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Brian Brazeau, *Writing a New France, 1604-1632: Empire and Early Modern French Identity*, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009. 172 pp. \$89.95 U.S. (cl). ISBN-10: 0754661121.

Review by Ann T. Delehanty, Reed College.

Brian Brazeau's *Writing a New France: 1604-1632* charts out the varying approaches that French colonialists took to transplant French culture onto a new land, specifically New France (now Canada). Rather than treating New France as just an extension of France or looking at an extended history of New France, as earlier studies that he cites have done, Brazeau carves out a fairly short period of time so as to examine the writings of several colonialists, namely the travel writers, Marc Lescarbot and Samuel de Champlain as well as the missionaries, Gabriel Sagard, Jean de Brébeuf, and Paul le Jeune, in order to trace their early attempts at imposition of French culture onto this different land. At the heart of Brazeau's work is the assertion that the metaphors that these writers employed to translate between French culture and the culture of so-called New France reveal a great deal about how the French conceived of their own culture as well as their aspirations for the colonial endeavor. By way of the uneasy employment and translation of these metaphors that make up much of what we call culture, the writers reveal the difficulty of the colonial overlay of culture.

Fundamental to Brazeau's method is the presumption that the definition of a culture depends upon the "specular omnipresence of an Other" (p. 8). As such, France's colonialist encounters in the seventeenth century did as much to define France itself as they redefined the indigenous cultures of the French colonies. In this way, *Writing a New France* has a great deal to tell us about seventeenth-century France since "Frenchness" depended, in part, upon these colonial encounters for its crystallization. By grounding his work in the cultural theories of Zemon Davis, Todorov, Pratt and Ricoeur, Brazeau's book depicts what he calls, following Richard White, "the middle ground" where the clashes between indigenous and colonizing culture produce something altogether new and unexpected, rather than replicating the colonizing culture, as the colonizers might have hoped. Each chapter in this compact book follows the same structure to arrive at that "middle ground": first, it details what the colonizers expected to encounter, then, the realities of what was found, and finally, "the processes by which they attempted to integrate expectations with experience" (p. 4). This approach makes for a thought-provoking analysis since it portrays quite actively the shifting expectations of the colonizers, moving from an attitude which sought a totalizing imposition of French culture onto New France towards an attitude of translation and negotiation.

The book is divided into two sections: the first section depicts concrete realities of colonialism, the first chapter discussing the encounter with the Canadian land (and its harsh weather) and the second chapter treating the question of language; the second section looks at more abstract questions of the self in relation to the Other, including the third chapter which examines a new model of historiography that sought to merge the prehistory of the New French with that of the French and the final chapter which traces the tension between mercantile and missionary models of colonialism.

In the first chapter, Brazeau asserts that it is the land that colonialists must understand, cultivate and conquer before colonizing its people. Prior to their voyages, the French explorers presumed that the

Canadian climate would be similar to the French climate given their equal latitudes. In terms of the project of creating a new France that paralleled the old, this geographic parity was seen as crucial to the transplantation of French culture. The first part of the chapter details Champlain and Lescarbot's marked astonishment at the harshness of the Canadian winter. Moreover, given the seventeenth-century theories of the relationship between climate and temperament, these initial disappointments about the climate led to similar disappointments about the temperament of the indigenous peoples. In the second half of the chapter, which examines the metaphor of the cultivation of grapes and production of wine, Brazeau argues that Champlain and Lescarbot use the metaphor of wine to decidedly different ends. Whereas Champlain saw the failure of Canadian viticulture as analogous to the failure to tame (and thus make French) New France, Lescarbot promotes wine as a source of great health, a means to restore oneself in the harshness of the Canadian climate, and most importantly, a potential source of unity. In both cases, despite their differing levels of optimism about the transplantation of viticulture and wine's unifying effects, wine becomes solidly emblematic of Frenchness through its absence in the Canadian wild.

The second chapter looks at another concrete fundamental to cultural exchange, language, particularly from the vantage point of Recollect and Jesuit missionaries. Brazeau argues that "translation" for these missionaries becomes a metaphor for "conversion": the conversion of the indigenous people was deemed impossible unless satisfactory translations could be found and, moreover, the native tongues were seen as impoverished due to their lack of the terms to express religious experience (e.g., glory, reason, angels, etc.). He begins by describing the Recollect Sagard's *Dictionnaire de la langue huronne* which offered salvation to the Huron people by way of its introduction of the French language into the culture. Notably, Sagard does not try to offer translations of the religiously important words that Huron does not have. Rather, Brazeau argues that the dictionary is meant to begin the process of erasing the need for the Huron language, eventually allowing the Huron not only to speak but also to think as a Frenchman would (p. 56).

