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Frank Lestringant, *Jean de Léry ou l'invention du sauvage. Essai sur l'Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre du Bresil*, 3rd ed. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2016. 333 pp. Figures, notes, bibliography, and index. 78 € (hb). ISBN 978-2-8124-5429-5; 39 € (pb). ISBN 978-2-406-05723-9.

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Given the broader shifts in cultural and scholarly preoccupations over the last two decades, it was perhaps inevitable that Jean de Léry (1534-1613), the Huguenot shoemaker-turned-colonist who chronicled the troubled history of the short-lived French settlement on Guanabara Bay (1555-60) in his *Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre du Brésil*, would come to enjoy critical prominence.^[1]

To be sure, institutional fiat played an oversized, albeit contingent, role, when the French *Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale* put Léry's text on the program of required readings for the 1999-2000 *agrégation* in *lettres modernes* civil service examination for secondary school teachers. The ritual publication of the *agrégé's* reading lists each year sets a peculiarly French machinery of accelerated scholarly publication into motion, as specialists of the assigned texts scramble to put out up-to-date syntheses in time for students preparing the exams (a rare opportunity, too, for academics to cash in on a sizable, even captive, market).^[2] Léry's appearance on the 2012 *baccalauréat* exam sat by all French *lycée* students in the *série littéraire* stream confirmed his newfound place in the institutionalized canon.

Agrég or no *agrég*, it was Léry's intense interest in the indigenous peoples with whom the French colony was in contact, and his sustained attempts to learn from and about the Tupinambá (always via interpreters), that ensured his twenty-first century critical and editorial fortunes. His insatiable curiosity in the face of cultural difference, his sympathy—admiration even—for the Tupi in tension always with his Calvinist conviction that they were doomed for damnation, make this remarkable text an incandescent artefact of cultural encounter at the dawn of the first age of globalization. Long relegated to the margins of the sixteenth-century canon, Léry found himself at the turn of the twenty-first century pushed front and center, scrutinized as a turbulent eddy in the broader shock waves of New World discovery, a striking crystallization of new forms of subjectivity in a sixteenth-century world whose old certainties had been cast in doubt, an iconic figure whose experience and writings resonated with a late modernity increasingly preoccupied with intercultural encounter, hybridity, the legacies of empire, and global connections.

Léry's rising scholarly fortunes made him a bellwether of changing research interests, coming as large numbers of historians and literary scholars were beginning to explore the early modern histories of overseas empire, the Atlantic world as an interconnected space, European-indigenous relations as a process of negotiation, cultural exchange, cooperation and conflict, the Christian missionary enterprise as a complex, power-laden cultural dialogue, and travel writing as a site for articulating new modes of understanding.^[3] Against this analytic backdrop, Léry now appeared to be a central historical figure, an architect of modern travel writing, his *Histoire d'un voyage* a genre-making (even discipline-

launching) proto-ethnographic exercise in cultural description (Claude Lévi-Strauss famously called Léry's account "the ethnologist's breviary").[4]

But Léry wasn't just a happy beneficiary of shifting academic fashions. His dialogues with the Tupinambá resonated with the broader *zeitgeist*. Across five centuries, Léry's rings as a lonely voice in a sixteenth-century marked by intolerance, violence, and conquest; he appears to speak to our time on reassuringly familiar terms, offering up a like-minded, even sympathetic, interlocutor who shared our own concerns. In a telling conjuncture, powerhouse publishing house Gallimard published Jean-Christophe Rufin's historical novel *Rouge Brésil*, a retelling of the story of the Brazilian colony largely inspired by Léry's account, in 2001, which won commercial success and was awarded the prestigious Prix Goncourt only a few months after aspiring *lycée* teachers with Léry on their minds sat the *agrégation*. That *France Télévisions* adapted Rufin's novel as a made-for-television film in 2013 confirmed Léry's transformation into a living cultural object in contemporary France.[5]

To be sure, Léry would still have been a familiar figure to scholars of the early modern French world today had the distinguished scholar of sixteenth-century French literature Frank Lestringant never taken an interest in the Calvinist travel writer. And Lestringant was by no means the first scholar to pay serious heed to Léry. Claude Lévi-Strauss and Michel de Certeau both took a critical interest in the *Histoire d'un voyage*. [6] All the same, in a now substantial and still growing body of work, Lestringant has done more than anyone else to make sense of Léry's writings and world and assess their importance.

