory to us,
except that he would always love the French, that he would
not abandon them, but that he was afraid and could do nothing for them (274).

Later, De Beauchamp relates,

I then spoke in private to Toupãoumastabé... It appeared by his reply that he was better inclined toward us than he had appeared in his harangue; he said, by way of excuse, that the Red men did not dare to say in public what they thought, because Ymatahatchitou had spies in the assemblies, but that he hoped nevertheless that we would have grounds for satisfaction without loss of time (276).

De Beauchamp reiterates after other discourses in the narrative that many Indians were more friendly to him in private than they were when speaking publicly, for fear of incurring the disfavor of reds antagonistic toward the French through any lavish affirmation of loyalty to the latter.

In addition to paraphrasing Indians who are wishy-washy, those who are unswervingly loyal, and those who are vehemently hostile, De Beauchamp summarizes the discourse of reds who had been opposed to the French before allying themselves wholeheartedly to the latter.

"Quikanabé Mingo," for instance, asserts that

as soon as he had learned the sad news [of the assassination of the French] he had made ready to march to execute justice, that he had failed because no one had been willing to second him, that if there was a willingness to aid him he was entirely willing to start out again, nor did he fear to risk his life to avenge the French and to re-establish peace in the nation to the end that he might rescue it from the oppression of Ymatahatchitou and of the English, knowing furthermore that these latter are unable to supply their needs. [He said] that of this he spoke with knowledge since he had formerly been [one of] their captains and their partisans -- [and] that but for M. De Beauchamps and the Reverend Father Beaudoin he might still be -- but he had recognized his mistake and would always sacrifice himself for the French, his benefactors. He told me in private that he took this affair so much to heart that, although he did not promise me anything, I would perhaps hear of him; that he was returning at once to succor his children whom he had left dying; that he had already lost one but a few days before, for whom he was in mourning, that it had required nothing less than a message.
such as mine to have made him leave his hut where he was in tears (275).

"Taskanamgouchy of the Bois Bleux" follows the regenerate Quikanабé Mingo in avowing his commitment to the French and eagerness to help them. At the same time, however, he also relates the admonition that other reds gave him when he was ready to march against Ymatahatchitou to avenge the French deaths: that it was not yet the time to strike.

Other chiefs come to see De Beauchamp and assure him of their favor, but the author's familiarity with the speech and behavior of many Native Americans keeps him cautious at all times. Of one group he says, "I had good grounds for being content with them, although [they are] neighbors of the rebel" (277). Of another group's leader he relates, "Oulissö Mingo of the Eaies noires spoke no ill, notwithstanding he was suspected of being in the interests of Ymatahatchitou" (277).

Summing up the harangues he has heard up to this point, De Beauchamp maintains,

I did not discern any great attachment for us although I had every reason to be content with the fashion in which Allibamont mingo had declared himself, as well as Taskanamgouchy of the Bois Bleux and some others; ... I was awaiting the six Villages and the western party in order to sound their hearts, which would doubtless be as hardened as that of the chief of this village who had spoken much ill to us (277).

De Beauchamp's skeptical predictions come true. The next round of red envoys prove to be just as frustrating in their speeches as those who preceded them.

The new speakers deliver "speeches, good and bad," in which the positives must be heard with a great deal of reserve. When one chief rails self-pityingly against the French, De Beauchamp comments, "It is to be remarked that this chief is of the race of Ymatahatchitou"
A young chief next speaks, "saying neither good nor ill" but asserting that he had several times warned the French to beware of the bad Tchactas, that they [the French] were not ignorant that there were many of ill will; that he had several times warned the Sr. Chambly as well as the others, of them (278).

Another chief who speaks does so to De Beauchamp's satisfaction, but the discourse of the same chief's second in command offsets what the former had to say. Although De Beauchamp is annoyed by much of what he hears, the fact that he presents many Indian points of view on the crisis at hand indicates how closely he listens to red opinion and, therefore, how fit he is to be a mediator.

When some speakers affirm "that they did not see any likelihood that the red men could do us justice without running many risks and that they were not at all inclined to get themselves killed through love of us" (278), the author comments that "it even appeared that their discourses were shaped upon the understanding which they had reached among themselves while on the way" (278).

De Beauchamp gets Allibamont mingo to help him persuade reluctant Choctaw groups that banding solidly with the French is in their own best interest. He points out that the French would help restore peace and supply needed provisions, and he warns that other groups hold the treacherous Ymatahatchitou in abhorrence. The response from the gathered chiefs is hardly satisfactory to the Frenchman. One reply is so stinging that "this evil argument compelled Allibamont mingo to silence, in spite of the desire which he had to make them realize all the horror of the crime committed by the Tchactus" (279).

His mettle tried and proven, De Beauchamp remains in control of procedures and firm in his resolve, even during the important, revelatory rituals of gift giving and negotiation of trade. He notes that
Pouchimataha . . . supposed that the goods which I brought were intended to engage them to go to war upon their enemies and ours, but that he saw, on the contrary, that they were for the purpose of getting them to support [me]; that he was not at all of that opinion; he added many other things, in the same tone and but little satisfying. The red chief of the Nachoubadouénia did likewise and endorsed what this last chief had recited. I told him that a man like myself did not go on the march without goods; that those which I had brought were intended for the subsistence of my warriors and for making presents to whom I saw fit; to which he dared not retort; no more than did Pouchimataha and the others. I broke up this assembly in telling them that I would render a faithful account to their father of the attachment for him and for all the French which they had displayed to me. They then set themselves to eating what the Chicaché had prepared for them, [and] as soon as they had their bellies full they came to take my hand and quickly departed without saying anything more.

The chief of Toussana and the red chief of the Nachoubaouenya remained and gave some signs of good will and attachment in the hope, without doubt, that I would make them a present by way of reward for the evil discourse they had held me; but their hopes were vain as were those of their company, whom I sent away with nothing (280).

After these Indians leave, De Beauchamp has better luck with the next individuals he encounters.

One speaks "in excellent terms" but reminds De Beauchamp that he was old and unable to undertake anything; that even of late his hut had been shot at and [there had been shooting] in his deserts; that he was in great fear lest those of evil intentions should make an attempt upon his life after the measures that had just been taken, but that he would, with all his force, urge the nation to give us satisfaction in order to re-establish peace and union among the Tchactas that they might live together as heretofore; that as for himself personally he would never hold any other language than that of his father, but that he could not take any action, that he feared too much lest he himself be assassinated (281).

The above paints a touching picture of the extent to which some reds suffer for their fidelity to the French, but it is followed by another speaker "making an exhibit of cowardice, like the others" (281).
De Beauchamp gladly relates a certain chief's finally correcting fellow reds for impolitenesses directed at the author.

The great chief, before his departure, gave evidence of much displeasure at the evil language held by the Six Villages and by the [chief] of Toussana, and ordered Ápanicnantcla of the Céniachas to tell them, from him, that they must come to make their excuses to me, both for their evil discourse and for the brusque fashion of their leaving, and that he would speak right roundly his mind to them in the assembly... In consequence the chief and the second of the village of Nachoubaouenya, came the day of my departure, to express their regret at having spoken ill as well as at having departed so brusquely; that they had acted thus without reflection, but that they came to make me their excuses, assuring me that they would never abandon the hand of the French (281-282).

De Beauchamp's illustration of Native-American corrigibility clearly shows that, despite his occasional disparaging comments, the author looks for and acknowledges cooperation, reconciliation, and other fine qualities among American aborigines.

As evidenced earlier when he advises fellow Frenchmen that a change of ultimatum is in order because of Indian cooperation, De Beauchamp leaves himself open to red influence. His flexibility can be seen in the following encounter with "the Ditémongoulacha chiefs, of the west."

They replied that my demand was just, but that although they realized all the consequences, they were not bold enough, nor strong enough to attack the party of Ymataha Tchitou which was still powerful; that they had taken upon themselves to avenge us, but that, finding themselves alone in this determination, they had not dared make the attempt for fear of not being sustained by the nation. [They said] that when the partizans of the rebel find themselves impoverished they will withdraw from him, and that then they will be able to give us the satisfaction which we demand; but that up to now he [Ymatahatchitou] had filled them [his partizans] with imaginings and the hope that they would shortly be enriched with goods, both from the English and from the Chikachas; that as for them they saw well enough that all those promises were vain and futile and that it was impossible for him to hold to all that he had promised them; that for their part we ought to feel assured that they would never abandon the hand of the
French to take the hand of the English; that furthermore they would do all in their power to avenge the death of the man Petit, their trader, and that if they could not take vengeance upon the red men they would take it upon the English, should they be crazy enough to come among the nation (282).

The author asserts, "In short I was very well satisfied with the chief of this village and with the red chief, who nevertheless is of the race of the rebel" (282). In this passage and others, the author's listening to and agreeing with the red allies' reasons for postponing vengeance shows that De Beauchamp readily recognizes and acquiesces to common sense coming from Indians, incorporating it into his own strategy when he judges the view of particular reds to be superior.

As the series of meetings with various reds progresses, De Beauchamp continues to convey the peculiarities of each encounter. Of the positive testimonies, the author relates one individual's assertion that he will avenge the death of a Frenchman at the next Indian gathering and "escape, thereupon, to New Orleans" (283). Another reports that "the Couchas had even constructed a fort, as much for their own security as for that of the French, whose hand they did not wish to abandon" (283). This last speaker also assures the French that "he did not believe . . . that the party of Ymatahâitchitou could long hold together, as his people see no fulfillment of the promises he has made and is still making daily" (283).

De Beauchamp next presents some conflicting Native-American discourse that sheds much light into the crisis at hand.

The white chief, who is a worthless fellow, told me that Ymatahâitchitou, seeing nothing coming of all that he expected from the English, Chikachas, and Abôkas, began to repent him of having corrupted their lands, and that he [Ymatahâitchitou] had said that if goods did not come in abundance before long, it would be necessary to satisfy the French by giving up the heads of three of the warriors who had committed the deed, and that as for himself, being gouty of the foot and feeble, he thought his warriors
would pardon him and allow him to die his own death, which, by reason of his infirmities and of his age, would not be long delayed; for it would be shameful for him to die at the hands of his nation. The Abēkas of the west, who are his partizans, having learned of this language replied that not having first given their word in favor of the murder, they would not consent to give their heads to whiten the land which he had made red; that it was far more just to give up his own head since it was only at his solicitation that the warriors had spoiled the roads on the strength of the false promises which he had made them (283).

Characteristically, De Beauchamp follows the report above with additional summaries of both satisfactory and unsatisfactory encounters with more Native Americans.

De Beauchamp continues to remain flexible yet firm, meeting Indians head on, in their own fashion, as the following paraphrased dialogue shows.

The Soulier Rouge, of the Yanabé, spoke next, saying that he was ashamed to appear before the French chief after the disgraceful thing that had come to pass in the nation, but that he saw no way of making amends because of the fear in which they stood of kindling a civil war among the Tchactas; that I should be assured that he would always cherish our interests with warmth, [but] that he did not feel that he himself was brave enough to make an attempt upon the life of Ymatahatchitou, who was well guarded, and that furthermore he was not of his race.

To which I replied that it was far more shameful for me to have come among a nation which I supposed entirely devoted to our interests, because of the benefits which their ancestors had received, and which they [themselves] would still receive daily; that I saw with astonished surprise that all those great warriors, captains, red chiefs, and notables, did not dare to undertake anything against a man who sought only their undoing, and to disunite them in causing them to lose the moiety of the French, and to make them wretched; that if, however, they did not give satisfaction to their father, in reparation of the offense committed by Ymatahatchitou, I doubted not, that upon my return, M. De Vaudreuil, perceiving the lack of zeal for the execution of his orders, would at once cease all commerce with a nation so ingrate. I further said several very strong things, recalling to them all that we had done for them and in the strongest terms. This brought about a change in this party chief, who appeared much touched by
the feeling reproaches, which with justice, I had just addressed to him (286-287).

Confronting the Indian in the manner of the Indian pays off for De Beauchamp.

When "Paémingo of the Castachas" recounts all that he and his brothers have done for the French, above all their raid on the Chickasaw, De Beauchamp praises these allies for their faithful service but continues to point out strongly that it was not the same with all the captains, red chiefs, and other notables of that nation, who, vying with each other, had assured M. De Vaudreuil, at Mobile, in the strongest terms, that, immediately upon their arrival [i.e., return] each one would arouse his party to go against the Chikachas, their enemies and ours; but that, hardly had they lost sight of his house, as well as of the good reception and the good cheer which he had tendered them, than all those mighty and fine promises had gone up in smoke and that, instead of keeping the word which they had given their father, the most of them had remained asleep in their huts; others had gone to the Chikachas to trade, instead of to make war, and to learn at the same time the thoughts of the English. . . .

[I continued by saying] that Paémingo then, was the only one who had held to the word which, in leaving, he had given to his father, [and] that I went so far as to hope that he would not stop [halfway] in such a good course, but that he would do his utmost to obtain for us the satisfaction which we demand of the Tchactas, so that it might be possible to re-establish among them a peace, which, in all appearance, has been troubled only with the consent of all the captains, red chiefs, and other notables of the nation, who had given no proofs of their zeal and fidelity in our service. This sharp reproach, vehemently uttered, astonished the Soulier Rouge of the Yánabé to such a point, that he asked a second time to speak in private, saying that he would demand nothing better than to satisfy the French and to reestablish the [supply of] munitions and goods, in order to ward off the misery to which we were going to reduce them; [and] that further, if they did not do us justice, they would be despised by the other nations who would rightly regard them as ungrateful and faithless (288-289).

De Beauchamp continues his attempt to get Native-American supporters of the French to wield influence over those Choctaws still
leaning toward the Chickasaw and the British. The author gives a long summary of a speech by “Tamatlémingo of the Allibamonts,” who tries to sway the Choctaw away from the British and the Chickasaw by reminding them of both how much they owe the French and how much the French can still offer them. De Beauchamp remarks after his paraphrase of the discourse: “In short this chief spared no effort and said all that he could to appeal to the Tchactas. Perceiving how little movement they made I said to him that their hearts were harder than steel” (291).

Then the captain of the Chikachaé, after the speech of Tamatlémingo, made a little speech to the assembly, presenting to it a bow and some arrows and saying that he had just tried his ancient arms but that he could no longer make use of them, having lost the art; hoping thereby to touch this auditors and make them realize how wretched they would be should we abandon them (291).

After the two presentations above, made by older men who do not speak the Choctaw language, a young Choctaw “spoke very well in our behalf,” supporting what the previous speakers had said and noting further that “the English ... ever sowed evil words among the nations for the purpose of troubling them; whereas the words of the French were always the same, that is to say, white and beneficent for the red men.” De Beauchamp concludes, “This discourse publicly uttered by a Tchactas made a very good effect” (291).

The effect is so good, in fact, that a listener offers to kill Ymatahatchitou himself. In presenting his negotiations with this Indian over Red Shoe’s killing, De Beauchamp shows how complicated atonement, revenge, and justice in Franco-Indian Louisiana can be.

He then spoke to me in private and asked if no one had volunteered to kill Ymatahatchitou; I told him No, not wishing to let him know who had given me their word [to do so]. I said to him that he was young and full of ambition and that he ought to persuade Paémingo of the Castachas, Taskaadémingo, captain of the Boukfoukà, [the Captain] of Toussana, and Illétaska of the Ymongoulachas to have that...
act of reparation done by Tatoulimatāha, elder brother of Ymatāhatchitou, in order to avoid the consequences. He replied that he did not wish to have the captain of Bouffouka cooperate with him, that he was too ambitious, — which did not displease me as I had learned that he had given his consent to the death of the Frenchmen — but that he would gladly join with Paémingo, regarding [however] the others as suspects. He asked me if the one who should kill Ymatāhatchitou would be given the medal, which I promised him, together with the present of [the position of] Captain [for the second] and [for] the third, the present of [the position of] village chief, as well as a reward for the warriors, whereupon he replied that that business could be accomplished in a fortnight after my arrival at Mobille not being willing to attempt anything while I should be among them, or on the road, for fear lest some accident might befall me or my men. At eleven o'clock of the evening he came to ask me if I would give him two pieces of limbourg in addition to what I had promised him. I replied that I would, and even more if it were necessary; [I said] that the message of his father, and my message would remain with the Reverend Father Baudolijn in my absence, as well as at Tombekbè. He requested of me a great secrecy in this affair; I told him that I would observe it most religiously but that I could not dispense with communicating the matter to Mrs. De Vauredreuil and Louboey. Tell them, said he, but let them speak of it to no one (292-293).

In the instance above as in many others, De Beauchamp effectively uses the cleverness, cunning, and customs that Louisiana writers associate with Native Americans for his own purposes, an approach that could only come from familiarity with what the authors view as red tactics. Unfortunately for De Beauchamp, the well-planned murder of Red Shoe does not occur, but not because of any defect or omission in the intricate scheme.

It might seem strange to readers to learn that De Beauchamp and others consider it a viable option for the atonement of the French murders and the restoration of Franco-Choctaw relations to have the brother of Ymatahatchitou kill the latter. Ymatahatchitou’s brother Tatoulimatāha is considered a possible candidate for the avenging deed because he “was always inclined toward the French and would not
abandon them" (293). When the matter is brought up to him, however, Tatoulimatâha asserts that he cannot possibly undertake the deed, no matter how much he would like to see it done; furthermore, when the deed is done, knowledge of the avenging should be kept from him because he would be forced to go over to his brother's faction upon hearing of it. Such is what the Indian law at hand dictates and what honor imposes upon Red Shoe's brother.

For his part, Tatoulimatâha affirms that he could not approve of the wicked deed which his brother had had committed against the French; that he knew, from of old, that his heart was evil, and he had many times blamed him for it. Nevertheless, if he [his brother] should pass on to the Abekas or the Talapouches, we would be free to have [his brother] killed, and not only would he [himself] not say a word, but he would be rejoiced. It is useless, said he, to think of having him killed by his [own] nation (293).

In this case and others De Beauchamp illustrates the pragmatism and proscription governing the actions of many Indians.

While there is no love lost between Red Shoe and his brother and while the latter reveals a devotion to the French that whites would like to see in all Indians, Tatoulimatâha does defend his brother to a certain extent and criticizes the French, in part, for the crisis at hand.

He added that if his brother had committed that evil deed it was only because of desperation at seeing how he had been treated, formerly, at Tombékbé, together with the ill treatment he had received, both in his own person and in the persons of his wives. He even asked if it was by order of M. the governor that there were sent chiefs and other Frenchmen, who were in the nation, to employ insulting terms towards them and their wives. That we ought to know that that caused much hard feeling and added that his brother had seen with indignation the little importance that we made of him; that it even seemed that a trader had been placed with Pouchimatahâ at Toussana, only for the purpose of emphasizing it; [all of] which had determined him the more promptly to commit that folly; that it was true that the English had demanded but one French head for an Englishman who had been killed by the Tchactas . . . ;
that the warriors had exceeded his order, which made matters worse (293-294).

If De Beauchamp is to be credited with nothing else, he must be recognized for presenting Native-American perspectives on events, even when he does not agree with them, and for allowing red speakers to vent their anger and frustration, even when he does not deem the emotions well-founded.

As his narrative nears the end, De Beauchamp makes a one-sentence paragraph that typifies much of what he has encountered during his mission of vengeance and peace: "The former chief of Tchanké spoke well, in the evening, for us; and [spoke] ill in the morning" (295). Despite the ongoing vacillation from support to rejection, friendship to animosity that the author has faced in the red visitors, De Beauchamp still believes that by shutting off the flow of English goods to the Choctaw via the Chickasaw, the French will find themselves "in a position to reform many of the rascals of that faithless nation who indirectly have been accomplices in the affair of Ymatahatchitou" (295). Instructing both Frenchmen and Native-American friends of the course of action to be followed after his departure and getting assistance from both aboriginal and Euro-Americans on his way back to Mobile, De Beauchamp leaves the rest of the work to be done "in the affair of Ymatahatchitou" to red and white hands. He ends his narrative with the words, "That, then is the fruit of the journey which I have made with pleasure for the service of the King and of the Country. May God bless my work" (297).
Le Page and Indians

In the preface to his three-volume work on Louisiana, Le Page du Pratz anticipates a common complaint of nineteenth-century Creole writers when he asserts that "Les faux jugemens qu'on a portés sur cette contrée de l'Amérique, semblent même inviter un bon Patriote à redresser les idées et à en donner de justes" (I, v-vi). Furthermore, "il est donc absolument nécessaire de détruire ces faux jugemens occasionnés par des Relations infidèles, souvent pleines de malignité, et presque toujours d'ignorance" (I, vi). As the above indicates, Le Page joins "Louisianianized" writers such as Tonti, Pénicaut, and Dumont (and even conscientious French authors such as Charlevoix) in venting frustration over inaccurate depictions of Louisiana (created by Frenchmen who do not know the region well) and by proposing a narrative that will clarify misconceptions concerning all aspects of life in the New World. This urgent desire to present Louisiana as it is continues into the antebellum literary renaissance of the 1800s, when Creole authors spend as much time defining themselves for the edification of French readers overseas as they do revelling in themselves for the sake of entertaining fellow Creoles at home.

In his effort to present a definitive study of Louisiana, Le Page also wishes to correct false and too often sensational notions concerning America's aboriginal inhabitants. He boasts in his preface that previous to his work no one has done Native-Americans justice in print.

L'origine des Peuples de l'Amérique est une matière assez curieuse et assez intéressante qu'aucun Auteur n'a encore pu traiter à fond jusqu'à présent d'une manière satisfaisante, faute d'avoir eu des principes solides sur lesquels il se fût appuyé. Je ne me contenterai point de parler de l'origine des Peuples de cette Colonie dont je fais l'Histoire; je traiterai en même tems de celles de tous les Peuples de l'Amérique en général. Je donnerai les preuves
les plus convainquantes que l'on puisse désirer à ce sujet, sur lequel l'Histoire de l'ancien Monde ne nous dit rien de positif. Quoique celle du nouveau Monde ne soit point écrite, elle ne laisse pas que d'être sûre, du moins m'a-t'elle paru fidèle (I, ix-x).

From the start of his narrative, Le Page duly expresses his fascination over the complexity of Native-American societies and indicates the respect and attention to detail that any work treating red inhabitants of the New World should display. Le Page operates from this careful and in large part unbiased position throughout the three volumes of his work, only occasionally showing instances of prejudice and racism that would be considered extremely mild for his day.

Even when he describes the Natchez, the Indian group that he knew best and that dealt the greatest blow to French existence in Lower Louisiana, Le Page remains surprisingly objective. As early as the preface, he sounds apologetic for the Natchez.

L'évenement du Massacre des Français aux Natchez a été suivi en France dans son temps, et a fait frémir d'horreur les honnêtes gens; mais les circonstances n'en ont été connues que de très-peu de personnes, lesquelles pour la plupart n'y ont nullement ajouté foi, parce que le fait paraît en effet incroyable (I, xi).

As the narrative progresses, Le Page presents an intimate and prolonged depiction of Natchez life that is as sympathetic as it is informative.

As might be expected, given the tone of the preface, Le Page advocates cooperation with Native Americans throughout his work. In Volume I's Chapter 1, when he gives the nature of initial contacts between Europeans and Native Americans, Le Page points out the skirmishes as well as immediate friendships that occur when the two cultures first meet. He depicts the early French as heavily dependent upon Indian friendship for survival and urges continued amity well into the middle of the century.
Le Page offers the Arkansas settlement as an example of the prosperity that results from good Franco-Indian relations.

Cette petite habitation s'est soutenue et fortifiée; non-seulement parce que de temps à autre elle a été grossie par quelque Canadiens qui ont descendu ce Fleuve; mais surtout parce que ceux qui la formoient, ont eu la sagesse de vivre en paix avec les Naturels, et ont traité comme légitimes les enfans qu'ils ont eus des filles des Arkansas, avec qui ils se sont alliés par nécessité (I, 7).

Le Page asserts that the Arkansas post has thrived above all ("surtout") because its white inhabitants have had the wisdom to live in peace with Native-American neighbors, part of which peaceful coexistence means treating the children that Frenchmen beget with Indian women as legitimate sons and daughters. This early reference to miscegenation in Le Page's *Histoire* not only shows the author's belief that Frenchmen should be responsible for their half-breed progeny but also voices the author's endorsement of racial mixing on all levels. After all, it is because of such mixing that the Arkansas post and others that Le Page showcases thrive.

Conflicts with various Indian groups begin to occur despite French attempts at friendship. As noted previously, often, an alliance with a particular tribe also means the addition of that tribe's enemies to the list of one's foes. In addition to inheriting battle lines that have already been drawn, the French also acquire another hallmark of Indian warfare: enslavement of the defeated faction. Just as he does not object to black slavery, Le Page, like the other Louisiana writers, does not condemn red bondage either. In both cases, however, he advocates humane treatment of the disenfranchised person. Before mentioning in Chapter 5 his own purchase of a female slave of the Chitimachas (a nation defeated by the French in war and, hence, some of whose survivors were enslaved), Le Page is quick to point out that Indians commonly enslave their enemies. He also notes
regretfully that certain Frenchmen other than himself treat their Indian underlings terribly. In addition to inflicting physical harm, some French corrupt their red servants morally. As Le Page notes, "Je m'apercevois que les Habitans faisoient leur possible pour débaucher nos Ouvriers, et se les attirer par de belles promesses" (I, 82). For his part, however, Le Page boasts that he treats his Indian servant so well that she becomes devoutly attached to him, as Le Page will show in greater detail later.

As part of his introduction to Native-American life and to Franco-Indian relations, Le Page tackles some of the prejudices and misconceptions that Europeans have about American aboriginals. One of these misconceptions involves the dishonesty that persons such as Pénicaut and Dumont highlight as part of Indian character. The author concedes that before Bienville explained Indian ways to him, even Le Page himself had begun to view the Native American as a "bête brute" (I, 88), as on the occasion when he thought an Indian chief had reneged on a deal with him. Interestingly, the villain of Dumont's poem (a man who is loathsome in part because he abuses reds as well as whites) defends and clarifies Indian ways to such an extent in the beginning of Le Page's story that it instills in Le Page a desire to correct European misconceptions about Indians once and for all.

Le Page comments on Bienville's highly informative and influential words of advice concerning Indian ways, recited in the wake of the author's anger over what he perceived to be an Indian's failure to keep part of a bargain.

Le Gouverneur me repliqua que je ne connoissois pas encore ces gens-là, et que quand je les connoissois, je leur rendrois plus de justice: il disoit bien vrai; j'ai eu le tems de me détromper, et je suis persuadé que ceux qui verront le portrait fiddle que j'en ferai ci-après, conviendront avec moi, que l'on a grand tort de nommer Sauvages des hommes qui savent faire un très-bon usage de leur raison, qui pensent juste, qui ont de la prudence, de la
bonne foi, de la générosité, beaucoup plus que certains Nations policées, qui ne voudroient point souffrir d'être mises en comparaison avec eux, faute de savoir ou vouloir donner aux choses le prix qu'elles méritent (I, 88).

Such passages lead Tregle to remark that to read Le Page "is to appreciate his impatience with those who saw savagery in what they had not even tried to understand" (xlix).

Before saying anything more about misunderstandings between Europeans and Native Americans, about enslavement of Indians by reds as well as whites, about increased conflicts between French and Indians, or about red cruelties to both reds and whites, Le Page devotes Volume I's Chapter 6 to the war with the Spanish at Pensacola. As Dumont does, Le Page uses this episode to highlight the cruelty and treachery that Europeans practice against each other, a showcasing of white-on-white mistreatment that deflects some of the attention from inhumaneness carried out by reds by pointing out a Euro-American counterpart. He notes that when Richebourg and his men arrive in Havana to return Spanish soldiers defeated in the French capture of Pensacola, the Spanish

fit mettre les Soldats [i.e., French soldiers] aux fers et en prison, où ils furent pendant quelque temps exposés à la faim et aux insultes des Espagnols, ce qui détermina plusieurs d'entre'eux de prendre parti dans le service d'Espagne pour se tirer de la misère extrême dans laquelle ils gémissaient (I, 95).

Under Spanish duress, some Frenchmen betray their compatriots in order to save their own lives. These traitors inform the Spanish that they could easily retake Pensacola -- and they do. The loyal French eventually re-defeat the Spanish, however, promptly hanging half of the deserters and making the others "forgats de la Compagnie pendant dix ans dans le Pays" (I, 102).
Le Page further exposes French and Spanish treatment of white prisoners when he relates that in "une boîte de plomb" confiscated after the war

On y trouva une Lettre du Gouverneur de la Havane à celui de Pensacola, par laquelle il lui marquoit, que ne doutant point que la valeur des Espagnols ne les eût rendus Maîtres du Pays des François, et qu’ils ne les eussent tous fait Prisonniers, il ordonnaït faute de vivres de les envoyer travailler aux mines.

Ces ordres rendus publics n’adoucirent point le sort des Prisonniers Espagnols (I, 102-103).

By presenting the problems between the French and the Spanish during Louisiana’s founding years, Le Page, like Pénicaut and Dumont, counterbalances red-on-red, red-on-white, and white-on-red cruelty with white-on-white abuse.

After spotlighting European cruelty to fellow European in Chapter 6, Le Page returns to the Indian in Chapter 7, entitled “Calumet de Paix des Tchitimachas.” The French had been at war with the Chitimachas following the murder of “M. de S. Côme Missionnaire de cette Colonie” by a Chitimacha. Because of the action of a single murderer, Le Page notes, Bienville made war on the entire Chitimacha nation.

When they are rendered powerless, the Indians settle for peace. As Le Page is still in New Orleans at the time, waiting to leave for his concession in Natchez, he accompanies Bienville to the peace-making ceremonies “parce que dans ces circonstances, il est à propos qu’il soit accompagné d’une petite Cour; c’est l’usage et cela fait honneur au Gouverneur” (I, 107). To his credit, Bienville apparently insists on French respect for an Indian process that some Europeans might consider ludicrous but whose importance Louisianians from the time of Tonti have realized and honored. Le Page states, “On nous avertit de ne point rire ni parler pendant la harangue; ce qu’ils auraient regardé comme un grand mépris de notre part” (I, 109). While Bienville
might have overreacted in avenging the murder of the missionary, he at least demands that his men show proper regard for Indian etiquette when the time comes to make peace.

The "Chancelier des Tchitimachas" begins the "harangue," which Le Page quotes at length, capturing its poetry and dignity. The speaker relates how his entire people have suffered at the hands of the French because of the actions of a single man. The conveyance of this irony seems deliberate. Weary and decimated from war and deprivation, the Chitimacha long for peace and an end to their suffering. The passage from the Indian speaker’s discourse relating to the expiatory execution of the murderer and the effect of that sacrifice on the entire tribe shows the imagery and refined rhetoric that typify the oratory of many Indians on formal occasions. Le Page skillfully recreates Native-American oral artistry when he depicts the speaker telling Bienville,

Tu as demandé la tête du méchant homme pour avoir la Paix; nous te l’avons envoyée, et voilà le seul vieux Guerrier qui a osé l’attaquer et le tuer; n’en sois point surpris, il a toujours été un vrai homme, et un vrai Guerrier: il est parent de notre Souverain, et son cœur pleuroit jour et nuit, parce que sa femme et son enfant ne sont plus depuis cette Guerre; mais il est content et moi aussi aujourd’hui, parce qu’il a tué ton ennemi et le sien. Autrefois le Soleil était rouge, les chemins étaient remplis de ronces et de dunes, les nuages étaient noirs, l’eau était trouble et teinte de notre sang, nos Femmes pleuraient sans cesse, nos Enfants criaient de frayeur, le gibier fuyait loin de nous, nos maisons étaient abandonnées, et nos Champs en friche, nous avions tous le ventre vide, et nos os paroissiaient.

Aujourd’hui le Soleil est chaud et brillant, le Ciel est clair, il n’y a plus de nuages, les chemins sont nets et agréables, l’eau est si claire que nous nous voyons dedans, le gibier revient, nos Femmes dansent jusqu’à oublier de manger, nos Enfants sautent comme des jeunes Faons de Biche, le cœur de toute la Nation rit de joye, de voir qu’aujourd’hui nous marcherons par le même chemin, que vous tous, François; le même Soleil nous éclairera; nous n’aurons plus qu’une même parole, nos cœurs n’en seront plus qu’un, nous mangerons ensemble comme frères; cela ne sera-t-il pas bon, qu’en dis tu? (I, 112-113)
Le Page aptly perceives and conveys important elements of a Native-American world view in his paraphrase of the harangue. Most notably, the author is impressed by Native-American closeness to Nature, by the reds' linking natural phenomena to human activity and vice versa. This appreciation of the Native Americans' closeness to Earth and natural forces may be one of the explanations for Le Page's continually referring to Native Americans as "Naturels" rather than the customary terms of the time, "sauvages" and "barbares." Undoubtedly, Le Page is also struck by the similarities between Indian attention to the cosmic ramifications of human misdeeds and European concepts of the Great Chain of Being and the dire consequences of its disruption by human interference.

Le Page's attention to Indian oratory, which figures throughout his narrative, reflects an international interest of the time. As Shields notes,

> From the earliest era of settlement, Europeans had noted the Indian love of declamation on ceremonial and political occasions. . . . Examples of Indian oratory had come into the hands of men of letters. By the 1740s Indian eloquence had become a fashionable concern of European and American belletrists (211).

Not only was Le Page one of those who supplied "examples of Indian oratory" to "the hands of men of letters," he was also one of those "European and American belletrists" who conveyed red oral artistry in his own writings. The red chief's speech transcribed above impresses Le Page to such an extent that he describes it as being "prononcé d'un ton ferme et assuré, avec toute la grace et la décence, j'ose même dire, avec toute la majesté possible" (I, 113).

For his part, "M. de Biainville répondit en peu de mots, en Langue vulgaire qu'il parloit avec facilité; il les fit manger, mit en signe d'amitié sa main dans celle du Chancelier, et les renvoya
satisfaits" (I, 113-114). Peace thus returns to the French and the Chitimachas.

Le Page's Chitimacha slave accompanied her master to the calumet ceremony in order to see her relatives. When the Indians hand over the head of Saint Cosme's murderer, which the French demanded, Le Page discovers that it was brought by his slave's father. When the daughter sees her father during the ceremony, the situation obviously affords much pathos, but Le Page keeps the event from becoming melodramatic. He says briefly in a footnote,

C'étoit le Père de mon Esclave qui avoit été prise dans cette guerre, et il croyoit qu'elle étoit morte ainsi que sa mère: mon Esclave étoit avec d'autres filles et n'osoit rien dire; j'étois à portée de pouvoir la regarder, et je la voyois tantôt sourire et tantôt verser des larmes (I, 112).

The Indian's sense of decorum as well as the depth of her filial emotions obviously impress the observant Le Page. In this reunion of the estranged father and daughter, he offers the first of many sympathetic glimpses into the feelings and code of behavior characterizing Native Americans.

Le Page's telling of his slave's reuniting with her father reveals as many things about the author as it does about Indian familial sentiments.

Au sortir de cette cérémonie, je ne m'attendais guère à ce que je devois avoir le plus à craindre dans ces circonstances, qui étoit de perdre mon Esclave, après avoir donné congé à mes engagés; cette fille me joignit tout de suite, et m'abordant avec une joie qu'il est difficile d'exprimer: "C'est mon père, me dit-elle, qui est là; c'est lui qui à [sic.] tué le méchant, je te prie que je lui parle; je lui dis: vas vite, et amenes-le chez moi; je veux lui donner la main et lui faire un présent; elle y courut sur le champ de toutes ses forces; son père étot extasié de la joie qu'il avoit de revoir sa fille; il quitta sa compagnie et vint chez moi avec elle peu de temps après que je l'eus envoyée vers lui (I, 114).
Le Page obviously respects Indian family ties and cares enough for his servant to grant her the liberty to see her father.\(^1\) It seems that Le Page’s depiction of the red father-and-child reunion aims at proving to other Europeans that Indians have the same love and bonds of kinship that whites do.

As the reunion continues, Le Page reveals more about his relationship with his red slave and about the nature of slavery involving Indians.

Malgré le peu de temps qu’elle mit à aller chercher son père, j’en eus de reste pour craindre qu’il ne la redemandât, et que par faveur on ne la lui rendit; car c’était lui qui avait tué l’assassin du Missionnaire dont le meur­tre avait occasé [sic.] la guerre, comme la mort du coupable avait donné lieu à la paix; d’ailleurs la sœur ainée de mon Esclave étoit femme du Souverain de cette Na­tion. Mais cette crainte fut vaine heureusement pour moi, puisque si elle m’eût quitté, je me serois trouvé sur mon départ pour les Natchez sans domestique (I, 114-115).

In expressing his desire to keep his slave, Le Page also indicates his dependence upon her as well as his fear of losing her. Regardless of his needs or desires, however, his peers’ realization of the importance of family ties for their Indian allies might have overridden the master’s prerogatives in this case so as to reestablish good relations with the Chitimachas. It is evident from the passage above and others that French enslavement of red persons in Louisiana’s earliest years conformed at times to a more fluid Indian notion of indenture rather than to a stricter concept of irrevocable ownership.

Continuing his depiction of disenfranchisement involving Native Americans, Le Page shows how in some cases Indians view slavery more as temporary service and even adoption into another society than as servile subjugation for a lifetime. Le Page notes of the Indian father and daughter’s attitude toward the girl’s indenture and the negotiations to determine her fate,
Son père vint en ma maison, je lui fis le meilleur accueil qu’il eût pu espérer; cependant il lui proposa de la faire racheter par sa Nation; et si elle y eût consenti, je n’aurais pas été dans de pareilles circonstances, le maître de la garder: mais elle déclara qu’elle ne voulait point me quitter. J’avais eu le bonheur de trouver en elle un excellent sujet; je l’avais traitée avec beaucoup de douceur, elle s’était attachée à moi, et avait perdu l’habitude de vivre et d’aller presque nue comme dans son pays. Elle dit donc à son père qu’il marchait en homme mort, et par son grand âge, et parce que les parens du méchant qu’il avait tué ne manqueroient pas de venger sa mort par la sienne, que d’ailleurs sa mere étant morte elle se trouverait sans appui, que j’étais sur le point d’aller m’établir aux Natchez, et que s’il vouloit aller demeurer chez ses parens de cette Nation, elle se trouveroit ainsi dans son voisinage, et seroit en état de lui procurer tous les secours dont elle étoit capable. Le pere sentit la force des raisons de sa fille, et qu’elle avoit pris son parti. C’est pourquoi il lui dit: “C’en est fait, je suis trop vieux pour rester avec toi: que pourrais-je faire pour ton Maître à présent? Si j’étois plus jeune, je demeurerois chez lui, j’irois à la chasse et à la pêche, je ferois un champ de blé et tu me verrois mourir auprès de toi; mais tu m’a [sic.] dit que ton Maître alloit bientôt s’établir aux Natchez, je vais y passer le reste de mes jours chez de mes parens qui sont les tiens, et je mourrai chez eux près de toi: tu n’as qu’à appeller ton Maître, et dis lui qu’avant de partir je veux lui céder mon autorité sur toi.”

En effet j’avais dit plus d’une fois à cette fille, que si elle vouloit s’attacher à moi, je lui servirois de pere; elle l’avait répété au Vieillard, qui me céda ses droits sur sa fille en la plaçant entre nous deux, me portant la main droite sur sa tête, et mettant la sienne par dessus; il prononça ensuite quelques paroles, qui signifiaient qu’il me la donnait pour ma fille (I, 115-117).

The red father and daughter’s attitude concerning slavery indicates the Indian’s placement of disenfranchisement within a code of honor relating to commitments brought about by war, defeat, and peacemaking. Obviously, many reds do not view captivity as a completely negative thing. Rather, the indenture of the captive is an obligation that must be endured (for having warred and lost) until freedom is properly secured. The Indian notion of war captivity and indenture also entails more flexibility of service, opportunities for freedom, and
incorporation into the host community than does French, Spanish, and British forms of slavery. Native Americans soon learn the backbreaking and irreversible nature of most Euro-American forms of disenfranchisement, however, and writers from Le Page onward comment on the Indian’s growing preference for death over enslavement as whites enforce it. The resolution of the Le Page slave’s dilemma is a happy one. Such is not the case for most Indians subjugated by whites throughout the course of New-World history.

The Indian father and daughter’s commitment to Le Page shows that, despite the stress that is often placed on Native-American disingenuousness in Louisiana literature, reds can equal and at times surpass whites when it comes to honor and obligation as defined in European terms -- even when it means great hardship and injustice for the Native Americans. The slave girl’s loyalty to the author also sheds light on Le Page’s role as a master, at least as he perceives his fulfillment of the function. The girl’s supposed attachment supports the author’s boast that he had always treated her well and indicates that the type of slavery espoused by Le Page (at least with regard to reds) is a rather benign form of indenture. Again, Indian notions of slavery may be at work here, softening French treatment of red servants. However, as will be seen in later chapters, Le Page bears much affection for his black slaves as well, not to mention other blacks whom he knows, and his guidelines for handling Negroes shows a degree of humanity and sympathy not present among many who were active in the slave business.

As Le Page recounts his transition from New Orleans to Natchez, he sheds more light on the nature of his relationship with his slaves. He says of his leaving New Orleans,

Au départ du père de mon Esclave, nous nous trouvions tous trois assez contens, et moi en particulier d’être assuré d’une personne fidèle et attachée à mes intérêts, et qui

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Le Page acknowledges his reliance upon the Indian girl in establishing himself at Natchez. He recounts all the information that she had given him concerning the Natchez before the move, and, once they are resettled, Le Page credits the Indian girl with beginning his entrance into intimate and prominent circles of Natchez society.

In New Orleans Le Page had bought a young, married Negro couple to accompany him and the Indian girl to Natchez. Le Page’s red and black slaves make a happy household, at least for the author, in the absence of white company. After arriving at their new home, the four-some find themselves in close quarters.

The picture that Le Page presents of himself and his red and black slaves in a rustic American setting is indeed a cozy one.

Le Page comes to live among the Natchez by making transactions that reflect his belief in fairness when conducting business with Native Americans. Far from confiscating native lands, otherwise offending red sensitivities, or imposing himself upon the Natchez in any way, Le Page exercises great tact with respect to original residents when he establishes himself among them, as the following illustrates.

A peine fus-je installé sur mon Habitation je fus voir avec l’Interprète les autres Champs que les Naturels avoient défrichés sur mon terrein; je les achetai tous à la réserve d’un seul que le Naturel ne voulut jamais vendre: il étoit situé de façon à me convenir, j’en avois envie, et je lui aurois payé bien plus cher, mais il me fut impossible de le faire consentir à ma volonté. Il me fit dire que sans le vendre, il me l’abandonneroit aussi tôt que j’aurois étendu mon défriché jusqu’après du sien, au lieu qu’en restant auprès de moi sur son terrein, je le
trouverois toujours prêt à me rendre service, et qu’il iroit à la chasse et à la pêche pour moi.

Cette réponse me satisfait, parce qu’il m’aurait fallu plus de vingt Nègres avant que j’eusse pu l’approcher; on m’assura d’ailleurs qu’il étoit honnête homme; et bien loin d’avoir eu occasion de me plaindre de son voisinage, j’en ai eu au contraire toute sorte de satisfaction (I, 127-128).

The proceedings recounted above prove that Le Page considers the Indian his equal, possessing inviolable prerogatives and worthy of the same deference due a contending white landowner unwilling to comply with the author’s wishes. Unfortunately, other Frenchmen fail to show similar respect for Native-American rights of ownership, and Le Page will join Dumont in blaming the bloody Natchez uprising on Commandant Etcheparre’s greedy usurpation of Indian lands, a self-appropriation that seems especially senseless and criminal in light of the generous help that many Indians offer to assist the French at colonization. In treating his Indian neighbor as a master in his own right, Le Page ends up getting a willing servant in place of a willing seller.

As the narrative progresses, Le Page goes beyond viewing Indians as equals on a mere business level. He sees them as similar to him and worthy of respect in many other situations as well. In some capacities, reds even surpass whites. One of the areas in which Le Page acknowledges Indian superiority is the practice of medicine. Le Page comes to respect their expertise in the art of healing to such an extent that he even entrusts his life to its practitioners.

For example, in Chapter 9 Le Page is so sick from a “sciatique” that he cannot walk. When white doctors fail to effect a cure, Le Page resorts to red medicine men. After the first visit from a “jongleur,” Le Page recuperates enough to take a walk. He says that

On me donna conseil dans ma promenade de me mettre entre les mains des Médecins Natchez, que l’on me dit avoir beaucoup de science; et qui faisaient des cures qui tenaient du miracle; on m’en cita plusieurs exemples qui me

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In entrusting himself to Indian doctors, Le Page joins many white residents of colonial Louisiana before him in attesting to certain red advantages in medicine. After full treatment by Indians, he asserts,

Je fus parfaitement guéri, puisque depuis ce temps je ne m’en suis nullement ressenti. Quelle satisfaction pour un jeune homme qui se trouve en pleine santé après avoir été contraint de garder la maison l’espace de quatre mois et demi sans avoir pu sortir un instant! (I, 136)

Le Page’s total recovery from a debilitating illness has made him a believer in the Indians’ superior healing powers.

In Chapter 15, Le Page’s health again suffers, this time from a “fistule lacrymale” on his left eye. The white doctor’s recommendations for a cure dismay Le Page, but the suggestions of the “Medecin du Grand Soleil” so please the author that “j’y accordai avec d’autant plus de plaisir et de facilité” (I, 209). Following his cure, Le Page expresses his gratitude by lauding Indian medical practices. “Il est aisé de comprendre par ce recit, combien les Médecins Naturels de la Louisiane sont habiles: je les ai vus faire des cures surprenantes sur nos François mêmes” (I, 209). Le Page then recounts the fates of two Frenchmen afflicted with the same illness. The one treated by the Indian medicine man lives, while the one handled by the French doctor dies. Le Page also elaborates upon how much shorter Indian cures are as compared to their European counterparts. The author affirms,

Il n’y a personne dans la Colonie, qui ignore les faits que je viens de rapporter. Ces Médecins ont fait un grand nombre d’autres cures dont la narration demanderait un volume particulier; je me suis contenté de rapporter seulement ces trois que je viens de citer, pour faire voir que des maux que l’on regarde ailleurs presque comme incurables, desquels on ne guérit qu’au bout d’un long temps, et après avoir beaucoup soufferts, des maux, dis je, de cette espèce sont guéris sans opération douloureuse et en peu de temps par les Médecins Naturels de la Louisiane (I, 211).
Truly, Le Page asserts, there is much that Europeans can learn from Native-American medical science.

While Pénicaud and Dumont at times doubt the accuracy and truthfulness of what Indians have to say, Le Page does not view the words of the latter with such skepticism. In fact, he often values information that he has gained from Native Americans more than the details gathered from fellow Europeans or Euro-Americans. For example, when acquiring knowledge on Upper Louisiana beyond the Missouri, he scorns white accounts.

Tout le Nord du Missouri nous est totalement inconnu, à moins qu'on ne veuille s'en rapporter aux diverses Relations que differens Voyageurs en ont faites; mais auquel donner la préférence? En premier lieu ils se contredisent presque: je vois d'ailleurs les plus experts les traiter de fourbes: ainsi j'aime mieux ne m'arrêter à aucun.

J'ai cependant fait ce que j'ai pû pour tirer quelques lumieres de ces Voyageurs que j'ai frequentés et connus véridiques; mais c'étoit par malheur des gens si grossiers, que ce qu'ils m'ont dit, ne mérite point d'être écrit (I, 327).

Le Page places greater stock in the relations of Indians. For example, he notes,

Ce que j'ai trouvé de mieux à ce sujet, me vient d'un Naturel, qui étoit né avec tant d'esprit et d'amour pour les Sciences, qu'il aurroit mérité de recevoir une autre éducation. Je le rapporterai en son lieu, tant pour faire connoître des Pays que les Européens ne connoissent point, que pour faire voir ce que les Naturels sont capables d'entreprendre, et que l'esprit est de tout Pays comme de tous Etats (I, 327).

Trusting Indian sources of information while deploring the inaccuracy, inconsistency, and dishonesty of white accounts (be they by uncouth North American voyageurs or by Continental pseudo-intellectuals), Le Page defends Native-American reliability and intelligence against the criticism of those who would argue for the red person's moral and intellectual inferiority. Such vindication of the Indian before
European detractors by proving that "l'esprit est de tout Pays comme
de tous Etats" continues throughout the volumes of Le Page's Histoire.

Although he discredits many white sources that touch on unfamil-
lar parts of America, Le Page himself has received criticism for at
times relating faulty secondhand information. However, when it comes
to firsthand accounts, Le Page is viewed as generally accurate. In
one area in particular he remains unquestionably the best source.
Tregle notes that Le Page's history is

the unrivaled chief source of modern knowledge concerning
the Natchez, particularly in those areas of "esoteric
lore," which in all likelihood would have been forever
closed to us were it not for his account. Others such as
Dumont may be richer in description of material culture,
but we must turn to Le Page for a view into the Natchez
heart and mind. There remains, of course, the question of
how much trust can safely be put in the observations of
the same Le Page whose gullibility and lapses in histori-
cal and biological accuracy have already been noted. To
this there can be no absolute answer, by the very nature
of his unique relationship to the matters upon which he
reports. But one must note that in the great preponder-
ance of his observations on the Natchez he is speaking
from firsthand knowledge, not relying on the findings of
others. Where it has been possible to check his accuracy
in matters unrelated to the Natchez and in which he is
equally independent of outside authority, his reliability
is of high order. Moreover, recent archaeological excava-
tion has for the first time produced findings against
which the validity of his descriptive passages can be
checked, with results clearly supportive of his credulity
(xl-xli).

Much of Le Page's narrative concerns the Natchez, for he knew them as
well as he did anything else in Louisiana. Hence, much of the present
discussion of Le Page must focus on his treatment of this unique Indi-
an nation.

As early as Volume I's Chapter 13, Le Page alludes to the mount-
ing difficulties between the Natchez and the French. He entitles
Chapter 13 "Premiere Guerre avec les Natchez: Cause de cette Guerre:
Les Naturels apportent le Calumet de Paix à l'Auteur." In introducing
the chapter, Le Page asserts that he will try to give an accurate and honest depiction of the events leading up to the first Natchez war, and he acknowledges that the topic is still a hard one for Frenchmen to treat without sentiment.

Le Page quickly points out that the Natchez, far from resenting Frenchmen in the first years, greatly assisted the early settlers in establishing themselves in Louisiana.

Les Français s’établirent aux Natchez sans aucune contradiction de la part de ces peuples, qui loin même de les traverser, leur rendirent beaucoup de services, et leur furent d’un secours très-essentiel pour avoir des vivres... Sans les Naturels ils seroient péris de faim et de misère (I, 178).

As Pénicaut and Dumont do, Le Page reiterates that without the aid of Indians such as the Natchez the French would not have survived the critical founding years in Louisiana.

Not only did the Natchez prove to be extremely useful to the French, they also became close friends. Le Page maintains that such friendship would have continued “si le peu de satisfaction que leur donna le Commandant du Fort Rosalie de la mauvaise action d’un de ses Soldats n’eût allié leurs esprits” (I, 179-180). Without wasting time, Dumont pinpoints the beginning of the rift in Franco-Natchez relations to the commandant’s failure to address adequately a soldier’s infractions against the Natchez. Unfortunately, such infractions only multiply under Etcheparre.

Having thus placed the initial guilt for years of subsequent Indian trouble on the French, Le Page offers his version of the first ugly incident between whites and reds at Natchez.

Un jeune Soldat du Fort Rosalie avoit fait quelques avances à un vieux Guerrier d’un Village des Natchez qui devoit lui donner en retour du bled. Vers le commencement de l’Hyver de 1723, ce Soldat logé près du Fort, le vieux y fut le voir, le Soldat lui demanda son bled. Le Naturel répondit doucement que le bled n’étoit pas encore sec pour
l'égrainer, que d'ailleurs sa femme avait été malade, et qu'il le payeroit aussi-tôt qu'il seroit possible. Le jeune homme peu content de cette réponse menaça le vieillard de lui donner des coups de bâton. Aussi-tôt celui-ci qui étoit dans la cabane du Soldat, fut indigné de cette menace et lui dit qu'il vint voir dehors lequel seroit le plus fort. Sur ce défi le Soldat criant à l'assassin appelle la Garde à son secours. La Garde accourut, et le jeune homme la pressa de tirer sur le Guerrier qui retournoit à son Village d'un pas ordinaire, un Soldat fut assez imprudent pour le faire. Le vieillard tomba du coup. Bien-tôt le Commandant fut averti de ce qui venoit de se passer, et se rendit sur le lieu, où les témoins, car il y en avoit de François et de Natchez, où les témoins, dis-je, l'instruisirent du fait. La justice et la prudence vouloient qu'il fit subir au Soldat un châtiment exemplaire, il l'en a quitta pour une réprimande, après laquelle les Naturels firent un brancard et emportèrent leur Guerrier qui mourut la nuit suivante de ses blessures, quoique le fusil n'eût été chargé que de gros plomb (I, 180-182).

In the passage quoted above, Le Page sympathetically presents an old, dignified Indian who, through no fault of his own, is unable to satisfy a debt immediately. After humbly approaching his young white creditor with logical explanations for his slowness to pay the debt, he suffers the latter's disrespect and violent physical abuse. When the old man rebuffs the physical and verbal indignities, the young Frenchman becomes hysterical and cowardly calls for help. Then, assisted by other equally imprudent young soldiers, he orders the helpless red man's execution and receives it. The commandant hardly exerts justice in investigating the affair or in punishing the guilty parties, and he thereby becomes as culpable as his murderous underlings in Le Page's opinion.

Le Page continues the unfortunate tale by conceding that it came as no surprise that the victim's entire village turned against the French. Still, the author points out, the rest of the Natchez nation did not take part in this first conflict with the French. In recounting the attacks that the red avengers undertake, Le Page relates his
fears and leaves no doubt as to who is responsible for the crisis. "Je
me vis donc exposé, ainsi que beaucoup d'autres, à payer de mes biens,
et peut-être de ma vie la témérité d'un Soldat et la trop grande douc­
eur de son Capitaine" (I, 182). Le Page clearly holds a white soldier
and his captain responsible for the first uprising of a group of
Natchez and condemns the twosome for endangering the lives of French
and Indian alike. While he execrates his fellow countrymen for their
calamitous carelessness and self-concern, he says of the Indian reac­
tion, "Comme je connoissois déjà le caractère des peuples à qui nous
avions affaire, je ne désesperai point de faveur l'un et l'autre" (I,
182). Although Le Page barricades himself in his house in case of
Indian retaliation against all whites, he gladly reports that "ils
n'osent m'attaquer" (I, 183).

Ironically, as the first Natchez skirmish wears on, the good
relations that Le Page enjoys with the Indians become more evident.
The French commandant orders Le Page to join a detachment against the
warring village, and Le Page has little alternative other than to com­
ply, confessing, "Je partis sans différer" (I, 183). He notes of the
Indian reaction to his presence in the militia,

Le bruit cessa aussi-tôt que je fus arrivé, et les Natu­
rels parurent s'être retirés; ils m'avoient sans doute dé­
couvert dans ma marche, et la vue d'un renfort que je con­
duisois leur en avoir imposé (I, 183). At about the same
time a Natchez friendly with the French calms the outraged
members of his nation. They turn to Le Page instead of
toward the commandant to smoke the calumet of peace. Le
Page notes, Mon premier mouvement fut de le refuser, sqa­
chant que cet honneur étoit dû au Commandant du Fort, et il me paroissoit d'autant plus délicat de l'en priver que
nous n'étions pas trop bien ensemble. Cependant le danger
evident d'occasionner la continuation de la Guerre en le
refusant, me détermina à l'accepter, après néanmoins avoir
pris l'avis de ceux qui étoient avec moi, qui tous le jug­
erent à propos pour menager ces peuples à qui le Comman­
dant étoit devenu odieux (I, 185).

By this time, even Le Page's white peers realize his favor among the
Indians. Likewise, they recognize the resentment and disgust that their commandant occasions among the Natchez. Undoubtedly, the commandant’s approach to Indians is one of the many things that cause the author and the French leader not to get along well with each other.

Le Page recounts the peacemaking ceremony in a touching fashion.

Je leur demandai ce qu’ils vouloient, ils me répondirent en tremblant, la paix: “Cela est bon, leur répondis-je, mais pourquoi m’apportez-vous le Calumet de Paix? C’est au Chef du Fort qu’il faut le porter pour avoir la paix. Nous avons ordre, me dirent-ils, de te l’apporter d’abord, si tu veux le recevoir en fumant seulement dedans; nous le porterons après au Chef du Fort, mais si tu ne veux pas le recevoir, les ordres portent que nous n’avons qu’à nous en retourner”

Je leur dis donc que je voulais bien fumer dans leur Calumet, à condition qu’ils iraient le porter au Chef du Fort. Ils me firent une harangue, elle dura peu, quoi qu’elle fût très-flateuse; on me dispensera de la rapporter à pour la raison que l’on peut aisément deviner: Je répondis à leur harangue, qu’il était bon que nous reprissions notre façon de vivre ensemble, et que les Français et les hommes Rouges oubliassent entièrement ce qui s’était passé, qu’à mon égard j’avais du chagrin de n’avoir plus de maison, mais que j’en allais bâtir une très-promptement, et qu’aussi-tôt que j’y serois logé j’oublirois que l’ancienne avait été brulée; enfin qu’ils n’avoient qu’à porter le Calumet au Chef du Fort et de là aller dormir chez eux (I, 185-186).

Far from holding grudges against the Indians who have destroyed his home, Le Page desires nothing but peace and a restoration of friendly terms between the Natchez and the French. He thereby exhibits the understanding, forgiveness, and goodwill necessary for lasting relations with Native-Americans while at the same time maintaining that reds must comply with the proper French way of negotiating peace.

The first Natchez upheaval does not involve the entire tribe and lasts only a few days. Serpent Piqué, the war chief from another village who arranged the peace, shows the same good will that Le Page does. He insists that his warriors help rebuild Le Page’s house, even after Le Page points out that they were not the ones who burned the
dwelling. Serpent Piqué's group readies the necessary construction materials, and Le Page and two Negro slaves finish the house. Le Page notes Serpent Piqué's effort to provide Indian workers and black slaves with enough nourishment during their work. In fact, the whole episode seems intended to convey the fact that an Indian peer can be as selfless and as concerned about others as the author himself can be.

Le Page directs attention away from the Natchez difficulties and resumes his depiction of the positive in Franco-Indian relations. Not only do Le Page's personal fortunes immediately improve following the uprising, the entire colony quickly returns to normalcy and business as usual. Le Page ends the fourteenth chapter by remarking,

Il auroit été fort à souhaiter que les choses fussent restées sur un si bon pied. Placés dans un des bons et beaux Pays du monde, en liaison étroite avec les Naturels de qui nous tirions beaucoup de connaissances sur la nature des productions de la terre et sur les animaux de toute espèce dont elle est peuplée, ainsi que des Pelleteries et des vivres, et aidés par eux dans beaucoup d'ouvrages pénibles, nous n'avions besoin que d'une paix profonde pour former des établissements solides, capables de nous faire oublier l'Europe; mais la Providence en avait autrement ordonné (I, 188).

As Dumont does, Le Page relates the possibilities that the attractive Natchez country offered — its potential for development and its ability to lure the Frenchman permanently from Europe to Louisiana. At the same time, Le Page affirms that the dream of a "Second Paradis" in Louisiana (a dream that he shared with Dumont) depended upon maintaining good terms with the Natchez. The Natchez had helped the French in many ways and would have continued, Le Page believes, if treated properly. Unfortunately, the dream became a nightmare because of negligent and eventually abusive Indian policy. While Le Page may refer to the tragic outcome as the work of Divine Providence, he does not excuse the deeds of those who brought about the disaster.
Despite the return to normalcy that Le Page notes earlier, certain Frenchmen do not consider the first conflict with the Natchez to be resolved. Chapter 15 features the arrival of Bienville and a force of seven-hundred red and white men at Natchez. Only the commandant knew of the army’s coming beforehand. Once the troops reach Natchez, the officials order the Indians already present at the fort to remain there so that word of the increased military presence does not spread among the Natchez villages. Le Page avoids the French authorities so as not to be conscripted into service, but “le Commandant m’ayant enfin trouvé, m’ordonna de la part du Roi de me mettre à la tête des Habitans des Natchez, et de les commander; et à eux de m’obéir comme à lui-même” (I, 198). The French march against a group of Natchez, Le Page taking a leading role in this second skirmish. The author does not appear to be particularly proud of his part, however. He notes, “Cette Guerre dont je ne ferai pas d’autre détail, dura quatre jours sur le lieu” (I, 199). Bienville demands and gets the head of an old mutinous chief before making peace again, but this time conditions do not return to normal as easily as they had after the first incident.

The lingering rift in Franco-Natchez relations, brought on by Bienville’s forceful approach to resolving difficulties, proves detrimental to the colony. Le Page notes that the French rarely see the residents of the village they attacked, and other Natchez groups avoid the whites as well. He comments further,

\[ J’aurois souhaité en être débarrassé pour toujours, si nous n’en eussions point eu besoin; mais nous n’avions ni Boucherie ni Poissonnerie; il fallait donc sans leur secours, se passer avec ce que la basse cour et les jardins nous procuraient de nourriture; ainsi nous ne pouvions guères nous passer d’eux (I, 200). \]

Such is the French reliance upon Native-American provisions in the early years of the colony that further progress depends upon a speedy
restoration of amity and assistance, something that was never fully restored at Natchez.

Le Page takes it upon himself to precipitate a return to good terms. When Serpent Piqué, former friend of the French, passes by Le Page’s house without even looking in the author’s direction, Le Page acts quickly.

Je l’appelai donc et lui dis: “Autrefois nous étions amis, ne le sommes nous plus? Il répondit: Noco, je ne sais: je repris ainsi: tu venois chez moi, à présent tu passes droit; as-tu oblié le chemin, ou si ma Maison te fait de la peine? pour ce qui est de moi mon coeur est toujours le même pour toi et pour tous mes amis, je ne sais point changer, pourquoi changes-tu donc?” (I, 201)

In this passage, Le Page shows that his desire to return to amicable relations with the Natchez stems not only from a wish for commercial prosperity for the entire colony but also from a deep longing for harmonious personal relationships with reds.

As Le Page and Serpent Piqué enter into dialogue, the revelation of affection that each man feels for the other and the realization of mounting difficulties between their peoples heighten the pathos of this section. Embarrassed and deeply touched by Le Page’s reproach, Serpent Piqué remains unable to speak for a long time. Then he begins both an apology for his own behavior and a reproach of his white friend’s participation in French aggression: “Je suis honteux d’avoir été si long-temps sans te voir, mais je croyois que toi-même tu étois fâché contre notre Nation; parce que de tous les Français qui étoient à la Guerre, personne autre que toi n’a foncé sur eux” (I, 202). Le Page counters Serpent Piqué as follows,

Tu as tort ... de penser de la sorte; M. de Biainville étant notre Chef de Guerre, nous devons lui obéir, de même que toi tout Soleil que tu es, tu serois obligé de tuer ou faire tuer celui à qui ton frère le Grand Soleil t’ordonneroit d’ôter la vie (I, 202).
Stressing that he had no choice other than to obey his overlords and pointing out that Serpent Piqué would do the same, Le Page stands his ground, as Serpent Piqué does. The two men thus gain in each other's respect at the same time that they realize -- all too painfully -- the divisions that will always exist because of political nationality more than racial identity. More importantly, Le Page and Serpent Piqué both make it clear that they want no more conflicts between their people or between each other.

The desire that both men feel to be exempt from interracial wars that others create becomes more apparent as the conversation continues. For his part, Serpent Piqué says,

\[
\text{Je n'ai pas approuvé, comme tu sais, la Guerre que nos gens ont faite aux Français, pour venger la mort de leur parent, puisque je leur ai fait porter le Calumet de Paix aux Français; tu le sais, puisque tu as fumé le premier dedans. Est-ce que les Français ont deux cœurs, un bon aujourd'hui et demain un mauvais? pour ce qui est de mon frère et de moi, nous n'avons qu'un cœur et une parole: dis-moi donc, si tu es, comme tu le dis, mon vrai ami, ce que tu pense [sic.] de tout cela, et ferme ta bouche pour tout autre; nous ne savons tous que penser des Français, qui après avoir commencé la Guerre, ont donné la Paix, et l'ont offerte eux-mêmes; puis dans le temps que nous sommes tranquilles nous croyants en Paix, on vient nous tuer sans rien dire} \ (I, 202-203).
\]

Amidst countless accounts from early Louisiana literature that warn against Indian treachery, Le Page includes a passage that reproaches the French for duplicity. Le Page seems fully to support Serpent Piqué's indignation over an unprecedented French attack on Indians who thought that peace had been concluded between whites and themselves.

Le Page the listener and Le Page the writer allow Serpent Piqué's reproach to heighten to an angry pitch.

\[
\text{Pourquoi les Français sont ils venus dans notre Terre? nous ne sommes point allés les chercher: ils nous ont demandé de la terre, parce que celle de votre Pays étoit trop petite, pour tous les hommes qui y étoient. Nous leur avons dit qu'ils pouvaient prendre de la terre où ils}
\]
voudroient, qu'il y en ait assez pour eux et pour nous, qu'il étoit bon que le même Soleil nous éclairât, que nous marcherions par le même chemin, que nous leur donnerions de ce que nous avions pour vivre, que nous les aiderions à se bâtir, et à faire des champs; nous l'avons fait, cela n'est-il pas vrai?

Quel besoin avions-nous des Français? avant eux ne vivions-nous pas mieux que nous ne faisons, puisque nous nous privons d'une partie de notre bled, du gibier et du poisson que nous tuons pour leur en faire part? en quoi donc avions-nous besoin d'eux? étoit-ce pour leurs fusils? nous nous servions de nos arcs et de nos flèches qui suffisoient pour nous faire bien vivre: étoit-ce pour leurs Couvertes blanches, bleues ou rouges? nous nous passions avec des peaux de Boeufs qui sont plus chaudes; nos femmes travaillaient à des Couvertes de plumes pour l'hiver, et d'écorce de meuriers pour l'été, cela n'étoit pas si beau; mais nos femmes étoient plus laborieuses et moins glorieuses qu'elles ne sont. Enfin, avant l'arrivée des Français nous vivions comme des hommes qui savaient se passer avec ce qu'ils ont; au lieu qu'aujourd'hui nous marchons en Esclaves qui ne font pas ce qu'ils veulent (I, 203-205).

Le Page, through Serpent Piqué, stresses the basic injustice wrought by whites in the New World: Europeans have settled, often with warm Indian reception, on red lands, but instead of showing gratitude for a new life in the red world, whites have done everything to mar the happiness that aboriginal populations previously enjoyed. Whites have confiscated more than their share of the land, have made Indians dependent upon European goods, have imposed their ways upon the red ways of life, and have subjected their hosts to nothing less than slavery.

In Serpent Piqué, Le Page depicts one of the most dignified Native Americans to be found in colonial literature of any language, and this Indian leader offers one of the most convincing chastisements of French Indian policy to be found anywhere. Le Page's sympathy for a people who have been wrongfully hurt also leads him to sentimentalize a harmonious way of life that has been altered forever by European "progress." The nostalgic references to a Natchez âge d'or even
question whether the introduction of European ways has had any good on Native Americans at all.

That Le Page himself is both impressed and disconcerted by Serpent Piqué’s words is evident in his response to the monologue.

A ce discours auquel je ne m’étois point attendu, je ne sçais ce qu’un autre auroit répondu; mais j’avoue sincèrement que si à mes premières paroles il avoit paru embarrassé, je l’étois véritablement à mon tour. “Mon coeur, lui répondis-je, entend mieux tes raisons que mes oreilles, quoiqu’elles en soient pleines” (I, 205).

Clearly, Le Page hopes that Serpent Piqué’s words will unsettle his readers as much as they have upset the author and that thereby whites may be moved to restructure their attitudes concerning both Native-American integrity and European culpability in the New World. The depth of Le Page’s respect for Serpent Piqué is further shown by the author’s going to great lengths to design a calumet of peace for the Indian, assuring the latter that “rien ne m’est cher quand il s’agit de te faire plaisir” (I, 206). The Indian, in turn, names Le Page his “véritable ami.”

Despite the disastrous undertakings of Bienville, Etcheparre, and others of his compatriots, Le Page firmly believes that the French can effect peace not only between the Indians and themselves but also among the bellicose tribes. He notes of one man’s activities in the Missouri country,

M. le Chevalier de Bourgmont y a commandé assez de temps pour gagner l’amitié des Naturels des Pays voisins de cette grande Rivière; il avoit mis en paix toutes ces Nations, qui avant son arrivée étoient toutes en guerre; ces Nations du Nord étant toutes beaucoup plus belliqueuses que celles du Sud (I, 324).

Le Page thus offers as one excuse for French control of Louisiana the ability of certain influential Frenchmen to make warring nations live in harmony with each other and thereby improve their lives. As will
be seen in more detail later on, Étienne Véniard de Bourgmont, like Saint Denis, rises to heroic stature in Le Page’s opinion because of his fair and effective dealings with Native Americans.

While French domination has proved beneficial to some Indians by establishing peace in red lives where it might not have existed before, Le Page is not blind to French abuses in the Native Americas, nor does he gloss over them. He is painfully aware of the disruptions to societal fabrics that European intrusions have made in the Western Hemisphere. The latter realities have been aptly illustrated in the Natchez episodes presented thus far, but French insensitivities that lead to Indian retaliation and subsequent upheavals of both red and white communities are not confined to Natchez.

The destruction of De Bourgmont's efforts in Upper Louisiana serves as an example of how easily French projects fail in the absence of sound leadership, particularly in relation to dealings with Native Americans.

Depuis le départ de ce Commandant, ils ont égorgé toute la Garnison; aucun Français n'ayant pu en échapper pour en rapporter la nouvelle, on n'a pu savoir si c'était la faute des Français, ou s'ils l'ont fait par pure trahison (I, 325).

While it is unclear whether or not the uprising in the Missouri country is a result of French transgressions, it is noteworthy to point out that the trouble occurs after De Bourgmont has left the region. Such revolts are rarely depicted as occurring when Frenchmen such as De Bourgmont and Saint Denis govern with great attention to Indian welfare.

In Volume I's Chapter 16, Le Page sets out, as Pénicaud does on occasion, to live with Indians in the wilderness. Unlike Pénicaud's sojourns, which tend to become Romantic communions with Indians and Nature, Le Page's ventures are speculative and scientific. Still,
they reveal his preference for red company over white while in the Ameri­
can wilds. Le Page wishes to explore "les Terres de la Louisiane" with­
out the encumbrance of Frenchmen ill-suited for a natural life.
After elaborating upon the ways that civilization has spoiled French­
men for any adventure such as the one that he is undertaking, Le Page
announces, "Je pris donc avec moi dix Naturels que je préférai aux
Français" (I, 217). Le Page continues, "On verra par la suite de
cette Histoire, et en particulier dans ce voyage, la différence d'un
compagnon à un autre, et que j'avois eu raison de préférer les uns aux
autres" (I, 217). The author also relates the many admirable quali­
ties that make "les dix Naturels" whom he has chosen suitable compani­
ons for his voyage. As for his care of them, Le Page asserts, "Il
faut . . . surtout conduire ces gens avec prudence, et humanité" (I,
234).

Le Page attempts to heighten the reader's interest in his wil­
derness travels by adding a sense of wonder and suspense to his ex­
ploratory adventures. The individual jaunts are routine enough, but
Le Page interlaces them with dangers and even the supernatural. For
example, at the outset he tells the Indians that he wishes to go where
no one else has gone and to bypass the various red nations along the
way. Even "les dix Naturels" express fear over the venture at this
point, but Le Page calms their apprehension by explaining how his com­
pass will guide them through the unknown. After describing rather
mundane but nonetheless exotic hunting practices and scouting proce­
dures, Le Page relates in Chapter 17 how a lost scout returns with the
tale of having seen a white buck leading a herd of deer.³ As his band
proceeds up the Mississippi, Le Page describes landscape, wild game,
rocks, and minerals in addition to routines of camp life such as food
preparation and bedding down for sleep. Later, the author is so
fascinated by a "village" of beavers that he makes Chapter 18 nothing more than a description of "the Republic of Beavers." In the next chapter he mentions the mines that he has come across, and as Chapter 19 comes to a close, so does Le Page's trip.

While Le Page's time alone with Indians and Nature does not show the same degree of sentimentality that Pénicaud's sylvan interludes do, Le Page's remarks upon returning to Natchez betray a Romantic wistfulness for life in the American wilds.

Primeval America obviously has the same effect on Le Page as it does on Pénicaud: it invites him to commune with Nature and shun all human company save that of a few hand-picked "Naturels."

Before the passage quoted above, Le Page expresses his desire to retire one day to the wilderness so that he might escape the vicious activities of white civilization. The peace and beauty of unspoiled America, enjoyed in solitude, save for the company of a few Indians, would suffice to content Le Page for the rest of his life. Here Le Page foreshadows the Creole poet Adrien Rouquette, who, before and after the Civil War, expressed his Romantic and religious desire for eremitism and extolled the virtues of a life lived close to Indians in the wilderness. Clearly, in their attitude toward Indians and the Indians' unspoiled world, both Le Page and Pénicaud express sentiments similar to those of many Romantic writers who follow them.

While Le Page sheds much insight into Native-American life in Volume I, he reserves his major examination of Indians for Volume II.
Starting with Volume II’s Chapter 13, entitled “Travaux des Naturels de la Louisiane: Construction de leurs Cabannes,” Le Page devotes several chapters exclusively to red people and their way of life. In Chapter 13 the author describes such things as Native-American tools, weapons, housing, and agriculture, hypothesizing the whole time about the evolution of Indian practices from the time the first Americans crossed over from Asia until the eighteenth century. In describing Native-American construction, Le Page gives Indians credit for making good use of the materials and means available to them.

Le Page continues to speak in a generally objective and often favorable tone as he moves from housing and farming in Chapter 13 to pottery making, fishing, bedding, furnishings, sewing, and modes of transportation in Chapter 14. Le Page ends Chapter 14 by describing, with the same admiration that other early Louisiana writers employ, the art of pirogue making. In short, Le Page’s depiction of Indian ways remains positive and offers information that the author undoubtedly feels can be useful to Frenchmen in the New World.

Even when relating aesthetics at odds with European notions of beauty, Le Page does not feel compelled to deplore aboriginal tastes. For instance, in Chapter 15, “Habits et Ornemens des Naturels de la Louisiane,” he does not condemn tattooing, as some writers do, and he even describes in detail a chief’s crown that he finds attractive.

In Chapter 16 Le Page provides the “Histoire ou Description des Nations Naturelles de la Louisiane.” In relating the decimation of
indigenous populations resulting from European arrival in the Western Hemisphere, Le Page waxes sympathetic toward the passing Indian, preceding a general shift in Anglo-American literary attitudes concerning red persons by many decades.

Il semble que l'arrivée des Espagnols dans ce nouveau Monde ait été la malheureuse époque de la destruction de toutes ces Nations de l'Amérique, tant par les armes que par la nature même.

On ne sçait que trop combien de millions de Naturels ont été détruits par les armes de l'Espagne sans qu'il soit nécessaire de présenter aux yeux du Lecteur cet affreux tableau.4

Here Le Page touches on the Black Legend of Spanish activity in the New World, a subject of historical and literary interest that will be examined in more detail in the section of this study devoted to Bossu. Clearly, Le Page deplores the mistreatment and eventual annihilation of countless aboriginal societies as a result of European conquest of the New World. However, he observes that Native Americans have contributed to their own demise as well.

Beaucoup de personnes ignorent qu'une multitude innombrable des Peuples du Mexique et du Pérou, se sont détruits volontairement, tant pour se sacrifier aux mânes de leurs Souverains, qui étaient péris, et dont ils étaient les victimes nées, suivant leur détestable coutume, que pour éviter de tomber sous la Domination des Espagnols, ces Naturels préférant la mort à l'esclavage (II, second page of Chapter 16).

Without a doubt, Le Page laments the loss of countless Indian lives by both red and white hands.

In addition to weakening their own populations through the ritualized murders of religious ceremonies, Indian tribes have decimated other nations through warfare. Le Page relates how the Chickasaw, the Iroquois, and the "Padoucas" mainly have wrought havoc upon other tribes. That havoc is reflexive, for, as Le Page comments, "Remarquons en passant que si ces Peuples en ont tant détruits, ils n'ont pâ
le faire sans s'affaiblir extrêmement, et qu'ainsi ils se sont détruits eux-mêmes en bonne partie" (II, third page of Chapter 16). Especially since Indians have come to have European forces and European diseases with which to contend, aboriginal groups hurt themselves irreparably by making war on each other. Like Pénicaud, Le Page expresses the hope that French intervention will keep Native Americans from murdering each other both in religious ceremonies and in war.

Le Page next begins to list and describe encyclopedically the various Indian groups that occupy the vast Louisiana territory. In discussing those of the east, he uses their relationship to the English on the Atlantic Seaboard to defend them against European misconceptions of innate brutality. As he states of Native Americans before their being corrupted by the British,

Le trait que je vais rapporter prouvera la vérité de ce que j'avance dans cette histoire lorsque je dis que ces Naturels ne pensent point comme on se l'imagine ordinairement; mais qu'au contraire ils ont des sentiments et de l'humanité (II, 209).

Le Page proceeds to relate the mounting difficulties between English and French in America, blaming the English, of course, for initial acts of aggression. All the while, he insists that the British are more inhumane than are Indians and that France has more to fear from England than from the Native Americas.

Furthermore, instead of condemning the Indians that ally themselves with the British, Le Page takes advantage of an opportunity to make the former look better at the latter's expense. During a battle between the French and the Anglo-Indian forces, a French officer attempts to make peace but is assassinated by the British. Le Page cites the reaction of the Indians allied to the English:

Les Naturels témoins et indignés de cette inhumanité, dont ils n'avaient jamais vu d'exemple, se jetèrent à l'instant entre les Anglois et les Français, dans la crainte que ceux-ci n'eussent le même sort que leur officier, et
dirent aux Anglois: "du moins vous ne tuerez pas ces autres Français, sans nous avoir tués nous-mêmes auparavant; ce trait est connu de toute l'Europe;" je laisse à mes Lecteurs le soin de réfléchir sur les caractères des Anglois et des Naturels (II, 212).

Le Page thus amplifies Anglo villainy by highlighting Indian outrage over English doings, "action que les Naturels qui en étoient témoins ont eu soin de faire sçavoir à toutes les autres Nations qui n'approuveront jamais rien de semblable" (II, 212).

While Louisiana writers often distinguish between their English and Native-American foes by condemning the former and apologizing for the latter, David Shields notes in Oracles of Empire how the British and Anglo-Americans at one time lumped French and Indian together in an alliance of equal villainy.

If the Spaniard was the gross devil of Patriot fantasy, then the Frenchman was the subtle Satan. The simple viciousness of the Hidalgo was supplanted by the duplicity of the Chevalier. Because of the "craft," "cleverness," "guile," and "policy" of the French, they posed a greater danger to the British than did the Spanish. The special quality of the Gallic threat was comprehended by the term perfidy, a word that took on great rhetorical weight when employed by English pamphleteers and British American poets. It meant calculated faithlessness — programmatic dissimulation toward malevolent ends. The term assimilated to itself a wealth of significances. The faithlessness of perfidy came to mean both the Catholic apostasy from primitive Christianity and a Gallic proclivity to break treaties and contracts (195).

Shields continues to note that the distinctive contribution of the American literature was its linkage of Gallic perfidy with "Indian Barbarism," to compose the formula of imperial peril. The personal testimonies in New England's many Indian captivity narratives imbued this peril with a peculiar intimacy (196).

Interestingly, British and Anglo-American writers came to group French and Indian together by attributing to both of them the same vice that Louisiana-French writers decried in Native Americans — duplicity,
"guile." Perhaps the Anglos' joining of their red and white foes in this particular form of corruption was due to the fact that, as recorded consciously or inadvertently by Louisiana writers, Indianized Frenchmen came to use Native-American techniques of "craft" and "cleverness" effectively, be it in officially sanctioned warfare or in officially denounced yet generally tolerated trading practices. Interestingly, Shields also notes that while Anglo-American writers linked French and Indian together in a common threat, it was British émigrés to Anglo-America at the end of the seventeenth century and not native-born colonists who voiced the most anti-French prejudice (196). Like the Louisianians, the Anglo-Americans may have borne more sympathy for the diverse peoples of the New World than Continentals did for other Europeans.

A common New-Worldness and colonial experience notwithstanding, the British American writers of the seventeenth century transformed their traditional anxiety at the native population into a horror at the possibility of a French and Indian coalescence on the frontier. No longer simply the servants of Satan, the native populations seemed puppets of French imperial policy (201).

Obviously, the Anglo-Americans were painfully aware of French intimacy with indigenous peoples, a realization which led the former to resort to dealings (if only on a small scale, confined to only one tribe) similar to those that were universally applied by the French. As Shields notes,

While all the French were suspect in the eyes of good Whigs and Patriots, not all Indians were rated as barbarians and enemies. The Mohawk Confederacy, because of its power and its organization, inspired many fantasies among British imperialists. If it could be solidified in its antagonism to the French; if it could be rendered truly subservient to the English crown; if it could be employed to dominate the peltries of Canada and the West, then the provinces would have less to fear from Gallic plots (209).
While some Anglo-American colonists for a time may have exempted one tribe from their demeaning generalizations of Native America and continued to villainize the French, as the colonies became united states the reverse occurred.

Shields notes of yet more changes in Anglo-America’s considerations of its immediate red and white neighbors,

The success at arms of the British forces in 1763 mitigated American fears of the French and Spanish. Indeed, the patriotic alliance with France revealed the extent to which traditional fears had dissolved. Only with news of the horrors of the French Revolution... did the rhetoric of Gallic perfidy emerge again... in the writings of the federalists. The Spanish ceased to haunt the American imagination, though the Black Legend was dusted off whenever convenient for “diplomatic” reasons.... “Heathen Indians” alone of the original figures of the imperial demonology retained the onus of evil (226-227).

Hence, while Anglo-Americans grew more favorable toward fellow Euro-Americans, non-white aborigines continued to hold a dark place in the imagination of British colonists and later United States citizens. Thus, the attitude toward Native-Americans also continued to be one of the characteristics distinguishing Louisiana-French literature from Anglo-American literature.

As Le Page continues his descriptive list of tribes in Louisiana, he continues also to point out the nature of their relations with the French, the majority of which are overwhelmingly positive. He says of a small group of Catholic Indians below Mobile, “Ils sont amis des Françoïs auxquels ils rendent tous les services que l’on peut exiger d’eux en payant” (II, 213). Of another Catholic grouping above Mobile, Le Page notes, “Ils sont amis jusqu’à l’importunité” (II, 213). Le Page happily notes that peaceful Euro-Indian coexistence is the norm among the Pascagoulas west of Mobile.

Quelques Canadiens se sont établis auprès d’eux et vivent ensemble comme frères, parce que les Canadiens étant naturellement tranquilles, connoissant d’ailleurs le caractère...
des Naturels, sçavent vivre avec les Nations de l'Amérique; mais ce qui contribue principalement à cette paix durable, c'est qu'aucun Soldat ne fréquente cette Nation (II, 214-215).