By contrast, the Jesuit model focused more on categories of Latin grammar than translation itself. In this way, the Jesuits sought to help the Huron people conform, through language, to the order of the Roman universal church. In either case, the translations must be controlled and ordered according to the colonizing model (either the French or Latin language). The integrity of that translation was always under threat, however. Brazeau discusses the problem of the unreliable translator (or *truchement*) as well as the Frenchman who has "gone to the other side" (the *coureur de bois*). In these cases, translation risks turning one into the Other if it's taken too far: "The fundamental suspicion is, as with the *truchement*, that living too closely with the *sauvages*, without religious or royal approbation, leads to the breakdown of Frenchness" (60). Both the lack of equivalent concepts and the risk of taking translation too far made language, according to Brazeau, one of the greatest impediments to totalizing colonization.

The third chapter, "Nos Ancêtres Les Américains," articulates how colonialism took place also through the originary metaphors of historiography, particularly in the work of Lescarbot who makes an explicit link between the French and the Amerindians via a common progenitor. Brazeau discusses various historiographical arguments about French origins during the sixteenth century, including those who celebrate the Gaulois (and thus assert a kind of autochthony for the French) as well as those who find France's origins in Troy. Lescarbot achieves a kind of compromise between these positions by arguing that Noah is the father of all, including the Amerindian: "Presenting origins in this way is tantamount to stating that New France will be the site of a family reunion" (p. 89). Moreover, this chapter argues that this kind of historiographical compromise went a long way to look beyond the Wars of Religion by looking to an original state of history, prior to religious dissent and closer to the state of nature of the people of New France. Lescarbot's theory effectively granted legitimacy to the Amerindian by placing him on the French family tree at the same time as it reminded the religiously divided French people of a common ancestry which unites them.

In the final chapter, Brazeau discusses the precarious state of France's status as "la nation la plus chrétienne" after the wars of religion. The New World was seen as a site where France's religious status could be restored. In practice, however, fighting between different Catholic sects, in particular the Recollects and Jesuits, resulted in further fracture and discord. Moreover, the aims of the religious sects were in stark contrast with those of the merchants who were also vying for colonial control. This chapter argues that, in contrast with the British colonial project which had a unified vision for the relationship between religion and commerce in the colonies, the divergent goals of French missionaries and merchants led not only to the upending of the image of France as "la nation la plus chrétienne" but also to some dissipating of its colonial efforts.

Readers will find this to be a theoretically well grounded work that raises numerous ideas about the relationship among writing, metaphors, and colonialism. Because the work covers such a wide swath of topics in a very short number of pages (132 in total), some will find the treatment of each question to be too hasty. We do not stay long enough with any text to get a full sense of what the text was seeking to do. As such, the book may prove to be somewhat opaque to those who are not already familiar with the primary texts that Brazeau analyzes, although the ideas he presents are so intriguing that they may indeed motivate such readers to explore those primary texts further. Moreover, the text's brevity does not allow it to consider at length the historical circumstances of any of the writers it analyzes or the French colonial agenda in general. The footnotes certainly lead the reader to a wealth of works to add to that depth but some basic historicizing would have been welcome. Finally, despite the method being explicitly grounded in Natalie Zemon Davis' strategies for decentering the Renaissance, the work is finally centered on the French perspective, without evidence from indigenous sources. While Brazeau's work laudably goes a long way to show that the French perspective was by no means unified, attention to the indigenous response would have been very welcome.

In short, Brazeau's work leaves the reader thoroughly intrigued and wanting more evidence to test out his theories about the role these metaphors play in the colonialist and nation-building enterprise. His book admirably distills numerous developments in colonial and post-colonial theory to help the reader begin to see how the articulation of Frenchness depended heavily upon the colonial encounter. It is a welcome addition to the body of works seeking to describe how the colonial enterprise was shaped and altered by the land, the culture, and the individual people that it found.

Ann T. Delehanty
Reed College
delehana@reed.edu

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