The publication of a new edition of Lestringant's *Jean de Léry, ou l'invention du sauvage*, first published in 1999 in the race to help studious *agrégatifs* prepare for the 2000 *concours*, represents a welcome occasion to assess his considerable contributions. [7] Though this particular text in fact took shape in response to the *agrégation* imperative, Lestringant had not awaited the *mammoth's* curricular directives to begin reading Léry closely. [8] Readers already familiar with earlier editions should take heed of this new edition. As Lestringant explains in the "Avertissement" that opens this volume, the *agreg*-imposed deadline forced him to send an incomplete manuscript to press in 1999. He has taken advantage of the publication of subsequent editions to expand the text, adding in the 2005 edition a chapter on Amerindian hospitality, as well as an expanded epilogue on Lévi-Strauss and de Certeau. [9] In this latest edition, Lestringant has added two new chapters: the first analyzes chapters 14–16 in Léry's *Histoire*, on war and unbelief among the Tupinambá; the second considers Léry's borrowings from Leo Africanus's own writings on Africa.

What emerges from Lestringant's work is how heavily various traditions—whether the inheritance of cosmographical, geographical, and travel writing bequeathed by Antiquity, medieval pilgrimage accounts of voyages to the Holy Land, literary models borrowed from the Homeric or Virgilian corpus, or the weighty doctrinal questions that set Catholic and Protestant against each other during the Reformation—weighed on early modern writers as they wrestled with the new. [10]

What sets Léry apart is the extent to which he breaks with these traditions, laying out new forms of engagement with the unfamiliar and sketching novel kinds of subjectivities. While Léry's work represents a rupture with a tradition-bound past, as Lestringant shows, he is nonetheless very much rooted in the dense thematic preoccupations and rhetorical conventions of his own tortured present. Crucial moments in the *Histoire d'un voyage* turn on his efforts to interrogate limit-cases of ineffable cultural difference, whether cannibalism, nudity, or shamanistic dances. The text also represents a carefully-aimed confessional polemic, written well after Léry's return to Europe, when he had taken up a vocation as a Calvinist pastor. Léry's objective is to set the record of the France Antarctique's short history straight, to demonstrate the infamy of the colony's leader, Nicolas Durand de Villegagnon, to refute the Catholic prism through which the royal cosmographer and Franciscan André Thevet had viewed the Brazilian colony in his 1557 *Les Singularitez de la France antarctique* (Lestringant has also worked extensively on Thevet, devoting his *thèse* to him before taking up the study of Léry). [11] Léry

also takes pains to rehearse the Calvinist side of the debate over transubstantiation which fueled the conflict with Villegagnon. Finally, Léry's text is deeply engaged with the botanical and animal world its author discovered in Brazil (after all, it was the commercial possibilities of Brazilwood, prized for the dye which could be extracted from it, which motivated the foundation of the colony).

Part of what accounts for Léry's originality is, in Lestringant's view, his Protestant faith. The chronicler's reformed worldview arms him with a deep skepticism towards received wisdom. Calvinist habits of self-scrutiny feed his profound self-reflexivity. His engagement with the notion of "the book of nature" informs his reflections on South America's ecology. The traumatic misfortunes that befell Protestants, whether in Brazil or in a France rent by religious war, encourages a position of critical and pessimistic distance with regards to human nature. And Léry's adherence to Calvin's theology of double predestination underpins his conviction that his Amerindian interlocutors will certainly be damned, closing the door to evangelization and opening another onto the possibility for cultural understanding in Lestringant's fascinating formula: "Le désintéret missionnaire donne alors naissance à la curiosité ethnographique" (p. 190). From this intense matrix, Léry fashioned textual and conceptual tools which, in Lestringant's telling, played an important role in shaping modernity: inventor of the myth of, if not the "noble savage", the "savage" *tout court* (pt. 2), of the "philosophical voyage" (for ex. p. 25), and of the ethnographic gaze. Above all, Léry's striking plaint "je regrette souvent que je ne suis parmi les sauvages," embodies what for Lestringant represents the *Histoire's* polysemic singularity and importance: a relativistic point of view unique to the sixteenth century (with the possible exception of the Montaigne of "Des Cannibales" – who was himself an attentive reader of Léry's text); a polemical move designed to highlight Christian Europe's failures; and a remarkable expression of nostalgia for a paradise lost (p. 99).^[12]

This latest edition of *Jean de Léry ou l'invention du sauvage*, then, helps us take stock of Léry's significance as well as Lestringant's always learned and thoughtful scholarly contributions. Frank Lestringant is without a doubt our surest guide to the *Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre du Brésil* and its author.