Later in the narrative, Le Page mentions the Pascagoula community again.

Il n'est composé que d'un très-petit nombre de Canadiens amateurs de la tranquillité, qu'ils préfèrent à tous les avantages que la fortune présente dans le Commerce; ils se contentent d'une vie champêtre et frugale, et ne vont à la Nouvelle Orléans que pour acheter leur nécessaire (II, 255).

The harmonious mixing of red and white at Le Page’s Pascagoula mirrors Pénicaud’s and Dumont’s Euro-aboriginal utopia at the Kaskaskia Illinois. Whereas “Canadian rakes” threaten Pénicaud’s utopia and necessitate military intervention to restore peace to the Franco-Indian stronghold of Upper Louisiana, Le Page’s Lower-Louisiana Euro-Indian haven profits from a Canadian presence and a military absence. Clearly, Pénicaud and Dumont differ on the effect that Canadian voyageurs and French soldiers can have on Indian relations. While Dumont, for his part, may make light of Bienville’s boast that he knows Indians well because of his Canadian upbringing, Le Page concedes that Canadians understand Indians better than do Frenchmen fresh to America. Le Page thus acknowledges the positive side of “Americanization” or “Indianization.” Simply put, a successful life in the New World is characterized by the transformation of whites, by the adapting of European heritage to a setting different from Europe. In addition to Indianization or Americanization of whites through adaptation, hybridization of white and red societies into one can also occur, and, judging from the depictions of mixed communities presented thus far, Le Page seems to approve of this evolution.
As seen already, intimate European contacts with Native Americans can all too often have negative societal effects. Whereas Pénicaud sees harm primarily in the Canadian traders who carouse with the Indians, Le Page remains principally concerned with the doings of French soldiers. As he attests, “J'ai fait voir combien la fréquentation des Soldats est nuisible à la bonne intelligence que l'on doit conserver avec ces Peuples, pour en tirer les avantages que l'on en espere” (II, 215). In other words, soldiers are apt to use Indians for senseless self-gratification rather than to establish respectful relationships that can prove beneficial to both red and white societies.

Chapter 17 continues Le Page’s encyclopedic presentation of Louisiana Indians. When he touches on two of the largest and most powerful groups of Lower Louisiana, the author points out how one, the Choctaw, is peace loving and the other, the Chickasaw, is bellicose. Such distinctions, even if they do occur along the lines of alliances that France has made, illustrate Le Page’s ongoing attempt to stress the differences between Indian nations -- to show the good and the bad, the admirable and the deplorable (as judged by the French), as well as the similar and the dissimilar characterizing Native-American cultures.

When he mentions the Houmas, Le Page again points out the corrupting influence that some Frenchmen can have on Indians. The Houmas village on the Mississippi has not fared well from the presence of Europeans, who have been in it since the first days of colonization in Lower Louisiana. Above all, “l'usage immodéré de l'eau-de-vie” has proven “dommageable” to these Indians (II, 220).

Happier in their dealings with the French have been the Tunicas living north of the Houmas. Le Page elaborates upon Tunica fidelity
and bravery in supporting the French and lavishes special praise upon the Tunica chief.

Le chef de cette Nation étoit le véritable ami de la nôtre. Comme il étoit plein de bravoure et toujours prêt à faire la guerre pour venger les François, le Roi lui avoit envoyé le brevet de Brigadier des armées rouges, et un cordon-bleu d'où pendait une médaille d'argent . . . ; le Roi lui envoya aussi une canne à poignée d'or. Il méritoit certainement l'honneur qu'on lui faisoit, si l'on fait attention à son bon cœur pour les Français; et de son côté il se faisoit gloire d'avoir ces marques honorables et de les porter (II, 220-221).

The Tunica chief has impressed Le Page like few persons in the narrative have. This red leader thus rises to the heroic stature reserved for such men as De Bourgmont and Saint Denis, both of whom distinguish themselves as white friends of the Indian.

Moving upriver from the Tunicas, Le Page focuses on the Natchez. Despite the breakdown in Franco-Natchez relations that occurred before his publishing the Histoire, Le Page still depicts the Natchez favorably. He says of them,

La Nation des Natchez étoit une des plus estimables de la Colonie dans les premiers temps, non-seulement suivant leur tradition, mais encore suivant celles des autres peuples, à qui leur grandeur et la beauté de leurs usages donnaient autant de jalousie, que d'admiration. Je pourrois faire un Volume de ce qui les concerne en particulier; mais comme je ne parle qu'en raccourci des Peuples de la Louisiane, je parlerai d'eux comme des autres; et si j'en dis un peu plus, c'est qu'il y a en effet beaucoup plus de choses à en rapporter (II, 221-222).

Le Page believes the Native-American oral tradition of the Natchez having once been the most powerful Indian nation in Louisiana. He contributes their demise to prejudice and despotism, aspects of Natchez life that this study treats later.

Even when Le Page switches his census-like account from listing Indian nations to tallying European establishments in Louisiana, he still includes favorable references to the tribe that gave the Natchez
post its name. Highlighting Natchez service to the French and the
lure of their homeland for European settlers, Le Page notes,

Tous les Voyageurs qui passoient et s'arrêtent en cet
endroit, alloient voir les Naturels Natchez; la lieue de
chemin qu'ils faisoient est dans un si beau et si bon
Pays; les Naturels étoient si serviables et si familiers,
le sexe même y étoit si aimable, que tous les Voyageurs ne
se laissoient point de faire l'éloge de ce Canton et des
Naturels qui l'habitotent (II, 280).

After recalling the prosperity and progress that the post enjoyed
"malgré tous les efforts d'un des principaux Supérieurs qui y a apporté
tous les obstacles que l'on puisse imaginer," Le Page ends the brief
Natchez entry in his guide to Louisiana places and people by noting,
"Dieu l'a abandonné à la fureur de ses ennemis, pour tirer vengeance
des péchés qui s'y commettoient" (II, 281). While here the author
may sound like a New England Puritan writer who views Indian violence
as a Heaven-sent scourge meant to torment sinners into repentance, Le
Page does not stop at such a cut-and-dried explanation of Natchez's
destruction. Although God's will may have been done in this instance,
the bloody fate was inevitable for a place run by someone like
Etcheparre, who abused the Indians to a degree that the reds could no
longer tolerate.

Proceeding upriver in his encyclopedic presentation of
Louisiana's aborigines, Le Page reaches the Kaskaskia Illinois. He
touches only briefly on the Euro-Indian harmony upon which Pénicaud
elaborates.

Ce Poste est un des plus considérables de la Louisiane; ce
qui ne paroltra point surprenant, sitôt que l'on sçaura
que cette Nation a été comme la première dans la Décou-
verte de cette Province, et qu'elle a toujours été trés-
fidellement alliée aux Français: avantage qui naît en
grande partie de la bonne manière dont usent les Canadiens
pour vivre avec les Naturels de l'Amérique; cependant on
ne doit pas croire que ce soit le peu de courage qui les
rende paisible, puisque leur valeur est trés-connue (II,
227-228).
Le Page again sheds favorable light on Canadians living among Indians, this time in the very place where Pénicaud sees a Canadian menace to Franco-Indian harmony.

After having treated the tribes east of the Mississippi, Le Page begins in Volume II's Chapter 18 to list those residing west of the River. When he touches on the Chitimachas, who had once warred against the French, Le Page does not discuss them bitterly. In fact, as in the case of the Natchez, he almost apologizes for them. "Cette nation n'a jamais eu l'âme guerrière; et s'ils ont eu la guerre avec nous, c’est parce qu’un de leurs petits Chefs, tua un Missionnaire qui descendait le Fleuve" (II, 231). Le Page says of the Chitimacha disposition following the unfortunate war,

Depuis la paix que l'on a faite avec eux en 1719, non-seulement ils sont restés tranquilles, mais même ils se tiennent si sagement solitaires qu'ils préfèrent de vivre comme ils faisoient cent ans avant l'arrivée des François, plutôt que d'avoir d'eux des secours qu'ils croyent superflus, et d'être en même temps obligés de les fréquenter (II, 230-231).

Le Page seems as much to admire as be wistful over this decimated tribe that, in defeat, has turned its back on "progress" and moved away from the French so as to return to its former way of life.

When he focuses on the supposedly man-eating Attakapas west of the Chitimachas, Le Page offers another storytelling jewel by digressing upon "M. de Belle-Isle"'s captivity by the cannibals. Saint Denis also enters into the story, in the following fashion.

Il y avoit déjà quelques mois que l'esclavage de M. de Belle-Isle duroit chez les Atac-apas, lorsqu'une Nation vint leur apporter le Calumet de Paix. Cette Nation étoit du nombre de celles qui sont dans les terres Espagnols du nouveau Mexique; mais en même temps elle étoit de celles qui reconnoissoient et respectoient M. de S. Denis alors Commandant des Nactchitoches. Les Députés de cette Nation s'appерçurent à la mine et aux manières de M. de Belle-Isle, qu'il étoit François, et dans la pensée de faire plaisir à M. de S. Denis, ils résolurent entre'eux de sauver ce François; mais ils se donnerent bien de garde de
faire connoître leur surprise aux Atac-Apas, chez lesquels ils étoient venus avec le symbole de la Paix. Ils épi-erent le moment de le trouver seul; ils le trouvèrent et en profitèrent pour lui faire comprendre par signe, qu’ils étoient voisins de M. de S. Denis, qu’ils lui nommerent. A la prononciation de ce mot, M. de Belle-Isle fut au com-ble de la joye, et quoiqu’il n’eût jamais été à portée d’entendre parler de ce brave Commandant, puisqu’il arriv-oit de France, il comprit à ce nom qu’il étoit Français; ces Envoyés lui firent signe aussi qu’il eût à écrire, et qu’ils envoyerolent son écrit à M. de S. Denis (II, 237-238).

So high is certain Indians’ esteem for Saint Denis that they will save a white man from fellow red men just to win the Natchitoches comman-dant’s favor. De Belle-Isle writes a letter, which two of the visit-ing Indians take to Saint Denis at an opportune time. The two return under cover to the Attakapas village and secretly give their tribesmen Saint Denis’ reply.

The story of De Belle-Isle’s captivity continues with Saint Denis’ intervention.

M. de S. Denis leur avoit ordonné d’amener avec eux ce François, ou de ne jamais paroître devant lui. Ceux qui venoient d’apprendre cette nouvelle, avertirent en secret M. de Belle-Isle d’aller dans le Bois, d’un côté qu’ils lui indiquèrent; que là ils trouveroient leurs gens cachés; il les trouva et ils lui remirent une Lettre de M. de S. Denis, dans laquelle ce Commandant lui marquoit qu’il n’eût rien à craindre avec eux.

Ce fut ainsi que M. de Belle-Isle échappa à un es-clavage, qui peut-être n’auroit fini qu’avec sa vie (II, 239-240).

Once again, Saint Denis comes to the rescue of a white man through his ability to deal with Indians.

Finished with the De Belle-Isle story, Le Page ends the Attakapas section on a hopeful note.

Il est à propos de remarquer ici que dans cette vaste Province nous n’avons connu d’Antropophages que les Atac-apas; et que depuis que quelques Français les ont fréquen-tés, ils leur ont donné tant d’horreur de cette abominable coutume de manger leurs semblables, qu’ils ont promis de
Instead of dwelling on Attakapas cannibalism, Le Page emphasizes how remarkable it is that in a land as vast as Louisiana only one anthropophagic tribe has been encountered. Furthermore, even this group, which sanctions the most detestable practice to be discovered, can be "reformed" through French intervention. Later on, Bossu will attest to this very reformation.

Typically, Le Page glosses over negatives in Native-American societies, such as the Attakapas' "détestable coutume de manger les hommes qui sont leurs ennemis, ou qu'ils croyent tels" (II, 231), and spends more time highlighting positive aspects of Indian cultures. He points out, for example, how hospitality characterizes red tribes.

On a déjà vu depuis le commencement de cette Histoire des Naturels de la Louisiane, que plusieurs Nations de ces Peuples s’étoient jointes à d’autres, soit parce qu’ils ne pouvoient plus résister à leurs Ennemis, soit parce qu’ils espéroient se trouver mieux en se confondant avec une autre Nation. Je suis bien aise à cette occasion de faire connoitre que ces Peuples respectent le droit de l’hospitalité, et que malgré la supériorité que pourroit avoir une Nation sur une autre et sur celle qui se seroit réfugiée chez elle, le droit de l’hospitalité l’emporte. Ceci se fera plus aisément comprendre par une supposition. Une Nation de deux mille Guerriers fait la guerre, et poursuit violemment une autre Nation de cinq cens Guerriers; celle-ci se retire chez une Nation alliée de ceux qui les poursuivent, et qui n’est composée que de trois cens Guerriers; si elle adopte celle de cinq cens, les premiers quoi-qu’au nombre de deux mille, mettent bas les armes, et ne font pas plus de mal à leurs ennemis qu’à ceux qui les ont reçus chez eux, qui par ce moyen deviennent alliées de leurs ennemis. Un Lecteur prévenu à l’ordinaire contre la manière de penser de ces Peuples, n’aurait eu garde de s’imaginer qu’ils faisaient des alliances de cette espèce (II, 244-245).

Many Native Americans view hospitality and the adoption of one tribe into another so seriously that enemy nations can become immediate
friends should one be taken in by allies of the other. Perhaps Le Page offers this disposition to shame Europeans into similar considerations.

When Le Page’s roaming summary of Indian nations arrives at the Missouri, he takes advantage of the opportunity to make fun of one of France’s rivals who has also encountered this Indian group. The author uses the failed venture of the Spanish against the Missouri to add comedy at the former’s expense. The six-page digression is another example of the storytelling gems that decorate the Histoire, and it offers some of the most humorous reading to be found in the three volumes. Thus, it deserves quoting at length.

Les Espagnols, de même que nos autres voisins, toujours jaloux de notre supériorité sur eux, formerent le dessein de s’établir aux Missouris . . . afin de nous borner de plus près à l’Ouest. . . .

Ils penserent que pour mettre leur Colonie en sûreté, il convenoit de détruire entièrement les Missouris. Mais n’entrevoyant point de possibilité à exécuter ce projet avec leurs seules forces, il entra dans leur plan de faire amitié avec les Osages, Peuples voisins des Missouris, et souvent en guerre avec eux, espérant de les gagner par là à surprendre et détruire leurs voisins. Dans cette idée ils formèrent à Santa Fé une Caravane d’hommes, de femmes et de soldats, ayant un Jacobin pour Aumônier, et un Ingénieur pour Chef et Conducteur, avec les chevaux et les bestiaux nécessaires; car c’est chez eux une sage coutume de faire marcher ensemble toutes ces choses. La Caravane s’étant mise en route, se trompa dans sa marche et arriva chez les Missouris, croyant trouver les Osages qu’elle cherchait. Ainsi le Conducteur de la troupe fit parler son Interprète au Chef des Missouris, comme s’il eût été celui des Osages, et lui dit qu’il venoit faire alliance avec eux pour détruire ensemble toute la Nation des Missouris leurs anciens ennemis.

Le grand Chef des Missouris, dissimulant ce qu’il devoit penser d’un tel dessein, témoigna de la joye aux Espagnols, et leur promit d’exécuter avec eux un projet qui les flattoit beaucoup. Pour cet effet il les invita à se reposer quelques jours de leur voyage, en attendant qu’il eût assemblé ses Guerriers et tenu conseil avec les vieillards [sic.]; il fit grande chère à ses hôtes et fit paroître une amitié sincere. Il [sic.] prirent jour ensemble pour partir dans trois jours; mais dès la nuit de cet arrêté, les Missouris furent au point du jour au camp
des Espagnols, les assommerent tous, excepté le Jacobin, ayant remarqué qu’il étoit le Chef de la priere et étoit sans armes; joint à cela que la singularité de son habit ne l’annonçoit pas pour un Guerrier. Les Missouris garderent quelques mois, et se divertirent à lui faire faire le manège sur un cheval les jours qu’il faisoit beau temps (II, 246-248).

The grand Spanish caravan, ridiculous in its pomp on the prairie and overconfident in its plans for genocide, foolishly mistakes its enemies for the tribe that it intends to use in destroying the Missouris. The Spanish suffer the dire consequences of not being able to distinguish between Indian groups, a blunder rarely committed by the French as recounted in early Louisiana literature, and only one of their number, the priest, escapes death.

The fate of both the priest and the religious items confiscated by the Indians make for the most comic part of the tale of Spanish misadventure.

Le Jacobin, quoique caressé et bien nourri, n’étoit point sans inquiétude; c’est pourquoi profitant un jour de leur confiance, il prit ses précautions pour s’évader un jour de manège, ce qu’il fit en effet à leur vu: on a su ces choses des Missouris mêmes, lorsqu’ils furent porter aux Français des Illinois les ornemens de la Chapelle avec la Carte, comme je vais le rapporter.

Les Missouris honteux d’avoir été dupés par l’Aumonier fugitif, ne se crurent pas suffisamment dédommagés de ce qu’il leur avoit appris le manège, ou du moins diverti, lorsqu’il montoit à cheval en leur présence. Ils résolurent d’aller aux Illinois chez les Français qui y sont établis, pour traiter avec eux les ornemens et tout ce qui concernoit la Chapelle, le Jacobin ayant eu plus de soin de sa liberté que du transport de sa Chapelle, puisqu’il auroit été découvert. Les Missouris s’étant chargés de ces ornemens arrivèrent enfin aux Illinois. Dès qu’ils furent près de l’Etablissement des Français, ils se parent chacun d’une des pièces de la Chapelle: celui qui avoit sur sa peau la plus belle Chasuble, marchoit à la tête; ceux qui portoient les Chasubles le suivoient, venoient ensuite les Porte-Etoles suivis de ceux qui avoient les Manipules à leur col; on voyoit après ceux-ci trois ou quatre Naturels revêtus d’Aubes, d’autres de Surplis; les Acolytes, contre l’ordinaire, marchoient à la queue de cette Procession d’un goût si nouveau, ne se trouvant
point assez parés de porter à la main, en dansant en cadence, une Croix ou un Chandelier. Je ne sais à quel rang marchaient ceux qui portaient les Vases sacrés; ces Naturels ne connaissant point le respect qui leur est dû, les avoient profanés; je suis seulement certain qu'un d'eux avoit trouvé le secret de percer la Patène qu'il portoit pendue à son col. Que l'on s'imagine le spectacle ridicule, que pouvoit offrir aux yeux l'ordre bizarre de cette Procession telle que je viens de la décrire, et arrivant à la maison de M. de Boisbriant, Lieutenant de Roi, en sautant par mesure, le Calumet déployé suivant la coutume de faire une Ambassade.

Les premiers Français qui virent arriver cette troupe de Mascarades d'une mode nouvelle, coururent en riant en porter la nouvelle à M. de Boisbriant. Cet Officier qui avoit autant de piété que de bravoure, fut pénétré de douleur à la vue de ces Naturels, et ne s'avoit quoi penser de cet événement; il appréhendoit qu'ils n'eussent défait quelques Partis de Français en voyage, ne pouvant s'imager ce que ce pouvoit être; mais lorsqu'il put les appercevoir de loin, son chagrin s'évanouit, il eut même bien de la peine à s'empêcher d'en rire comme les autres. Les Missouris lui raconterent comment les Espagnols avoient voulu les détruire, et qu'ils lui apportoient tout ce qu'il voyoit, n'étant point à leur usage, et que s'il vouloit, il pouvoit leur donner des marchandises qui seroient plus de leur goût, ce qu'il fit; il les envoya ensuite à M. de Blainville, Commandant Général (II, 248-250).

Le Page beautifully conveys the humor and the horror that the spectacle of "savages" bearing sacred items holds for eighteenth-century French-Catholic viewers. Realizing that the Indians are guilty of no sacrilege, thanks to their ignorance concerning the objects they carry, Le Page and De Boisbriant can tolerate and even appreciate the comedy that the sight produces.5 Pious but not prudish, Le Page and De Boisbriant must restore the vestments and holy utensils to their proper places after enjoying a harmless laugh at their improper arrival.

Just as Pénicaud and Dumont prefer to criticize the Spanish and the British over the Indians, so Le Page also makes haste at times to find fault with his Euro-American neighbors to the west and east. For

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example, he mentions the English activities among Louisiana's eastern Indians as a means of blaming the British for red aggression against the French. Eastern Louisiana is also threatened by the Spanish in Florida, and during the Pensacola war they are presented as unflatteringly as are some of the shady Mexican characters with whom Saint Denis must contend.

When it comes to demeaning the Spanish west of Louisiana, Le Page uses a device employed by Pénicaud to achieve the same result: a monologue in which a character relates his dealings with Hispanics. While Pénicaud uses what he alleges is Saint Denis' personal account to ridicule the politesse and pomp of inflated Spanish egos, Le Page offers the story of a Louisiana trader's visit to New Mexico as an exposé of quotidian wretchedness in a Spanish colony. The purpose is undoubtedly to lessen French dissatisfaction with Louisiana by comparison with another colony. The account reads as follows.

Que l'on ne s'imagine pas au reste que je veuille en faire accroire au sujet des Espagnols du nouveau-Mexique; on pourra du moins en juger par l'ébauche que je vais faire des Habitans qui sont même plus près des mines que les Adaies; je tiens le récit suivant d'un Français qui avait hazardé d'aller commencer chez eux; il parlera lui-même.

"Je fus un jour, me dit-il, avec deux mulets chargés de marchandises à la première cabane que j'aperçus pour m'informer du chemin que je devois tenir. Je vis sur la porte un grand homme assez brun de corps et de cheveux avec une moustache noire qu'il retroussa plus de vingt fois avant que je fusse assez près de lui pour lui demander le chemin; il étoit pieds nus, et n'avoit pour tout habillement sur le corps qu'une culotte dont les canons descendoient jusques sur ses talons; sa chemise faite de deux peaux n'avoit aucune couleur que l'on puisse nommer non plus que la culotte je puis seulement dire qu'elles étoient très grasses, et avoit sur la tête un mouchoir dans le même goût. Après l'avoir salué poliment, je lui demandai le chemin que je désirois savoir; il me rendit le salut avec toute la gravité Espagnole, et sans répondre à ma demande: avez-vous là, me dit-il, des marchandises qui méritent d'être vues? Je lui répondis que j'en avois qui pourroient lui convenir: arrêtez donc, ajouta-t-il, et que je voye s'il y en a qui me plaisent. Je ne me fis..."
point prier, parce que l'heure du dîner approchait; je dé-chargeai mes balots et mis paître mes Mulets. Comme j'en-
trois le premier ballot, je vis une femme accroupie qui 
faissait du feu; m'entendant lui souhaiter le bonjour, elle 
abattit son voile pour me répondre et me regarder; elle 
pouvoit au moyen des trous et des déchirures me voir aisè-
ment, de même que je pouvois aussi la considérer, malgré 
l'obstacle apparent qui cachoit son visage. Elle étoit 
jolie, et un sourire gracieux me fit juger que mon arrivée 
ne lui déplaisoît point. Elle n'avoit que son voile sur 
la tête, et pour tout habillement un corcet et une juppe 
qui tenoient ensemble; le corcet étoit si échancré, que 
toute sa gorge paraııssoit, sans que l'on pût appercevoir 
qu'elle eût une chemise. Je ne tardai pas à voir deux 
dignes rejettons de cette illustre famille, qui pouvoient 
avoir huit à dix ans, et habillés dans le goût de notre 
premier Pere lorsqu'il sortit des mains du Créateur. 

J'avois à peine défait un ballot, que je vis laver 
avec une éponge une toille cirée qui avoit servi d'embal-
lages; c'étoit la nappe sur laquelle on mit un plat de 
bois fait par les Naturels; ce plat étoit surchargé d'une 
douzaine d'épis de Mahiz grillés, et à l'instant le maıître 
m'invita à dîner: comme j'avois marché, j'avois besoin de 
me reposer: la Dame me présenta une selle de bois, ce qui 
obligea un des enfans à rester debout, parce qu'il n'y en 
avoit que quatre. Je fis avec appetit ce repas frugal en 
buvant deux grands coups d'eau dans un morceau de cale-
bace; je sçavois que les Espagnols sont glorieux, et je 
devois que celui ci ne voudroit point recevoir d'ar-
gent pour mon déct, je voulus l'en dédommager par un prés-
ent; je tirai de ma poche une petite bouteille clissée où 
j'avois de l'eau-de-vie; j'en donnai un coup à boire au 
mari, j'en versai pour la femme qui le refusa. 

Je montrai ensuite mes marchandises. Il m'acheta 
deux pièces de toille de Bretagne qui sont de six aulnes 
chacune; deux pièces de Platlle de même longueur; c'étoit 
pour la Dame. . . . 

Je vendis aussi à cet Espagnol une paire de bas de 
soye rouge ponceau à coins brodés d'argent, et une pièce 
de dentelle pour sa femme. Quand il fallut me payer, il 
me fit entrer dans la chambre à coucher, puisque j'y vis 
deux lits par terre sur des plauches faites à la hache; un 
de ces lits étoit sans doute pour le pere et la mere, 
l'autre pour les enfans; j'aperçus aussi pendus au croc 
un pourpoint, une cullotte de velours verd, et une chemise 
garnie qui paraııssoit avoir été blanche; cette chemise 
couvroit une épée dont je vis le fourreau sortir, il y av-
oit à côté un petit coffre qui étoit sans doute la garde 
robe de la Dame, celle des enfans paraııssoit leur servir 
du chevet. Enfin l'on ouvrit le coffre fort; c'étoit un 
tas d'environ cinq à six cens Piastres dans un coin de 
notre chambre par terre, couvert en talut d'une grande
Le Page offers this travelling trader’s story as a means of preventing more colonists from venturing to Natchitoches with the incorrect notion that its proximity to the Spanish outpost of Los Adaes will afford easy trafficking with the mine-rich Spanish empire. The reality, as Le Page sees it, is that the vast Mexican frontier, which, on its eastern flank, spans the entire distance that Saint Denis travelled from Natchitoches to the Presidio del Norte, offers much misery and few delights. In short, the standard of living for many miles west of Louisiana is much lower than that which French colonists know -- and largely because of the impracticality of the Spanish colonists. Louisiana, often depicted as a materially miserable place by its own writers (and that because of the corruption of those officials who are supposed to be supplying the colony with Continental goods), at least has an abundance of natural resources that the colonists have learned to reap by Le Page’s time.

Finished, for the time being, with his depictions of the “glorious” Spaniards, Le Page turns to heaping unsavory passages upon the
English. When describing the Yazoo post near Chickasaw territory in Volume II's Chapter 20, Le Page alludes to British instigation of Indian aggression against the French. He notes that the Chickasaw have been "toujours amis des Anglois, et toujours excités par ces derniers à nous inquider" (II, 282). In other words, it is because of the British that the French have not been able to win over the Chickasaw.

The story of a Chickasaw attack that Dumont also includes in his long poem serves as another example of the literary artistry embellishing Le Page's history. In addition, the episode shows further how Indian anecdotes in New-World literatures often become full-cycle tales of suspense, terror, bravery, and reparation in a dangerous yet exciting frontier civilization. The "Histoire du Sergent Riter de sa femme et de son enfant" reads as follows.

Les deux Sergens de la Garnison se crurent autorisés à se faire chacun une Cabanne dans un terrain de leur choix; malgré les avis réitérés qu'on leur donna de la molle complaisance des Officiers, ils y couchoient toutes les nuits. Ces deux Sergens étoient mariés; l'un étoit le sieur des Noyers, qui faisoit les affaires de la Compagnie; le second étoit le sieur Riter plus éloigné du Fort que le premier.

Pendant une nuit un Parti de dix à douze Tchicachas s'approcheront au clair de la Lune auprès de la Cabanne du Sr. Riter qui étoit couché et endormi dans son lit, ainsi que sa femme et un fils qu'ils avoient de treize à quatorze ans. Les Tchicachas étant tout près de la porte, l'ouvrirent en la poussant, et entrerent très doucement dans la Cabanne comme ils ont coutume de faire; mais malgré leurs précautions, le Sergent se saisit d'un fusil qui étoit le seul qui ne fût point chargé de huit qu'il avoit dans sa Cabanne. Il crie plusieurs fois qui va-là? N'entendant aucune réponse, il voulut lâcher son coup; mais comme par malheur le fusil n'étoit point chargé, le coup ne partit point. Les Tchicachas alors sans lui donner le temps d'en prendre un autre, ou de charger celui qu'il tenoit, se jetterent sur lui et l'assassinerent d'un coup de casse-tête, lui leverent la chevelure, et le laisserent pour mort dans le milieu de sa Cabanne baigné dans son sang. Les autres en même temps s'empareront de la femme, qui eut soin avant d'être prise de se munir d'un grand couteau à gaine qu'elle coula dans sa manche; ils l'emmenèrent pour la faire Esclave dans leur Nation; deux de ces
Barbares la trainerent sur le chemin pour y attendre les autres.

Le bruit qui le faisait dans cette Cabane reveilla le fils du Sergent Riter, qui se leva et courut en chemise vers le Fort, en criant de toutes ses forces "au secours; les ennemis tuent mon père et ma mère." Un Tchicacha courut après cet enfant et l'atteignit assez près pour lui tirer une flèche qui lui perça le poignet. Le jeune homme contrefaisant le mort, le Tchicacha le crut mort et s'approcha pour lui lever la chevelure à la hâte; il eut la constance de se laisser lever partie par partie, la peau étant encore trop tendre pour être levée entière. Le même ennemi voulut en outre lui couper la gorge; mais l'enfant fut assez heureux pour n'avoir que la peau coupée; sa persévérance lui sauva sa vie. Le sieur des Noyers s'éveilla au bruit de tout ce qui venait de se passer; il tira un coup de fusil, cria aux armes, et mit ainsi l'alerte au Fort.

La femme du Sergent Riter étoit cependant avec ses deux gardiens dans une ravine: elle crut son mari et son fils morts; elle entendit venir les autres Tchicachas; ne voyant donc plus aucune ressource pour leur échapper, et n'étant gardée que par deux hommes, elle résolut de s'en défaire; d'un coup de son grand couteau elle tua un de ces Naturels; l'autre évita le coup et ne le reçut qu'à la cuisse; il cria; les autres doublèrent le pas et arrivèrent à l'instant; alors celui qu'elle avait blessé, la tua et s'enfuit avec les autres. Ce fut ainsi que mourut cette femme pleine de courage, et qui aimait mieux perdre la vie avec sa famille que d'être Esclave des Barbares qui venaient d'assassiner son mari et son fils.

De son côté la Garnison sortit et courut au bruit. On rencontra le fils du Sergent, que des Soldats portèrent au Corps de Garde; les autres allèrent au plus vite à la Cabanne du Sergent qu'ils trouvèrent étendu par terre et nud sans chemise; il avait perdu toute connaissance par la quantité de sang qui étoit sorti de ses plaies: on fit à la hâte un brancard sur lequel on le porta du Fort dans le Corps de Garde où étoit déjà son fils, lequel voyant M. Baldy, Chirurgien de la Concession, s'empresser à soulager son père, s'écria: "Messieurs, secourez moi le premier; mon père est vieux et n'en reviendra pas, au lieu que je suis jeune et qu'il y a beaucoup plus d'espérance que je guérirai." M. Valdeterre, Commandant de ce Poste, ne voulut pas que le Chirurgien les touchât ni l'un ni l'autre, que pour laver leurs blessures et recoudre la peau du col du jeune homme....

Le Détachement qui étoit sorti du Fort ne trouvant point la femme du sieur Riter, poursuivit les ennemis qui fuirent et laissèrent après eux une partie des effets qu'ils avaient emportés de la Cabanne de ce Sergent; ils voulaient mieux courir, à cet effet ils abandonnerent
presque tout leur butin. Nos Troupes trouveront aussi des bois gravés par lesquels on connoit quelle est la Nation ennemie. Enfin au retour on trouva le corps de la Dame Riter et celui qu'elle avoit tué. . . .

Les François revinrent au Fort avec ce qu'ils avoient trouvé dans le chemin et le cadavre de l'Héroïne Française qu'ils enterrèrent. Un Naturel Illinois étoit présent au retour du Détachement; mais ayant voulu revenir les Français sans dépouilles des ennemis et sans autre avantage que de les avoir chassés, il demanda de la poudre et des balles; on lui en fournit; il partit avec son fusil et quelques vivres et se mit à les poursuivre. Il en atteignit trois qui n'avoient pu suivre les autres, parce qu'un de ces trois étoit celui qui avoit été blessé par la Dame Riter; il avoit beaucoup de peine à marcher, c'est pourquoi il avoit deux de ces camarades pour l'accompagner. Ce Naturel Illinois les ayant ainsi découverts, les suivit jusqu'au soir; il se tint caché toute la nuit à quelque distance de leur Cabanage; puis vers le point du jour il tomba sur eux à l'improviste, tua les deux Tchicachas qui étoient en santé, et saisit le blessé, qui lui dit par qui et comment il l'avoit été; il le tua aussi, leva les trois chevelures et les apporta à M. Valdeterre, qui le contenta par la recompense qu'il lui donna.

Les Tchicachas qui avoient fait cette indigne action, furent assez effrontés pour venir quinze jours après apporter le Calumet de Paix, sous prétexte que c'étoit de jeunes gens de leur Nation, qui avoient fait ce coup: ils couvrirent cette excuse d'un présent au Commandant François, lequel reçut très-bien et le présent et l'excuse. L'on crut bien bien faire de leur montrer les deux blessés; il me semble qu'il auraient suffi de leur faire connoître par d'autres voyes qu'ils n'étoient pas morts; aussi la vue de ces ennemis fit une si grande révolution au sieur Riter, que sa plaie se rouvrit, une fièvre chaude le saisit; et malgré tous les soins que l'on prit de lui pendant trois jours et trois nuits, one ne put parvenir à lui conserver la vie. Le fils guérit parfaitement; je le vis quelque temps après, lorsqu'il fut sur le point de repasser en France, où M. le Blanc lui avoit obtenu les Invalides, pour lui assurer du pain le reste de ses jours.

J'ai appris tout ce détail par M. Baldy que j'avois fait nommer Chirurgien Major de l'Habitation du Roi, peu après que l'on m'en eût confié la régie (IT, 282-289).

The story of attack on a homestead, scalping, murder, attempted captivity, retribution, and peacemaking reads like many frontier tales from Anglo-American literature. While Le Page’s anecdote showcases one episode from years of difficulty with the troublesome Chickasaw,
its aim is not to condemn the red neighbors of the French. Actually, Le Page blames the French victims, in part, for their horrible fate. After all, they settled in a dangerous location, against the advice of their peers. In addition, the British encouraged Chickasaw aggression, and, if one is to believe the words of the Chickasaw leaders (which the author does not), the young offenders acted independently of tribal approbation. Because of their ongoing "corruption" by the English, "ces misérables Tchicachas" are not depicted worse than any other Indian nation, including the Natchez. Rather, Le Page restores the Chickasaw to dubious good graces at the end of this episode once an Indian from another tribe succeeds where the French have failed in avenging the death of the white woman. French ineptness is revealed further in the death of the white man, for instead of letting Riter regain his health in total tranquillity the whites allow tribesmen of his attackers to see him, an encounter that upsets Riter so much that he dies from it.

In Chapter 21 Le Page offers another event to illustrate Chickasaw aggression against the French. In the story of "ce nouvel Enée et son père," a Canadian named "M. Rodot" becomes so enamored of Louisiana that he brings his aged father and a friend to settle there. Camped on the Mississippi near present-day Memphis, the two younger men go off to hunt while the old man rests. A band of Chickasaw kidnap the father, but his son and son's friend soon rescue him.

Between his long accounts of French-Chickasaw difficulties, Le Page presents a happier portrait of Franco-Indian relations when he mentions the Arkansas at the outset of Chapter 21. The land and the aboriginal inhabitants of the Arkansas valley have left such a favorable impression on Le Page that he confesses,

Je suis si prévenu en sa faveur, que je me persuade que la beauté de son climat influe sur le caractère de ses Habitants, qui sont en même temps très-doux et très-braves,
puisqu'avec les qualités pacifiques que tout le monde leur
connoit, ils sont d'une bravoure sans reproche: ils ont
toujours eu pour les François une fidélité à toute
épreuve, sans y être portés par la crainte ou par l'intér-
et [sic.]; ils vivent avec les Français qui sont près
d'eux plutôt en frères qu'en voisins; et il est encore à
arriver que l'on ait vu quelque mésiintelligence entre les
deux Nations (II, 291).

Le Page admire in the Arkansas the same cooperative disposition to­
ward the French that he observes in many other tribes. He values most
of all the fact that the Arkansas, like the Pascagoulas and the Kas-
kaskia Illinois, coexist more as relatives than as neighbors with the
French. Thus, through his comments on this tribe, it becomes increas­
ingly clear that Le Page's vision of the ideal New-World community is
one in which the red and white residents form a big family, with the
French as parents, of course. As will be seen later, Bossu takes up
where Le Page leaves off in flattering the friendly Arkansas.

At the same time that he is including a description of the Illi­
nois post in his list of white settlements, Le Page digresses upon
Claude-Charles du Tisné's adventures, which involve Indians to a great
extent. In his treatment of Du Tisné, the author proves again that
Louis Juchereau de Saint Denis is not the only subject of his hero
worship. Le Page idolizes any leader who deals fairly with Indians
and colonists. At the same time, Le Page takes advantage of any ex­
citing and unusual episodes from such a person's life to provide en­
tertainment for his reader.

Plot, exchange of dialogue, conflict, exposition, suspense, and
comedy make the "Histoire de M. du Tissenet" another storytelling mas­
terpiece. The themes of initiation both into adulthood and into an­
other society, of achieving independence by becoming a self-made man,
and of forsaking ties to the Old World in order to carve one's own
life out of the New give Du Tisné's tale some of the characteristics
of "American-Dream" narratives. At the same time, the fable-like quality of the story, whose appended moral does not seem to capture the account's main message, links Du Tnisé's tale to much older forms of narrative.

The "Histoire de M. du Tissenet" reads as follows.

M. du Tissenet étoit né à Paris de parens aisés, mais trop craintifs pour consentir à se séparer de leur fils, qui vouloit absolument servir; il n'étoit pas de taille à pouvoir être accepter dans un Régiment pour soldat; c'est ce qui l'obligea à s'offrir à un Officier qui engageoit pour le Canada les jeunes gens qui vouloient y aller de bonne volonté; il fut reçu et nommé le Cadet. Dans le temps de sa résidence à Québec, son esprit et sa politesse le firent aimer d'un Marchand qui lui dit un jour: "Vous avez, Monsieur, de l'esprit et de l'activité; je vous vois des dispositions à faire quelque chose, vous réussiriez, que n'allez-vous en Traite; vous gagneriez de quoi vous passer de vos parens, qui s'opiniâtrent à ne vous rien envoyer, dans l'espérance que vous retourneriez chez eux. Cela serait bon, répondit M. du Tissenet, si j'avois de quoi acheter des Marchandises; mais n'ayant rien, comment voudriez-vous que je m'y prissé pour aller traiter chez quelque Nation? Il ne tiendra qu'à vous, reprit le Marchand; je vous avancerai des Marchandises, si vous le souhaitez; et je le ferai d'autant plus volontiers que vous me paroissez honnête homme, et que vous avez bonne volonté."

L'offre fut accepté, le Marchand chargea un grand canot, afin que son Traiteur ordinaire n'eût point lieu de seplaindre. Ce Traiteur sçavoit la Langue de la Nation où ils alloient; ils partirent, et pendant le Voyage M. du Tissenet apprit la Langue, et fut bientôt au fait de tout. Le désir du gain et sur tout de faire ses affaires sans le secours de ses parens, lui aurait fait entreprendre des choses encore plus difficiles, s'il eût trouvé l'occasion de travailler à son avancement.

Après un assez long voyage ils arrivèrent enfin à la Nation où ils espéroient faire leur Traite de Castors et d'autres pelleteries; mais quelque diligence qu'ils eussent pu faire, ils avoient été prévenu par d'autres Traiteurs, ensorte qu'il n'y avoit plus rien à espérer pour eux. Loin qu'une si triste nouvelle les décourageât, elle ne servit qu'à leur faire chercher et trouver des moyens de se dédommager ailleurs de ce contre-temps.

Pour y parvenir il fut résolu dans leur petit conseil qu'ils pousseroient leur route plus loin, jusqu'à une Nation de laquelle on avoit parlé au Traiteur; cette Nation étoit une branche de celle où ils se trouvoient pour lors et qui parloit la même Langue; on lui avoit ajouté qu'aucun
François n’y étoit encore allé, et qu’ils pourroient même y faire encore mieux leurs affaires; mais qu’il ne faisoit parler que par signes, afin que croyant n’être pas entendus, ces Naturels ne se cachassent point pour parler ensemble au préjudice de ceux à qui ils auroient affaire.

Nos Traiteurs firent diligence et y arrivèrent enfin comme ils l’avoient désiré; ils firent les signes nécessaires pour donner à connoître qu’ils venoient pour traiter; comme il n’y avoit que l’ancien Traiteur et M. du Tissenet qui sçussent parler la Langue, ils n’avoient point à craindre qu’ils fussent décelés par leurs Rameurs.

On les reçut assez bien, et on leur donna une Cabanne. Avant de pousser plus loin cette narration, il est à propos que je prévienne le Lecteur que M. du Tissenet portoit une perruque naturelle qui étoit très-bien faite; qu’étant encore enfant il avoit eu une maladie à la tête, de telle sorte que la plus grande partie de la peau avoit été enlevée, et qu’il étoit honteux de n’avoir des cheveux qu’en quelques endroits de la tête; pour y remédier de son mieux il se rasoit fort souvent la tête, afin qu’il ne paraît point qu’il n’avoit pas de cheveux qu’en quelques endroits; il faut ajouter que le matin de leur arrivée il s’étoit rasé la tête.

Le lendemain qu’ils furent à cette Nation, ils crurent bien faire d’êtraler leurs Marchandises, et de les mettre toutes dans un beau jour; ils les mirent sur des nates au milieu de la Cabannes, et leurs fusils dans le fond. Ils allèrent de là dans la Cabanne du Chef de la Nation, où il y avoit déjà nombre de Naturels assemblés; ils leur firent signe de venir, et après être arrivés au lieu des Marchandises, les Français se mirent devant leurs armes.

Les Naturels rendus de la Cabanne des Français, furent dans l’admiration de voir tant de Marchandises, qui les éblouiscoient par leur beauté et leur diversité, eux surtout qui n’avoient jamais rien vu de Français. A cette vue ils dirent tout haut, s’imaginant que les Traiteurs ne les entendirent pas: “comment pourrons nous acheter toutes ces belles Marchandises? Nous n’attendrions pas les Français, et nous n’avons point de Pelleterie, et il est trop tard pour en aller faire à présent.” Un de ces Naturels dit aux autres: “Il n’y a pas d’autres moyens pour avoir leurs Marchandises que de leur lever la chevelure, les tuer, les jeter dans la Rivière, et nous aurons tout.”

M. du Tissenet qui avoit appris la Langue en route, entendit tout ce discours; il dit en même temps aux Français de prendre leurs armes, et prit lui-même son fusil, et tout de suite dit aux Naturels en leur Langue: “Tu veux donc ma chevelure? Tiens, la voilà, ramasses-la, si tu oses le faire”: Il jeta sa perruque en prononçant ces paroles, et sa tête pelée et fraîchement rasée parut n’avoir jamais eu de cheveux. L’étonnement des Naturels ne peut s’exprimer; ils étoient tous aussi tremblans que si la foudre fût tombée.
à leurs pieds; la parole leur manqua, et ce silence dura une
demi-heure, et jusqu'à ce que M. du Tissenet parla d'un ton
ferme et dit: "Frends donc ma chevelure, puisque tu en avois
tant d'envie". Le grand Chef prit la parole et dit: "Nous
avons cru que vous étiez des hommes comme nous, mais nous
voyons bien que vous êtes des esprits, puisque vous parlez
comme nous et que vous pouvez quitter vos cheveux quand vous
voulez; toi, à qui sont les cheveux, reprenez-les, et vous
tous esprits, laissez nous en repos; nous ne pouvons traiter
vos Marchandises, parce que nous n'avons point de Pelleter-
ries et qu'il est trop tard pour en aller faire; mais ne
soyez point fâchés contre nous, je vais parler à tous mes
gens et leur dirai de vous apporter sans dessein leurs robes
de pelleterie.

Alors M. du Tissenet reprit sa perruque, la rajusta
sur sa tête en leur présence, et leur parut comme ses pro-
pres cheveux; autre étonnement qui les fit encore trembler;
M. du Tissenet au contraire leur parla avec plus de fermeté
et leur dit: "Nous partons demain, puisque notre présence
vous fait tant de peine. Les autres Français furent surpris
de la hardiesse d'un jeune homme de dix-sept ans, qui dans
une occasion si périlleuse avait trouvé si promptement le
moyen efficace de les tirer du risque où ils étoient, et
avec plus de fermeté que n'eussent peut-être fait des hommes
de quarante ans.

Voyant qu'ils ne pouvaient débiter leurs marchandises,
ils replierent les plus grosses; mais ils n'avoient pas en-
core fini, que les Naturels leur apportèrent toutes les
robes de Castors qui étoient dans le village; Le Grand Chef
qui vint avec eux dit à M. du Tissenet: "ne sois point fâché
contre nous, ne nous fais point de mal; va-t'en avec tous
tes Camarades, voilà ce que nous te donnons sans dessein".

Alors M. du Tissenet leur donna des couteaux, des
alènes, de la rassade, de très-petits miroirs, du fil de
léton et quelques autres bagatelles dont ils furent enchan-
tés, n'ayant encore rien vu de semblable; mais ils étoient
encore bien contents d'être débarrassés de ces prétendus es-
prits qu'ils appréhendoient plus que l'on ne sauroit dire;
et s'ils eussent eu autres choses à donner que leurs robes,
ils auraient tout donné pour ne plus être avec des esprits
du Canada.

Pour nos Marchands, ils furent de leur côté très sat-
isfaits d'avoir sur-tout échappé au danger qui les menaçoit;
ils firent d'ailleurs un profit égal et même plus grand que
celui qu'ils eussent fait, s'ils eussent traité toutes
leurs marchandises, et ils les eussent de reste; ils étoient
chargés de robes de Castors... .

Sitôt que nos Voyageurs furent de retour à Québec, le
bruit de cette aventure se répandit et parvint jusques au
Gouverneur qui manda M. du Tissenet; il lui confirma la véri-
été du fait tel qu'il lui étoit arrivé. Le Gouverneur juge-
ant par cette action qu'il méritoit d'être Officier, le fit
Enseigne; il écrivit en Cour et on le fit Lieutenant; il fut depuis Capitaine; il a passé à la Louisiane, où il a été mon Commandant et mon ami à Natchez.

Je n'ai pas cru devoir ajouter des réflexions aux Histoires que j'ai insérées dans cet Ouvrage; parce que n'étant que pour instruire de la manière de se comporter dans les différentes occasions où on se trouve dans ce Pays, mes Lecteurs en tireront les conséquences qui suivent naturellement. Celle de M. du Tissenet en particulier apprend aux Traiteurs à ne jamais faire étalage de toutes leurs Marchandises à la fois; qu'il ne faut au contraire ne les montrer que petit-à-petit, et une de chaque espèce, ou selon qu'on les demande. A mesure que l'on débite on en fait voir d'autres, et l'on continue de la sorte tant que les Marchands ont de quoi satisfaire. M. du Tissenet n'a point été le seul à qui parle danger soit arrivé; il en a coûté la vie à plusieurs pour s'être conduit autrement que je viens de le dire (II, 298-306).

Using the age-old convention of the outnumbered, undersized, and ill-equipped victim outwitting his powerful foes through a clever bluff (in which a mere human trick is mistaken for the fabulous), Le Page makes Du Tisné a hero in the tradition of the medieval conte. Thus, another person from Louisiana whom Le Page favors is idolized and an episode from his life transformed into a literary jewel. As Le Page’s superior and friend for the short time that Du Tisné was at Natchez, Du Tisné won the author’s admiration. Curiously, Giraud claims that “Du Tisné . . . distinguished himself by his exaggerated and brutal authoritativeness, and the Council at New Orleans soon decided that he was unsuitable for the command” of Natchez (V, 395).

Following his listing of Louisiana’s white establishments, Le Page devotes Volume II’s remaining six chapters to Native-American morals, customs, religion, festivals, and warfare, stressing all the while how these facets of Indian life vary from tribe to tribe. In Chapter 22 he notes that “le caractère de ces Nations n’est pas le même, qu’elles soient voisines les unes des autres” (II, 307). Le Page admits that the complexity and diversity of beliefs and practices
prevent him from presenting them in detail and from thereby doing them justice. Hence, "mon dessein n'est que de faire connoitre en général par le caractère de ces Peuples, la route que l'on doit tenir pour en tirer un bon parti dans le Commerce" (II, 307). Le Page focuses especially on the Natchez because, having lived among them for eight years and considering their "Sovereign," their War Chief, and their Chief of the Guardians of the Temple to have been "mes amis particuliers" (II, 308), he knows them best. Moreover,

leurs Moeurs étoient d'ailleurs plus douces, leur manière de penser plus vraie et plus remplie de sentiments, leurs Costumes plus raisonnables, et leurs Crémonies plus naturelles et plus sérieuses; ce qui rendoit cette Nation plus brillante et la distinguoit entre toutes les autres; il étoit même aisé de reconnoitre qu'elle étoit beaucoup plus policée (II, 308).

Le Page centers his attention on the Natchez in hopes that their admirable qualities will redeem European opinions of Native Americans. When Le Page speaks of Native Americans collectively, he often generalizes favorably. For instance, he approves of their physical appearance. He points out the regularity of their physiques and the absence of gigantic or dwarf-like abnormalities that are more common in Europe. He credits the methods of aboriginal upbringing and the New-World environment for the health and comeliness of indigenous residents.

J'ai toujours été porté à croire que les soins qu' ils prennent de leurs enfants dès leur naissance, contribuoient beaucoup à les bien conformer, quoique le climat y fasse aussi sa part, car les Créoles [sic.] Françoys de la Louisiane sont tous grands, bienfaits et d'un beau sang (II, 309).

Le Page rejoices over the fact that Creoles (children born in the New World to Continental parents) seem to acquire the physical niceties of Native Americans by virtue of their growing up in the same environment. Le Page's pleasure over this approximation of whites to Indians
shows both his inherent approval of the Indian as well as his possible endorsement of the blending of European and Native American into one.

Le Page appreciates the way reds tend to everyone in their society. With regard to the treatment of children, Le Page begins by citing the birthing and post-natal care of infants, noting how some Native-American practices are safer than their European equivalents. Oftentimes Indian attitudes concerning childhood and upbringing seem sounder than Continental counterparts. For example, even though red children start working at an early age, Le Page asserts that adults never abuse them through labor. In short, Le Page sums up Indian treatment of youngsters by affirming, “J’ai toujours remarqué que toutes ces Nations sans exception ménagent beaucoup la jeunesse, et que toutes sont du sentiment qu’il ne faut point mener loin les jeunes gens” (II, 315). Indians also take good care of the elderly, and Native-American veneration of senior citizens greatly impresses Le Page.

When it comes to the distribution of work in Indian societies, however, Le Page does seem to criticize the fact that most women have to do more than their fair share of it. Interestingly, Le Page does not depict unmarried Natchez girls as the lazy, selfish sluts whom Pénicaout encountered. With regard to male teens, Le Page notes that “la raison demande qu’ils ménagent davantage leur jeunesse” (II, 318-319). And while boys and men may not work as hard as women and girls do on a regular basis, they rise to the occasion when it comes to making war, hunting, clearing land, constructing cabins, or performing any other sort of strenuous labor.

Sensitivity to the needs of everyone in a tribe results in a peace and orderliness that Le Page lauds. Expounding upon the rarity of juvenile delinquency in the individual red groups, Le Page notes,
S'il arrivait aux jeunes gens de se battre, ce que je n'ai vu ni entendu dire pendant le temps que j'ai demeuré près d'eux, on les menacerait de les faire cabanner très loin de la Nation, comme gens indignes d'habiter avec les autres; et on le leur répéterait si souvent, que s'ils se sont battus, ils n'ont garde de recommencer. J'ai déjà dit que je les avais étudiés assez long-temps; mais je n'ai jamais appris qu'il y ait eu de ces disputes ou batteries entre les jeunes gens ou les hommes (XI, 314).

In light of the above, it comes as no surprise that Indians need little policing. As the author notes, "Ils n'ont chez eux aucune Police que la raison, parce qu'en suivant exactement la loi de Nature, ils n'ont aucun débat, et ainsi n'ont point besoin de juges" (II, 314).

Le Page's repeated allusions to Indians' "natural" adherence to reason are perhaps the highest compliments that an eighteenth-century French writer could extend to anyone. Such references further indicate Le Page's esteem for red peoples.

Le Page attributes what he sees as a lack of aggressive behavior within tribes to a virtual absence of corporal punishment in Indian upbringing.

On a grande attention de ne les point battre dans leur enfance, de peur qu'un mauvais coup ne les blesse. Je laisse au Lecteur à décider lequel vaut mieux d'inspirer des sentiments aux enfants par la crainte quelle qu'elle soit, ou de les frapper pour leur donner une éducation qui s'évanouit, dès qu'ils sont hors d'atteinte aux coups qu'ils étaient obligés de recevoir pour apprendre à bien penser (II, 319).

Obviously, Le Page hopes that European academicians and others involved in the formation of children will read his observations and think twice before using the rod to encourage learning and good behavior.

Finally, Le Page sums up the major factors in the harmonizing of Indian society as follows: "Je me persuade aisément que cette éducation jointe à la douceur de leur caractère et à celle du climat, les rend aussi sociables que nous les voyons entr'eux et avec ceux qui
sçavent les connoître” (II, 317). By nature and by nurture, Le Page believes, Indians are peaceable and sociable among their own tribes. In presenting reds as such, Le Page not only attempts to improve Continental opinions of American aborigines, he also intends to shame Europeans for being, at times, less “civilized” to each other than so-called “savages” are to their fellows. A century later, Louisiana writers such as Adrien Rouquette will still feel the need to redeem Native Americans from the opinions of both European and American audiences.

Moving from describing Native American forms of government to entertainment and communication, Le Page continues to depict reds in a positive light. He treats their oral tradition (“l'ancienne parolle”) with as much respect as he directs toward their management of society. Le Page acknowledges that he was introduced to Natchez oral history and teaching by someone who was of such intelligence, learning, reason, spirit, and amiability that he could be considered the equal of European savants and worthy of their close friendship. This person is “le Chef des Gardiens du Temple,” and through him Le Page achieves the confidence of other Natchez notables.

As his familiarity with Natchez oral discourse deepens, Le Page realizes that upper- and lower-class Natchez Indians have separate languages and that even men and women of the same class speak differently.

Les femmes parlent la même Langue que les hommes; mais elles sont mignardes dans leur maniere de prononcer, au lieu que les hommes ont la parole plus sérieuse et plus grave; et cette prononciation différente est si sensible, que les hommes, et même les femmes, se moquent de ceux qui parlent comme elles; défaut que les Français ne contractent que par la fréquentation plus grande des femmes que des hommes (II, 324-325).

Considering the times, it is not surprising that Le Page refers to
Natchez speech in a sexist fashion, but it is a sexism that he shares with Natchez Indians of both sexes. Female speech is dismissed as being less serious than male discourse (and, hence, inferior), and Frenchmen are ridiculed by the author as well as by the Natchez for talking like the women whose company they frequent.

In keeping with his respect for their language and oral legacy, Le Page admires Natchez drama -- the re-enactments of Natchez lore that take place during politico-religious festivals. He asserts, as enthusiastically as one who has become hooked on the European stage, that “tout ce Spectacle est très amusant; . . . j’ai voulu voir ces Fêtes de mes propres yeux, et je les ai vues plus d’une fois” (II, 359).

Le Page notes of one performance in particular,

En un mot l’allégresse générale est si vive et si naturelle qu’elle offre un spectacle intéressant, et j’avoue sincèrement que j’ai pris autant de plaisir à cette guerre feinte qu’à aucune Pièce comique que j’aie jamais vue représenter sur le Théâtre (II, 358).

With regard to the behavior of festival participants, Le Page states,

Au reste je dois dire que dans cette Fête il n’arrive jamais ni désordre, ni querelle, non-seulement à cause de la présence du Grand Soleil, et de la bonne habitude où ils sont de vivre en paix; mais encore parce que l’on n’y mange que le bled sacré et que l’on n’y boit que de l’eau (II, 378).

Le Page then recounts at length the various festivals as well as the specific ceremonies and sports activities associated with each.

Le Page ventures into more detail concerning Natchez religion than do either Pénicaud or Dumont. In sum, he views the Natchez as venerating a supreme spirit that is all good and all powerful over a multitude of other spirits. The Natchez story of humankind’s creation is strikingly similar to the Judeo-Christian version. Le Page reports that he does not fail to instruct his Natchez informants on “la vérité que la Religion nous enseigne” (II, 330), and that the Indian audience listens to the Roman catechism with respectful attention. His
proselytizing notwithstanding, Le Page reveals an acute interest in Natchez spirituality and thought through his questions about such things as the temple, its eternal fire, the various festivals, and many other aspects of Natchez religion. Because of his interest, the guardians of Natchez oral tradition offer Le Page more information on their history and world view than they have given any other white man. Hence, Le Page’s record of their accounts, along with Pénicaud’s, have contributed more than any other sources to an understanding of a people now extinct. Since the information gleaned by Le Page has been used by so many subsequent writers and scholars that it is readily available to researchers, there is no need to relate all of it here.

After he has discussed the eternal temple fire, which the Natchez hold sacred in part because it derives from the sun, Le Page gives a full account of his using a magnifying glass to show the Indians how to make fire from the sun whenever they wish. Although he admits nearly succumbing more than once to the comedy inherent in the Indians’ awe, Le Page does not mock “leurs superstitions touchant le Feu éternel” (II, 343) so as to humor the French. Rather, he asserts,

Ces Naturels sont pleins de bon sens, mais que l’on se mette à leur place pour un moment: si nous eussions eu aussi peu d’éducation que ces Peuples, et que nous n’eussions jamais rien vu d’extraordinaire dans aucun genre, ou qui approchât de ce dont nous parlons, nous serions certainement aussi surpris qu’ils le sont la première fois qu’ils voient des choses réellement très-surprenantes, et que de lui-même l’esprit humain n’imagine point, et qu’il ne conçoit point le plus souvent, lors-même qu’il en reconnaît l’existence (II, 345).

As always, Le Page is quicker to sympathize rather than to mock or condemn the Indian, here defending indigenous “good sense” over lack of European-style education.

Le Page’s treatment of the Grand Soleil’s reaction to the magnifying glass is especially touching. Beautifully recreating the Great
Sun's response and its effect on Le Page, the author presents the exchange as follows.

A peine fus-je rentré dans ma maison, que le Grand Soleil me joignit, me dit d'entrer dans ma chambre; j'y entrai, il me suivit. Dès que nous nous fûmes assis pour nous reposer, il me prit la main, et me la serra en me disant: "N'es tu pas mon vrai ami?" Je lui répondis d'un ton ferme: "Oui je le suis: Je suis plus ton ami, poursuivit-il, que de tous les autres Français, quoique je les aime tous: voici pourquoi, c'est que beaucoup de François portent tout leur esprit sur la langue, au lieu que tu portes le tien dans toute ta tête et ton corps; ouvres donc tes oreilles pour entendre la parole de ton ami, ouvres aussi ton coeur pour recevoir le mien; je parle, écoute. Je suis un vrai homme; je connais les hommes par leur esprit et par leur coeur; la plupart des hommes ordinaires ont envie de tout ce qui brille à leurs yeux, sans regarder si la chose qu'ils désirent a une certaine valeur. Pour moi je pense tout autrement; quand je vois quelque chose qui a de l'éclat, je la laisse aux curieux; mais quand je vois des choses utiles, je les désire (II, 347-348).

The chief proposes a price for the magnifying glass, and Le Page accepts it. Evident in the deliberations over the purchase is the fact that both the Grand Soleil and Le Page like to distinguish themselves from the majority of red and white men. The two, after all, seek after what is most profound and important. They, likewise, recognize and appreciate this quality in each other. While the chief maintains that he loves all the French, he confesses that he loves Le Page more because the latter is more sensible and sincere than others.

In Volume II's Chapter 26, Le Page takes up the sexual mores and other exigencies of male-female relations in Natchez life. Instead of finding unmarried girls to be the pampered bimbos that Pénicaout encountered, Le Page notices instead the subservience of Natchez women to Natchez men. In place of recounting the lurid sex dances that produce shock effects in Pénicaut's narrative, Le Page notes only briefly that Natchez youth enjoy much liberty until the time of their marriage. Concerning their espousals, he says, "Par un accord admirable

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et bien digne d’être imité, on ne marie que ceux qui s’aiment, et ceux qui s’aiment ne sont mariés que lorsqu’ils conviennent à leurs parens” (II, 389). Continuing his description of courtship and marriage, Le Page grants much more dignity to Indian wedding ceremonies than does Pénicaud. Furthermore, as in his explanations of other socio-religious practices, Le Page reveals himself to be deeply aware of the meanings behind the various symbols and rituals that reds employ.

Because of his respect for Native-American customs and his sensitivity to red persons’ feelings, Le Page had been given greater access to private ceremonies than have other Frenchmen. While the Natchez appreciate the fact that Le Page relates seriously to them, the author conveys their estimation of most Europeans as follows.

Il est vrai qu’ils se cachent ordinairement des Français, parce qu’ils sont sujets à rire de la moindre chose qui leur paroit extraordinaire: d’ailleurs ces Peuples ne peuvent s’accommoder, non plus que toutes les autres Nations du Monde, des libertés que les Français prennent par-tout ailleurs que chez eux (II, 393).

Le Page shares the Natchez’s offense over French response to red customs and French liberties in red communities. The fact that the whites laugh at what they find to be strange in Native-American life only makes the Continentals appear silly in the author’s opinion, especially in light of the Indians’ consistent attentiveness to white discourse, ritual, and protocol.

The degree of the Natchez’s esteem for Le Page is made most evident in the proposal that a female Sun offers him one day. The “Visite de la Grande Soleille et de sa fille à l’Auteur” is worth quoting at length for its poignant portrayal of interracial relationships and its insight into the mentality of Natchez nobility. In addition, its humor, action, and other narrative qualities make it one of the many
anecdotes that become short stories in the *Histoire*, stories that are even set off by their own titles in the margins.

Soit qu’ils se lassassent de cette Loi [the law of royal descent occurring only through the marriage of a female Sun to a male Stinkard], ou qu’ils désirassent que leurs Soleils sortissent du Sang François, la femme Grande Soleille vint un jour me voir assez matin pour que je fusse encore au lit; elle étoit accompagnée de sa fille unique âgé de quatorze à quinze ans, jolie et bien faite. J’avois l’usage de ne laisser entrer personne dans ma chambre tandis que j’étois couché; mais mon Esclave me dit que la Grande Soleille vouloit me parler, et me dit point que sa fille étoit avec elle. Cette femme étoit âgée; je dis qu’on la fit entrer.

Elle entre avec sa fille; ce qui m’étonna, ferme la porte, me tend la main que je lui serre ainsi qu’à sa fille, et leur dis de prendre des sièges et de s’asseoir; la mere mit sa chaise devant mon lit, ensorte qu’elle étoit vis-à-vis [sic.] de moi et touchoit à mon lit; sa fille qui d’abord s’étoit placée derrière elle, quitta sa chaise et s’assit sur le pied de mon lit d’où elle me regardoit sans cesse. Lorsqu’elles furent ainsi à leur repos la mere me tint ce discours.

"Nous savons tous, et je sais en mon particulier que tu es un vrai homme, que tu ne mens point, et que tu ne jettes point tes paroles en l’air, tu parles comme nous, tu es comme notre frere et comme le frere de tous les Soleils, et nous voudrions que tu le fusses véritablement. J’ai bien des choses à te dire; c’est pourquoi ouvres tes oreilles et ton coeur, pour entendre et recevoir mes paroles; car je t’ouvre le mien; mais fermes bien ta bouche, et ne l’ouvre jamais pour jeter au vent ce que je vais te dire, n’en parles même jamais à mes frères que lorsqu’ils t’en parleront; nous n’avons tous trois de même que cette fille qu’un coeur et une parole.

Je suis trop vieille pour avoir des enfants qui puissent parler après mes frères (leur succéder); et il seroit beaucoup de valeur si notre famille venoit à être pour toujours dans la terre (éteinte). Il n’y a plus que deux jeunes Soleils qui puissent parler après mes frères; car le troisième n’a qu’une jambe, et il faut être sans tache pour parler et être obéi des hommes Guerriers, et de toute la Nation des Natchez". En cet endroit elle s’arrêta un instant, puis elle dit: "Parlerai-je? Elle fit encore une pose et reprit ainsi: "Mais serai-je écoutée"? Elle fut à cette fois assez long-tems sans parler. Pendant tout ce temps je fis bien des réflexions sur ce que je voyois et sur ce que je venois d’entendre, et cependant je ne pouvois deviner ce que tout cela signifioit; je ne pouvois croire d’ailleurs ce que les apparences pouvoient me donner à penser. Je rompis
le silence et lui dis: "Mes oreilles sont ouvertes depuis longtemps, et je n'entends autre chose que le bruit du vent."

Elle reprit son discours et me dit: "Ma fille que tu vois là est encore jeune; mais si elle a le corps d'une femme, elle a l'esprit d'un homme; c'est pour cela que je n'ai point craint de l'amener avec moi, et de lui laisser entendre la parole que je viens t'apporter, parce qu'elle sait fermer sa bouche.

Depuis près d'une Lune mes frères et moi avons parlé de toi et ils disent souvent: Depuis que le Chef à la Belle Terre sait parler notre Langue, il a chassé les brouillards épais qui couvoient la Nation et qui nous empêchoient de voir clair; il nous a donné de l'esprit, et nous a fait connaître que nos usages détruisent notre Nation; que leurs Costumes étoient bien plus sages; que les Soleils et les Nobles s'alloient ensemble, et que les enfans par ces alliances de Nobles à Nobles ne pouvoient qu'être Nobles; qu'il y avoit de l'humanité à vouloir que la femme suivit le mari ou que le mari suivit la femme que le grand Esprit qui avait fait tous les hommes les aimoit tous, et trouvoit mauvais que les femmes fussent mourir leurs semblables, et que c'étoit une erreur de prétendre que cette femme en mourant avec son mari fût encore sa femme dans le pays des Esprits, de même que de croire que dans ce pays-là on a le gibier et tous les vivres à souhait et sans peine, puisque les Esprits n'ont point besoin de manger; qu'à l'égard des femmes l'erreur n'étoit pas moins grande, puisque les Esprits n'étoient plus ni hommes ni femmes, et ne pouvoient plus habiter ensemble et n'étoient plus de Nation distinguée; que s'il y avoit des hommes et des femmes, ce seroit pour habiter ensemble et peupler; que les Esprits étant immortels et toujours dans un état de jeunesse, leur nombre se multiplieroit à l'infini; ce qui étoit faux et contraire à la raison.

Tu as entendu ce que je t'ai dit, et c'est ce que mes frères m'ont dit; tu peux comprendre à présent combien tes paroles nous sont chères; tu vois que nous les renfermons dans notre cœur de peur que le vent ne les emporte. Nous connaissons bien à présent que nos Costumes ne valent rien; mais comment les couper (en arrêter le cours?) Il faudroit pour cela qu'un Soleil ou un Noble épousât une Soleille qui le voulût bien aussi; mais nos jeunes Soleils n'ont pas assez d'esprit pour entendre raison sur cette importante affaire, et encore moins pour faire naître cet usage parmi nous; il n'y a plus de femme Soleille pour s'y opposer que celle-ci, qui y consent volontiers, pourvu que tu devienne son mari, parce que tu aurais la protection des François, tu aurais aussi l'esprit assez ferme pour faire exécuter cette Loi."

Je coupai son discours en lui disant: "Me presns-tu pour un Puant"? parce que les femmes Soleilles n'épousent
que des hommes du Peuple; et je feignois n'avoir pas compris le sens de ce qu'elle m'avait dit.

Elle me répondit que non; qu'au contraire c’était pour parvenir à éteindre leur usage que je leur avois fait con-
noître aussi mauvais qu’il l’était en effet, et pour établir parmi eux notre usage qui était beaucoup meilleur. Elle
m'ajouta que depuis qu'elle fréquentoit les François elle
avait entendu dire la même chose, et que ses frères et elle
connaissaient que cela étoit vrai; “c’est pourquoi,
continua-t-elle, nous voudrions suivre ta parole; mais nos
Soleils n’ont pas la parole assez forte pour se faire obdier
des Nobles, qui ne manqueroient pas de s’opposer à cette
nouvelle Côtume”.

Depuis long-temps je sgavois par expérience, que rien
n’est plus à craindre qu’une femme méprisée; mais cependant
il falloit lui répondre d’une manière qu’elle n’eût plus rien
à répliquer, sans néanmoins rougir de la Religion que je
professe; il falloit de plus faire ensorte qu’elle n’al-
lût point faire la même proposition à quelque tête sans cer-
velle, qui en l’acceptant pourroient exposer le Poste Fran-
çois à quelque événement funeste. Je lui répondis donc
ainsi:

“Vous sgavez tous que nous connoissons le Grand Es-
prit, que nous le prions tous les jours chez nous, et que
tous les sept jours nous allons le prier chez le Chef Noir.
Nous avons la parole du Grand Esprit et l’étoffe parlante
(le papier) qui nous dit tout ce que le Grand Esprit veut
que nous fassions: il nous défend de prendre des femmes qui
ne prient point, parce qu’elles éleveroient nos enfans comme
elles; et si tu vois quelques François qui prennent de vos
filles, ce n’est que pour un tems, et parce qu’ils n’en ont
point de celles qui prient: d’ailleurs il ne seroit pas bon
que je prisse pour femme une Soleille et que je la quittasse
quelque tems après. Ce n’est pas que je la trouve désagréa-
ble, au contraire je la trouve jolie et elle me plairoit
beaucoup, parce qu’elle a le cœur bon et l’esprit bien
fait”.

La vieille Soleille parut contente de mes raisons, et
n’a jamais cessé de me faire confidence de ce qu’elle sgav-
oit; la fille ne dit rien, et je m’aperçus qu’elle n’était
pas satisfaite. Elles s’en furent toutes deux, et je ne
crois pas avoir vu la fille depuis ce jour. Elle fut mariée
peu de tems après, et j’appris par une de ses parentes qui
lui avoit dit qu’il n’y avoit que moi qui eusse le sel; elle
l’avoit priée de venir m’en traiter; “parce que, lui dit-
elle, je l’aime, et il est beaucoup de valeur pour moi
d’aller chez lui”.

On peut voir par ce récit qu’il ne faut que du bon
sens pour faire entendre raison à ces Naturels et pour con-
server long-temps leur amitié; on peut encore décider que les
démêlés que l’on a eus avec eux sont plutôt venus de la part
des Français que de la leur. Quand on les traite trop
After the comedy of the female Suns’ intruding upon the modest Le Page in his state of undress, the author presents a serious, touching, interracial dialogue, dominated for the most part by a red female who consistently impresses Le Page because of her nobility, good sense, and self-assertedness. Among other things, the Female Sun’s monologue reveals that the Natchez have listened longer and harder to Le Page’s catechizing than to anyone else’s, precisely because Le Page has become like them. The proud Indians have actually begun to reconsider their long-held views (especially those concerning funerary killings and the afterlife) simply because of Le Page’s teachings. Such flexibility testifies as much to the author’s skill at proselytizing as to the Indians’ willingness to learn from outsiders who show their appreciation of Native-American culture by blending into it. In order to enlighten her tribe further, the Femme Soleille wants Le Page to marry her daughter. Through this union, not only might the author’s enlightened views become new Natchez law, but also the Franco-Natchez alliance would be strengthened. Le Page tactfully declines the offer.

The author ends the episode by affirming that Indians will respond to Frenchmen in the same fashion that the latter address the former, and he makes it clear that the French have been more guilty than the Indians for problems arising between reds and whites.

In order to continue proving how varied and distinct from each other American aboriginal groups are, Le Page ends Volume II by focusing on similarities and differences between tribes, pointing out the unfavorable as well as the favorable aspects of red life. He spends the greater part of the last chapters highlighting how Native
Americans make both war and peace among themselves in a cyclic pattern of fighting and befriending that is started and finished in ritualistic fashion and that is as easily resolved as it is instigated. Le Page does not fail to describe in detail the same types of wartime torturing that Pénicaud deplores at length. Le Page sums up the practices by noting, "En effet il faut convenir que si les Naturels sont bons amis pendant la Paix, ils sont en Guerre ennemis irréconciliables" (II, 431).

Le Page's in-depth examination of Native America, especially Natchez, progresses to Volume III. In Chapter 1 Le Page presents more peacetime occupations and delves further into Indian mannerisms and mentality. He continues to uphold Indian dignity and to correct European misconceptions concerning reds. Again Le Page seems particularly impressed with the way Native Americans communicate, and he speaks admiringly of their practice of talking only one at a time. When the author asks his Natchez neighbors why they laugh when they observe the French speaking all at once, the Indians reply, "Quand plusieurs Français sont ensemble, ils parlent tous à la fois comme une volée d'oves" (III, 8). Indeed, Le Page intends the Indian point of view to force Europeans into a reconsideration of white ways. When it comes to relating culinary habits, Le Page continues to champion red practice over white.

Ils ne mangent jamais de chair crue, comme tant de personne se sont faussement imaginé; nous avons même en Europe des Royaumes entiers qui ne donnent point à leurs viandes le temps de cuire, autant que les Naturels de la Louisiane en laissent aux morceaux les plus délicats du Boeuf qui est leur principale nourriture (III, 11-12).

Even though he persists in redeeming Native Americans before a Continental audience, Le Page does not forfeit criticism of Indians that he deems necessary.
In Volume III's Chapter 2, Le Page returns to Indian temples and temple practices, many of the latter involving the dead. In his descriptions of sacred places, the author marvels at how the Natchez were able to build their temple without modern technology. When touching upon the Indians' religious respect for the dead, Le Page notes, "De tous les Peuples . . . dont j'ai parlé jusqu'à présent, il n'y en a aucun qui n'ait beaucoup d'attention religieuse pour les Morts" (III, 20-21). Le Page then proceeds to recount the burial practices of Louisiana Indians.

The concerns that some Indians have over detrimental aspects of their culture and the value that red individuals place on Le Page as a mediator for positive change are reflected in Volume III's Chapter 3. In the spring of 1725 the "Chef des Gardiens du Temple" expresses his worry that the imminent death of Serpent Piqué (a Sun) would probably entail the death of the "Grand Soleil," who is vowing to commit suicide so as to honor and accompany his brother to the next life. The deaths of these two brother Suns, especially that of the Great Sun, would incur countless ritualized killings that could decimate the Natchez population. The chief temple guardian hopes that Le Page can intervene for the sake of the Natchez nation. What ensues is another suspenseful Indian story.

After Serpent Piqué dies, Natchez turns into a macabre place of mournful howling and anticipated slaughter. The extinguishing of fires indicates that the Grand Soleil is considering joining his brother through suicide. Le Page does his best to dissuade the Great Sun while the French become increasingly saddened and worried as various Indians whom they like prepare to be sacrificed. The address of Serpent Piqué's favorite wife to the French is especially poignant. The woman doomed to die states,
Chefs et Nobles François, je vois que vous regrettez beaucoup mon mari; il est vrai que sa mort est bien de valeur (bien fâcheuse) tant pour les François que pour notre Nation, parce qu’il portait les uns et les autres dans son cœur; ses oreilles étaient toujours pleines des paroles des Chefs François. Il a toujours marché par le même chemin que les François, et il les aimait plus que lui-même; mais que faire? Il est au pays des Esprits, et dans deux jours j’irai le joindre, et lui dirai que j’ai vu vos coeurs se resserrer à la vue de son corps mort. Ne vous chagriniez pas, nous serons plus long temps amis au pays des Esprits qu’en celui-ci, parce que l’on n’y meurt plus; il y fait toujours beau, on n’y a jamais faim, parce que rien n’y manque pour vivre mieux qu’en ce pays-ci; les hommes ne s’y font point la guerre, parce qu’ils ne sont plus qu’une même Nation. Je m’en vais et laisse mes enfants sans père ni mère. Quand vous les verrez, François, souvenez-vous que vous avez aimé le père et que vous ne devez pas rebuter les enfants de celui qui a toujours été le véritable ami des Français (III, 37-38).

The fated woman’s remarks reveal a touching reciprocal affection between the Natchez and the French, a fondness that gains pathos in light of the later Natchez massacre of the French in 1729. That two peoples who once loved each other could one day wish only to destroy each other is a genuine tragedy that Le Page makes into a central motif of his history. For the present, the author shows a red mother entrusting her children to the care of whites and promising portentously that Natchez and French will be friends longer in the next life than in the present one.

As the Natchez and the French worry about what the Grand Soleil will do with his life, Le Page remains the only person, red or white, who can reason with the head chief. As the Great Sun’s wife tells the author,

Si tu sors, mon mari est mort et tous les Natchez mourront; restes donc, car il n’ouvre les oreilles qu’à ta parole qui a la pointe et le force des flèches: d’ailleurs qui eût osé faire ce que tu as fait? Mais tu es son vrai ami et celui de son frère; tu ne ris pas en parlant, comme font beaucoup de Français. As-tu vu comme toutes les oreilles et tous les yeux étaient ouverts quand tu parlois? tes paroles ont été ramassées tous (III, 41).
Le Page does not recreate the exchange quoted above solely to flaunt Natchez esteem for the author. Rather, the lady Sun's appreciating the fact that Le Page does not "laugh while talking, like many Frenchmen do" serves as another illustration of how Frenchmen offend Indians through a lack of sensitivity and reiterates Le Page's contention that red people respond favorably to those who treat them with respect.

Le Page continues to oppose the Grand Soleil's contemplated suicide. Finally, when the author threatens to end their friendship if the chief does not relight the village fires and change his plans, the Indian leader relents. The Great Sun tells his white friend,

Puisque tous les Chefs et Nobles Français aiment ma vie, c'en est fait, je ne me tuerai point; que l'on rallume les feux sur le champ, et j'attendrai que la mort me rejoigne à mon frère; aussi-bien je suis vieux, et jusqu'à ce temps je marcherai avec les Français; sans eux je serois parti avec mon frère, et les chemins auraient été couverts de corps morts (III, 42).

Thus ends Chapter 3, with Le Page rising to the status of his own idols — that is, becoming one of the few white men who have won such respect and affection from Native Americans that they can intervene as effectively in the internal affairs of Indians as can reds themselves.

Chapter 4 keeps the suspenseful funereal story going. Although the Great Sun foregoes suicide, thereby sparing many lives, preparations soon begin for killing those who will accompany Serpent Pigé to the spirit world. As a form of comic relief in this increasingly morbid section, Le Page offers the story of Ette-actal, a young Indian who humorously wheedles his way out of death. Since Bossu also offers an Ette-actal story, this episode will be examined in more detail in the Bossu section of this study.

After presenting Ette-actal's self-preserving antics, Le Page transcribes the "Discours de la femme favorite à ses enfans et aux Français." In her farewell speech, Serpent Pigé's favorite widow has
the following to tell her children concerning the French:

Ne parlez point mal des Frangçois, marchez avec eux, marchez-y comme votre père et moi y avons marché sans dessein; parlez d'eux comme lui et moi en avons parlé; ne faites rien de contraire à l'amitié des Frangçois, ne leur mentez jamais; ils vous donneront à manger et les autres choses dont vous aurez besoin, et s'ils ne vous donnent rien, revendez sans murmurer. Ils étoient amis de votre père, ainsi aimez-les tous, et ne vous rebutez point de les voir, quand même ils ne vous recevront pas bien (III, 51).

The favorite wife then turns to the French: "Et vous, Chefs Frangçois, ... soyez toujours amis des Natchez, traitez avec eux, ne soyez point avarés de vos marchandises, et ne rebutez pas ce qu'ils vous portent, mais traitez-les avec douceur" (III, 51). The doomed woman orders that future Franco-Natchez relations be predicated upon the French dealing fairly with the Indians and the Indians not retaliating against the French. Ironically, the woman marked for death indicates the specific areas in which the two peoples will fail most drastically and will thereby bring about each other's destruction. Thus, unknownst to herself or to her listeners, the dying woman, in admonishing her hearers, inadvertently prophesies her nation's end.

The pathos of Serpent Piqué's wife's speech heightens when one of the Frenchmen is so moved by the discourse that he starts to cry. The woman tells him,

Ne pleurez point, je sçai que mon mari et moi étions fort amis des Frangçois, parce que nous vous aimions aussi beaucoup, quoique je n'aye jamais mangé avec eux, parce que je suis femme; mais j'y peux manger aujourd'hui que je vais au Pays des Esprits. Que l'on nous apporte donc à manger, afin que je mange avec les Chefs Frangçois (III, 52).

The fact that Le Page chose to include the widow's parting words as a means of highlighting the deep affection and respect of many Natchez for the French before the massacre is made even more clear when the author explains his decision to relate the woman's speech.

J'ai rapporté les discours et les démarches de cette Favorite qui ne pouvait être que du Peuple, étant femme d'un
Soleil, pour montrer l'adresse avec laquelle elle ménageoit pour ses enfants l'amitié des Français, combien cette Nation a d'esprit, et qu'elle n'est rien moins que ce que l'on entend d'ordinaire par le nom de Sauvage, que la plupart du monde lui donne mal à propos (III, 52).

Thus, even while relating a Natchez practice that he dislikes, the killing of countless people to accompany a Sun to the other world, Le Page still focuses on the dignity of red individuals, on their devotion to both European and Native-American friends, and on their desire for peace and harmony. When Le Page finally recounts the ritual killings and burials, he does not afford the gruesome details found in Pénicaud's account.

Speculating on the origins of Native-American peoples, Le Page continues to uphold their dignity, this time by tying them to ancient, Old-World civilizations, a connection made by many New-World writers not bent on degrading indigenous peoples. In Volume III's Chapter 5, he focuses on the origins of the Natchez, offering in addition to his own views the opinions of the Grand Soleil, the guardian of the temple, and "Diodore de Sicile" concerning this group's beginnings. Le Page personally believes that "cette Nation descend des plus anciens Peuples de notre Continent, mais surtout des Phéniciens" (III, 80). As for the great peoples of Central America, however, the author confirms, "Je suis donc raisonnablement fondé à croire que les Mexiquains étoient sortis de la Chine ou du Japon" (III, 83). When Le Page touches on the origins of "less civilized" tribes, he still maintains their worth by comparing them to classical cultures. In Chapter 6, before he relates the travels of the Yazoo savant Moncacht-apé, Le Page says of this red wise man,

Je ne puis mieux le comparer qu'aux premiers Grecs qui voyageoient principalement dans l'Orient, pour examiner les moeurs et les costumes des diverses Nations, et revenir ensuite communiquer à leurs Concitoyens les connoissances qu'ils avoient acquises (III, 88).