NOTES

[1] Léry, *Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre du Brésil, autrement dite Amerique ...* (Antoine Chuppin, 1578); critical edition Léry, *Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre du Brésil*, ed. Jean-Claude Morisot (Geneva: Droz, 1975); critical editions in modernized French, Léry, *Histoire d'un voyage fait en terre du Brésil 1557*, ed. Frank Lestringant (Paris: Max Chaleil, 1992), and Léry, *Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre du Brésil*, ed. Frank Lestringant (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1994); English translation Léry, *History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil*, trans. Janet Whatley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

[2] See for example Frank Lestringant and Marie-Christine Gomez-Géraud, eds., *D'Encre de Brésil, Jean de Léry écrivain* (Orléans: Paradigme, 1999); Gisèle Matthieu-Castellani, ed., *Jean de Léry, Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre du Brésil. Actes de la Journée d'étude sur Jean de Léry*, 6 November 1999, *Cahiers Textuels*, no. 21 (1999); Françoise Argod-Dutard, ed., *Histoire d'un voyage en la terre du Brésil. Journées d'étude*, 10-11 December 1999 (Pessac: Université Michel-de-Montaigne Bordeaux-III, 2000).

[3] On the historiography of the French Atlantic and empire, see Cécile Vidal, "The Reluctance of French Historians to Address Atlantic History," *The Southern Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (2006): 153-89; Gilles Havard and Vidal, "Making New France New Again: French Historians Rediscover their American Past," *Common-Place* 7, no. 4 (2007) <http://www.common-place-archives.org/vol-07/no-04/harvard/> (consulted 8 November 2017); Vidal, "La nouvelle histoire atlantique en France: ignorance, réticence et reconnaissance tardive," *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos* (24 September 2008) <https://nuevomundo.revues.org/42513> (consulted 8 November 2017); Vidal, "Le(s) monde(s) atlantique(s), l'Atlantique français, l'empire atlantique français," *Outre-Mers. Revue d'Histoire* 97, no. 362-63 (2009): 7-37; Christopher Hodson and Brett Rushforth, "Absolutely Atlantic: Colonialism and

the Early Modern French State in Recent Historiography,” *History Compass* 8, no. 1 (January 2010): 101-17. On French-Amerindian relations, see for example Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (1991), 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Jeffers Lennox, *Homelands and Empires: Indigenous Spaces, Imperial Fictions, and Competition for Territory in Northeastern North America, 1690-1763* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017). On the missionary enterprise, Dominique Deslandres, *Croire et faire croire. Les missions françaises au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2003); Paolo Broggio, *Evangelizzare il mondo. Le missioni della Compagnia di Gesù tra Europa e America (secoli XVI-XVII)* (Rome: Carocci, 2004). On travel writing, Marie-Christine Gomez-Géraud, *Écrire le voyage au XVIe siècle en France* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2000); Frédéric Tanguely, *L'écriture du Levant à la Renaissance. Enquête sur les voyageurs français dans l'empire de Soliman le Magnifique* (Geneva: Droz, 2000); Tanguely, *Le voyageur aux mille tours. Les ruses de l'écriture du monde à la Renaissance* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2014); Grégoire Holtz, *L'Ombre de l'auteur. Pierre Bergeron et l'écriture du voyage à la fin de la Renaissance* (Geneva: Droz, 2011); Holtz and Vincent Masse, “Étudier les récits de voyage. Bilan, questionnements, enjeux,” *Arborescences*, no. 2 (2012), <http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1009267ar> (consulted 8 November 2017).