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With fitting attention to the Yazoo wise man’s findings, Le Page presents the highpoints of Moncacht-apé’s travels across eastern North America, travels which spring as much from a desire to see the continent as to learn of its different inhabitants’ origins.

In Chapter 7, Le Page proceeds to Moncacht-apé’s account of his travels west and northwest of Louisiana, voyages precipitated by Moncacht-apé’s having heard that the northern Indians originated in lands beyond the source of the Missouri River. As Moncacht-apé ventures from nation to nation across the plains, he comments on the similarities and differences existing between the groups. The commonalities impress him most, and he glories in the finer qualities that Indians share. For the most part, Moncacht-apé is well received wherever he goes, and he proudly relates the friendships that he forms. At one point he fondly reports,

\[ J'étais toujours avec les Vieillards qui aiment à instruire la jeunesse, comme les jeunes gens aiment à être instruits et s’entretiennent beaucoup entr’eux: c'est ce que j'ai remarqué généralement dans toutes les Nations que j'ai vues (III, 110). \]

Moncacht-apé’s rambling tale of red bonding does much to negate unfavorable opinions occasioned by white reports of red-on-red cruelties, many of which figure importantly even in Le Page’s work. The siblinghood of all Native Americans, as presented by Moncacht-apé, brings the reader closer to a consideration of Indians as “Naturels,” Le Page’s untiring term for Native Americans.

When he reaches the Indians of the extreme Northwest, Moncacht-apé relates how they are raided by people from “où le Soleil se couche” (III, 117). Le Page believes these people to be Japanese. The northwestern Indians understand Moncacht-apé’s curiosity and desire to see these people for himself, even though the local reds flee in terror from the Asians whenever the latter land. Moncacht-apé notes of the
Northwestern Indians' appreciation of his intellectual interest in all races,

Ma bonne volonté fit grand plaisir à ces Peuples, qui pensaient avec raison qu'un homme qui avait vu des Blancs et plusieurs Nations, devait avoir plus d'esprit que des gens qui n'étoient jamais sortis de chez eux, et n'avoient vu que des hommes rouges (III, 118-119).

While Moncacht-apé's red brothers and sisters value both their individual tribes and the things that all tribes have in common, they concede that exposure to the non-Indian world can be beneficial. Thus, Indians as Le Page and Moncacht-apé present them are not xenophobic. Their reactions to outsiders, as seen in their contacts with French, Spanish, English and supposed Japanese depend on the outsiders' reactions to them.

In Chapter 8, Moncacht-apé continues his tale of the northwest. He and his new red allies ambush the "Japanese" on their next raid, causing the Asians to flee across the ocean. The Indians examine the short, stout, white men that they have killed as well as their exotic clothing and possessions. Soon after, Moncacht-apé proceeds ever northward to find the western land from which he and other Native Americans believe all red men came. The last tribe that he encounters discourages him from venturing farther, as the land he would travel is cold, harsh, and lacking in game. Moncacht-apé returns to Lower Louisiana and fascinates both Indian and French with his stories. When he leaves Le Page after relating his adventures (which Le Page carefully records) the white author notes,

Il m'assura qu'il me quittoit à regret; je lui en dis autant et je le pensois de même; car j'estimois cet homme, et j'avois pour lui une véritable amitié: il partit pour son Village et je ne l'ai point vu depuis (III, 131).

If Moncacht-apé's story is primarily one of an Indian exploring what it means to be Indian, it is also a story of interracial bonding.
occurring as one man shares his journey into the human experience with everyone he encounters.

Through the long, first-person narrations of many Indians such as Moncacht-apé, Le Page allows the reader to experience Indian thought and daily life on a level that few other white writers afford. Le Page obviously intends for his audience, by entering into Indian mentality and behavior through reading the Histoire, to come to understand and sympathize with Native-American needs and aspirations. In learning of red desires, fears, love for each other, religious beliefs, and code of conduct, whites might be more inclined to respect the unique indigenous traditions of the Western Hemisphere. At the same time, Le Page clearly hopes, Europeans will marvel at how much aboriginal Americans share with all of humanity -- Old World, New World, classical and contemporary.

In Volume III's Chapter 9, Le Page moves from a questing Indian's adventures across North America to an important white man's exploits on the Great Plains. In elaborating upon the deeds of Véniard de Bourgmont, Le Page lifts another Indianized Frenchman to heroic status for embodying, like Saint Denis, the colonial mythology involving Franco-Indian relations. In the summer of 1724, De Bourgmont endeavors to establish peace between the "Padoucas" and the various Plains Indians allied to the French. The intertribal warring has been hindering French trade in the Missouri region, but, in addition to seeking to promote his country's commercial interests by mediating for peace, De Bourgmont also hopes that the tribes will get along with each other solely for their own good. Instead of planning to exterminate the pesky tribe, De Bourgmont calls all of the Indian allies together for peace talks with the Padoucas.
The Indian allies' esteem for De Bourgmont is immediately apparent in a chief's address to the Frenchman.

Mon père, il y a long-temps que nos yeux sont ouverts pour te voir; le moindre bruit remuoi notre coeur, croyant que tu arriverois; mais te voilà enfin, notre coeur en rit de joye, car tu nous apportes de beaux jours. Nos femmes pillent et préparent les vivres pour notre voyage, tu viens essuyer leurs larmes, elles vont danser à ton arrivée, et nos enfants vont sauter comme des Chevaux. C'est la parole de toute notre Nation que nous t'apportons, ouvres tes oreilles pour la recevoir, et la renferme dans ton cœur; nous sommes ici sept Chefs qui te l'apportons au nom de toute la Nation. Elle nous obéit, et t'assure par notre bouche que nous Guerriers et nos jeunes gens veulent aller avec toi aux Pâ­doucas, manger et danser avec ceux qui étoient nos ennemis; car nous t'assurons pour toute notre Nation que nous n'aurons jamais d'autre volonté que la tienne; ainsi tu peux nous commander comme à tes Guerriers: nous ne laisserons chez nous que les Vieillards, nos femmes et nos enfants; car nous t'avons vu il y a un Été et un Hyver; tu nous laissas ta parole, elle est encore dans notre cœur, parce que tu nous as toujours dit vrai. Depuis tu as passé la grande Eau pour aller à ton ancien Village dans ton ancienne Terre; tu nous avois promis de revenir, tu nous as tenu parole, comme doit faire un vrai homme tel que tu es; parles, et tu seras obéi dans le moment (III, 144-146).

Highlighting Indian affection and respect for De Bourgmont, expressed in the chief's flattering words as well as in the reds' willingness to end grievances with fellow reds because of De Bourgmont's wishes, is one of the first steps Le Page takes in lifting the Frenchman to heroic stature.

De Bourgmont's response to the assembled Indians can be summed up in his expressed hope that "toutes les Nations n'ayent qu'un coeur." De Bourgmont continues, "Je vous recommande de vivre ensemble comme frères; car si votre coeur les rebute, le mien vous rebuttera à jamais; et les Françoises seront ennemis de ceux qui les premiers rompront les chemins" (III, 152). De Bourgmont wants peace primarily for the Indians' sake. Of course, such a positive policy only bolsters French interests, but it must not be overlooked that a negative policy of
decimation could benefit the whites just as well. If the Plains Indians refuse to live together harmoniously, De Bourgmont will resort to forceful means of establishing that peace. The Indian reaction to De Bourgmont’s admonition is overwhelmingly favorable. They

applaudirent à cette harangue par des houhou alongés et répétés à pleine voix: ils dirent à M. de Bourgmont que leurs coeurs étaient remplis de la Parole, qu’ils ne la perdroient jamais, parce qu’ils la mettroient avec leur ancienne Parole, qu’ils la donneroient à toute la Nation, pour qu’elle l’enfermât dans son coeur; qu’ils en feroient de même aux jeunes gens et aux enfants, si-tôt qu’ils auroient les oreilles ouvertes (III, 153-154).

The effect of De Bourgmont’s words and example on his Indian allies is similar to that of Le Page’s own speech and deeds on the Natchez. Despite such veneration of De Bourgmont’s desires, the Indians and the French run into trading disagreements. They resolve their differences, however, and the red and white forces eventually proceed to make peace with the Padoucas.

The Indians’ fondness and respect for De Bourgmont run so deep that they wish to incorporate him into their people through marriage, an additional aspect of De Bourgmont’s story that has parallels in Le Page’s. Unlike another historical figure, Pénicaut’s Iberville, who, to keep his men free of illicit unions with Indian women, explains to a Native-American procurer that reds and whites are not meant to mix sexually, De Bourgmont does not use racial distinctions to get himself out of a bind. Le Page relates De Bourgmont’s predicament and his skillful exit as follows.

Les Canzés de leur côté, pour prouver à M. de Bourgmont combien ils l’aimoient, lui présentèrent en grande cérémonie la fille de leur Grand Chef, qui n’était âgée que de treize à quatorze ans au plus, et lui dirent qu’ils la lui amenoient pour qu’il se mariât avec elle, afin qu’il fût leur gendre et qu’il protégât leur Nation. Ce Commandant leur répondit qu’il l’accepteroit volontiers s’il n’était point marié; mais qu’il n’était point permis aux François d’avoir deux

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femmes. Ils lui répliquèrent qu'il le pouvait, puisqu'il'était le Chef; il leur dit de nouveau qu'il ne le pouvait et qu'il devait donner l'exemple au Français. Les Canzés voyant qu'il n'y avait rien à espérer de son côté, la lui présenterent pour son fils, afin, disaient ils: "que l'ayant épousé il soit notre véritable Père et nous te prions de ne la pas rebuter." Le Commandant répondit que son fils était encore trop jeune pour le marier, puisqu'il n'avait encore que dix ans; que quand il serait grand, s'il vouloit la prendre pour sa femme, il y consentiroit volontiers. Le Grand Chef parut content et ajouta qu'il la garderait quelques années pour attendre sa volonté. M. de Bourgmont se débarrassa ainsi d'eux par cette défaite (III, 159-160).

In speaking for monogamy and marriage of choice, De Bourgmont becomes a moral mouthpiece. With regard to sexual conduct among Native Americans, Le Page's De Bourgmont differs from the historical De Bourgmont as presented by Giraud. Giraud points out that De Bourgmont was one of the coureurs de bois whom missionaries succeeded at one point in having the government arrest on grounds of treasonous activities among Upper-Louisiana Indians. In actuality, however, the only questionable behavior that occurred might have involved the manifestation of "loose morals" in red company (I, 347-348; V, 448). After having been cleared of charges, De Bourgmont proved his fidelity to France and his desire for peace among Native Americans by his efforts at colonization and mediation in the Missouri country (V, 445-456).

In Chapter 10, the French and Indian allies finally encounter the Padoucas. The former release Padouca slaves, who praise De Bourgmont's treatment of them before their fellow tribesmen. The groups exchange gifts as further signs of good intentions. Once the former enemies are at ease with each other, De Bourgmont delivers another speech. At one point, he declares that

la volonté de notre Souverain est que vous viviez tous en paix comme des frères, si vous voulez qu'il vous aime et qu'il vous protège. Cessez donc de répandre le sang des hommes: contentez-vous de répandre celui des animaux pour en manger la viande ensemble; dormez à présent en repos: je viens essuyer vos larmes, chasser la crainte loin de vous.

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et vous mettre tous en paix; goûtez-en les douceurs si long-temps, que vos arrière-petits-fils ne sachent pas même ce que signifie le nom de Guerre (III, 177-178).

Clearly, Le Page’s De Bourgmont wants peace primarily for the Indians’ benefit. The address given above confirms the fact that the continuance of trade among Plains Indians takes second place to Indian welfare as a reason for mediating between tribes. While it is true that peace among the Indians might make things easier for the French who are attempting to rule over them, it must not be forgotten that the conciliatory policy of Le Page’s France contrasts with the approach of other European powers, who often encouraged intertribal warfare so as to decimate aboriginal populations, thereby making the indigenous nations less of a threat and keeping Native-American groups from banding together against the intended white overlords. That Le Page’s De Bourgmont, acting for his sovereign, does not choose the policy of conflict indicates feelings in keeping with the Indian strategies proposed by Louisiana’s colonial writers.

The Indians again respond favorably to De Bourgmont’s continued exhortations and make peace with one another. Their stylized response, full of symbolism and imagery, is nothing short of Native-American poetry rendered into French by Le Page. Le Page’s quotation of numerous Indian speeches such as these contributes to the heteroglossic nature of his narrative and enhances the Histoire as a literary collection. Le Page devotes more chapters to his long account of peacemaking on the Plains, a reconciliation that entails many speeches, elaborate ceremonial gestures, and prodigious displays of generosity. Le Page presents it all as though reluctant to move on to the worst Franco-Indian fiasco of his time -- the Natchez Massacre of 1729.
Between lengthy detailing of peace proceedings among Plains Indians and examining the Natchez conflicts, Le Page presents insights into Padouca society. As he does in his exposés of Lower-Louisiana tribes, Le Page describes Padouca hunting, cooking, travelling, war­ring, clothing, etc. Also in keeping with his treatment of other groups, Le Page quickly points out the Padoucas’ propensity for friendship.

Ces Peuples ne sont point du tout farouches; on n’aurait pas même de peine à les familiariser, ce qui fait voir qu’il y a long-temps qu’ils pratiquent les Espagnols; car pour le peu de séjour que les François y ont fait, ils s’étaient déjà rendus très familiers. Ils auraient bien voulu que M. de Bourgmont leur eût laissé quelques François parmi eux, ajoutant qu’ils en auraient grand soin (III, 211-212).

Le Page continues later on,

Ces Peuples, quoique très peu habitués à fréquenter les Européens, n’ont rien de barbare que dans la Guerre; que même ils n’ont rien de farouche; on peut au contraire voir en eux de la grandeur, de la bonne foi et beaucoup de reconnaissance (III, 216-217).

Consistent with a point that he tirelessly tries to make concerning all Native Americans, Le Page stresses that the Padoucas act barba­rously only in war.

In Volume III’s Chapter 13, Le Page begins his probe of the Natch­ez rebellion against the French. As indicated previously, he places most of the blame for the crisis on the French commandant at Natchez, Etcheparre. Not surprisingly, he does not elaborate upon Natchez guilt. For example, in relating the actual massacre in Chapter 14, Le Page treats it briefly. When he does delve into gory details, he does not berate the Natchez for the proceedings.

Other Indian groups are also spared the author’s ire for their possible role in a Natchez conspiracy. Le Page says of the reactions of some Indian nations, who, he believes, were going to join the
Natchez in totally eliminating the French in Lower Louisiana at a later date,

Les Naturels des autres Nations, furent indignés du procédé des Natchez, croyant que ceux-ci avoient avancé le terme dont ils étoient convenus, pour se moquer d'eux, et ils se proposoient d'en tirer vengeance dès que l'occasion se présenteroit; elle ne tarda pas à s'offrir (III, 258-259).

Instead of undertaking a concerted attempt at annihilating the French in Louisiana, the southeast Indians join the French in exterminating the Natchez. Clearly, these Indians are after what they consider to be in their own best interests and do not make decisions along color lines. While they may have sided with a fellow red group against whites initially, they would just as soon forsake that group and assist the whites should it prove beneficial for their people later on.

The first to join the French in rebuffing the Natchez in the wake of the 1729 uprising are the Tunicas, the group immediately downriver from Natchez. Actually, the Tunicas have always been French allies. These Indians receive the French survivors of the massacre well and allow the French to build a fort against the Natchez in the Tunica village. The Tunica chief even ransoms French captives that Choctaws have won from the Natchez, despite the fact that the Choctaw are reluctant to hand them over. The Indian leader also succeeds in other diplomatic efforts at which the French leader Loubois fails.

While Le Page does not elaborate upon Natchez cruelties during the massacre itself, he does relate burnings and other retaliatory torturings of captives that the Natchez exact when the French do not respond to their terms for peace. At the same time, the author continues to present the Natchez side of the conflict, as when he shows the Great Sun trying to speak to one of the captured French women. In addition, Le Page points out how some of the Natchez, like the great “femme Soleille,” try to alleviate the plight of the French captives.
Deflecting Natchez villainy further, Le Page reports that when the Choctaw arrive at Natchez, supposedly to help the French, they end up robbing the ransomed French women of all that the Natchez have not already stolen. Likewise, the Choctaw make very little war against the Natchez while remaining encamped in the vicinity for an extended period of time with the white women. Le Page does not use the ambivalent behavior of red foe and presumed red friend to downgrade Indians in general because of unreliability or unpredictability. Rather, he uses the Choctaw’s disregard for the French victims’ welfare to comment on human callousness in general: “Tel est le caractere des gens sans coeur, d’avoir moins de pitié des malheureux que n’en ont les braves” (III, 285). “Gens sans coeur” are people of any color, and Le Page just as readily portrays European cruelty and treachery as he does the Native-American versions.

As though to justify France’s eventual annihilation of the Natchez, Le Page begins to make increasing references to the tribe’s cruelties as the narrative progresses. Although he does not relate the deeds of the massacre itself in any graphic way in earlier chapters, by Chapter 16 Le Page shows the post-massacre Natchez impaling children so as to anger the French into either negotiating or fighting. At the same time that he is presenting the crazed Natchez as having become worthy of extinction, Le Page portrays the Tunica chief succeeding in behalf of the French in areas in which the French themselves have failed. The juxtaposition of Indian abuse with Indian assistance is one of many similar techniques used by both Le Page and Pénicaut to keep the audience from becoming totally biased against all Native Americans when reading about the horrors undertaken by some red groups or individuals. Still, by this point in the narrative, the recounting of Indian atrocities takes its toll even on Le Page’s
objectivity. For example, he becomes so outdone at the Choctaws’ dubious aid and their desire to hold on to French captives that he calls them “ce Peuple naturellement brutal” (III, 294).

Le Page makes sure to point out that while the Natchez expect retaliation from the French, brace for it, and even entice it, they fear what the Choctaw may do to them more than what the French might undertake.

Je me persuade aisément que si les Natchez avoient juste raison de craindre les François à cause de l’action noire qu’ils avoient faite, ils craignoient encore plus les Chatkas qui les avoient menacés dès avant la Guerre déclarée; ils ne doutoient pas que les François ne les excusassent du meurtre de leurs Compatriotes, en exposant pour excuse la tyrannie du Commandant François qui y ait donné lieu; mais ils craignoient l’insolence ordinaire des Chatkas, qui les auraient pillés jusqu’à les mettre nuds (III, 297).

Because of their fears, the Natchez flee Natchez abruptly one night. Small bands of Natchez return to ambush the French, however. After the skirmishing, the French and their Tunica allies duly torture and burn Natchez captives in an all-too-familiar scenario of European and Native-American collaboration in wartime abuses.

Despite the fact that they are becoming increasingly weakened, the Natchez continue their offensive. After feigning peace with the Tunicas, for instance, the Natchez turn on the same tribe and wipe most of them out. Le Page uses the occasion to offer this epitaph for the fallen Tunica chief:

Ainsi périt ce brave et véritable ami des Français, qui fut regretté de tous les Habitans sans exception: on savait que dans toutes les occasions il ait donné des preuves non équivoques du zèle le plus marqué pour les Français (III, 302).

Undoubtedly, Le Page takes advantage of the Natchez butchering of a friendly Indian nation to pad his excuse for total French retaliation.
Le Page continues his account of Natchez difficulties in Chapter 18. Périer, newly appointed governor of Louisiana, pursues the constantly fleeing Natchez, eventually defeating this “Ennemi opiniâtre” (III, 325). He enslaves some of the survivors while others flee to the Chickasaw. It is while the “Soleille Bras-piqué” is imprisoned at the Habitation du Roi (which Le Page managed near New Orleans at the time) that the author learns from this Indian “Princesse” of her efforts to save the French beforehand from imminent massacre. Le Page dutifully records the Indian woman’s story for the sake of her memory and that of all the former Natchez friends of the French.

After he is done reporting all of the problems between the French and the Natchez, Le Page presents what he believes to be the main causes of trouble between the French and various Indian groups, basing his opinions on sixteen years of observant residence in Louisiana. He concludes that everything from wars to simple disputes with Indians “n’ont jamais eu d’autre origine que la fréquentation trop familière des François avec eux” (III, 329). Seeming, at first glance, to forget his earlier praise for Franco-Indian mixing on all levels in the little Euro-aboriginal utopias that he has noticed across Louisiana, Le Page strongly states that too much association between whites and reds of the general population is not good. He gives the reasons:

First of all, he is convinced that the familiarity produced by frequent contact with the Indians “leur fait perdre peu à peu le respect qu’ils ont naturellement pour notre Nation” (III, 329). Le Page implies that if the “Naturels” naturally have respect for Frenchmen, then the loss of that respect through increased intimacy is the fault of the French, who must be behaving improperly in the presence of red persons.
Secondly, Le Page feels that young French traders, the only Frenchmen with whom many Indian communities have contact, are not good representatives of France. The author notes how some traders

pour acquérir la bienveillance de ces Peuples, leur donnent des lumieres préjudiciables à notre intérêt: ces jeunes Marchands à la vérité n’en sentent point les conséquences; mais ces Peuples n’oublient point ce qui peut leur être de quelque utilité, et le dommage n’en est pas moins grand ni moins réel" (III, 329-330).

Again Le Page indicts the French more than the Indians for abuses of intimacy. In this case, the young capitalists lack the maturity to realize that Native Americans hold France accountable for every unrealistic offer an individual trader makes.

Thirdly, Le Page believes that French visitors to Indian villages corrupt themselves spiritually and physically by taking advantage of the Indian practice of providing guests with girls. Le Page’s objections to this practice are as much racist as they are religious and health-conscious. He asserts that “cette familiarité donne occasion aux vices, d’où s’ensuivent des maladies dangereuses et la corruption du sang, qui est naturellement très pur dans cette Colonie . . . ce qui fait grand tort à leur santé” (III, 330). While here Le Page might not condone racial mixing of every sort for all members of society, readers must not forget that he speaks favorably of Euro-Indian communities elsewhere — at Pascagoula and Kaskaskia, for instance — and that he himself entered into an intimacy with the Natchez that most Frenchmen could never imagine.

Fourthly, Le Page cites invasion of Indian privacy and a lack of security deriving from familiarity as further reasons for segregation of the general populace.

La fréquentation des Naturels les met dans la contrainte, parce qu’ils aiment la solitude; et on les gêne encore davantage si l’Etablissement Français est près de chez eux, ce qui leur procure des visites trop fréquentes, qui leur deviennent d’autant plus importunes qu’ils ne se soucient

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point du-tout que l'on voye et que l'on sçaache ce qu'ils ont ni ce qu'ils font. Et quel funeste exemple n'avons-nous pas du danger que courent les Etablissemens qui sont trop près des Naturels? Qu'on se rappelle le massacre des François, et on sera convaincu que cette proximité est extrêmement dommageable aux Français (III, 330-331).

Citing the Natchez Massacre, which occurred only after both red and white communities had been completely opened up to each other, Le Page drives home the message that intimate intermingling can be as harmful to one party as it is to the other.

Fifthly and finally, Le Page argues that trade suffers from "la fréquentation trop familière avec les Naturels." Too many French traders venturing to too many Indian villages results in too many individualized "deals" and, hence, too many hard feelings when the promises cannot be kept. In place of a proliferation of travelling traders, Le Page proposes confining all commerce to fortified trading centers, where prices would be fixed and where ingress and egress would be closely monitored. Not only would these forts both prevent French abuses of Indians through trade and protect the French from Indian attacks, Le Page's contention is that they would also hinder English infiltration of various tribes.

Simply put, Le Page does not trust his average countrymen (at least not the majority of those whom he has observed in the New World) to refrain from showing the worst side of European "civilization" to Indians, on the one hand, and from forgetting their Catholic upbringing so as to indulge in Native-American "vices" on the other. For these moral, elitist, and practical reasons, the author urges that the red and the white hoi polloi maintain some degree of segregation and reserve at the same time that they are cooperating in the colonial enterprise. As for the hybridized utopias lauded earlier, they are to be populated only by those Frenchmen who have proved themselves to be
both good Catholics and good representatives of the mother country and by those reds who have converted to Christianity and shown unswerving allegiance to France. For both red and white sectors, such criteria proscribe perhaps a majority of members from entrance into the idealized communities of colonial Louisiana's literary imagination.

The last chapter of Le Page's three-volume work on Louisiana involves Bienville's wars with the Chickasaw, which occurred after Le Page's return to France. Le Page defends his authority on the subject by relating that his interest in Louisiana kept him corresponding with colonists, through whom he came to know of the events that he recounts. For the details concerning Bienville's war with the Chickasaw and Philippe de Rigault, Marquis de Vaudreuil's problems with the Choctaw, Le Page offers the accounts of the "feu M. d'Ausseville, ancien Conseiller du Conseil Supérieur de la Louisiane, et Commissaire en cette Colonie" (III, 401).

D'Ausseville's report via Le Page begins with an implied criticism of Bienville's commencement of the Chickasaw war. Following their massacre of the French, the Natchez are, in turn, so decimated by their pursuers that they seek refuge in the Chickasaw to the north. D'Ausseville through Le Page relates,

M. de Biainville trouva mauvais que les Natchez se fussent retirés chez les Tchicachas sans que l'on eût châtié ceux ci de leur témérité; il avoit cependant appris dès sa jeunesse, que c'est un usage et même une coutume sacré chez toutes les Nations de l'Amérique Septentrionale; mais soit que cette hospitalité ne lui plût point, soit qu'il eût oublié cette Loi irrefragable parmi des Nations, il fit dire aux Tchicachas peu de temps après son arrivée, qu'ils eussent à lui livrer les Natchez (III, 402-403).

What D'Ausseville criticizes is that despite Bienville's supposed knowledge of Native-American cultures, Le Moyne insists upon a breach of an almost universal Indian mandate concerning reception of fleeing,
defeated tribes, a breach to which he knows (or should know) that the Chickasaw cannot comply.

D'Ausseville/Le Page say of the Chickasaw response to Bienville's unprecedented demand,

Les Tchicachas lui firent répondre, que les Natchez ayant demandé de se confondre avec eux, ils les avaient reçus et adoptés; de sorte qu'ils ne faisaient plus qu'une Nation sous le nom de Tchicachas; qu'ainsi il n'y avait plus de Natchez: "D'ailleurs, ajoutèrent ils, si Biainville avait retiré nos Ennemis, irions nous les lui demander? Et si nous le faisions, nous les livrerait il?" (III, 403).

In addition to explaining their position, the Chickasaw put Bienville on the spot with a tough question. Without taking the Chickasaw point of view into consideration, Bienville continues with plans for war.

The D'Ausseville-Le Page narrative proceeds to recount the long, drawn-out war. In the course of the account, D'Ausseville/Le Page offer another version of Dartaguiette d'Itouralde's capture and death, a tragedy that Dumont, for one, blames directly on Bienville.

Peu après il arriva à la nouvelle Orléans un Sergent de la Garnison des Illinois, qui rapporta que M. d'Artaguette avoit reçu par M. le Blanc les ordres de M. de Blainville, qui lui enjoignoit de se trouver au plus tard le dix de Mai aux Tchicachas avec tout ce qu'il pouvait emmener de Troupes, et que lui Général y seroit en même-temps; qu'en conséquence de ces ordres M. d'Artaguette avait si bien pris ses mesures, que le neuf de ce mois il étoit arrivé avec sa Troupe près des Tchicachas; qu'il avait envoyé des Découvreurs pour reconnoître si l'Armée Françoise arrivoit; que tous les jours jusqu'au vingt il avoit fait la même chose; qu'allois les Naturels alliés entendant toujours dire qu'on ne décou­voit point les Français, voulurent s'en retourner en leur Pays dès ce jour ou attaquer les Tchicachas que M. d'Arta­guette avoit enfin resolu d'attaquer les Ennemis le vingt un, ce qui lui avoit d'abord assez-bien réussi, ayant force les Ennemis d'abandonner leur Village et leur Fort; qu'il avoit de suite attaqué un autre Village avec le même succès; mais qu'en poursuivant les fuyards, M. d'Artaguette avoit reçu deux blessures, ce qui ayant été suè des Naturels, les avoit déterminés à se retirer et à abandonner ce Commandant, le R. P. Jésuite qui les accompagnoit, quarante-six Soldats et deux Sergens; que pendant tout le jour ce petit nombre de Soldats avoit soutenu et défendu son Commandant, qui à la fin avoit été force de se rendre avec sa Troupe; que les
Ennemis au lieu de les maltraiter, les avaient caressés et amenés à leur Village où ils les nourrissaient bien; qu’ils avaient traités et guéris les blessés dans l’espérance d’obtenir la Paix en les rendant à M. de Biainville lorsqu’il serait arrivé; qu’ayant appris que les Français étoient dans leur Pays, ils avaient engagé M. d’Artaguette à écrire au Général; mais que cette Députation ayant eu un mauvais succès, et apprenant que les Français s’étoient retirés, qu’enfin ne voyant plus aucun moyen de rien obtenir pour la rançon de ces Esclaves, ils les avaient fait mourir à petit feu.

Ce Sergent ajouta que pour lui il avoit eu le bonheur de tomber à un si bon Maître, que non-seulement il lui avoit sauvé la vie, mais encore qu’il l’avoit si bien pris en amitié, qu’il lui avoit donné la liberté, fourni des vivres, et enseigné la route pour se rendre à la Mobile, de peur que quelque Tchicachas le trouvant un jour à l’écart ne le tuât. Voilà ce que ce Sergent racontait publiquement, et c’est par lui que l’on a appris la triste fin de M. d’Artaguette (III, 417-419).

With the episodes given above, D’Ausseville/Le Page soften the depiction of the Chickasaw, who, after caring for their French captives well, kill the latter when it seems that the reds will not be able to use the whites for ransom. D’Ausseville/Le Page make it clear that the Chickasaw would have settled for peace on more than one occasion and that, at least in this latest war, they did not begin the conflict. Furthermore, the authors imply rather than blatantly state (as is Dumont’s fashion of making a point) that Bienville is to blame for the long duration and lack of success in a war upon which he insisted.

As the Chickasaw war drags on, Bienville’s culpability increases because of his seeming mismanagement, apparent lack of direction, and general ineffectiveness. The narrators note how a desperate period at a particular fortification becomes a breaking point for the French:

Les Vivres qui au commencement étoient très-abondans, devinrent si rares sur la fin, qu’on fut obligé de manger les Chevaux qui devaient traîner l’Artillerie et toutes les munitions de guerre et de bouche; ensuite la maladie se mit dans l’Armée. M. de Biainville qui jusque-là n’avoit point agi contre les Tchicachas, se détermina à prendre la voie de la douceur pour conclurre [sic.], et pour s’avoir à quoi s’en tenir avec eux (III, 421).
Largely unsuccessful in his campaigns, which seem to entail, both in Le Page’s and Dumont’s narratives, more waiting and preparing than actual fighting, Bienville finally sues for a peace that had dissatisfied him at the outset of the war.

In the establishing of peace between the Chickasaw and the French, the former come out much better than the latter, both in the deal that is struck and in the impression that the authors intend to leave upon the reader. Bienville sends a peace delegation to the Indians, who, for their part,

sortirent de leur Fort dans la contenance la plus humble, s’exposant à toutes suites pour obtenir la Paix. Ils jurèrent qu’ils étoient et seroient à jamais amis inviolables des Français; que c’étoient les Anglois qui les avoient engagés à agir ainsi; mais qu’ils étoient brouillés avec eux à cause de cela, et qu’à l’heure présente ils en avoient deux qu’ils avoient faits esclaves; que si on désiroit d’aller les voir, on connoîtroit qu’ils n’étoient point menteurs (III, 422).

The Chickasaw send a delegation with the above-quoted message back to Bienville in the accompaniment of his French envoys. Bienville has no choice other than to accept the Indians’ lavish protestations that they will forever be friends of the French, from whom the British had led them astray.

Historian Paul Hoffman agrees with some of the complaints that Louisiana colonial writers levy at Bienville for his part in the Chickasaw wars of the 1730s and 1740s. Speaking of the campaign in the spring of 1736, in which Bienville, coming from the south, failed to meet Dartaguiette d’Itouralde, coming from the north, at the destined place in time to attack the Chickasaw, a failure that resulted in Dartaguiette d’Itouralde’s death, Hoffman states, “Bienville behaved badly during the whole affair. Despite his long years of Indian fighting and reputation, he was incapable of commanding a large-scale force or making quick adjustments in the field” (61). Hoffman notes
further that "Bienville blamed everyone but himself for the disaster" (61). The historian's assertions are not far from what a number of Louisiana colonial writers contend: that Bienville did not possess the Indian expertise of which he boasted.

Later, in another campaign against the Chickasaw in 1740, the French were able to get one village to surrender, whereupon

Bienville then proclaimed that peace had been achieved and ordered the expeditionary force to disband (April). This was putting a good face on another failed campaign. Other Chickasaw villages did not feel bound by the treaty (61).

Clearly, Bienville had a hard time getting out of a war that he "again pressed" (61).

In a section of his history entitled "Bienville's Fall, a Consequence of the Failed Indian Policy and Other Troubles," Hoffman notes,

In the wake of the expensive, failed Indian campaigns of 1736 and 1739-40, Bienville's performance as governor came under scrutiny. Reports suggested that Bienville was an incompetent leader, well past his prime and more concerned with his personal prestige than with the welfare of the colony or of the king's treasury (62).

Undoubtedly, many of the "reports" that called Bienville's administration into question were from some of the artists examined in this study.

In concluding his commentary concerning the Chickasaw wars, Hoffman also brings his examination of the Le Moyne era in Lower Louisiana to a close by asserting that "in short, a new man with new ideas was needed. Bienville made a decision on his future easier by requesting permission to return to France because of illness and age. Permission was granted" (62). In essence, the end of the first dynasty in Louisiana political history occurred in part through a Le Moyne failing to heed the admonitions of the colony's literary oracles (who were his peers and underlings as well) concerning the proper approach to Native Americans.
Following the Indian fiascos of Bienville, who never rises to heroic stature in the narratives of Pénicaut, Dumont, or Le Page, Le Page ends his three-volume work by relating De Vaudreuil’s tactful handling of a possible rebellion among a group of Choctaw led by “Soulier Rouge.” The last sentence of the Histoire reads, “Ce fut ainsi que la sage politique de M. de Vaudreuil termina cette Guerre sans frais et sans avoir exposé un seul homme” (III, 426). De Vaudreuil’s management of Indian difficulties, which appears to be the opposite both in manner and outcome than that of Dumont’s and Le Page’s Bienville, is the approach idealized by Le Page. The capsulized summation of De Vaudreuil’s policy would be a fitting inscription on monuments to Le Page’s other heroes, all of whom attempt to make peace between Europeans and Native Americans without risking red or white lives.

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In many respects, Jean-Bernard Bossu, the next writer whose depiction of Native Americans is to be presented in this study, should be examined with the authors of Louisiana's second colonial period, the Spanish domination of 1763-1800. After all, the first of Bossu's two books, *Nouveaux Voyages aux Indes Occidentales*, was not published until 1768, the same year in which Louisiana was bucking Spanish attempts to begin governing the colony. However, in light of the fact that the book concerns Bossu's stays in Louisiana from 1751 to 1762 (and, hence, the additional fact that its contents touch on many of the same events treated in the texts examined thus far), *Nouveaux Voyages aux Indes Occidentales* would be best studied alongside the literature from Louisiana's first colonial period. The same concerns and themes that figure in Bossu's first book continue in the second, *Nouveaux Voyages dans l'Amérique Septentrionale*, published in 1777 and relating the author's third stint in the colony in 1770-1771, right after Spain had forced Louisiana to submit to its control and while the new rulers were enacting changes that would bring a well-being and prosperity to the territory that the French domination could never provide. Because of their similarities, both of Bossu's books would be best analyzed together rather than apart from each other.

By virtue of his dates in the colony both well before and well after the transfer from France to Spain, Bossu was able to leave a lasting record of Louisiana as a French and then a Spanish colony. Thus, the writings of this one author provide a good transition from literature of the first French domination to that of the Spanish regime. Like writers before and after the transfer, Bossu concentrates
to a great extent on Franco-Indian relations and on the relationship between rulers and the ruled. In addition, Bossu, along with Le Page, devotes more attention than other Louisiana colonial authors do to an increasingly important aspect of life in the colony -- black slavery. Thus, Bossu's treatment of reds will end this section on Native Americans. It will be followed by a look at both Bossu's and Le Page's attention to blacks and black slavery. Ending this study of the literature of Louisiana's first colonial period will be an analysis of the growing concern on the part of pioneering authors for the relationship between the minority who govern and the majority who are governed.

Jean-Bernard Bossu (also known as Jean-Baptiste le Bossu and Nicolas Bossu) was born in Baigneux-les-Juifs, France, in 1720. Coming from a prominent medical family of Burgundy, Bossu added a military career to his credentials, distinguishing himself in the Italian wars. In 1750 he was sent to reinforce the garrison at New Orleans. Arriving in Louisiana in 1751, he ventured up the Mississippi River to an assignment in the Illinois country. Along the way, he was "adopted" by the Arkansas Indians. Suffering from old war injuries, Bossu returned to New Orleans from Upper Louisiana in early 1757. He sought treatment in France but was back in Louisiana in 1758.

Aboard ship during his second voyage to the colony, Bossu befriended Vincent-Gaspard-Pierre du Rochemore, Louisiana's newly appointed commissaire ordonnateur. When Rochemore and the colony's governor-general, Baron Louis Billouart de Kerlérec, entered into a feud (as did many officials who shared the highest authorities in colonial Louisiana), Bossu sided with Rochemore. As a result, he did not receive the expected command of the Illinois post when it became available. Bossu asked to return to France, but Kerlérec sent him to Mobile and to Fort Toulouse in the Alabama region instead. There
Bossu became friends with the Alabama Indians. In 1762 Bossu accompanied the recalled Rochemore to France. Upon arriving in Europe, the two learned that Kerlérec had filed complaints against Bossu as well as Rochemore. In 1769 the Rochemore-Kerlérec controversy was settled in favor of the late Rochemore.

The letters to the Marquis de l'Estrade de la Cousse concerning Bossu's first two travels and sojourns in the New World were published in 1768 as *Nouveaux Voyages aux Indes Occidentales; Contenant une Relation des differens Peuples qui habitent les environs du grande Fleuve Saint-Louis, appelé vulgairement le Mississippi; leur Religion; leur gouvernement; leurs moeurs, leurs guerres, et leur commerce.* Kerlérec's infuriation over several passages in the book resulted in Bossu's arrest for libel and imprisonment in the Bastille. After a month of investigation, Bossu was cleared and set free. The seals that had been set on his book were lifted.


After Louisiana had changed from French to Spanish possession, Bossu made a third trip to the colony in 1770-1771 to attend to personal business and to visit the Arkansas Indians. A second book of letters, these addressed to Bossu's friend "M. Douin" and describing the third venture, appeared in 1777 as *Nouveaux Voyages dans l'Amérique septentrionale Contenant une collection de Lettres écrites sur les lieux par l'Auteur à son ami, M. Douin.* Samuel Dorris Dickinson offered the first published English translation in 1982 as *New Travels in North America by Jean-Bernard Bossu, 1770-1771.*
Bossu died in France on May 4, 1792. Cumulatively, the author spent twelve years in Louisiana during the two decades that spanned from 1751 to 1771. Although the combined length of his three separate stints of residence in the colony fall short of the years spent by other émigré authors in Louisiana, Bossu’s active participation in colonial development, his interest in red, white, and black inhabitants, his desire for societal reform, and his affectionate attachment to the New World tie Bossu and his writings inextricably to Louisiana’s colonial history and literature.

Bossu’s most recent editors, Feiler and Dickinson, stretch the issue when they allude to Bossu’s romanticization of the Indian so as to connect Bossu to Rousseau and Bossu’s Indians to the Noble Savage (Feiler, x-xi; Dickinson, x-xi). Actually, in his desire for accuracy, Bossu resembles Pénicaud and the other Louisiana writers more than he does any Continental romanticizer who had never been to the New World or seen a Native American. The achievement of realistic depictions in both of Bossu’s books occurs through the author’s presenting Indians as they are, with good as well as bad qualities. As will be seen in more detail shortly, Bossu, like Pénicaud and Le Page, points out the terrors and the beauties of Indian societies, the benefits as well as the drawbacks to living in the Native Americas. Like Louisianians who write about Native Americans, Bossu also makes distinctions between different indigenous groups and does not fail to criticize red flaws when he deems it necessary. In truth, then, Bossu’s Indians are not what Feiler and Dickinson view as “‘Children of Nature’ who enjoyed a life of simple pursuits and innocent pleasures” (Dickinson, x) before the arrival of Europeans in the Western Hemisphere. Rather, Bossu’s Indians are too complicated and too distinct from each other to fit easily under one stereotypical label.
Despite a harmonious communion with Nature and the insights deriving from such a relationship, red lives, as Bossu views them, are still plagued by ignorance from within and dangers from without. Since long before the arrival of Europeans, Indians have had to deal with moral corruption within their own communities as well as constant harassment from neighboring tribes. As a remedy for these and what he views as other Native-American woes, Bossu, like Pénicaud and Le Page, applies the appropriate European resources gained through religion and science. Even more forcefully than Pénicaud and Le Page do, Bossu always proposes genuine conversion on the part of both whites and reds to Christianity as the true reformative of society. Not surprisingly, then, he firmly believes that the best of all possible futures for Native Americans lies in their embracing Catholicism as well as in their swearing allegiance to the King of France.

If Bossu's otherwise favorable portrayals of Indians in their original state resemble the Noble-Savage convention, the resemblance is due primarily to the fact that Bossu observed red people displaying very noble qualities in addition to glaring defects. Of only secondary importance is the possibility that the likeness of Bossu's works to Noble-Savage literature occurred as a result of Bossu's possibly wishing to associate his writings with those of authors influenced by or operating from the same stance as Rousseau. If the thoughts and behavior of red persons in Bossu's two books reflect the novel intellectual views of Europe at the time, the coincidence occurs not simply because of any arbitrary characterizations contrived by the author to promote those views but, more importantly, because Bossu found and wished to share with his peers attitudes and actions existing in aboriginal American societies that validated the theories and convictions of many European writers and thinkers in the mid- to latter 1700s.
While Bossu's writings do illustrate the mentality of the eighteenth-century French intelligentsia, their primary value may rest more in their depiction of the thoughts and actions of those working in the colonial Americas. Not only does Bossu present the colonies and their inhabitants as he finds them, thereby leaving valuable records of specific peoples at given times, his comments on colonial ways of life reveal insights produced not solely by currents of French thought but also by a certain degree of Americanization. That is, Bossu's knowledge of and compassion for the Indian, the Anglo-American patriot, the black slave, and the French and Spanish colonists; his criticism of European conquest of the New World and trafficking in African slaves; his interest in the future of the Western Hemisphere; and his insistence upon adaptation to the New World and reformation of the Old result more from his travel and residence in Louisiana than from any other influence.

If Dickinson's contention is true, that not all of the contents of the letters comprising Bossu's two books were composed on the dates and at the spots that Bossu claims, then even as early as the first letters (dated 1751 but not published until 1768) Bossu may well have patterned or repatterned his writings after having read Rousseau's Discours (1750 and 1754) and having become acquainted with concepts of Noble Savage and Social Contract. Even if Bossu were not well acquainted with Rousseau, the French political, intellectual, and artistic ideas preceding, concurrent with, and culminating in Rousseau's work definitely express themselves in Bossu's writings. Although significant Continental influence is undeniable, Bossu, because of his formative New-World experiences and his choice of New-World subject matter, cannot be considered simply as a typical eighteenth-century French writer of secondary importance. The following examination of
Bossu, which begins in this chapter with his treatment of Indians and continues in the next two chapters with analyses of his views on slavery and his concern for the welfare of all peoples, will show the author to have been profoundly shaped by his residence in the New World.

The "Foreword" to Bossu's first book introduces the Indian as a primary focus of the narrative. It states that Bossu spent twelve years travelling through Louisiana in hopes of allying Native Americans more closely to the French (5). In the process, Bossu's increased familiarity with aboriginal Americans, like that of the other authors examined thus far in this study, resulted in a relinquishing of certain personal prejudices that had been formed in Europe solely on hearsay and a lack of contact with red persons. For instance, the "Foreword" states early on that Bossu was "surprised to discover the oratorical talent and order which are evident in the speeches of these men whom we call savages" (5). This and many other revelations of greater significance to the author fostered such a positive outlook on Indians that Bossu soon became one of their leading mediators and literary champions.

Introducing the epistolary narrative, which concentrates in great part on Native Americans, the "Foreword" defends the text's historical accuracy against any possible accusation of fancy. During this conventional introductory argument for a consideration of the Travels as history rather than fiction, Bossu, like Pénicaud and Le Page, offers literary criticism.

The historical letters which make up this collection introduce the reader to a series of surprising and curious facts, whose nature and variety are of great interest. The moral and political reflections which appear in the letters are natural and unaffected. There is evidence throughout of the same uprightness and fidelity which governed all the author's actions. His deeds are justly praised and are verified by the authentic papers attached
to the work. Everything in it, the geography as well as the general history of Louisiana, is accurate. He has told his story by means of interesting anecdotes.

The account contains a true summary of the events which took place in Louisiana. They are reported in chronological order from the time of the discovery of the country in 1512 until 1762.

The author, incapable of fooling the public and convinced that simple, unadorned truth is more impressive than fancy, tells what he has seen and learned during his travels. He could have gone on at greater length, but he preferred a restrained, succinct style to a rambling one. He relates only the most interesting facts.

Although this description contains amusing as well as useful information, you can be sure that it is not written in the Romanesque style used by most travelers, who invent stories and substitute ingenious fables for the truth to make their work more interesting. Important anecdotes concerning the Indians' way of life are lacking in the works of such authors. Knowledge of the Indians can be acquired only after a long period of residence among them.

Everything reported by this author might appear to be fictitious were it not for the verification of a number of distinguished people now living in France who accompanied him on his travels (5-6).

In asserting the main text's historical accuracy, the "Foreword" also upholds Bossu's knowledge of the Indian. The author's accuracy, knowledge, and skill as a writer are further endorsed in a letter by the Marquis de l'Estrade, which Bossu places before his book of letters addressed to the same marquis.

Just as Pénicaud, Dumont, and Le Page at times attempt to make the French and even Indians look better by putting down persons of other European nationalities, so Bossu resorts to the same tactic. Bossu employs the technique early on, highlighting Spanish cruelty to Indians in Santo Domingo in Letter I of the first book, dated February 15, 1751. Bossu especially abhors the murder of Indians conducted under the pretext that they are not converting to Catholicism. He realizes that this is a rationalization of genocide on the part of
conquerors and land-grabbers who have no interest in religion other than the fact that it can be used to promote their own irreligious causes. Bossu exempts the Church's hierarchy and the Spanish king from implication in the brutal conquests, removals, and annihilations that he decries, pointing out in a footnote that

King Ferdinand was notified of these irregularities, and he tried to correct them. He was particularly concerned with the Indians, whom he wanted to protect and attract to the Faith. This has always been the primary concern of Catholic kings. Indeed, he gave several orders and published laws asking that they be taught gently through good examples and selflessness. All of these good intentions lost their strength with distance, just as an arrow falls short of the target which is too far from the archer's arm (13-14).

In condemning certain Spanish officials and capitalists who abuse their power and wealth (in Santo Domingo and other colonies) and in distancing the Spanish king and the Catholic Church from such corruption, Bossu shows himself to be as devoted to religion and royalty as he is opposed to oppression and greed, a devotion that he shares with other eighteenth-century Louisiana writers. As will be seen throughout this study, both regal and ecclesiastical institutions, in Bossu's thinking, are committed to the well-being of all persons, regardless of race, place of residence, or social standing. (A commitment to universal well-being should not be confused with a commitment to emancipation or total equalization of society here, for Bossu does allow for a more humane form of slavery and for social stratification.) However, both Church and Crown have been unable to curb the violence directed at red (and later at black) persons in the colonies because of important corrupt individuals in the employment of these institutions.

Bossu readily relates specific Spanish crimes against Indians in Latin America. He deplores the Repartimiento of the fifteenth and
sixteenth centuries, a mode of conquest in which Native Americans of newly occupied areas were divided among Castilians in a subjugation that was supposed to lead to conversion. Bossu comments, "You will doubtless agree that that is a peculiar way to gain converts in the New World. Such actions are certainly opposed to the true spirit of Christianity" (13). Thus reads one of the first sentences indicative of an uprightness and sensitivity that cause Bossu to weigh convention, status quo, and tradition against humanitarian and religious principles of good will toward others.

Such good will is evident when Bossu offers an otherwise absurd account of the "origin of the disease of Naples, or syphilis" (13). Painting a graphic picture of red suffering in Santo Domingo, Bossu notes,

These gold-hungry Spaniards forced the wretched Indians to work in the mines and to spend eight to nine months almost buried in the bowels of the earth. This hard work, the sulphurous fumes of the mines, and the famine caused by the inability of the Indians to work their lands caused their blood to become so bad that their faces turned saffron yellow. Unbearably painful boils broke out on all parts of their bodies. Soon they passed on this contagious disease to their wives and, consequently, to their enemies. Since there was no cure, both the Indians and the Spaniards died of the disease.

The despairing Spaniards thought that this disease would not follow them to Europe where they went for a change of climate. They were wrong; when they returned, they gave the Europeans the disease they had received from the Americans. God, however, pitied these wretched islanders; some time later, the Indian wife of a Castilian discovered a certain wood called guaiacum which can cure the disease.

It is only too true that evil gives birth to evil. The Spaniards have sacrificed millions of men in the New World and have laid waste to vast countries to steal the Indians' gold, but as a famous poet says so well:

By our laws, it's true, America is ruled,
But her disease ruins us, it's we who are fooled.

VOLTAIRE (14)
In addition to depicting European abuse of Native Americans (which, Bossu will point out, is not confined to the Spanish), the author begins a moralistic depiction of Euro-aboriginal interaction in which he stresses that those who inflict suffering upon others will in turn have suffering inflicted upon themselves, either through human or Divine forces. In Bossu's opinion, syphilis is a just punishment for Continentals who mistreat Native Americans.

Throughout his graphic depictions of the enslaved miners' plight, the author highlights suffering incurred because of "man's stupid greed." In denouncing the quest for golden wealth, Bossu draws upon a convention that was old by the time he wrote. As Stephen Greenblatt relates,

The unnaturalness of the desire for gold is one of the great themes of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a theme tirelessly rehearsed by poets, playwrights, and moralists and frequently illustrated by tales of European behavior in the New World (64).

Greenblatt notes further that these depictions had roots in the "ancient polemics against greed" (64), and certainly greed is what Bossu highlights as the root of all evil inhumanity in the New World. While Bossu initially focuses on Spanish transgressions against fellow human beings in his first book, he will certainly not spare the French their share of blame for rampant injustice when the appropriate time comes.

Proceeding with his account of Spanish abuse, Bossu next depicts Iberians resorting to the same types of torture and treachery that the Louisiana writers examined thus far have condemned in Native Americans. The Spaniards, however, are motivated by greed, not by a strict system of warfare and revenge that demands ritualized affliction of the defeated foe. If Bossu reveals himself to be more lenient on Indian atrocities, which he nonetheless condemns along with European crimes, it is because he excuses the Native Americans for not having
yet been enlightened by Christianity and, therefore, not yet accountable to its humane precepts. The Spanish, on the other hand, should know better than to behave as they do. Greed, the vice that Bossu views as the most destructive to humankind and the one that he consistently attacks throughout his writings, has turned certain Spanish colonists from God and reason to unfeeling, self-centered exploiters.

To show how greed has led to widespread misery, Bossu offers the story of a Dominican Indian chief. The plight of Poncra and his people typify that of many reds following conquest.

A chief named Poncra, being harassed by the Spaniards, decided to flee from his village. The enemy, finding the village deserted, pillaged it of three thousand gold marks which had been left behind. Vasco Núñez de Balboa, Nicolas de Obando's successor, sent some of his people after the chief to tell him not to be afraid to come back and to assure him that they would be friends. If not, the Spaniard would go after him with his dogs, who would devour him.

Poncra, frightened by this threat, did not dare disobey and brought with him three other chiefs, who were his vassals. Núñez de Balboa tried unsuccessfully every imaginable means to make Poncra tell where the gold came from in that land which reputedly produced a great amount of it. Neither kind treatment nor torture could make him reveal the secret, which perhaps he did not even know himself. As far as the three thousand gold marks were concerned, Poncra said they had been amassed by people who had died in his father's time, and that he himself had never considered it worth while to look for more, since he had no use for gold. This poor chief and his companions were fed to the dogs (16-17).

Typically, Bossu does not end this story with total Indian defeat. Bossu's anecdotes, most of which are moral tales, characteristically conclude with evil eventually being met with evil. In Bossu's cyclic schema, the Spanish can be victorious only for a time.

Bossu offers the following finale as a vindication of both the death of Poncra and the misfortunes of countless Indians at the hands of the Spanish.
Sometime later a Spaniard fell into the hands of Indians belonging to poor Ponca's tribe. They reproached him for his nation’s greed for gold and the injustices that this greed had made them commit. It was for that alone that the Spaniards had left their own country, had suffered hardship on the sea, and had come to this island to trouble people who lived peacefully in their cabins under the protection of the Great Spirit.

After that short harangue, they melted some gold and poured it into the Spaniard's ears and throat and said, "Since you want it so much, drink your fill!" (17)

Greenblatt notes that "one of the most famous images of the Spanish in America depicts a group of Indians punishing a conquistador for his insatiable thirst for gold by pouring the molten metal down his throat" (64). While Bossu may be drawing from the same image in this instance, it is noteworthy that in his rendition an anonymous Spaniard, who may or may not have been personally involved in aggression against Indians, is made to suffer for the crimes of some members of his nation. Bossu's use of a Spaniard with no given rank seems to indicate the author's belief that one shares his/her society's guilt if he/she does not make him/herself a prominent exception to an abusive status quo.

Bossu quickly moves from this story of reciprocal abuse so as to highlight examples of more pleasant alternatives: interracial charity and appreciation of the benefits peculiar to groups other than one's own.

Moving to the North American continent, Bossu spotlights the Native-American peacemaking ceremony as a civilizing and artistic practice worthy of European attention. Bossu shares Pénicaud's, Le Page's, and even Dumont's admiration for the eloquence and civility of the calumet proceedings. He offers one event -- that of the Chitimachas wishing to make peace with Bienville -- to illustrate Indian oratorical artistry and ceremonial beauty. Bossu notes that generally "on these occasions, they are dressed in their most beautiful
clothing" (25), and he relates the attire, gifts, and gestures of the Chitimachas as they come to greet Bienville. In describing the calumet itself, Bossu points out in a footnote, "With the calumet one can travel everywhere without fear, since there is nothing more sacred among these people" (25). He notes that the peace speech is done "with a great deal of majesty" (26). Bossu proceeds to describe at length the Chitimacha harangue addressed to Bienville much as Le Page relates this same and other Indian discourses: so as to convey Native-American poetry. Upon the harangue's termination, Bossu notes that it was "delivered in a firm and assured tone with eloquence and propriety and even, if it can be said, with all possible majesty" (28).

In Letters II and III, Bossu begins describing the tribes of Lower Louisiana, pointing out items of interest peculiar to each group. Bossu's basically objective and often positive approach to studying these Native Americans makes itself immediately evident and is perhaps most obvious in his treatment of former and current aboriginal enemies of the French. For example, he stresses the dignity and good will of the Chitimachas, against whom Bienville made war, and he speaks admiringly of the Natchez, even while recounting the doom they spelled for his compatriots.

As evidenced even before his narrative leaves the Caribbean for Louisiana, Bossu deplores the hardships plaguing Native-American societies. He is especially saddened by the disruption of communal fabrics through European intrusion and by the intertribal frictions that leave reds little peace. Arriving on the North American continent, Bossu relates, with the same regret that the other Louisiana writers convey, the demise of the Tunica after they choose to defy the Natchez so as to defend the French. Following the treacherous massacre of Tunicas and their chief by the Natchez, Bossu eulogizes one of early
Louisiana's best red supporters as follows: "We, as well as these good Indians, shall always regret the loss of this chief whose qualities would do honor to a civilized man" (31). Thus reads one of the first instances in which Bossu's sympathy and esteem for an Indian individual lead him to compare the red favorably to Europeans. Later, Bossu will even rate some Native Americans superior to many Europeans in certain categories.

When it comes to detailing the particulars of Natchez life prior to the tribe's uprising and subsequent decimation, Bossu maintains his relatively objective tone, even lacing his account here and there with admiring comments. For example, he refers to the ceremonies of the Natchez's sun-worshipping religion as "rather august" (31). In describing the ritualized killings that occur during funerals for Natchez Suns, Bossu does not relate the proceedings with a shock similar to Pénicaut's. Rather, he offers anecdotes that show two opposing Natchez reactions to the custom: Etteacteal's comic evasion of his certain death and the poignant self-sacrifice of individuals personally committed to honoring another's passing with their own. The anecdotes relating to Bitten Snake's funeral are two that Le Page also uses, and both Le Page and Bossu seem to offer them for the same reasons: comic entertainment on the one hand and, on the other, nostalgic acknowledgment of the honor inherent in the former friends of the French.

Bossu's version of Etteacteal's antics mirrors the tendency of Indian anecdotes in New-World literature to become highly entertaining stories in themselves, independent to a great extent from the larger narrative. Bossu's rendition of a tale that other writers also relate reads as follows.

Here is the story of an Indian named Etteacteal, who was unwilling to submit to this law [of accompanying a Sun in death]. He had married into the Sun family, an honor which almost ended in disaster for him. When his wife fell sick and seemed to be dying, he fled down the
Mississippi in a pirogue and arrived in New Orleans. He gained the protection of Governor de Bienville by becoming his hunter. The Governor interceded for him with the Natchez, who stated that Etteacteal had nothing to fear since the funeral ceremony had already taken place without him and he was no longer of any use.

Etteacteal, thus reassured, dared to make several trips to his nation without taking up permanent residence there. He happened to be there at the time of the death of Bitten Snake, a relative of his late wife and brother of the Chief Sun. It was decided that he would have to pay his debt. Since Monsieur de Bienville had been recalled to France, the Natchez chief decided that the letters of reprieve granted to Etteacteal were null and void, and he had him seized. In the war chief’s cabin, where he was put with the other victims to be sacrificed to Bitten Snake, Etteacteal gave way to his feelings of grief. The dead man’s wife was to be sacrificed, too, but she watched the preparations for her death calmly and seemed eager to join her husband in death. Hearing Etteacteal’s groans, she said to him, “Aren’t you a warrior?” He answered, “Yes, I am.” She replied, “Still, you are crying. Life is dear to you! Since you feel that way, it’s not right for you to come with us. Go off with the women.” Etteacteal said, “Certainly life is dear to me. I should like to walk upon this earth until the death of the Great Sun; then I would die with him.” The woman answered, “Go away, I tell you. It is not right for you to come with us and for your heart to remain behind on earth. Again I say, go away so that I shall not have to look at you.”

Etteacteal did not wait for her to repeat her order; he took off like a bolt of lightning. Three old women, two of whom were relatives of his, tired of life because of their age and their infirmities, offered to pay his debt. None of them had been able to walk for a long time. Etteacteal’s two relatives had hair which was no grayer than that of 55-year-old French women. The other woman was 120 years old and had very wrinkled skin. They were put to death early in the evening, one at Bitten Snake’s door, the other two in the temple square.

The generosity of these women redeemed Warrior Etteacteal’s life. His honor, which had been blemished by his fear of death, was restored to him. He lived in peace from that time on, and, profiting by the education he received during his stay among the French, he became a witch doctor and used his knowledge to fool his fellow tribesmen (32-34).
Etteacteal's story, in addition to illustrating behavior on the part of the protagonist that is uncharacteristic of that of the majority of Indian heroes presented in Louisiana literature, also shows the way a red nonconformist evades the strictures of his community in the fashion of a trickster figure. Etteacteal redeems himself to such an extent that he not only returns to good standing in the community, but also rises to the top of his society. Etteacteal has the last laugh when his final position of prominence, which depends upon a combination of deception and real knowledge, gives him unlimited opportunities to promote himself at the expense of others. Later in the narrative, Bossu fully exposes the shams that he has discovered in the practices of witch doctors such as the clever Etteacteal.

In the second anecdote involving the funerary killings done in honor of Bitten Snake, Bossu condenses into one account several episodes that Le Page treats separately and at greater length. Despite the abridgement, Bossu achieves the same pathos that Le Page conveys. Bossu also beautifully depicts the desperation and anxiety experienced by both the Natchez and the French when the Chief Sun vows to commit suicide so as to accompany his late brother Bitten Snake to the next world, an action that would result in a decimating number of ritualized killings in honor of the chief's death.

At the appointed hour, the leader of the ceremony, dressed in the ornaments appropriate to his rank, appeared at the door of the cabin out of which came the victims who were to accompany the prince to the Land of the Spirits. There were his two wives, his chancellor, his physician, his favorite servant, and some old women who had volunteered to be sacrificed.

The favorite wife went up to the Chief Sun, who was with several Frenchmen, to say good-by to them. She ordered that the Suns, who were her children, be brought to her and she spoke these words to them: "My children, this is the day when I must tear myself from your arms to follow the footsteps of your father to the Land of the Spirits. If I were to yield to your tears, I would fail in my duty and my love. I have done enough for you by bearing
you next to my heart and nursing you at my breasts. Should you who were formed of his blood and fed with my milk be shedding tears? Rejoice in the fact that you are Suns and warriors. You must set examples of firmness and valor for the entire nation. I have provided for all your needs by obtaining friends for you. My friends and the friends of your father are also yours. I leave you among them. They are the French, who have tender hearts and are generous. Be worthy of their esteem by not disgracing your race. Always deal with them honestly and never ask their help for base reasons."

"And you, Frenchmen," she added, turning toward our officers, "I leave my orphaned children in your hands. They will know no other father but you; you must protect them."

She then arose and, followed by her group, entered her husband's cabin with surprising firmness (34).

As in Le Page's earlier version, so in Bossu's later account the author aims for a strong emotional reaction from the audience by stressing former affection for the French on the part of Indians who would eventually incur the colony's worst opprobrium.

Bossu's appeal to the emotions continues as another regal Natchez woman who impressed the French makes her appearance among those condemned to die.

A noble lady, who decided to accompany Bitten Snake to the other world because of her friendship for him, voluntarily joined the number of victims. The Europeans called her Gloria because of her majestic bearing, her proud look, and the fact that she would bother with only the most distinguished Frenchmen. They felt her loss keenly. She was familiar with many herbs which she used to save the lives of a good number of our sick. This moving sight filled them with grief and horror. The dead man's favorite wife then arose and said to them with a smile on her lips: "I die without fear; my last moments are not marred by grief. I leave my children in your hands. When you see them, noble Frenchmen, remember that you loved their father and that to the very grave he was a sincere and true friend of your nation, which he loved more than his own life. It has pleased the Master of Life to call him, and in a little while I shall go to join him. I shall tell him that I saw your hearts grieve at the sight of his body. Do not mourn, for we shall be friends in the Land of the Spirits for even a longer time than here. There is no death there."
These sad words brought tears to the eyes of all the French. They did all that they could to keep the Chief Sun from killing himself. He was inconsolable at the death of his brother to whom he used to delegate the burdens of government. He became furious when his attempts were resisted. He held his rifle by the breech, while the Sun who was his heir held it by the lock, causing the powder to spill out. The cabin was full of Suns, Nobles, and the Esteemed, all of whom were trembling, but the French reassured them by having all the Chief Sun's arms hidden and by filling the barrel of his rifle with water so that it could not be used for some time. When the Suns saw that their chief's life was assured, they thanked the French by shaking hands with them without saying a word. There was deep silence, for grief and respect restrained the great number of people who were present.

During this ceremony, the Chief Sun's wife was seized with fear. When she was asked if she were sick, she answered in a loud voice, "Yes, I am." She continued more softly, "If the French leave, my husband and all the Natchez will die. Please stay, brave Frenchmen, for your word has the force of arrows. Who would have dared do what you have done? You are true friends to him and his brother."

According to the law, the Chief Sun's wife would have been forced to follow her husband to the grave; that was doubtless the reason for her fear and her gratitude to the French who wanted him to live (34-36).

In addition to some condemned Natchez expressing their love for the French, others of the tribe voice their desperate dependence upon the whites to spare their own and/or their fellow tribesmen and women's lives.

As the melodrama continues, the French dutifully come to the rescue.

The Chief Sun held his hand out to the officers and said, "My heart is so heavy that my eyes, although they are open, did not see that you were standing. My mouth did not open to tell you to be seated. Excuse my deep grief."

The French replied that it was unimportant, that they were going to leave him alone, but that they would no longer be friends if he did not give the order to light the fires again, first lighting his own in their presence. They also said that they would not leave him until his brother had been buried.
He shook hands with all the Frenchmen and said, "Since all the chiefs and the noble officers want me to remain on this earth, so be it; I will not kill myself. Let all the fires be lighted again immediately. I shall wait for death to unite me with my brother. I am already old, and until my death, I shall walk with the French. If not for them, I would have gone off with my brother and the paths would have been covered with dead bodies" (36-37).

Worthy of note in Bossu's condensation of an episode that transpired long before the author left Europe for the New World is the absence of any mention of Le Page as the key player in persuading the Chief Sun to desist from suicide. Instead, all of the French at Natchez become heroes in Bossu's more generalized version. Ironically, by helping to prevent unnecessary Natchez deaths, the French bolster a red population that will later slaughter the white inhabitants of the same area. Bossu binds the French and the Natchez so close to each other in this episode that the impending massacre is made even more shocking.

When he finally begins to relate the causes of the Natchez Massacre of 1729, Bossu makes it clear that the blame for the disaster rests principally on the shoulders of a French individual: Etcheparre.5

In all fairness to the Indians, it must be said that their plan to kill all the French was not the result of treachery or instability. It was the bad conduct of an officer who insulted and infuriated the very people he should have been handling gently. Free and peaceful people, who were living in a land settled by their ancestors, could not permit themselves to be tyrannized by foreigners whom they had welcomed. Monsieur de Chepar, commander of the Natchez post, did not win the friendship of either the French or the Indians in his care. He mistreated everyone who was unwilling to go along with his criminal ideas, and he gave important posts to sergeants and corporals who were personally devoted to him. You can easily understand, sir, that such favoritism would subvert all military discipline.

Monsieur Dupont, the second in command, registered official complaints which were not heeded. The only answer he received was to be thrown into irons. As soon as
he was freed, he went down to the capital to bring his charges before Monsieur Perrier, the governor of Louisiana. Monsieur de Chepar was recalled to explain his conduct. He was to be broken in rank, but his intrigues and his influence saved him. He was reinstated and sent back to his post.

This humiliating experience had no influence on him. He behaved in exactly the same way that he always had and was equally detested by the French and the Indians, whom he iritated to such a degree that they were forced to take extreme and terrible measures (37).

In his explanation of causes of the Natchez Massacre, Bossu stresses that the French suffered along with the Indians under Etcheparre. In expressing the Natchez grievances with precision and understanding and in attacking Etcheparre's character with a vengeance worthy of Dumont, Bossu excuses the Indians from a great deal of blame and presents their rebellion as the logical outcome of an unfortunate and unfair sequence of events. Bossu elsewhere pardons the Natchez by implying that they would not have retaliated with such totality had they not been governed at the time by a young, inexperienced "prince," whose "reign" was "quite unfortunate for the colony" (37). Interestingly, this young prince or Chief Sun, a successor to the old Chief Sun of the Bitten-Snake funeral episodes, is himself half French!

Bossu next proceeds to recount the specific succession of events that broke the good will of the Natchez toward the French, and he delineates the Indians' strategy for both deceiving Etcheparre and eradicating Europeans from their land once and for all.

Monsieur de Chepar, who was eager to make a fortune as quickly as possible, ordered the Sun of a village called Pomme to move out with all his people. The land, which Chepar was to turn into a plantation, would bring him a handsome profit. The Chief explained that the bones of his ancestors were buried there, but his arguments were useless. The French commander ordered the Chief Sun to evacuate the village and even threatened to send him to New Orleans in chains if he did not obey promptly. Perhaps the officer thought that he could treat this chief like a slave. It never occurred to him that he was speaking to a man who was accustomed to giving commands.
and whose authority over his subjects was absolute.

The Chief Sun listened to him and went off without becoming angry. He assembled his council, and they decided to inform Monsieur de Chepar that, before Pomme could be abandoned, plans for a new village would have to be drawn up. That would take two moons (37-38).

As in his depictions of the goldlusting Spaniards, Bossu makes his French villain’s major crime to be greed. Etcheparre’s self-centered desire for immediate profit takes precedence in the commandant’s thinking over the Natchez’s centuries-old claims to ancestral lands. If such views were not enough to condemn Etcheparre in the reader’s opinion, Bossu presents the commandant’s speech and behavior alone as damming. The French official is emotional in his comportment and unrealistic in his demands whereas the “savage” is calm and rational.

When the Natchez send their realistic and even compliant response to Etcheparre, the commandant becomes irate because the proposal is too slow for him. Bossu implies that Etcheparre’s manner of placing his demand rather than the demand itself is what finally resolves the Natchez to push the French once and for all from their midst.

The decision was made known to the Commander, who rebuked the messengers and threatened them with the severest punishment if Pomme were not turned over to him within a very short time. When this answer was delivered to the council, the elders concluded that the best policy was to try to gain enough time so that they could think of a way to get rid of these disagreeable guests who were becoming tyrannical. Since they knew that Monsieur de Chepar was very greedy, they thought up a scheme whereby he would grant them a delay of several moons, during which period each cabin would pay him in corn, fowl, and skins. The Commander fell into the trap because of his greed. He accepted the proposition, pretending that he was doing it only to oblige this nation which he loved because of its long-standing friendship for France.

The Sun, who was not taken in by this false altruism, assembled his council once more and announced that the time requested had been granted. During this period of grace, they were to think of a way to end the burdensome tribute they were paying and, especially, to put a
stop to the domination of the tyrannical French. He pointed out to them that this enterprise required the profoundest secrecy, well-founded plans, and, especially, a great deal of strategy. He advised them, in the meantime, to redouble all their outward signs of friendship and confidence in dealing with the French, while thinking of what had to be done. They were to come back to the council as soon as they had thought of some plan whose success could be assured (38-39).

In compliance with the nature of Bossu’s cyclic moral tales, Etcheparre’s end is brought about by the same quality that started his problems with the Natchez: greed. Just as greed leads the commandant to make impossible demands on the Indians, so the Natchez use that same greed in their final ruse against the French leader. Regarding the Natchez’s concealed scheme, Bossu presents this manifestation of deception as the most logical and effective course of action to make in response to an unbearable situation.

As he delves further into the fatal plan being hatched by the Natchez, Bossu continues his sympathetic treatment of the tribe’s desperation and gives further insight into their grievances.

For five or six days the noble elders conferred with each other, and they concluded once again unanimously to destroy all the French. After having greeted his chief, the oldest member of the council reported the decision in this manner:

We have noticed for a long time that having the French as neighbors has done us more harm than good. We old men see it, but the young men do not. The supplies from Europe please them, but of what use are they? To seduce our women, to corrupt our nation, to lead our daughters astray, to make them proud and lazy. Our boys are the same. Young married men must work themselves to death to keep their wives in luxury. Before the French came into our lands, we were men, we were happy with what we had, we walked boldly upon all our paths, because then we were our own masters. But today we tread gropingly, fearing thorns. We walk like the slaves which we will soon be, since they already treat us as though we were. When they are strong enough, they will no longer treat us with consideration. They will put us in chains. Has not their chief already...
threatened ours with this affront? Is not death preferable to slavery?
The orator paused to catch his breath and then went on:
What are we waiting for? Are we to let the French grow in numbers until we can no longer resist them? What will the other nations say? We are considered the wisest of all the red men. They will rightly say that we have less intelligence than the other peoples. Why wait longer? Let us free ourselves and prove that we are real men. Let us start this very day to get ready for it. Let us have the women prepare food without telling them why. Let us carry the peace pipe to all the nations of this country and tell them that the French hope to dominate our continent. Since they are stronger in our region than any place else, we shall be the first to wear their chains. When they are powerful enough, they will do the same to all the tribes. Let us convince the others that it is in their interest to prevent this misfortune. This can be done only by exterminating the French. Let all the nations join us in the task of wiping out the French, wherever they may be, in the same hour of the same day. Let the massacre take place the end of the period of time granted us by their chief. In that way we will be free of the burden of our self-imposed tribute and we will get back the products which we have given him. On that great day of freedom, our warriors will carry their firearms. The Natchez will go among the French, and, in each house, we shall outnumber them three or four to one. Our warriors, pretending to go out on a hunt in preparation of a great feast, will borrow firearms and ammunition and will promise to bring back game. The shots fired at the Commander’s home will be the signal for attacking the French. The other nations must help us by carrying out similar massacres in their territories at the same time. To succeed in this, we shall have to prepare bundles consisting of equal numbers of twigs, one bundle to be given to each nation. Each morning of the waiting period, one twig will be cut up and thrown into the fire. When there is only one left, they will know that the time for the slaughter has come. It will begin at the first quarter of the day . . . , and we shall all attack the tyrants at the same time from all directions. Once these are destroyed, it will be easy to keep others who may come from the Old World across the great lake from settling among us. It is extremely important that one twig be removed every day without fail. The slightest error can bring dangerous consequences.
We shall give this duty to a wise man and shall ask our neighbors to do likewise (39-40).

The speech given above is one of the most condemning arguments against French (and, by extension, any European) activity in the New World to be found anywhere. Although pretending to quote a red spokesman, Bossu undoubtedly composed the bulk of the exhortation to rebellion himself. It is a convincing plea for Native-American self-determination, and not the only one to be found in Bossu's two books.

As Bossu continues his detailed depiction of the Indian conspiracy, he continues to pardon the fatal orchestrations.

When the orator had finished, the elders gave their approval. The Sun of Pomme was particularly pleased with this suggestion; since he was the one most hurt by Monsieur de Chepar's injustice, he considered this a matter of personal vengeance. He was so eager to have this scheme succeed that he warned the council not to be indiscreet and even made the members promise not to reveal it to the female Suns. As much as he wanted to get rid of the French, the Chief Sun, who had to give his approval, felt that the plan called for too much violence. The Sun of Pomme, considered a just and intelligent man by his people, determined to win the Chief Sun over to the plan. He did this by making the Chief realize that his very own safety depended upon this course of action. The French commander had, after all, threatened to chase him from his village. The Chief Sun was weak because of his youth; the man speaking to him was clever; the plan was approved.

The next day, when the Suns came to greet their chief, they were told for one reason or another to go to the village of Pomme and did not suspect that they were under specific orders to do so. Everything went according to plan. Charmed by the Sun of Pomme's engaging wit, they all agreed to take part in the conspiracy. They immediately formed a council of Suns and noble elders, which accepted the plan unanimously after it had once again been explained. The elders, accompanied by warriors, were sent out as envoys to the other nations. They were forbidden, under pain of death, to speak to anyone about their mission. Without the French knowing it, all these groups immediately set out together (40-41).

Bossu believes that the Natchez had orchestrated a massive conspiracy of southeastern tribes against the French, a concerted effort whose
reality writers and historians have debated. Although the passage quoted above is yet another version of episodes that Pénicaud, Dumont, and Le Page recount, Bossu's rendition is so sympathetic to the Indian that it almost reads as though written from the Natchez point of view. Bossu's familiarity with reds fosters his ability to create Indian anecdotes that seem to come from a Native-American spokesman.

To show the complexity of Natchez reaction to the French, to dissuade the reader from making blanket condemnations of the entire Natchez people, and to thicken the plot, Bossu next highlights complications that arise in carrying out the plans drafted by the Natchez elite. Bossu illustrates the opposing Natchez views concerning the French by using an episode that Le Page also employs. It pits a Natchez mother against a Natchez son.

Although the secret of the Natchez was well guarded, the meeting of the council of Suns and noble elders worried the people. It is a well-known fact that the people of every country manage to learn court secrets. In this case, however, their curiosity was not satisfied. Only the female Suns, or princesses, had the right to ask why something was being kept secret from them. The Chief Sun's wife was only eighteen years old and was not too much concerned, but Stung Arm, the Chief Sun's mother, a woman well-aware of her intelligence, was not pleased that a secret was being kept from her. When she complained to her son, he told her that the envoys were sent out to renew friendly relations with the other nations, who thought that they were being scorned because the peace pipe had not been smoked with them for so long a time. This excuse seemed to calm Stung Arm, but she was really still troubled. Her worries were increased when she saw the Suns meet secretly with the returned envoys to find out how they were received by the other nations. Such meetings were usually public.

The Princess was furious at the idea that they were hiding from the nation and even from her what they had a right to know. It was only prudence that kept her from breaking out in anger (41-42).

Already apparent in Bossu's handling of a lady Sun's indignation over an important secret being kept from her is the author's sympathizing
with a strong, intelligent woman who is not being treated as an equal by men who are her peers and some of whom are even her intellectual inferiors. Such sympathetic depictions of rightly angered women of competence, especially Native-American women, are not unusual in Louisiana colonial literature, as is readily observable in Le Page and Bossu's volumes. Neither is the portrayal of women acting heroically rare. While Bossu and the Louisiana writers operate from the conventional sexism of the time, episodes such as this one involving the mother Sun betray the author's applauding female subversion of an oppressive system of male dominance.

The noble woman who impressed both Le Page and Bossu continues to show her tactful ability to outdo any man.

It was fortunate for the French that she thought she was being treated with contempt. She was right in thinking that the secret would be more closely guarded and she would find out nothing if she showed her anger. She slyly thought of a sure way to satisfy her curiosity. She got her son to visit a sick relative who lived in the village of Pomme. She took him the long way by telling him it was more beautiful than the other. Her true reason was that they would meet fewer people on the path. She very shrewdly thought that this mystery concerned some sinister plot against the French. The coming and going of the Sun of Pomme supported her belief. When she and her son came to a lonely spot, she spoke to him.

"Let us sit down here. I am tired, and I also have something to say to you." When they were seated, she added, "Open your ears and listen to me. I have always taught you not to lie. I have always told you that a liar is not worthy of being considered a man and that a lying Sun deserves even the contempt of women. I think that you will tell me the truth. Tell me, are not all the Suns brothers? Yet all the Suns are keeping something from me as though my lips were cut and could not keep a secret. Have you ever known me to speak in my sleep? I am deeply hurt by my brothers' contempt for me, but even more by yours. Did I not give birth to you? Did I not feed you at my breast? Did I not give you the best blood I had? Does not that same blood flow in your veins? Would you be a Sun if you were not my child? Have you already forgotten that, without the care I gave you, you would have died a long time ago? I have told you, and so has everyone else, that you are the son of a Frenchman; but my own
blood is dearer to me than that of strangers. Today I walk beside you like a dog, without being looked at. I am amazed that you do not shove me aside with your foot. I am not surprised that the others avoid me, but can you, who are my son? Have you ever seen a son distrust his mother in our nation? You alone behave this way. There is all this activity in the nation, and yet I do not know the reason for it, I who am the Chief Sun's mother. Are you afraid that I shall oppose you and make you the slave of the French, against whom you plan to take action? How tired I am of being scorned and of dealing with ungrateful men!" (42-43)

In addition to voicing a strong complaint against sexist attitudes and activities that have discriminated against her, the female noble prepares a good guilt trip for her son. Amid it all, she expresses her affection and concern for the French.

The Natchez mother's approaches combine to move her son in a powerful way. The dialogue between the two red royals caught in a complicated crisis is touching. The profundity of thought and emotion and the eloquence of speech continue to elevate the two characters and to enhance the poignancy of their encounter.

The Chief Sun was deeply touched by the words he had just heard. He wept and listened to these reproaches with the usual calm of the Americans and with the respect due a mother and a princess.

Then he answered her, "Your reproaches are like arrows which pierce my heart. I do not think that I have ever rebuffed you or scorned you. Have you never heard that the decisions of the council elders are not to be revealed? Is not the keeping of a secret the duty of every man, and should I not, as chief, set the example? This was kept from my wife just as it was from you. Even though everyone knows that I am the son of a Frenchman, I have been trusted. We all knew that with your intelligence you would discover the secret, but since it was kept from my wife, was it right to tell you of it? Since you have guessed it all, what do you want me to tell you? You know as much as I do. Just keep your mouth closed" (43).

In addition to sympathizing with an Indian lover of the French, Bossu also presents the views of a contender with understanding. The
conflicting views and emotions intensify the pathos of this very moving episode of the Natchez drama.

Having achieved her initial purpose -- discovering the male secret by winning an emotional tug of war with her son -- the concerned dowager then attempts to convince her offspring chief of alternative courses of action by rationally pointing out the impracticalities and ramifications of the Natchez men's plans.

She replied, "It was not very difficult for me to figure out against whom you were taking all these precautions. Since the French are involved, I am afraid that the measures you have taken to surprise them are not good enough. I know that they are very intelligent, even though their commander seems to have lost his mind. They have enough wealth to turn the warriors of the other nations against us. If your quarrel was with red men, I would sleep more peacefully. I am no longer young, and an old woman's life is not worth much, but yours is dear to me. If the elders think that it is as easy to surprise the French as it is the red men, they have made a serious mistake. The French have resources that we do not have. You know that they have cloth that speaks [paper]."

Her son told her that she had nothing to worry about as far as the plans were concerned. After he had told her everything that I have reported, he informed her that the bundle of sticks was in the temple on the flat wood (table) (43-44).

Having learned and said all that she can concerning the Natchez scheme, the lady Sun resorts to active intervention.

The Natchez woman's plan to save the French is clever, but it is ruined by French obtuseness.

When the Princess felt that she had learned enough, she pretended approval of all that had been done, and then leaving her son alone, she set about trying to find a way to thwart this barbarous plan. Time was short; the day for the massacre was not far off.

Unwilling to see the Natchez carry out their plan to kill all the French in a single day, the Princess decided to warn them. For this purpose, she used Indian girls who had French lovers, but she cautioned them never to reveal under whose orders they were working.

Ensign Macé, stationed at Fort Natchez, was advised of the plot by an Indian girl who loved him. She cried when she told him that her people were going to kill all
the French. Astonished by this information, Monsieur Macé questioned his mistress. Her frightened, straightforward, and naïve answers convinced him that she was telling the truth. He went to report this immediately to Monsieur de Chepar, who had him arrested for spreading a false alarm. Seven colonists who found out about the plot the same way as the ensign asked Chepar for arms to forestall a surprise attack. The Commander threw them in irons and called them cowards for trying to stir up trouble against a nation which had proven itself so friendly to him. The promptness with which the Indians paid their tribute gave him a feeling of security. Blinded by his contempt for them, he did not suspect them of subterfuge. He did not think that men of that kind were capable of being so shrewd.

When Stung Arm sadly realized that all her measures to save the French were useless, she decided to help them in spite of themselves. Since she could not save them all, she tried to find a way to reduce the number of victims. She sneaked into the temple and, without the knowledge of the priests, she pulled some of the twigs out of the fatal bundle. In that way, the day set for carrying out the plot would be advanced. She felt that the news of the massacre which would occur in Natchez territory would spread rapidly. The French who lived among the other nations would thus be warned and would prepare against attack. This was the only thing she could possibly do, and she succeeded. When the Natchez, not realizing that they had been tricked, saw that they were down to their last twig, they began the slaughter according to plan, persuaded that their allies were acting at the same moment (44-45).

Clearly, the depiction of Stung Arm, an intelligent and determined red woman who is surrounded by such dull men of both races that neither red nor white males save themselves by heeding her insights, goes a long way in redeeming Bossu from the sexist comments that he sometimes makes. As in the case of other writers, so with Bossu, the actions of the author’s nonwhite, non-male heroes speak louder than the careless and/or conventional racist and sexist comments that are occasionally made.

Most of the events recounted by Bossu regarding the Natchez rebellion mirror those recorded in other narratives that touch on the
massacre. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, as he begins to mention the horrors of the slaughter itself, Bossu’s sympathy for the would-be red liberators dwindles. For example, Bossu relates briefly, but obviously condemingly,

During the massacre, the Chief Sun was seated in one of the sheds of the India Company. First he was brought the commanding officer’s head, and around it were placed the heads of the most important Frenchmen. The others were heaped up in a pile. The unburied bodies were eaten by the vultures. Pregnant women were disemboweled, and almost all those who were nursing children were killed because of their annoying cries and tears. The others were all made slaves and were treated with the greatest indignity (46).

Only after relating the gory details of the Natchez Massacre does Bossu, in passing, refer to Indians as “naturally barbarous.” Even following the Natchez Massacre as it does, the comment comes as a bit of a surprise in light of all the positive things Bossu has said and will say about Indians.

In concluding his account of the Franco-Natchez fiasco, Bossu relates the following concerning Etcheparre, the Natchez, and French-Indian relations.

That was the end of the man who was guided only by his own decisions, cruelty, greed, and ambition. Since none of the French escaped alive, we cannot know how this officer really died. It is enough to know that he was dealing with naturally barbarous people and that he had antagonized them. Under a decent administration these people would have become the allies of the French and would have been very useful. This is how one man’s faults can sometimes cause a whole colony to be lost. The greatest caution must be used when we choose a commanding officer for these territories. Regardless of what we think of the Indians, they are not always easy to manage. Strategy and wisdom are needed to gain their good will. This story proves that you cannot insult them without suffering the consequences (46).
Again, Bossu places the responsibility for the massacre squarely on Etcheparre and implies that most breakdowns in Franco-Indian relations are the fault of the French. That is, the tensions leading to warfare often result from appointment of wrong persons to important positions, carelessness and insensitivity in dealing with Indians, and general European ignorance and misconception regarding Native Americans.

Bossu relates the end of the Natchez nation as follows:

The French women and the Negroes taken as slaves were returned by the Natchez, whose fortified camps were attacked. The Natchez escaped during a storm and left the territory. About one thousand of them were captured, taken to New Orleans, and sold as slaves on the island of Santo Domingo. Among the prisoners were the Chief Sun, his wife, and his mother. The Chief Sun denied that the massacre was his idea. He said that his nation had taken advantage of his youth, that he had always liked the French, and that it was really Monsieur de Chepar's outrageous behavior toward a freeborn people which had caused them to act in desperation. The French, satisfied that he was not guilty, treated him, his wife, and his mother with consideration. They soon died of grief, however, because they could not return to their people. The territory has been uninhabited since that time. The Natchez, too weak to resist the pursuing French, have found refuge among the Chickasaws.

Even in the wake of red slaughter of whites, Bossu does not lose faith in Native Americans. He goes so far as to recommend the resurrection of Natchez in the following fashion: "The way to revitalize it would be to attract other Indians to settle here" (47). Bossu's vision of the colony's future thus parallels that of Pénicaut, Le Page, and others in that it depends upon red-white cooperation and even advocates the formation of Euro-Indian communities.

Bossu moves from Natchez to happier Indian settings. In the first book's Letter IV, dated October 29, 1751, Bossu relates his arrival among the Arkansas, the tribe with whom he became most familiar.
and upon whom he would elaborate in both of his books. Bossu’s love and respect for the Arkansas lead him to condemn Hernando de Soto, who, Bossu believes, did not treat the Arkansas or any other Indian group with much humanity. For Bossu, De Soto is a major villain of the Black Legend.

I shall say just a word about Ferdinand de Soto’s travels. We learn from the general history of America that, after having soaked his unholy hands in the blood of the Inca royal family, De Soto and his bravest soldiers wanted to come into this country to subjugate the people who live near the river, which I shall describe later. He was, however, unfamiliar with the interior of this vast continent. If he expected to find effeminate people like those of South America, he was sadly mistaken. The Indians killed some of his soldiers with clubs, flayed the most important officers among them, and hung their skins on the temple door. This so frightened the Spaniards that they set sail for Europe immediately.

History tells us that Ferdinand de Soto died in 1543, of shame because of his failure, and Europeans did not occupy this beautiful country from that time until 1682 (49).

Far from making De Soto a hero for his important discoveries, Bossu villainizes him for his cruelty to aborigines of both American continents. Bossu even applauds his beloved Arkansas for giving De Soto his just deserts.9 In the same letter, Bossu grants the other great early European explorer of the Lower Mississippi, Cavelier de La Salle, an equally unflattering depiction, which will be fully examined later in this study.

Letter IV can truly be called a discourse on the foibles of white explorers in the New World, with only Native Americans surfacing as admirable or even smart characters. Bossu quickly condemns De Soto at the beginning of the letter, recounts La Salle’s disastrous undertakings in the middle, and then closes by emphasizing the folly of Spain’s unending quest for gold in the Western Hemisphere. At the same time, unlike other writers who condemn Indians for treacherous
behavior and breaches of trust and who ignore dishonest behavior on
the part of whites, Bossu expresses admiration for the Native Ameri­
cans’ artful deception of easily duped Europeans, viewing the deceit
as appropriate, effective retaliation against unbearable trespassers.

Similar to the Natchez, who seize the opportunity to fool Etcheparre
through his greed, the Indians in Spanish America (the ones who are
apparently less “effeminate people” than the reds whom Bossu con­
strained disparagingly with the Arkansas) make use of readily per­
ceived European avarice to turn away the invader. In explaining the
origin of the El Dorado legend, for example, Bossu notes,

The Spaniards were not content with the wealth of Peru;
yet they set out to find El Dorado, a country whose rocks and
stones were made of gold. The Indians, taking advantage
of the greed of their enemies in order to get rid of them,
kept talking of the gold, the silver, the diamonds, and
the pearls of El Dorado. In order to get them to leave,
the Indians did everything in their power to make the
Spaniards believe that that imaginary country really ex­
isted. The Spaniards believed these interesting reports,
and it is thought that that is the origin of the famous El
Dorado, which made such a stir throughout the world (58).

Bossu obviously enjoys making the conquistadores of Latin America the
butt of an Indian joke as much as Le Page savors the Spanish being
duped by the Missouri on the Great Plains. However, it must be reit­
erated that neither man makes Iberians the unique European laughing­
stock in the Americas.

In the first book’s Letter V, Bossu begins his first in-depth
look at the Arkansas, the tribe he would come to know and love as much
as Le Page knew and loved the Natchez. Fittingly, as Le Page does
with the Natchez, so Bossu uses many aspects of Arkansas life to il­
illustrate traits that he considers to be common to all Native Ameri­
cans. However, Bossu takes such generalization farther than Le Page
does when he says of American aboriginal groups, “There is, as a
matter of fact, very little difference among them in custom and in

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Bossu's later depictions of various Indian groups will prove this generalized and even pejorative statement to be either carelessly or hastily made.

Bossu's favorable presentation of the Arkansas begins with his noting that they are "tall, well-built, brave Indians" and that "they have given proof of their devotion to the French on several occasions" (60). As evidence of Arkansas loyalty to France, Bossu relates the following.

I spoke to you in my last letter of an old Arkansas who said he had seen La Salle. This good Indian added that from that time on he had had a great deal of esteem for the French, who were the first white men he had ever seen. As chief, he had always urged his nation to have no European allies but the French. These Indians, following the Chief's advice, wanted no part of the Natchez' plot to massacre the French. I must give credit to these good Indians, who are still at war with the Chickasaws among whom the Natchez found refuge (60-61).

In complimenting the Arkansas, Bossu also inadvertently compliments La Salle, who elsewhere suffers from Bossu's opinion. More than expressing a latent positive attitude toward Cavelier, Bossu's transcription of the old Indian's favorable remarks continues the author's desire to present the French as esteemed friends of Native Americans from the very first days of contact. The reference to Cavelier also indicates how Louisiana colonial writers kept their eyes and ears open for traces of the La Salle legacy so as to justify French claims to a continent.10

After relating Arkansas appearance and character approvingly, Bossu next describes the Indians' country with the same admiration and fondness that Pénicaut and Le Page lavish upon the Natchez area. However, just as Pénicaut feels compelled to condemn the Natchez sex dances, so Bossu ceases to praise the Arkansas when it comes to their "lewd dance." Operating from the same devoutly Catholic stance as
Pénicaut, Bossu reports,

The lewd dance was held secretly at night by the light of a large fire. All those who joined this lustful group were supposed to strike the post and swear never to reveal what they had done or seen at this dissolute dance. Both men and women danced completely nude, accompanying their obscene poses and gestures with lewd songs. You will excuse me if I refrain from translating them, although they are merely light and witty in the original Indian language (61).

Typically briefer in his descriptions than Pénicaut and Le Page are in theirs, regardless of the subject, Bossu quickly and happily relates that “this last dance has been abolished since our arrival in America” (61).

While he resembles Pénicaut in his abhorrence of Indian sexual behavior, Bossu does not share Pénicaut’s awe over red magic. He concedes, however, that other Frenchmen may be impressed by the seemingly unnatural performances.

There are skillful men among the Arkansas who would probably astound our magicians. I saw one, in my presence, do a trick which will seem unbelievable. After going through some of the usual magician’s motions, he swallowed the seventeen-inch rib of a deer, holding on to one end, and then pulled it up out of his stomach. This Arkansas went to New Orleans to show this trick to the governor and all the officers of the garrison. This is what the Indians call “making magic” (61-62).

While Pénicaut insists that Indian magic derives from the Devil, Bossu remains more practical. Increasingly, as he relates other amazing feats, Bossu hastens to point out their natural explanations. Eventually, he even begins a campaign of sorcery-bashing, exposing the shams of many witch doctors so as to enlighten and thereby emancipate those Indians who are manipulated by their medicine men. At other times, though, Bossu uses the same shams if they can either benefit Native Americans or get the author out of a difficult situation.
Bossu proceeds to describe other aspects of Indian life upon which the other Louisiana writers also concentrate. Like his predecessors, Bossu gives much attention to Native-American war-making. In detailing the war dance and other pre-battle activities, Bossu, although keenly interested in the rituals, starts to criticize two aspects of red culture that the other authors also condemn: wartime cruelty and paganism.

With regard to war-related abuses, Bossu says in a footnote to his account of the pre-battle ceremonies,

> These are the words of the war chant: "I am going to war to avenge the death of my brothers. I'll kill, exterminate, rob, and burn the enemy. I'll bring back slaves, I'll eat their hearts, I'll roast their flesh, I'll drink their blood, I'll take their scalps, I'll make cups of their skulls." There are other such words dealing with vengeance, cruelty, and murder (63).

Clearly, while Bossu might have believed that certain Spaniards received just punishment in being tortured and killed by Indians, he still abhors the extent and frequency of Native-American blood lust.

Bossu's dislike of war activities is even more evident in his relating the departure for battle.

> It should be mentioned that when they get ready to go on the warpath, they very carefully paint their bodies and faces red. With their red bodies and their mad cries, they resemble a troop of demons who have come straight from hell. They are kind to their friends but very cruel to their enemies (65).

At first glance, Bossu might seem to resemble those Puritan writers who equate Native Americans with devils. However, it must be remembered that in the passage quoted above Bossu is isolating one aspect of Indian culture -- wartime barbarism -- as being hellish and not labelling all facets of Native-American society as demonic.

Perhaps most appalling to Bossu and to other writers who decry red cruelty are the post-battle torturings of prisoners. In addition
to presenting the horror of these spectacles, Bossu is not blind to the pathos in the interactions between victors and vanquished.

The women prepare to greet the prisoners or slaves by beating them with sticks. Whether these captives, who are bound and painted black, will live or die is determined by the women. Those who have lost a husband or a son have the right to choose a prisoner to replace him. Those chosen are adopted as husbands or sons and are immediately set free.

Those who are not adopted are burned alive over a slow fire. The young men of the tribe take out their anger on these unfortunate victims, who are scalped and tied to a wooden frame where they undergo the most frightful torture without complaining. As a matter of fact, they sing until they die, declaring that they are not afraid of death or fire. They even taunt their executioners by saying they are not suffering enough. If things were reversed, the victims would know how to make the executioners suffer even greater torment. The prisoners even point out where the fire should be built up more and which parts of their bodies are most sensitive (64-65).

Strangely and whimsically, two drastically different fates could be imposed upon Indian war prisoners. A painful death or adoption into the tribe depended upon the preferences of women, and a male captive viewed as odious and worthy of extermination at one moment could at another be embraced as husband or son, depending upon the needs of female members of the tribe. The implication is also that the male captives embraced either fate doled out to them as nonchalantly as the captors decided what to do with the prisoners. Rather than pleading for adoption, the captives expected and encouraged their deadly tortures as the ultimate means of proving their courage, a chance that they would gladly have given to their enemies had the situation been reversed. The “bravery” exhibited by one who did not lose his (or her) composure during the final, horrible ordeal won the victim a fine posthumous trophy: the esteem of both friend and foe, who would be impressed by anyone (ally or enemy) capable of enduring the worst tortures imaginable.
As for Indian religion, Bossu treats it less scathingly than do Pénicaud and Dumont. Although Bossu refers to the manitou repeatedly as the Indians' "false god" and engages in physical as well as verbal manitou-bashing before both Indian and European audiences, he does not share Dumont's view that Native-American religion is preoccupied with the Evil rather than the Good Spirit.

Before ending Letter V and proceeding to the Illinois country, Bossu drops all negative depictions and returns to his more characteristically positive portrait of indigenous Americans. In relating his adoption into Arkansas society, for instance, Bossu shows the degree of his esteem for the tribe.

I am now a noble of the Arkansas nation. By adopting me, these people have shown me the greatest honor they can pay to a defender of their land. I consider it similar to the honor received by Marshal de Richelieu when his name was inscribed in the golden book among the names of the nobles of the Republic of Genoa (66).

Far from speaking facetiously, Bossu is further revealing his respect for Native-Americans and their institutions by again equating them to European counterparts. He concludes his introduction to his adopted red nation by highlighting a reciprocal love and respect: "You would never believe how attached to me these people have become since then" (66).

In a postscript to Letter V, Bossu, as if to humble himself, refers to another Frenchman who had been adopted with honors into Indian society long before the author achieved such distinction.

I found a half-blood among the Arkansas. After questioning him, I learned that he was the son of Rutel, the Bretton sailor who got lost at the time of La Salle's expedition down the Mississippi in 1682. I have had the honor of mentioning him before.

This half-Indian said that his father had been found and adopted by the Caddo Indians. He was made a warrior and was given an Indian girl as his wife because he had frightened and routed the enemies of the Caddoes by using
his rifle, which was still an unknown weapon among them at that time.

Rutel then taught the Indians how to sail and row their canoes. Through these skills they were able to defeat an enemy "naval" force. Rutel's instruction in this type of navigation, completely new to the Indians, earned him the gratitude and the veneration of these people. They considered him the greatest man in the world. The famous Ruyter, who rose from sailor to lieutenant and admiral of the United Provinces, was perhaps less esteemed than Rutel among the Caddoes (67).

Bossu's mention of Rutel is fitting homage to a Frenchman who had been present at the christening of Louisiana in the 1680s and who remained in the region during the colony's fumbling founding years, serving France by serving Native Americans. The fruitful, if independently conducted, work of Bossu's Rutel, carried out in obscurity among the Indians until the Frenchman's discovery after La Salle's return, redeems, in part, French failures to colonize Lower Louisiana in the late 1600s by establishing good will between an entire red group and a single white representative of a larger nation. Such a favorable rapport between the Caddoes and Rutel could only have benefitted future Franco-Indian relations when Frenchmen became more prevalent in Lower Louisiana. Also significant is the fact that Rutel's half-breed descendants bridge the gap between the demise of La Salle's followers and the arrival of Iberville's settlers -- that is, by being living and breathing continuations of a French presence in Lower Louisiana from the days of the colony's naming until the time that permanent white communities were finally a reality. Because of Rutel's progeny -- and, of course, that of many other Frenchmen who ventured into the vast territory before regenerative white enclaves were firmly and officially established -- a Franco-Indian Louisiana was evolving before any transplanted European society had a chance to take root. In the second book, Bossu cites Rutel's Franco-Indian offspring. In relating
the love of half-breed poet Rutel-Attikaloubémimgo for the totally white Manon, Bossu captures the poetry and pathos of a newly evolving and already racially complex Louisiana society.

As the other Louisiana writers do, Bossu blames the English for many of the problems that the French have with certain Indians. For example, after he leaves the Arkansas on an expedition to the Illinois area, Bossu relates how “at the instigation of the English” the Weas and the Piankashaws were plotting a Christmas massacre of the French (70). Regarding events following the French defeat of these Indians, Bossu notes:

The Governor ordered the prisoners to be returned to their people, who came crying, peace pipe in hand. They disclaimed all responsibility for the plot and said that the English were the cause of their madness. They were very grateful when they were granted peace, and all is quiet at present (71).

After eradication of the English nuisance, situations become so peaceful and ordinary in the Illinois territory, that Bossu maintains there is little news to report from there. To fill the space, he offers “anecdotes which may amuse you,” or “at least they will give you some idea of the character of the Indians” (71).

The anecdotes that Bossu offers attempt to free Native Americans of unfavorable impressions formed by Europeans. Bossu asserts that many Europeans, thinking that the Indians cannot reason and have no common sense, consider them as brutes. Yet the anecdote that I have just told and a great many others show that these people have a sense of honor, know how to punish themselves when they have done wrong, and realize full well when they have acted badly. There are people in Europe who act as ridiculously and as barbarously as the Americans (72).

The anecdote to which Bossu alludes is one which illustrates Native-American sense of honor, obligation, right, and wrong. Bossu presents the story of an Indian who, hired by the author to secure game,
returns drunk and empty-handed after trading the quarry to other Frenchmen for alcohol. Despite Bossu’s attempts to be rid of him, the drunken Indian “crashes” at the author’s lodgings. Once he has sobered up, however, the red man not only fulfills his obligations to Bossu by securing an abundance of game, but also fittingly apologizes, expressing both his guilt and his gratitude to the author.

Bossu further pardons Indians for some of their wrongdoings by stressing that many vices have been acquired from the French. As a case in point, Bossu reminds his reader that

> you know as well as I that drunkenness places man on the same level as the animals, and that this vice is difficult to overcome even among the French. The Indians imitate them easily in this respect, and they point out that the whites taught them to drink firewater (72).

Bossu’s awareness of the Indians’ conscientious code of conduct and his acknowledgement of French corruption of Native Americans bind him more closely to Louisiana writers who show similar realizations both before and after his day.

Also like other Louisiana writers, Bossu keeps an eye open for humor in Franco-aboriginal relations, even in the most unfortunate situations of culture clash. In the following anecdote, a storytelling jewel, the author teams with Indians to counteract a blight introduced into red society by whites.

One day my Indian found the door to the King’s storehouse open. He sneaked in like a snake, opened the spigot of a cask of brandy, and spilled half of it while trying to fill a bottle. I was forced to dismiss him because of this accident. Since he was a good hunter and had only this one fault, when his wife asked me to make medicine to keep him from drinking, I was willing to try it if she and their relatives would help. One day when the hunter was drunk and wanted still more to drink, I had someone tell him that I had some brandy but was very stingy with it. He came immediately to ask me for some, but I told him I wanted to be paid. He answered that he was very poor but that he would lend his wife to me for a moon if I wanted to accept her. I explained to him that
the chiefs of white warriors did not come among the red men to take advantage of their wives. I would, however, accept his son as a slave if he wanted to sell him to me for a cask of brandy. We concluded the sale in the presence of witnesses, and he turned his son over to me.

I felt like laughing from the very beginning of this farce. I also had him drink some brandy into which I had put long pepper. After he had drunk, he was bound and permitted to sleep. When he became sober, his relatives and the chief of the village, who knew of the scheme, went to see him in his cabin, where he was stretched out on a mat. They explained to him the horrible and unnatural thing he had done when he had sold his own flesh and blood. The Indian came to see me immediately, wailing, "Indagey wai panis," which means, "I do not deserve to live; I am unworthy of the name of "father." He blamed the brandy which I had given him and which had set his body on fire; he called it the urine of the Chief of Hell, the Evil Spirit who was to blame for all of this.

His wife, who had a sense of humor and who was enjoying herself at her husband’s expense, asked him with a straight face where his son was. He asked to be forgiven again and said that he knew that I would return his son to him, since I was kind. He also knew that the Chief of the French and the Father of the Red Men had no child slaves in his empire. I answered that that was true but that I had adopted the boy as my son and was going to take him to France and make a Christian of him and that all the skins of his nation could not buy him back.

His relatives pretended to weep and advised the drunken Indian to get the prayer chief, or the man who talks to the great Spirit. This is what they call the priest. I told him that I would do what the prayer chief advised, that I would give his son back to him but that he must be baptized, and I would be his godfather. I also demanded that the boy’s father swear off drinking, which had been so harmful to him. He said that my words were strong and that he would remember them as long as he lived. He asked me to adopt him as a brother and said that he was going to strike the post immediately. From that time on he has never drunk wine or any other alcohol. He has refused even when I have offered it to him and says that since he has struck the post, the Master of Life, who I myself said could not be fooled, would be angry with him. He reminded me that once I had told him how many glasses of brandy he had drunk, although I had not seen him do it. I had been right, and the Great Spirit who sees everything must have told me. This is how I went about finding out how many glasses of brandy he could drink. I left a clean glass near a cask of brandy. Every time he took a drink, I washed the glass and put it back where it had been. In this way it was easy for me to know.
how many glasses he had drunk. The astonished Indian thought I was a sorcerer (72-74).

Instead of finishing Letter VI (which tends to focus on the negatives of Euro-Indian relations) on a disturbing note, Bossu closes by presenting a story that, even though it touches on a serious social ill, arrives at a happy ending after many comic twists and turns. Bossu effectively taps into the tragicomedy that writers have always harvested from the clash of cultures in Louisiana society and the sequence of unfortunate events in Louisiana history. In addition to imparting the comedy involved in the reformative duping of an Indian suffering from a grave social ill, Bossu offers his anecdote in an effort to soften European considerations of Native Americans. Stressing the vulnerable and affective sides of red people -- their ability to laugh at, cry over, and love both themselves and others -- Bossu hopes to win increased white approval for reds. And it should not be overlooked that Bossu’s comic corrective of the Indian drunk also includes a word on treating Indian women better.

In relating a way through which he has learned to manipulate reds, Bossu further indicates his familiarity with Indians of all ages.

I have frequently noticed that the Indians are delighted when the French caress their little children. I took advantage of this in order to have them welcome me and, at the same time, fear me when I had reason to be displeased with their stupidity. The angrier I seemed to be with fathers, the more I pretended to love the children. I lavished caresses and European trinkets on them. The Indians understood that since I had nothing against their wives and their children, I liked them as much as ever and that I was angry only with those who had wronged me and not with their families. This touched them, and, as a result, they went out to hunt small game, which they threw on the ground in front of me. They would say, “This is to calm you. Do not be angry with us.” I answered immediately, “I am willing to forget the past when I see you return intelligently, when you do not come to me with empty hands” (74-75).
His intimacy with Indian families leads Bossu to the realization that “fathers’ hearts are the same throughout the world. Parents are pleased by the friendship shown to their children, who respond affectionately” (75). He adds, “You understand that it does not take much for me to gain the friendship of these people; you just have to know how to go about it” (75). Bossu asserts further, “I try particularly hard to learn something of the character of the people with whom I can spend just a short time” (75). His affectionate and inquisitive nature leads Bossu to want to know, understand, and share the lives of residents of the Western Hemisphere. The greatest knowledge he has acquired in his quest is that the inhabitants of the New World are basically the same as those of the Old. That is, aboriginal Americans share the vices and virtues of Continentals, of all humankind.

Bossu begins Letter VII of his first book by describing the Illinois settlements. As Pénicaud does, he makes several connections between the Illinois region and France. For example, he notes that “the hams are every bit as good as those of Bayonne. The local fruit is as good as that grown in France” (77).

Bossu details aspects of Illinois marital and family life as much for curiosity’s sake as for prompting Frenchmen into a re consideration of Continental ways by a comparison with Indian practices. While he is not advocating that all aboriginal ways be copied, he relates that

Indian marriages, governed entirely by natural law, depend only upon the consent of both parties. Since they are not bound by civil contract, the couples merely separate when they are no longer happy together, claiming that marriage is a matter of love and mutual assistance. I have seen very happy marriages among these people; divorce and polygamy, authorized by law, are not common. If an Indian is a good hunter, he may have two wives. Some of them marry sisters in the belief that they get along better than strangers. Indian women generally work hard, since they are warned from childhood that if they are lazy or clumsy, they will have worthless husbands. The Indian father,
whose natural sentiment is not stifled by greed, ambition, or other well-known European characteristics, does not force his child to do things against his will. With natural understanding, which we would do well to imitate, children are married to those whom they love (77).

In a manner that would make Rousseau proud, Bossu encourages Europeans to compare their ways to those of Indians, who, governed by "natural law," "natural sentiment," and "natural understanding," display greater sensibility and sensitivity in many areas than do Europeans, who, driven by the desire for possessions, progress, and success, have lost touch with many realities outside of material gain and societal conformity.

In a continued effort to uphold the integrity of Native Americans and to expose the foibles of Europeans, Bossu offers the impressions of Indians who have been to France. One Indian, with whom Bossu seems to be in particular agreement, scorns the affectations that he witnessed in Paris.

He had noticed at the Tuileries and in other public places men who were half women, with curled hair, earrings, and corsages on their chests. He suspected that they wore rouge, and he said that they smelled like alligators. This American spoke with the great scorn of these people, whom we call petits maîtres. They are born with the natural weakness and coquetry of women. Nature seems to have started to make them women and then forgot and gave them the wrong sex. This Indian had also noticed the enormous height of the headdress of the women of that time as well as the height of their heels. I wonder what he would have said if he had seen the exaggerated width of their hoop skirts and the narrowness of their waists, strangled by that piece of armor called a whalebone corset? These coquetish women are made just as ridiculous by these artifices as are their stupid admirers. You have noticed, just as I have, during your travels through Europe, that foreigners and people from the provinces become insufferable to their compatriots when they try to imitate our petits maîtres and our petites maîtresses. Our Indian said that such effeminate manners dishonor a respectable nation (84).

The author's condemnation of superficialities and affectation in
Continental fashion and manners corresponds to his general detestation of materialism and removal from the natural world. In attacking the importance that some of his compatriots place on the fads of the day, Bossu continues his campaign against egocentrism, greed, and a host of other corruptions resulting from man’s and woman’s straying from natural and religious laws.\(^\text{11}\)

Another Indian seems more impressed with Paris than does the red social critic quoted above, and the former offers comparisons to his Native-American home in an attempt to explain his French experiences accurately. Europeans may find the descriptions quaint and amusing, but indigenous Americans consider them incredulous and disturbing.

I have spoken to an old Indian who was a member of Princess Tamaroa's party. I questioned him about France and asked him what he thought was beautiful in Paris. He replied that the Rue des Bouchers was beautiful because of the quantity of meat he had seen there and that the Rue Saint Honoré pleased him, too. When he told his fellow tribesmen that he had gone to the opera, where all the people were magicians and sorcerers, and that he had also seen, on the Pont Neuf, little men who spoke and sang, they would not believe him. When he told them that he had seen in the great village of the French (Paris) as many people as there are leaves on the trees of their forests (a figure of speech used by the Indians to indicate a great number, since they have no numbers beyond one hundred), they answered that, since such a thing was impossible, the Europeans must have bewitched his eyes and must have shown him the same people over and over again. He added that he had seen the cabins of the great French chiefs, Versailles and the Louvre, and that they held more people than there were in all the tribal lands. He said that he had also seen the cabin of the old warriors, l'Hôtel Royal des Invalides. Since the old man was beginning to be senile, he agreed with the other Indians that the French must have bewitched him (83–84).

The two Indian views of Paris that Bossu records for posterity are as valuable for their insights into the red psyche as they are for illustrating the author’s respectful yet amused interest in Native-American
Bossu mentions other Illinois who have been to France and/or who have married Frenchmen, and he refers to many of them with titles that further indicate a deference to Indian "royalty."

When he moves from the Illinois to the Missouri Indians, Bossu continues his crusade to redeem indigenous cultures in the opinions of Europeans by again highlighting how Frenchmen have corrupted the Native Americans. He notes of the Missouris:

They had at one time been warlike and honest but ... they were corrupted by the bad conduct and the constant fighting of the French hunters, who were contemptible because of their fraudulent dealings in business affairs. These Frenchmen committed the greatest and the most unforgivable crime of all in the eyes of the Indians -- they seduced and carried off native women. Because of the disorderly conduct of these Frenchmen, the Missouris were not very kindly disposed towards them. That is why, under the administration of Monsieur de Bienville, they massacred Sieur Dubois and the little garrison under his command. Since not a single soldier escaped with his life, we have never been able to determine who was right and who was wrong in this affair (85).

Bossu realizes that many Frenchmen have not acted honorably in dealing with Native Americans. As a result, these whites have brought disaster not only upon themselves but upon innocent compatriots as well. As in the case of the Natchez, Bossu here also is willing to explain and even pardon some of the bloody actions instead of blankly condemning whole tribes for the totality of their retaliations. And when he does not have all the facts concerning uprisings and reprisals, Bossu gives Native Americans the benefit of the doubt.

Bossu next offers an anecdote to prove Indian integrity on the one hand and French fraud on the other.

The story which I am going to tell you will prove that these people are savages in name only and that the French who tried to deceive them fooled themselves instead. Here is the proof. Forty years ago, when these Americans still knew no Europeans, a hunter came into their country, taught them to use firearms, and sold them rifles and...
powder. As a result, their hunt was successful, and they had a great quantity of furs. Another hunter arrived some time later and tried to sell them ammunition. Since the Indians still had quite a supply on hand, they were not very eager to deal with this French adventurer. He thought up a rather strange trick to sell his powder without worrying too much about what the consequences might be to his fellow countrymen. He thought he had accomplished a clever piece of work in fooling these poor natives.

The Indians, who are naturally curious, wanted to know how France came by this powder, which they call grain. The hunter told them that it was sown in fields and harvested like indigo and millet in America. The Missouris, happy with this discovery, sowed all their powder and had to buy a new supply from the Frenchman, who made a considerable profit in beaver, otter, and other furs. He then went down the river to the Illinois country, at that time commanded by Monsieur de Tonti.

The Missouris went to the field from time to time to see if the powder was growing. They carefully placed a man on guard to keep the animals from destroying the future crop. They soon, however, discovered that the Frenchman had tricked them. It should be remembered that Indians are fooled just once and that they never forget it. They promised to avenge themselves on the first member of our nation who would come among them. A short time later, the lure of profit tempted our hunter to send his partner out with an assortment of merchandise to sell to the Missouris. The Indians discovered that this man had been sent by the one who had fooled them. They made no mention of the trick played on them, and they even lent the trader the public cabin, located in the middle of the village, as a storage place for his packages of merchandise. When he had displayed his wares, the Missouris entered in great confusion, and all those who had been simple enough to sow their powder walked off with some of the merchandise, so that the poor trader was done out of all that he had brought with him. He complained bitterly about this treatment to the great chief of the nation, who answered in a serious tone of voice that the Frenchman would receive justice but that he would have to wait until the Indians had harvested the powder planted upon the advice of his countryman. The trader could count on the chief's word as a sovereign that a general hunt would then be ordered and that all the furs taken would be given to the Frenchman as a reward for the important secret he had imparted to the Indians. It did the traveler no good to argue that perhaps Missouri soil was no good for the growing of powder, that the chief's subjects had misunderstood, and that powder could be grown only in France. All of his reasoning was in vain; he left weighing much less
than when he arrived and was quite embarrassed over being taught a lesson by savages (85-87).

This moral tale, like many others that Bossu offers to show that those who behave greedily and deceitfully eventually get their just deserts, features Indians as the dealers of justice and Europeans as the guilty party worthy of punishment.

While the anecdote given above makes Indians look good at the expense of the French, a second story following upon the gunpowder tale places Frenchmen and Indians on the same moral plane.

This lesson . . . did not discourage other Frenchmen from visiting the Missouris. One decided to play a trick on them. He armed a pirogue, which he loaded down with trinkets and with a barrel of ground ashes and coal covered with a layer of powder. When he had arrived at the village, he displayed all his baubles in the large cabin in order to tempt the Missouris to steal them. This is, indeed, exactly what the Indians proceeded to do. The Frenchman shouted and insulted the Indians. He ran to the barrel of powder which he had prepared, broke it open, grabbed a burning stick, and cried, “I have gone mad! I am going to blow up the cabin, and you are all going with me to the land of the spirits!” The frightened Indians did not know what to do. The Frenchmen who were outside the cabin said that their brother had gone out of his mind and could not be brought to his senses unless his merchandise was returned or paid for. The chiefs and all those who had relatives in the cabin begged the villagers to comply. The people were moved, and each one brought to the cabin all the furs he owned. The Frenchmen then informed them that he had regained his senses. The chief handed him a peace pipe, which he smoked. The trader then poured water on the powder to show that it could never again be used, and incidentally, to conceal his trickery. He carried off more than one thousand crowns in good furs. From that time on, the Indians have thought highly of him and have given him the name of “True Man” or “Man of Valor” (87).

While a clever European may have the last laugh in this tale, Bossu follows the passage quoted above with the Missouris’ tragicomic thwarting of Spanish aggression, the story of fatal mistaken identity that Le Page also relates.13 Rather than functioning as condemnations
of Native-American disingenuousness, the Missouri episodes, like many others, show how Indians use clever deceit in order to survive.

In order to show the depth of Native-American familial love and tribal honor, Bossu announces in the first book’s Letter VIII, “I shall finish this letter by telling you of the tragic death of an Acolapissa Indian, who sacrificed himself for his son. I have admired this as a heroic act and one which epitomizes human generosity” (97). The story reads as follows.

One day an indignant Acolapissa shot and killed a Choctaw who had called the Acolapissas the dogs of the French, whom he had also maligned. The Choctaw nation, which is the largest and the most war-like on the continent, armed itself immediately and sent delegates to the governor in New Orleans. They asked for the head of the murderer, who had placed himself under the protection of the French. The Choctaws were offered gifts to pacify them. The terrible nation refused them and threatened to wipe out the Acolapissa village. In order to avoid unnecessary bloodshed, we had to surrender the unfortunate Indian to them. Sieur Ferrand, the commander of the German post on the right bank of the Mississippi, was entrusted with this mission. A meeting was arranged between the Acolapissa village and the German post. The sacrifice was made in the following manner.

The Indian victim was named Tichou Mingo, which means “Servant of the Chief.” As is customary among these people, he stood up to deliver a speech. “I am a true man. I do not fear death, but I pity my wife, my young children, and my old father and mother, whom I leave behind and who depend on my hunting. I leave them in the care of the French, since I am going to be sacrificed for having taken their part.”

He had hardly finished this short and pathetic speech when his good and kind father, moved by this filial devotion, arose immediately and spoke in these terms, “My son is dying valiantly. But since he is young and vigorous, he is more capable than I to feed his mother, his wife, and his four small children. He must live in order to take care of them. I am at the end of my life. I have lived enough. I wish that my son may live as old as I am so that he can raise my grandchildren properly. I am no longer good for anything. A few years more or less make no difference. I have lived like a man; I want to
die the same way. That is why I am going to take my son's place."

Upon hearing these words, which expressed paternal love in so strong and moving a manner, his wife, his son, his daughter-in-law, and his grandchildren began to weep around this kind and courageous old man. He embraced them for the last time, asking them to remain faithful to the French and to die rather than to betray them by any act of cowardice unworthy of his blood. He said, at the end, that his death was a sacrifice which he was happy and proud to make to the nation. When he had finished these last words, he offered his life to the murdered man's relatives, who accepted it. Then he stretched out on a log, and his head was cut off with an ax.

Everything was settled by this death. The young man was obliged to give his father's head to the Choctaws. As he picked it up, he said these words, "Forgive me for your death and remember me in the land of the spirits." All the French who were present at this tragedy were moved to the point of tears. The virtue of this admirably and heroically loyal old man can be compared with that of the famous Roman orator who was hidden by his son in the days of the Triumvirate. He was tortured for having hidden his father, and the old man, unable to stand seeing so kind and virtuous a son tormented, gave himself up to the murderers. These soldiers, who were more barbaric than the Indians, killed both of them at the same time and on the very same spot (97-99).

This story of filial, paternal, and societal love also serves as another occasion for Bossu to paint a fine portrait of Native Americans at European expense. In equating the Indian sense of justice and revenge to that of the Romans, Bossu rates his contemporary pagans superior to their classical counterparts. For although the Choctaw are exacting a harsh payment from the Acolapissa, the former are only acting according to both Indian and French law. While they show no clemency, neither do they retaliate more than is due. The latter cannot be said of the forerunners of modern Europe to whom Bossu refers.

Indians often surpass even the modern French in refraining from demanding what is due them or from expecting any favors. Such is the case of an Arkansas man who refuses payment for saving a Frenchman from drowning. The mention of the near-drowning leads Bossu to
Indians of both sexes learn to swim from earliest youth. I have often seen mothers put their children into a pond of clear water. Watching these little innocents swim as naturally as frogs has always given me the keest pleasure. Would not such training be better than all the education over which we make such a fuss in Europe? The subject which I treat here is of the utmost importance, especially in a country where almost all traveling is done by water. I shall not spend too much time on boring details; I shall say that, following healthy reason, the first law of nature is self-preservation. It would be desirable for European mothers to imitate American mothers in such things as nursing their children themselves. This act, dictated by nature, would prevent many mix-ups among children who are presumably legitimate. Without referring to the many well-known cases concerning this subject, I have before my eyes a very recent example of the inconveniences which are so often caused by mercenary nurses. A gentleman, who is an officer in my detachment, was lost for a long time as a child when he was given away to be nursed. As soon as he was born in Paris, he was sent off to the backwoods of Normandy. Through some quirk of fate, he was not recognized by his parents until he was twenty-two years old and had undergone all kinds of hardship and danger.

I remember that in 1749, while I was on my way from Paris to Arpajon, I witnessed an accident that happened to one of these little victims sent off by parents who do not want to be annoyed by the crying of their children. The nurse in charge of the child put it in her apron. When she tried to get into the large carriage used on these trips, her apron strings came loose and the child fell dead on the pavement (100).

Passages such as the one quoted above further indicate that Bossu admires Native Americans for a practicality that derives in large part from closeness to nature. At the same time, he deplores French foibles spawn of a removal from the natural order of things.

As Bossu continues to compare the attitudes and practices of Native-American and European mothers, the former fare more favorably than the latter.

Indian women would consider themselves disgraced if they abandoned their children to the care of a far-off nurse.
Unlike European women, they are not afraid of losing their husbands’ affection for having carried within themselves the proof of their love for each other. On the contrary, their love grows. The pleasure of perpetuating the race and of seeing themselves live once again, day by day, in this little creature to which they have given life more than makes up for any hardship they may have to bear.

The white women, who are called Creoles, follow European custom in America and do not nurse their children. As soon as a child is born, they give it to a black, colored, or Indian slave, without thinking that the child’s blood may be contaminated. Several competent doctors have demonstrated that the milk drunk by the child influences his character. I have often seen in America innocent children become the victims of the disorderly life led by their nurses. This is disastrous to the propagation of the human race. I leave this subject to the faculty of the medical school. They will do a better job of it than I (101).

While sexism and racism are blatantly apparent in Bossu’s remarks, his primary concern is not to downgrade nonwhites but to promote the welfare of children, who run a greater risk of being neglected or abused when out of the sight and the care of their parents than they do when at home. Bossu criticizes the French elite more than any nonwhite surrogate for the unfavorable formation of white children. After all, the Continentals and white Creoles act against nature and humanity in shirking their responsibilities to their offspring. The author’s acquaintance with Native-American mothers and fathers has led him to believe that they are among the best parents to be found anywhere, and he offers their method of rearing in hopes of improving childcare not only among France’s and the colonies’ upper classes but also among all people.

The knowledge and appreciation of Indians that Bossu gains from frequent sharing in Native-American life is further revealed in Letter IX. Bossu notes that "I have made it a point to conform to the customs of the people with whom I have to live and to assume their habits in order to gain their friendship" (108). His eager desire to partake in red life wherever he goes grants him easy access into intimate circles of various tribes. Such is the case in the village of the Peorias, where the author is greeted by the chief and warriors and feasts on fare that he favorably appraises.

When it comes to observing the pagan rituals honoring the "false god" represented by the Peoria village's manitou, Bossu displays the respect and tact necessary for a successful attempt at either proselytizing or achieving a more secular advantage from the Indians. Perhaps both missionaries and capitalists could have learned from Bossu's approach. In the following anecdote concerning a live manitou that the author observed himself, Bossu presents a grotesque tale involving an unnatural being about which Bossu does not provide adequate explanation. The uncertainty as to what Bossu thinks the manitou in this instance actually is only adds to the intriguing quality of the passage.

Since these ceremonies are serious, one must be very careful not to burst out laughing. The Indians would consider this indecent and sacrilegious. It should be said, too, that the Indians never interrupt the Catholics when they are engaged in the divine service of the true God. What a sight I saw! A living monster made into a god! I was at the door of the false god's temple. The ceremonial leader asked me to enter. Since I was not yet used to the ways of these people, I hesitated. One of the Indians who accompanied me, noticing my embarrassment, said that I would insult them if I refused their invitation. This determined me to enter. Here is the description of the Manitou. Its goatlike head grew out of its stomach; its ears looked like those of a lynx, and it had similar hair; its feet, hands, thighs, and legs were of human skin and form. This false god must have been about six months old. The Indians had found it in the woods at the foot of the Santa
Barbara mountain chain, which runs as far as the rich mines of Santa Fé in Mexico. The purpose of this gathering was to seek the Manitou's protection against enemies.

I told these poor ignorant people that their Manitou was an evil spirit. The proof of this was that he had permitted the Fox nation, their cruelest enemies, to win a victory over their fellow tribesmen. They ought to abandon that evil spirit and punish it. They answered, "Teek-alabay, houay nee gai." That means "We believe you. You are right." They put it to a vote and decided to burn the Manitou alive. The high priest and sacrificer pronounced the sentence in these terms, according to the interpreter: "Monster, engendered in the excrement of the Evil Spirit in order to bring misfortune to our people, who mistakenly thought you a Manitou, you took no recognition of our offerings. You permitted a party of our tribe to be beaten and enslaved by our enemies, whom you openly protect. Our elders have voted unanimously, and the chief of the white warriors has advised us to burn you alive so that you may atone for your ingratitude toward us." At the end of this verdict condemning the false living god to death, the spectators shouted, "Hoo! Hoo! Hoo! Hoo! Hoo!"

This is what I did to try to gain possession of this monster, since I had not been able to obtain the one I mentioned to you earlier. I approached the priest and gave him a small present. Then I told him through my interpreter to inform the other Indians that, if they burned this spirit of bad omen, another monster that would be harmful to them could be born from its ashes. I also said that I was going to cross the large lake just to save them from this. He approved of my reasoning, and with the aid of the gift which strengthened my argument, the sentence was changed from death by burning to death by clubbing. Since I did not want the false god mutilated, I told the priest to turn it over to my men who would strangle it. If a member of the tribe killed it, misfortune would befall him. The Indians agreed with what I said and found that my arguments were just. Finally, they turned it over to me with the condition that I remove it far from their lands. I had it strangled, but, having neither spirits or wine nor brandy in which to preserve it, I had to have it dissected so that I could take it to France with me in order to satisfy your curiosity about natural history (109-110).

While present-day readers may wonder about the exact nature of the odd creatures that Indians believe to be manitous (especially the one mentioned above, which Bossu says was a "living monster"), Bossu makes it
clear that these and other items of Indian religion have no supernatu­ral dimension. And if he refers to the manitou as an “evil spirit” when speaking to the Indians, Bossu does so only to convince the Peorias to give it to him.

Bossu says further of the sham behind some Indian priests’ claims to supernatural powers, as well as the unfounded fear that some whites have of red communion with the Devil,

If I wanted to believe in superstition or in false mira­cles, I would have told you that I had seen the devil ap­pear to these people. . . . A number of missionaries have persuaded us in their edifying reports and letters that the devil appeared to these people so that they would wor­ship him. But it is easy to see that there is nothing su­pernatural about all this; it is a case of pure charlatan­ry (111).

While Pénicaud and even some missionaries firmly believe that certain Indian shamans derive magic from the Devil, the more scientific Bossu attempts to discern the natural forces behind the seemingly preterna­tural powers of witch doctors. The reason for Bossu’s urgency to ex­pose the impostors is simple: “The Indians generally revere their med­icine men or seers, true charlatans who take advantage of the stupid people and live comfortably at their expense” (167). In short, Bossu does not like seeing the red masses being swindled by a corrupt elite.

Bossu ends Letter IX by relating another manitou escapade.

I remember in the village of the Piankashaws, a tribe re­lated to the Illinois, one of our soldiers had a narrow escape. He entered a cabin and found a snake there, which he killed with his ax. He did not know that this was the cabin owner’s Manitou. The Indian arrived just at that moment and shook with anger when he found that his god was dead. He swore that it was the soul of his father, who had fallen ill and had died a year ago, shortly after hav­ing shot two snakes which were mating on a rock. In his feverish delirium, the old man thought that he saw two snakes and that they blamed him for their death. As he lay dying, he warned his son not to harm these animals or they would cause his death too. Since I knew the ways of these people, I advised the soldier, who was accused of delicide, to pretend that he was drunk or mad and that he
wanted to kill me and his comrades. The Indians, who did not know that this was put on, were the first to say that the white warrior had lost his mind. I pretended to be very angry with him and asked the Indians for ropes with which to tie him. The chiefs and the warriors asked me to pardon him, since he had drunk too much and was not responsible. They said that this happened to red men too. To make my anger seem even more authentic, I waited until the chief’s wife came to me, and I pretended finally to give in to her entreaties through deference to her sex, since I greatly respected women.

I gave the owner of the snake a bottle of brandy with which to drown his sorrow. The Indians have an excessive liking for this liquor, and they become completely mad when they have drunk too much of it. When they have become sober again, they say that they are not to blame for what they said or did; they attribute all their madness to the brandy and believe themselves to be perfectly innocent when they admit that they were out of their minds. If an intoxicated Indian kills another, the death goes unavenged. They take the precaution of not all drinking at the same time. Those who remain sober restrain the others, and the women hide all the arms. We can count brandy as one of the plagues that has decreased the population of the North American Indians. This liquor reduces man to the level of animals and often brings him to his grave. I have frequently seen drunken Indians kill each other with clubs and axes (111-112).

Although Bossu initially intended this illustration to be “another account of the superstition of these people and of their worship of frightful animals” (110), it ends up becoming a protest against alcohol abuse and its damage to Indian society.

In the first book’s Letter XV, when Bossu proceeds to describe the Indians of Louisiana’s southeastern quadrant after his return to the colony in 1758, the author continues his favorable, redemptive, often admiring depiction of Native Americans. For instance, he says of their hospitality,

These Indians and their beautiful wives are very friendly. Upon landing among them, you are greeted with a handshake and the peace pipe. After you have smoked, they ask you the reason for your trip, the length of time you have been traveling, if you intend to stay for a long time, and whether you have a wife and children. They also ask about the war in Canada and inquire about their father, the
King. They then bring mush made of pounded corn, often boiled with venison, bread made of the same flour and baked in hot ashes, roasted turkeys, grilled venison, and dough fried in nut oil. They also serve chestnuts in season, cooked in bear grease, deer tongue, and both hen and turtle eggs (131).

More than anything, this passage indicates the degree to which Bossu relishes Indian homecomings and other social events. The cordiality of Indian hosts and the fare at their feasts especially delight the author. Furthermore, such favorable reports of the return to Louisiana indicate how attached Bossu had become to his second home.

In a footnote to the paragraph given above, Bossu explains, without criticism, the practice of offering sex as part of a welcome.

It is customary among the Indians to offer you their girls. In the morning, the chiefs address the village in these terms: "Young men, warriors, be wise, love the Master of Life, go hunting for the French, who bring us what we need. You girls, do not be hard or ungrateful. Offer your bodies to the white warriors so that we can have children of their blood. Through such an alliance, we shall have their intelligence, and we shall be feared by our enemies" (131).

Far from criticizing the Indians for their offers of sexual hospitality, Bossu's mention of the practice is intended to reveal the depth of Native-American esteem for the French, an esteem that leads some reds to hope for the same type of hybridized, Euro-Indian communities that certain Louisiana writers envision.

As he delves into red sex and other issues of male-female relations, Bossu sketches the guidelines of Indian sexuality and marital life as he has observed them. He begins by presenting red expectations for men and women in sex and marriage.

These Indians generally have just one wife, of whom they are very jealous. When an unmarried brave passes through a village, he hires a girl for a night or two, as he pleases, and her parents find nothing wrong with this. They are not at all worried about their daughter and explain that her body is hers to do with as she wishes. The Indian girls do not abuse their freedom, since they find
it to their interest to appear modest if they want to be sought in marriage. The married women, however, say that they sell their freedom when they become wives and must be faithful to their husbands. The men reserve the right to have several women and are free to leave their wives, although that happens rarely. If a woman is found guilty of adultery, the least that can happen to her is that she will be repudiated. Her husband leaves the cabin; if there are children, he takes the sons with him, leaving the daughters with his wife. The woman must remain unmarried for one year, but the man can take another wife immediately. The husband may take the same wife again; that is the reason she must wait one year before remarrying (131-132).

If nothing else, the passage above shows that double standards according to sex are not a Western phenomenon. While conditions are more favorable for Bossu’s red men than for his red women after marriage, the pre-marital liberties of most Indian females as depicted by the author is considerable. Bossu reports such freedoms uncritically. He even ends Letter XV by calling the southeastern Louisiana females “these pretty women, who are not at all wild despite their reputation” (140). Considering his ardent Catholicity, it is noteworthy that Bossu can relate the pre-marital sex of Indian women and the extramarital sex of Indian men in such an objective fashion.

The “naturalness” that he has observed in Indian relations is further revealed when Bossu focuses on the process of marrying.

Marriage among the Indians, as I have already said, is completely natural and takes no form other than the mutual agreement of the parties involved. The future groom gives gifts of furs and food to his bride’s family. After the presents have been accepted, there is a feast to which the entire village is invited. When the meal is over, the guests dance and sing of the battle exploits of the groom’s ancestors. The next day, the oldest man in the village presents the bride to her husband’s parents. That is the entire marriage ceremony.

Bossu adds,

The good hunters and warriors choose the prettiest girls; the others take the rejected and the ugly ones. The girls, knowing that they will not be free in matters of
the heart once they are married, try to make the best
match possible. Once they have husbands, there are no
more love affairs (132).

While Bossu gives equal time to showing how both sides enter into In-
dian marriage, when it comes to Indian adultery he, typically of a
Western, Judeo-Christian male, stresses woman’s role in the affair.

Bossu details the manner in which Indian women are punished for
adultery.

First of all, the husband must witness with his own eyes
his wife’s misbehavior. Then both her husband’s relatives
and her own spy upon her. Even if her husband should want
to keep her, he cannot, since the Indians believe that a
real man would consider it beneath his dignity to live
with a woman who has betrayed him. When a woman is guilty
of adultery, her husband presents his case to the chief,
who orders some of his people to go out secretly and cut
switches. Everyone -- men, women, boys, and girls -- is
then forced to attend a dance. Those who fail to come are
fined, but as a rule no one is absent. At the height of
the dance, the adulteress is thrown to the ground and she
is mercilessly beaten on her back and her stomach. Her
seducer is given the same treatment.

When the two unfortunates have been sufficiently
whipped, a relative of each places a stick between the
guilty couple and those punishing them. The whipping
stops immediately, but the woman’s punishment is not yet
finished. Her husband then shaves off her hair and re-
proaches her for her conduct before the entire assembly.
He tells her that she was wrong to act as she did, since
he had always given her everything she needed, but now
that things have turned out this way, she can go off with
her lover. His braids are cut off too. These Indians
usually wear their hair parted in the middle, with braids
hanging on each side of their forehead. Then the lover is
told, as the adulteress is pointed to, “There is your
wife.” He is free to marry her immediately, but they must
leave the village.

When a woman seduces someone else’s husband, the
women gather, carrying sticks as long as their arms. They
find the guilty woman and beat her mercilessly, much to
the amusement of the young men, who finally snatch the
sticks away from the women to keep them from killing the
poor wretch (133).
Bossu's emphasis on women caught in adultery as opposed to men engaged in extramarital affairs seems to indicate that aboriginal Americans resembled eighteenth-century Frenchmen by placing more proscriptions on the sexual activities of married females than those of married males. For while married women are punished for sleeping with anyone other than their husbands (be the male lover married or single) and unmarried women are punished for sleeping with married men, both married and unmarried men seem to be punished only for sleeping with another man's wife.

Even in his second book, Bossu emphasizes the female side of adultery. In the Sixth Letter, speaking of "savages who live far in the interior" and who kill both male and female adulterers "without mercy" (94), Bossu notes,

The fear of such a severe punishment is a restraint that often stops men, but they do not know how to stop women who look for all possible ways. Women await the moment a young man is alone. Immediately one comes completely nude to offer herself to him. At first she tries by affectations and caresses to seduce him. If he resists, she protests that she will go to her husband and accuse the young man of having begged her to commit the crime. This single threat makes the young man amenable to the seductress's desires, for should he be as chaste as Joseph, his having been found in a cabin with a woman in this condition would be sufficient to condemn him. It would be in vain if he were to try to vindicate himself. Everyone would refuse to listen to his explanations, and the woman would be believed on her word alone.

Although adultery is so severely punished, loose girls publicly are tolerated in it. It is an evil that has become unavoidable among all nations today (95).

Clearly, Bossu believes that the blame for Native-American adultery lies most often with the woman.

As though his depiction of Indian women as sex vampires preying upon innocent and helpless young men were not enough, Bossu moves on
to chide even faithful women who are not more understanding and conciliatory toward their cheating husbands.

However jealous American women may be of their husbands, they dare not complain or even say anything when their husbands have intimate relations with other women. But they try to win them back by gentleness and all sorts of endearments. Certain European ladies instead of throwing vain fits of passion that make the public laugh would do well to follow their examples. If they could pretend to be somewhat sympathetic to their husbands, they doubtless would succeed in making them triumph over their weaknesses and make them more faithful to conjugal honor (95).

Even though Bossu demands that women be tolerant of their straying husbands, he omits recommending that men exhibit the same pardoning, sympathetic disposition toward cheating wives. Molded by conventional thinking, Bossu obviously feels that men “fall” because of exposure to constant temptation and hardships whereas women debase themselves simply to satisfy bestial desires.

Bossu continues the first book’s Letter XV by moving from male-female relations to other red interpersonal interactions. He mentions the “great severity” of Indian upbringing, a form of child rearing that prepares youngsters for surviving harsh living conditions and frequent intertribal hostilities. Bossu focuses also on Indian respect for elders and reports how euthanasia is sometimes considered an honorable practice. In directing attention again toward Indian concepts of friend and foe, the author offers more insights into red ways of thinking.

The Indians are very hospitable toward strangers with whom they are at peace and are kind to their allies and friends, but they are cruel and unmerciful to their enemies. They are surprised and even scandalized to see Englishmen, who have come to New Orleans presumably to negotiate the exchange of prisoners, carrying on business affairs and wandering about in our settlements. Shortly after his return from New Orleans, a native chief told me that he was tempted to bash in the heads of these English dogs to avenge the Frenchmen they had killed up north during the siege of Quebec. He added that the Indians spoke
to their enemies only with the tomahawk and the murderous ax. This means that once war is declared, you speak to the enemy only by beating him on the head. There is no communication with him, either direct or indirect, for any reason whatsoever. Anyone who disregards this is considered a traitor and is treated accordingly.

When peace is made, they bury the ax, or the war club, as a sign to their enemies that all hatred is buried, that all the horror and the destruction of war are finished, and that friendship and harmony between them and their neighbors will flourish again like the flowers of the tree of peace, the white laurel. This tree will spread its branches over the white land, which is what the Indians call a land that is at peace (134-135).

While Indian hostility during warfare may be more total than its European counterpart in Bossu’s opinion, Indian peacemaking likewise seems more complete to the author. Just as Louisiana writers have a hard time accepting Indian wartime cruelties, so Bossu’s Native Americans have a problem understanding European tolerance of the enemy prior to the establishment of peace.

The totality of Indian adherence to war or peace can prove beneficial to the French, as indicated above in the red willingness to combat the English on behalf of the French. Bossu relates Chief Tamathlemingo’s fidelity to the French in the face of English temptation and reminds the reader of how easy it is for the French to make Indian allies. In mentioning Chief Allekxi Mingo’s hatred of the Spanish at Pensacola, Bossu notes that oral traditions of southeastern Indians have kept alive the memories of cruelties rendered to their people two centuries earlier by Hernando de Soto’s men, who explored much of what is now the United States Deep South. Bossu attempts to appease the unrequited anger and lingering indignation of generations of southeastern Indians by explaining to them that De Soto’s party met an ignoble end, that many atrocities of conquest had been condemned by Spain, and that the Spanish of the 1700s are different from those of the 1500s.
As he brings Letter XV to a close, Bossu makes it especially clear that he desires peace among Indians primarily for the Indians’ sake, not necessarily for the advantages to be reaped by the French. He notes of red-on-red friction and of his mediation between red individuals,

> The Indians are very sensitive and are easily insulted. It is when they are drunk that they usually remember those who have insulted them. I have often acted as mediator between two Indians. I have told them that they should live like brothers, forget the past, and use their courage only in defense of our common country. I have assured them that if they did not listen to me, the Great Spirit would be angry with them and would ruin their corn crop.

> When the men were ready to come to blows, the women would come quickly and ask me to arbitrate. I did all that I could to reconcile the two parties and made sure that no one’s honor was at stake (139).

While some Europeans may desire and even encourage red-on-red altercations as part of a strategy of genocide (whose aim would be to clear the way for increased white colonization), Bossu wants for the Indian what he wants for everyone: life, peace, and prosperity.

Letter XVI of the first book continues Bossu’s detailed description of Alabama life. The author highlights red ingenuity and other aspects of southeastern Indian life, still attempting to improve European opinions of Native Americans. (Bossu even goes so far as to assert later, in Chapter XVIII: “It can be safely said that when Indians apply themselves to a single thing, they excel in it” (166).

While earlier writers such as Pénicaud cite continuous problems with the Alabama Indians, Bossu recounts how the French make lasting peace with the nation. Such peace is effected through the “Chevalier d’Erneville”’s demanding justice, Indian style. As Bossu relates,

> The Alabamas are very fond of the French. There is even an agreement stating that a Frenchman who kills an Indian will be put to death, and an Indian who kills a Frenchman will suffer the same fate. Here is an incident which occurred while the Chevalier d’Erneville was commander among the Alabamas. A young native shot a soldier of the
garrison and then escaped. The Commander, not knowing where the murderer was to be found, spoke to the chiefs of the Indian nation and told them that justice had to be done. They answered that the young man had taken refuge with another nation. The Chevalier, not satisfied with this excuse, said that the dead man cried out for vengeance. As the Indians say, blood must be avenged with blood. The murderer’s mother had to die in his place. They answered that it was not she who had committed the crime. He replied that he was speaking like the red men, who, when one of their people is killed and justice is not done, seek vengeance on a member of the guilty man’s nation. He then reminded them that if good relations between the whites and the red men were to be maintained, criminals must be punished. The chiefs offered him many furs and even horses loaded with booty. The Commander, known for his zeal and his altruism, preferring the King’s welfare to his own and the nation’s honor to fortune, refused all the presents. He added that he could not rest because his murdered warrior cried out every night, “Avenge my death!” Seeing that they could not move him, these poor people held a council and sent out eight men led by a young war chief. He immediately led his detachment to the murderer’s mother and told her that she would have to pay for the Frenchman’s death since her son could not be found. The amazed and tearful woman was led away, followed by her sad relatives. When the family saw that there was no hope for a pardon, one of them said to the leader of the troop, “My mother-in-law is dying courageously since she did not commit the crime.” He suggested that they wait while he went to find the murderer. He brought the criminal to the assembly where the Chevalier d’Erneville was waiting and said, “Here is the guilty man; do what you wish with him.” The Commander replied that it was up to them to see that justice was done. The Indians bashed in his head immediately.

After justice was done, the chiefs made speeches to the young people and advised them to be the friends of the French. They added that any time one of them was mad enough to kill one of our people, he would suffer the same fate.

The Chevalier d’Erneville then spoke to the assembly and gave the tribe a gift sent him by the Governor. The Indians then offered him the peace pipe, which all the French soldiers and settlers smoked as a sign of amnesty. Then they drank cassina, which is the drink of the “white word” or oblivion.

Since that time the tribe has never failed us. In 1714, Alabama Indians offered to build, in their territory and at their own expense, Fort Toulouse and asked the French to occupy it. Monsieur de Bienville, who was then
Because of D’Erneville’s operating effectively on the Indians’ level, the red attitudes toward the French become so favorable that the Alabamas of Bossu’s day hardly resemble the troublesome tribe of Pénicaut’s time. Furthermore, the French leader in this instance resembles the typical hero of Bossu’s writings and the works of other Louisiana authors. That is, D’Erneville, like Saint Denis, puts service to country and fellow human being before personal gain. In addition to the absence from his personality of that most detestable vice of greed, the protagonist is made all the more admirable and effective in his undertakings by his acquisition of a clever, pragmatic Indian way (Bossu and others would call it) of doing things. In short, Bossu’s D’Erneville, like all the idols of early Louisiana authors, achieves success by becoming like the Indian.

In a footnote to the passage quoted above, Bossu offers one of the few instances of praise for Bienville to be found in the literary works of colonial Louisiana.

This governor is so well thought of by the Indians that they always mention him in their speeches. His name is so deeply rooted in the hearts of these good people that his memory will always be dear to them. As soon as they saw me, they asked me about him, and I told them that he was well and was living in the great village, Paris. They were very happy when they heard this (144).

While Dumont directs nothing but diatribes at Bienville and while Pénicaut and Le Page do not compliment Le Moyne, Bossu relates the lasting love that certain Indians bear for their former white leader. The source of Bossu’s flattering reference to Bienville may seem odd, considering the fact that most of the Louisiana authors who knew Bienville questioned much of his Indian policy. Undoubtedly, it is
Bienville's absence from the colony by Bossu's time that grants the author the ignorance and the disposition to write favorably of this controversial founding father of Louisiana.

In Letter XVII Bossu again shows his skill at negotiating with Indians, a skill in which Bienville prided himself, but a skill for which some writers believe Le Moyne was over-esteemed. As an example of his ability to relate effectively with Native Americans, Bossu recounts his dealings with a troublesome band of Choctaws.

I met a rebellious party of Choctaws, who were on their way to the English after having crossed the river at a point which they call Tuscalousa. This means "white mountain" in their language. Their chief, Mingo-Houmas, was insolent enough to try to make me give him some brandy. He even had the audacity to raise his ax over my head. At this point, I told him that I was a real man, that I was not afraid to die, and that I had given up my body. I added that I was perfectly satisfied to die, since I was sure that if he killed me and my small group of warriors, the great chief of the French across the big lake would seek revenge by sending against their nation as many warriors as there were leaves on the trees. Surprised at my resolution, these people decided that I was a "man of valor" and that I had restored to them the sanity which they had lost when they devised the plan to abandon their father. They hoped that since I was kind, I would forget the past. At the end of the speech, they handed me a peace pipe, which I accepted on the condition that it be lighted with a new fire. This would mean that the past was forgotten and that our alliance would be renewed with the Choctaws, the children of the great chief of the French. To convince them that the past was really going to be forgotten, I said that the fire would light itself. I had with me a small phial of phosphorus that I had brought back from France during my last trip. I put some of this powder in the pipe, looked up at the sky, and uttered a few words to the Great Spirit. During this time, the powder, which had been exposed to the air, lit the tobacco. This surprised not only the Indians but also my French companions, who had never before seen an experiment performed with this powder.

After this mysterious ceremony, I gave some European trinkets to the people and a bottle of brandy to the Chief. Giving gifts to seal a bargain is customary among the Indians. Then they all shook my hand in friendship and started back to their village. They had given me
proof that they were ashamed of their mad plan, and we parted the best of friends (158-159).

Bossu’s "magic" feat with phosphorus is reminiscent of Le Page’s similar trick with the magnifying glass. In both cases, the intention of the author is not to dupe the Indian for purposes of ridicule or self-gain but to use a European advantage so as to forge more amicable Franco-aboriginal relations. Furthermore, Bossu demonstrates that a show of strength, cleverness, and gifts often helps induce Indians toward peacemaking.

Bossu, like the other Louisiana writers, advocates European appropriation of many aspects of centuries-old Native-American ways of life as means of adapting successfully to the strange new environment of the Western Hemisphere. Sheer "roughing it" à l’Indien is often absolutely necessary for surviving in less "civilized" parts of the New World, where the only way to eat, travel, and sleep is in the aboriginal fashion. But even where European-style farms and towns have become or are becoming the norm, white persons can acquire and implement much accumulated, practical knowledge from their red neighbors. Hence, Bossu approaches the rich reserves of Indian learning for what they are: veritable treasures of daily living not to be ignored by Euro-Americans.

In the following passage, in which Bossu relates a trip from Mobile to Fort Tombigbee in the summer of 1759, the author again reveals his esteem for Indian ways (as well as his disgust over European slowness to acquire them) when he criticizes Continental softness and affectation and points out how disastrous the characteristics can be on the American frontier, especially in times of war.

Our European dandies, who carry with them mirrors, toilet-ries, dressing gowns, etc., would be considered women and not war chiefs by the Indians. They would not distinguish themselves in this type of campaign, where they would have to endure excessive summer heat and the rigors of winter,
sleep on the ground, and expose themselves to the weather in order to keep the Indians from taking them by surprise. Braddock, the commanding general of New England, learned this much to his sorrow in 1755, when he took Fort Duquêne. He and all his army were massacred at some distance from this post by a small number of Frenchmen and Indians, our faithful allies, led by brave Canadian and European officers, who accomplished great feats of heroism in this engagement (159-160).

To be a survivor in the New World, especially during American warfare, one must meld Continental ways with those of Native America.

Like Dumont, Bossu is often guilty of conflicting statements and lack of clarity, especially with regard to the Indian. The incongruous or unclear commentary is undoubtedly the result of a lack of revision. An example of the self-contradictory nature of some of Bossu’s passages occurs in the first book’s Letter XVIII. Focusing on the Choctaws, Bossu offers this criticism right after he has favorably compared Choctaw love, generosity, and sense of justice to a lack of the same among Europeans.

The people of this nation are generally of a brutal and coarse nature. You can talk to them as much as you want about the mysteries of our religion; they always reply that all of that is beyond their comprehension. They are morally quite perverted, and most of them are addicted to sodomy. These corrupt men, who have their long hair and wear short skirts like women, are held in great contempt (169).

Not only does the paragraph quoted above contradict positive statements about the Choctaw made not very far away in either direction of the text, it also seems internally contradictory. That is, if “most of them are addicted to sodomy,” by whom are they “held in great contempt?” By other tribes? By the minority of non-sodomizing men within their own tribe? Perhaps Bossu is talking about two different groups of Choctaw men here and failed to make a distinction between the two. Perhaps his exasperation over Choctaw failure to embrace
Christianity and Christian morality also confounds Bossu's language. His lack of clarity and lack of adequate revision leave the reader wondering here and elsewhere what Bossu (like Dumont) really is trying to say. Fortunately, with Bossu as with Dumont, there are too many favorable discussions of the Indian to deem this and other occasionally derogatory references very important. In the cases of both Dumont and Bossu, one can overlook fleeting and careless pejorative comments and focus on larger, generally positive depictions to determine each author's attitude toward Native Americans.

As Bossu moves from the Choctaws to the Chickasaws in Letter XVIII, his ability to distinguish Indian nations from each other for the reader's benefit becomes even more clear. While one tribe may be praised for its collective strengths, the other is criticized for its weaknesses. The same holds true for individuals within a given tribe -- they are different from each other. Bossu's distinctions and criticisms concerning the Choctaw and the Chickasaw are nothing short of surprising, considering the fact that the remarks do not seem to coincide with one group being a traditional enemy of the French and the other usually an ally. Despite the nature of their relationship with the French, the two nations win both flattering and unflattering comments from the author.

For example, Bossu notes that France's friends the Choctaw are "very dirty, since they live for the most part quite far from rivers" (166). On the other hand, the women of the troublesome Chickasaw nation are "beautiful and very clean" (172). Always commenting upon Native-American comeliness whenever he encounters it, whether in females or in males, Bossu calls enemy Chickasaw men "these tall, well-built people" (172). As in the reports of Pénicaud, Dumont, and

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Le Page, Bossu’s assessments of the finer and the coarser in aboriginal cultures extend to eating, clothing, hunting, and warring.

Bossu goes beyond superficial issues to probe deeper distinctions. He notes that while many other Indians are duped into venerating the witch doctors whom he cannot stand, the Choctaw respond differently to those supposedly in league with darker forces: “The Choctaws believe in the existence of sorcerers and witches. When they think that they have discovered one, they bash in his head without any kind of trial” (168). Regarding Indian religions further, Bossu relates that although some tribes have complex theologies, the Choctaw “have no religion” (166). The varying Native-American manifestations of ruling, obeying, and loving are also of interest to Bossu.

While some Louisiana writers tend to criticize the Chickasaw more easily than they do other Indian groups because of the former’s preference for the English over the French, because of their adoption of Natchez Indians after the latter’s infamous massacre of the French, and because of the many other problems they posed to French security, Bossu speaks quite favorably of “these valiant Indian warriors” (172) before focusing on French difficulties with them. Furthermore, unlike Dumont and others, Bossu does not blame Bienville for the two failed campaigns against the Chickasaw. And despite British agitation of the Chickasaw against the French, Bossu still acknowledges an Englishman’s ransoming a French sergeant from the Chickasaw as well as the same sergeant’s residing in British Charleston for some time. These unmaligned references to two separate enemy groups that often worked together against the French show Bossu’s resemblance to other Louisiana writers who are willing to acknowledge the good points of their foes in hopes that the many peoples making up the North American population can work together for the benefit of the respective colonies.
Bossu is just as willing to point out threats to Louisiana’s well-being from within the colony’s French population as he is to warn against dangers from without. In Letter XIX, he refers to the “imprudence and vanity peculiar to our nation” (footnote, 177) as characteristics detrimental to colonization. In the same footnote, Bossu also speaks of officers who are “poorly selected, violent, and incapable of doing the work assigned to them.” He continues the footnote by stressing the alternative:

They should have been men who were above the more vulgar passions and who were interested only in the good of their country. This should be the sole guide for those who wish to do a good job.

It seems to me that this useful lesson should be taken to heart by all those who are sent to the colonies in positions of authority.

I have told this . . . because it is singularly significant today in view of what goes on in our colonies (177-178).

Bossu’s criticism of those who serve country and fellow humankind poorly or maliciously will be examined in more detail in the chapter devoted specifically to this topic. For now, it is enough to note that the author stops his criticism of fellow Frenchmen to end the footnote with the following positive acknowledgement: “There are, however, good governors and finance officers who must not be confused with those who have made quick fortunes by odious means, through public misery, and by the blood of many unfortunate victims” (178).

In Letter XX, dated “New Orleans, June 1, 1762,” Bossu relates “Monsieur de Belle-Isle”’s 1719-1720 abandonment on the Louisiana coast and sojourn among the Attakapas Indians. Resembling Le Page in some ways, Bossu gives a different edge to De Bellisle’s loss, his wandering on the coast, his residence among the notorious cannibals, and his eventual ransom. As one of the best crafted anecdotes in Bossu’s narrative, De Bellisle’s story deserves quoting at length.
The role of De Bellisle’s pet dog in the pre-captivity wandering, followed by De Bellisle’s becoming the pet of an Attakapas woman, make Bossu’s telling especially entertaining.

In his De Bellisle story, Bossu also depicts Bienville and the Attakapas more charitably than do many other writers. For example, once De Bellisle returns to the white world, Bossu notes,

Because of Belle-Isle’s knowledge of the Attacapas’ way of life, he was very useful to the Governor. The Spaniards of New Mexico had never been able to subjugate these Indians as they had the other tribes in this part of their empire.

Monsieur de Bienville sent a present to the Attacapas and another one to the widow who had adopted and protected Monsieur de Belle-Isle. These people, who were not expecting the Governor’s generosity, sent envoys to thank him and to form an alliance with the French. Monsieur de Belle-Isle’s patroness was among the group. From that time on these Indians have always treated the French humanely, and the French have persuaded them to give up the barbaric custom of eating human flesh (191-192).

Bossu comments further in a footnote, “The hospitality offered Belle-Isle by the Attacapas proves that we should consider their cruelty the result of a lack of education. Nature has made them capable of showing human kindness” (192). Typically, Bossu suggests that Europeans probe the reasons behind Native Americans behaving the way they do instead of blanketly condemning indigenous peoples for even the most appalling “barbarities.”

Earlier white residents apparently shared Bossu’s pardoning disposition toward Louisiana’s famous cannibal tribe, for the author notes further that

when the Attacapas came to New Orleans, they were well received by all the French, in recognition of their treatment of Monsieur de Belle-Isle, because if it had not been for them, he would have suffered the same unhappy fate as his companions (192).
Even "Monsieur de Bienville sometimes amused himself with these canni­bals by having their pupil, Monsieur de Belle-Isle, converse with them in sign language" (192). As this ending to the De Bellisle story in­dicates, Bossu’s version depicts the young Frenchman’s relationship with his captors in a far more positive light than does Le Page’s account.18

As Le Page does, Bossu also speculates on the origins of Native­American peoples. In Letter XXI of the first book, he contends that they could be of Mediterranean or Asian derivation, their ancestors having arrived in the Western Hemisphere by crossing the Atlantic or by walking on a former isthmus from Siberia to Alaska. To verify his claim, Bossu points out what he observes to be striking similarities between the thoughts and practices of Native Americans and those of the pre-Christian Western World. To back his conjectures further, Bossu reminds the reader that God “created only two human beings, who are the Ancestors of all mankind” (209). He presents the views of other scholars who claim that American aborigines have come from this or that Old-World country before finally concluding, “I believe that those who come closest to the truth are the ones who believe that the Americans are of Tatar origin” (217). Undoubtedly, Bossu’s attempt to trace the roots of Native Americans to Europe, Asia, and North Africa is aimed at increasing Continental esteem for indigenous Americans by highlighting the latter’s ties to the Old World.

In Letter XXI Bossu also implies that he hopes Native Americans will stop killing each other and will settle down to a more sedentary existence.

The wars which the Americans have always fought against their neighbors have been partly responsible for prevent­ing population growth. They obviously lead a nomadic life because they are so few in number. They wander from forest to forest hunting for game, settle wherever there is enough food, and leave to go elsewhere as soon as there

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is not enough to eat. If they were more numerous, their needs would increase. The difficulty of providing for everyone would force them to think of new ways to find food and to depend less on mere chance. They would find use for many of the things provided by the earth and would learn to grow crops. In many regions they already cultivate corn; they would soon learn to grow other grains, and one discovery would lead to another. They would settle in the country which they farmed and would give up their nomadic life.

Several of the Indian nations have found it beneficial to move close to the European settlements in the north country. In exchange for furs, which the Europeans are so eager to have, the natives can easily obtain brandy and arms. They hunt and trap over a two-hundred-league area in order to get supplies which they now consider necessities. They appear to have settled down, while in reality they continue to enjoy their nomadic life. It will take a long time for them to become civilized. Perhaps they will destroy each other before then (216-127).

In contrast to the removal and annihilation that white appropriation of red lands would incur throughout the long, sad history of the colonization of the Americas, Bossu advocates a policy whereby Native Americans would be encouraged to adopt European patterns of farming and urbanization. Bossu devises his plan from a Christian/humanitarian consideration of red rights and needs as well as from an interest in making Louisiana secure and profitable for the French. While the benefits to white society from such a red transformation to European models are undeniable (e.g., more food, more commerce, more allies), Bossu again seems concerned with stopping red-on-red cruelty, self-inflicted genocide, and nomadic hardships primarily for the Indians' sake. The alternative, Bossu's vision for the Native Americans' future, is the vision that he holds for Euro-Americans as well: red-white communities where the forging of two cultures eventually forms a new society.

As he ends Letter XXI, Bossu wishes "to indicate briefly the way to conserve and prolong life in America" (217). It quickly becomes
apparent that the author recommends nothing less than the "Indianization" of the European as the surest means of survival in the New World. This conversion does not mean that the European is to forsake his/her cultural legacy and become identical to the Indian. After all, the meeting of the two worlds requires that Indians change as well, especially with regard to religion and political allegiance. Instead of complete abnegation of one's Continental heritage in the Americanization process, Bossu proposes that European ways be adjusted to the American setting and that Continentals learn to acquire from Native Americans the tried-and-true techniques for survival and success in the strange New World.

Neither completely Continental nor totally Native-American, the newly formed American societies manifested, to a greater or lesser degree, the characteristics of both contributing cultures. As Gwendolyn Midlo Hall notes in *Africans in Colonial Louisiana*,

> It is wrong to assume that there was an all-powerful, static, national culture and society brought over by the European colonizers into which non-Europeans were more or less socialized and acculturated. Cultural influences intensely interpenetrated the extremely varied population of the Americas. Like the Indians and the Africans, Europeans were acculturated by the peoples, and by the world, they encountered (xiv).

Whether close knit and dense or spread out and sparsely populated, whether dependent upon daily and equalized contact between reds and whites or characterized only by occasional intercourse between the races, these hybrid Euro-Indian communities unique to the Americas formed the foundation upon which later, continually evolving layers of Americanization occurred as waves of immigrants and the enslaved from around the Old World made their way to the New over centuries.19

Bossu closes Letter XXI by offering specific Native-American practices that he believes could improve European health.20
First of all, believing that “perfect health is brought about by exercise and sobriety” (218), the author suggests energizing, alcohol-free Indian fare as a staple for colonists. Bossu notes,

When Europeans first came here 260 years ago, the Indian had neither wine nor brandy. The natives, I have already said, lived on dried and smoked game, roasted or boiled with corn ground in a hardwood mortar. This food, called chili, is very tasty and healthful. When I went up the Mobile River with the Indians, I lived for about two months on this food. I can assure you that I never felt better than I did during that period. The best of all the Latin proverbs is: Plures gula occidit quam gladius. Voluptuousness and intemperance in eating and drinking kill more people than the sword. You should lead a life of moderation, especially in the warm regions of America (218).

Unfortunately, in the author’s opinion, the moderation and abstinence that Bossu recommends for eating and drinking are disappearing even from Native-American practice. He adds sadly concerning the introduction of alcohol into red circles, “I should mention that since the Americans have begun to drink wine and liquor, they have shortened their lives, just as we have” (footnote, 218).

Secondly, Bossu offers the Indian practice of induced sweating as a virtual cure-all. After describing in detail a proper sweating regimen, he asserts, “My conclusion, sir, is that diet and sweating are general cures” (219). In concluding that diet and sweating are “general cures,” Bossu also affirms that Native-American eating habits and health care often surpass their Continental equivalents.

As a third recommendation for improving one’s health and increasing one’s life span, Bossu offers exercise à l’Indien and au paysan.

The North American Indians’ great physical activity, such as dancing, ball-playing, hunting, fishing, and fighting, overheats them so that they perspire and thus eliminate body waste. Why do the peasants live so long and remain healthy without the aid of doctors? It is because of their work and exercise that they do not have the gout,
kidney stones, and other infirmities to which wealthy Europeans are prone because they eat rich food and walk as rarely as do sick old men. I have known some of them who have turned their stomachs into a drug store (219-220).

In summary, Bossu’s Indian guide to healthy living in the New World consists of the same things that present-day health-and-fitness gurus would advise: well-rounded, moderate diet; abstinence from drugs and alcohol; and daily exercise.

As though more persuasion were necessary, Bossu ends Letter XXI by affirming,

If these precautions are taken, I am sure that one could live longer in the New World than in the Old. There are at present a number of people in Louisiana who have been there since the founding of the colony. I have met a settler named Graveline who is 118 years old. He came here with Monsieur d’Iberville in 1698. . . (220).

Bossu undoubtedly uses the longevity of Indianized/Americanized whites living in Louisiana as a lure to the colony. Their adoption of the Indian health and eating practices proposed by Bossu in the eighteenth century still serves as a model in the twentieth century for anyone anywhere interested in healthy living.21

Bossu continues his defense of Native-American over European ways until the first book’s last chapter. He admiringly relates the resistance of Caribbean aborigines to Spaniards who combed Florida and the Antilles in search of gold and the Fountain of Youth, and he deplores the ruination of their idyllic homeland by white exploiters. Bossu does not fail to blast the French at the same time that he is criticizing Spanish quest for gold and ridiculing Spanish belief in a fountain of youth.

Focusing on a notorious colonizing scheme that lured French citizens to Louisiana under false pretenses, Bossu also exposes the folly and the easily exploited self-centeredness of his compatriots.
You probably know that during the period of John Law's famous system, which almost overturned the entire kingdom, Parisians were shown a picture of an Indian from the Mississippi Valley exchanging a gold ingot for a Frenchman's knife. Everyone at that time was mad enough to spend his hard cash on worthless stock in an imaginary El Dorado. It must be admitted that if New Orleans Indians had been in Paris at that time, they would have correctly surmised that the French had gone mad or that they were all magic-working medicine men. We have been told that those imaginary mines are what ruined La Salle, when he missed the mouth of the Mississippi in 1684. He did not stop to think that the interior of this great continent contained much more valuable treasure in the cultivation of the land, which nurtures all men and creates the true riches of nations (225-226).

Bossu's ongoing complaint against gold searching is a democratic one. In his opinion, the acquisition of precious ores enriches only a few (and these it corrupts) while it impoverishes many. Agriculture, on the other hand, benefits everyone in society and thereby makes for a happy kingdom. Bossu joins the other Louisiana writers in their effort to convince government officials and a variety of schemers and capitalists that the colony's agricultural potential is what they should be exploiting. This joint attempt on the part of Louisiana authors to persuade France to make the colony the bread basket of the empire shows the agrarian interest that has marked Louisiana literature from its birth.

While Bossu addresses the letters of his first book to Marquis de l'Estrade, in the second book he writes to "M. Douin, Chevalier" and dedicates the collection to "His Most Serene Highness, My Lord Philippe de Limbourg." In the opening dedication, the author remarks,

You will note in my descriptions of the country and customs of the Western Indians, whom Europeans call savages and barbarians, that these peoples are capable of heroism, benevolence and virtuous sentiments. It is for these reasons that the work has a claim to your interest (xvii).