[4] Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques* (Paris: Plon, 1955), p. 89. See also Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie Structurale II* (Paris: Plon, 1973), p. 43; Lévi-Strauss interviewed by Dominique-Antoine Grisoni, “Sur Jean de Léry,” in Léry, *Histoire d'un voyage* (1994), pp. 13-14; and Michel de Certeau, “Ethno-graphie. L'oralité, ou l'espace de l'autre: Léry,” in *L'Écriture de l'histoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), pp. 215-48. See also for example Andrea Frisch, “In a Sacramental Mode: Jean de Léry's Calvinist Ethnography,” *Representations* 77, no. 1 (2002): 82-106.

[5] Ruffin, *Rouge Brésil* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001); Sylvain Archambault, director, *Rouge Brésil*, 2 x 90 min., DVD (France Télévisions, 2013). First broadcast 22-23 January 2013 on France 2.

[6] Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie Structurale II*, p. 43; Lévi-Strauss, “Eine Idylle bei den Indianern: Ueber Jean de Léry,” in Karl-Heinz Kohl, ed., *Mythen der Neuen Welt. Zur Entdeckungsgeschichte Lateinamerikas* (Berlin: Frölich und Kaufmann, 1982), pp. 68-70; de Certeau, “Ethno-graphie.”

[7] Lestringant, *Jean de Léry ou l'invention du sauvage. Essai sur l'Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre du Bresil* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1999).

[8] In addition to Lestringant's critical editions of Léry's *Histoire* and the collected volume of articles edited by Lestringant and Gomez-Géraud, eds., *D'Encre de Brésil*, all cited above, see for example: *Le Huguenot et le sauvage. L'Amérique et la controverse coloniale, en France, aux temps des guerres de religion* (1990), 3rd ed. (Geneva: Droz, 2004); *Le Cannibale. Grandeur et décadence* (1994) (Geneva: Droz, 2016); and *L'Expérience huguenote au Nouveau Monde (XVIe siècle)* (Geneva: Droz, 1996). For examples of Lestringant's work on travel and the perception of the wider world in the Renaissance more broadly, see also: *L'Atelier du cosmographe ou l'image du monde à la Renaissance* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1991), in English translation *Mapping the Renaissance World: The Geographical Imagination in the Age of Discovery* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); *Le Livre des îles. Atlas et récits insulaires de la Genèse à Jules Verne* (Geneva: Droz, 2002); and *Le Théâtre de la Floride. Autour de la Brève narration des événements qui arrivèrent aux Français en Floride, province d'Amérique, de Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues* (Paris: Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2017). See also his critical editions: *Le Brésil de Montaigne. Le Nouveau Monde des « Essais » (1580-1592)* (Paris: Chandeigne, 2005); and *Cosmographie Universelle. Selon les navigateurs tant anciens que modernes par Guillaume Le Testu pillotte en la mer du Ponent, de la ville françoise de Grace* (Paris: Arthaud-Direction de la Mémoire, du Patrimoine et des Archives-Carnets des Tropiques, 2012).

[9] Lestringant, *Jean de Léry ou l'invention du sauvage. Essai sur l'Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre du Bresil*. 2nd ed. (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2005).

[10] For a similar approach, see Anthony Grafton, with April Shelford and Nancy Siraisi, *New Worlds, Ancient Texts: The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discovery* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

[11] See Lestringant, "André Thevet, cosmographe," thèse de doctorat, Université Paris-12 (1988); *André Thevet, cosmographe des derniers Valois* (Geneva: Droz, 1991); and *Sous la leçon des vents. Le monde d'André Thevet, cosmographe de la Renaissance* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2003). See also his critical editions: André Thevet, *Les Singularités de la France antarctique. Le Brésil des cannibales au XVI^e siècle* (Paris: Maspero, 1983); Thevet, *Cosmographie de Levant* (Geneva: Droz, 1985); *Le Brésil d'André Thevet. Les Singularités de la France Antarctique (1557)* (1997) 2nd ed. (Paris: Chandeigne, 2011); Thevet, *Histoire d'André Thevet angoumois, cosmographe du roy, de deux voyages par luy faits aux Indes australes*, eds. Jean-Claude Laborie and Lestringant (Geneva: Droz, 2006).

[12] Léry, *Histoire d'un voyage* (1994), ch. 18, p. 464.

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