Although Bossu's second book features more international action
outside Louisiana than does the first, it still follows its predecessor in the campaign to redeem Native Americans from European misconceptions.

In the second book’s Third Letter, Bossu resumes his favorable depiction of American aboriginal life when he relates his return to the Arkansas Indians. As in the first book, red women figure in that positive portrayal. “There is no country where the women are more industrious” (42), Bossu says of Arkansas females. After giving specific examples of such industry, the author comments further,

> It is pleasant to see these women devote themselves to their tasks without making the least complaint. They even sing while at work and smile with pleasure. Moreover, they are very friendly and they are very fond of the French. They prefer them to the Spaniards whom they cannot abide. It is known that some of our compatriots took Indian women for wives in the absence of white women at the start of their settlement (44).

Bossu thinks so highly of Arkansas women that he pays his compatriots a compliment by noting the red females’ preference for Frenchmen (who mixed in every way with Indians in the first years of the colony) over the Spaniards who had gained control of Louisiana from the French by the time of the encounter noted above. Throughout the Third Letter, Bossu relates the unbridled displays of hospitality that the Arkansas lavish upon him, remarking, “I dare say they experience as much pleasure in giving as a miser does in receiving” (47).

Bossu’s defense of Native Americans against European prejudice continues in the Fifth Letter, dated “From the Akangas country, February 22, 1771.” There, the author asserts,

> I shall say it again: savages, too little understood, do not deserve the kind of contempt in which general opinion holds them. . . . Most civilized vices are unknown to them. . . . At all times and places people have recognized the existence of the Divinity and have felt the need of his support. Having such innocent ideas, these people do not know to adopt customs which appear contrary to
nature and which are derived from associations with people who are very far removed from it (75).

Bossu says further in the next paragraph,

What I have found admirable among the men whom we have the barbarity to call barbarians is that there are no paupers at all among them who go about begging for a living; nor professional beggars who put certain plants and corrosive leaves on their limbs to inflame and make sores to rouse the pity of passers-by, which gives these wretches a taste for slothful living and makes them a burden to society, as is seen among the peoples of Europe. It is a shame that the latter do not imitate the Americans, among whom the widow and orphan are fed at public expense. Those who cannot do strenuous work are employed in hunting and in frightening starlings which come to eat their maize crop while it still is tender. Some of them make harpoons for fishermen, bows and arrows for hunters. And in this way they are not useless to the society of which they are members (75).

Not only do Europeans need to correct their misconceptions of Native Americans (whose closeness to nature frees them from "civilized vices"), the former would do well to reform their societies by observing Indian programs of public assistance and rehabilitation.

As evinced previously, Bossu often forgets about his own nation's priorities and sometimes desires concord among the red tribes simply for the Indians' sake. This lack of national interest is revealed in the Fifth Letter when he volunteers to be a mediator between the Arkansas and the Caddo, who are planning to battle following Arkansas abduction of Caddo women. Bossu declares himself to be an envoy whose duty is "to prevent a war, which could only be disastrous to these two nations" (81). He states further,

This mission will cost me several jugs of brandy, some twists of tobacco for the men, and some trinkets or baubles of European hardware for the women. But under the present circumstances should these little sacrifices be of any importance? I shall gladly make them with the greatest pleasure to prevent the shedding of human blood, and especially that of my dear Akangas (82).
Cherishing human life, regardless of race, Bossu does anything in his power to prevent the spilling of blood, even when the consequences mean nothing to France. Clearly, his affection for the Arkansas prompts Bossu into action in this instance, but he seems to indicate that he would do the same for other Indian groups to which he has no personal ties other than fellow humanity.

Bossu follows the passage quoted above with a tale decrying further spilling of red blood -- this time by white hands. The anecdote is another storytelling gem reflecting Bossu’s typical concerns as well as his narrative skill.

M. de Santilly, former captain of our troops, told me a story of the time that M. de Bienville was governor of Louisiana.

Some French adventurers or rather some barbarians committed a crime which is a dishonor to humanity. In an isolated place near the famous Lake Maurepas these cour-eurs de bois came upon a pirogue in which there were a savage, his wife and son, of a nation called Chactas, a friend and ally of ours. These Indians had completed a rather good winter hunt and they were going by pirogue to Mobile to trade bundles of skins for European merchandise, because since the arrival of Europeans in their country the savages cannot do without these goods as before.

They were peacefully boiling their pot of food where they were encamped on the bank of the lake at the edge of the surrounding forest. Those brigands, unworthy of the name of Frenchmen but greedy for skins of bears, deers, and tigers, were even more cruel than these animals (since they do not destroy their kind, but on the contrary when two bears meet in the wilderness they lick and caress each other). These treacherous boucaniers, I say, formed the abominable plan of murdering those poor Indians who counted on being their good friends and who generously offered them a dish of sagamité which they had prepared to eat together (82).

Once again Bossu features an episode from Louisiana history in which well-disposed Native Americans are treated savagely by malign and greedy whites. In this scene of bad whites fatally abusing good reds, Bossu alludes to the Indians’ being the same “kind” as Europeans.
(i.e., humans equal in every way to Caucasians), but he deems the sinister Frenchmen something worse than wild animals.

While the slaughtered indigenous family is clearly acculturated to such an extent that they are dependent upon French goods (a dependence that indirectly leads to their deaths, as they are killed by brigands who want the skins that the family barter for Continental supplies), the young red eyewitness to the murders resembles a pre-contact aboriginal personage. Through the latter’s impressions, Bossu affords insight into a frame of mind representative of much of Native America before or at the time of European penetration of the Western Hemisphere.

Fortunately, at some distance from the scene where this bloody tragedy took place, a small savage boy this day happened to climb a very tall and extremely bushy tree to take out of their nests some birds called Moqueurs by the French. . . . Without being seen, the young Indian from the height of this tree saw the murder committed. He was careful to remain hidden in the dense foliage, that concealed him from the murderers’ view, until nightfall. This small boy, as fleet as a deer, arrived out of breath at his village. He related the sad fate of his countrymen which he had just witnessed, but this child could not identify the assassins. He simply affirmed they were three white men, each armed with a hollow stick with which they made fire like lightning strike two red men and a woman of the same color who were eating their meal on the bank of the lake. Then these wicked men approached their victims and finished killing them by beating them with the butts of their hollow sticks as if they were wild animals. As for himself, he had hidden like a squirrel, for he had feared he would be treated in the same way if unfortunately he had been discovered by these barbarians who undoubtedly would have killed him to get possession of his birds and maybe eaten him (82-83).

Most notable, perhaps, in this anecdote, especially in Bossu’s rendition of a young Indian’s account of the inhuman slaughter, is the inversion of “barbarity.” Far from resembling the “savages” of much white literature, the Native Americans of this tale are well intentioned and live in harmony with the pristine world about them. The
uncouth white men disrupt the peace and order of aboriginal existence, and it is precisely their "savageness" and "barbarous" designs in addition to their whiteness and deadly weapons that indicate to the young red observer that they are alien to his country.

The white Louisianians who hear of the murders are just as disturbed by the news as the red tribespersons are. After all, the nation to which the victims belonged is a powerful ally of the French. The colonial government and military respond fittingly.

Rumor of this murder spread as far as Mobile. Acting on this sign of a crime, M. de Loubois, then King's lieutenant and His Majesty's commander of this district, ordered M. de Santilly, officer of this garrison, to set out immediately with a detachment composed half of soldiers and half of savages, to find those boucaniers or French hunters suspected of being brutal enough to slaughter that Indian family.

This officer, aided by a brave and intelligent sergeant, punctually executed his superior's orders. On the day after the next they found the three murderers camped in the fashion of boucaniers. These wretches, planning to enjoy a big feast, were roasting a deer loin, some turkeys, and prairie chickens, but they were sadly mistaken. Their game caused them no indigestion, for the famished soldiers found it delicious (83).

In addition to putting the military, the government, and the general white population on the side of the offended red tribe, Bossu, in depicting the action being taken against the murderers, begins the typical cyclic pattern of his moralistic tales. Those who commit a crime at the beginning of an anecdote will pay for it by the end.

When the French "good guys" meet the French "bad guys," the tale gains in drama.

These murderers then felt quite safe, not knowing that they had been discovered. At the first signal made by M. de Santilly, his escort seized the three criminals. At the same time the sergeant said to them in a dreadful tone: "Ah, wretches, what have you done? You have slaughtered on a certain day on the bank of Lake Maurepas three members of our most faithful allies."

"Yes," said the corporal, "Heaven has witnessed this evil deed, and the gibbet has not lost its rights."
At these words, which were like a clap of thunder to these cowardly assassins, their spirit shrunk and terror possessed their senses so much that their conscience, burdened with such an atrocious crime and filled with remorse, caused one of them to reproach his companions for having induced him to commit this cruelty through vile personal interest, in other words, to get the wild animal hides. Since he thought no living soul could have seen them in that solitary place, he openly acknowledged that it was the will of the All Powerful Avenger of Crime that had allowed them to be caught. "Yes," he said, "we are guilty as much toward the Creator as toward his creatures. We are unworthy of walking the earth, having polluted and stained it with innocent blood. We deserve to die" (83).

The comments made by the French officials and even by one of the criminals concerning the murders of the Indians indicate the depth to which Bossu valued Indian lives. In Bossu's opinion, the merciless killing of any aboriginals (even those who do not belong to a powerful group) would be a crime that cried to Heaven for vengeance.

Bossu sums up another circular tale of the vanquishing of evil as follows.

With this voluntary confession, the crime was conclusively proved, although by the laws of the kingdom two eye-witnesses are necessary, and a murderer cannot be his own accuser. But in this instance it was in the public interest and for the welfare of the French, who are settled in small numbers among the savage nations, to purge the colony of these three monsters.

Then they were put on board a boat..., and they were brought to New Orleans where they were judged in military fashion by a council of war assembled for this purpose. The officers who composed this council voted that these three reprobates, arraigned and convicted of having basely massacred this Indian family, in punishment for their crime should be transferred from New Orleans to Mobile in order to be executed there and in the presence of a large assembly of Chactas, who would come to this post and receive presents which the governor was obligated to distribute to them every year by the King's order so that we could keep this warlike nation on our side, because it could provide four thousand warriors on call.

Since this shining example of justice, proper harmony reigns between the white men and red men of this district. M. le Marquis de Vaudreuil, M. de Bienville's successor, kept these people on friendly terms with our
nation. Also he often acted as mediator between them and their neighbors. Consequently the name of Vaudreuil still is venerated in this part of the World (83-84).

As Bossu boasts, "This account contains a moral that can be of great usefulness" (footnote, 84). Serving as another example of the author’s consistent interest in the welfare of Native-Americans, his constant abhorrence of greed and injustice, and his continual condemnation of all forms of cruelty, the anecdote, with its cyclical movement, also offers another depiction of Bossu’s conviction that everyone eventually is rewarded or punished for the way that he/she treats others. Here, as elsewhere in Bossu, the transgressors pay fittingly for their transgressions. But while the tale exposes sans réserve an instance of white-on-red abuse, it also stresses a white compulsion to right the wrong, not merely for the purpose of maintaining peace with a formidable red nation, but also for the sake of universal justice regardless of race or empowerment. Furthermore, with the same facility that he condemns the “barbarity” of fellow Frenchmen, Bossu, through the young eyewitness, offers a lasting glimpse of something akin to a pre-Columbian point of view.

In the Sixth Letter, Bossu gladly reports the success of his peacemaking efforts between the Caddo and the Arkansas. He relates in detail the diplomatic and ceremonious proceedings in the Caddo village. During his own harangue, Bossu assures the Caddo of his concern for them, but he also makes it clear that the Caddo women chose to run off with the Arkansas men and that, therefore, they are not worth a battle.

Would it not be shameful if honorable men should kill each other because of unfaithful women, prostitutes who came to the assistance of their ravishers? If these women really had loved their husbands, they never would have abandoned them by secret and unlawful flight. Far from spilling blood for these lewd women we ought to forget them and hold them in abhorrence, because their scandalous conduct
has made them unworthy of consorting with valuable warriors (90).

Far from being simply a misogynistic condemnation, Bossu’s denunciation of unfaithful Caddo females actually argues that the women be dismissed to do as they please without punishment. The Caddo men, moved by Bossu’s words, agree to leave their women and the Arkansas men alone and thereby save rather than spill blood.

Bossu’s seeming approval of red-and-white social and even sexual mixing is perhaps most evident in the romantic anecdote involving Rutel-Attikaloubéméingo in the Sixth Letter. In a footnote, Bossu explains that Rutel-Attikaloubéméingo “was the son of an Akanças chief and the grandson of a lower Brittany sailor named Rutel who was lost in 1683 when La Salle came down the Mississippi making a reconnaissance of this famous river” (106). Bossu’s report of the mixed-breed Arkansas bard’s amorous approach to a white woman reads as follows.

In 1756 when I was detailed for duty in the Illinois country an Akanças orator named Rutel-Attikaloubéméingo, which means chief of the language that affects the heart, came in behalf of his nation en calumet, in other words, as ambassador, to M. de Macarty, French commandant of Fort de Chartres, to renew the alliance between our nation and the natives of that district. The Indian was young and handsome. As for his intellect, you never will have a doubt after the anecdote I am going to tell. He was welcomed at the post with all possible honors and M. de Macarty gave a brilliant ball in his honor at which Rutel-Attikaloubéméingo was the king, because they had him open it with Mademoiselle Manon Robert, a young lady fourteen years old, daughter of one of the richest French settlers among the Illinois, with whom he fell madly in love at first sight. The American ambassador made a very graceful bow to her and embraced her with his eyes (he copied the French). He would not leave her for a moment during the ball that lasted all night. She was seated close to him at the most stylish cold collation. The assembly was infinitely amused by the naive and passionate manner with which he confessed to her (with the interpreter’s help) how he felt toward her.

Finally, in an ecstatic mood, he tried to persuade Mlle. Manon to remove a light scarf which covered her bosom. The belle blushed; he insisted. He said not a word...
in reply to the expostulations that each country has its customs, and that it would be the vilest impropriety for a French woman to expose her bosom, although it was very natural for an Akanças lady to do so. He lowered his head and remained in deep thought for about a quarter of an hour. Then, after having collected his thoughts, he rose and with a noble and sensitive demeanor, he gave the little speech which he had just planned. I was so struck with the novelty of the Indian's ideas that I took my note-book and rapidly wrote the poor prose that the Indian interpreter gave us in very bad French, and I tried as much as possible to preserve the form and especially the spirit of the original (106-107).

Bossu then offers "My translation of the delightful Elegy of the Indian Envoy Rutel-Attikaloubémigo," which is quoted in its entirety elsewhere in this study.

Several aspects of Bossu's portrayal of a red man's pursuit of a white girl in this episode are worth noting. First of all, Bossu speaks only favorably of the mixed breed's appearance, intelligence, and creativity, almost offering these qualities as the logical outcome of a red-and-white union. Still, the Arkansas ambassador-bard is clearly a red man, but as such he is honored and allowed into intimate circles of Illinois-French society. Neither Mademoiselle Manon, her French company, nor Bossu consider it wrong that Rutel-Attikaloubémigo makes advances on the white-female object of his desires. Even when the Arkansas Indian oversteps the boundaries of white propriety, he is not chased away or chastised. Rather, the French allow him to deliver (and Bossu rushes to record!) an impassioned, poetic plea for the juvenile Mademoiselle Manon to bare her breasts!

Proceeding to the Seventh Letter, Bossu, through his attempts to get information from Indians concerning the murder of a Frenchman, shows that he has become as "Indianized" as early Louisiana heroes such as Saint Denis. That is, he has learned how to pick the brains of certain Indians and analyze their circumlocutory responses so as to
obtain what he wants to hear. The episode quoted below, which high-
lights some of the adventures of Sans-peur (a Gascon “boucanier” whose
unusual and comic activities in the Louisiana wilds impress and amuse
Bossu), shows the ability of Bossu and Sans-peur to use clever and de-
ceitful ploys that they have learned from reds on Indians themselves.

Here is an occurrence, Sir, that I must not fail to
report. It was Sans-peur’s turn to trick. . . . And he
truly distinguished himself in this affair. He was much
disturbed about a soldier in my service who was killed by
a savage whose name and tribe I did not know. As a result
of this tragic event, I appealed to the chief of a nation
where I suspected the killer was. I told this Cacique
that a white warrior of mine had been missing for several
days, and that I was sure he had not deserted. . . .

I showed him that it was in the red men’s interest
to search for this French warrior. Surely, I said, they
would find him in the forests where he had got lost, for
otherwise some of their men would be suspected of having
killed him. Furthermore, I reminded the chief of the
treaty that had been made between the white men and the
red men, that is, if a member of one nation killed a per-
son of another nation the law of retaliation would take
effect. This chief gravely answered that the missing
white warrior probably had gone hunting in the wilderness;
that after firing his gun at a tiger or leopard and wound-
ing it slightly he probably was devoured by the ferocious
beast. I replied that the animal would have eaten neither
his gun nor his clothes, but if he would send his warriors
to hunt for this Frenchman, they surely would find traces
of them if this misfortune had happened as he supposed.

I perceived that this man was beating around the
bush and I withdrew, but in a secluded place I questioned
a young warrior named Embryoukia who was very attached to
me. I made this savage understand that if he could tell
me correctly what tribe the murderer of my soldier be-
longed to, I would give him my word of honor to keep it a
secret forever. If he would obtain for me some informa-
tion about his death, I would reward him handsomely, and
the King who has the sun for a hat, on the other side of
the great salty lake would be informed of it by the speak-
ing bark.

With this assurance, Embryoukia told me everything.
He admitted that the murderer was a member of the tribe
called Kanoatino. That was what I wanted to know in order
to stage my comedy (115-116).
In addition to showing that the author knows how to approach Native Americans, the passage quoted above also illustrates Bossu's ability to speak like Indians, using expressions peculiar to their language.

As Bossu and Sans-peur proceed to dupe the Indians who will not level with them, the Frenchmen take pains to protect their red informant from any suspicion.

The dead soldier was the intimate of Sans-peur. The latter, to avenge his comrade, thought of a plan to make magic, and he hoped that a prank, pretending to be supernatural, would scare the murderer's nation into acknowledging the deed and handing over the guilty person.

However, in order not to jeopardize the young savage, and to insure the success of the business, it was of the greatest importance that they not know it was Embryoukia who had revealed to me the identity of the Frenchman's murderer. It was necessary then, on this critical occasion, to maintain respect and circumspection for the Caciques, who often are needed. At the same time these people must be kept thinking that white men know everything that happens in the two worlds and that they can hardly be fooled. It is, as you know, Sir, this wrong opinion which makes the American respect Europeans scattered in such small numbers throughout this vast country (116-117).

In addition to duping Indians in order to get what he wants from them in this one instance, Bossu admits the constant deception on the part of the outnumbered French that is necessary to keep Native Americans from taking advantage of the whites' vulnerability. France can only rule over or with the Native Americas if the latter, larger and more powerful when they are united, are convinced that the former has powers which it really does not.

Just as medicine men deceive reds (Bossu believes), so Frenchmen play witch doctor to trick Indians who will not be honest with them.

Sans-peur explained his plan to me. I found it wonderful and very easy to execute... Here is how Sans-peur set out to imitate Indian medicine men but in an entirely different manner. He chose for this purpose a tree that grows in Louisiana and bears a fruit similar to the banana...

The Gascon soldier lighted a big fire around the tree to make the sap rise so the bark could be peeled more
quickly and easily. Also he took great care to hide his activities. . . . Out of this bark he made an enormous trumpet to carry the voice a long distance like those seamen use. He sewed the bark with yucca and coated it with the gum of a wild plum tree.

When Sans-peur finished the instrument for his magic he left incognito on a very dark night so as not to be seen. . . . He stationed himself on a high place suitable for his great scheme. . . .

He spoke through this megaphone in a barbarous tongue unknown to the Americans. This terrible noise, which the savages thought was coming from Heaven, frightened and caused great alarm among these people, and particularly among the naturally timid women, who said that the Master of Life or the Creator of Nature was angry with their nation and that this groaning and sometimes formidable voice was sentencing them to a great calamity.

Accordingly, at noon the next day all the venerable old men came with the interpreter to consult me about this thing which was so novel and strange to them (117).

At the same time that Bossu is taking part in a trick on the Indians, the reds run to him to seek help regarding the same trick. The Indians’ recourse to the author reveals their respect for him.

Bossu takes advantage of his credibility and position of importance to continue Sans-peur’s “comedy.”

I pretended to be ignorant of the comedy that was being staged by the bold soldier, who, always fearless, was frightening them. I told them that since the death of my white warrior I no longer could rest; that every night while in bed I heard the dreadful voice of a ghost which roamed around my cabin without being seen, however; that this voice said in a mournful tone, “I am a white warrior, from the retinue of the French captain. I was killed by a man of the tribe or nation of the Kanoatinos. Frenchman, avenge my death, avenge my blood.”

These poor men had no idea that it was a clever performance of the facetious Gascon to make them disclose the crime and the criminal. In fact, these simple and superstitious Indians no longer dared dissemble when I convinced them it was the shade of the dead soldier. They confessed everything to me, giving as an excuse that a red man of their village indeed had the misfortune to kill my white warrior. But they claimed the former had gone crazy, because the French soldier had made him drink a great deal of fire water (brandy) to make him intoxicated, so he could enjoy the red man’s wife after he passed out.
I answered the old men that there was no proof of this charge. My white warrior, I said, would have had to be caught in the act, and in that case he would have been guilty. Even in this theoretical situation, the red man would have been compelled to treat his adulterous wife the same way he did the white warrior. Since things had not happened this way, this man, according to terms of the treaty (which should be reciprocal between the two nations) deserved death, because if a white man killed a red man treacherously and without case, he would be knocked in the head. I added that they could not spare the murderer of my French soldier from the same punishment (117-118).

At the same time that Bossu is taking part in Sans-peur’s trick (and obviously enjoying it), he is only seeking from the Indians what is fair. His respect for reds does not diminish even while he is taking advantage of their ignorance and exposing it to a white readership. After all, Bossu’s spoken arguments to the Indians reveal his knowledge of their law and code of honor. It is precisely through the application of admirable red precepts that Bossu intends to get what he deserves from the Indians. The comic duping that accompanies the same endeavor is done merely to keep an aboriginal informant safe. Nevertheless, the two white men enjoy the joke they play at the reds’ expense, and Bossu cannot help relating the humorous episode to others.

Bossu’s recourse to red tactics and principles wins out. However, after getting what he wants from the Indians, Bossu acknowledges French guilt in the matter and makes the necessary concessions. Finally, these savage senators, after rightly interceding for their compatriot, were compelled to agree with my arguments which they found valid.

After the eldest of the old men took their votes the Cacique ordered his henchmen to go immediately to seize the guilty man, tie him and bring him before me to be sacrificed in order to appease the shade of the French warrior which was calling up the infernal powers for the purpose of avenging his death and his blood on the entire nation.

My intention, however, was not to let this savage die, because I knew that my soldier rashly had provoked this deed which had not been premeditated. Besides, this soldier ought to have known that there are regions in America where men are extremely jealous of their wives,
although elsewhere girls are free and rulers of their own bodies and their whims (118-119).

In addition to acknowledging French wrongdoing that contributes to Indian crime, Bossu also points out that Indian women and red male-female relations are not the same throughout the vast regions that make up America. The implication is that Europeans should not be so unwise as to think that reds are not distinguishable from each other. Stereotypes hold up no better in Native Americas than they do anywhere else, and the adherence to biased misconceptions can prove fatal.

Once Bossu has gotten the Indians to acquiesce to his designs, he uses more clever techniques to guarantee his informant's cover-up.

To avoid casting suspicion on Embryoukia, the young warrior who had revealed to me the nation of my soldier's murderer, I had him go, as if unknown to me, to make a strong plea to the wife of the Cacique of the Kanoatinos to beg me to have mercy on the guilty Indian. She made this request through a captain or war chief, her relative. I told him to assure the princess that I could refuse her nothing, and that it was only because of consideration for her that I would forgive the Frenchman's murderer.

Immediately the thongs that bound the killer were cut. The Cacique made a short harangue in the form of a rebuke, saying to him, "You were dead, but the captain of the white warriors has saved you at the Chief's wife's request."

Afterwards they offered me the peace pipe. I drew a puff of smoke and returned the pipe to the Chief. Everybody was gratified. Sans-peur, very pleased with himself for having played his part so well, came to rejoin me, following the orders I had secretly sent him by my emissary, Embryoukia. Regarding his instrument, you may indeed presume, Sir, that the shrewd Gascon did not neglect to reduce to ashes this wonderful megaphone which served him so well in making magic to scare these poor savages (119).

Having gotten what he wanted from the Indians -- simple truth and justice -- and having protected his red source, Bossu shows mercy and restores peace between red and white.
Bossu ends the anecdote by noting,

Next day at ten-thirty the notables and old warriors of the nation came to thank me. They also inquired about my health. My face seemed to them to be more serene than when Sans-peur was on the hill imitating the ghost of his comrade.

As you know, it often is necessary among these people to become a Proteus in order the better to achieve one's purpose.

Then I received these deputies with gentleness and pleasure, assuring them that I was forgetting the past and that I was overjoyed to see them calm. As for myself, I had slept very well since the ghost was appeased, and there was every reason to believe that it would return no more from the Land of Souls to harass them unless young men acted foolishly again, in other words, killed Frenchmen in a lonely place. They assured me they would carefully keep watch over them, indicating to them that the spirits of white warriors were terrible, even after death. They couldn't doubt it since they had just seen every impressive proof of it.

The man whom I had just freed came back all in tears, threw himself at my feet and evinced his sincere gratitude to me, affirming that in the future he would kill no more Frenchmen. It was all that I asked. Peace between white and red men was my heart's desire (119).

Sans-peur's story illustrates the tactics that Bossu, Sans-peur, and other Frenchmen have come to believe are necessary for successful interaction with and domination of Native Americans, tactics that combine both the reason and deception that Indians often use themselves. So as not to give the impression that Indians are fools, Bossu points out in a footnote that Europeans can be just as easily spooked as Indians can. Bossu is also aware of the theatrical quality of his farce, and he sets this anecdote off as a "comedy" that he "staged" in the American wilds. This and other accounts of red and white trickery in Bossu's and other Louisiana colonial authors' writings relate activities resembling those from the Uncle Remus tales. The similarities between the Louisiana-French accounts of Euro-Indian pranks and the later French and English transcriptions of Franco-African and Anglo-African trickster tales of the United States South are
intriguing and may indicate yet-to-be-explored instances of borrowing between the lore of the three races and the many cultures and languages found in each.

In the second book's Eighth letter, when he relates his reluctant departure from the Arkansas Indians and Louisiana for good, Bossu takes advantage of another opportunity to expose European vices against Native-American virtues. He does so through the discourse of an Arkansas medicine man (whose profession Bossu elsewhere attacks as charlatanry). Bidding Bossu farewell, the Indian notes,

"Were not the whites, who discovered the red men's country, fools to abandon their families and their fatherland to come into this hemisphere, through the most terrible perils, at the mercy of winds and waves? It was unfortunate for them and for us since millions of men have perished. Instead of thanking the Great Spirit for their escape from the rages of the sea, they still wage cruel and festering wars among themselves for idle fancies which we don't understand. Instead of populating and cultivating in peace this great expanse of fertile and uninhabited land, which exposes its bosom to them, on the contrary they seem to take pleasure in shedding human blood. Europeans would have done well to copy these same Americans whom they call savages. It is true that the latter do not have the speaking bark as they do. But, content to live under the sky where the Master of Life placed them, they would have thought it displeasing to Him if they had wanted to go to another region to disturb the repose of tranquil peoples who have done nothing to them.

"Have Europeans thought of this? They have come to murder the Americans on the pretext of making them love the Christian Manitou. But it truly has been recognized that their real idol is yellow iron which has made them undertake everything to possess it. This Manitou, however, never keeps them from dying like red men do, and these white men take with them into the Land of Souls only eternal remorse, the hatred and the wrath of the Great Spirit, whom they have offended. Why, in fact, have you come such a great distance in search of false gods and to massacre innocent people who did not know in their natural state their needs that you have multiplied for them. Moreover, you have brought into their country your vices, your injustices, and your pillage. Yes, they have seen you, they say, mock the Great Spirit, who, nevertheless, is good, according to what the Gray Robes (Franciscans) tell us every day, since He Himself came into your country to
show you the path you do not follow. Ah, if we had been as fortunate to have seen Him and known Him as you have, we indeed would have kept Him from being nailed to a cross by burning those persons who made Him die innocent."

After this speech, which I found full of truth and good sense, I embraced the Indian philosopher. He bade me farewell with tears in his eyes and he expressed the acute regret that he felt on leaving me by saying that I was wrong to expose myself to the dangers of the great lake and the brutality of the monsters that inhabited it, as I deserved to have been born in his country (126-127).

The Indian medicine man's chastisement of European activity in the New World is clearly Bossu's. Bossu condemns Continentals precisely for failing to become Americans, the term he often uses for Indians. For Bossu, becoming American or a truly integrated person of the New World means becoming like the Indian in many ways. In addition to learning from the indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere how to live in the Americas, the transplanted European must bring the natives the religion, law, and real advances of Europe, not import corruption, greed, and enslavement under the guise of these benefits. Bossu's Indian speaker is clearly a Christianized aborigine -- and a better Christian, in Bossu's opinion, than many whites. Thus, the red speaker's wish that Bossu had been born in his country is one of the greatest compliments that the author pays himself.

In concluding this lengthy section on the Indian in colonial Louisiana literature, it would perhaps be most advantageous to stress that the Louisiana-French attitude toward indigenous peoples corresponds in many ways to Anglo-American and Hispano-American alternatives to the much studied and much condemned approaches of Puritans and conquistadores. Just as the Louisiana literary consensus concerning Franco-Indian relations derives from Catholic and French humanitarian sentiments and leads the authors at times to counter the official Indian policies of military and state, so the opposing views
within British- and Spanish-American politics and literature often comes from religious writers.

Bartolomé de Las Casas and Thomas Morton in particular can be highlighted as two of many voices at variance with the empowered views dominating the government and the writings of the Anglo- and Ibero-Americas.

Las Casas, the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Americanized Spaniard who combined his priestly and literary vocations in speaking out against the abuse of indigenous peoples through enslavement in the Spanish colonies not only forced Spaniards to look at the dark side of their imperial schemes but also provided the impetus of the Black Legend in world literature.

Todorov’s summation of Las Casas’ approach to Native Americans also fits the views of the Louisiana writers well: “Submission and colonization must be maintained, but conducted differently; it is not only the Indians who stand to gain (by not being tortured and exterminated) but also the king and [the mother country]” (171). Thus, “the ideology ‘assumed’ by Las Casas and by other defenders of the Indians is certainly a colonialist one” (173).

Las Casas’ and the Louisiana writers’ views reflect a Euro-American debate on the nature of Native Americans that not only pits the writers against others involved in the colonial process but also causes the individual author to explore, battle, and contradict his/her own attitudes concerning indigenous peoples. What Todorov sees in the evolution of Spanish thought concerning New-World aborigines can be extended to the developing French concepts regarding the same.

From its first formulation, [the] doctrine of [nonwhite] inequality will be opposed by another, which affirms the equality of all men; hence we are listening to a debate, and we must pay attention to the two voices in contention. Now, this debate does not only oppose equality to inequality, but also identity to difference; and this new
opposition, whose terms are no more ethically neutral than those of the preceding one, makes it more difficult to bring a judgment to bear on either position. . . . Difference is corrupted into inequality, equality into identity. These are the two great figures of the relation to the other that delimit the other’s inevitable space (146).

The internal debate involving the concepts of other delineated by Todorov explains perhaps better than anything else the self-contradicting statements that even the best and most favorably inclined Louisiana authors make when treating Native Americans.

Thomas Morton, the notoriously Indianized sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Englishman of “Merry-mount” fame, offered an alternative approach to colonizing and interacting with Native Americans that so offended the Puritan establishment that he could not be tolerated by New-England church and state. While his views got him the opprobrium of his “peers” (assuming Morton would have considered persons like Miles Standish and William Bradford such), Morton’s comparing Indian virtues to Continental vices and his advocating the mixing of red and white on all levels, would have been less obvious for its difference and intensity of expression in the colonial Louisiana literary canon. In fact, the channeling of opposing views into derogatory yet entertaining fiction make Morton’s and Dumont’s atypical diatribes fitting complements for an analysis of the angry colonial artist at odds with his colony’s empowered administration.

While it must be acknowledged that negative aspects of the Puritan and conquistador legacies were not the only formative forces contributing to the prevailing opinions of British and Spanish America regarding indigenous peoples and, hence, that Anglo- and Hispano-American literatures feature some positive alternatives to the pale and the Requirimiento, it also can not be overlooked that perhaps no other American colonial literature manifests as total and positive a
consensus toward Native Americans as do the writings of French Louisiana. As reiterated throughout this study, that positive outlook was born of necessity. The French, Canadian, and later Creole colonists of Louisiana needed Indian involvement in their colonial enterprises perhaps more than any other Euro-American venture in the Americas did. Nevertheless, the reasons for cooperation on the part of both reds and whites, for the sharing of two cultures on such a large scale and at so many levels, and for the ultimate advocation of a Franco-Indian fusion in the establishment of a new civilization do not lie simply in French need.

Acknowledging French need for Native Americans as well as the other factors contributing to a cooperative Gallic disposition toward indigenous peoples, Hall compares British Indian policy and French Indian policy as follows.

It has been claimed that France had a particular gift for understanding and conciliating the Indians and that, unlike the English colonists on the North American continent, the French were more interested in the fur trade and military alliances with the Indians than in taking over their land. The French therefore aimed to preserve the Indians, while the English aimed to displace them. The English Atlantic colonies were comparatively thickly populated by whites, had developed a productive, self-sustaining economy, and could therefore afford an attitude of racial exclusiveness toward Indian nations. But religious and cultural differences between the French and Canadian colonists of Louisiana and the English colonists were significant factors in how each group treated the Indians. . . . Missionaries played a vital role in the exploration and early French colonization of the Mississippi Valley, contributing to a degree of racial openness and fluidity. The greatest strength of the Canadian and French settlers of Louisiana was their openness to peoples of other races and cultures. Surely, it was the main reason for their survival in this dangerous and inhospitable land (14).

In short, "if the ability to develop a rapport with the Indians was a talent of the French and Canadian settlers of Louisiana, it was also a precondition for their survival" (14). Furthermore, "France usually
managed to retain the loyalty of the most important Indian nations of lower Louisiana" (14).

Attesting to how the religious dimension of French culture achieved a particular advantage in the New World, Shields notes, "A great conundrum for New England's theological and political establishments was the relative success of the French Catholics in converting natives to their faith" (201-202). Shields observes further that "New England counted modest enlistments to the role of the saints . . . , while the French weaned whole nations in the north and west to the religion of Rome" (202).

And what of the Franco-Indian Louisiana hoped for by many of the colonial writers? When France gave up control of western Louisiana in late 1762 and eastern Louisiana in early 1763, the area west of the Mississippi and south of Lakes Maurepas and Pontchartrain that would retain the name that La Salle had given to the southern half of New France would not include the regions (save for the Arkansas) that the Louisiana writers had highlighted for possessing unique and prosperous hybridized societies. Even before France's relinquishment of the colony to Spain and England, the portion that would become Spanish Luisiana had received the shift in importance and population from Biloxi and Mobile (around which many acculturated Indian communities had settled in the first years) once New Orleans was established in 1718. The Indian population, both slave and free, of New Orleans would dwindle following the Natchez Massacre of 1729, and the ensuing mistrust of nonwhites in the wake of the uprising would result not only in the extermination (because of white paranoia) of at least one small and innocent tribe near the new major city of Louisiana but also in the breakdown of other Franco-Indian bondings of long existence in Lower Louisiana. The neglect of the much touted Euro-aboriginal
communities of Illinois (another area that, along with Mobile, Biloxi, and Natchez would not become part of Spanish Luisiana in the 1760s) during the Company years (1717-1731), the continued "official" discouragement of miscegenation, and the arrival of European men and women whose tastes watered down the Euro-Americans' openness to union with reds on all levels weakened the Upper-Louisiana establishments that were to many writers the model of the colony's future: a productive network of communities where reds and whites lived and worked in harmony and thereby prospered the entire colony. In addition to all of these factors, the same sad story repeated throughout the Americas, one of decimation by European disease and removal before wave after wave of white encroachment (following French governmental and military departure from Louisiana) dealt a final blow to whatever vestiges of Franco-Indian Louisiana remained. The final blow did not exterminate what had begun when the very first Caucasians entered what would become Louisiana, however. Groups such as the United Houma Nation, which has yet to receive Federal recognition as a Native-American tribe because of its French heritage but which has been discriminated against for generations because of its indigenous origins, preserve a centuries-old practice of mixing and borrowing that was pushed from the forefront of literary attention to the backwaters of contemporary reality because of the prejudice and ignorance of the increasingly racist and intolerant powers that came to control what has evolved into the present state of Louisiana. In ways that have yet to be fully appreciated, Americans of all countries of the New World are what they are today in part because of the indigenous persons who inhabited their part of the globe.
Up to this point, the present study has focused on two major aspects of colonial Louisiana literature: the development of the Saint-Denis legend and the representation of Indians. The exaltation of Louis Juchereau de Saint Denis and the portrayal of Native Americans in Louisiana’s colonial writings indicate the degree to which émigré authors were influenced by the intellectual and religious currents of France from the late 1600s to the mid-1700s. In idolizing a man who was fair to people of all races, nationalities, and backgrounds; who worked for peace among nations and for universal justice; and who deferred personal honors and luxury (at least in the authors’ opinions) so as to serve others, the colony’s early writers created a mythical figure and legend patterned after contemporary notions of relevant hero and morally instructive text. The presentations of Indians reveal either consistent objectivity or a great deal of tolerance; a desire to clarify European misconceptions and to present Indians as they are; an attempt to expose Continental corruption by setting it against aboriginal virtues; and interest in the stranger side of humanity as well as in the common good of all humankind. In addition, the depictions also reveal the influence that life in the Americas had on Louisiana writers, especially as relating to adjustment of European world views to New-World exigencies.

Reflecting as they do the influences of two different existences — that of the Old World and that of the New — the writings of Europeans who made America their home are peculiar things indeed. Perhaps these unique bicultural productions are most peculiar when they reflect the confrontation of a European legacy with an American reality that is at variance with all known Continental precedents. Clearly,
the opportunities for displaying the peculiarities resulting from such confrontations occur most frequently in treatment of Native Americans, whose persons and way of life may cause the newcomer to marvel for a long time before they can be considered “normal” to anything he/she has previously known.

While Indian matters dominated the first writings of the colony, little by little another socio-racial reality that began to play an increasingly important role in the shaping of the colony began to color Louisiana literature as well. Slavery, that most peculiar of American institutions, one that peoples of both Worlds practiced for centuries but that took on quite different dimensions in Euro-America because of its association with race, started becoming an important literary topic as soon as the system and those it disenfranchised began transforming Louisiana life like nothing before or since.

Most Louisiana writers dating from the time that black enslavement began in earnest in the colony refer to slavery and blacks in some way or other. Hachard, Louisiana’s first published writer, who at first shamefully mentions the Ursuline nuns’ possession of slaves to her father back in Normandy, does not object to the idea that a white person may own a black human being and nowhere protests against her order’s or her new homeland’s involvement in slavery. Rather, Hachard speaks favorably of the progress blacks make in spiritual and secular learning and, as such, seems to indicate a personal contention that the spiritual, mental, and physical welfare of enslaved persons should not be neglected.

Pénicaud and Dumont refer to blacks and slavery only when noting, matter of factly, such mundane circumstances as the arrival and presence of slaves in the colony, the work that enslaved blacks can perform, and the need that the colony has for more enslaved laborers.
Such fleeting references characterize the manner in which most of the writers of the first half of Louisiana's colonial experience mention Negro residents and the "peculiar institution" in Louisiana, as things so normal to the colony and taken for granted to such an extent that they do not deserve any more comment than do neutral, commonplace matters. However, two writers do stand out for their more in-depth treatment of blacks and disenfranchisement as found to exist in the second home of both writer and slave.

With Le Page and Bossu, the institution of slavery and the condition of unfree blacks are important concerns. While Bossu comes closer than Le Page to questioning the right of one race to enslave another, neither author condemns the entire institution per se. What both deplore and hope to correct in their books is the inhumane treatment of enslaved persons -- the physical abuse, nutritional and medical neglect, impossible labor demands, and general white disregard for black humanity -- that the two witness all around them. In addressing the needs of black slaves in the hopes of ameliorating an institution whose evils they openly acknowledge but whose future they know is secured, Le Page and Bossu continue a French-humanitarian interest in all persons, seen first in this study in the colonial authors' treatment of red Americans. This ongoing interest in the welfare of non-whites also corresponds to an aspect of Louisiana literature that will be examined the the last chapter of this study: the colonial writers' concerns for the masses living under the monarchy, for the hordes ruled by the elite few.

Before examining Le Page and Bossu's treatment of blacks and slavery in any detail, it may be worthwhile to note how two leading historians on Louisiana -- Marcel Giraud and Gwendolyn Midlo Hall -- present the black slave situation during the French colonial period.
Giraud says of the origins of black slavery in Louisiana,

The first missionaries agreed that black slaves would be very useful, for they alone were capable of enduring the Louisiana summer, which always interfered with the work of the white laborers. The suggestion had first been made by Gabriel Argoud as early as 1697. D'Iberville had taken it up again. . . . If he had survived the Nevis campaign, very likely he would have had Louisiana benefit from the Negroes he had just captured. From whatever angle one considered the exploitation of the country, slavery appeared to be the ingredient necessary for success. Those who proposed it felt a black labor force would be the most desirable method of developing the forest and the silk industry.

The absence of Negroes in these first years also provoked the constant complaints of the population. Bienville, Dartaguiette, and Father Gravier held no hope for the colony's future without slaves, and the inhabitants never ceased pointing out their great need of Negroes (I, 177).

Giraud notes further, "The virtual absence of Negroes remained one of the serious deficiencies in Louisiana for many years" (I, 181).

Throughout the volumes of his history of French colonial Louisiana, Giraud stresses first the need and then the growing dependence of white settlers upon black slaves as the eighteenth century progressed. Without questioning the moral implications of slavery, Giraud refers to the system of black disenfranchisement as a necessity for the colony's advancement and as a superior alternative to red bondage. Often writing from an economic and perhaps unconsciously racist perspective, Giraud presents black slavery as something appropriate if not required for such a colony at such a stage in history.

Approaching the "peculiar institution" from a different angle, Hall views the system as one of the many abuses that pre-revolutionary France levelled at all of its underprivileged citizens, regardless of color (128). Abuse inherent in a pre-revolutionary form of government notwithstanding, Hall asserts that in French Louisiana blacks were not regarded with the prejudice of later periods.
French New Orleans was a brutal, violent place. But it cannot be understood by projecting contemporary attitudes toward race backward in time. There is no evidence of the racial exclusiveness and contempt that characterizes more recent times. While contempt toward poor whites, especially soldiers, is omnipresent in the documents, there is little indication of contempt toward blacks, nor evidence that white settlers and French officials considered the Africans and their descendants uncivilized people. . . . Here survival was on the line, and notions of racial and/or cultural and national superiority were a luxury beyond the means of the colonists. In French Louisiana, Africans and their descendants were competent, desperately needed, and far from powerless (155).

Just as desperation contributed to French dependence upon Native Americans, so the same desperation precluded the luxury of many manifestations of racism against blacks during the first French domination.

The disposition, desperation, and demographics of French colonial Louisiana also allowed for an Africanization of the general population that did not occur in the British North American colonies or in many other colonies of the New World. As Hall notes,

French Louisiana was not a stable society controlled by a culturally and socially cohesive white elite ruling a dominated, immobilized, fractionalized, and culturally obliterated slave population. The chaotic conditions prevailing in the colony, the knowledge and skills of the African population, the size and importance of the Indian population throughout the eighteenth century, and the geography of lower Louisiana, which allowed for easy mobility along its waterways as well as escape and survival in the nearby, pervasive swamp, all contributed to an unusually cohesive and heavily Africanized culture in lower Louisiana: clearly the most Africanized slave culture in the United States (160-161).

The fact that so many of the slaves brought during the French period came directly to Louisiana from the same regions of Africa and were allowed to continue their families and traditions in the colony, where their numbers and skills were formidable, explains why the general population of Louisiana came to be more Africanized than that of pre-United States Anglo-America.

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Hall notes further that the early contingent of slaves introduced into the Chesapeake and Carolina came from the British West Indies and constituted a relatively small minority. They were one or more generations removed from Africa and spoke English.

Thus, the Africanization of Anglo-America that would occur later happened in part through the spread of Afro-Louisiana culture across the United States. As Hall relates,

The culture of the United States was most heavily Africanized from Louisiana after 1803, when the slave plantation system spread west, when New Orleans was the major entrepôt for new slaves, and when the largest slave plantations of the antebellum South were established in the state. The massive post-Reconstruction migration of African-Americans up the Mississippi Valley spread a partially anglicized Afro-Creole folk culture throughout the United States.

Hence, just as Africans followed Native Americans in contributing to the hybridization of Louisiana society, so Afro-Louisiana culture began to affect the North American mainstream once Louisiana was purchased by the United States.

In addition to the respect for and maintenance of family ties; the continuance of African names, language, tradition, and religion; and the reliance of whites upon African skills and knowledge, Hall presents slave society in French Louisiana as being peculiar also for its relatively high emancipation rate (which led to a free African population early in the colony's history), for the ability of non-whites to pass into white society, and for the fear and power wielded by maroons (runaway slaves). Hall asserts that during the Spanish domination, respect for the maintenance of the slave family diminished; distinctions between varying degrees of African, European, and Native-American ancestry in nonwhites were more scrupulously observed; Louisiana was re-Africanized with the importation of slaves from other...
parts of Africa; and the opportunities for resistance on the part of
slaves lessened. Ironically, at the same time, slaves benefited
materially, along with the general white population, from Spanish
progress and innovation.

The fact that black slavery in French colonial Louisiana was a
particularly unique manifestation of the "peculiar institution" is
apparent in Le Page and Bossu's depictions of Africans and disenfran-
chisement.

A third of the way into the first volume of his narrative, Le
Page makes it clear that the relaxed form of slavery that he imposes
upon his Indian girl extends to his black slaves as well. The affec-
tion that Le Page bears for the young, married black couple that he
purchased in New Orleans before venturing to Natchez becomes evident
when he admits to "le chagrin que me donnoit l'évasion de mes deux
Nègres" (I, 131). Taking advantage of their master's illness at one
point, the two black slaves run away, leaving Le Page lonely and help-
less. Yet even after this rupture in the master-slave relationship,
Le Page's affection is restored with repossessing of the couple -- so
much so that the joy of the author's own recovery from sickness is
dampened by the concomitant death of his male servant. Le Page says
of his simultaneous cure and his loss, "J'étois aussi joyeux que peut
l'être un Maître qui vient de perdre un bon Nègre" (I, 136). Even
though his slave had run away from him, Le Page can still refer to the
young black man as "a good Negro," and he deeply regrets the permanent
loss of such a servant through death. The author's affection for
blacks as fellow human beings is obviously the main factor contribut-
ing to Le Page's becoming a spokesman for better treatment of slaves.
Still, his recognition of the full fellow humanity of darker persons
(which the Louisiana-French writers, unlike later racist defenders of
slavery, never seem to question) does not lead Le Page to object overtly to the practice of disenfranchisement.

In addition to being saddened by the male slave's death, which was brought on by an illness contracted during the futile flight to freedom, Le Page refrains from condemning the black couple's attempt at escaping servitude.

Mon Nègre venoit de mourir d'une fluxion de poitrine, qu'il avoit attrapée dans sa fuite pendant ma maladie; sa jeunesse et son défaut d'expérience lui firent faire cette folie, espérant de pouvoir vivre dans les bois; mais il trouva des Tonicas, Nation Américaine à vingt lieues des Natchez; ils l'emmenerent à leur Village: mon Esclave et sa femme furent remis entre les mains d'un François, chez lequel ils travaillèrent, et par ce moyen gagnèrent bien leur vie. M. de Montplaisir qui venoit aux Natchez, me fit la grace de payer leurs vivres, en donna une décharge, et me les amena, dont je lui eus grande obligation (I, 136-137).

Far from rationalizing the slave's death as just punishment for bucking authority and for repudiating his station in life, Le Page paternally pities what he views as a tragedy resulting from the follies of youth. And folly Le Page would consider such an attempt by a black slave to flee the paternalistic protection of bondage so as to live in unfamiliar, inhospitable wilds, where the African would be subject to precarious encounters with Indians.¹

Le Page's affectionate regard for his other slaves and the author's belief in their reciprocal reaction to him as their master is made more evident when Le Page describes a return to his household after a trip up the Mississippi. "Je trouvai mes Esclaves surpris et joyeux en même-temps de mon retour inopiné," he notes. The slaves' favorable reception of their long-absent master is made even more gratifying for the author by the fact that Le Page catches the servants off guard. Le Page asserts further, "J'étois réellement satisfait d'être arrivé dans ma maison, de voir mes Esclaves jouissans d'une parfaite..."
santé, et toutes mes affaires en bon ordre” (I, 263). Childless and without a spouse, Le Page clearly directs familial sentiments toward his enslaved wards.

Before Volume I’s last chapter (which is dedicated to the management of slaves) and elsewhere in the narrative, Le Page makes many matter-of-fact allusions to black slaves that resemble the unremarkable mentions made by writers such as Pénicaud and Dumont. One passage from Volume III gains significance for the same reason that Poydras’ sole reference to blacks in his poetry does later in the century: It acknowledges the part that Afro-Louisianians play in helping the ruling Caucasians defeat their enemies. Just as Poydras credits blacks with aiding Spanish Governor Galvez in beating the British, so Le Page deems it worthy to note that Bienville’s army against the Chickasaw is “composée des Troupes réglées, de quelques Habitans et Nègres libres, et de quelques Esclaves, lesquels partirent tous de la Nouvelle Orléans pour la Mobile, où l’Armée trouva rassemblée avec les Chatkas” (III, 406). The motley militias mentioned by Le Page, Poydras, and others in the colonial periods and after statehood often consist of blacks both slave and free. The quintessential Louisiana army of many nationalities and many hues would be made famous by the multicultural force that Andrew Jackson led against the British in the Battle of New Orleans in 1815, shortly after Louisiana had ended the colonial phases of its history by becoming a member of the still fledgling United States of America.

As noted, Le Page devotes the last chapter of Volume I especially to blacks. He entitles it “Des Nègres: Du choix des Nègres: De leurs maladies: De la maniere de les traiter pour les guérir: De la maniere de les gouverner” (I, 333). When Le Page begins to speak in depth of blacks in this chapter, he notes, “Les Nègres font une espèce
d’hommes qu’il faut gouverner autrement que les Européens, non pas parce qu’ils sont noirs, ni parce qu’ils sont Esclaves, mais parce qu’ils pensent tout autrement que les Blancs” (I, 333). While statements such as the one above, which asserts that blacks must be governed differently from whites not because they are black or slaves but because they think differently than whites, seem self-contradictory at first, it becomes clearer later on that Le Page means that African slaves must be handled differently from Europeans not because of genetic peculiarities that some later defenders of discrimination may argue are inherent in race but because of learned behavior (to which slavery has caused many to resort as a means of coping with their disenfranchisement) and its effect on thinking.

Le Page reveals considerable lack of prejudice and an almost scientific degree of objectivity in exploring what he perceives as differences between whites and blacks. In fact, Le Page’s level­headed approach to analyzing blacks in slavery as compared to whites in freedom may be best seen in his explanation of a Guinean belief in white vampirism. Instead of condemning blacks for “superstition,” as many whites might be inclined to do, Le Page searches for the reasons behind beliefs. He finds that many native Guineans have been told from birth that whites drink blood from Africans. The misconception started when some Guineans witnessed slave traders drinking Bordeaux and then mistook the wine for the blood of black victims. Since none of the black captives taken away on slave ships ever returned to correct their tribesmen’s terrified interpretation, those who remained in the African homeland perpetuated the belief in European bloodsucking. Le Page does not present these African views so as to entertain white readers with amusing anecdotes of black ignorance. Rather, he seeks,
as always, to probe the reasons behind beliefs so as to improve understanding between disparate peoples.

While Le Page does consider Africans to be very superstitious (a European label for those adhering to non-Christian religions) and, thus, needful of conversion, he does not condemn blacks for what he and his peers term superstition, nor does he propose forcing Catholicism upon recently acquired servants. Warning against the futility of trying to dissuade new slaves from old beliefs, Le Page recommends that owners allow older slaves who have been away from Africa for quite some time (that is, Americanized slaves) to use their influence on the new arrivals -- and to do it gradually. The fact that Le Page stresses that new white masters immediately attempt to calm African fears of Europeans through humane contact and then patiently try to lead the pagans into Christianity without offense to their religious inheritance indicates the manner in which the author would have all whites govern their new black underlings: with an understanding of where the Africans have come from and where they are going -- that is, with a full realization that these free-born people are headed into the shock of their lives.

Le Page's attention to the ultimate culture shock that Africans experience in becoming slaves soon shifts to the proper management and care of black persons once they have become slaves. Clearly, Le Page's treatise on blacks is a slave owner's manual. While Le Page sanctions slavery and owned slaves himself, he countenances only a certain kind of slavery: one with a minimum of hardship and a maximum of care. Such a balance, in Le Page's opinion, can only prove beneficial to both master and slave.

An example of the two-way benefits of attentive slave-holding may be seen when Le Page insists that the slave purchaser first
subject his intended human purchase to a thorough physical examination, performed by "un habile Chirurgien et honnête homme" (I, 335), before closing any deal. Those who already own slaves would do well to have them undergo similar physicals as well. While it may at first seem that Le Page urges such inspections only for the benefit of a buyer (who may be in danger of acquiring Africans infected with tropical and communicable diseases) or for the benefit of the master who already owns sick slaves, the author actually offers various types of inspections and cures out of concern for the slave as well.

Indeed, it may be said that Le Page learned the cures he prescribes by apprenticing himself to a learned slave. Le Page refers to that slave as "Un Medecin Nègre qui étoit sur l'Habitation du Roi quand j'en pris la régie" (I, 337). It becomes increasingly apparent as the narrative progresses that Le Page considers African medicine (like Native-American medicine) to be superior to European health care in many instances. Furthermore, he especially warns against trusting the word of white doctors when it comes to treating African blacks. In place of a fumbling white approach to treating strange "new" diseases, Le Page offers tried-and-true black cures for several common African illnesses. The detailed manner in which the author presents the remedies further indicates Le Page's esteem for black learning, at least with regard to the healing arts.

In closing the section on the treatment of sick slaves, Le Page notes,

Au reste les bons alimens sont la meilleure partie des remèdes aux gens qui sont nourris grossièrement. Le Negre qui m'a appris ces ... remèdes, voyant le soin que je prenois des Negres et Negresses, m'apprit aussi à guérir toutes les maladies aux quelles [sic] les femmes sont sujettes, car les Negresses n'en sont pas plus exemptes que les Blanches (I, 340).

Le Page protests the mistreatment of blacks through malnourishment.
when he asserts that most slaves are not fed properly and, hence, that the majority of their ills derive from improper diet. Thus, a simple cure for a wide, costly spectrum of ills would be to give slaves what any human being deserves: good food. Such practical, attentive regard for blacks wins for Le Page the Negro doctor's favor, and, as a result, the author is granted access to secrets of African healing that many whites never learn.

From Negro health, Le Page next moves to the governance of disenfranchised blacks. As he proceeds, he further reveals his compassion for slaves and his desire for more benign manifestations of slavery. For example, in sketching the proper reception of a new slave by his/her master, he maintains that

quand un Negre ou Negresse arrive chez vous, il est à-propos [sic] de le caresser, de lui donner quelque chose de bon à manger avec un coup d'eau de vie; il est bon de l'habiller dès le même jour, de lui donner une couverture et de quoi le coucher; je suppose que les autres ont été traités de même, parce que ces marques d'humanité les flattent et les attachent à leurs maîtres. S'ils sont fatigués ou affaiblis de quelques voyages ou maladies, faites-les travailler peu, mais occupez les toujours tant qu'ils peuvent le supporter, sans les laisser jamais oisifs hors des repas. Ayez soin d'eux dans leurs maladies, tant pour les remèdes que pour les aliments, qui doivent être plus succulents que ceux dont ils usent ordinairement; vous y êtes intéressé, tant pour leur conservation que pour vous les attacher; car quoique plusieurs Français disent que les Negres sont ingrats, j'ai éprouvé qu'il est très-aisé de se les rendre affectionnés par les bonnes façons, et en leur faisant justice, comme je le dirai ci-après (I, 340-341).

Le Page goes beyond recommending that only the most basic necessities and most common civilities be extended to slaves. He demands love and affection from the master as well. (Of course, the plan of cultivating such feelings and behavior on the part of the master is to win the slave's love and affection and thereby to secure faithful and steady labor.) Le Page is aware that owners often deprive their slaves of
even the barest essentials under the conviction that blacks are irredeemably ungrateful for whatever is done for them. Le Page knows better than do these whites, however, and attempts to persuade slave owners that care, affection, and justice will win for them what deprivation, contempt, and abuse will not. On top of this, Le Page still advocates magisterial firmness toward slaves, indicating his commitment to keeping disenfranchised blacks where he believes they belong -- "in their place," working for their master.

As Le Page continues his guidelines for proper care of slaves, he makes interesting comments regarding women, children, and religion. He affirms that every form of attention should be given to female slaves when they are in labor. Furthermore, the slave owner's wife should not disdain taking care of the child-birthing slave herself. Le Page also argues for prompt baptism and ongoing religious instruction for slave children "puisqu'ils ont une ame immortelle" (I, 341). Le Page's belief that the Negro is as fully human as the Caucasian obviously originates in a Catholic view that blacks (like persons of any race) have souls. It is a belief that all of the early Louisiana writers seem to share, but one that more ardent defenders of slavery in other quarters and/or other times either call into question or vehemently deny.

When it comes to designing the ideal slave village, Le Page shows continued interest in slave welfare. At the same time, however, he also reveals views that might be considered racist and/or ignorant by today's reader. For instance, varying hygienic and also dietary practices between blacks and whites and between black groups have led Le Page to believe that certain African nations possess certain natural odors. In addition, the author's failure to credit fully an individual's smell to the squalor of slave quarters or to other

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environmental factors has convinced Le Page that muskiness is endemic to all blacks to a greater or lesser extent. Curiously, Le Page concludes that "ceux qui sentent les plus mauvais sont ceux qui sont les moins noirs" (I, 343). Because of their "natural" odors and the stench of their living conditions, Le Page proposes housing slaves at a distance and direction from the master's house that will spare the white family unpleasant smells. The author also advises that a white person approaching a slave at work should do so from the direction that the wind is blowing so as not to be upset by stinking sweat. Not surprisingly, Le Page dictates that a bathing area should be included in the "Camp des Negres," and he cautions that it should be built so as to prevent child drownings. A reservoir for water and fishing should also be constructed nearby. Clearly, Le Page believes that improved sanitation can do more important things for enslaved Negroes than simply minimizing their body odors.

In contrast to the parental concerns for disenfranchised persons that he normally displays, Le Page abruptly pronounces at one point that a master's children should have nothing to do with slave children. Le Page asserts,

Ce que je viens de dire sur l'odeur des Negres . . . doit vous faire prendre garde . . . de n'en point laisser approcher vos enfans, lesquels outre le mauvais air, n'en peuvent jamais apprendre rien de bon, ni pour les moeurs, ni pour l'éducation, ni pour la Langue (I, 343).

Le Page's contention that white children can learn nothing good by keeping black company seems to contradict his earlier admission of the knowledge that he gained from at least one black person (the doctor) as well as his demand that masters be loving and affectionate toward their slaves. What prompts this seeming about-face is Le Page's awareness of the impressionability of children. While he posits
master and mistress close to their servants, he waits for a degree of
maturation to occur before allowing children greater proximity to
their underlings.

Le Page continues to disapprove of intimate contact between
white children and black slaves by condemning a practice that would
become widespread in the colonial and antebellum South: black wetnurs-
ing of white children.

Je conclus qu'un pere Francois et sa femme sont bien enne-
mis de leur postérité, lorsqu'ils donnent à leurs enfans
de telles nourrices; car le lait étant le sang le plus pur
de la femme, il faut être marâtre pour donner son enfant à
nourrir à une Etrangere de cette espèce, dans un Pays tel
que la Louisiane, où les meres ont toutes les commodités
pour se faire servir, pour faire porter et accommoder
leurs enfans, qui peuvent par ce moyen, être toujours sous
leurs yeux, il ne reste donc à la mere que le foible soin
d'allaiter son enfant et de se décharger du lait qui le
nourrit (I, 343-344).

While outright racism is, of course, one reason for Le Page's decrying
the employment of black wetnurses for white children, his interest in
juvenile welfare is another. Le Page, like Bossu, champions chil-
dren's rights by insisting that parents fulfill their obligation to
their offspring instead of having surrogates do it. For Le Page and
Bossu, a mother's nourishment as well as her supervision are essential
to a child's proper upbringing. No one, regardless of race, should
replace the mother in feeding and guarding children, especially in the
frontier setting that was the Louisiana plantation of Le Page's day.
The newness of slavery in Le Page's Louisiana, with its heavy reliance
upon fresh imports of slaves from Africa, probably accounts more than
anything else for Le Page's reservations about contact between blacks
and young whites.

While Le Page does not value interaction between slaves and
young members of a master's family, he nonetheless respects bonds
within the black family. Speaking pragmatically, he points out the
stabilizing effect that the family unit has upon slaves.

Vous devez savoir qu'il faut des femmes aux Negres, et
que rien ne les attachent mieux à une Habitation que les
enfants; mais sur-tout ne souffrez point qu'ils quittent
leurs femmes quand ils en ont fait choix d'une, et en vot-
re présence; défendez les batteries sous peine du fouet,
sans cela les femmes en feront naître très-souvent (I,
351).

Unlike more racistly hostile defenders of slavery, Le Page realizes
fully the love that exists between members of the nonwhite family,
especially between parents and their children. Therefore, instead of
proposing a weakening the black family unit so as to make the injus­
tices and possible severances of slavery easier for both master and
slave, Le Page demands that Negro spouses live as husbands and wives,
despite the obstacles that the absence of freedom places on marriage.
Le Page even takes things a step further by defending women's rights.
That is, he strictly forbids male adultery and orders that abusive
husbands be duly punished. While such attempts at domestic stabiliza­
tion are obviously intended to bring order to the slave system and to
resign blacks to their disenfranchisement, they also indicate the de­
gree to which Catholic teaching and a humanitarian spirit influence Le
Page's thinking and force him to insist upon respect and humane treat­
ment for all persons.

Le Page has his favorites among African groups, and it is inter­
esting to note why he values one in particular more than any other.

Je ne conseille pas de prendre d'autres Negres et Ne­
gresses, jeunes et vieux, que des Sénégalais qui se nomment
entr'eux Djolaufs, parce que de tous les Negres que j'ai
connus, ceux-ci ont le sang le plus pur; ils ont plus de
fidelité et l'esprit plus pénétrant que les autres, et
sont par conséquent plus propres à apprendre un métier ou
à servir; il est vrai qu'ils ne sont pas si robustes que
les autres pour les travaux de la terre, et pour résister
à la grande chaleur.

Cependant les Sénégalais sont les plus noirs, et je
n'en ai point vus qui eussent de l'odeur; ils sont
très-reconnaissans, et quand on sait se les attacher, on les voit sacrifier leurs propres amis pour servir leurs maîtres. Ils sont bons Commandeurs des autres Negres, tant à cause de leur fidélité et leur reconnoissance, que parce qu’ils semblent être nés pour commander. Comme ils sont orgueilleux, on peut aisément les encourager à apprendre un métier ou à servir dans la Maison, par la distinction qu’ils acquerront sur les autres Negres, et la propreté que cet état leur procurera dans leurs habillements (I, 344-345).

It now becomes clear why earlier Le Page maintains that dark-skinned blacks smell better than lighter complexioned Negroes: The darker Senegalese, whose original society back in Africa more closely resembles a European form of civilization than does that of lighter Africans (in the author’s opinion) and who in the new country have obviously formed an elite group of skilled workers within the slave system, have been spared the dirt, sweat, and resulting stench of the field hand. Attitudinal and behavioral resemblance to Europeans rather than pigmental approximation, then, determines which African groups win Le Page’s favor. Furthermore, the dark Senegalese seem to attach themselves more readily to their French masters, and for this Le Page elevates them above the black horde.

His prejudices and preferences aside, Le Page reiterates his concern for the welfare of all slaves when he focuses on the management of labor. At the same time, he stresses that a slave’s well-being while at work further contributes to the master’s well-being overall.

À la vérité il est de son intérêt que ses Negres travaillent bien, mais d’un travail égal et modéré sans les ruiner par des travaux violents et continus auxquels ils ne pourraient tenir long-temps; au lieu que ne les faisant travailler que continuellement et tranquillement, ils ne ruinent point leurs forces ni leur tempérament; il arrive de là qu’ils se portent bien, et travaillent plus long-temps et plus agréablement: au reste il faut convenir que la journée est assez longue à qui travaille bien, pour mériter le repos du soir (I, 345-346).
In arguing for "un travail égal et modéré," Le Page acknowledges that many slaves have been "ruined" by masters who have imposed "travaux violens et continuels." It seems like only good sense to Le Page for one not to be a harsh taskmaster since both master and slave eventually suffer from unreasonable workloads. Humane expectations, however, benefit all in the slave system.

In his recommendations for planning and supervising slave labor, Le Page continues to show good sense and humanity. Surprise inspections of slaves at work should be part of any supervision. Le Page notes of the plan to catch slaves off guard:

Si je les trouvois à s'amuser, je les grondois; de même quand ils me voyoient venir, s'ils travaillaient trop vite, je leur disois qu'ils se fatiguoient, et qu'ils ne pourroient continuer un travail aussi rude pendant tout le jour sans être harrassés, et que je ne voulois pas qu'il en fût ainsi (I, 346).

As in other instances, so in the supervision of slave labor Le Page's fairness manifests itself. For just as he would scold slaves caught goofing off, so Le Page would also caution over-diligent slaves to slow down their efforts so as not to exhaust themselves.

To fairness, Le Page adds good-natured verbal exchanges and rewards as further means of securing efficient slave labor.

Quand je les surprenois à chanter en travaillant et que je m'appercevois qu'ils me découvroient, je leur criois d'un ton joyeux: courage, mes enfans, j'aime à vous voir le coeur gai pendant que vous travaillez; mais chantez doucement, afin de ne pas vous fatiguer, et vous aurez ce soir un coup de Tafia pour vous donner des forces et de la joye; on ne saurroit croire l'effet que ce discours fairoit sur leur esprit, par l'allégresse que l'on voyoit paraître sur leur visage, et l'ardeur au travail (I, 346-347).

Le Page's psychological insights, evident in his awareness of the effects of positive reinforcement on the slave, work as much to the master's benefit as do a humane disposition and an attempt to understand
all cultures. The importance of such insight and humanity carry over into Le Page’s comments on slave punishment.

In discussing slave chastisement, Le Page reveals concern for those who may be accused of wrongdoing and advises masters to be cautious in handling suspected infractions.

S’il est à propos de ne passer aucune faute essentielle aux Negres, il est aussi nécessaire de ne les châtier que lorsqu’ils l’ont mérité, après une sérieuse recherche et un examen appuyé d’une certitude parfaite, si ce n’est que vous les preniez sur le fait; mais quand vous êtes bien convaincu du crime, ne faites point de grace, sous protestation ou assurance de leur part, ou par sollicitation: châtiez-les proportionnément au mal qu’ils ont fait; cependant toujours avec humanité, afin de les mettre dans le cas de convenir en eux-mêmes qu’ils ont mérité le châtiment qu’ils ont reçu; un Chrétien est indigné de ce nom lorsqu’il châtie avec cruauté, comme je sçais que l’on fait dans quelque Colonie, jusques-là qu’ils réjouissent leurs convives d’un spectacle qui tient plus de la barbarie que de l’humanité (I, 347-348).

Le Page recommends punishment only when the master is absolutely certain of a slave’s transgression. Even then, the master should carefully match the punitive measures to the crime, justice and humanity governing all chastisements. Le Page blasts those whom he knows to be abusive in handling their erring slaves. He spares no condemnation of such masters: They are unworthy of the name of Christian, perhaps the worst criticism that Le Page could extend to any white person.

In his treatise on blacks and slavery, Le Page is obviously championing disenfranchisement by arguing for a benign form of enslavement. He rationalizes the right of whites to own blacks by convincing himself and his readers that when slavery is conducted with humanity and religion it benefits master, slave, and society. That is, master and society prosper from an abundant, happy, unpaid, and bound work force, and nonwhite slaves “better” themselves by
acquisition of new skills, conformance to law and order, and exposure to European religion and values.

While he attacks many abuses of the slave system, Le Page does not touch on its central injustice: the fact that under law some people are allowed to own other people and, to a greater or lesser extent, are able to do with the owned persons as they please. Nevertheless, Le Page does acknowledge the absolute destitution of many slaves and alludes to the corrupting effect of disenfranchisement on the black person.

Comme l’expérience nous apprend que la plupart des hommes nés d’une basse extraction et sans éducation, sont sujets au larcin dans la nécessité, il n’y a rien de surprenant de voir des Negres voleurs lorsqu’ils manquent de tout, comme j’en ai vus beaucoup mal nourris, mal vêts et couchés sur la terre (I, 348).

Lack of freedom and the imposition of poverty place many slaves in the same desperate situation that spawns most lower-class white criminals. Systems of subjugation that deprive certain classes or races of individual rights and economic resources lead members of suppressed groups into breaking laws simply to acquire the bare necessities of life. Le Page’s acknowledgement of the corrupting nature of slavery and impoverishment indicates his awareness of the societal causes of crime. However, the cure for slave crime, in Le Page’s view, rests not in the abolition of slavery but in a reform of the slave system that eradicates poverty and most abuse.

Responding to the abuses that he knows all too well to exist in many master-slave relationships, Le Page asserts,

Il n’y a qu’une réflexion à faire: s’ils sont Esclaves, il est vrai aussi qu’ils sont hommes et capables de devenir Chrétiens; votre but d’ailleurs est d’en tirer du profit: n’est-il donc pas juste d’en avoir tout le soin qui dépend de vous? (I, 348).

If one is a slave, one is a human being; and all human beings can

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become Christians. This simple act of inductive reasoning governs Le Page entire attitude toward slavery. In Le Page’s thinking, respect for a black person’s humanity and for his/her soul, in addition to being an obligation, is also the most profitable disposition that a master can have. For the cultivation of the slave’s humanity and the encouragement of his/her conversion to Christianity can only benefit the master by creating a servant bound to his overlord through honor, devotion, and gratitude.

Unfortunately, Le Page feels, many masters do not realize or value the power they have to civilize their frontier society by molding sophisticated, upright, happy slaves. As an opposite to the slave utopia or, rather, the dream world for masters that he is sketching, Le Page offers a perplexing reality that he sees all about him: Work and luxury animals are often treated better than enslaved human beings are. Le Page argues that if beasts are handled well in order to enhance performance and insure longevity, the same attention should be extended to people so as to achieve the same ends, if not simply to acknowledge fellow humanity. In showing how horses often receive greater care than do human stock, the author clearly intends to shame owners of persons into reconsidering their manner of using fellow human beings. Le Page continues,

Après cet exemple peut-on espérer du travail des Negres qui manquent bien souvent du nécesaire? peut-on exiger de la fideülité d’un homme à qui on refuse ce dont il a le plus grand besoin? Quand on voit un Negre qui travaille bien et avec zele, on a coutume de lui dire pour l’encourager, qu’on est content de lui, et qu’il est un bon Negre: mais quand quelque Negre qui parle Francois entend un pareil éloge, il sait bien dire, Monsu, Negre mian mian boucou travail boucou, quand Negre tenir bon Maître, Negre veni bon; ce qui signifie: Monsieur, quand un Negre est bien nourri, il travaille bien; et quand un Negre a un bon Maître, le Negre devient bon (I, 349-350).

Le Page truly believes that master and slave can be happy together,
pending reform of the slave society in which they live. He therefore
does his part to contribute to the Louisiana-Franchophone manifesta-
tion of the growing Southern plantation myth that both blacks and
whites can live well in a slave system if it is conducted in a humane
-- that is, Christianized -- fashion. Le Page embellishes his argu-
ment with the signal stereotype of the Southern slavery myth when he
presents perhaps the first representation in Louisiana-French litera-
ture of a "happy darky," a black person content with his disenfran-
chisement as long as he has a good master.²

Le Page begins to close the section on blacks and slavery by re-
iterating, "Si je conseille aux Habitans d'avoir grand soin de leurs
Negres, je leur fais voir aussi que leur intérêt est en cela joint à
l'humanité" (I, 350). Humanity, then, is the primary cause of Le
Page's interest in slave welfare, while profit to masters and to com-
mercial interests takes a second seat. Le Page ends the black-slavery
chapter as well as the first volume of his narrative with these words:

Il est encore de votre intérêt de leur donner un canton au
bout du vôtre, et de les engager à en faire un champ à
leur profit pour se mettre plus braves, avec le produit
que vous leur achetez équitablement; il vaut mieux qu'ils
s'occupent à cela les Dimanches, quand ils ne sont pas
Chrétien, que de faire pis: enfin rien n'est plus à
criindre que de voir les Negres s'assembler les Dimanches,
puisque sous prétexte de calinda (ou de danse) on les ver-
roit quelquefois s'assembler des trois à quatre cens en-
semble faire un espace de Sabbat qu'il est toujours pru-
dent d'éviter, puisque c'est dans ces assemblées tumultu-
euses que se trafiquent les vols et que les crimes se com-
mettent; c'est-là aussi que se forment les révoltes.

Enfin avec de l'attention et de l'humanité, on vient
aisément à bout des Negres, et on a le plaisir de tirer
grand profit de leurs travaux (I, 351-352).

By encouraging individualized growing and selling of agricultural
products on Sundays and during off hours, Le Page offers a degree of
independence to slaves. Granted, such controlled and limited
private-enterprise activities benefit the master as well as the slave, above all in enhancing the security of the entire colony by leading blacks away from African religious practices and large gatherings that tend to occur during times of leisure.

In Volume II's Chapter 12, Le Page shows how he put his recommendations for governing slaves into practice when he assumed control of the Habitation du Roi near New Orleans. Describing the king's plantation at the time he took it over, Le Page notes,

Cette Habitation paroissoit une Forêt à moitié défriché; les cabannes des Negres étoient éparçes çà et là; ces Negres avoient plusieurs petites Pirogues qui leur servoient à traverser le Fleuve, pour aller voler tous les Habitans de l'autre côté, qui étoit celui de la Ville: tous les Dimanches il s'y trouvoit au moins quatre cent Negres sur l'Habitation, y compris deux cent cinquante qui en étoient.

In describing the state of the royal farm at the time that it came under his control, Le Page also indicates what he does not consider suitable in a slave plantation: neglect of the land and of physical facilities, decentralization of the enslaved community, the ability of slaves to come and go at will, and large congregations of blacks during times of leisure.

Le Page works his cure on the derelict plantation as follows.

Je fis défricher et cultiver le terrain; je fis briser les Pirogues des Negres et leur défendis d'en avoir jamais, je convins avec les autres Habitans de ce que nous avions à faire pour empêcher ces assemblées de Negres, qui ne pouvoient aboutir qu'au dommage de la Colonie, et je parvins à les abolir; je fis un camp pour les Negres de l'Habitation. Il étoit composé d'une Place dans le milieu, et de trois grandes Rues où je disposai leurs cabannes, entre lesquelles je laissai un espace couvennable [sic]. J'entourai ce camp de fortes palissades, je n'y laissai qu'une porte qui étoit le seul endroit par où ils pouvoient sortir; je fis faire encore en dehors de cette porte deux cabannes dont l'une étoit pour le Commandeur blanc, et l'autre pour serrer les médicaments et faire les pansements; un jeune Nègre qui suivoit le Chirurgien couchoit et demeurait dans cette dernière cabanne, afin d'être à portée de saigner ou de mettre un premier appareil si le cas étoit
pressant. J'ai appris depuis plusieurs années que ce Nègre étoit un des bons Chirurgiens de la Colonie.

While Le Page’s rectification of the plantation includes limiting the slaves’ mobility, decreasing the frequency and size of leisure gatherings, and housing slaves in a guarded village, the remedies also provide the disenfranchised blacks better housing, sanitation, and health care. Part of the improved conditions for health result from the presence of a black on the plantation who is recognized as one of the best surgeons in the colony.

Le Page says further of improved medical attention to slaves (a primary concern of his throughout the narrative) and of slave chastisement,

J'avais attention que l'on eût grand soin des malades et des femmes en couche; je faisais donner du lait à celles-ci et augmenter leur portion; ce qui n'empêchait point que lorsque ils manquaient à leur devoir de quelque manière que ce pût être, je ne les fisse châtier comme ils le méritoient. Voyant que je faisais plaisir ou que je punissais suivant les occasions, ils se convertirent enfin malgré eux. Il y en avait cependant qui avaient des disputes entr'eux à l'occasion des femmes; et ces disputes occasionnoient des batteries, qui n'alloient pas à moins que de s'estropier ou même de se tuer. Je les faisais corriger, je n'y gagnai rien, surtout à l'égard de deux qui en vouloient à la même. Je fis venir la femme en particulier et lui demandai lequel elle aimoit; lorsqu'elle me l'eût nommé, je fis avertir le Nègre, qui me dit qu'il l'aimoit bien; je les unis ensemble et leur recommandai d'être tranquilles qu'autrement je serois obligé d'agir. J'en usai de même à l'égard de plusieurs autres, et la paix régna parmi eux (III, 226-229).

In Le Page’s accounts of improving slave health care and ending slave discord, black women figure prominently. In the former category they receive special attention; in the latter, they are at the center of male confrontations. In settling men’s quarrels over women, Le Page’s first action is to let the woman decide which man she wants for herself.
Le Page sums up his rectification of the Habitation du Roi as follows: "Les choses étant ainsi en règle, je me trouvai plus commodément et plus satisfait; cette tranquillité dura jusqu'à la conspiration des Négres contre les Français" (III, 229). Although Le Page flexes his muscles as a master, he tightens the grip only when he deems it necessary, allowing his slaves more slack than many other disenfranchised blacks would enjoy during the long history of the "peculiar institution." He also pays more attention to black needs than many slave owners would exert.

Le Page focuses on the above-mentioned black uprising in Volume III's Chapter 17, entitled "Conspiration des Négres contre les Français: Leur exécution." Beginning his account of the revolt, he notes,

On avoit à craindre dans cette Colonie une trahison de la part de gens desquels on ne se seroit point défie. Les Négres eurent dessein de se défaire de tous les Français et de s'établir en leur lieu et place, en se rendant maîtres de la Capi-tale et de tout ce qui appartenoit aux Français (III, 304).

From the start, the fear and disapproval of a total upheaval of the racial order of his society are evident in Le Page's account.

Since Le Page's narration of the slave uprising is the first serious depiction in Louisiana literature of blacks in a role of self-determination, since it offers white reaction to this significant event, and since it is interesting literature, it is worth quoting in its entirety.

Une Négresse attachée à la Briguerie, quoiqu'elle fût à la Compagnie, revenoit à midi pour dîner. Un Soldat ayant besoin de bois, voulut la contraindre en payant, à lui en aller chercher; elle ne vouloit jamais y aller, son temps la pressoit. Le Soldat paresseux en fut fort fâché, et lui donna un si rude soufflet, que la Négresse dans sa colère dit que les Français ne battroient pas encore long-temps les Négres. Ceux des Français qui entendirent ces menaces, l'arrêtèrent et la conduisirent au Gouverneur qui ordonna de la mettre en prison. Le Lieutenant Criminel s'y transporta, l'interrogea et n'en put rien tirer.
It is noteworthy that before indicating how he feels about the purported slave conspiracy, Le Page clearly indicates his sentiments regarding the white man’s mistreatment of the black woman who, in retaliation, angrily and unwisely alludes to plans for an insurrection. The soldier is “lazy,” and because of that he becomes “very mad” when the black woman does not behave according to his desires, whereupon he gives her a “violent slap.” In condemning the white man’s behavior, which led to the black woman’s disclosing confidential information, Le Page also condemns any manifestation of similar behavior, without which, he contends, there would be no revolts in the first place.

While he shows that he understands the reasons for non-white revolts against white rule, Le Page, as part of the governing elite, must defend the latter. His next criticism of whites extends to Louisiana’s commander and chief for failing, like the much more culpable Etcheparre, to take a threat seriously, even when it comes from the mouths of those closely associated with the conspiring.

Je fus instruit de toutes ces choses, et j’allai au Gouvernement. Comme je n’y allois jamais que je n’y eusse affaire, M. Périer me demanda s’il y avait quelque chose de nouveau: je lui répondis que je venois au contraire pour savoir au juste à quoi m’en tenir au sujet des nouvelles courantes. Il me demanda quelle étot donc la nouvelle dont il s’agissoit, puisqu’il n’en savoit aucune. Je lui racontai l’Histoire de la Nègresse: ce Gouverneur me dit que tout cela étot vrai, mais que ne pouvant tirer d’elle aucun éclaircissement, sinon que la colere l’avoit fait parler de la sorte, on ne pouvoit lui rien faire.

“Monsieur, lui repliquai-je, je suis dans le sentiment qu’un homme dans le vin et une femme dans la colere disent plutôt la vérité que dans tout autre temps; ainsi il n’y a pas d’apparence que la colere ait fait inventer à cette femme une chose de cette conséquence; il est donc très-probable qu’il y a du vrai; et si cela est, comme j’ai lieu de le croire, il doit y avoir une Conspiration prête à éclorir, et elle ne peut guères [sic] être projet-tée, qu’il n’y ait plusieurs Nègres de l’Habitation du Roi qui en soient complices; je me flatte, s’il y en a, de les découvrir par mes soins, de les arrêter même, s’il le faut, sans faire d’éclat: alors on tirera quelque conviction, ou tout au moins leur projet étant éventé, se

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dissipera ou se retardera; ainsi on aura le temps de prendre les mesures convenables et de se prémunir contre leurs mauvais desseins."

To his credit, Louisiana’s top commander, unlike the Natchez commandant, eventually listens to warnings and reason, thanks to the author.

Thus, Le Page begins to rise to heroic stature when other empowered persons acquiesce to his views and go along with his plans. The author depicts his own leadership and heroism as follows.

Le Gouverneur et toute sa Cour approuverent mes raisons. Dès le soir même je fus au Camp des Nègres quand je jugeai qu’ils étoient endormis: je me persuadai que tous ne devoient point être du complot; qu’ainsi les Conjurés seroient assemblés dans quelques cabannes pour s’entretenir sur ce sujet. Je pris avec moi le jeune Nègre qui étoit attaché au Chirurgien; je me fis ouvrir la porte du Camp des Nègres et nous fumes sans bruit de cabannes en cabannes, jusqu’à ce que nous vimes la lueur du feu. Dans celle ci nous en entendimes trois qui s’entretenoient de leur projet, et qui dirent entr’autres choses, qu’il ne falloit pas en gagner d’autres sur l’Habitation que deux ou trois jours avant de faire le coup, parce qu’il y en avait beaucoup qui m’aimoient, et qui ne manqueroient pas de les découvrir; puis continuant: “J’ai parlé, dit-il aujourd’hui à tel et tel sur lesquels nous pouvons compter en toute sûreté.” C’étoit mon premier Commandeur, et en même temps mon homme de confiance qui parlait ainsi; ce qui me surprit extrêmement. Le second Commandeur parla ensuite et dit: “J’ai parlé ce matin à un tel duquel je suis très assuré, et il m’a dit qu’il ne falloit pas en parler encore de sitôt à d’autres.” Les deux autres disoient aussi qu’ils devoient rester tranquilles tous huit, jusqu’au retour de ceux qui étoient aux Illinois, où il y avoit des Nègres qui avoient beaucoup de parens et d’amis; que si on pouvoit les gagner ils en gagneroient bien d’autres; que ces deux autres viendroient demain à la même heure; mais qu’il étoit tard, qu’il falloit se coucher afin de pouvoir faire lever les Nègres le lendemain de bon matin.

Nous nous retirâmes promptement de crainte d’être découverts. Après être sorti du Camp des Nègres, le jeune Nègre me dit ce qu’il avoit entendu, qui étoit précisément la même chose que ce que je savois moi-même. De ce premier voyage nous en connoissions six, et nous étions assurés qu’ils n’étoient encore que huit: nous ne pouvions à la vérité deviner qui étoient les deux autres; mais comme ils devoient se trouver le lendemain à l’assemblée, j’espérois les connoître et m’en tenir là.
At the same time that he is aggrandizing himself for his role in gaining intelligence on the conspiracy, Le Page also humbles himself by relating the infidelity of his black confidant. His distress over a favorite’s betrayal does not cause the author to suspect all blacks of treachery. Le Page emphasizes that only a minority of slaves were involved in the plot. Furthermore, the author is able to acquire information and continue his plans to quell the rebellion before it starts partly through the help of blacks who have remained faithful to him and to the rest of the French.

With whites and blacks, the empowered and the ruled now on his side, Le Page takes the lead in sparing the colony a disaster similar to that occurring at Natchez in 1729.

Le lendemain j’écrivis au Gouverneur tout ce que je viens de rapporter. Je lui marquai que ma présence étant nécessaire à l’Habitation, je l’instruisois par Lettre de ce que j’avais découvert; je lui ajouterais que je croyais qu’il falloit les arrêter dans le même jour, de peur que le nombre des Conjurés n’augmentât. M. Périer dans sa réponse me marqua qu’aussi-tôt que je connaîtrois les deux autres et que je jugerois à propos de les faire arrêter, il m’envoyeroit le nombre de Troupes dont je croirois avoir besoin; que je n’avoir qu’à lui faire savoir quels officiers je vouloris avoir pour cette opération, et qu’il me les enverroirait avec ordre de faire ce que je leur direois.

Après dix heures du soir je me rendis au Camp des Nègres; je reconnus à la voix les deux qui manquoient la veille et qu’on n’avoit point nommés; je remarquois aussi deux de ceux qu’on avoit nommés et les deux Commandeurs. L’un des absens de la veille dit, que jusqu’à la récolte ils devoient absolument se borner au nombre de huit qu’ils étoient, et que dans ce temps ils en gagneroient bien d’autres. Je fus content de cette découverte, et fus me coucher après avoir donné ordre au Commandeur François de disperser les travailleurs en six endroits différents dans le Bois, et de mettre à chaque endroit un de ces Conjurés que je lui nommois; qu’il envoyât le second Commandeur par terre au Cajeu de charpente que l’on m’amenoit le lendemain pour bâtir, et que le premier Commandeur resteroit au Port avec douze Nègres pour recevoir le Cajeu et le faire aborder.

Dès qu’il fut jour, j’écrivis à M. Périer que je savois le nom des huit Conjurés; que j’avois pris de
justes mesures pour les arrêter sans qu'aucun des autres Nègres pût s'en appercevoir; que je n'avais besoin ni de Troupes ni d'Officiers, mais seulement du Capitaine de Port en qui il se confioit et moi aussi; que je le priais cependant d'ordonner à l'Officier de garde qu'il eût attention de mettre quatre Soldats forts et adroits qui badinerent devant la porte de la Prison; qu'aussi-tôt qu'ils verroient M. de Livaudais passer devant eux ils prîrent bien leur temps pour jeter dans la Prison, comme en badinant, le Nègre qui suivroit ce Capitaine, et que je serois conduire les autres à nuit close; que j'y serois et qu'il fût sans inquiétude à ce sujet.

Le Gouverneur donna en conséquence l'ordre à l'Officier de garde et à M. de Livaudais. J'avais fait disperser, comme je l'ai dit, les Travaillleurs en six pelotons et un Conjuré dans chacun. Dès que mon Canot fut parti pour la Ville; je fis venir le Forgeron qui avait préparé des fers et des cadenats pour les mettre aux Nègres criminels; le Forgeron les attendait avec ses fers dans un petit Magasin aux Haches, aux Pioches et autres outils. Je fis partir mon Nègrillon Serviteur, pour aller dire à un des Conjurés que je voulais lui parler: ce Nègrillon en fut averti un; il venoit devant et me disoit: je vous vois.

Je l'envoyois à un autre avant que celui qu'il venoit de chercher fût arrivé. Dès que le premier étoit entré, il me demandoit ce que je lui voulois: je lui disois d'aller chercher une Hache, et qu'auparavant il eût soin d'ouvrir le contre-vent afin qu'il fût clair. Comme il entroit, le Forgeron l'arrestoit au troisième pas; je lui fisais mettre les fers et on le conduisoit dans un endroit séparé. J'en fis de même à tous six, sans que les Nègres ou autres personnes s'en apercussent; le Nègrillon ne savoit pas même ce qu'ils devenoient; toute cette opération fut finie à dix heures et demie, et M. de Livaudais arriva à onze heures.

Je fis retirer mon Nègrillon: M. de Livaudais me dit: "Que veut donc dire notre Gouverneur? Il prétend que vous avez envie, avec moi seulement, d'arrêter huit Conjurés. A quoi nous exposez-vous? Je sais que nous pouvons compter l'un sur l'autre; mais je crains l'émeute, et alors nous ne pourrions en venir à bout; pensez-y, mon ami."

Je lui répondis qu'il y en avoit déjà six aux fers, et que chacun d'eux ignorait le sort des cinq autres; que j'en attendoïs un septième dont je me chargeois encore; ainsi qu'il ne craignoit rien, puisqu'il n'avoit pas le moindre danger; que tout ce que j'exigeois de lui, étoit d'amener Samba, qui étoit mon premier Commandeur, et qui étoit cependant l'auteur de ce projet et le chef de cette Conspiration: "Voici, dis-je à M. de Livaudais, comment vous-y prendrez pour que personne ne se doute de rien. Lorsqu'il sera onze heures trois quarts nous irons tous deux au bord du Fleuve où Samba est avec les autres
Négres que vous y voyez, pour attendre le Cajeu de bois de charpente que l'on doit m'ammener vers les quatre heures; comme il est de votre ministère d'y avoir l'œil, vous feindrez devant lui de vouloir y aller et vous me demanderez quel Commandeur est à ce Cajeu; je vous répondrai que c'est le nommé Guey; vous repartirez que vous ne le trouvez pas si habile que Samba (qui sera présent) et que vous me priez de vous le donner pour cette conduite; je parolrai ne point vouloir le céder, parce que c'est mon homme de confiance, et après quelques débats je le laisserai aller. Alors vous entrerez dans votre Canot, vous prendrez le gouvernail, afin que tous les Matelots et le Patron même ramant tous à la fois, vous puissiez aller plus vite. Aussi-tôt que vous serez assis, vous feindrez d'avoir oublié de prendre du pain chez vous; vous m'en demanderez à emprunter; je vous dirai que je n'en ai tout au plus que pour dîner, et que vous aurez plutôt fait d'en aller chercher chez vous. Vous traverserez dès-là afin d'arriver au bout de la rue du Gouvernement, ce qui vous obligerà de passer devant la Prison pour aller chez vous; vous passerez le plus près que vous pourrez de la Prison, afin que les Soldats qui sont devant puissent aisément y jeter le Nègre comme en badinant. Les Nègres seront alors à manger; ainsi ni eux, ni les François ne s'en appercevront.

Ce Capitaine de Port convint de faire ce que je lui disois: il le fit en effet et le Nègre fut mis en prison, croyant que ce n'étoit que pour badiner.

Perhaps the most memorable aspect of Le Page’s attempts to stop the uprising before it starts is his clever schemings to trap the plotters off guard.

His counter-intrigue achieving its goals, Le Page ends the tale of his defeat of black self-determination as follows.

Le Cajeu arriva à bon port vers les quatre heures, je le fis amarrer; je fis donner à manger à Guey chez moi, ensuite je le fis mettre aux fers comme les autres. Quand il fut nuit, je les fis embarquer et arriver au bout de la rue du Corps-de-Garde, et j'envoyai chercher un Détachement pour les mener en prison.

L'Officier de garde qui étoit prévenu dès le matin, envoya sur le champ huit Fusiliers et un Sergent avec la bayonnette au bout du fusil, et on mit les sept Nègres en prison. L'Officier et moi fûmes en rendre compte à M. le Gouverneur qui fut très-satisfait de ma conduite, d'avoir arrêté ces huit Conjurés sans que personne s'en fût aperçu. Le Lieutenant Criminel étoit au Gouvernement ainsi que tous les Officiers, dans l'attente de ce qui pourroit en arriver.
Le lendemain on leur fit souffrir les méches ardentes pour leur faire avouer leur crime projeté et leurs complices; mais ils ne vouluirent rien confesser: on en fit autant à différentes fois; et on n'en apprit pas plus que la première fois qu'on leur donna cette question. J'appris toutes ces circonstances, et dans cet intervalle, je m'inforai moi-même et j'employai des espions. Je fus instruit que Samba avait été dans son Pays le Chef de la révolte, qui avait enlevé le Fort d'Arquin aux Français; et que quand M. Périer de Salvert eut repris ce Fort, un des principaux articles de la Paix fut que ce Nègre fut Esclave des Français dans l'Amérique; que ce Samba fut en conséquence amené sur l'Annibal, où il avait encore projeté d'égorger l'Equipage du Vaisseau pour s'en rendre maître; mais que les Officiers du Navire en étant avertis, le firent mettre aux fers et tous les autres hommes jusqu'à la Louisiane, où il avait été amené et où il avait formé cette Conspiration.

Je fis un Mémoire instructif de tout ce que j'avais appris et j'en portai copie au Gouvernement. On envoya chercher le Lieutenant Criminel, qui me dit en arrivant que l'on ne pouvait rien savoir de ces coupables prisonniers, que les méches les brûloient et les faisaient beaucoup souffrir; mais qu'ils ne disoient autre chose sinon qu'ils n'avoient jamais pensé à faire du mal aux Français.

Mais quand il eut fait lecture du Mémoire que je venois d'apporter, il parut content et eut espérance de convaincre Samba et deux autres de son Pays et complices de ses deux autres Conjurations. Avec ces pièces le Lieutenant Criminel s'attendit que le lendemain il se serviroit des méches à l'ordinaire. Il fit venir Samba et le menaça des méches, s'il ne convenoit de tout ce dont on l'accusait, mais auparavant il lui lut le Mémoire que je lui avois donné; puis lui dit: "Tu vois que je sais toute ta vie qui a toujours été celle d'un séditieux; tu as toujours cherché à faire du mal et à exciter les autres à se révolter." Le Nègre lui demanda: "Qui cilia qui dire cilia à toi?" Ce qui signifie: Qui est celui qui t'a dit cela? Le Juge lui répondit: "Qu'importe qui me l'a dit; cela n'est-il pas vrai?" Le Nègre Samba persista toujours à demander au Juge qui lui avoit dit tout cela. Enfin le Juge lui dit que c'étoit moi. Il jetta alors un grand cri, en disant: "Ah! M. le Page li diable li sabai tout": voulant dire que j'étois un diable qui savoient tout. Le Juge fut charmé de cet aveu; il convint de toutes les circonstances de sa Conspiration; on fit venir les autres devant lui qui avouèrent; après quoi ils furent condamnés tous huit à être rompus vifs, et la femme à être pendue en leur présence.

Ils furent exécutés ainsi que l'Arrêt du Conseil le portoit: cette exécution remit la tranquillité dans les
Le Page's prominent role in quashing the slave rebellion before it even starts leaves little doubt as to the author's stance on slavery and the self-determination of blacks. Notwithstanding his belief in the right of white men to possess slaves and in the obligation of blacks to resign themselves to disenfranchisement, Le Page does not fail to suggest that blacks will naturally buck at the white yoke when they are the victims of continued abuse. What perplexes Le Page, however, is the fact that slaves, such as his own "premier Commandeur," would want emancipation from "good masters" such as himself. Le Page must rationalize the slaves' discontent by making the leader Samba out to be a disgruntled troublemaker and a threat to social order wherever he went rather than a type for Bras-Coupé, the African hero of self-determination for Louisiana blacks. In addition, Le Page convinces himself and attempts to convince the reader that, once Samba and his gullible band of malcontents are eliminated, blacks and whites can return to the peaceful and productive coexistence that derives from the guidelines sketched in Volume I.

Bossu resembles Le Page in caring intensely for the physical and emotional well-being of slaves while at the same time defending the slavery-based status quo. In Bossu's second book's Eighth Letter, which details the author's sojourn in the Caribbean after his final departure from Louisiana, Bossu reveals much concerning his attitude toward blacks and slavery. When the slaves accompanying Bossu to a sulphurous pit formed by an earthquake outside Port-au-Prince become frightened by the sight, the author takes advantage of the opportunity to preach to them about Hell and its relation to their life on earth.

I told them that if they were good Christians, loyal to France and to their masters, they should not be afraid of
going there [to Hell] after death, and that so long as
they served the Master of Life with all the sincerity of
their heart the Evil Spirit would have no power over them.
They paid attention to me and seemed affected by these
remarks (138-139).

Wishing to free the Negroes from their fright, Bossu affirms that
through loyalty to God (in the Catholic faith, of course), loyalty to
France, and loyalty to white masters, blacks will escape the eternal
sulphurous pits of Hell. Bossu thus upholds both the right of French-
men to own slaves and the obligation of slaves to be bound to their
masters but suggests that temporal happiness is possible for blacks if
they resign themselves to disenfranchisement. While Bossu, like Le
Page, would never outwardly flinch from this stance in front of
blacks, his awareness of the cruelties of slavery manifest themselves
before the white reader in various exposés of inhumane treatment of
slaves. At times his denouncements of the horrors of slavery betray
personal reservations about the system as a whole and, as such, end up
becoming some of the boldest objections to aspects of the “peculiar
institution” to be found in Louisiana’s colonial literary canon.

To be sure, Bossu, like most of his peers, both in the Old World
and the New, is blatantly racist in considering Negroes and other non-
whites to be inferior to Euro-Caucasians. In the second book’s Ninth
Letter, however, the author redeems himself to a certain extent. Wit-
nessing the arrival of Africans at Port-au-Prince in 1771, Bossu com-
plains about the manner in which slaves are trafficked, indicating
that such treatment is beneath the blacks’ human dignity.

A ship load of Negroes who were purchased on the
cost of Angola has just arrived in this port. Here is
the way they are put up for sale.

When these miserable victims of our greed are taken
off the ship they are led to a square that might be called
the market of men. After having been completely stripped
without regard for sex, they are inspected from all sides,
and those who are affected by any disgraceful disease are
separated from the others. If surgeons do not buy them
cheaply, those remain unsold, because it is thought that the cost of remedies to cure them would exceed the slave's value. Is it possible, my friend, that rational beings engage in the traffic of these men who were born as free as them and whom they value less than beasts of burden?

(142-142)

Bossu acknowledges that capitalistic European greed, the vice he de-tests the most, has instituted black slavery. He is abhorred that the disenfranchisement of a whole race of human beings has placed them (in the minds of their captors and in the way that they are treated) on a level below that of animals. Bossu wonders aloud how rational men can implicate themselves in slavemongering and ignore the fact that Africans who are born free and are then cast into slavery suffer a great injustice. Clearly, Bossu condemns the “market of men” -- the capturing, selling, and mistreating of blacks that results from a convenient capitalistic conviction that blacks are inferior to whites and that since Negroes are inferior to Caucasians the former can be used by the latter. While he does not approve this rationalization, Bossu believes, as does Le Page, that the seemingly irreversible reality of slavery can be ameliorated by having the free exert greater humanity in their dealings with the enslaved.

In the midst of the dehumanizing exposure of the slave market, Bossu still finds dignity in the African captives.

I confess to you that during these examinations, which are conducted in the harshest manner, I have seen, not without astonishment, some women not blush. However, I have not dared conclude that they have neither shame nor modesty. Reproaches of conscience, feelings of modesty, it is true, make one blush with shame. But also innocence never blushes (143).

While generations of white men would rationalize their sexual abuse of black women by affirming the amorality of Negroes, Bossu believes that he has observed a primal innocence in African women that allows them to remain and feel modest even when subjected to the most degrading
physical probings. Bossu thus demands the same sexual decency for black women that his age deemed a requisite for upright white womanhood.

From the disgrace of the slave market, Bossu proceeds to mention one of the first cruelties endured by many slaves upon purchase by a master: "You know that he or she, to whom one of these unfortunates has been knocked down at auction, brands him, that is, marks him with a hot iron that bears his name or his number" (143). Bossu then commends the "entirely humane" efforts by the recipient of his letters to have branding ("so barbarous a custom") abolished. Bossu firmly believes that his reader's alternative of medal identification "would have influenced subjects and bound them inviolably to the whites" (143).

Considering Bossu's acknowledgement of abuses in the slave system, his pleas for reform, and his belief in the moral rectitude of many blacks, it comes as no surprise that the author favorably reports a slave's protestation against taking part in deeds that whites demand but that his conscience cannot condone. Bossu relates the "Courageous act of a slave who refused to perform the duties of executioner" (142) as follows:

While I was serving in the Louisiana Troops I was told that someone had tried to force a Negro slave on the King's plantation to act as hangman for a soldier deserter arrested in enemy territory. This proud slave steadily refused, saying in his patois, "Blanc-là ly pas faire mal à moi; pourquoi toi v'lé moi faire māl a ly? Moi pas v'lé déshonoré famille à moi. Moi Negre, ça ben vrai; ma moi gagne sentiment tout comme blancs mêmes." In other words, "This soldier never has harmed me. Why do you want me to harm him? I do not want to dishonor my family. I am a Negro, that is true; but I have feelings the same as a Frenchman." This Negro cut his wrist with a stroke of an axe in order to avoid such a degrading job; and having cut the joint, he fell to the ground. This brave act caused him to be admired by the French and his fellowmen. He was treated as an invalid at the King's expense. The fidelity of trustworthy slaves is thoroughly proved; they
have been known to sacrifice themselves courageously for their masters when they were well treated (143-144).

In offering this sketch of a defiant black, who touches the collective white consciousness and causes his “superiors” to question the laws under which they live and relate to others by refusing to execute a white man for fleeing white convention, Bossu gives an example of the indiscriminate good will and moral sensitivity that he has observed in blacks. Here and elsewhere, Bossu shows that blacks can be morally superior to whites, and he wishes to shame the latter, who, because of their Christian upbringing, should be setting examples for African pagans rather than being corrected by their black dependents.

After the brief anecdote quoted above, which is noteworthy also for its illustration of the spoken Negro French of Louisiana, Bossu returns to the horrors of slave trading, asserting that,

> I believe I ought to say a few words about the health and preservation of Negroes obtained in the slave trade on the coasts of Africa. Here is, according to my belief, a good way to care for them during the crossing when often a third or sometimes half of them die (144).

Before Bossu begins his recommendations for reform, he presents a summary of a typical passage from Africa to the Americas. Immediately, it becomes apparent that Bossu’s protest against the horrible conditions aboard slave ships is not rooted merely in economic concerns over a monetary waste of human cargo through lack of sanitation. More than worrying about the loss of profit incurred by sickness and death among African captives, Bossu desires better treatment for the doomed blacks for the simple reason that they are fellow human beings. Still, Bossu uses the financial benefits of humane treatment of slaves to sway white minds when compassion cannot sway white hearts.

Depicting what he considers to be a representative passage from Africa to America, Bossu relates,
You know that they have been brought from the interior to the coasts. It is there that European ships (called Ne­griers) wait to carry them to America where Christians are the jobbers of these men, because they have a black skin. These unfortunates, for the most part torn by force from a beloved family, bound and fettered like the worst crimi­nals, uncertain of the fate in store for them, imagine that they are going to a country where, on their arrival, they will be roasted for their tyrants’ food or sacrificed to their gods. This belief profoundly affects them and reduces them to a condition deserving compassion. They fall into languors which cause illnesses that often become contagious, because it is impossible to separate the sick from those who are not. Add to that, the fact that this voyage is very injurious to human health, and that the privateers who are responsible for it often are duped by their own avarice. In fact, they use ignorant surgeons whom they pay only very small salaries; and these sur­geons, who make the trip to the gold coast only to fetch that precious dust, scarcely interest themselves in saving black persons and they allow a great number of them to perish. Without doubt, these privateers would find it much to their profit to select and generously pay compe­tent men recognized by the Royal Academy of Surgeons who really would cost them only a little more but who would render greater services than do the Fraters (144).

Thus reads Bossu’s strongest protest against the evils of slavery. He wonders how white Christians can justify enslaving fellow human beings simply because of the color of their skin. The author recognizes the reality and sanctity of African family bonds and agonizes over the disruption of such ties. Bossu understands and respects the Africans’ strange fears concerning their fate at the hands of barbarous whites and does not dare joke about them so as simply to amuse the white reader with depictions of “superstition” and “primitive imagination.” What Bossu cannot understand and what he decries is the wasteful inhu­manity of slave-mongers who are so blinded by avarice that they fail to see the lucrativeness deriving from treating human chattel well.

After recounting the horrors of slavery and duly blasting the perpetrators of white-on-black abuse, Bossu next offers his sugges­tions for improving the lot of those aboard slave ships. In addition
to arguing for better sanitation, ventilation, food, water, housing, and health care, Bossu also points out the need for psychological and emotional assistance to those on the slavers.

I have said that the Negroes, frightened where they are by the presumption that whites come to buy them only to eat them and drink their blood, die for the most part from languor and sadness. To prevent such an evil, I wish that the privateers would carry on their ships free Negroes, inhabitants of the French islands of America who speak the Guiana languages. They would dispel the new captives’ notion that white men eat them by telling them that they were going to a country where they will find their relatives and fellow countrymen. Likewise, these ships should be required to have on board Negro musicians or players of some instrument. We have a great many of them in regiments in France who would be a thousand times more useful on these voyages. There is no better means than music to divert these poor slaves from the melancholy into which they are plunged. You know that Africans are peculiarly affected by harmonious sounds. Their hearing is so acute that in their dance they all drop down and rise again in time with the song (145).

While his statements about an innate African propensity for music and a greater sense of hearing among Negroes exemplify Bossu’s conventional racism, the author’s proposal of support groups and music therapy reveals a mentality that is so ahead of its time that it can be appreciated even today for its refreshing insights into personal and social problems and for its innovative approaches to curing individual and societal ills.

Bossu ends his suggestions for reforming the worst sides of slavery by noting, “I wish someone would undertake it for the benefit of our colonies’ trade and especially for humanity” (146). As has been mentioned previously, Bossu alludes to the economic soundness of his reforms so as to sell them to slavemongers. Nevertheless, the well-being of the slave as a person remains the author’s primary consideration. Instead of arguing for abolition, which Bossu and many other writers know to be an impossibility in their day, Bossu devotes
his efforts to convincing others that more humane forms of disenfran-
chisement will prove beneficial to all involved in the "peculiar
institution" -- slave, master, colony, mother country, empire.

In examining Bossu's treatment of slavery, it is necessary also
to analyze his racism. As has been made clear by now, Bossu shares
the conventional racist attitudes of most of his peers, be they slave-
owning colonists or European intellectuals. That is, he views Negroes
as inferior in a variety of ways to Caucasians. To his credit, howev-
er, Bossu speaks more highly of blacks than some might expect a colo-
nial pioneer to do. And when it comes to one of the greatest taboos
to evolve in the slave-built United States South -- sex between white
women and black men -- Bossu stands apart from generations of Southern
writers by glossing over the issue when it presents itself. In his
second book, while relating how women of the New World sometimes give
birth to twins that are of different colors, Bossu notes,

I think I have read somewhere that a Virginia woman gave
birth to a white baby, and twenty-four hours later to a
black one, which manifestly proved the wife's infidelity
to her husband. But this crafty Englishwoman found still
another way to justify the crime of adultery that she had
committed with a Negro slave by saying that after her hus-
band had left her a Negro, armed with a dagger, found her
in bed and threatened to pierce her breast if she resist-
ed. Thus she saved her life and her honor in the public
eye and was absolved in the lawsuit her husband justly had
brought, without having to do as Lucretia did (76).

In the passage quoted above, Bossu condemns adultery, not miscege-
tation. He does not stand aghast at a white woman's choosing to commit
adultery with a black man but at the fact that she chooses to commit
adultery at all.

To prevent Bossu from coming across as more sexist than he is
(and sexism, to be sure, is another attitude that he shares with his
peers), it is necessary to place alongside the mention of a white
woman's infidelity with a black man Bossu's reference to more
commonplace white male debauchery with black women. As in the first instance, white association with black is not the primary issue in this passage from the second book. Rather, the author decries sexual excess along with other lapses from moderation.

Most new [male] arrivals [to Port-au-Prince] pay for it by being attacked by various diseases and die shortly afterward. However, if they lived in a more moderate manner the number of the sick and dead doubtless would be smaller. . . . In addition to the excesses of late nights, of nights spent in gambling, of drinking wine and strong drinks, they abandon themselves to debauchery with black women who make them lose their fortune, their health and their life. Often they attribute to the climate what is due to the intemperance of those who live in it. White women are observed to live longer here because they are more moderate than the men (139).

In Bossu's way of thinking, men who drink intemperately, carouse excessively, and neglect their health and responsibilities get exactly what they deserve: untimely death. White women, however, survive in the New World because of adaptation to the climate and moral uprightness.

Dana Nelson's closing remarks in her discussion of Cotton Mather's "The Negro Christianized" (1706) can apply to any colonial Louisiana work by authors (such as Le Page and Bossu) who, like Mather, try to improve both the conditions of those in slavery and the exploitative attitudes of whites toward blacks but who at the same time cannot escape the conventional racism of the day or the author's own involvement in a colonial system of subjugation: "[It] should be recognized for the social good it proposes and enacts, along with its fundamental prejudice and self-interest" (29).

As when they are speaking of Native Americans, so when they are writing about Africans, Louisiana's colonial writers seek to rectify attitudes and abuse not only to ameliorate nonwhite suffering but also to bolster white control and increase white wealth in the New World.

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Like Thomas Jefferson, Cotton Mather, and William Byrd (the first two highlighted by Nelson for their sympathetic treatment of blacks and the latter often touted for bucking Anglo-American views of reds but all three of whom, Nelson shows, reaffirm racial prejudices and promote continued and expanding Euro-Caucasian dominance in America), France's colonial writers desire "improvement" both in the general conditions of nonwhite life and in the relations between whites and nonwhites so as to make persons of color content with a subordinate position to whites and thereby keep them submitted to colonial, imperial, and later "revolutionary" schemes controlled by Euro-Caucasians. While whatever cooperation and respect for the "other" culture might have characterized initial interracial contacts, the increased empowerment of whites in America, along with increased freedom from Continental control, resulted in increased oppression of reds and blacks. Yet the Americas as they exist today (i.e., overwhelmingly beneficial to persons of predominantly Euro-Caucasian ancestry) would not have attained their present manifestations without constant recourse to the knowledge and labor of persons of color.
Monarchy and the Masses, Rulers and the Ruled in Colonial Louisiana Literature

In this the final section of the present study, I intend to look at how Louisiana’s colonial writers of the first French domination take up the cause of the common person by urging such things as fair government, free enterprise, lack of authoritative interference in daily life, and even social mobility — and all this without attempting to upset unduly the monarchy in Europe and its hierarchy of ruling representatives in the colony.

The effects of those who rule upon those who are ruled are primary concerns in the poetry of Julien Poydras and Etienne Viel (authors of the Spanish period of colonization, the second French domination, and the United States possession of Louisiana) and in the verse of Dumont de Montigny (poet of the first French domination). In fact, such concerns constitute the few similarities that link the compositions of Poydras and Viel to over a century of writers in pre-statehood Louisiana. Dumont, on the other hand, contributes with Louisiana writers before and after him to the Saint-Denis legend and commentary on Franco-Indian relations. Because it is the unique characteristic joining the works of pre-statehood Louisiana’s two best poets (Poydras and Viel) to the writings of Louisiana artists from the late 1600s to the early 1800s and because it is a burning consideration for the major poet of the first French domination (Dumont), I have decided to focus in this last chapter on the relation of the rulers to the ruled as it is wished for by Pénicaut, Dumont, Le Page, and Bossu as a prelude to an analysis of the same concern in Viel, Poydras, and other poets and prose authors to be examined in a future study devoted to pre-statehood Louisiana literature following the first French domination.
Interestingly, just as concerns about ruler-ruled relations serve as the unique knot tying Poydras and Viel to other Louisiana writers, so these concerns also serve as more integral components for Poydras’ Viel’s, and Dumont’s works than they do for the writings of other colonists. Still, to a greater or lesser extent, all Louisiana colonial authors attempt to work, through their writings, for the good of all persons in their complex, multicultural society in the days before democratic revolutions swept the world.

While issues relative to interactions between the rulers and the ruled are not primary themes in Pénicaut’s narrative, this early Louisiana author still shows concern for the ordinary person living under a powerful authority. This concern is most evident in Pénicaut’s Saint-Denis story and in the Indian episodes of his narrative.

The simple fact that he focuses a great part of his narrative on Saint Denis indicates Pénicaut’s admiration for leaders who are concerned with the needs of the common people and reveals the author’s personal interest in universal welfare. Pénicaut, who normally relates men’s deeds without describing the doer’s personality and who often records events with objective detachment, refers to Saint Denis in favorably subjective terms, such as “a very courageous officer and venturesome man” (144-145). Nowhere does Bienville, perhaps the person most important to the daily well-being of the colony at the time recorded, receive even such brief glowing references. Although Pénicaut extolls Saint Denis and does not offer praise for Bienville (who, historians such as Giraud concede, often assumed more than his rightful share of power and wealth while governing Louisiana), the author does not depict Bienville as the self-centered, powermongering, wealth-robbing, fratricidal whom Dumont creates. Still, the fact that Pénicaut offers only a minimum of perfunctory references to Bienville,
his top boss, and idolizes someone not even officially in the king's employ at the time being recounted speaks as effectively against Bienville as any invective could. In praising Saint Denis, a man who gained great popularity and respect for his fairness to all people and for his mediation between French, Spanish, and Indian residents of Louisiana and its frontiers, Pénicaud proves his interest in the right of all people -- high and low, white and nonwhite, French and non-French -- to a just and dignified existence.¹

An example of Pénicaud's failure to extoll Bienville's exploits occurs early in the narrative. In Chapter 2, the author breaks his glowing discourse on Iberville (whom he idolizes along with Saint Denis) to devote only a short paragraph to a famous episode from Louisiana history that starred Bienville: the "English Turn" incident.

On his way down from the Natchez to Biloxi, M. de Bienville had found a small English ship careened in a bend three leagues long. M. de Bienville went to him and asked him what he was seeking on the Missicipy and asked whether he did not know that the French were established in the region. The Englishman, quite astonished, replied that he had known nothing about that and a moment afterwards departed, headed for the sea, cursing greatly at the French and at M. de Bienville. This is what caused that bend to be named Détour-à-l'Anglois, a name that it bears today (30).

Without commenting further on the significance of the younger Le Moyne's action in strengthening French control of the lower Mississippi, Pénicaud quickly returns to the activities of the older brother.

While Pénicaud might state in other places that Bienville was "greatly pleased" by events that insured peace and well-being, especially between French and Indian residents, the author at no time depicts Bienville as engaged in the self-forgetting charity that another Le Moyne brother, Chateaugué, displays. Pénicaud relates Chateaugué's assistance to a shipwrecked Martiniquais captain and crew and includes this Le Moyne's noble refusal of remuneration.

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[The captain] still had forty thousand piastres, which he said could be found at the bottom of the ship's hold, in the sand. He begged M. de Chateaugué to accept this as thanks for saving his life and the lives of his men. He had forty-five men left, the greater part of whom were more dead than alive when we took them over to Isle Dauphine, for they hardly had the strength to stand. M. de Chateaugué sent for the forty thousand piastres and for everything else that could be salvaged from the ship. These things were brought to Isle Dauphine; but M. de Chateaugué would accept none of them: he gave back to M. Maurice all his money and his personal belongings and would not permit anyone to accept anything, telling M. Maurice that he would need to buy a small ship in which to return to Martinique. This did not happen quickly, and he was compelled to stay a long time with us at Mobile.

Chateaugué's disregard for personal gain here contrasts sharply with references that even historians make to the Le Moynes' self-serving interests and illegal activities in Louisiana and elsewhere.

Some of the most complimentary passages that Pénicaud affords Bienville occur in Chapters 3, 4, and 5. For instance, near the end of Chapter 3, when Bienville assumes command of the colony after the death of Sauvole, the man who was left in charge when Iberville made another trip to France, Pénicaud notes,

M. de Bienville, who was with M. de St. Denis at the fort on the bank of the Mississippi, came down to the sea and took over the command of Fort Biloxi in the place of M. de Sauvole; and noticing that lack of water was the cause of the illnesses, he worked as fast as possible to move all the merchandise and the munitions from Fort Biloxi to the fort on the Mobile, where M. de Boisbrian, who was there, had already got the fort and the warehouses ready to hold everything securely. M. de Bienville then came to the Mobile and had the work on the fort concluded, both on the lodgings for the habitans and on the fortifications (58-59).

One of the nearest things to a compliment that Pénicaud pays to Bienville in the entire narrative is to say that "he worked as fast as possible" to relieve the suffering of colonists.

Another near compliment occurs at the end of Chapter 4, when Pénicaud relates Bienville's granting Mobilian Indians possession of
the female and juvenile survivors of their defeated Alabama kin. The author notes,

They came to M. de Bienville and asked him for them, begging him to kindly give them to them, as these captives were their kin. M. de Bienville granted their request. This act of generosity on M. de Bienville’s part caused the Mobiliens later on to unite with us in the wars we carried on against the Alibamons (69).

While it might seem at first glance that Bienville extends to the Indians the same type of charity that his brother Chateaugué extends to the shipwrecked Martiniquais, it must be remembered that strategy rather than magnanimity is the ruling force here. Pénicaut mentions this wise move that secures red allies only after relating Bienville’s two failed campaigns against the Alabama, who are finally defeated in a third campaign that does not include Bienville.

Peace between the French and their Native-American neighbors as well as peace among the colony’s Indians themselves, situations that anyone interested in bolstering French strength by amassing red allies would want, occasion additional near-compliments for Bienville. In Chapter 5, for example, Pénicaut refers to Bienville as someone “who would have asked for nothing better than to mediate for peace” (73) during the Choctaw and Chickasaw tribes’ conflicts with each other in Lower Louisiana. In Chapter 10, Pénicaut also gives Bienville credit for wanting to put an end to intertribal warfare and Canadian harassing of reds and whites in Illinois. Still, such desires for peace on Bienville’s part would hardly distinguish him from anyone else interested in the welfare and progress of the colony.

While Pénicaut’s entire narrative must be carefully read to glean only a few passages that resemble anything like compliments directed at Bienville, the effort pays off in that it further reveals Pénicaut’s interest in the well-being of both red and white, high and low.
in his society, an interest that Pénicaut shares with the writers who follow him. Pénicaut approximates praise of Bienville only when the latter comes to the rescue of his fellow man, woman, and child and when he endeavors to secure peace for both French and Indian in Louisiana.

Shortly after the chapters that are most complimentary of Bienville, Pénicaut composes a section that might possibly allude to troubles between Saint Denis and the man in charge of Louisiana. In many places, Pénicaut refers to the Fort of the Mississippi (between the future site of New Orleans and the Mouth of the Mississippi) as “M. de St. Denis’ fort.” Bienville orders the abandonment of this stockade, and Pénicaut notes that “after a short while, M. de St. Denis, who was bored at being shut in with nothing to do at Mobile, organized a detachment, with M. de Bienville’s consent, to make war on the Chitimachas” (101), who were located near the site of the forsaken fort. Saint Denis returns to Mobile with Chitimacha slaves, but “some time later, because something had displeased him or because he objected to being shut in, M. de St. Denis went away with twelve Frenchmen to live at Biloxi” (102). Obviously, restlessness was not the only reason Pénicaut’s Saint Denis could not remain at Mobile. He might have had to distance himself from Bienville as well.

An indication of a possible rift between Bienville and Pénicaut occurs at the beginning of Chapter 9, “The Year 1707,” when Pénicaut refers to the newly arrived Reverend Henri Roulleaux de La Vente as “a great preacher” (114). This resident priest at Mobile soon joined Commissioner Nicolas de La Salle (a writer examined earlier in this study) in a campaign against supposed corruption in the Bienville administration, and the ensuing squabble completely divided the small colony into two groups. Shortly after he favorably recounts de La
Vente's arrival in Mobile, Pénicaut relates the reluctant return of himself and other French soldiers from Indian country to Mobile at Bienville's orders. Perhaps Pénicaut was a de La Vente/de La Salle sympathizer. Whatever the author was, he was not a Le Moyne lackey.

In Chapter 16, Pénicaut uses Bienville's reluctant leadership in the campaign against the Natchez to show how those in power often err by not listening to those above and below them who are experts on certain situations. At the same time, the author also seems to be pointing out how important it is for a leader to seek the intelligence of well-informed underlings before making decisions and taking action on anything. Pénicaut relates that even though La Mothe Cadillac (responding to the accounts of Pénicaut and other witnesses of Natchez plots against the French) ordered Bienville to act against the Indians, Bienville does not take the matter seriously until his expeditionary party happens upon a letter written to inform the first French passerby of the mutilation death of a French trader by the Natchez. As Pénicaut notes, the change in Le Moyne's attitude results in a change of maneuvers.

After M. de Bienville had read this letter, he realized that the matter was more serious than he had believed. Previously he had made light of it and had looked upon it as a trifle, accusing us of getting scared; but when he read this letter I believe he really became frightened himself, for he changed the plan he had of proceeding directly to the Natchez and made us go ashore at the Cross of the portage of the Tonicas (176).

Finally convinced of the Natchez danger and wary of proceeding into Natchez territory, Bienville erects a fort among the Tunicas and summons the Natchez to meet him there. When they extend the calumet of peace, Bienville rejects it and demands to have the murderers of five Frenchmen, especially the chief Terre Blanche. The Natchez send Bienville the head of someone they claim is Terre Blanche, but Pénicaut
informs Bienville that the head belongs to “the most feeble-minded person among the residents of their village” (178). Enraged by the attempted deception, Bienville turns on the Natchez envoys. They tell him that it is impossible to get the chief he desires but that some of the other murderers are among their number. Bienville has those accused by their fellow tribesmen executed, summons the Natchez leaders to come to him, hastily draws up a treaty with the Indians, and then begins immediate work on a fort at Natchez. Eventually, Bienville even acquiesces to the Natchez plea that Terre Blanche, the mastermind behind the murders, be pardoned. Pénicaud presents Bienville’s change from passivity to forceful yet compromising action as Le Moyne’s most impressive undertaking in the narrative. Still, the author realizes that the transformation occurs only after Bienville begins to see things as others have seen them and therefore does not offer Le Moyne the subjective praise that he affords to leaders such as Saint Denis.

While Pénicaud’s Bienville needs hard convincing to act upon the warnings of colonists such as the author, Saint Denis is much more in sync with the narrator’s interests and concerns. For instance, Saint Denis shares with Pénicaud an interest in the welfare of all Indians, not just the powerful ones whose alliances are important to the French. One of the first places where this shared concern for all red people occurs is in Chapter 7, “The Year 1705.”

The Nassitoches, who had abandoned their settlement on the Rivière Rouge, came seeking M. de St. Denis at his fort to ask him for a place in which to settle and for help with food because the rain and the overflow of the waters had rotted all their grains. I was then at M. de St. Denis’ fort, where M. de Bienville had sent me; so, after M. de St. Denis had welcomed these poor destitute savages the best he could, he commissioned me to escort them to the village of the Colapissas, instructing me to commend them in his name to the Chief of the Colapissas. The Colapissas received them cordially and located them next to their village. Here, on the shore of Lake Pontchartrain, they built their huts. Afterwards, the Colapissas and the Nassitoches were
well linked together. . . . When I got back to M. de St. Denis' establishment, I gave him a report of the commission he had assigned me, and he was well pleased (100-101).

Clearly, Pénicaut seems to sympathize with "these poor destitute savages" as much as Saint Denis does and to be as "well pleased" as Saint Denis is once the Natchitoches have been placed in a new home. Later, when the Acolapissa turn on the Natchitoches, Pénicaut shares Saint Denis' grief over the slaughter.

When Pénicaut begins his in-depth account of Saint Denis' life in Chapter 14, it immediately becomes apparent that the author interests himself not only in the deeds but also in the spirit of a person "who was a very courageous officer and venturesome man" (144-145). Such subjective interest does not typify Pénicaut's reaction to most colonial leaders, as seen already in the treatment of Bienville. However, Saint Denis' ability to lead both Indians and Frenchmen, his interest in a good rapport between Spanish Mexico and French Louisiana, and his mediation between all combinations of these groups reflect a deep (and sometimes very self-forgetting) concern for the well-being of all persons, not just a desire for profitable trade links between well-established communities. Such service in the interest of Caucasian commercial prosperity and Native-American daily subsistence wins Saint Denis Pénicaut's admiration.

When Saint Denis persuades several diverse tribes to settle in the Natchitoches area and to help establish a Euro-Indian community, Pénicaut highlights the former's famous knack for encouraging different people to get along with each other. Once the red groups assemble, Saint Denis informs them that Frenchmen and red men must henceforth work together to develop the country (by following French directives, of course), and he tries to convince the Indians that the strengthening of weaker tribes lies in their banding with each other and with
the French, under the French. McWilliams, in a footnote, attests to what Pénicaud is attempting to popularize concerning Saint Denis: “He was always able to rule or lead the tribes around him. As Indian diplomat, he was without peer among the French, who as a nation were generally more suasive among Indians than the English were” (149).

In addition to revealing Pénicaud’s esteem for Saint Denis, Chapter 14 also reflects the author’s ambivalence toward Spanish Mexicans, an ambivalence arising basically from the way he perceives Hispano-Americans treating fellow human beings, especially Native Americans. Earlier in the narrative, Pénicaud disapprovingly referred to Spanish Floridians’ neglect of Indians in their area while at the same time relating the pomp and merrymaking surrounding visits of white Florida officials to French Mobile. Switching from Hispanics in the east to those west of Louisiana in Chapter 14, Pénicaud openly expresses his prejudices against Mexicans when recounting his trip to Mexico with Saint Denis. He refers to those on the frontier as “miserable people that go quite naked and are a mixture of savages and Spaniards” (150). Despite such blatant contempt (which may be directed as much at the rulers who allow these miserable underlings to remain in such a deplorable state as at those who live like “savages”), Pénicaud comes to enjoy a pleasant sojourn at the Presidio del Norte before returning to Natchitoches. In fact, when the time comes, he and his contingent reluctantly follow orders to leave the Spanish outpost for the French one. As Pénicaud confesses,

After getting our orders, we had to make up our minds to leave. It was not without sorrow that we left. . . . The Spanish girls there were very agreeable and were very much nettled at seeing us leave. Before I departed I expressed my great thanks to the captain at whose house I had lodged. . . . So, we departed with much sorrow and little food for the road we had to travel (153).
The pleasantness and frontier luxury of the Spanish elite at the Presidio del Norte match the fun and expense surrounding the Pensacola dignitaries' visits to Mobile. However, such niceties do not blind Pénicaut to the Spanish threat to the French colony, nor do they keep him from seeing the harm that Spanish policies pose for both the Euro- and Native-Mexican and Native-Floridian masses.

In Chapter 17, after Saint Denis has returned to the Presidio del Norte following his confinement to Mexico City, where he had ventured simply as a trade ambassador, the French-Canadian-turned-Louisianian comes to the aid of both oppressed Indians and distressed Spaniards. Pénicaut's protagonist relates that "four villages of savages who were disheartened by Spanish rule decided to abandon their homes and go off and settle outside of Spanish territory" (190). Sympathizing with the Indians suffering from military abuse, Pénicaut's Saint Denis places much of the guilt for the troubling situation on the local Spanish leader: "He was partly to blame for this, as he had given too much freedom to his troopers, who were forever among the savages, pillaging them and annoying them without the savages' daring to defend themselves" (190). Realizing that the safety of Spanish residents on the Mexican frontier depends upon good relations with neighboring Native Americans and that the Indians themselves need the Spanish alliance for their own livelihood and protection, Saint Denis pursues the departing tribes in hopes of winning them back for Spain.

His approach to the red Mexicans reveals Saint Denis' deep concerns for their welfare, for Spanish security, and for justice and harmony among all peoples.

He told them to come back and all they wanted would be granted to them, and promised them in the name of Captain Dom Pedro that they would not be disturbed in the future, and pointed out to them that beyond Spanish territory they would daily be in danger of war with the Assinicus or the Cadodagueux, who cruelly put to death all the people they
capture. He added that all soldiers would be forbidden to set foot at any time inside their village for the purpose of disturbing them, upon penalty of death, and that they had only to follow him and they would themselves hear this interdiction made out loud to the soldiers. The four chiefs of these nations told him that they asked nothing better than to return to their villages if no one wished to trouble them. M. de St. Denis, after promising them a second time, told them to follow him and they would hear the interdiction made to all the troopers; and immediately all these poor savages followed M. de St. Denis in order to come and talk to Captain Dom Pedros. Everybody in the village was very much astonished to see M. de St. Denis coming there at the head of more than four thousand persons, as many men as women and children of the savages (191).

In serving both Spaniards and Native Americans in this instance, Saint Denis once again proves himself devoted to the well-being of all humanity. As will be seen later, such devotion to all persons, regardless of race, class, or sovereignty, likens Pénicault's Saint Denis even to Viel's Evandre and Poydras' Galvez, heroes from texts that have the least in common with the larger body of Louisiana colonial literature.

In his last major reference to Saint Denis, Pénicault notes that M. de St. Denis, who was one of the worthiest officers in Louisiana, was nevertheless without employment; . . . he had been partly responsible for saving Isle Dauphine, which he had aided of his own free will, leading a great number of savages there, by whom he was greatly loved, and at the head of whom he landed on the island just in time to repulse the Spaniards, who were beginning to make a landing. . . . M. de St. Denis had taken a hand in every difficulty whenever need for his help had arisen in the province, although he had neither pay nor rank. This determined the Court to send him the commission of captain and governor of the fort at the Nassitoches (247).

Pénicault thus closes his Saint Denis section by summing up a career that leads Dumont de Montigny to propose Saint Denis for Bienville's position. Pénicault's emphasis on Saint Denis' interest in service rather than in riches and power sheds more light on why author and protagonist made such fun of Spanish attempts to win Saint Denis'
allegiance by offers of material possessions and important positions. Neither Pénicaud nor Pénicaud’s Saint Denis preoccupy themselves with amassing wealth or exerting command; rather, the author and his hero are just as content to live on an equal level with Indians and common people as they are to enjoy the comfortable company of French and Spanish officials.

Pénicaud clearly has other heroes besides Saint Denis. One of them is the man to whom he dedicates the narrative, Jean-Baptiste Martin Dartaguiette Diron, former ordonnateur of Louisiana and later a director of the Company of the West. Pénicaud admires this particular leader for the same qualities that Dumont will praise in the entire Dartaguiette family. Although residing in France when Pénicaud presented the narrative in 1723, Dartaguiette Diron had earlier served in Louisiana, where, according to the following section from the dedication, he won great popularity. Pénicaud relates how all the troops now in Louisiana and all the habitans in the neighborhood of Mobile who have had the honor of seeing you there, and of obeying you, still long for that happy time when your natural goodness made free to question them kindly and to ask them whether they were content to live in that country. They deeply felt the misfortune they suffered in losing you when the Court, having need of you, Monsieur, wrote you to return to France.

According to Pénicaud, Dartaguiette Diron gained the love of the colonists by being open to their needs, complaints, and concerns when he came to investigate and mediate the squabble between Commandant Bien-ville and Commissaire Nicolas de La Salle after the latter drew the French Court’s attention to the Le Moyne family’s questionable doings in Louisiana. In holding Dartaguiette Diron up as an example of sound leadership and efficacious service, Pénicaud pleads, in the same fashion that Dumont does in citing the deeds of Governor Périer and Saint Denis, for the appointment of similar officials to govern Louisiana.
Pénicaud gives specific examples of Dartaguiette Diron’s effective leadership in Chapter 10, “The Year 1708.” Shortly after Dartaguiette arrives in Mobile, he asks everyone -- officers, soldiers, and residents alike -- if they are happy in Louisiana. Despite the feud that has split the colony (a feud that Pénicaud never mentions) and contrary to historians’ consensus on the misery of early Louisianians, Pénicaud reports that “all of them told him that they were quite happy there” (121). Pénicaud states further that the necessities requested by colonists in their interviews with Dartaguiette were sent to Louisiana once the well-meaning interlocutor returned to France. Dartaguiette thereby displays a reliability upon which early settlers could not always depend in other officials.

Dartaguiette’s concern for the state of early Louisiana manifests itself further when he joins Bienville in sending “M. d’Éraque” to the Illinois region to put a stop to abuses when officials hear that some French-Canadians living among the Cascassias Illinois were inciting the savage nations in the environs of this settlement to make war upon one another and that the French-Canadians themselves were participating in order to get slaves that they afterwards sold to the English (122).

On Dartaguiette’s and Bienville’s orders, D’Éraque travels through the Illinois country reprimanding French Canadians for their behavior, entreating the Indians to make peace with each other, and beseeching the missionaries “to send word to Mobile if the Canadians again started to stir up war among the savages, for which the punishment would be severe” (123). Dartaguiette’s handling of the problems in Upper Louisiana shows that, like the “Americanized” heroes of colonial Louisiana writers, he concerns himself with red as well as white inhabitants.

In Chapter 13, “The Year 1711,” Dartaguiette and Bienville again come to the aid of both Indian and French when they receive word from Upper-Louisiana missionaries that Canadians are “debauching the
daughters and the wives of the Illinois and dissuading them from being converted to our religious faith" (136). Dartaguiette and Bienville send a sergeant and twelve men (of whom Pénicaud is one) to Upper Louisiana, where the contingent attempts "to surprise those Canadian rakes in their beds" (137). The Canadians escape beforehand, and the Mobile troop lives with Indians for a time. At the end of Chapter 13, Pénicaud notes: "After four months we went down to Mobile, where we no longer found M. Dartaguet. He had sailed back to France" (142).

Like Dartaguiette Diron, Iberville (Bienville's older brother) is idolized by Pénicaud in large part because of his attentions to Native Americans as well as Frenchmen. In the first chapter of his narrative, Pénicaud delights in relating Iberville's kindnesses to the Indians of Lower Louisiana in the days of initial contact. During the founding of Biloxi, for example, the French leader shares provisions with the Gulf-Coast natives, has them instructed in the use of French goods, and takes genuine pleasure in their company. Pénicaud views the homage that the Indians pay Iberville as befitting his generosity and desire for friendship. The author, therefore, glories in recounting how Iberville is given the calumet of peace to smoke; is painted white as a mark of honor; and, in token of the same, is carried on shoulders, seated on furs, and embraced affectionately.

After Iberville leaves Louisiana on a temporary trip to France, Pénicaud notes, "We were quite impatient for the return of M. d'Hyberville and were constantly out on the point before the fort keeping watch for him" (21). Pénicaud expresses what seems to be the entire colony's relief when Iberville returns: "Finally, on Kings' Eve, 1700, we heard cannon-firing from Isle Surgère. . . . It was M. d'Hyberville arriving. . . . M. d'Hyberville was received with all possible joy. But he remained at the fort only four days. . . ." (21). Ready to
be of service to both crown and colony, Iberville does not luxuriate. Rather, he immediately leads an expedition from the Biloxi Coast to the Mississippi River.

As the Frenchmen encounter other Indian groups for the first time during the new explorations, Pénicaut again stresses Iberville's concern for red welfare. When Bayougoulas flee upon seeing Frenchmen, M. d'Hyberville was not surprised at this and remarked that fear had made them abandon their houses. He immediately detailed two Frenchmen and one savage to go to them and reassure them. They ran after them and caught up with them in a short while, as their children hindered them from going fast. Our savage, who was of the Biloxi and knew them all, made them understand that we were good people and encouraged them to return; and, although they had little faith in that, they did not fail to return, their calumet of peace in their hands (24).

As part of their peace package, the Bayougoulas offer women to Iberville and his men. Iberville refuses in a way that in part voices racist notions of the day: "By showing his hand to them, M. d’Hyberville made them understand that their skin -- red and tanned -- should not come close to that of the French, which was white" (24). Although it is worded in the convenient racism of the day, the warning against white men having intercourse with red women springs also and perhaps mostly from Iberville's Catholic views on sexuality. Because it would be harder to make the Indians understand Christian dictates concerning sexual behavior in this initial encounter, Iberville takes the easier route of using skin color to keep the Indians from tempting the men for whose behavior he is responsible. Racial difference affords the quickest, easiest recourse for Iberville in a delicate situation and allows a less offensive explanation of refusal than do protestations of immorality.

The manner in which Iberville's band travels up the Mississippi further indicates the leader's concern for good relations between the
French and Native Americans. Pénicaut says of a typical move from one village to the next,

We remained here only three days; and after the savages had finished singing their calumet of peace, M. d’Hyberville gave them some presents, as he had given the others. They, too, gave us a great many fowls and some game, which we loaded into our longboats. And we did not fail to get from them four of their savages to serve us as guides, replacing the four Bayagoulas savages, whom we sent back to their village. Thus we exchanged nation for nation so that we would not fatigue them and would at the same time reassure the savages when we came among them: seeing us with other savages, they were not at all alarmed (27).

Iberville’s concern for Native Americans is further evinced upriver when he stops the Tensas from sacrificing their own children in response to the destruction of their temple by lightning. Although Iberville enforces a European prohibition against a red religious response of human sacrifice in this instance, he apparently proceeds in such a way that the imposition of his values does not offend the Tensas. After all, the Indians sing the usual three-day calumet-of-peace ceremony for him following the incident. When he finally leaves the village, Iberville gives the Tensas “a more substantial present than he had given the others” (29) to make up for their disastrous loss, and he invites them to settle elsewhere. Clearly Pénicaut’s admiration for Iberville stems in large part from the latter’s interest in Native Americans and foreshadows the author’s idolization of Saint Denis, whom Pénicaut turns into his major hero once Iberville leaves Louisiana.

In addition to his treatment of various military and governmental leaders of early Louisiana, Pénicaut’s references to the priests who worked in the colony also indicate the way the author judges a person of power and influence: by his service to all humanity. Although Pénicaut, like most of the colonial Louisiana writers, reveals himself to be a devout Catholic throughout the narrative, his decision to
exalt certain priests is not an automatic response to their sacerdotal status. Chapter 2 affords a case in point. During an expedition to the headwaters of the Mississippi, Pénicaut spends a long, seventeen-day layover in the Franco-aboriginal Illinois village. There are no less than five priests in the vicinity (undoubtedly the greatest concentration of clergy that the author has encountered in Louisiana), but Pénicaut does nothing more than mention their names. Earlier, however, the author had granted extended attention to one of them, Reverend Joseph de Limoges, S.J., because of his timely and selfless assistance after encountering Pénicaut’s weakened band of explorers on the Mississippi. As Pénicaut relates,

Several days earlier, we had met a priest across from the Écorts-à-Prudhomme who was going down to the sea to call on M. d’Hyberville; but, after learning from us that M. d’Hyberville had sailed back to France, the priest changed his plans; and before he went back up to the Illinois -- M. Le Sueur having declared to him our need of food supplies -- he helped us out of his, as much as he could, even stinting himself in order to accommodate us. M. Le Sueur had sought him to send us a boat with food, telling him that we would wait for it at Cape St. Anthoine, as we were so weakened from lack of food that we did not have the strength to row farther. He had left at once, having promised us to row night and day in order to arrive as quickly as possible at the Illinois, from where he would send us some provisions. He did not go back on his word; and the minute he got there, he started a boat downstream filled with all kinds of provisions. It reached us after twenty-two days, in the time of our greatest need. On that occasion few people were in our longboat, as most of our men had gone off in the woods to find something on which to subsist. The Reverend Father Limoges came in that boat with four Frenchmen to paddle him (37-38).

Returning to the destitute party, the priest foregoes any ceremony in his honor and immediately tends to the sick. In addition to the cleric, Pénicaut does not fail to honor the expedition’s leader, Pierre-Charles Le Sueur, for putting his men’s health before his own, an act that impresses even the selfless Reverend Father.
Pénicaut's interest in the equalization of society through attention to common humanity is detectable even in his relation of curious ceremonies that he observes among Native Americans. In the first chapter, for example, while the Indians are celebrating the French arrival at Biloxi, Pénicaut points out how one of the welcoming ceremonies involves both the exalting and levelling of self and others. Indians strike stakes with head-breakers, "telling at each blow whatever noble deeds they had done in war, and more besides" (6-7). To counterbalance the self-elevation of military and governmental elite, "all of them, women as well as men, are permitted to do the same thing and to accuse one another of telling big lies" (7). Undoubtedly, Pénicaut chose to record such a ceremony because of the unique way in which it allows the whole community to take an active part in maintaining some degree of horizontalization in society, a social levelling of which the author obviously approves.

Pénicaut's democratic sentiments are perhaps most apparent in the two chapters recounting his sojourns among the Natchez and the Acolapissa-Natchitoches. There, the author openly expresses his pleasure at being free of the hierarchical conventions of garrison life, but, at the same time, he and the band of young Frenchmen do not abuse their new liberties. Far from debauching with the Indians and becoming slothful in their absence from Bienville, the individuals work together for the good of the entire group, hunting to meet their joint needs and electing from among themselves a leader to oversee prayers and shared sentinel duty. They behave civilly with Indians and for many months are actually integrated into red society. The greater degree of social equalization in Native-American communities seems more pleasing to the youthful Europeans than do the regimen and social stratification of colonial military life. Not surprisingly,
the Frenchmen linger longer than is necessary among the Indians, "where we all but forgot M. de Bienville's instructions" (83).

While the Frenchmen may be appreciative of many facets of Native-American life that seem more democratic than their Continental counterparts, Pénicaut is not blind to peculiar forms of aboriginal elitism and oppression. Such oppression is clearest among the Natchez, the most socially stratified Indian nation encountered by the French. Although awed by the intricacy of the Natchez caste system, Pénicaut nonetheless disapproves of the Suns' (the nobility's) overwhelming sway over the lives of the Stinkards (the commoners). Thus, the author feels compelled to expose and condemn the inequalities of this red society along with those of Continental and Euro-American civilizations.

Pénicaut begins his presentation of Natchez social stratification by showing the highly exalted position of the Grand Chief: "This Grand Chief is as absolute as a king. His people, out of awe, do not come close to him: when they speak to him, they stand four paces away from him" (89). After describing the Grand Chief's bed, which approximates a throne, Pénicaut says further,

Only his wife may sleep with him in that bed; only his wife, too, can eat at his table. When he offers his leavings to his brothers or to some of his kinsmen, he pushes the dishes to them with his foot. When he rises from his bed, all his kinsmen or several distinguished old men draw near his bed raising their arms aloft and howling frightfully. This is how they pay their respects to him; still, he does not deign to look at them (89).

Along with the lavish deference that even his closest relatives must show, "there are many servants that they call ouchil-tichou, who serve him for various purposes" in a house "large enough to hold as many as four thousand persons" (89). In addition to presiding over the main village, the Grand Chief rules over the chiefs of eight other villages.
and "sends his orders to them by two of his thirty flunkies, who are called hirelings, in their tongue tichou" (88-89).

Just as the Grand Chief is highly distinguished from everyone else by where he lives and how he is treated, so the other nobles enjoy clear separation from the masses. The division is reflected in housing. As Pénicaut notes,

The houses of these noble chiefs are built upon elevations and are distinguished from other houses by their magnitude. The Grand Chief sends these nobles to be chiefs in the villages subject to him whenever he needs them there (90).

While Pénicaut may more or less objectively relate the distinctions between high and low in Natchez society that have already been mentioned, when it comes to detailing a noble's funeral, the author seems to lose his tolerance. That is, he clearly denounces the carnage committed as homage to a royal's death.

Pénicaut's famous Natchez funeral passage reads as follows.

It happened in our time that the Grand Noble Female Chief died and we witnessed the funeral ceremonies, which were indeed the most horrifying tragedy that could be seen. It made us shudder with horror, me and all my comrades. She was a female chief noble in her own right; accordingly, as soon as she died, her husband, who wasn't at all noble, was immediately strangled by the first boy that she had borne him, so that he might accompany his wife to the Grand Village, where they think they go after such a fine beginning. Everything in the Grand Chief's house was taken outside. As is the custom, a kind of triumphal chariot was made inside the house, and upon it were placed the Dead One and her strangled husband. A little while later, a dozen little infants that had been strangled to death were borne in and arranged about the Dead One; the fathers and mothers took them there by order of the Dead Female Chief's oldest child, who could then, as Grand Chief, bespeak as many persons as he wished to have put to death, honoring his mother's funeral.

In the village square, fourteen scaffolds were erected, which they decorated with branches of trees and with linen cloth covered with paintings. Upon each scaffold was put a person who was to accompany the Dead One to the other world. On these scaffolds they are surrounded by their nearest of kin. Sometimes they are forewarned ten years in advance of their death; this is an honor to their kin. Usually they have offered their death while the Dead One was
alive, out of the great love they bear her; it is they themselves who have spun the cord with which they are strangled. Then -- dressed in their finest clothes, with a large shell in their right hand, and accompanied by their closest kinsmen (for example, if the father of a family is to die, his eldest son walks behind him carrying the cord under his arm and a casse-tête in his right hand, uttering a horrible scream called the death cry) -- then all these unfortunate victims come down from their scaffolds once every quarter hour and, meeting in the middle of the square, dance together before the temple and before the house of the Dead Female Chief; then they remount their scaffolds and take their places once more. They are highly respected on that day, and each one has five servants. Their faces are painted all over with vermilion. As for me, I believe their purpose was to hide their fear of death, which was at hand.

Four days later they began the ceremony of the Corpses' March. The fathers and mothers who had brought their children picked them up and held them out on their hands. The oldest of these children did not seem to be over three years old. They took their places to right and left of the door of the Dead Female Chief's house. The fourteen victims doomed to be strangled came and took up similar positions. The chiefs and the Dead One's kinsmen appeared there, likewise, in mourning -- that is, with their hair cut off. At that time they made such frightful howls that we thought the devils had come out of hell just to get to this place and howl. The unfortunates, doomed to death, danced while kinsmen of the Dead One sang. When they started off, two by two, in that grand funeral procession, the Dead One was brought from her house, four savages carrying her on their shoulders as on a stretcher. As soon as she was brought forth, the house was set on fire -- that is the grand fashion with nobles. The fathers with their dead children out on their hands marched in front at intervals of four paces, and after taking ten steps they dropped the children to the ground. Those carrying the Dead One walked on top of these children and three times marched around them. The fathers gathered them up then and fell back in line; and every ten steps they repeated this frightful ritual till they came to the temple, so that the children were mangled in pieces by the time that fine funeral procession got there.

While the Noble Woman was being buried inside the temple, the victims were undressed before the door; and after they had been seated on the ground, one savage sat down on the knees of each while a second savage behind him held his arms. Cords were put around their necks and deer skins placed over their heads, and they were made to swallow three tobacco pills each, with a drink of water to moisten them in their stomachs, which made them lose consciousness. Then the Dead One's kinsmen lined up beside these poor unfortunates, to right and left; and singing the while, each pulled
an end of the cord about a victim's neck as a slipknot until they were dead. They were then buried.

When a chief dies, if his wet nurse is still alive, she has to die with him (92-95).

Obviously, one aim of Pénicaut's long description of a royal Natchez funeral is to show the large-scale horror that can occur when an elite minority has unlimited, uncontested power over the underprivileged majority of a given population. "This execrable ritual" of the Natchez is so offensive to the young Frenchmen, who are "seized, as it were, with sadness and horror at having seen such a frightful spectacle" (96), that they abruptly leave Natchez and return to Mobile.

The abuse that Pénicaut and many other Louisiana writers dislike the most in Native-American societies is unbridled wartime cruelty, which, as has been noted, is most often a red-on-red affair. One of the best illustrations of the depth of war-related tactics and their effects on Pénicaut is a passage from Chapter 7. Speaking of one Indian group in particular, Pénicaut relates,

These savages, who are named Coroas, are the most cruel of all the savages in Louisiana. They are forever off hunting or making war; and when they capture one of their enemies alive, they fasten him to a frame made of two posts eight feet high set five feet apart, tying his hands at the top and his feet at the bottom in the form of a St. Andrew's cross. The poor wretch is fastened up this way entirely naked, and the whole village gathers around him. In that place they have a fire burning in which they have put pieces of iron to get red hot -- old gun barrels, spades, or axe-heads, and other such things. When these get red hot, they rub his back with them, his arms, thighs, and legs. Then they ring the skin on his head even with his ears and tear it off him. They fill this scalp with burning coals and re-fit it to his head. They stick the ends of his fingers into their lighted pipes and draw on them. And they tear out his nails. Thus they torment him until he is dead (100).

This in-depth account of red-on-red cruelty follows the paragraph that recounts the murder-theft of a missionary and two other Frenchmen by four Coroas. Interestingly, the white men suffer none of the tortures
typically inflicted by the Coroas upon other Indians. Rather, the heads of the white men are simply broken and their bodies merely thrown into the river. Later, Pénicaut will relate Hasinai cruelty to fellow reds with the same detail afforded the Coroa. In all this, the author seems to be pleading for an end to red-on-red inhumanity.

It is clear that Pénicaut believes that the weak of all races should be protected by the strong. For example, when relating how the small band of Taoùachas come from Florida to settle near the French at Mobile, Pénicaut seems to condemn the Spanish for not shielding this militarily unimportant red group from Alabama harassment. Even worse, the Spanish also fail to aid the thoroughly Catholic Apalachees in similar troubles. Hence, the Apalachees move to Mobile for protection, livelihood, and greater opportunities to practice the Christian religion. Unlike the Spanish as he has observed them, Pénicaut deems no group of people expendable.

The French attempt to establish a fort on the Sabine River further illustrates the approach to Native Americans that Pénicaut endorses. In Chapter 23, "The Year 1721," Pénicaut relates that after a brigantine loaded down with "great supplies of food and munitions" had entered the Sabine to found a white establishment,

They came upon a strong party of savages entrenched on one side of this river, who stopped them and never did consent for the French to build a fort there. M. de la Harpe had an interpreter tell them that the French had come to be their friends, that they wanted to do nothing except what was to their good and to bring them some of the conveniences of life; but they were unwilling to hear any of the proposals that were made to them, which they rejected, telling us that they were satisfied with their condition and that they wished to live free and off to themselves, without taking any other nation among them. M. de la Harpe had them told further that if any of their chiefs wished to go with the French to Biloxi, they would be given an opportunity to talk to M. de Bienville, who would not fail to give them some presents as evidence that we wanted a fort on the bank of their river solely as a service to them. Nine presented
themselves and, getting in the brigantine, were conducted to Biloxi (250-251).

Despite their hopes and preparations to build a post on the Sabine, the French drop their plans at the behest of natives. The author's emphasizing such deference to Indian wishes reflects Pénicaut's sometimes viewing colonization as a partnership between Europeans and Native Americans rather than as a complete subjugation of the latter to the former.

Such respect for red prerogatives is not surprising in someone who estimated his importance to Louisiana in large part by his familiarity with aborigines. Using third person to refer to himself as he brings the narrative to a close, Pénicaut testifies that

he was a member of all the expeditions he mentions in his narrative, as he was really needed on them, not only to repair the longboats and the rowboats of the expeditions that went off as war parties or as convoys, but even to act as interpreter in explaining the questions and answers of the savages, whose languages he speaks quite well. Several times he has ascended the Mississippi from its embouchure, where it empties into the sea, as high as the Saut de St. Anthoine. . . . Likewise, he has been as far up the tributaries that flow into the Mississippi, to right and to left of its banks, having visited nearly all the nations on both sides of this river for more than sixty leagues from its banks in the direction of Mexico, Canada, and Carolina (253-254).

Understandably, Pénicaut elevates himself for the same reason that he elevates certain other pioneering colonists: because of his amicable and cooperative familiarity with the various red peoples of Louisiana.

While references to enslavement of Indians exist in the narrative, Pénicaut definitely does not approve of large-scale, indiscriminate disenfranchisement of Native Americans. In his opinion, only those Indians who prove themselves to be enemies of the French and of France's red allies and who are captured after making war against the French alliance should be subjected to slavery as punishment for their
offense. Even then, clemency and eventual emancipation should figure into the punitive bondage approved by the author. Thus, Pénicaud tends to view red slavery more as a temporary condition meted out to certain offenders rather than as a permanent state to be enforced upon whole groups. Hence, he gladly relates Bienville's willingness to hand over enslaved Alabamas to their Mobilian kin.

Pénicaud attacks other forms of slavery that seem cruder and less humane than the type he endorses. For example, in Chapter 15 he disapproves of a red and a white group's means of procuring slaves and intervenes on behalf of those unjustly enslaved.

Among the Natchez I found some slaves who were of the Cha-o-achas nation. They had been captured by a strong party of Chicachas, Yasoux, and Natchez, who had been in the Cha-o-achas' village under the pretext of singing their calumet of peace; but these treacherous men had, on the contrary, gone there to make war, and the very first thing they did was kill the Grand Chief and several members of his family. They took eleven persons prisoner, among them the Grand Chief's wife, whom they brought to the Natchez.

I did what I could to rescue them, but I was never able to accomplish anything with the captors. I was surprised to find three Englishmen there who had come to buy these slaves. They were the persons who had incited the nations to war among themselves so that by this means they might find a good number of slaves to buy and take back to Carolina (159).

Pénicaud exposes the white forces behind the Indians' deceitful entrapment of fellow Indians. The English receive their just deserts for unfairly enslaving some reds and then setting the others against the French, however. In presenting the pathetic tale of Price Hughes, an Englishman who attempted to establish the British at Natchez, the author relates how Pénicaud's band brought Hughes to Mobile (where he was "well entertained" before moving on to the Spanish at Pensacola for similar treatment) and how Hughes was killed by Native Americans once he left the Gulf Coast for British territory on the Atlantic.
Contrary to Anglo hopes, the indigenous nations make war on English outposts instead of French settlements. Furthermore,

During the same time, the Grand Chief of all the savages in the direction of Carolina, whom all those savages called their Emperor, came accompanied by all the other chiefs of those nations, seeking M. de la Mothe at Mobile; and they sang their calumet of peace to him (164-165).

Other eastern chiefs also come to Mobile, and Pénicaud’s French negotiate for further colonization in the direction of Carolina. Clearly, Pénicaud believes that in these changes of events the French are receiving Providential reward for treating Native Americans more fairly than the British and the Spanish do and for refraining from the plots and schemes of their Anglo and Hispanic neighbors.

As the narrative reaches a close, Pénicaud presents a picture of colonial prosperity that results when those in control and those without power work together for their own and for each other’s good. It is a picture of the commercial and societal well-being that Poydras hopes to encourage in his poems later on. Speaking of Commissary-General Marc-Antoine Hubert’s concession at Natchez in Chapter 22, "The Year 1720," Pénicaud relates,

This concession is now one of the most delightful along the Missicipy, for M. Hubert improved it by adding a water mill to grind grain on the place, since he had taken the precautions of bringing several millstones from France and had a very smart miller among his workmen. This mill saw service that very year both with the troops and with the savages, who came to it in droves carrying their grains, which made this concession very rich. He also had a forge mill built on this river so that he could work in it a gunsmith and an edge-tool worker he had brought. They proved to be of great service in the area, on weapons and in the making of plowshares and other iron things. At the same time the Commissary, M. Hubert, gave a quite fine and comfortable dwelling place, one league away, to M. de Montplaisir, so that he could put his thirty tobacco workers to work there. This factory succeeded very well, for as early as the second year they made more than a hundred thousand pounds of tobacco (238-239).
Unfortunately, the progress that Pénicaud wished for Louisiana, as evinced not only in the depiction given above but also in descriptions of other concessions throughout the colony, in speculations about mining in the territory's far reaches, and in promotion of trade with Mexico, was slow in coming and was even discouraged by Continental overlords who wanted colonies to remain sources of raw materials for Europe and not to become independent centers of commerce. Not surprisingly, Pénicaud's vision for Louisiana, which has Europeans and Native Americans, concession owners and concession workers, government officials and soldiers, the powerful and the powerless, the rulers and the ruled working together, hand in hand, to build the colony, links the carpenter-scribe more, perhaps, to the writers who followed than to the authorities who dictated the fate of his second homeland.

The desire to promote the prosperity, well-being, and liberty of the populace may not be as central to Pénicaud's prose narrative as it is to Poydras', Viel's, and Dumont's verse works. Still, the reader cannot overlook the fact that Pénicaud's text comes alive when he denounces red and white injustices and when he relates the happiness that occurs when people live and work together in harmony. One must also wonder what the happy relating of the reprieve from regimen under colonial overlords so as to sojourn among the Indians and among smaller groups of Frenchmen, where more democratic forms of existence become the norm, must indicate concerning Pénicaud's views on authority and existing government. At such times, when Frenchmen of the same rank live cooperatively with each other and with Native Americans, Pénicaud confesses, "We remained for a long time in their villages, where we all but forgot M. de Bienville's instructions" (83). Wistful in relating the days spent amid the red tribes before the destruction of their way of life, a way of life that, paradoxically, made the
Natchez hierarchy seem even more absolute than its Continental counterpart, Pénicaut obviously prefers to recall much of his contact with red people than to remember the disagreeable experiences endured in the European enclaves of America. What is most important, however, is that when one looks at the Euro-American whose “galante story” Pénicaut chose to highlight and through which the author wished to instruct as well as entertain his powerful reader, it becomes clear that the writer presents those who work alongside people of every race and nation for the good of all as the true heroes of this early Louisiana narrative.

More forcefully than his peers of the first French domination or than Poydras and Viel of the Spanish period do, Dumont pleads for the liberty and prosperity of the people and the curtailing of tyrannical oppression. Unlike the more cautious Poydras and Viel, Dumont openly attacks those who (he thinks) have abused their power and harmed their underlings. Furthermore, while Poydras speaks for progress by praising a man commonly recognized as one of the best Spanish governors of Louisiana, Dumont draws attention to improving Louisiana by continually condemning one of the colony’s founding fathers. Bienville, founder of New Orleans, military leader and governor of Louisiana, a man who spent half his life developing the Louisiana colony and, hence, who came to be known by some as the “Father of Louisiana” (a title that others ascribe to Cavelier de La Salle), serves as the main object of Dumont’s ire in the Poème en Vers, as has already been seen. While Dumont repeatedly blasts Bienville, others -- most notably Lieutenant Etcheparre, infamous commandant of Natchez -- also receive unrelenting criticism. Virulent diatribes notwithstanding, Dumont does cite those who have benefited the colony and holds them up as suitable replacements for those who seek their own gain over the public good.
In dedicating his colossal poem to the Count d'Argenson, Dumont states that some of his purposes for writing about the establishment of Louisiana include a desire to show how lives have been lost in a place that could be a "Second Paradis" should peace prevail there. He begins the poem by recounting the skirmishes between French and Spanish forces in the Mobile-Pensacola region of the Gulf of Mexico in the late 1710s and early 1720s. For a time, Dumont spares Bienville criticism while relating the latter's part in the campaigns to strengthen the French presence in Lower Louisiana's southeastern extremity. Rather than blasting Bienville, the poet directs his first diatribes against the French deserters who unsuccessfully assist the Spanish. Once the Spanish in Pensacola and the French in the Mobile-Biloxi area establish peace, Dumont turns to detailing how Frenchmen, working side by side against many difficulties, develop the Dauphin-Island, Old-Biloxi, New-Biloxi, and New-Orleans settlements. The attacks against Bienville begin to creep into the text slowly, initially in the form of sarcastic references regarding senseless public works and the moving around of Bienville's official capital and principal residences. Dumont also explains colonial Louisiana's judicial system, offers descriptions of New Orleans, Mobile, and Natchez, and then digresses upon mosquitoes and other insects. Thus begins the rambling course of the Poème, held together in large part by Dumont's invectives against Bienville.

After describing the Natchez region and the potential it has for becoming the "Second Paradis" of Louisiana, Dumont recounts the events leading up to the Natchez Massacre of 1729. Then he announces one of the theses of the Poème:

\[\text{Je mettrai par écrit, les divers changements}
\text{Tant du gouvernement que les faits de la guerre,}
\text{Qui nous ont, un moment, réduits à la misère,}
\text{Qu'aujourd'hui l'on ressent partout dans ce pays (313).}\]
In Dumont’s view, bad government as much as war has led the Louisiana colony into misery. Dumont offers his *Poème en Vers* as a highly biased exposé of those officials who have harmed Louisiana most.

Before detailing the persons and practices contributing to Louisiana’s demise, Dumont presents an idyllic picture of former colonial life under a commandant that he favors: Étienne Périer, who governed Louisiana from 1727 to 1733. Under Périer

Cette terre, en un mot, faisait nargue à la France,
On y vivoit fort bien, et tout en abondance,
Chacun voyoit venir, dans l’habitation,
Le coton, le tabac et de belles moissons (314).

During Périer’s administration, the colony was so agriculturally productive that it could parade its prosperity flauntingly before France, Dumont affirms. This prosperity was possible only because “Ce digne gouverneur, à tous, était propice,/ Et rendoit à chacun le droit et la justice” (314). In other words, Périer’s fairness and propitiousness towards all colonists insured the entire colony’s prosperity. For only under a non-abusive and unintrusive system of government such as that conducted by Dumont’s Périer could people take advantage of a land rich in resources and thereby produce to capacity.³ Thus, from the start of his political commentary, Dumont uses the equation that others before him and that Viel and Poydras later employ: Bad government (i.e., tyrannical deprivation of the right to pursue one’s livelihood without excessive governmental interference) leads to bad social conditions; conversely, good government (something that approaches democracy or that is at least attentive to popular needs and concerns) results in societal well-being.

Unfortunately, Périer’s reign did not last long. As Dumont notes of the passing of what he perceives to have been a Camelot age in Louisiana history,
Mais ce temps là n’est plus, un fatal accident
A retiré ce chef. Aujourd’hui, l’habitant
Se trouve abandonné, réduit à la misère,
Qui l’oblige à quitter sa maison et sa terre (314).

Dumont turns from the happy years of Périer’s regime and proceeds to recount the cause for the present sad state of affairs in Louisiana.

The main cause of the colony’s decline was the 1729 Natchez Massacre. Dumont blames the event on Lieutenant Etcheparre, a man who abused his power as commandant of the Natchez post and thereby infuriated the Indians. Dumont alleges that in setting himself up as absolute lord of the Natchez post, Etcheparre, in essence, condemned it to destruction.

... Par un grand malheur, en ce charmant endroit,
Le nommé de Chépart en roy le commandoit;
En roy, cela veut dire en très grande puissance.
Eloigné qu’il était de cent lieues de distance
De la Cour de justice et du chef commandant,
Il devint, en un mot, orgueilleux et tyrant,
Maltraitant le bourgeois et même les Sauvages,
Leur ordonnant de plus de quitter leurs villages.
... Ils s’en voulait saisir, et le tout sans raison...
... Son poste l’avait rendu fier et vain;
Ors, par malheur, Lecteur, cet ordre fut funeste
A lui non seulement, mais même à tout le reste (314-315).

Far from the seat of justice in New Orleans, Etcheparre assumed more power than the position of commandant at Natchez carried. Mistreating both French and Indians in the area, he wished to dislocate the latter so as to appropriate their fertile and already developed lands for himself. Etcheparre’s greed and his restriction of the rights of both white and red inhabitants resulted in the destruction of a prosperous settlement, the loss of the majority of white lives there, and the irreparable rift in Franco-Natchez relations. Dumont, showing his ultimate disgust for Etcheparre, affords him a coward’s death in the poem. As the massacre proceeds,

... Partout
Les Français sont tués par de funestes coups;
Etcheparre, the man who set himself up as lord over others, is treated
in the end like the lowest animal by those he considered to be the
lowest human beings. Etcheparre’s is depicted as the worst death to
occur in the Natchez carnage because, rather than considering it an
honor to kill the French leader (which would be the normal attitude in
this brand of warfare), no Indian wants to contaminate himself by so
much as touching the commandant. Rather, the lowest in Natchez soci­
ety is made to rid the people once and for all of Etcheparre. Dumont
contrasts Etcheparre’s disgraceful end with the more honorable death
of a respectable man, “un esprit sage et bon,” “un juge, irréprochable
en tout” (318), who is likened to Hannibal in his final bravery and
whose refraining from uttering a cry while being fatally tortured by
the Indians wins him the reds’ admiration.

While most historians agree with Dumont in citing Etcheparre as
the person most to blame for events leading to the Natchez Massacre,
most would also see Dumont’s hero Pérrier as sharing some of the guilt
for the catastrophe. As noted in Louisiana: a History, “The tragic
flaw in Pérrier’s administration was his support of Lieutenant Etche­
parre” (25). Despite the historians’ views and even those of his con­
temporaries, Dumont places no blame on “l’illustre Pérrier.” Having
previously pointed out how Etcheparre reigned supreme in Natchez by
virtue of his distance from Pérrier’s seat of government in New Orle­
ans, Dumont follows the Massacre episode with Pérrier’s quick dispatch
of troops against the Natchez. The heroic campaigns under Dumont’s Périer and the same character’s earlier ignorance of or inability to curtail Etcheparre’s abuses clear him of any responsibility for the destruction of the French presence in Natchez.

Unfortunately for Dumont, Périer, “un vrai César” in his fight against the Natchez, leaves Louisiana too soon. Dumont notes sadly,

Périer nous quitte alors; adieu donc l’abondance!
S’il part, elle le suit, et retourne à la France.
On peut dire sans fard que jamais commandant
N’a fait ce qu’il a fait, soulageant l’habitant,
Punissant à regret, ne refusant personne;
En un mot, il mérite une illustre couronne (328).

In Dumont’s opinion, Périer put others before himself, thereby becoming a true minister (that is, a servant) to those under his rule. By putting the welfare of other colonists ahead of his own interests, Dumont’s Périer insured the prosperity of the colony. His selfless service to others wins him a crown from Dumont, whereas Etcheparre’s greed and denial of the rights of others incur only condemnation.

At the time that he wrote the last part of the Poème’s “Premier Chant,” Dumont was again under Bienville’s rule. De Villiers surmises that he was probably in New Orleans in 1736 or 1737 (“Avant-Propos,” 275), longing for Périer’s return and suspended between Bienville’s two unsatisfactory campaigns against the Natchez and their Chickasaw allies. Not surprisingly, Dumont ends the “Premier Chant” by indicating that something better must replace Bienville’s policies. In his “Remarques sur le Premier Chant” immediately following the first of the four divisions of Dumont’s poem, De Villiers notes,

Dumont ... a déjà soin de faire un éloge excessif, et parfois même ridicule, des talents de Périer pour pouvoir ensuite établir, tout au désavantage de celui de Bienville, une comparaison de la prospérité de la Louisiane pendant leurs deux gouvernements (329).

De Villiers then notes that Dumont might not have been as swift to
exalt Périer had he known that Périer had written as critically of him to France as Bienville had done.

Dumont begins one of his most virulent tirades against Bienville in the “Deuxième Chant.” Above all, Dumont attacks Bienville’s egoism since such self-centeredness more than any other factor makes the leader an “orgueilleux tyran.” Dumont depicts Bienville, returning to Louisiana in 1733, as too proud to accept the French soldiers given him to fight the Natchez anew. Bienville boasts, “Je n’ai besoin de rien,/ . . . et je peux tout, étant Canadien” (334). Despite the boast and the fanfare and high hopes surrounding Bienville’s arrival, everything goes downhill from the time he returns to the colony to the time Dumont decides to end the Poème. As Dumont notes with regret,

A peine arrive-t-il, que, commençant son règne,
Il fait, à quelques uns, déjà sentir sa haine.
Même à ce grand Périer, illustre commandant,
S’empare de sa place en orgueilleux tyran (334).

In addition to the vengeance he wreaks upon peers and his usurpation of power, Bienville hurts the general populace through such abuses, for his interference with the governmental and commercial machine hinders the normal functioning of the colony and prevents all from conducting business as usual and thereby earning a livelihood.

When Périer finally leaves Louisiana and Bienville amasses all power to himself, the abundance of the good old days disappears. “Le long de la rivière,/ Tout est abandonné, chacun sent la misère” (334). The “établissements” created under Périer are no more, and the sad state of affairs under Bienville stand in vivid contrast to the halcyon scenes from Périer’s administration.

Les habitations sont toutes délaissées,
Excepté neuf ou dix, qui sont si bien situées,
Au proche de la ville, où l’on ne craint point
L’arme de l’ennemi; le reste aurait besoin,
Pour pouvoir subsister, dans leur petit ménage,
De la proximité, de ce même avantage (334).

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Even though Dumont is unfairly attributing to Bienville a decline that resulted from the Massacre (during Périer’s administration!), it is still significant that Dumont chooses to launch his vendetta against Bienville by depicting the latter as a proud powermonger whose greed and lack of justice cause his society to suffer. This tactic is significant in that it causes Dumont to resemble writers such as Bossu, who repeatedly attacks European greed because of its inherent injustice and resultant destruction of human and natural resources. Dumont’s Bienville is the exact opposite of Poydras’ Galvez and Viel’s Evandre. Dumont’s Bienville and Etcheparre, like Viel’s King of Chrysante, represent the type of ruler Poydras feared most for Louisiana. Not only do such self-serving leaders deny the rights and oppress the daily lives of those under their command, they also hinder progress and prosperity and leave a weakened society vulnerable to its enemies.

Aware, to be sure, of the French Court’s suspicion of Bienville’s and the entire Le Moyne faction’s interests and importance in the colony, Dumont, as he states at the beginning of the “Deuxième Chant,” offers his report in hopes that the “grand Roy de France” will exert his power and come to the aid of his subjects suffering in Louisiana. While Dumont goes overboard in attributing most of Louisiana’s woes to Bienville and fabricates situations that De Villiers, Delanglez, and others decry, he resorts to these measures to insure that the person he considers to be the main villain of Louisiana will be permanently removed from power. In short, Dumont wants to make sure that not only his grievances but also those of many others will be redressed.

As he focuses on Bienville’s particular vices, Dumont repeatedly makes it clear that Le Moyne’s egoism more than anything else makes him an unsuitable military and civic leader. For example, overconfident in his ability to defeat the Natchez and Chickasaw in the
Illinois region, Dumont's Bienville leads his forces against an enemy fort too soon. Dumont notes of this foolhardy attempt to win early glory: "Bienville, à son idée,/ Croit déjà remporter la palme de laurier./ Non, Non, elle n'est pas pour tel aventurier" (345). Even when Bienville learns that there are Englishmen in the fort, he boasts,

Mais que peut cet Anglois? . . .,
Du Sauvage vraiment nous aurons l'ustensile
Qu'appartient à ces gens, et pourquoi sont-ils là?
Que nous peuvent-ils faire? Ils sont en mauvais pas,
Et ne pourront du moins, après toute défense,
Etant pris, se sauver de ma juste vengeance (347).

Despite the self-assurance of their leader, Bienville's troops suffer a miserable defeat. Immediately after recounting how many soldiers have been killed or wounded, Dumont notes, "Bienville, cependant, dans le corps de réserve,/ Examine à loisir, priant Dieu qu'il conserve/
Sans doute tous nos gens. . ." (350). Obviously, the people under Bienville suffer more than he does from his arrogance and lack of benevolent leadership. Such is the most pitiable outcome of a conceited tyrant's hold on power, and Dumont detests this injustice more than any other abuse.

Bienville's first campaign against the Natchez and their Chickasaw allies ends in cowardly fashion: "On reprit le chemin/ Pour se rendre, au plus vite, au fort de La Mobile./ Tel fut là le propre de l'esprit de Bienville" (352-353). A far cry from the initial boasting, Bienville's final retreat betrays a lack of courage. What is more, Bienville's blind overconfidence and subsequent fear lead him not only to personal humiliation in his failure to master the Indians but also bring about societal disaster.

Dumont sums up the Indian episodes that constitute the "Deuxième Chant" as follows.

Voilà, mon cher Lecteur, le vrai de cette affaire:
Ah! beaucoup de dépenses et beaucoup de misère.
Entrepris cependant comme très assuré

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D'être victorieux, hélas! on s'est trompé,
Le cœur ne manquait pas à toute notre armée
Mais la tête, la tête, étant très mal ornée
D'esprit et de bons sens, on s'aperçoit d'abord
Que, malgré ses désirs, cette masse de corps,
Au lieu de nous montrer un aimable génie,
Ne nous fait ressentir que des traits de folie.
Encore si cette tête en avait tout le prix,
Cela pourrait passer; il faut que les partis,
Conduits ainsi de même, ayant reçu dommage,
En réponse pour tous; ce n'est pas être sage (354-355).

Obviously metaphorizing Bienville as "la tête . . . très mal ornée,"
Dumont blames Le Moyne alone for leading the good-hearted and able-bodied French army into defeat.

On the other hand,

Très heureux est celui qui, dans ses actions,
Fait voir, dans tous les faits, une aimable raison.
Heureux, encore heureux, celui qui par courage,
Sait conduire et régler le tout à l'avantage,
Non seulement de lui, mais de ses compagnons,
Je peux dire, il est vrai, qu'il mérite mil dons (355).

Not only must an able leader possess "une aimable raison" (which Dumont's Bienville does not), he must also know how to lead all to their advantage. In place of the thousand gifts that Dumont would heap upon such a ruler, who thinks of his fellows as much as of himself, Dumont's Bienville receives countless insults.

As reinforcements come from France to aid in the second fight against the Chickasaw-Natchez, Dumont jumps at more chances to denigrate Bienville. For example, when another French official arrives in Louisiana, Dumont depicts Le Moyne as follows.

Bienville, notre héro, en lui même pestoît
De voir que de Noailles ah! de France venoit,
Pour être le témoin des faits de cette guerre;
Il le reçut pourtant de très belle manière,
Rongeant, pour le bien dire, en lui même son frein,
Et cachant, sur le tout, ce qu'il avoit dessein (362).

Not only does Bienville envy another military leader who might steal
from him the glory of defeating the foe (and who might also report Le Moyne's ineptness in war to the authorities back in France), Dumont's villain also plans some treachery against De Noailles.

Despite Bienville's desire to hoard all the acclaim in the campaign against the Chickasaw-Natchez, Dumont next depicts Le Moyne as reluctant to encounter the Indian enemy, remembering the defeat of 1736 and preferring comfortable accommodations at forts and posts to constant marching. De Noailles, on the other hand, wishes to seize the ripe moment for attack. Dumont presents De Noailles and other conscientious officers, such as the Sieur de La Buissonnière, as diligent leaders whose efficiency and concern for their troops make Bienville's luxurious sloth and disregard for anyone but himself even more conspicuous and contemptible.

Bienville refuses to comply with the advice of the newly arrived French officials, and, instead of besieging the Chickasaw-Natchez at an opportune moment, he forces the French soldiers, the Louisiana troops, and the Indian allies into an uneasy truce with the enemy. After this unsatisfactory peace goes into effect, Dumont details the harassment that the Chickasaw-Natchez continue to levy against the Louisianians living in more remote reaches of the colony, while Bienville, comfortable and safe in New Orleans, looks the other way. Bienville, "tant qu'il restera là, sera de cette ville/ La perte générale et de tout le pays" (377). Dumont closes the "Troisième Chant" thus prophesying the colony's continued decline should Bienville remain in office and bemoaning the fact that Périer and De Noailles do not serve in Bienville's place. The last two lines of the Poème en Vers' third division read, "Et je ne puis finir qu'en plaignant le malheur/ Du soldat, du bourgeois et tout voyageur" (377). In
short, Bienville's self-absorption and inattention to the needs and desires of his people have caused suffering at all levels of society.

Dumont devotes the "Quatrième Chant" to the description of Louisiana's climate and topography, its fauna and flora, and its Indian and French inhabitants. In discussing the French colonists, Dumont distinguishes those of the city (New Orleans) from those of the country. "L'un a tout le bon et l'autre ne l'a pas" (419). City dwellers have it much easier than rural residents do because of the former's proximity to centers of supply and trade. However, even in the city the distribution of wealth is uneven, and Dumont offers the reasons.

Presque l'esprit de tous est plein de jalousie;
Chacun voudroit gagner, tout le monde est marchand,
Officiers, soldats, conseillers, habitants,
Et, pour bien l'expliquer, sans être fanatique,
C'est qu'on se sert partout du bel art politique (420).

A colonial form of capitalism allows some to get rich while others languish. The greedy quest for possessions has corrupted every level of society in Louisiana, making the inhabitants jealous of each other and avaricious in their unequal competition. What is more, Dumont points out, the politics of the land sanction and even serve as vehicles for this type of communal defilement in which everyone struggles for goods that only the powerful and the privileged can get.

Dumont focuses on the main injustice of this corrupt distribution of goods in the colony.

Le pauvre est opprimé, l'on peut plaindre son sort,
Attendu que le riche est toujours le plus fort,
Et, malgré tout le droit, dans l'Hôtel de Justice,
On trouve que le juge a reçu des épices.
Qu'un ouvrier d'esprit dispute bien ses droits,
Il est ivre, il est fol et mutin à la fois.
Après le jugement, quoique non équitable,
On ne peut rappeler; injuste ou favorable,
Il faut passer par là, car, comment rappeler
En France au criminel? Il faudroit bien payer
L'allée et le retour pour une grosse somme,
Ce qui retient vraiment la bourse de chaque homme.
Avec un peu d'amis, on peut venir à bout,
De gagner sur autrui l'habit et le surtout (420).

Furthermore,
A quel prix que ce soit, rien ne devient contraire
A ceux qui payent bien; une petite affaire
En un ou deux conseils, avec de bons amis,
Est bientôt terminée au cercle de Thémis (420).

In sum, the rich have more sway in the colonial courts than do the impoverished, and Dumont even implies that a conspiracy exists between the legal and economic bosses to rob the ordinary citizen of all he or she possesses, including the protection of the legal system.

Not surprisingly, Dumont holds up Bienville as the main cause of all the injustice, for

Le gouverneur du Roy est le Sieur de Bienville,
C'est le Roy du pays, c'est le chef de la ville;
Chacun tâche à l'envie de lui faire la court,
Il ne sait ce que c'est qu'amitié, qu'amour (420).

Having usurped even the French monarch's authority and set himself up as king of Louisiana, Bienville is ultimately responsible for everything that happens or fails to happen in the colony. Thus, Bienville must be held accountable for all legal and economic abuses that occur. While Bienville has amassed power for himself and dictates the lives of many to their detriment, Dumont still dismisses Bienville as a coward despite his might and reminds the reader of how his lack of courage has been depicted in the preceding accounts of the unsuccessful Indian campaigns.

Continuing his exposé of Louisiana's commercial and legal injustices, Dumont goes on to cite in more detail how the colony's supplies from France end up in powerful hands instead of being distributed in an equalized fashion to all citizens. With regard to the goods placed in storehouses, Dumont notes,

Ceci c'est un chaos; crois donc qu'à l'habitant
On en délivre peu, quoique, pour son argent,
Ceux qui, dans ce pays, ont toute puissance,
Qui tiennent, de Thémis, les poids et la balance,
Sont tous payés du Roy par des appointements.
Ils prennent ces effets, au lieu de leur argent,
Par une main tierce, ils font faire la traite,
Qui, par ce beau moyen, augmente leur recette.
Ne crois pas cependant que l'officier soit mieux,
C'est comme l'habitant, tout passe par les yeux,
Et, s'ils la font un peu, c'est à la dérobée,
Pour tâcher de tirer leur part à la dragée (422).

Thus do the colony's administrators hoard surplus goods and thereby deprive the average and poorer citizens of basic necessities.  

As he brings the Poème en Vers to a close, Dumont mentions some admirable colonial leaders, detailing their fine qualities so as to call further attention to Bienville's corruption. For example, Dumont credits Diron Dartaguiette with making Mobile "un endroit charmant."

"L'illustre Diron" served there "avec mil qualités, l'esprit et la justice" (423-424). Dumont then moves from Mobile to Natchitoches to elaborate upon the fabulous deeds of Commandant Louis Juchereau de Saint Denis.

In starting his contribution to the Saint-Denis legend (part of which has been examined earlier in this study), Dumont refers to Saint Denis as a

Digne chevalier, cousin du Sieur Bienville,
Beaucoup plus généreux, courageux au possible,
Digne de meilleurs vers, pour que sa qualité
Soit connue, par mes vers, de la posterité (425).

In Dumont's view, Saint Denis deserves to be remembered by subsequent generations because of his courage and generosity, two qualities that Dumont delights in showing as being absent from Bienville. Furthermore, "Les travaux de ce chef sont si considérables/ Qu'en les sachant, Lecteur, ils passeroient pour fables" (425).

Having thus informed the reader of the admirable and the incredulous nature of Saint Denis' life, Dumont begins his long account of
Saint Denis' adventures in a section that reads more like a romance than like the combination descriptive narrative/belabored invective that much of the Poème has been up to this point. Hence, as in Pénicaut's narrative so in Dumont's, the Saint-Denis section stands apart in many ways from the rest of the text. In proceeding with the Saint-Denis story, Dumont reminds the reader of Saint Denis' service in the French campaign against the Spanish in Pensacola (the action that opened the Poème en Vers but that actually took place after the events recounted in the Saint-Denis tale). For love of Saint Denis, more than a hundred Indians left their homes in the interior and followed the Frenchman to help his embattled compatriots on the Gulf Coast. Saint Denis offered this service even after Bienville had tried his best to destroy his "cousin," a scheme fabricated by the author and presented in the Saint-Denis section proper and for which Dumont has earned the negative criticism of scholars. Dumont will return to Saint Denis leading the Franco-Indian forces to victory over the Spanish on the coast when he finishes the Saint-Denis tale, thereby bestowing a cyclic quality on the entire poem.

Most of Dumont's Saint-Denis drama centers on Saint Denis' imprisonment in Mexico City. Dumont blames Bienville for this incarceration, relating that the Mexican governor restrained the Natchitoches commandant, who had traded freely between French Louisiana and Spanish Mexico, only because Bienville wrote the Mexicans a letter warning that Saint Denis "avoit mauvais dessein" (425). In a footnote to the "Quatrième Chant," De Villiers calls these accusations "abominables calomnies contre Bienville" (425). Still, the fabrications are not surprising coming from Dumont. Even though Saint Denis wins a large following of Mexican sympathizers, the Spanish governor does not
release him sooner solely because the word that he requests from Bienville clarifying the latter's suspicions never arrives.

Just as Saint Denis is winning universal approval despite the international intrigue set in motion against him, Bienville writes a second letter to Spanish authorities, again condemning his cousin as an "ennemi commun" (426). Fortunately, the Indian carrying the message to the "grand Chef du Mexique" goes to Saint Denis before venturing to the governor. Surprised to see the Louisiana Indian, Saint Denis inquires into his welfare: "'Pourquoi donc quittes-tu ton établissement/ Que tu viens de si loin? Quel mécontentement/ As-tu pu recevoir?'" (426). After thus displaying his genuine concern for the conditions of red persons back home, Saint Denis asks to see the letter, the message of which the Indian does not know, and learns of the conspiracy against him. Saint Denis rewrites the letter and wins immediate freedom from his cell, but Spanish authorities ask him to remain in Mexico City on his honor until matters are cleared up further. The Spanish governor apologizes for the incarceration, citing Bienville's accusation of Saint Denis' criminality. Saint Denis responds,

Je jure qu'il a tort,
. . . mais il a la puissance
Desur moi, c'est assez. Si j'étois dans la France,
J'aurois, grand Gouverneur, la justice pour moi,
Et je puis vous jurer que c'est de bonne foi
Que je suis innocent (427).

Dumont's Saint Denis thus comments on the control that corrupt powers have over innocent, powerless persons in Louisiana. At the same time, Dumont obviously intends through Saint Denis' comparison of Continental and New-World administration of justice to flatter the powers back in Europe by alluding to their better sense of equity so as to insure its extension to those suffering from injustice in the colony. When Dumont's Bienville hears that Saint Denis is still alive and that he
is only nominally a prisoner in Mexico City, where the Spanish governor is merely awaiting official word to release him, the “Father of Louisiana” becomes enraged. Dumont depicts the scheming cousin as the archetypal villain fuming over the foiling of his evil plans.

Alors l’haine cruelle
S’empare de Bienville. Grands Dieux! l’étonnement
De voir que Saint-Denis est encore vivant!
Cette nouvelle alors lui fit changer de mine
Il peste avec fureur, en colère, il fulmine,
Ne peut s’imaginer qui peut avoir ainsi
fait changer tout d’un coup son ordre par écrit,
Qu’il avait envoyé sur l’innocente vie.
Examinant cela, plus il entre en furie;
Ce qui lui fait plaisir, c’est un retardement
Qui ne peut, selon lui, durer que peu de temps,
Et, pour y parvenir, voulant se satisfaire
Aussitôt il écrit et traite cette affaire
D’une telle façon que, c’était fait pour lors
Du pauvre Saint-Denis qu’il condamnoit à mort (428).

Although Bienville tries once more to have his cousin permanently done away with, the Indian messenger from Louisiana again goes to visit Saint Denis before reporting to the Spanish governor in Mexico City. Finally convinced of the plot against him, Saint Denis leaves the Spanish colony for good.6

In departing “sans en dire un seul mot à ses meilleurs amis” (428), Saint Denis, like Viel’s Evandre, takes upon himself the life of the refugee and the destitute.

Il parcourt les bois, errant par les montagnes,
Et nullement armé, traversant les campagnes,
Réduit à vivre d’herbes, ayant, devant les yeux,
La mort toujours présente. Il va de lieux en lieux
... La faim le tourmentant (428).

Without weapons, home, food, or rest, haunted by fear and hunger, Saint Denis experiences absolute powerlessness and impoverishment. The hardships continue once he reaches friendly red society. As in the case of Viel’s Evandre, these experiences at the bottom of human
existence elevate Saint Denis to heroic stature, for not only does the
humbling win Saint Denis the love of those whose oppressed lives he
comes to share, the experiences also rekindle in him a respect and
compassion for his hosts, sentiments that translate into increased at­
tention to their needs and the needs of all in dire situations once
Saint Denis is returned to an important position in the colony.

Having reached the Missouri Indians and then the Illinois, "Le
Sieur de Saint Denis" lives with them for a time as an equal, humbly
paying homage to their chiefs and participating in their everyday
life. Unlike Bienville, who travels from settlement to settlement
only when satisfactory accommodations have been completed for him be­
forehand and who proceeds through the Indian campaigns in regal pomp,
Saint Denis shares the hand-to-mouth existence of the Indians com­
pletely before leading them down to Pensacola to aid the same relative
who wanted him dead. Not only do Saint Denis' Indian forces help
Bienville's struggling troops at Pensacola, Saint Denis also effec­
tively defeats the Natchez near Natchitoches later on, something
Bienville was not able to do.

Dumont closes the “Quatrième Chant” by depicting the happy domain
of Natchitoches under Saint Denis.

Notre chevalier, en ce lieu d’abondance
Est comme un vrai César; le fort est sa défense,
Soutenu du soldat dont il est bien servi,
Etant comme leur père et leur fidèle appui.
Ils l’aiment tendrement; pour eux, il est propice.
Là, chez lui, on y trouve une bonne justice,
Sa parole est oracle, on l’obéit en tout,
Et heureux est celui qui ne sent pas ses coups,
Etant son adversaire. Il a grande puissance
Et si, par un bonheur, inconnu de la France,
Il peut être le chef de tout ce grand pays
Je pourrais bien jurer: Adieu les ennemis! (433)

In Natchitoches all residents love Saint Denis on account of his sup­
port, his justice, and his protection. Dumont depicts the
Natchitoches commandant's power as being as absolute as that of Bien­ville and Etcheparre, but Saint Denis is supported and served well by his troops and the people in "ce lieu d'abondance." Unlike the com­mandants of Louisiana and Natchez, Saint Denis is "un vrai César," his "parole est oracle," and he bids all enemies of France "Adieu." Thus, instead of opting for a lessening of the Natchitoches commandant's power (which derives from popular support), Dumont recommends that Saint Denis become "Chef de la Louisiane." In that event, Louisiana could well become the "Second Paradis" of which the author dreams, akin to the happy realm over which Viel's Evandre rules.

In his "Conclusion" to the Poème, Dumont warns the Comte d'Argen­son (and King Louis as well) of the threat that the English pose to Louisiana's security. Already British are inciting Indians in New France, and if the government in Louisiana is not reformed the end of a French presence there is certain. Dumont offers the alternative.

Heureux, mille fois heureux, si ce charmant pays Peut voir encore chez lui le trône de Thémis Remis dans son vrai lustre et, par un grand courage, Affermi dans la paix, réduisant le Sauvage A reconnaître en tout, par un si grand exploit, Ce qu'est bien le François, soutenu de son Roy (434).

The vision of Louisiana set forth by Dumont will not be realized as long as Bienville remains in power. Dumont ends the long Poème en Vers, Touchant l'Établissement de la Province de la Louisiane by ex­pressing his hope that the French monarch will place someone over Louisiana who is more interested in the masses than in himself.

After commenting on Dumont's personal shortcomings and on the ab­surd accusations made in Le Mascorier/Dumont's Mémoires Historiques, which derive in large part from the Poèmes en Vers, Delanglez asserts,

Many of these details may appear trivial, but they reflect the thoughts of the settlers, they indicate their reaction to the events that took place around them and they unite to make a better, more concrete picture of the Louisiana colonial life (49).
While Delanglez and De Villiers both criticize Dumont’s prose and verse works, they nonetheless see the significance of Dumont’s writings as reflecting some degree of popular colonial opinion on persons and events in Louisiana’s history.

Although Dumont clearly allowed personal prejudices to color his views of Louisiana’s colonial leaders, a comparison of Dumont’s treatment of favorites and villains with historians’ evaluations of the same figures shows that Dumont often begins a tirade or an encomium in reality but then expands it into something that can only be termed emotional fiction. While Dumont hyperbolizes, imagines, and even falsifies information, his dislikes and preferences still have bases in real situations. He condemns, above all, Bienville, a leader whom the French Court itself suspected of amassing too much power and wealth for himself in Louisiana. Dumont execrates Etcheparre for the Natchez Massacre, and most scholars also place the bulk of the blame for this worst disaster of French Louisiana on the said commandant. While Dumont idolizes Périer and Saint Denis, making both out to be almost super-human and remaining blind to the part that historians have shown Périer to have had in the disintegration of Franco-Indian relations, other critics after Dumont likewise highlight the innovative and well-intentioned approaches that Périer and Saint Denis took so as to promote the colony. Dumont’s prejudices, then, can be used as indicators but not accurate measures of the persons and policies that might have been close to or far removed from the concerns of many in French colonial Louisiana.

As early as in the preface to his history, Le Page du Pratz, the next author whose concerns for the welfare of all in society is to be examined in this essay, expresses a desire both for the king’s and the king’s subjects’ well-being. Such unilateral felicity will hopefully
result from the easy development of Louisiana. As Le Page states,
"Enfin mes dernieres réflexions s’étendent sur tous les avantages que
l’on peut tirer sans peine de ce riche Pays pour la gloire du Roi, le
bien de son service, et le bonheur de ceux qui l’habitent" (xiii).
The end of the preface likewise reads,

Enfin je m’estimerai heureux et très-dedommagé des peines et
des soins que m’ont coûté mes recherches, si cette Histoire
peut être utile au service du Roi, et à l’avantage du Com­
merce de ma Patrie, puisque toute ma vie je n’ai eu d’autre
ambition ni d’autres désirs, que de pouvoir me rendre utile
au service du Roi et à l’état (xvi).

Le Page’s dedication to crown and state, to overlord and underling
permeates the narrative, serving as another example of how democratic
sentiments and royal loyalties stand side by side in the hearts colo­
nial Louisiana writers.

While it is clear throughout the volumes of his history that Le
Page also has the commercial interests of empire close at heart, he is
not principally a capitalist motivated mainly by mercantile interests.
For example, after his first trip up the Mississippi, conducted in
large part with land speculations and mining prospects in mind, Le
Page relates other reflexions of the trip.

J’étois fortement occupé de la beauté des Pays que j’avois
vûs; j’aurois désiré finir mes jours dans ces charmantes
Solitudes, éloigné du tumulte du monde, de l’avarice et de
la fourberie: c’est là, disois-je en moi-même, que l’on
goûte mille plaisirs innocens, et qui se répetent avec une
satisfaction toujours nouvelle; c’est là que l’on est exempt
de la critique, de la méditation et de la calomnie (I, 263-
264).

Clearly, the hustle and bustle, the selfishness and corruption, the
lack of charity and falsehood that typify much of white society as the
author has known it, especially in the commercial world, weary Le
Page. Instead of wanting to join the fray, Le Page, at least at one
point, expresses a wish to distance himself from such dehumanizing
activity. Although he does not act upon the wish by undertaking the permanent separation of which he dreams, Le Page’s integrating conscience with commercial interest begets a humane form of capitalism that ties him to the other Louisiana writers who concern themselves with championing the causes of the many ruled by the few.

Through his views on commercial prosperity, Le Page, like Poydras, reveals a concern for everyone involved in an empire’s far-reaching economy. Le Page’s brand of mercantilism would have the colony prosper along with the mother country, a scheme frowned upon by many imperialists who sought to make colonies sources of raw materials, not independent centers of commerce. As Tregle notes, Le Page stresses the most precious of all colonial wealth, a populace strong in its economic viability and bound to the mother country by emotional and cultural as well as pragmatic considerations. Without in any sense ignoring the value to France of Louisiana’s furs, timber, tobacco, maize, and indigo, Le Page managed to project the desirability of an imperial policy in which profit to the homeland was but the natural consequence of a prior commitment to a vigorous and robust colonial economy shaped to the fullest enjoyment of its own peculiar advantages rather than to the objectives of European planners (xxxi).

In other words, for Le Page, like Poydras, the colony comes first, meeting its own needs before it can meet those of the rest of the realm. Such a scheme of things runs oppositely to the system advocated by most imperialists. Yet rather than functioning as a detriment to empire, such a priority, both authors believe, insures the monarch’s and the mother country’s prosperity and security by creating a prosperous colonial populace willing to serve and defend king and ancestral homeland whenever the need arises.

In Volume I, when he touches on why many Frenchmen have settled near the Spanish west of Natchitoches, Le Page takes advantage of the opportunity to attack the selfish desire to amass wealth for self, a
favorite vice fired upon by Bossu, especially when the latter notices
it among the Spanish. Le Page relates that

le voisinage de ces Etrangers y a attiré plusieurs Français,
qui sans doute se sont imaginés que les pluyes qui venaient
du Mexique rouloient et apportaient avec leurs eaux de l’or,
qui ne coûtroient que la peine de le ramasser. Mais quelle
est l’utilité de ce beau métal, sinon de rendre vains et pa-
resseux les hommes, chez qu’il est si commun, et de leur
faire négliger la culture de la terre qui est la vrai rich-
esse, par les douceurs qu’elle procure à l’homme, et par les
avantages qu’elle lui fournit au moyen du Commerce (I, 302-
303).

In attacking goldlust, as Bossu so often does, Le Page imbeds a criti-
cism against the Spanish, “les hommes, chez qu’il est si commun,” a
group of people whom Bossu repeatedly criticizes for allowing an ob-
session with precious metals to lead them into neglect of other indus-
tries and societal necessities as well as into outright abuse of per-
sons standing in their way or serving in their employ. True personal
and communal felicity, Le Page believes along with Bossu and others,
comes not from gold or other sources of immediate wealth but from a
life lived close to the earth. Furthermore, the agricultural alterna-
tive to the endless quest for metallic riches produces an economy
whose benefits are shared by more people over a longer period of time
than is the case in a system of boom/bust mining. Thus, Le Page here
voices agrarian sentiments that continue throughout Louisiana-French
literature and are echoed in Anglo-Southern literature till the pres-
ent century.

At the beginning of Volume II, Le Page makes it even more clear
that individual and communal prosperity are important to him.

Je parlerai particulièrement de ce qu’il y a de plus utile
aux Habitans, soit par rapport à leur propre subsistance et
à leur conservation, soit par rapport au commerce qu’ils en
peuvent faire; j’y ajouterai la manière de cultiver et de
façonner les plantes qui sont les plus avantageuses à la
Colonie (II, 3).
Equally concerned about the individual colonist and the colony as a whole, the contentment of which can only benefit the crown and the mother country, Le Page devotes chapters of the second volume to the types of Old-World agriculture and livestock that seem to be most suited to Louisiana. At the same time, he suggests possible uses of the region’s native fauna and flora. Le Page relates specific cultivations that have already proven lucrative in the colony, and he hopes to encourage continued development and experimentation so that more people may enjoy the fruits to be reaped from Louisiana’s incredible fertility.

Le Page’s interest in all of humankind is evident in the theorizing that he injects into his history here and there. For example, he speculates in Volume II that

*l’homme auroit été trop heureux sans doute s’il n’eût pas oublié que tous les autres sont ses frères: en effet dès que le genre humain s’est multiplié, les hommes forcés de vivre séparément les uns des autres, à cause de leur multitude dans les mêmes contrées, ne se souvinrent plus qu’ils sortoient tous du même père; ils crurent voir dans d’autres hommes une espèce différente de la leur; portés au mal d’eux tendres années, ils se livrèrent à toute l’impétuosité d’un amour propre offensé; ils se firent des guerres cruelles* (II, 170).

Regardless of the racist remarks that he sometimes voices, Le Page makes it clear here that he views all people as being of the same species -- that is, human -- and originating from the same source. Thus, all should be treated with the same humaneness. Many would come to justify their abuse of red and black persons, and even lower class whites, with the argument that darker and cruder people were of a different and inferior form of humanity. In the passage above, Le Page specifically and forcefully denounces the violence to which the latter considerations invariably lead.
Not surprisingly, then, when Le Page mentions Bienville early in the narrative, he does so positively, since Bienville led the author from condemnation of Native Americans to an understanding of their ways. Still, Le Page, like Dumont and possibly Pénicaud, might have had personal difficulties with Bienville. The first indication that problems could have existed between the Louisiana leader and Le Page is a subtle one. In recounting the origin of the name English Turn, which refers to a certain section of the Mississippi River below New Orleans, Le Page does not even mention what has become the most popular explanation of the location’s name: commemoration of the youthful Bienville’s routing of an English vessel making its way up the river, a routing dependent upon the English believing Bienville’s bluff that there were more Frenchmen in the area than there actually were, a routing that kept Louisiana French by convincing the English that France was in control of the region when the French actually could have been outpowered by the British.

The story of the English “turn” is as much a part of Louisiana lore as are Saint Denis’ escapades. While Le Page willingly contributes to fiction when writing about Saint Denis, the author offers a separate explanation of English Turn’s name in an effort to extract truth from legend.

L’origine du nom de Détour à l’Anglois se rapporte de différentes manières; et ceux qui veulent en raconter l’Histoire sans la savoir, en composent une à leur mode: coutume trop ordinaire à ceux qui n’ont d’autre but que de parler et non d’instruire les autres.

Je pense différemment: je me suis informé aux plus Anciens du Pays, à quelle circonstance ce Détour devoit son nom.

Ils m’ont dit qu’avant le premier Etablissement des François en cette Colonie, les Anglois ayant entendu parler de la beauté du Pays, qu’ils avoient déjà visité sans doute en y allant de la Caroline par terre, essayèrent de s’emparer de l’entrée du Fleuve, et de remonter, pour se fortifier dans le premier terrein solide qu’ils trouvoient. Excités
par cette jalousie qui leur est naturelle, ils prirent les précautions qu’ils crurent convenables pour réussir.

De leur côté les Naturels qui avaient déjà vu ou entendu dire que plusieurs Hommes Blancs (les Français) avaient descendu et remonté le Fleuve en différentes fois; les Naturels, dis-je, qui n’étaient peut-être pas trop contents d’avoir de tels voisins, furent encore plus effrayés de voir entrer un Navire dans le Fleuve, ce qui les détermina à les arrêter en chemin; mais il leur fut impossible, tant que les Angois eurent du vent dont ils profitèrent jusqu’à ce Détour. Ces Naturels étaient les Ouachas et les Chaouachas qui habitoient à l’Ouest du Fleuve, et au dessous de ce Détour. Ils y en avait d’un côté et de l’autre du Fleuve, ils se cachaient dans les cannes, regardoient les Angois et les suivoient en montant sans oser les attaquer.

Lorsque les Angois furent à l’entrée de ce Détour, le peu de vent qu’ils avaient leur manqua: voyant en outre que le Fleuve tournoit extrêmement, ils désespérèrent de réussir, ils voulurent s’amarrer en cette endroit, il fallut à cet effet porter des cordages à terre; mais les Naturels leur turent grand nombre de flèches, jusqu’à ce qu’un coup de canon tiré en l’air les dissipa, et fut un signal aux Angois de regagner le Vaisseau, dans la crainte que les Naturels ne vinssent en plus grand nombre les mettre en pièces.

Telle est l’origine du nom de ce Détour (I, 276-278).

Undoubtedly, Le Page’s version of the origin of English Turn’s name is not the one with which most Louisianians are familiar, and the conspicuous omission of any reference to Bienville adds to its uniqueness. Admirably, it would seem, Le Page wishes to present only the truth in this instance, thereby not bothering to mention Bienville’s feat, which, even if it did not give rise to the name, took place in the same vicinity. The omission is made even more curious by the fact that when it comes to building upon the fame of his hero Saint Denis, Le Page conveys much information that cannot be proven and that would seem highly unlikely to have occurred.

Carl J. Ekberg says of the sources of English Turn’s name (or English Bend as he prefers to call it),

The origin of the name English Bend almost certainly derives from an encounter in 1699 on the lower Mississippi River between Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville . . . and the captain of an English ship named Bond (213).
Specifically, "the accounts of Iberville and Tonti are probably responsible for the notion that the name English Turn derived from the location on the river where the Englishmen turned tail and fled in the face of a force majeure" (213). Regarding Le Page’s unique account, Ekberg agrees that "the early historian of Louisiana, Le Page du Pratz, offered a more picturesque explanation for the origin of the name" (213). Ekberg then asserts that

Du Pratz was wrong about Indians having driven off the Englishmen but was correct in emphasizing how the name for the area derived from the bend in the river. Surely the appellation English Bend is preferable to English Turn, for the name simply comes from the bend in the river where the Englishmen were encountered by Bienville (not Indians). The French détour signifies bend or detour, not turn in the sense of turn around. In any event, after Captain Bond and his crew sailed down and out of the Mississippi the only English presence on the lower river for years to come was the peculiar name, Détour aux Anglois or English Bend (214).

So much for the legend and the reality of English Turn’s naming and Le Page’s role in its explication, which affords no place for Le Page’s Bienville.

Moving from Frenchmen to Native Americans again, when he relates the Natchez oral tradition concerning the tribe’s origins, Le Page does not fail to point out the precepts by which their messiah admonished them to live, precepts that evoke Le Page’s admiration because of their focus on the welfare of all people. Le Page’s Natchez informant says of the reds’ savior,

Il nous dit encore que pour être en état de gouverner les autres, il fallait savoir se conduire soi-même, et que pour vivre en paix entre nous, et plaire à l’Esprit suprême, il était indispensable d’observer ces points: De ne tuer personne que pour la défense de sa propre vie; de ne jamais connaître d’autre femme que la sienne; ne rien prendre qui appartient à autrui; ne jamais mentir ni s’enivrer, et n’être point avaré, mais donner libéralement et avec joie de ce que l’on a, à ceux qui n’ont point, et partager généreusement sa nourriture avec ceux qui en manquent (II, 332-333).
Le Page comments upon these guidelines for living,

On peut connoître que la docilité avec laquelle la Nation des Natchez se soumit aux sages loix de cet homme extraordinaire qui parut tout-à-coup au milieu d’eux, témoigne un bon fond de caractère. En effet ils sont doux humains, véridiques et très charitables; plus d’un François a éprouvé dans eux cette dernière qualité (II, 337).

Le Page is obviously struck by the similarity between Natchez and Judeo-Christian divine revelations concerning human conduct, commandments conveyed from God to humankind through a prophet and designed to insure universal well-being. Through his comparison, Le Page is defending the civility, humanity, and spirituality of the Natchez long after their “barbarous” slaughter of the French in their midst turned popular white opinion against them.

On the other hand, Le Page believes that Indians can be just as guilty of injustices resulting from prejudice and power-mongering as can Europeans. In fact, the author blames social biases and hierarchical despotism for the demise of the Natchez nation: “L’orgueil de leurs grands Soleils ou Souverains, et celui des autres Soleils joint aux préjugés du Peuple, a plus fait de ravage et a plus contribué à la destruction de ce grand peuple (II, 224). In other words, by ignoring the tenets given by their messiah and thenceforth abusing the rights and neglecting the needs of large numbers of its people, the Natchez ruling body assured its own tragic fate.

Le Page uses the Natchez as a paradigm of civilizations doomed to destruction from within whenever a part of the population is subjugated or duped into believing unrealities by another, more powerful segment of the same people. Le Page uses the funereal practices of the Natchez Suns to illustrate both the depth of subservience to which the lower classes are sometimes reduced and the techniques by which such debasements are achieved.
Les Souverains étoient despotiques, et avoient depuis long-temps établi la funeste coutume de faire mourir avec eux un nombre de leur Peuple, hommes et femmes; on en faisait mourir à proportion à la mort des simples Soleils. Les Peuples de leur côté s'étoient laissés prévenir que tous ceux qui suivaient leurs Princes dans l'autre monde pour les servir, étoient heureux; que sans peine et sans craindre la guerre ils avoient tout-à-souhait; qu'ils n'y souffroient ni du chaud ni du froid, et qu'ils mangeoient tout qui ils pouvoient désirer; qu'enfin pour comble de bonheur on ne pouvoit plus souffrir ou mourir (II, 224).

Undoubtedly apparent to Le Page is the fact that the Natchez royalty use promised glories of an afterlife to make the lower classes content with the misery and powerlessness of their temporal existence. The Stinkards remain servile to the Suns on earth so as to enjoy freedom from suffering after death. The Suns control Stinkard behavior by holding this eternal promise ever before them, and they obviously check Stinkard growth by the mass ceremonial killings accompanying the death of any Sun. Le Page does not go into detail concerning the degree to which discrimination and Stinkard-culling weakened the Natchez nation, but he makes his Natchez emblematic of societies that kill themselves by allowing an elite few to blind and abuse the majority.

Although Le Page seems to value the friendship he won from the Grand Soleil and others in the highest strata of Natchez society through the gift of a fire-producing magnifying glass, the author still criticizes the absolute authority of his friends. Speaking of the Natchez population's relation to the Great Sun, he states,

En effet ces Peuples sont élevés dans une si parfaite soumission à leur Souverain, que l'autorité qu'ils exercent sur eux est un véritable despotisme qui ne peut-être comparé qu'à celui des premiers Empereurs Ottomans. Il est comme eux, maître absolu des biens et de la vie de ses Sujets; il en dispose à son gré, sa volonté est sa raison; et par un avantage dont les Ottomans n'ont jamais joui, il n'a point ni d'attentat sur sa personne, ni de mouvements séditieux à craindre. Qu'il ordonne que l'on mette à mort un homme qui l'aura méritée, le malheureux proscrit, ni ne supplie, ni ne
fait intercéder pour sa vie, ni ne cherche à s'évader; l'or-
dre du Souverain s'exécute sur le champ, et personne n'en
murmure.

As an example of the Sun's right to order anyone's death, Le Page
points out that even while the Natchez were at war with the French a
Sun had three of his men killed for capturing and tying up a Frenchman
whom he liked.

One of the best illustrations of Le Page's humanitarianism is his
intervention in the wake of Serpent Piqué's death to prevent the sui-
cide of the deceased's brother, the Great Sun, and thereby to curtail
the number of funerary killings among the Natchez. Le Page's effort
is morally correct but politically stupid. The author states,

Ce fut une grande obligation que nous eut la Nation des
Natchez, de ce que si peu de monde suivit le le Serpent Pi-
qué au Pays des Esprits; mais ce ne fut point sans hésiter
que nous nous employâmes dans ce dessein auprès du Grand So-
leil, qui dans son désespoir auroit ordonné un massacre
epouvantable; car quoique la Religion et l'humanité décid-
assent d'abord pour le parti que nous prîmes, la politique y
opposait des difficultés qui n'étoient point à mépriser.
Nous avions eu guerre avec cette Nation, et nous avions fait
la paix; elle se reposoit sur la foi de cette paix, lors-
qu'il plût à M. de Biauville de venir la surprendre avec
une armée qu'il amena de la nouvelle Orléans. Ces hostili-
tés imprévues et qui n'avoient plus de cause, auroient dès
des ce moment effarouché ces peuples à jamais, si par le moyen
du Serpent Piqué et du Grand Soleil, je ne les eusse cal-
més. Je puis dire que les deux Chefs y travaillerent autant
par amitié pour moi, que pour la Nation Française; et le re-
spect que leurs sujets leur portoient parut étouffer en eux
un ressentiment que je savois n'être que dissimulé. La
mort du Grand Soleil, qui ne pouvoit tarder beaucoup à suiv-
re son frère, étoit visiblement le terme de la confiance que
l'on devoit prendre dans le Natchez. On ne risquoit donc
rien; on gagnoit même beaucoup en laissant cette Nation, si-
non se détruire, au moins s'affoiblir considérablement par
sa barbare coûteuse. Plus de morts, moins d'ennemis; jamais
Cette maxime ne s'étoit trouvée plus vraie. Mais un senti-
ment pieux l'emporta sur une prudence qui paroissoit trop
cruelle, et chaque arbre porta son fruit, je veux dire que
la gloire d'être humains fût notre partage, et que ce Poste
paya cherement dans la suite la démarche de l'armée partie
de la nouvelle Orléans, qui ayant rompu sans sujet une paix
conclue dans les formes (III, 58-59).
Le Page's humanitarianism results from or at least coincides with his religiosity. Both lead the author and the French to spare countless Natchez lives from ritual killing in a double royal funeral. The fact that the French prevent the culling of the Natchez population makes the Natchez army numerically stronger and, hence, more willing to overthrow and massacre the French when Etcheparre's abuses become unbearable. Still, the whites' strategically foolish intervention is the only humane response they could make when faced with such potential loss of red lives.

Le Page's interest in missionaries and the work they do on behalf of Native Americans is another indication of his interest in universal welfare and reveals itself early on. In Volume I's Chapter 8, subtitled in part "Difficulté de convertir les Naturels," the author relates his conversation with Father D'Avion.

Je m'informai à lui-même si son grand zèle pour le salut des Naturels faisoit beaucoup de progrès; il me répondit, presque la larme à l'œil, que nonobstant le profond respect que ces Peuples lui portaient, à grande peine pouvait-il obtenir de baptiser quelques enfants à l'article de la mort, que ceux qui étoient en âge de raison s'excusoient d'embrasser notre sainte Religion, sur ce qu'ils disoient être trop trop vieux pour s'accoutumer à s'assujettir à des règles si difficiles à observer; que le Prince depuis qu'il avoit tué le Médecin qui traitoit son fils unique de la maladie dont il étoit mort, avoit fait résolution de jeûner tous les vendredis de sa vie, sur les vifs reproches qu'il lui avoit faits de son inhumanité. Ce grand Chef ne manquoit pas à la prière que M. d'Avion faisoit soir et matin, les femmes et les enfants y assistoient assez régulièrement, mais les hommes qui n'y venoient pas souvent, prenoient plus de plaisir à sonner la cloche; du reste ils ne laissoient manquer d'aucune chose ce zélé Pasteur, et lui fournissoient tout ce qu'il témoignoit lui faire quelque plaisir (I, 122-124).

Father D'Avion's response to Le Page indicates what the author views and appreciates as the missionary's love for the Indian. Le Page's priest not only desires conversion of the Indian so that the latter may gain eternal salvation, he also sees Christianity as a way to
improve the reds' earthly lot. Fittingly, he brings a "grand Chef" to repentance by reproaching the absolute sovereign's inhumanity to his underlings. That Le Page's Father D'Avion's failure to be more effective discourages the priest to the point of tears is more a reflection of genuine concern for reds than a sign of wounded pride. Le Page's interpretation of Father D'Avion's disposition toward Native Americans must surely indicate the author's own concern for the temporal and spiritual welfare of indigenous peoples.

Le Page's desire for the well-being of both red and white subjects of the French king is made even more clear in his rendition of De Bourgmont's address to the French allies before their meeting with the troublesome Paducahs in Volume III.

Vous me voyez de retour de l'autre coté de la grande Eau où j'étais allé: je vous assure avec une forte parole de la part du Souverain de tous les Français, qu'il veut que toutes les Nations de ce Pays vivent en paix entr'elles et avec les Français; qu'il ne m'a envoyé en ce Pays-ci que pour y apporter la paix et des Marchandises, pour secourir les Nations, rendre les Peuples plus humains et plus socia­bles; mais que ceux qui refuseront d'entendre sa parole que je vous apporte, ou qui troubleront la paix, il les rejette­ra, il donnera à leurs ennemis des Marchandises, des Armes, de la Poudre et des Balles avec des Guerriers Français, et il en agira ainsi pour détruire tous ceux qui n'auront point d'oreilles pour entendre à la paix où il veut vous engager tous.

Son coeur est rempli de toutes les Nations; il regarde comme ses enfans tous ceux qui écoutent sa parole, et qui aiment la paix comme les véritables hommes doivent l'aimer.

Quoi donc! vous qui dites à haute voix que vous êtes des hommes; vous vivez ensemble comme les Loups avec les Chevreuils. Ne marchez-vous sur la terre que pour tâcher de mettre les autres dessous, ou pour les fouler aux pieds? Les Bœufs, les Cerfs, les Ours et les autres Animaux vous montrent depuis longtems a vivre en paix; et vous qui vous donnez le nom d'hommes rouges et prudens, vous êtes toujours en Guerre? Où est donc cette prudence? Qui sont les Blancs qui vous demandent des Esclaves? S'il y en a qui vous en demandent, ils sont ennemis de tous les hommes et leur coeur est tout fiel. Vivez donc en paix, mes chers amis; et alors notre Souverain sera votre Père comme il est le vôtre à nous tous (III, 151-152?).
The message of Le Page's De Bourgmont's speech is that the French king wants all to live in peace so that universal well-being can become a reality. While France is sure to benefit from such unity, the speaker makes it seem as though the end of red-on-red warfare is desired above all for the Native Americans' sake. Anything less than peace would be below the dignity of even wild animals.

Le Page’s De Bourgmont continues his portrait of a selfless (albeit extremely powerful) French monarch who is interested in the felicity of his red dependents, even though he has no need of them.

Qu’a-t-il besoin de vous? Il ne vous demande rien que la paix entre vous; il n’a pas besoin de vos présens, il a tout ce qu’il veut; il n’a pas besoin de vos Guerriers, il en a plus que vous n’avez tous de cheveux à la tête; encore une fois il ne vous demande rien que la paix entre vous tous; si vous la faites, alors il vous protégera et vous securera; ainsi je vous annonce à tous, que quand vous viendrez chez les François, vous y serez bien reçus (III, 152-153).

While the actual concerns of the real-life king might have been padding the royal coffers and protecting the realm through stabilization of Native-American tribes, the ruler whom Le Page presents through De Bourgmont seeks only peace from his red subjects so that the natives themselves may be happy. Le Page's Indians, for their part, respond favorably throughout his voluminous history to the king's paternal interest. When the time comes for the French officials to relinquish control of Louisiana in the 1760s, D'Abbadie will repeatedly record in a more accurately historical fashion the filial disappointment and sense of rejection Indians across Louisiana felt at the loss of their French protectors.

Le Page moves from depicting a benevolently selfless monarch to highlighting the dire consequences resulting from tyranny. Like many Louisiana writers do, Le Page focuses on the Natchez Massacre as the supreme example of societal ruin destined to accompany tyrannical
oligarchy. In citing the causes for the Natchez uprising, Le Page immediately blames Commandant Etcheparre for the catastrophe. In Volume III's Chapter 13, shortly after the author recounts rushing to New Orleans from the Habitation du Roi (to which he had previously moved from Natchez) to get additional news concerning the rebellion, "M. de la Frênière" meets him and confirms what the author had been warning the French about Etcheparre all along:

Que vous êtes heureux, mon cher ami, d'avoir prévu ce qui vient d'arriver aux Natchez, puisque tous les François y sont égorgés: c'est par la faute de cet étourdi de Commandant que ce malheur est arrivé. Vous m'aviez bien dit qu'il vous tromperait agréablement, s'il n'attiroit quelque disgrâce à ce Poste (III, 231).

In the passage quoted above, Le Page immediately seconds his condemnation of Etcheparre with the opinion of another personage. At the same time, he shows that his prediction of societal ruin resulting from the abuses of the condemnable person have finally come true.

Le Page depicts Etcheparre as the archetypal tyrant, a man who from the beginning used his powers as commandant only to satisfy himself at the expense of others. Even in the first days of Etcheparre's administration,

ce nouveau Commandant ayant pris possession de son Poste, projette de former pour lui une Habitation des plus brillantes de la Colonie. A cet effet il examina tous les terrains qui n'étoient pas occupés par les François; mais il n'y trouva rien qui pût remplir la grandeur de ses vœus; il n'y eut que le Village de la Pomme Blanche, qui avoit au moins une lieue en quarre, qui fût capable de lui plaire, et sur le champ il prit la resolution de s'y établir (III, 231-232).

"Entêté de la beauté de son dessein," Etcheparre summoned the chief of the White Apple Village to hear his ultimatum.

With no consideration for the Indians' desires, rights, or hardships resulting from displacement, Le Page's Etcheparre rudely and carelessly let his intentions be known.
Lorsque ce Soleil fut rendu chez le Commandant, celui-ci sans autre compliment lui dit qu’il n’avoit qu’à chercher un autre terrain pour faire son Village, parce qu’il vouloit bâtir au premier jour dans le Village de la Pomme; qu’il eût à faire vider incessamment les cabannes et se retirer ailleurs; et pour mieux couvrir son jeu, il avait fait entendre à quelqu’un qu’il étoit bon que les François s’établissent sur le bord de la petite Rivière où étoit le grand Village et le séjour du Grand Soleil (III, 232-233).

Etcheparre’s mounting greed leads him into desiring not just the displacement of one village but two.

The corrupt commandant’s avariciousness reflects his belief that he is the only authority in Natchez, accountable to no one else and under no restrictions. Hence, everyone -- white, red, and black -- becomes his slave. When speaking to the Natchez Suns,

le Commandant s’imaginois sans doute parler à un Esclave auquel on commande d’un ton absolu; mais il ignoroit que les Naturels de la Louisiane sont si ennemis de l’esclavage, qu’ils lui préfèrent la mort; les Soleils surtout accoutumés à gouverner despotiquement, y répugnent encore davantage (III, 233).

Le Page unequivocally attributes Etcheparre’s and all of Natchez’s downfall to the commandant’s tragic belief that he was everyone’s master, a major mistake in a land where at least one red hierarchy was perhaps more elaborate, more absolute, and more easily offended than most European potentates.

Etcheparre is so bloated with self-importance and so preoccupied with his own whims that he cannot consider any condition other than his own. After listening to Etcheparre’s orders, the Sun thinks he can reason with the commandant and maybe modify some of the demands.

Le Soleil de la Pomme, crût qu’en lui parlant raison il pourroit l’entendre; la pensée de ce Soleil se seroit trouvée juste, s’il eût eu affaire à un homme raisonnable. Il lui répondit donc que ces ancêtres avoient demeuré dans son Village autant d’années qu’il avoit de cheveux à sa cadenette, et qu’ainsi il étoit bon qu’ils y restassent encore (III, 233).
Despite the chief's sound argument for his people's remaining stationary, "À peine l'Interprète eut-il expliqué cette réponse au Commandant, qu'il se mit en colère, et menaça le Soleil que si dans peu de jours il ne sortait de son Village, il s'en repentiroit" (III, 233).

The Sun continues his attempt to reason with the irascible Etcheparre. Hoping to make the white leader appreciate the potentially harmonious status quo at Natchez, the chief reminds the commandant that Frenchmen have always been welcome on unoccupied native lands, "mais le Commandant qui s'échauffoit, lui dit dans sa fougue qu'il voulait être obéi sans aucune réplique" (III, 234). The Sun leaves to confer with his village's elders and then returns with yet another argument that they hope will alter Etcheparre's resolve. The commandant rejects it as vehemently as he did the chief's first plea.

After the Sun reports Etcheparre's continued demands to the elders, the reds plan retaliation. They stall for time by convincing Etcheparre that they want to harvest their crops in order to present him tribute. Thus begins the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing episode that Dumont entertainingly dramatizes. Etcheparre's tragic flaws blind him to the deadly deception. As Le Page notes, "L'avidité du Commandant lui fit accepter la proposition avec joie, et lui ferma les yeux sur les suites de sa tyrannie" (III, 236). The "suites de sa tyrannie," as in any real tragedy, spell disaster not only for the flawed man of importance but also for all those dependent upon him -- that is, white, black, and even red Natchez.

In presenting the Indian side of the Natchez Massacre, Le Page shows that the urge to revolt was prompted by fear of more French oppression. When the Sun returns to the elders with word that Etcheparre has agreed to their request for time,
mesure qu’ils se multiplioient; que les Natchez devoient se
souvenir de la guerre qu’on leur avoit faite, malgré le
Traité de Paix conclu avec eux; que cette Guerre ayant été
faite à leur seul Village, ils devoient chercher les moyens
les plus sûrs pour en tirer une juste et sanglante vengeance
(III, 236-237).

Because the Natchez cannot plead their case before Etchefarre and be-
cause the French have deceived them in the past, the Indians plan re-
volt as a last resort.

As Le Page continues to present the Indian side sympathetically
and at length, he shows the totality of their grievances, and this
through the voice of “le plus ancien des Vieillards.”

Il y a long-tems que nous nous appercevons que le voisinage
des Françoys nous fait plus de mal que de bien; nous le voy-
ons, nous autres Vieillards, mais les jeunes gens ne le
voyent pas. Les Marchandises des Françoys font plaisir à la
jeunesse; mais en effet à quoi tout cela sert-il, sinon à
débaucher les filles et à corrompre le sang de la Nation, et
to les rendre glorieuses et fainéantes? Les jeunes hommes
sont dans le même cas: et il faut que les hommes mariés
soient tous de travail pour nourrir la famille et satisfaire
les enfans. Avant que les Françoys fussent arrivés dans ce
Pays, nous étions des hommes qui nous contentions de ce que
nous avions, et il nous suffisoit: nous marchions hardiment
par tous les chemins, parce qu’alors nous étions nos maîtr-
res; mais aujourd’hui nous n’allons qu’en tâtonnant, dans la
crainte de trouver des épines; nous marchons en Esclaves, et
nous ne tarderons pas de l’être bien-tôt des Françoys, puis-
qu’ils nous traitent déjà comme si nous l’étions. Quand ils
seront assez forts, ils n’useront plus de politique; la
moindre chose que nos jeunes gens feront, les Françoys les
attacheront au Poteau, et les flotteront comme ils fouettent
leurs Esclaves Noirs. Ne l’ont-ils pas déjà fait à un de
nos jeunes gens, et la mort n’est-elle pas préférable à
l’esclavage? (III, 238-239).

Through the oldest elder’s complaint, Le Page himself attacks several
aspects of French Indian policy that create injustices and societal
imbalances. The introduction of European material goods has, in both
the author’s and the character’s mind, debased Native Americans by
making them addicts of imports and dissatisfied with their own fine
products. This enslavement to Continental provisions causes Native

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Americans to be less like themselves and more like the French, whose corruption through luxuriousness is not worth emulation. Despite the increasing resemblance to Frenchmen by partaking in the whites' consumerism, Indians will not be treated as friends of the French when the latter become more powerful in their midst. Rather, reds will share the fate of black slaves as a result of their dependence upon Euro-Caucasians.

The elders and the Sun of the White Apple Village convince the new Great Sun of the entire Natchez nation (a young man who has succeeded an old man) that the French will not take him seriously because of his youth. The Great Sun, swayed by the elders' arguments, allies all Natchez males against the French. The men do not reveal their planned attack to the women, but in a touching and even comical episode that has already been highlighted a female Sun, "Bras Piqué," squeezes the plans out of her son. The lady Sun resolves to save as many French as possible, realizing that "ils ont beaucoup d'esprit, quoique le Commandant d'ici ait perdu le sien" (III, 249). She then spreads news of the scheme to some Indian girls who are enamored of certain Frenchmen, hoping that their warnings will save the whites.

Etcheparre's failure to profit from the Femme Soleille's warnings shows how an overlord's unwillingness to listen to counsel can ruin him. When the female Sun sends a French soldier to relate the news to Etcheparre, "le Commandant, loin d'ajouter foi à cet avis, d'en profiter, de l'approfondir et de s'informer de la raison qui y donnait lieu, traita le Soldat de lâche et de visionnaire, le fit mettre aux fers" (III, 252-253). More French soldiers, likewise warned by the Femme Soleille and her girls, repeat the Natchez plans to Etcheparre, but the commandant imprisons them too. Thinking that Etcheparre will
listen to someone with more authority, Bras Piqué tells an officer of the plot, but Etcheparre ignores him as well.

As in Dumont's account, so in Le Page's Etcheparre debauches himself in the Indian village just before the attack. Hungover, he foolishly responds to continued warnings by sending word to the Grand Soleil to ask if there will really be an attack. Etcheparre contents himself with the Great Sun's deceitful reply, thus making himself silly in everyone's eyes. After the massacre has started in both Dumont's and Le Page's accounts, the Natchez hold Etcheparre in such disgust that no one wants to dishonor himself by killing the commandant, who was "la cause par son avidité" for the uprising.

In Le Page's opinion, Governor Périer effectively ends the problems started by Etcheparre. Le Page says of Périer's reception upon his return to France: "On lui donna la récompense dûe à ses services, à la fermeté et à l'équité avec laquelle il avoit gouverné; qualités qui le firent regretter de tous les honnêtes gens de la Colonie" (III, 327). In the author's opinion, Périer's firmness and fairness make him a good and beloved leader in Louisiana, one missed as much by Le Page as by Dumont and undoubtedly Hachard.

In addition to Pénicaut, Dumont, and Le Page, Bossu also has much to say about the relationship between rulers and the ruled, especially in his second book. Treating as it does Louisiana's transfer from France to Spain as well as the colony's attempt at self-determination in its revolt against Spanish rule, the second book would be better discussed in the study to follow this one. Furthermore, since Bossu's treatment of the ideal and worst forms of government in the first book would be more advantageously examined alongside those of the second book, an analysis of the first book's handling of monarchy and the masses will also be reserved for the study of literature from

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Louisiana's Spanish colonial period. In fact, the depictions of rule in Bossu's first book will serve as the appropriate transition from the present study of Louisiana's first colonial literature to the examination of the writings from the second phase of pre-statehood Louisiana history.
Auguste Viatte asserts that the literatures of the French-speaking world outside of France began with history narratives (Histoire Comparée, 18; Histoire Littéraire, 509). Looking at the beginnings of Louisiana Francophone literature alone, one can judge the truth of Viatte's assertion. From Tonti's and Nicolas de La Salle's travelogues to those of Bossu, the bulk of the literature from Louisiana's first colonial period consists of "relations" -- historical and travel journals, diaries, and letters relating to military campaigns and missionary activity, to exploratory/speculative expeditions and peace/war negotiations with Native Americans, and to past, present, and projected future progressions of colonial activity. Sprinkled throughout are anecdotes and other artistic passages featuring unique and often strange episodes from colonial life.

These "artistic embellishments" begin ever so subtly in the earliest texts (the prosaic documents of Tonti and Nicolas). They become even more pronounced in the not exclusively ecclesiastical reports of the religious writers (Hachard, Le Petit, and Vitry), and they figure in the writings of Bernard Diron Dartaguiette and others who may be highlighted as typifying perhaps a multitude of lost or unrecorded colonial sentiments and expressions. As the "embellishments" more often than not focus on what is most pressing or most interesting to the authors, it is significant that many of these artistic manifestations of what has piqued the writers' sensibilities involve Native Americans.

In practically all of these narratives from Louisiana's first colonial experience, Indians figure prominently, an attestation to the importance of Native Americans in Louisiana society, an importance
deriving in large part from French need of red cooperation in the colonial enterprise. So vital were indigenous Americans to French colonialism (and, increasingly, vice versa) that an entire mythology grew out of the symbiotic relationship. The journals, histories, travelogues, diaries, letters, and occasional poetry consistently expound the benefits of such a mythologized symbiosis. The myth, permeating a century of Louisiana writings, holds that French and Indian are good for each other, that under French king and French law and united by French religion the two can work for the improvement of each other and can develop a society that is not Europe or Native America but something sprung of both. For the birth of the new civilization to happen, what the writers universally view as Indian "barbarity" (specifically, the cruelty considered by Louisiana writers to be endemic in Native-American life and the pagan religious manifestations condemned by the more pious scribes) must be modified through the aborigines' embracing Christianity. Blinded by the condescending idealism of the prospect or perhaps even aware of its basic hegemony, Louisiana writers gloss over the reality that French penetration and subsequent control of the Native Americas ultimately means the complete subjugation of red prerogatives to those of white newcomers.

Instead of questioning long-range French intentions in depth, a good number of the writers -- specifically, those highlighted as the major littérateurs of the first colonial period (Pénicaud, Le Page, and Dumont) -- personify the mythology of Franco-Indian relations by collaborating in the creation of the colony's first great legendary hero, erecting around him Louisiana literature's first collection of related fiction. In addition to embodying the Franco-Indian mythology of the colony, Saint Denis emerges as one of many colonial leaders who represent the other consistent major concern of Louisiana writers: the
proper manifestation of authority as it moves from an elite governing few to the countless governed masses.

While Saint Denis ceases to figure as prominently in the later phases of Louisiana's pre- and post-statehood Francophone literature as he does during the first French period, the Indian and the relationship between rulers and the ruled continue to dominate Louisiana letters until well after United States acquisition, whereupon a very differently defined era of literary activity flowered in a society that was no longer colonial but no less Gallic for its new political status. In fact, the belle époque of Louisiana Francophone belles lettres occurred well after statehood, when Creole/Franco-émigré culture reached its zenith and then plunged from it, the climb and the collapse both producing a wide range of good literature that varies both in subject matter and choice of genre, before receding along with Creole-émigré culture's demise as a dominating force in Louisiana society.

In the belle époque of Louisiana-French letters, when art and social commentary rather than historical record became the primary inspirations for literary creativity and when the upheaval of slave-holding states clashing with the United States on how to deal with matters of race and freedom replaced the struggles of a white minority in red America, the preoccupation with red-white relations likewise came to be supplanted by concerns over black-white issues. Such concerns are foreshadowed in the writings of authors such as Le Page and Bossu. While Indians remain prominent in the works of mid-nineteenth-century Romanticists like Adrien Rouquette, who, despite his sentimentality, wished to depict Native Americans realistically, the tensions of black-white, slave-free interactions dominated and afforded some of
the best artistic possibilities for the golden age’s creations before
the sun finally set on a shinningly unique literary period.

As the pall was placed on Creole and Franco-émigré written expression with the abolishing of Louisiana’s official bilingual status in the early 1920s (a suspension of the state’s officially recognized bilingualism that would last for over forty years), the way was also cleared to eliminate the spoken French of another, larger segment of the state’s Francophone population. The Cajuns, many of whom were previously deprived of the educational and cultural opportunities afforded the Creole-émigrés, had not produced a body of written literature before their forced immersion in English-language education. Through cracks in the English-only educational system, however, many Cajuns and Francophone African Americans came to be literate in French as well as English. Thus, the Louisiana-French literary renaissance that is being enjoyed today is one dominated by the descendants of Acadians and Africans who came to and were relegated to positions of inferiority in French, Spanish, and Creole Louisiana. As such, Louisiana Francophone literature today is a fitting complement to the music and oral lore that have reflected the imagination and maintained the verbal artistry of Louisiana’s retainers of spoken French.

As a final word, it must be noted that Jean Morisset’s observations of North America’s Gallic diaspora reflect in part the situation of Franco-Louisiana, which from its inception to the present has been a collecting of marginal societies into a fragile, yet viable and recognizable, general entity.

Throughout the French colonial period there was always a multitude of Americas that, largely unconsciously, overlapped: Native America, French America, Black (Slave) America, and a fourth America, dominant but ambivalent and vague, born of the first three. We of the fourth America were called then, and we continue to be called today, French, but we know only too well that we are not and have never been French, nor indeed French Americans, but
something very different: mixed-race people without a clear name and, by virtue of that, bearers of a multitude of names. In other words, we are an anonymous America that has given its soul to the entire continent (339).

While the excerpts extracted from Louisiana-French literature and examined in this study testify to the fact that in many respects "our" America has given its soul to an entire continent, Louisiana-French Americans and their literature can hardly be said to be part of an "anonymous America." From the earliest days of the colony to the present, French-speaking people living in Louisiana (be they of Continental, Canadian, Caribbean, African, or Native-American origin) have been associated by outsiders and by themselves with a separate, clearly identifiable "other" America -- Louisiana, a hybridized society associated with a specific geographic location and political status, linked to and incorporating persons and practices from other Americas and other continents, but always transforming these elements by a unique legacy begun in a French colonial past. Still distinguishable today from the other forty-nine United States by its laws, customs, and inhabitants, still maintaining special cultural and educational ties with the French-speaking world that the other forty-nine states do not, the mixed-race, mixed-cultural collection of people in Louisiana has been and remains different above all because of what its Gallic roots allowed: growth through incorporation of many disparate groups into a loose and paradoxical unity. This difference, evident today in the daily way of living, thinking, and governing of several million people on the northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico and projected to national and international attention by unusual self-expression through music, cuisine, seasonal ritual, and politics, was discernable even in the founding years of the colony, when Europeans, Canadians, Native Americans, and Africans quickly began establishing a new
homeland by combining varying world views and everyday experiences on
the same ground, under French rule and religion. The literature that
coincides with the birth, growth, transfer, and transformation of that
hybrid society attests to an individualness born of cultural conglom­
eration under French orchestration. Whether expressed today in
English or in French, Louisiana literature, like much of contemporary
Louisiana life, owes its individuality to the fusion of cultures and
races that was allowed, needed, hoped for, and enjoyed by the state’s
first French-governed residents.
Introduction

1 About the only distinction between "literary" and "non-literary" prose texts that I will be making in this study of Louisiana writings is to distinguish those compositions that were patterned for public consumption (and, hence, that were written with varying degrees of "artifice") from those that were recorded as a matter of business, be it military, ecclesiastical, governmental, or commercial and were, as far as can be determined, not aimed at a large audience. Of course, the works in verse fall unarguably into the conventional poetic genres and are easily identifiable as "literature" in the sense that most people perceive the term.

2 As noted in Louisiana: A History, "Denis Braud became the colony's first printer in 1764. Le Moniteur de la Louisiane became New Orleans' first newspaper in 1794" (82).

3 In spite of the democratic tendencies that express themselves in colonial Louisiana writings and that may have resulted in part from contact with Indians, whose societies, in general, were more equalized than European counterparts, Marcel Giraud, one of the leading historians on colonial Louisiana, denies that an egalitarian spirit overcame the first settlers -- either as a result of pioneer living or intimate exchanges with Native Americans. Rather, the French historian asserts that "the inhabitants held tenaciously to the social prejudices of the mother country," and Giraud cites "the spontaneous attachment of the population to that sense of hierarchy and respect of social titles which had been brought to the colony" (I, 244).

Furthermore, Giraud claims that living conditions did not...do away with the distinctions associated with rank and birth. In spite of this primitive environment where the general suffering of all classes created a spirit of solidarity and where the majority of inhabitants were of very humble extraction, no egalitarian spirit existed. Brought to Louisiana aboard ships where precedences were rigorously observed and still attached to their previous ways of life, the emigrants arrived imbued with the social distinctions of the kingdom (I, 244).

Giraud maintains that throughout the colonial years the Louisiana population showed "a persistent respect for social hierarchy, titles of nobility, and claims to precedence -- a characteristic contrast in frontier regions" (V, 312). In Louisiana "a title of nobility retained its prestige. . . . Everyone who could tried to enhance his name by inserting a noble-sounding 'de'" (V, 312).

In contrast to Giraud, Gwendolyn Midlo Hall in Africans in Colonial Louisiana describes French Louisiana as "an extremely fluid
society where a socio-racial hierarchy was ill defined and hard to enforce" (128). Hall adds that
desperation transcended race and even, to some extent, status, leading to cooperation among diverse peoples in their efforts to escape the settlement. Louisiana was a colony of deserters. Indian and African slaves, deportees from France . . ., Swiss as well as French soldiers, and indentured workers fled in all directions (131).

If the preoccupation with title and privilege reiterated by Giraud was strong, the desperation cited by both Giraud and Hall may have been stronger. Perhaps it was that general desperation coupled with the discrimination deriving from privilege that inculcated the Louisiana writers' desire for universal well-being and justice. After all, the favorite objects of many colonial diatribes were those egocentric leaders who horded power and possessions to satisfy themselves and their favorites at the expense of the rest of the population.

4 Even though Julien Poydras, long considered Louisiana's first belletrist, wrote in the Spanish colonial period (and, therefore, will be examined in more detail in the volume to follow this one), he is mentioned often in this study by right of his long-held title and because of the characteristics he shares with the colonists currently being proven to be Louisiana's first authors.

5 The complete omission of colonial Louisiana-French writings from The Heath Anthology of American Literature, which incorporates such non-Anglo oral and written artistry as that coming from Hispanic, Native-American, and African-American sources, further justifies an examination of colonial Louisiana literature as a body of writings yet to be considered part of United States literature.

6 While no work on colonial Louisiana literature as such has existed before the present study, some related comprehensive examinations are of particular value.

Philippe Olivier's Bibliographie des Travaux Relatifs aux Relations entre la France et les États-Unis is a worthy guide to Continental French writings that focus wholly or in part on Louisiana as early as the very birth of the colony. Olivier offers reproductions of specific Louisiana-related passages ranging in importance from references by second-rate authors to treatments by such greats as Voltaire.

The collection of essays in Dean R. Louder and Eric Waddell's French America is perhaps the most comprehensive, up-to-date examination of Francophone America as it has evolved up to this day. The collection of historical and geographical studies is concerned primarily with "the concepts of mobility, identity and minority experience" of French-speaking enclaves in North America. The study does not pretend to offer detailed analyses of the literary productions of "French America." When Louisiana-French literature is mentioned, the emphasis falls on present-day publications, not on the literary legacy of previous times. Still, French America remains important for its thorough
analysis of Louisiana-French dialects and cultures as they exist today and as they relate to "la Francophonie," particularly that of the New World.

Finally, Auguste Viatte in his three books on global Francophone literature has laid the foundation for examining Louisiana-French writings of the late eighteenth century and the entire nineteenth century as they relate to the literatures of other French-speaking regions of the world. Even though it necessarily touches only the surface of issues because of the encyclopedic nature of the author's presentation, Viatte's work is invaluable for its placing Louisiana literature within the appropriate artistic trends, cultural milieux, political eras, and international exchanges. However, Viatte speaks primarily of the nineteenth-century Louisiana-French literary flowerings, viewing pre-statehood Louisiana literature as having consisted only of a few productions, such as those by Poydras and Le Blanc de Villeneufve, at the end of the 1700s and in the early 1800s.

The Beginnings of Another Literature:
The Writings of Henri de Tonti and Nicolas de La Salle

Ironically, through the sexual mixing of La Salle's men and Native-American women, the French presence begun by La Salle in Lower Louisiana would continue after the obliteration of La Salle's enterprises with the birth of Franco-Indian children, some of whom figure in later colonial writings. In addition to these products of miscegenation, the Frenchmen accompanying Iberville in 1699 would encounter European artifacts from La Salle's day and testify to Indian acculturation begun by the La Salle party's contacts with reds in the 1680s.

In La Salle and His Legacy, Patricia Galloway alludes to the same schematic separation of Americanized colonist and transient Continental offered in this study. Downplaying the importance of the changing colonial administrators in favor of the influence of the permanent populace in shaping the colony, Galloway notes,

There has been a great deal of interest in the past in the "Great Men" of the Louisiana colony's history: La Salle, Iberville, Bienville, Cadillac, Vaudreuil. But all of these men and most others whose motivations and role in the colony's history have been thought of interest never committed themselves to Louisiana; in the end, they all returned to France. Many colonists, however, did not. The salutary attention that the new social history is paying to merchants, artisans, women, and slaves deserves to be directed toward the history of those groups in the Louisiana colony; so far the only such nonpolitical group to be studied in detail -- and that because its influence was far greater than its numbers -- is that of the colony's religious personnel (xii-xiii).

In keeping with the "salutary attention" that the "new social history" is giving to the real movers and shakers of Louisiana colonial life, persons whose contributions have for too long not been fully
acknowledged, the literature of the colony must also be spotlighted for further insights into a past that continues to the present. Renewed examination of the colony's writings shows that the distinctions Galloway suggests between Continentals and true colonists extend from the work place and seat of government to the quill and printing press, allowing for the separation of Louisiana colonial literature from French writings about Louisiana.

3 While La Salle’s letters will not be examined as Louisiana literature in this study, it must be noted that La Salle the man receives significant attention from many authors in the colonial canon. These writers’ treatments of La Salle will be analyzed in detail as they arise. For a brief overview of the changing perceptions of La Salle in later Louisiana historical literature (i.e., after the colonial period) and in Anglo-American and French historical literature, see Carl Brasseaux’s “The Image of La Salle in North American Historiography.”

4 More than twenty years after Tonti’s death in Mobile, Marie-Madeleine Hachard, newly arrived in New Orleans from Rouen, takes up where Tonti left off in praising her fellow Norman La Salle. Louisiana’s first published author, joining one of Louisiana’s first authors in unique adulation of La Salle, cements a minority consensus favorable of La Salle. The approval is matched and magnified only much later and well outside the realm of Louisiana’s colonial canon when Anglo-American, Franco-American, and Continental historical authors band together during different periods of universal praise for a man whose reputation has changed as often and whose role in history has been interpreted as variously as could seem possible.

While Tonti may praise La Salle, another contemporary, Jean Couture, prefigures later Louisiana writers in using Cavelier to show how egocentrism and irreligion lead not only to personal tragedy but also to societal ruin. At the end of his short relation, which appears in Pierre Margry’s Découvertes, Couture singles out a particularly embarrassing episode relating to the voyage of La Salle’s ships to the Gulf Coast as causing the “chagrin” that leads to Cavelier’s downfall.

M. de La Salle ayant reconnu, mais trop tard, que le pilote de M. de Beaujeu avait mieux jugé que luy, il entra dans un tel chagrin, pour ne pas dire désespoir, . . . et se voyant ainsi dégradé, qu’il ne connoissoit et ne messageoit plus personne. Il n’assistoit plus à la messe ny à la prière et ne s’approchoit plus des sacrements depuis deux ans. Il traitoit M. Cavelier, son frère, avec le dernier mespris, l’ayant chassé de sa table et ne luy faisant donner qu’une poignée de farine, pendant qu’il mangeoit de bon pain. Il a tué luy-mesme de sa main quantité de personnes et ses douze charpentiers à coups de levier, ne travaillant pas à son gré. Il n’espargnoit pas mesme les malades dans leurs lits, les tuant impitoyablement, sous pretexte qu’ils ne faisoint les malades que pour ne pas travailler. Il a arraché les deux yeux à un jeune homme qui vivoit encore, il

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It is interesting to note that in his scathing portrait of La Salle Couture (a seemingly unscrupulous coureur de bois, who, led by mercenary interests rather than patriotic or religious ideals, forsook French colonial activities so as to collaborate with the enemy Anglo-Indian alliance) uses disregard for religion as a vehicle of La Salle’s transmogrification. Such seeming respect for the sacraments, for daily religious ritual, and for the clergy (of whom La Salle’s brother “M. Cavelier” is a member) would appear to link the questionable Couture to other French colonial authors, most of whom are devout, at least in their writings. It is more accurate, however, to say that Couture knew his audience, which was at least culturally pious if not genuinely so, and knew how to use irreligion to serve them a good depiction of villainy.

Even if the murderous and irreligious inclinations presented by the author are clear exaggerations, the fact that Couture’s La Salle thinks only of himself and neglects/abuses those in his charge is the real crime. More than anything else, Couture’s attention to the criminality of a self-centered, neglectful, inefficient, and abusive leader links his sketch of La Salle to the writings of more loyal Louisiana colonists, all of whom yearn for a form of governance that will insure widespread well-being rather than elite luxury and privilege.

Although Couture worked with La Salle and Tonti in the founding of the Louisiana colony, he did not witness the last days of Cavelier that he records in his brief relation. Rather, he relied upon the account of a La Salle survivor who made it from the ill-fated Gulf-Coast settlement to Arkansas. As stated previously, Couture was a coureur de bois through and through, which means that his primary allegiance was to his own exploits. He forsook France in the early 1690s to trade with the Carolina English by way of the Tennessee Valley, thereby becoming one of those men knowledgeable of Louisiana who, Iberville and others rightly feared, would aid the British against the French.

5 For a handy annotated bibliography of the various eyewitness and secondhand contemporary accounts of La Salle’s descent of the Mississippi River, see Patricia Galloway’s “Sources for the La Salle Expedition of 1682.”

6 The biographical information on Nicolas de La Salle is drawn largely from Patricia Galloway’s “The Minet Relation” and Paul Hoffman’s A History of Louisiana before 1813.

The letters appear in Margry's *Découvertes*, Volume III, pages 553-564.

After completing a description of the Mississippi, its tributaries, and the inhabitants along those waterways, Tonti tells his reader,

Here then, my dear brother, is truly the real state of this country. Speak boldly on this subject; the sooner the better, lest others hand in memoirs before you do. I am almost sure that no memoirs are being sent by the ships commanded by M. de Surgères (234).

Clearly, Tonti intended public dissemination of what he wrote, be it letters or journals, and he was hopeful that his manuscripts would be published by the right hands. At the same time, he was very critical of any printed misrepresentations of himself or of the America he had come to know. Such an agenda determined what and how Tonti wrote. It was an agenda shared by many literary and non-literary persons in early Louisiana -- explorers, colonists, military men, clergy and religious who, because of a heightened awareness of the importance of their compositions, transformed personal recordings into deliberately "literary" creations.

After the deaths of Tonti and Nicolas, La Salle's legacy figures in the reports of another early Louisiana pioneer, François Dion Dey-prés Derbanne, who also highlights Franco-Indian cooperation in the colonization of Louisiana and urges taking up where La Salle left off in settling the lands west of the Mississippi Valley.

According to Elizabeth Shown and Gary B. Mills in their short tribute to Derbanne, Derbanne was born on the Canadian frontier in 1671, the son of "one of Canada's leading naval merchants" and the grandson of one of Canada's founding fathers. Along with many other Canadians, Derbanne's interests stretched south, and "with d'Iberville, he planted the flag of France on the sandy beaches of Biloxi and Mobile" (11).

Derbanne also played an important role in reconnoitering the regions between the Gulf of Mexico and the Great Lakes. As the Mills note,

He explored the Mississippi and its tributaries. His probes into the American wilderness took him farther up the unknown Missouri [in 1706] than any white man before him or any for a half-century after. He roamed the forests of the Deep South, learning the customs and languages of the numerous Indian nations, winning the friendships that the colony needed to insure its safety (12).

Katherine Bridges and Winston De Ville relate that Derbanne had moved to Dauphin Island by 1710 and was put in charge of the warehouse there. He took part in the Natchez War of 1716 and in the same year journeyed with Saint Denis to the Rio Grande in hopes of trading with the Spanish (241).

In 1717, Derbanne moved to Natchitoches. The Mills say of "Bienville's business agent" at that settlement:
While incompetent commandants came and went -- prior to St. Denis' appointment -- it was Derbanne, the subdélégué, who held the post together, filed the numerous reports, kept the accounts in order, and rationed the goods from the storehouse (12).

Derbanne thus proved to be the type of efficient worker and capable administrator for whom many Louisiana writers hoped.

The Mills note further that Derbanne served both French and Native American well.

For fifteen years, François Derbanne controlled much of the financial affairs of the Natchitoches Post. As the trusted confidant of the area's Indian population, he served, too, as mediator between his commandant and the various tribes in periods of native unrest (12-13).

Bridges and De Ville also point out Derbanne's efficacy among aborigines.

Derbanne seems to have won the confidence of [the Natchitoches] Indians, for he was able to explain their grievances to St. Denis in 1733 at a time when they held the Natchitoches fort in what was almost a state of siege for six months (243-244).

Reconciling white and red worlds to each other, Derbanne resembled -- and times even outshone -- his much-lauded contemporary, Saint Denis.

In addition to serving Crown, colony, and indigenous community, Derbanne also became a successful plantation master. As Bridges and De Ville note,

The hardy Canadian had in his first nine years in Natchitoches managed to clear about forty acres of land. . . . He had . . . seventeen slaves, two of whom were Indians and the rest Negroes. Besides his slaves, his property in 1726 consisted of five head of cattle and sixteen horses. Next to the commandant, he was the richest man in the little settlement (242).

While Derbanne's success may have been helped by his having come from a prominent colonial family and his having been groomed for an important role in the development of French empire, the ability to adapt to the Louisiana setting and to respect its people also proved beneficial to the transplanted Canadian.

Derbanne's Louisianization occurred at many levels, even the most intimate. Bridges and De Ville say of Derbanne's wife, "It is probable that Jeanne de la Grande Terre was a Natchitoches Indian" (243). Starting in 1716, this Franco-Indian union produced at least six children (242-243). Bridges and De Ville indicate that even as early as his Dauphin Island-Mobile years Derbanne may have fathered half-breed offspring (footnote, 243). Hence, in both his public and private life, Derbanne helped to bring diverse elements of Louisiana together into new hybridized being.

Derbanne died during a business trip to New Orleans in the winter of 1734.

Bridges and De Ville assert that although other writers mention Derbanne and his deeds favorably in a number of official reports,
his best claim to a place in history rests upon his plain and careful account of a trip across Texas to Mexico in 1716-1717 and his description of . . . Natchitoches, as it appeared in the first years of its existence. These no doubt will be read long after the bayou which now bears his name has gone the way of the earlier Lake Derbanne and Rivière à Derbanne (239-240), for “these written remains constitute a worthy monument to the intrepid Derbanne” (244).

Both reports are printed in English translation in Bridges and De Ville’s article, from which the excerpts appearing below are taken. Derbanne’s description of the Canadians’ journey to Mexico appeared earlier in Margry’s Découvertes, but the “Relation du Poste de Natchitoches” was not published before Bridges and De Ville’s study.

In the “Journey of the Canadians, Graveline, Derbanne, La Frésnîère and De Beaulieu, to the Rio Grande River, 1716-1717,” written at Dauphin Island on November 1, 1717, Derbanne recounts his group’s journey from Natchitoches to the Rio Grande and then to Dauphin Island, beginning November 22, 1716, and ending October 26, 1717. Most of the account is a description of what is now the state of Texas.

Significant to the present study, Derbanne relates the rumor he hears (during his trek over Texas) of survivors from La Salle’s Gulf-Coast colony.

The Spaniards assured me that there were still some French families from the time M. de La Salle settled that place. These were the families whom the Indians had not destroyed and who are now living among the Indians (250).

The passage above is another from colonial Louisiana literature to highlight the La Salle legacy as continuing in and contributing to a hybridized America.

Derbanne’s travelling through the land where La Salle last lived leads him to believe that it would be better for France to reoccupy the Texas region than to remain at Mobile.

It would have been preferable that the French, instead of settling at Mobile, had settled on this river [in Texas]. There are some very beautiful lands near the Spaniards where we could trade in silver and cattle. Wild beeves are there in abundance. A pirogue can go up that river to their mines with nothing to fear except the Indians. However, it is very easy to make peace with these nations because they are all enemies of the Spaniards (250).

Derbanne’s attitude displays the pragmatism necessary for colonial success. Derbanne would just as willingly trade with competitors (in this case, the Spanish, who dispute France’s claim to Texas) as befriend the competitors’ enemies. Furthermore, he would just as willingly forsake one post as establish another.

The superiority of Texas over Mobile presses Derbanne into urging the resumption of La Salle’s work in the west.

I see no other place suitable for trade than an establishment on the River M. de La Salle; the settlers within one year would have more opportunity in that place than they would have in twenty years at Mobile. The reason is that in
six months they could have horses, beeves, cows, sheep and goats and they could arrange to live at ease and at the same time trade with the Spaniards. The mission which they are going to establish at San Antonio is only 80 leagues from the settlement of M. de La Salle. I have spoken with several Spaniards who were there when the French were killed by the Indians; it was only a week after the massacre had taken place. They brought from there the swivel-guns, the powder, the candles; the cannon were left. When I left from the Rio Grande, they were getting ready to go explore the place (251).

Obviously, Derbanne hopes for friendly relations as Spaniards and Frenchmen define the border between each other and as both nations push settlements toward that boundary. At the same time, the author appropriates Spanish intelligence to relate vestiges of La Salle's colonizing efforts so that France may pick up where Cavelier left off before Spain does.

Derbanne points out how the Hispano-Indian situation in Texas is advantageous to the French. "All the Indian nations, who are in those parts, thoroughly hate the Spaniards because they abuse them badly; it would not be difficult to make them change to our side if we took the trouble" (251). Derbanne notes that even Spaniards admit the attraction that the French pose for Indians currently under Spanish rule.

The awareness of their own guilt with regard to the treatment of indigenous peoples and the acknowledgment of the inferiority of their Indian policy compared to that of France lead to insecurity when the Spanish realize that Frenchmen are infiltrating the ill-defined borderlands. As Derbanne attests,

This reconnaissance [of the Texas region by the French] has certainly made a disturbance in New Spain. The Spaniards talked to me many times about it, and they told me that their lands were lost because their Indians would be the first to trouble them if the French frequented their lands, and their mines were lost (251).

Derbanne's first account thus ends with Derbanne using both La Salle's claims and the preference of Native Americans for the French as grounds for resettling the Texas fringes of Louisiana.

Derbanne brings up La Salle's ill-fated, western Gulf-Coast colony again in the second account.

This St. Bernard Bay, where the Spanish are established, is the place where M. de la Salle once was, where the garrison was slaughtered by the Indians. The French for a while wanted to find it . . . , but they were not able to do so. Nevertheless, it is a very easy thing. . . . Those who were sent to make the discovery [did] not want to go to the trouble, for I, who was not one of these makers of memoirs, I would have found it without so much expense to the Company (253-254).

Bridges and De Ville say of the passage quoted above,

This appears to be a disparaging reference to the "Memoir Sent in 1693, on the Discovery of the Mississippi and the neighboring nations By M. De La Salle, From the Year 1678 to
the Time of His Death and By the Sieur De Tonty to the Year 1691." In this his memoir Henry de Tonti gives an account of his failure to find and rescue La Salle's colony (footnote, 254).

Derbanne, like the other Louisiana authors, considers it his duty to criticize the inaccuracies to be found in accounts relating explorations, discoveries, and colonial enterprises in America. Interestingly, if Bridges and De Ville's assumption is true, Derbanne's criticism extends even to Tonti, who himself deplored misrepresentations of the colony.

Derbanne next proceeds to praise/describe the Natchitoches area and much of Texas in this second report, which is dedicated to the former location.

The Narratives of Priests and Religious in Colonial Louisiana

The biographical information on Hachard comes from Myldred Masson Costa's and Jean-Pierre Chaline's respective introductions to the 1974 and 1988 editions of Hachard's letters.

Despite this favorable comment, Hachard backtracks in the third letter, also "Written at New Orleans, This twenty-seventh of October 1727" (25), to relate fears she and her sisters had during a shipwreck on "an island called White" en route to mainland Louisiana:

They assured us that our lives were not in danger, as we were very close to land, but that we would only disembark under dire necessity because the island was only inhabited by savages who are said to be very cruel. Not only do they eat the Whites but before that, they make them suffer torments a thousand times more bitter than death, sometimes even making the Whites drink their own blood. In the end, they make them suffer the most cruel martyrdoms. It was true that, if we had been in the sad necessity of having to leave the ship, we would have been, counting the crew and the passengers, a veritable small army and, furnished with arms which the savages fear greatly, we could have defended ourselves against any offense and could even have been a redoubtable enemy, but then we would still have run the risk of dying of hunger (36-37).

Cruelty on the part of Indians, whether directed at whites or at fellow Indians, appalls Hachard as much as it disturbs practically every colonial writer. Later, Hachard criticizes Indians along with whites for their morality, above all as it relates to sex, another favorite indigenous item of interest to Louisiana authors.

At the end of the eighteenth century, Guy Soniat du Fossat will note of New Orleans' appearance:

The conflagration which took place on the 23rd of March, 1788, reduced the city to ashes in about two hours' time,
and it is probable that it will never be rebuilt as elegantly as it was prior to that occurrence (9). New Orleans in the early 1790s, doubtlessly still rebuilding from incendiary destruction, apparently had nothing on the still fledgling city of 1728.

A few pages later, Hachard presents a more hopeful picture of Louisiana women.

Reverend Father conducted a retreat for us and our boarders during Holy Week. Several ladies of the city followed it assiduously; sometimes at the sermons and exhortations they numbered up to two hundred. Each day we had the Tenebrae in music and a Miserere accompanied by instruments. Our assistant Mother, Madame Boullenger, was in charge of these occasions. Easter Day, at Mass and Benediction, we sang Motets in four parts and on the last of the Easter Holy Days we sang the entire Mass to music. The Convents of France with all their splendor could not have done any better.

All this is very impressive and helps to draw in the public, some out of a beginning of devotion, some out of curiosity (58).

Obviously, all of the above causes Hachard to boast and reaffirm a commitment when she states,

We are better off than we would ever have believed, but this is neither the intention nor the wish of our enterprise. Our principal aim is to attract souls to the Lord and He accords us graces so that we can perform this duty (58).

Despite the harsh words that she sometimes levies at Louisiana women, Hachard undoubtedly remains confident that her order will strengthen the backbone of the colony most effectively by ministering to its women.

Hachard’s testifying to the Ursulines’ instruction of the disennfranchised indicates the degree to which French Louisianians, while depriving Negroes of many freedoms, at least allowed slaves religion. Later, Le Page will comment on the white obligation to respect black marriages, and Bossu will remind his reader that Africans, being born free, are entitled to a consideration of certain rights. Nowhere do eighteenth-century Louisiana writers question the humanity of blacks, even if they all seem to regard Caucasian as the superior race. Furthermore, while they never propose widespread abolition as a preferable alternative to slavery, convinced as they are that benevolent forms of disenfranchisement can actually benefit the disennfranchised, Louisiana authors of the pre-statehood periods gain significance among New-World writers for the degree to which they recommend humane treatment, religious and vocational instruction, and certain rights for slaves.

Hachard’s first superior in the New World, Mother Marie de Saint Augustin Tranchepain, also wrote an account of the Ursulines’ voyage from France to Louisiana. Reverend Henry Churchill Semple, S.J.,
relates that Tranchepain was a native of Rouen, born to a Protestant family, but converted to Catholicism. According to Semple, “It is noteworthy that her novitiate began in 1699, the very year in which Iberville and Bienville landed with colonists for the settlement of Louisiana” (8). Semple claims further that Tranchepain had long desired to be a missionary but that it was not until Father Ignace de Beaubois, S.J., intervened that her wish became a reality. Before leaving France, Tranchepain was made superior of the Ursulines’ Louisiana foundation. Tranchepain died in New Orleans on November 11, 1733, six years after arriving in the city.

In 1859, Tranchepain’s brief journal was published in New York as *Relation du Voyage des Premières Ursulines à la Nouvelle Orléans et de Leur Etablissement en Cette Ville*. In 1940, Olivia Blanchard translated the narrative into English as part of the WPA’s Survey of Federal Archives in Louisiana project.

Tranchepain’s account, unlike Hachard’s, ends shortly after the Ursulines land in New Orleans. As the title suggests, it is the voyage that concerns Tranchepain, not the nuns’ subsequent activities in Louisiana. The mother superior relates, as does Hachard, the stopover in Madeira and mentions some of the same peculiarities of the Portuguese inhabitants that Hachard highlights, most importantly the inequity of the sexes and the ironic fact that the island’s cloistered religious women have more freedoms than most other Madeiran females do. Tranchepain brings up many other occurrences of the voyage to Louisiana via the West Indies that Hachard includes, such as the near-fatal shipwreck in the Gulf of Mexico.

Relating her arrival in Louisiana, Tranchepain states,

> It would be impossible and even needless to try to express the various sentiments of my heart at the sight of a land for which I sighed so many years. You have too much understanding, Reverend Mother, to doubt the excess of my gratitude in setting foot on land (16).

Even though the title is restated on the first page of the body of the text so as to read “Relation of the Voyage of the Founders of New Orleans, written to the Ursulines of France by the First Superior, Mother St. Augustin” (5), Tranchepain’s account sounds so much like an abridgement of Hachard’s epistolary relation that co-authorship on one or both of the texts must be suspected. Further discussion of Tranchepain’s narrative, therefore, is hardly necessary in light of Hachard lengthier, more detailed, and more interesting version (not to mention Hachard’s longer residence in Louisiana), except to note that, like Louisiana writers, Tranchepain seems concerned about good government. After all, she deems it important to note of Governor Perier: “This gentleman has won the esteem of all the country which he traveled a few months previously and has succeeded in settling the troubles of the city” (17).

7See Jean Delanglez’s *The French Jesuits in Lower Louisiana (1700–1763).*
Historian Marcel Giraud refers to "the basically mercenary attitude of the natives -- especially the Choctaws, who excelled at haggling over the price to be paid for any service asked of them" (V, 366).

As seen in a comparison of the quotation below with the one in the preceding paragraph, Vitry's narration, as translated into English, occurs in both past and present tenses, sometimes with jarring effect.

In her article "Henri de Tonti du village des Chacta," Patricia Galloway says of De Soto's expedition over what would become the United States South:

For the interior tribes of the southeast first contact is generally reported from the "false dawn" of 1540-1543, but since it is still not clear what route the De Soto expedition took through the Alabama and Mississippi areas, nor precisely what forerunners of the later historic tribes they met, it is hard to make maximum use of the expedition accounts as first contact documents (146).

While the firsthand accounts of Spanish activity in the South may be a mixed blessing for historians, who grapple to determine where and through which nations the Iberians ventured, the Louisiana-French texts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries testify to the permanent alterations in Southeastern Native-American psyches that the "false dawn" of European presence in the Gulf-Coast and Mississippi-Valley regions triggered.

While Sauvole may not qualify to be a Louisiana writer, some observations of his treatment of Native Americans should be presented as further examples of the French attitude toward aboriginals in the first decades of the Louisiana colony.

Sauvole holds up as an illustration of potential acculturation one young red man in particular:

The chief of the Bayogoulas has left me a savage here, twenty-two years old, to learn our language; He has very strongly reproached the others about what he saw them do that didn't correspond to our manner; he copies us as best he can; he would be very sorry to leave us (28).

Later, the author says of the various red visitors to Biloxi, "They have felt so good among us, that there are no savages who, after having come here, have not come back several times" (33). Clearly, Sauvole hopes that Indian attraction to the French will result in Franco-Indian cooperation in building the Louisiana colony.

Sauvole obviously takes delight in the deepening relations between French and Indian. He boasts, "I dare to flatter myself that the savages will do blindly everything that we want, although they are very lazy" (40). The latter criticism is typical of that of many Continental writers who judge American natives by European norms. But perhaps more important than such occasional and conventional derogatory
commentary is the pleasure Sauvole and other Frenchmen derive from the lighter aspects of first contact.

For example, without criticizing them, Sauvole relates how red leaders, awestruck by European invention, use their initial acquaintance with Continental innovation as another means of securing power over their own people.

I have taken the chief of the Mobille to see the ships... He was ecstatic to see such big contraptions... He had with him two Chactas and the chief of the Pascoboulas also. Being back at the fort, they have told the others that they had been on the ships that went up to the clouds, that there were more than fifty villages on each one and crowds that one cannot pass through, and one made them climb down to a place where they did not see sun or moon; they have left to go to the Chactas to teach them these wonders. I hope that they induce them to return (40-41).

Rather than berating the chiefs for attempting to maintain control over the masses through dupery, Sauvole hopes that the report of European advances will entice more Indians to visit and ally themselves with the French.

In addition to presenting red awe at white advancement, Sauvole humbly conveys the immediate mutual dependence of the French and some of their weaker red neighbors. In the May 12, 1700, entry he states,

The chiefs of the Aomé and of the Mobille came to beg our protection against the Conchas, the Piniscas and other savages... I have not hesitated to send some men, in the pressing necessity that I found myself for lack of provisions. I have provided them, by this, the means to cultivate their lands, heartening them by such aids; besides the fact that our men have lived there for a sufficiently long time, with some beads, some axes and other little things that I had given them. I was also very happy to assure myself of the rest of the Indian corn that they had in their villages, which sustained me until the arrival of the ship... It is not a small obligation that we owe to those people there; they are the only ones for a hundred leagues around who could have aided us. They fervently wish that we should go to establish ourselves on their river... I am making some of our men stay there... (45).

While the smaller tribes early on seek the superior military protection of the French against traditional enemies, Sauvole acknowledges that the French, for their part, might have starved in the first years of colonization were it not for native foodstuffs procured from allied red neighbors.

Sauvole admits that providing military protection and a variety of Continental advancements is not enough to maintain red friendship. He uses Spanish Floridians to show how lack of respect for indigenous inhabitants can ruin any designs Europeans might have among native societies.
It has been more than six months since the Spanish have been among them; it is true that they put some hogs in their villages, and that they were leading them to believe that they were going to go to settle there, when they went there to trade some corn. They will not regard them at present on the footing of good friends, because they have killed one of their savages. I have always kept a sharp lookout that our men did not do them the slightest wrong; thus, they are well pleased with us (45-46).

In implying aboriginal disappointment over Spanish failures to settle in certain red communities, Sauvole suggests that many red groups, in addition to moving to white settlements for greater comforts and better protection, expected Europeans to join pre-existing native villages as well. Just as many red nations sought friendship with the French, the latter often had trouble establishing peace among the former; at the same time, the more powerful tribes used varying alliances with different white groups (French, Spanish, and English) as pawns in their attempts to reap as many benefits as possible from all Europeans. To his credit, Sauvole tries to respond as best as he can to his red neighbors' requests for Franco-Indian establishments and respect. Later, when he has to feed both red and white mouths on poor provisions sent from Europe, Sauvole admits, "I would be greatly hampered without the help of the Mobile" (48).

Bernard Diron Dartaguiette, an Exemplum

1The biographical information on Diron Dartaguiette comes from Giraud.

2A plaque at Repentance Fountain in downtown Baton Rouge summarizes the importance of the Dartaguiettes not only for the city that they helped found but also for the rest of Louisiana. Entitled "The D'Artaguiette Concession," the inscription reads, The D'Artaguiette brothers, Jean-Baptiste Martin, Navy Commissioner and later Director of the Company of the Indies, Bernard Diron, Inspector General and Later Commandant at Mobile, and Captain Pierre d'Itouralde, Commandant of Illinois, killed in 1736 in the Chickasaw War, all served in French colonial Louisiana between 1708 and 1742. Bernard and Pierre, with the help of Martin in 1720, established a land grant settlement called Baton Rouge, Red Stick, which lasted several years. It was resettled after 1730 and the site retained the name Baton Rouge. The D'Artaguiette brothers are considered the founders of Baton Rouge.

3At the time recounted by Diron, Louisiana was under the proprietorship of the Company of the Indies, which made land grants to settlers and held the monopoly on trade. The court of law for the colony was the Superior Council.
In the September 3, 1723, entry, Diron speaks of Saint Denis in a fashion more typical of his literary compatriots. The entry for that day reads,

We have been informed by the Thonniquas that M. St. Denys, commandant at the Natchitoches, had descended the river with all the Indians of this nation, and that he was persuading the Thonniquas to join him, to make an attack upon the Natchez (90).

Whatever his difficulties with the Natchitoches might have been at one point in the 1720s, Saint Denis and the Natchitoches together would play an important role in ending the colony's problem with the remnants of the Natchez nation in the 1730s.

The Saint Denis Legend

Unless otherwise indicated, the biographical information on Pénicaut comes from McWilliams' introduction and footnotes in Fleur de Lys and Calumet, as well as from Pénicaut's narrative itself. McWilliams' translation of Pénicaut's narrative into English in Fleur de Lys and Calumet provides the quotations used in this study.

McWilliams cites other writers and historians who have relied on Pénicaut's narrative for historical information. See McWilliams' note on page xiv of Fleur de Lys and Calumet.

The title of Pénicaut's narrative as it appears in the authoritative Clermont manuscript reads,

Narrative, or TRUE ANNALS of what occurred in the country of Louisiana during twenty-two consecutive years, from the beginning of French colonization in the region under Monsieur d'Hyberville and the Count de Surgère in 1699, up to 1721, WHEREIN ARE MENTIONED the wars of Frenchmen against the savages and of savages among themselves; the trade Frenchmen had with the savages; the course and the extent of the Missisipi; rivers that flow into this river; mines; the religion and customs of the savages; their foods, their hunting, their weddings, their festivals, and their funerals; concessions which Frenchmen hold there; together with THE GALANTE STORY of a French captain and the daughter of a Spanish captain of cavalry from Mexico.

The above-quoted title comes from "Appendix B" of McWilliams' Fleur de Lys and Calumet (268-269). The "galante story," of course, is that of Saint Denis.

Throughout the first colonial period, Louisiana writers showed a considerable interest in their Spanish neighbors to the east and to the west. The colonial texts manifest everything from curiosity about the Spaniards' doings, to speculations about the locations of their lucrative mines, to amusement over their ways, to ridicule of the general condition of their masses, to disapproval of their elite's...
oppression of the white and nonwhite populace, to condemnation of their gold lust.

Interestingly, a discussion of Spanish coaches (one of the many temptations held out by the Mexicans to Saint Denis) during the interrogation of the Talon brothers, survivors of La Salle's annihilated colony on the Gulf Coast, leads the Talons into relating Spanish luxury, vanity, racism, oppression, and rebellion, aspects of Hispano-colonial life that both intrigue and appall Louisiana writers. Starting with the status symbol of coaches and then branching out into other descriptions of privilege, deprivation, and self-determination in the Mexican capital, the Talon brothers inform their interrogator that the viceroy had ten of them for his own use and that of his household. And he is the only one in the city who can have coaches with six horses or six mules, it being permitted to others to have only 4 or 2. . . . He alone can have teams of horses, even though they are numerous in that country. Private individuals and a few noblemen are allowed to have only mules. The town is heavily populated, but the majority are natives of the country; that is, descendants of the Indian peoples or savages, rather than of Spaniards. And it is not permitted to these natives to keep arms. . . . Thus, they fight among themselves only by throwing rocks at each other. They [the Spaniards] take this precaution because of their great number and their inclination to revolt, for they endure the Spanish yoke only with difficulty. They revolted in the year 1692; and even though they were armed only with rocks, they put such a great fear into the hearts of the Spaniards that they all fled. Even the viceroy escaped through a window of his palace, with Madame his wife, and they took refuge at the archbishop's residence. On this occasion this prelate went in procession, followed by his clergy, through all the streets, carrying the Holy Sacrament; but the mutineers threw rocks at him and were not appeased. The principal ones among them call themselves by all the titles and dignities that the Spaniards have from the highest to the least. They would have ill-treated the viceroy if they had found him. They set fire to his palace, reducing it to ashes, and would have created greater troubles or disorder if the Count of Santiago, who is great lord of the Creoles -- that is to say, of those born in the country but of Spanish origin -- had not appeased them the next day. And even though he assembled what soldiers he could, he used only persuasion, having great trust in the spirit of these Indians. Afterward, when they were dispersed and those who had come from the fields had returned home, the viceroy had the cavalry dismount and made several examples of the more rebellious, who were flogged and put to death. It is to be noticed that the Creoles have no less an inclination to revolt than the descendants of the Indians because the Spaniards, mistrusting them, deprive them of all the civil and military offices (244-245).
Significantly, the Americanized Talons, who suffered at first because of their European overlords' failure to adapt to a new continent and who, once free of their inept leaders, subsequently survived on the same continent through Indian existence until they were brought back to Western civilization in Mexico, point out that Creoles (i.e., Euro-American natives of the New World) endure much of the same discrimination that Europeans direct at Native Americans and, likewise, bear the same resentments felt by aboriginals toward Continental authorities. Not surprisingly, then, Creoles in positions of importance (such as the Count of Santiago) do a better job at placating indigenous discontent than do officials sent from Europe.

The Talons note further that "the savages or Indians of the vicinity of Paral continually make war against the Spaniards and steal their horses and mules, which they eat" (245). In addition to rebellion, indigenous Mexicans do a wonderful job of levelling Spanish self-exaltation by filling their stomachs with the very thing that their overlords use to mark status.

In Louisiana colonial literature, the depiction of the "Black Legend" of Spain's mistreatment of Indians, mixed breeds, and even Euro-Americans in the colonies reaches its apex in Bossu's exposés of Iberian oppression throughout the Western Hemisphere. While Pénicaud does not concentrate on the Black Legend in the Saint-Denis chapters (although he does indicate a manifestation of it when referring to the abuses of "Dom Pedros"' soldiers toward border tribes), elsewhere the author, like many other Louisiana writers, highlights the problems that Iberians have with aboriginal Americans as a result of Spain's conquering, disenfranchising, and neglectful approach to indigenous peoples of the New World.

5Saint Denis' lapse from service, leadership, and personal promotion simply to dwell in hiding with his wife for a while stands in contrast to what Pénicaud reveals about his hero even before the "galante story" begins. Recording the progress being made in the development of Lower Louisiana, Pénicaud injects the following subjective observations of Saint Denis. "After a short while, M. de St. Denis, who was bored at being shut in with nothing to do at Mobile, organized a detachment, with M. de Bienville's consent, to make war on the Chetimachas" (101). And "some time later, because something had displeased him or because he objected to being shut in, M. de St. Denis went away with twelve Frenchmen to live at Biloxi" (102). These preliminary comments by Pénicaud refer to a character less idolized than that of the personage exalted in the gallant story, a character more in line with that of the Saint Denis whom some historians view as an opportunist and perhaps even a mercenary.

For example, Robert S. Weddle asserts in "The Talon Interrogations" that implicit in the Saint-Denis affair is a scheme to maneuver the two colonial governments, French and Spanish, to serve Saint-Denis' personal ends. . . . Saint-Denis succeeded in bringing the Spaniards and the French face to face on the Red River, where they might carry on the contraband trade of
his design and to his benefit. Rather than bolstering the
French claim to Texas, as the Spaniards feared, he actually
quitclaimed the territory to Spain (223).

Echoing De Villiers by judging Pénicaud and his literary heirs solely
on historical veracity and not on their skills as littérateurs, Weddle
also states, “The episode has been badly garbled by those interpreters
who have attempted to follow the spurious relation of André Pénigault”
(222).

Unless otherwise stated, the biographical information on Dumont
comes from De Villiers’ 1914 and 1931 studies in the Journal des
Americanistes de Paris. In addition to De Villiers’ two studies, Jean
Delanglez’s 1937 Mid-America article also clarifies what is fiction in
Dumont’s writings by presenting the appropriate facts from Louisiana
history.

Delanglez places Dumont’s birth on July 31, 1696 (32).

The biographical information on Le Page du Pratz comes from
Joseph G. Tregle, Jr.’s publication.

Le Page’s commandant of the Presidio del Norte, “D. Diegue Raimond” is the grandfather of Saint Denis’ sweetheart. Both Pénicaud
and Charlevoix depict the commandant (“Dom Pedro de Vilesca” for
Pénicaud, “Don Pedro de Vilescas” for Charlevoix) as being the father
of Saint Denis’ love interest.

The biographical information on Charlevoix comes from Charles
Edwards O’Neill’s introduction to Charlevoix’s Louisiana.

Indians in Colonial Louisiana Literature

The Indians described in Chapter 6, the Natchez, have fared all
the better in history and literature for having been encountered by
Pénicaud when they were. Since, as McWilliams points out, Pénicaud
via Charlevoix influenced Chateaubriand’s depiction of the Natchez
(footnotes, pp. 82, 95–96, Fleur de Lys and Calumet) and contributed
to historians’ and ethnologists’ considerations of the Natchez as so-
cially and historically different from neighboring tribes, it is in-
teresting to speculate about how exalted in literature and how distin-
guished in scholarship the Natchez would have been if Pénicaud had en-
countered them only while on official excursions (when he would have
not been free to linger among them), at a bad time of year, or when he
was ill, instead of during a period of personal liberty and cosmic ex-
uberance. Had Pénicaud’s mood and the circumstances of his stay among
the Natchez been different, he might well have focused more on the re-
vulsion he experienced when confronted with their sexual, religious,
and funereal practices and ignored the beauty, sophistication, and
agreeableness that also characterized Natchez life.
While Pénicaud and the young Frenchmen enjoy the company of Indian females, the author gives no details about sexual intercourse that might have occurred between the races during the times that he (for all practical purposes) was the one responsible for overseeing his fellows' behavior. Rather, in the Indian interludes and elsewhere in the narrative, Pénicaud, like many Louisiana writers, points out the pains that are taken to maintain regular religious observance in situations not conducive to such regularity, situations such as travelling across a continent and encountering all sorts of daily hardships. Throughout their narratives, even the non-ordained writers and those not in religious vows indicate a devotedness to Catholicism by praising both converted Indians and pious French colonists; by condemning both red and white non-believers, non-observers, and blasphemers; and by highlighting public and private religious practices. Whatever the real nature of their lives might have been, the majority of Louisiana writers defend the Church and its teachings in their narratives, criticize those who do not live according to religious guidelines, and point out the attempts to maintain regular devotion in their own lives and those of persons with whom they keep company.

A further indication of Pénicaud's conventional piety occurs in an episode that counterbalances the anecdote relating the Yazoo missionary's destruction of Indian idols. In Chapter 9, Pénicaud blasts blaspheming iconoclasts by recounting an oral tale of a shipwreck off of Dauphin Island.

The captain of the ship, M. de St. Maurice, was from Martinique. From Martinique he had set out in his ship to engage in trading at Havana and Vera Cruz, where he had sold his merchandise very well; but on the return trip he was becalmed for eighteen days. As his food supplies were about to fail him, certain ones of the sailors -- as among such men there are always some who live like heathen -- instead of imploring the aid of heaven, began to blaspheme and utter curses against God. They hurled overboard a little wooden image of St. Anthoine with a stone tied to his neck. St. Anthoine was the name of the ship, under the protection of this saint, to whom the master of the ship had dedicated it. The very next day, they had the storm I have just reported, which caused more than fifty of those blasphemers to perish; they were the cause of the loss of the ship [and of the riches they had gained by trading at Havana, which was a substantial amount. To lighten the ship they had to throw this into the sea.] That was what M. Maurice, the commander, told M. de Chateaugué, and what I heard -- just as I report it (118).

Not surprisingly, whereas the destroyer of Indian idols must face the rage merely of outraged humans, the blaspheming iconoclast of Catholic images must endure the wrath of God.

Pénicaud's religiosity does not remain on the pious level of sacramental observance, private devotion, and overt reverence for the teachings and trappings of the Church. He demands that public conduct, even when confined to Native-American society, conform to
Catholic precepts. In Chapter 13, for instance, Péniacut attacks certain Canadians for what he would consider lewd conduct among the Illinois Indians. Péniacut states that under the pretext of engaging in bartering there, they were openly committing scandalous offences -- debauching the daughters and the wives of the Illinois and dissuading them from being converted to our religious faith. This hindered the propagation of the faith (136).

Clearly, Péniacut does not condemn debauchery solely because it goes against what the Church teaches. Rather, he also sees the societal harm to which such activity can lead. In Péniacut as in many other writers, the Catholic stance leads also to a humanitarian one.

As evidenced in the two passages quoted above and in the attention the author gives to recording religious observances among both the French and the converted Indians in Louisiana, Péniacut testifies further to the role that Catholic conservatism has played in Louisiana literature from the start. If his religiosity causes him to condemn non-Christian Native-American religion at times, it must not be overlooked that Péniacut condemns nonpracticing Frenchmen and Canadians as well, an approach that the author shares with many other lay Louisiana writers. Finally, in addition to attacking "lapsed" Catholics in writing, Péniacut also serves as part of the group sent to assist a priest in stopping the debauched activities of "Canadian rakes" among Indians in Illinois (137).

3Giraud highlights the Christianity of the Kaskaskia Illinois as an exception to the failure of most French missionary activity during the times recounted by Péniacut and Dumont. (See Volume I, pages 340 and following.) With regard to a hybridized Franco-Indian culture and interracial mixing in the Illinois region, Giraud notes,

In these Illinois settlements, Indians and French maintained closer relations than at Mobile. The bond of a common religion favored the rapprochement of the two races and interracial marriages -- inevitable because of the absence of French women -- were not frowned upon there (I, 344).

While some priests and government officials in Mobile might not have approved of miscegenation, Giraud maintains that in the Illinois region "among the first inhabitants . . . there was hardly anyone who had not married an Indian" (I, 344). Regardless of "official" policy, Péniacut, for his part, seems to approve of interracial union.

4Giraud comments upon the trouble that wandering French Canadians posed for the Illinois missions as well as "their tendency to serve the interests of England." (See Volume I, pages 347-348.)

5Saint Denis' biographer Phares notes, "Justice was respected second only to power on the frontier. The Indians never, so far as record or tradition reveals, disputed St. Denis' maintenance of either" (252). While Bridges and De Ville's and the Mills' work on Derbanne does indicate instances when even the Natchitoches Indians disputed either Saint Denis' maintenance of power or his form of justice,
historians agree that for the most part Saint Denis’ record among Na-
tive Americans was a good one. Phares speculates further in a foot-
note, “The Natchez War was not a conflict of St. Denis’ making. And
if the tribe had known St. Denis better they might not have made their
fatal mistake” (252).

In a footnote to Dumont’s text, De Villiers notes of the impor-
tant letter whose destruction leads to Dartaguiette d’Itouralde’s
death in Dumont’s poem, “Elle nous semble inventée tout simplement
pour chercher à rendre Bienville responsable de la mort de d’Arta-
guette” (350). In addition,

Le désastre de l’expédition de d’Artaguette a été raconté de
diverses façons, mais la version de Dumont paraît de beau-
coup la plus inexacte. D’Artaguette attaqua très probable-
ment — ou fut attaqué par les Chickachas — le jour même de
son arrivée devant le village de ces Indiens. Il fut bles-
sé, pris et, dès le lendemain, brûlé par les Sauvages
(footnote, 351).

As evidenced throughout the Poème en Vers, Dumont devotes much of his
imaginative energies to creating scenes that villainize Bienville to
the extreme.

In commenting on the relationship between Dumont and Bienville,
Giraud first cites Bienville’s preference for Canadians over Continen-
tals, a prejudice that in itself was a strike against Dumont when he
arrived in the colony. Just as Bienville “était porté à favoriser les
colons canadiens, les officiers et les soldats dont il s’efforçait de
faciliter la vie et d’atténuer la pauvreté par quelques avantages ma-
tériels,” so also Bienville “avait eu tendance à moins favoriser les
colons de la métropole” (IV, 363).

Naturally Bienville and his favorites were opposed by others in
the colony. Giraud describes Dumont when he touches on this segment
of the population not favored by Bienville.

Au groupe de ses partisans s’opposaient les ennemis que
[Bienville] se créait par les profondes antipathies que lui
inspirait sa nature trop entière, en dehors de ceux que leur
position érigait en concurrents éventuels de son autorité.
On s’explique l’antipathie qu’il manifesta à Dumont de Mon-
tigny, fils d’un avocat parisien, qui arriva en Louisiane en
1719 avec un brevet de sous-lieutenant, après avoir servi
dans les gardes-marine et à Québec, et dont la turbulence et
la forfanterie l’exposèrent aussitôt au ressentiment du com-
mandant général. Revenu dans la colonie, après un court sé-
jour en France, avec un brevet de lieutenant réformé dans
les compagnies du ministre Le Blanc, il servit aux Yasoux où
il paraît avoir déçu ses supérieurs par ses prétendues capa-
cités d’ingénieur. A son retour à la Nouvelle-Orléans, en
conflit avec Bienville, mal vu de Leblond de La Tour, il fut
cassé de son grade, refoulé comme simple soldat dans la com-
pagnie de Poncereau de Richebourg, privé des arriérés d’ap-
pointements qui lui étaient dus et, finalement, du droit à
la ration alimentaire en raison de son refus d’accepter sa
nouvelle situation. Visiblement, Bienville était hostile aux fils de familles aisées qu'on avait exilés en Louisiane pendant le Système de Law (IV, 364-365).

Based on the hardships that his disfavor with Bienville entailed, it is understandable how the sometimes difficult and disagreeable Dumont would lash out at Le Moyne with such vehemence. For these and other reasons, Giraud and other historians rightly criticize the historical aspect of Dumont's writings. While Dumont's anger damages his veracity, it leads the "poor poet" to create entertaining fiction in his long poem.

With regard to Dumont's critical generalizations of the Indian, it must be noted again that Dumont generalizes as much to the detriment of Frenchmen as to that of Native Americans or any other group. For example, he says of white town dwellers in Louisiana, as opposed to whites who live in the country,

Presque l'esprit de tous est plein de jalousie;
Chacun voudroit gagner, tout le monde est marchand,
Officiers, soldats, conseillers, habitants,
Et, pour bien l'expliquer, sans être fanatique,
C'est qu'on se sert partout du bel art politique.
Le pauvre est opprimé, l'on peut plaindre son sort,
Attendu que le riche est toujours le plus fort (420).

Thus begins Dumont's exposé of political corruption in the colony and his denunciation of white-on-white social discrimination, aspects of the poem that are treated in more detail later in this study. In short, it suffices here to say that Dumont's Frenchmen show no more virtues and perhaps far more corruption than do his Native Americans. No group, red or white, is spared Dumont's chastising rod, but from all groups good individuals are capable of rising. For instance, just as Dumont can throw derogatory jabs at Canadians in general, the inference being that they are inferior to Continentals, so can he also elevate one of their number, Saint Denis, to lofty stature. As noted previously, no Indian receives the lengthy tirades Dumont reserves for his white villains. Thus, a single comment from the long poem probably sums up much of Dumont's real disposition toward Native Americans better than does his criticism: "Enfin ces nations,/ Quoique nommées sauvages, ont assez de raison" (412).

It should come as no surprise that writers such as Pénicaud and Dumont blame the British for many of the problems between the French and certain Indian nations (i.e., the Chickasaw and the Alabama). After all, the English strategy was to use the southeastern tribes of North America to drive the French from Louisiana and the Spanish from Florida. Hoffman notes that, beginning in 1705, "French concerns about English activity among the southeastern Indians continued to grow and became a constant in the history of Louisiana up to 1763" (31), the year Louisiana passed from French to Spanish rule.
De Beauchamp's Journal

De Beauchamp's spelling of individual names varies throughout the narrative.

Tzvetan Todorov in The Conquest of America notes that Cortés' victory over the Aztecs was insured in part by the fact that other indigenous groups in what is now Mexico bore grievances against their Aztec rulers and, therefore, were willing to aid the Spanish in overthrowing Montezuma and subjugating his empire (57-61). The same situation -- that of indigenous Americans siding with newly arriving Continentals or already established Euro-Americans against other Native-American groups -- is played out again and again in the history of Franco-Indian relations in colonial Louisiana.

Le Page and Indians

1Tregle views Le Page's relationship with his young female slave as exhibiting more than just platonic or paternal interest. "The purely avuncular role which Le Page ascribes to himself is singularly unconvincing" (xxxix).

2The French commandant at Natchez gave "peu de satisfaction" to Le Page as well. He notes in Chapter 12 that during the second year of his Natchez residence he made a trip to New Orleans and that certain actions of the Natchez commandant had adverse effects on the venture.

Avant de descendre le Fleuve, j'allai au Fort pour demander au Commandant s'il n'avait point de Lettres pour le Gouvernement: nous n'étions pas grands amis avec ce Commandant des Natchez, qui voulait faire sa cour au Gouverneur aux dépens d'autrui. Il avait des Lettres à envoyer à M. de Biainville; je le sçavois, il me dit qu'il n'en avait point: je me fis donner par le Commis principal un billet qui portait ce refus à ma demande: le même Commis me pria d'emmener dans ma voiture un forçat pendant le voyage. Je ne me pressai point, et je m'arrêtai de temps en temps pour visiter mes amis qui demeuroient le long du Fleuve; de cette sorte le Commandant eut tout le temps d'envoyer ses Lettres et d'écrire au Gouverneur que j'avais refusé de les prendre (I, 166-167).

The commandant's attempt to undermine Le Page's integrity before Bienville achieves its intended effect. Arriving in Biloxi from New Orleans, Le Page recounts his reception by Bienville.

Je fus saluer M. de Biainville: ce Gouverneur me demanda si j'avais des Lettres pour lui, je lui répondis que je les avois fait demander, mais qu'on me les avait refusés. Il me dit avec froideur que je n'avais point voulu m'en charger: pour toute réponse je lui montrai le certificat du Commis principal, à quoi il ne put répondre qu'en me disant que du
moins je ne pouvais nier que j’eusse emmené furtivement un
forçat de la Compagnie. Je lui répliquai que le Commandant
des Natchez lui en imposoit; et pour le lui prouver, je lui
fis voir le billet du Commiss principal, par lequel il prit
MM. les Directeurs de me rembourser les vivres du forçat que
j’avais bien voulu descendre, et qu’il renvoyoit, parce
qu’il lui étoit inutile. Cette explication et ces réponses
par écrit le mirent, comme on peut bien s’imaginer, de très
mauvaise humeur (I, 167-168).

While Le Page openly villainizes the Natchez commandant in the episode
recounted above, he hardly presents Bienville in a far better light.
In this instance and others, Le Page joins Dumont in exposing the
flaws of the same leaders, albeit in a more rational, less virulent
fashion.

3 As the reference to the white stag and other passages indicate,
Le Page, like Pénicaut, keeps an eye open for natural phenomena verg­
ing on the supernatural in the American wilds and in Native-American
life. Volume I’s Chapter 14, entitled “Serpent à sonnettes monstru­
eux: Phénomène extraordinaire,” offers two stories that verge on the
marvelous or science fiction. The first takes place during a winter
whose cold surpasses any that the Natchez have ever known. A snake
the size of a human being appears on Le Page’s property, scaring the
author’s Indian neighbor and other reds terribly. The dogs’ announce­
ment of a strange presence, the fright of individuals as they see the
huge reptile, the snake’s disappearance, and Le Page’s burning the
woods and fields to eradicate the beast are presented in such a way so
as to create suspense. The result is a mini-thriller of five pages
that casts French and Indian characters together in common fear of an
almost supernatural foe. Le Page ends Chapter 14 with the second tale
of the unnatural, this one concerning extraterrestrial activity. Ba­
sically, the “phénomène extraordinaire” that Le Page and many others
observe separately is what would today be termed a UFO.

4 See the first two pages of Volume II’s Chapter 16. The pagina­
tion in Volume II’s Chapters 15 and 16 becomes nonsequential, undoubt­
edly the result of printing errors.

5 As a means of understanding more fully the difference in atti­
tude between New-England Puritans and Louisiana Catholic colonists
with regard not only to the Native American but also to the whites’
respective religions and cultural/religious artifacts, one can compare
Le Page’s light treatment of the Missouris’ misuse of objects sacred
to Catholic ritual with Mary Rowlandson’s outrage at the sight of red
men parading merely in white men’s secular clothing.

6 Etcheparre’s tyrannical dealings with his underlings will be
treated in more detail in the chapter devoted to rulers and the ruled.
Bossu and Indians

1 The biographical information on Bossu comes from Seymour Feiler's and Samuel Dorris Dickinson's introductions to their translations of Bossu's two books.

2 As late as Letter VI, Bossu feels the need to defend the historicity of his narrative through assurances such as the following: "You can rely on the accuracy of my accounts. I will tell you absolutely nothing which I have not seen with my own eyes. Invention and exaggeration are completely foreign to me" (75). Perhaps Bossu remains truer in the first book than in the second to his boast of relating only eyewitness accounts, for in the latter work he offers a number of entertaining stories that were passed on to him by others. The second book does not suffer from the inclusion of events that Bossu did not see firsthand.

3 At the beginning of the second book's Fifth Letter, Bossu offers literary criticism by evaluating the manuscripts that his literature inclined reader sent him. (See pages 73 and 74.)

Bossu's artistic criticism extends to Indians. In the second book's Sixth Letter, for example, he admiringly relates the artistry in Native-American oratory.

Indians are very fluent. Their speech, which they embellish with parables or similes to express their thoughts, is full of circumlocutions. Sometimes I used to remain entire hours listening to these savage orators. They spoke with elegance, moving the body, hands, and arms with natural grace which a European never could imitate. It fascinated me, although this language, translated literally into our tongue, might have seemed barbarous and devoid of meaning (99).

The oral work of Indians receives as much attention in Bossu's narrative as does the written work of Europeans. That is, at the same time that Bossu is praising and encouraging his friend's literary efforts, he extolls and transcribes formal Indian harangues and even some extemporaneous red poetry. In so doing, Bossu joins authors from throughout the New World in rendering Native-American oral tradition into written literature.

In the second book's Sixth Letter, after providing the reader with "a summary of the history of Ferdinand Soto which you requested for use in a tragedy that you plan to write" (100), Bossu offers an Indian fable that he has rendered into rhymed French verse. Bossu's introduction to the fable as well as his poetical rendition (which Dickinson presents in the original French along with an English translation) are worth quoting in their entirety to show both the depth of Bossu's esteem for Indian oral artistry and his own skill as a poet.

I had forgotten, Sir, to send you a little fable that an Indian orator composed in his language when a small boy of his tribe caught a live young caiman . . . on the banks of the Mississippi River. I have translated it into French as best I could with the help of the Akangas interpreter.
The author is called Taftirichoulabémingo, meaning, Traditional or Chief of the Poets of the Nation. As it conveys a moral which seems very wholesome for a savage Indian, I thought I should give you pleasure by quoting it in this letter.

L'ENFANT SAUVAGE
ET LE PETIT CROCODILE
Fable

Un jeune Enfant, d'humeur maligne,
S'amusoit l'autre jour à pêcher à la ligne:
Sur les bords du Mississippi,
Notre drôle étoit accroupi.

Un jeune calman, imprudent & novice;
Sans se douter de l'artifice,
Se présente, & bientôt attrape avec effort
Le funeste aliment qui doit le mettre à mort.
La beauté de l'appât, la faim, tout l'y convie;
Il va chercher sa perte, & croit trouver la vie.
L'amphibie ignorait, en frétillant autour,
Qu'il étoit exprès là pour lui ravir le jour.
Il s'accroche; l'enfant, tout transporté de joie,
Saisit avec ardeur une si belle proie.

Jamais chat à l'affût, attrapant souriceau,
Ne prit plus de plaisir que notre jouvenceau;
Il le couve des yeux, & songe qu'à son père,
A son retour, il va procurer chère entière.

Le petit monstre, s'agitant
Sur un sable arid [sic] & brûlant
Se plaignoit d'un ton lamentable;
Mais d'un tyran impitoyable
En vain il veut toucher le coeur;
L'espègle insultée à son malheur,
Et, joignant les coups à l'outrage,
Lui tient ce mordicant langage:
Maitre gourmand, te voilà pris,
Pleure, si tu veux, moi, j'en ris.

Tu ne soupçonnaist pas qu'une chair mensongère
Recelait à tes yeux la ligne meurtrière.
Quel goût lui trouve-tu? Tu voudrois à présent
T'en retourner à jeun au liquide élément.
Pour assouvir ta faim tout morceau t'est propice:
Hé bien, d'un bon repas tu seras de délice.

L'enfant railloit son malheureux captif.
Un vieillard près de là pechoit dans un esquif;
Il l'entendit, & crut qu'à la folle jeunesse
Cet exemple pouvait inspirer la Sagesse.

Un pareil sort t'attend, dit-il, mon fils, hélas!
Un monde séducteur t'offrira ses appas.
Par-tout tu trouveras des coeurs cruels, avides,
Des hommes jaloux & perfides,
Des aspics cachés sous les fleurs,
Telle fillette aux yeux trompeurs,
Qui, dans son métier trop habile,
Vengera bien ton crocodile.
Cher enfant, retiens ma leçon,
Ne mords jamais à l'hameçon (103-104).

Since the fable’s moral fits in well with Bossu’s consistent desire to see the world freed of greed and filled with mercy, it comes as no surprise that the author highlights and embellishes the anecdote in his second narrative. In addition to recording Indian oral art, Bossu’s versical transcription has other importance. The fact that Bossu perfected this and another poetic translation of Indian oratory (to be examined shortly) before his second book’s 1777 publication forces Julien Poydras to share his position as one of Louisiana’s earliest poets with yet another author who composed his verse earlier than Poydras penned his. Bossu dates the Sixth Letter “In the Akangas country, April 1, 1771.” While Bossu may have finished his poem then, he did not publish it before Poydras’ first poem hit the press. It must be remembered that Dumont also completed his poem before Poydras composed his verse, but, as is the case with Bossu, Dumont’s poetry was not published before Poydras’. Not only did Poydras beat the earlier poets to publication, he also published in Louisiana rather than France. In short, while Poydras can no longer be called Louisiana’s first poet, first littérateur, or even first published author, he is still the first published poet from the colony and the first belletrist to publish in Louisiana.

Bossu follows the “caiman” fable by noting of Arkansas creativity in general:

The Akangas really have a poetic bent, and it is certain that Propertius, Tibullus, and even Horace himself never portrayed love more delicately than these people do in innumerable ballads that I should gladly call odes worthy of Anacreon. In reality, if their ballads of death have all the grandeur of Homer’s heroes, their simple elegies are worthy of the pen of the sensitive and exquisite Ovid. I am going to prove it to you (106).

As proof of his boast, Bossu immediately offers a poem on breasts that he witnessed a mixed-breed, French-Arkansas man recite at a white social function in hopes of impressing a Caucasian beauty with whom he had become smitten and whose bared bosom he longed to see.

Bossu’s “translation of the delightful Elegy of the Indian Envoy Rutel-Attikaloubémingo” reads as follows.

A MANON
Pourquoi, jeune MANON, tenir emprisonné
Avec tant de rigueur ce blanc sein nouveau né;
Que nul mortel n’a vu, dont nulle main encore
N’a su cueillir la fleur, qui ne vient que d’éclorer?
Quelle barbare loi te force à resserrer
Ces jolis prisonniers? Laissez-les respirer.
Tendres êtres, hélas! innocentes victimes,
Pourquoi vous étouffer? quels furent donc vos crimes?
Usez de tous vos droits; laissez à l’avenir,
Si vous en abusez, le soin de vous punir
Jeunes infortunés! Lorsque MANON respire,
Voyez leurs mouvements, que le dépit inspire,
Le peu que j’entrevois de leur joli contour
Fait naître dans mon cœur le désir et l’amour.
Que j’ai peine à le voir, ce sein que j’idolâtre,
Lancer contre un mouchoir ses deux globes d’albâtre!
Tel qu’un tendre chevreau, jeune, vif et charmant,
Ils voudraient lutiner et bondir librement.
Exempts de préjugés, ils redoutent la gêne;
Les captiver ainsi, c’est être une inhumaine.
À peine sont-ils nés, vous pensez bien, MANON,
Que, plus jeunes que vous, ils ont moins de raison.
De l’austère vertu ils ignorent l’usage.
Et vous-même étiez-vous plus prudente à leur âge?
On n’emmaillote point les enfants au berceau;
Ce qui n’est pas gêne n’en devient que plus beau:
Mais si tu crains, MANON, de troubler la cervelle
de quiqunque verra cette gorge si belle,
Si, pour de tes amis prévenir les malheurs,
Tu veux punir leur vue en épargnant leurs coeurs,
Voile donc tes beaux yeux, voile donc cette bouche
Dont l’éclat nous enflamme et dont le son nous touche;
Et, certaine des coups qui portent tes attraits,
Aux regards des mortels ne te montre jamais.

Thus ends the Sixth Letter of the second book. The poem will be analyzed in more detail later in the main text of this study. For now it should be noted that Bossu and the other white listeners are amused and impressed but not outraged at a red man making such an address to a young white woman. The French reaction to the Indian’s plea for the girl to bare her breasts to him indicates a great deal concerning the author’s and his peer’s dispositions toward Native Americans.

4 Bossu is not an Hispanophobe. For instance, the end of the “Foreword” expresses the hope that “France will share the riches of the New World with her good ally, Spain” (7). Later, after recounting the abuses that some Spaniards in Santo Domingo levy against Native Americans, Bossu offers portraits of Hispaniola’s other residents “to demonstrate the honor of the inhabitants of this island” (17).

While he acknowledges the good intentions of Spanish Crown, Church, and some colonists toward indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere, Bossu still plays a part in reiterating the “Black Legend” of Spanish conquest of the New World. The legend, which started in Europe in the 1500s following Bartolomé de Las Casas’ writings, is summarized well by David Shields.

The Black Legend tells of how agents of . . . Spain . . . came into the New World and found a people living in paradisical innocence. The land that these people inhabited was a place of wonders. . . . The people apportioned the materials of this world with . . . order and harmony . . . , governing themselves with simple justice. Though the Spaniards justified their dealings with the people of the New World as expanding the dominion of the Book and the Cross, their
actions proved that their true god was gold and their task the enslavement of the native population to serve in the mines. The lives of the Indians were sacrificed to serve the Spaniards' depraved appetite. In sum, the Black Legend tells of the conquest of innocence and simplicity by evil and hypocrisy. The potency of the Black Legend may lie in its representation of the blatancy of the conquistadors' evil. Few crimes known to ancient history are excluded from Spain's conquest. Genocide, infanticide, rape, idolatry, the murder of people for sport, and incest all figure in the tale (177).

In many vivid depictions in his letters, Bossu shows the Spanish committing most of the crimes mentioned by Shields, above all the horri­fying enslavement of reds and blacks to mines so as to satisfy the un­quenchable gold lust of some Spaniards.

5As late as the Sixth Letter of his second book, Bossu is still blaming Etcheparre for the Natchez Massacre. (See page 99.)

6Despite his relatively "enlightened" disposition, Bossu still displays the racist and sexist notions of his day. The conventional racism and sexism are expressed in both positive and negative state­ments directed at various races and nationalities as well as at the two sexes. For example, Bossu notes of the white inhabitants of New Orleans, "Those born of French fathers and French, or European, mothers are called Creoles. They are generally very brave, tall, and well built and have a natural inclination towards the arts and sciences" (24). Bossu obviously believes that an "inclination towards the arts and sciences" is inherited in the same fashion that height and build are -- that is, genetically. Hence, by the mere factor of their parentage (and maybe their place of birth), Louisiana Creoles are des­tined for the arts and sciences. Bossu continues, "As for the fair sex, whose only duty is to please, they are already born with that advantage here and do not have to go to Europe to acquire it artificial­ly" (24). Not only does Bossu believe that Louisiana women are born with an ability to please, he considers such a trait to correspond to the "only duty" of women. While the "rich and well-intentioned" Creole fathers rightly send their naturally gifted sons to "France, the best school for all things" (24), they should spare themselves the expense and trouble of doing the same thing for their daughters, who fare just as well staying at home, Bossu believes.

Even European groups come under Bossu's prejudicial generaliza­tions. Venturing downriver from Illinois to New Orleans in 1757, Bossu notes that one member of his party was "a Gascon soldier, who was as facetious as are all the people of his nation" (117).

As might be expected, Bossu's racist beliefs concern blacks to a great extent. One of the more benign examples of such views occurs in the Third Letter of the second book. There, Bossu states, "It has been observed that [alligators] attack Negroes especially, because of a certain exhalation discharged from their skin when they perspire" (33).
This derogatory statement does not deserve too much attention since it is a rather conventional remark and hardly reflective of Bossu’s true feelings for Native Americans. After all, in the next letter, the author notes of red reaction to the mutinous murders of La Salle’s men and what the response suggests about aboriginal character: “The scandalized Indians did not know what to make of these murders. They are more justified in thinking of us as savages than we are in referring to them by the same term” (57). In Letter VII, Bossu even offers an anecdote to show that “these people are savages in name only” (85). Curiously, Bossu uses the conventional appellation throughout his two narratives, whereas Le Page refuses to do so, replacing sauvages with Naturesls. To his credit, Bossu does refer to Indians with other, less pejorative names, such as Americans.

Although Bossu joins Dumont and Le Page in consistently blaming Etcheparre for the bloody Natchez uprising, Bossu spares the negligent and abusive commandant the horrible death that Dumont depicts with relish.

As late as the second book’s Sixth Letter, Bossu uses the De Soto story to attack the genocide undertaken by the conquistadores. Bossu relates that De Soto was “famous for having finished annihilating the family of the Incas, sovereigns of Peru, and still puffed up with pride over his glorious exploits, wished to do the same among the people who lived on the banks of the Mississippi River” (100). Other Spaniards share De Soto’s notoriety. As Bossu says in a footnote to the passage quoted above,

Pizarro was no less cruel nor less dishonest with the Kings who reigned in Peru than was Cortez with regard to Monte-

zuma, Emperor of Mexico, since he killed them, although un-
der a promise of life, they gave him possession of their trea-
sures. He fastened to the rack the Princes he had im-
prisoned in order to get all the gold and jewels that his greed demanded, and afterwards he hanged them. Such cruel treatment drew a reproach from one of the unfortunate Prin-
ces. “I am convinced of the insincerity of your promise,” he said. “You owe me death the moment I ask for it. I owed it to myself to abandon life the day of your victory, since you so unjustly murder me. But I hope the Gods will punish you for it” (footnote, 100).

Evident in the passage above is Bossu’s belief in the sovereignty of hierarchical powers already in existence in the New World before con-
quest and the author’s equation of Indian nobility with European roy-
alty. In addition to their cruelty toward the indigenous masses, the conquistadores are condemned by Bossu for their disrespect for and usurpation of Native-American authority, especially as it is manifest-
ed in the more “advanced” civilizations of Central and South America. The Spanish are not the only ones to suffer Bossu’s ire over their treatment of aboriginal Americans of both continents. As has been seen in the Natchez section and as is obvious throughout the two
books, the French have cause for shame over many of their interactions with the Indians.

In the *Historical Journal of the Establishment of the French in Louisiana*, attributed to Jean-Baptiste Bénard de La Harpe, the author relates that Iberville’s exploration party at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries encountered very tangible signs of La Salle’s former presence among Lower Mississippi-River Indians as well as vestiges of other white visits to the region.

In these villages the Frenchmen were shown a few cloaks which had been given to the Indians by the late M. de La Salle. The natives received their visitors very well, and gave them a few chickens from a flock that had come from the nations who live west of the Mississippi, near the sea. According to the Indians’ story, about four years before a ship had wrecked on the coast and only three men survived, but the local Indians killed and ate them. From this shipwreck, therefore, dates the introduction of chickens among these people (11).

Thus, prior to the Le Moynes’ entrance on the scene, acculturation of Lower Louisiana Indians had begun as a result of direct or indirect contact with Europeans and the incorporation of European introductions (chickens, horses, various artifacts) into Native-American life.

The Le Moynes draw encouragement from the European legacies they encounter in Lower Louisiana. The *Historical Journal* author says of Iberville, for example,

> He was greatly relieved . . . when M. de Bienville, on searching for the lost breviary of Father Anastase, found a few pages of it in a basket. On these pages were written the names of several Canadians of M. de La Salle’s party. There was also a letter to M. de La Salle from M. de Tonty (11-12).

Most amazing of all, perhaps, “the Le Moyne brothers also found in this Indian village a coat of mail, with double links, that belonged to Hernando de Soto, a Spaniard” (11-12). If the armor found by the Le Moynes really did date to the De Soto expedition of the 1540s, then Iberville and Bienville’s contacts with Native-American groups preserving Continental artifacts link not two but three centuries of European encounters with the same Louisiana tribes into one consistent continuity.

In addition to the La Salle (and possibly the De Soto) artifacts and the incipient acculturation of Native Americans resulting from initial contacts with Continental persons, animals, and inventions, the Le Moynes come across less welcome European presences in Lower Louisiana.

The next day M. de Bienville took four Canadians and the Bayagoula chief to the Colapissa village. They found that this nation . . . was armed and prepared to attack. Thus, . . . the Bayagoula chief went to investigate the cause of the warriors’ alarm. The chief learned that a short time before two white men, calling themselves English, had come
with two hundred Chickasaw to attack the Colapissa village. The attackers had surprised the Colapissa and had taken prisoner many of their people. Thus, the Colapissa thought that the white men with the Bayagoula chief were the same as the recent attackers. When the Bayagoula succeeded in making them understand that the men with him were Frenchmen, enemies of the English, they put down their arms and received M. de Bienville and his men in a friendly manner (14).

The author of the *Historical Journal* thus shows that the legacy of white predecessors both helped and hindered the Le Moynes in re-establishing the French in Lower Louisiana.

When the author of the *Historical Journal* mentions in the January 26, 1720, entry Bénard de La Harpe's venture to the Louisiana-Texas frontier near the Red River to form alliances with the Indians there, he brings up yet another La Salle legacy. The old chief of the "Cado-daquious," addressing a gathering of red and white men, "referred to M. de La Salle, who had come several years previously from the southern side." The reference to La Salle is offered by the old red man as part of his assurance that he is familiar enough with whites to know that the French will prove to be beneficial allies.

While Bossu attacks French superficiality by means of these Indian impressions of Paris, he also exposes Native-American vanity in the narrative. For example, in Letter VIII, he relates the near-tragic story of an Indian who tattoos himself so as to claim credit for feats he has not accomplished. Bossu frees the red man from the wrath of indignant fellow tribesmen by removing the fraudulent tattoo, which was acquired in hopes of impressing a woman. The author then offers as a complement to this story that of a Frenchman who is less fortunate in escaping his country's punishment for wrongly claiming decorations that he hoped would win the hand of his lady love.

As the writers previously examined do, Bossu often offers Native-American outlooks on persons and events in the rapidly changing New World. For example, in Letter V he relates an Indian impression of Europeans that is based on a comparison of red and white appearances and appetites.

Usually both male and female Indians have no hair on their bodies, except on their heads. In that respect, they say we resemble animals. They think this, too, when they see us eat herbs and salads (footnote, 65).

Not only are such passages valuable for their shifting the interpretation of racial and cultural differences from a white to a red aesthetic, they are also important for showing the delight that a French author derives in learning how another culture scrutinizes a group of people unlike its own.

Witnessing the clash of Old and New-World cultures must have also led Bossu to feel creative, for he states in his second book's Sixth Letter that he composed a comedy comparing and contrasting strange and not-so-strange occurrences in the two hemispheres (102-103).
The relating of this tale, which ends with the procession of Missouri Indians bedecked in Spanish vestments and altar items and which is dated "Illinois territory, May 15, 1753" (but which may have been completed much later), is one of many passages that indicate that Bossu used Le Page as a major source of information for events that he did not witness firsthand. Other anecdotes that prove Bossu's use of Le Page include the one featuring Du Tisné's doffing of his wig in order to save his life from Indian captors.

Mathé Allain, in her study of Le Blanc de Villeneufve's play, Poucha-Houmma, which, before Viel's Evandre was brought to light, had for a long time been considered Louisiana's oldest extant drama, says that Bossu's and Le Blanc's accounts of an Indian father who gives up his life for his son are two versions of the same story (ii-iii).

By present-day standards, the Native-American males of Bossu's time would appear to be as sexist as their French counterparts. For example, Bossu states that in addition to other male-ordered inequalities, Alabama women were barred from important assemblies, "where cassina is drunk and . . . the Indians announce the latest news and discuss matters of war and peace" (142). Le Page notes that even the female Natchez Suns, who determined nobility in their nation, were also barred from such sessions. And, of course, the terms woman and like a woman were universal expressions of disparagement.

Bossu does note at least one prominent exception to the common disregard and/or disdain for women:

The Chevalier d'Erneville . . . reports that the wife of a great chief used to attend these assemblies [among the Alabamas] as a warrior because of her quick and penetrating mind. Sometimes it was her opinion which prevailed in treaty making (142).

Evidently, female individuals in Native America, as elsewhere across the globe, could sometimes rise above the restrictions that society placed on their sex.

Bossu's observations of Choctaw women who sometimes enter the battle zones with their husbands also offer a glimpse into what may or may not have been a major exception to the typical Native-American roles for women.

Some of the women love their husbands so much that they follow them into battle. They remain at their sides, carry quivers full of arrows, and encourage their husbands by crying to them not to fear the enemy and to die like real men (164).

As always, the rarities that Bossu offers force a reconsideration of many generalities.

The Alabamas and Chief Tamathlemingo also figure in Bossu's second book's Fourth Letter. There, Bossu encounters them when he returns to the Arkansas Indians, among whom some of the Alabamas have
settled following the transfer of western Louisiana to Spain and eastern Louisiana to England.

Bossu notes of his meeting these Indians again, I was not more conscious of the joy that they showed me on my arrival than of the intense regret they expressed at no longer being under French rule. They are sincerely attached to us, and they have declared to me that they gladly would sacrifice themselves in order to have an opportunity to joke with us again. They constantly spoke to me about our august Monarch whom they still call father (53).

In highlighting the Alabamas’ fidelity to the French as the year 1770 fades into 1771 and as the formerly vast French Louisiana fragments into different and opposing political divisions, Bossu further indicates the paternalistic or hegemonic relationship that the French attempted to establish with their Indian allies. Although the French tried to instill in the Indians the notion of king as “father” of both French and Indian, a notion which in theory would have made reds and whites “brothers” and thereby equals, in practice many white “siblings” mirrored the fatherly role which was presumably the privilege of the king. As representatives of the king, these “big brothers” — commandants, officers, etc. — were to be obeyed like the king himself. Many Indians of the weaker tribes may have gladly venerated the Frenchmen in such fashion so as to insure their members white protection (and provisions) against red aggression. Bossu himself is often addressed as “father,” but he explains that the appellation derived from Indian practice and not from his insistence upon the title.

It must not be overlooked that paternalistic and hegemonic interactions ran the other way as well. For example, in eulogizing Chief Tamathlemingo, whom the author extols as much as he does any white sovereign hero, Bossu notes: “He had fatherly feelings for all the French; he called them his children, because he said, ‘I have seen them spring up on my lands’” (53).

In the paragraphs immediately following this very critical one, Bossu praises the “brutal and coarse” Choctaw at length for good sportsmanship in athletic competitions, he reports favorably that Choctaw children “are reasoned with and are not beaten,” and he observes that “the Choctaw lose all confidence in anyone who does not keep his word” (170).

Earlier in the same Choctaw chapter, Bossu seems to extend an observation concerning Choctaw character to all of Native America. It is to the Americans’ credit that the love they show their relatives, so rare among Europeans, is worthy of imitation. The examples of this feeling which I have mentioned surpass those of antiquity. This love which the Indians have for each other makes them humane enough to help the sick and the ailing. This sincere love can be seen in the care they give their dying relatives and friends and in the tears that are shed when their dear ones have departed (167).

So much for fleeting comments about the “brutal” and “coarse” nature of the Choctaw!
Bossu brings up the Attakapas again in the second book’s Sixth Letter when, anxious to visit the tribe, he makes a trip to their country. He continues to speak favorably of these former anthropophagites while presenting aspects of their life in detail. The author presents Attakapas practices concerning sex, courtship, and marriage and offers differing Indian attitudes regarding adultery.

Comparing Attakapas religion to Christianity, Bossu notes that Europeans are no better at defining mysteries than are Indians. A case in point concerns the soul. As elsewhere, Bossu here looks for anything in Native-American religion that approximates Christianity. He seems to believe that since Native Americans believe in a Supreme Spirit and in individual souls, they are in essence worshipping the Judeo-Christian God.

In the Sixth Letter, the Attakapas also ask Bossu about De Bellisle, and the author fills them in on the white man who spent time among them.

Hall comments further on the Native-American contribution to Louisiana’s birth:

The Indians of Louisiana taught the white colonists a great deal about the fauna and flora, the topography of the land, the building of boats, the navigation of the rich network of treacherous waterways that allowed communications among French settlements, hunting, fishing, warfare, agriculture, techniques of building houses, clothing and dress, preparation and preservation of food, and herbal medicine (14-15).

Moreover, “the economy of the swamp and of the tidal wetlands in and around New Orleans was built up from Chitimacha beginnings. Techniques of cultivating ... indigenous crops were surely learned from the Indians” (15).

Furthermore,

Many of the early French settlements of lower Louisiana began in Indian villages. During the frequent famines that gripped the colony, French soldiers were sent to live with Indian tribes so they would not starve to death. French and Canadian settlers were acculturated by the Indians. Soldiers and sailors were sent to live in Indian villages to learn their languages and act as interpreters. Soldiers serving at frontier posts became well acquainted with Indian nations and often sought, and received, their protection.

The early settlers consolidated their relationships with Indian nations by marrying Indian women (15).

No better examples than the above can be given to back the claim that the foundation upon which the Louisiana colony began to take shape was a Franco-Indian one.

Speaking of Franco-Indian (and, later, Franco-African) hybridization in colonial Louisiana, Patricia Galloway notes in La Salle and His Legacy,

Environmental and social conditions were very different in the Southeast from those in France or Canada, and their subtle influence pervaded the new Louisiana culture as the
colony took hold and colonists began to commit themselves to the lands they held. They learned many of the adaptations they had to make from the country's natives, who had long since mastered all the factors in their environment, and additional adaptations in the background of their lives were made by their African slaves (xii).

After acknowledging such multiracial borrowing in Louisiana's early years, Galloway alludes to the fact that colonial hybridization has not been adequately studied.

All of these changes in French lifeways that made the colonists distinctly Louisianais have been noticed by scholars in passing; however, except for Samuel Wilson's series of studies of architecture and building, none have been studied systematically (xiii).

Since Galloway's comments, made in 1982, Gwendolyn Midlo Hall has thoroughly examined the African contribution to colonial Louisiana society. A similar study devoted to the Native-American role in colonization is still needed.

If further proof of Louisiana society's roots in a Euro-Indian mixing are necessary, perhaps three significant realities should be noted. First of all, because of the small number of Frenchmen sent to occupy the vast territory that was Louisiana in the late 1600s and early 1700s, friendship with reds was necessary merely to gain a foothold in the region. Subsequently, military alliance with various tribes was crucial to maintaining the weak French presence against not only the harassment of hostile Indian nations but also the aggression of British and Spanish forces. Secondly, early French settlers in Louisiana depended upon Indian foodstuffs and other provisions to ward off starvation and a host of other miseries when irregular shipments from France failed to meet the colonists' basic needs. Thirdly, the lack of white women for soldiers, traders, and settlers forced the first white men in the colony into unions with Native-American women. Thus, by fighting together, eating together, and learning about and from each other while building the colony together, French and Indian forged a new society, an American society, Europe transplanted in Native America, the two nourishing and growing into something that neither Old nor New World had known before. Furthermore, by creating children together, the French men and Indian women produced Louisiana's first Créoles -- that is, the first offspring to be born of Frenchmen in the the colony. (Without a doubt, Spaniards such as De Soto and his men had given the region its first Criollos, children born of Spaniards in the New World, in the 1500s.) Virtually all of the Louisiana travel/history writers comment extensively upon Euro-Indian cooperation in the establishment of the Louisiana colony, a cooperation necessitated by the situations of dependence noted above.

As early as the Talon Interrogations, Louisianians familiar with Native Americans have deemed it important to discuss Indian health and medicine. A passage from the Interrogations serves as an example. The savages generally live to be very old and nearly always possess perfect health. They also have a marvelous
knowledge of the different properties of the medicinal herbs that abound in the whole country and can easily heal themselves of illnesses and wounds that befall them, since there was no professional physician among them. It is usually the old people who apply their remedies and cure their ailments; and the Talons assure us that, during all the time they stayed among them, they saw no one die of illness (228-229).

The Talons, like a host of Louisianians after them, are so impressed by red medicinal practices and health care that they can see the inferiority of European counterparts on many levels.

21 Bossu’s awareness of how Native-American health sometimes surpasses its European counterpart continues into his second book. For example, in the Sixth Letter, Bossu notes that blacks and reds have whiter and healthier teeth than whites do, and he gives the reasons why. In the Fifth Letter, Bossu comments upon both the comeliness and fine physiques of certain Indians as well as upon the absence of deformities common in Europe. Some Indians, such as the Illinois, are so impressed by their own physical superiority to Europeans that an ugly or short Frenchman has trouble winning their respect, regardless of his credentials or social status among whites. Bossu offers an interesting anecdote that features the Indians’ pride over their handsomeness and their eventual realization, thanks to an encounter with an ugly yet important Frenchman, that such pride is superficial and as damaging to reds as to others.

I shall end this letter with an anecdote known to old French inhabitants who settled the Illinois country. It concerns M. de Boisbriand, King’s lieutenant and commander of this district. I got this true story from the same M. de Santilly, . . . former captain in the forces that the King used to maintain in Louisiana.

M. de Boisbriand, an officer of distinguished attainments, lacked the advantages of nature which predispose people to favor them. He was born with one shoulder higher than the other, which made him slightly stooped. All these imperfections, however, did not keep M. de Bienville, then governor of Louisiana, from recommending him to the King for the command of Fort de Chartres, built by the French in the Illinois country.

As soon as M. de Boisbriand arrived there he received deputies of each dependent tribe of the Illinois nation. All these delegates were handsome men and well chosen to represent their nation in comparison to the new French commander. His short stature displeased these North Americans at first, but later they were impressed by his eloquent speech to them, which was in keeping with the character of these savage people (84-85).

As seen in the case of De Boisbriant, the Frenchman’s relating to Native Americans on their level is what gains confidence and overcomes initial skepticism. Still, after his long speech (also quoted by Bossu but not reproduced here), which is complimentary of the Indian
and assuring of French support, De Boisbriant feels it necessary to point out to the Illinois,

You . . . shall know that the Great Chief of all the French does not lack captains who are better looking and taller than I am. But this august sovereign correctly feared that if he had sent another captain to interpret his royal speech that other Frenchman would not have been able to express it to his children, the red men, with equal proficiency or equal understanding, because he had been informed that I speak the Illinois language like you do. That is precisely why this good French Monarch preferred me to the tallest captains of his vast Empire to come into your country (86).

Bossu then notes of the Illinois reaction to De Boisbriant's address,

This disclosure was heard with the most profound silence, followed by applause of the whole assembly.

In reply, the oldest Orator of the nation delivered an harangue. These discourses often give cause for moral and lofty reflections. You will see, Sir, by the following translation:

"Your speech has pierced our hearts as swiftly as an arrow from a bow. Our warriors and our young men who often judge only by appearances, like ignorant people, mistrusted you at first. But presently they correctly recognized that you are taller in wisdom and valor than the stars above our heads, and that you are deeper in shrewdness and understanding than whirlpools of the Mechassepi. . . . They think as I do that it is the power of your mind that has kept your body from growing. Also the Master of Life or the Creator of Nature has abundantly compensated you for your short stature by granting you grandeur of soul, with really heroic feelings, to defend and protect from their enemies, the red men of Illinois and their allies who will strive to win your friendship and at the same time cherish the French Emperor's adoption of our nation.

"Consequently, we earnestly pray you to inform by means of the speaking bark our father, the great Chief of the white men, that we do not find in our language terms sufficiently expressive to thank him for the fatherly attention he has shown our nation by sending a courageous captain, such as you are, to dwell in our land for the purpose of keeping it always white [that is, in peace]. Also, filled with love for this worthy Chief, and to show him our sincere and ardent gratitude, we shall delegate some notables to go to the other side of the great lake of salty water to assure our father in his big cabin in the great French village that we, the red men of Illinois, want to live and die as his most loyal allies and children."

This compliment included the most flattering praise of M. de Boisbriand, whose memory still is dear to the Indians in this part of the world (86-87).
In addition to showing the Indian esteem won by De Boisbriant, Bossu's recording of the Illinois harangue also preserves an example of Native-American oratory for future generations.

22 For an overview of Houma culture and attempts at Federal recognition, see Barbara Sillery's article "Hidden Nation."

Le Page, Bossu, and Blacks

Speaking of red-black relations in colonial Louisiana, Giraud asserts that very few of the tribes had any liking for the blacks. From the outset, a strong aversion had separated the two races, and the colony's authorities had made it their business to maintain this feeling. In particular, they offered rewards to Indians who caught fugitives and brought them in, which happened quite often (V, 328).

Giraud maintains further that "entering the territory of a native tribe rarely helped" the runaway (V, 328).

Hall offers a different view of the relationship between Africans and Native Americans in French Louisiana. She contends that a special bonding developed between reds and blacks, particularly between reds who had been enslaved and disenfranchised blacks. Hall notes that matings between Africans and Indians took place both on and off the estates throughout the eighteenth century. Africans and Indians continued to run away together. Documents surviving from the 1730s and 1740s record the departure of Indian and African slaves, who often left together to seek refuge among Indian tribes (115).

Hall admits, along with Giraud, the attempts on the part of French officials to create rifts between reds and blacks, but she affirms that the Natchez uprising of 1729 and its aftermath offered special opportunities for Africans and Native Americans to conspire against their white overlords (105-106).

Concluding her remarks on black-red relations, Hall maintains that formal alliances between African and Indian leaders ended by the early 1730s after attempts to destroy French rule failed. Indian leaders became increasingly dependent upon the colonial state for protection from British and then American encroachments as the eighteenth century advanced. Nevertheless, ties between blacks and Indians remained strong. Family ties among Africans and Indians radiated from the capital, the plantations, the woodlands, and the swamps into Indian villages. . . . Black-Indian mixtures, designated grif in Louisiana, emerged as a distinctive, self-conscious group among slaves (118).

While Giraud's and Hall's opinions contrast concerning the relationship between red and blacks in colonial Louisiana, contemporary examples of African-American fascination with Native-American culture (such as that manifested by the New Orleans Mardi Gras Indians) and continued denial of Federal recognition for the United Houma Nation.

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(done in part because of the group's African-American legacy) indicate an important Afro-aboriginal melding that followed upon and even coincided with the Franco-Indian mixing that began Louisiana's multicultural evolution.

While earlier Le Page advises separation of white children from slaves so that the former will not start to speak like the latter, here in the quotation of the slave's words to the white man and elsewhere the author obviously delights in recording Africanized French. In fact, Hall says that Le Page's quotations of Afro-Louisiana French "are some of the earliest documented examples of any creole language" (192).

Hall notes further that Louisiana Creole, the language of the blacks, and the folklore in this language were widely known and cherished by creoles of all colors and classes. Louisiana Creole became the preferred means of communication among Louisiana's elite white creoles. It came to be looked upon by many of them as their true native language (194).

Despite Le Page's warnings during the first decades of slavery in Louisiana, white children would start to speak in an Africanized fashion thanks to their intimate contacts with slaves and free blacks throughout Louisiana's later history.

In relating the Africanization of Louisiana speech after Le Page's time, Hall notes that it was customary for elite whites to speak Louisiana Creole even in the drawing rooms at times. . . . Until the late nineteenth century, upper-class white creoles spoke it exclusively until they were ten or twelve years old (195). One need only look at the novels of Alfred Mercier and the writings of other late nineteenth-century Louisiana writers to see the importance that Afro-Louisiana French continued to play in the lives of whites and blacks of all classes even into this century. Hall states that "it is presently spoken by about sixty thousand to eighty thousand persons: by fifty thousand to sixty thousand blacks and by ten thousand to twenty thousand whites" (195). The present white author's paternal grandfather and grandmother, born in rural Saint Martin Parish in 1888 and 1893 respectively, both spoke Afro-Louisiana French as their first language and continued to speak it along with standard French and English until their deaths in 1964 and 1980. Black French is still occasionally spoken in the author's family, mainly for purposes of entertainment, emphasis, and reminiscence.

While Afro-Louisiana French would figure in the writings of émigré, Creole, and Anglo-Louisiana authors from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, another important contribution of Black Louisiana French and its African-based lore to United States literature is noted by Hall: "The Brer Rabbit tales collected by Joel Chandler Harris were Anglicized versions of [the] Louisiana Creole folktales of Senegambian origin" (194).
Halls says that Le Page's account of the slave conspiracy is a bit flattering to him and his role in uncovering it. None of the existing documents mentions him at all. His report appears to be a composite version of several events and places him in the center of developments. But it is more concrete and graphic than some of the drier, documentary accounts and perhaps not too much less authentic (107).

Monarchy and the Masses, Rulers and the Ruled in Colonial Louisiana Literature

It has been pointed out before now that many of the personages who are praised by Louisiana writers for showing an interest in the welfare of all people were nonetheless proponents of black and red slavery and, like some of the authors, possessed slaves themselves. Even though these historical figures advocated slavery, the concern of some of them for universal well-being extended to the disenfranchised as well as to the free.

Giraud notes that Martin Dartaguiette Diron, one of Pénicaout's idols, showed great concern for his Indian slaves. Dartaguiette appears to have treated his servants with great solicitude. At the beginning of the winter of 1711, when an epidemic of dysentery decimated the Indians at Mobile, killing ten of his slaves, he tried in vain to save them. "It breaks the heart," he said, "to see them dying thus because there are no remedies." There definitely was no legislation designed to protect the Indian slave, but from the beginning of the colony Pontchartrain had notified d'Iberville that he would not authorize the use of Indians in mines without paying them. In agreement with Dartaguiette, he strongly recommended teaching them manual trades and involving them in the exploitation of the country (I, 179).

Thus, it seems that many early Louisiana leaders shared the belief of most Louisiana writers in a humane form of enslavement that, according to the growing myth of slave-dependent colonies, would benefit both the bound and free members of society.

The plague at the Repentance Fountain in downtown Baton Rouge publicly attests to the role that the Dartaguiette brothers played in Louisiana history.

De Villiers notes in his "Remarques sur le Premier Chant," "Bref, 'le héros Perrier', s'il se montra d'abord bon administrateur, provoqua la révolte des Natchez par sa coupable complaisance envers d'Etcheparre et ses amis, se montra ensuite très piètre général et diplomate on ne peut moins perspicace" (332). In his article on Dumont, Delanglez also views Périer as less the hero that Dumont would have the reader believe (44). Giraud depicts Périer as well intentioned, but his efficacy was hindered by the Bienvillist and anti-Bienvillist factions that divided Louisiana and by his failure at
times to take the advice and heed the warnings of others with much more colonial experience and dealings with Indians to their credit. Of the authors examined in this study, Diron Dartagniette and De Beau­champ clearly bore grievances against Périer, especially as relating to Indian policies and the Natchez Massacre, while Hachard and Dumont were in awe of the leader.

While most historians and critics concede that Bienville did amass power and material possessions for himself and did ultimately fail in his campaigns against the Chickasaw in the 1730s, most also discredit Dumont for the unbelievability of his depictions of Bien­ville as a power and wealth monger and a completely inept military leader/Indian diplomatist. Tregle goes so far as to dismiss Dumont as "a roistering scapegrace constantly in trouble with his superiors, who had whiled away his sober moments in the colony by composing a bloated epic poem" (xxvi). On the other end of the spectrum, Hall may be the historian most critical of Bienville. She asserts that "Bienville and his friends were interested in seizing and displaying wealth, not in creating it" and thereby "operated in the tradition of the Caribbean" (67).

Dumont also deplores the fact that the rich and powerful receive preferential slave allotments, a situation that he views as hindering the development of fertile stretches of the colony that belong to poorer, slaveless, and hence disadvantaged farmers.

While Dumont's intent to villainize Bienville leads the author to fabricate a plan on Le Moyne’s part to kill Saint Denis, it must be noted that André Pénicaout alludes to a strained relationship between Saint Denis and Bienville.

Toward the end of [1718], M. de St. Denis, with his valet Jalot, arrived at Isle Dauphine. He embraced M. de Bienville, but did not give him much of an account of his voyage because at that time he was quite reserved with M. de Bien­ville, following a pique that they had had with each other (220).

Without going into any particulars, Pénicaout makes it clear that Saint Denis bears grievances against Bienville, possibly stemming from the latter's treatment of him.
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