

**University of Alberta**

*Vice, Virtue and Profit in the Indian Trade: Trade Narrative and the  
Commercialization of Indians in America, 1700-1840*

by  
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## **Abstract**

This study examines French and English descriptions of the North American Indian trade in order to identify changing ethnological understandings of Indians and their "commercialization" in text beginning in the early Eighteenth Century. Europeans began describing in more detail the exchange of goods between themselves and Indians during a period of changing economic thought at home. The new virtues imagined in the consumption of goods, different understandings of "just" price, and the imagined benefits of such passions as acquisitiveness, all prompted and influenced a new description of Indians in trade. Correspondents and narrative writers identified universal trading abilities among Indians and a providential need for goods in America. In their writing, Europeans showed trade bringing Indians into a peaceable and dependent relationship with the widening, European commercial world. More fundamentally, writers agreed that some of the Indian's "civilization" lay, not in missionary work, but in commercial relationships established between people, and in the obligations that credit, supplied by traders, transferred to its Indian debtors. Early French and English writers also identified self-interest guiding Indians in the early Eighteenth Century and suggested that, like Europeans, Indians followed elastic needs for trade goods. This study suggests that commercial relations established in a period of relatively liberal credit had a marked impact on the way that Europeans understood the "Other" in America. Such issues as traditional clerical writings and their characterization of a virtuous exchange with Indians, the importance of trade goods in the Indians' social improvement and the place of goods in reports of apotheosis are analyzed. By examining trade descriptions of the early Nineteenth Century, this study suggests that the "commercialization" of Indians was

discredited when colonial credit reforms, declining profit margins in Indian trading, and changed business traditions in the fur trade prompted writers to view pessimistically the Indians' trading, and, therefore, negotiating, abilities. By the early nineteenth century, European description no longer depicted Indians as able traders. They suggested that Indians lost in exchange, and that they benefited neither socially nor economically from their trade with Europeans.

*But there is another means by which they often divert themselves which could pass as much for a Commerce as a game. In the Iroquois language it is called Onnonhayenti (signifying a contract by which one gives to receive). Here is how it is played:*

*Six Indians placing themselves in a hut and six in another, one of them takes goods, some peltries or something which he has a view to truck and goes thus to the door of the other hut. There he makes a certain shout and those who are in the hut respond as if to echo the shout. The first sings in a loud voice, stating that he would like to sell or truck that which he brings in his hands, while repeating Onnonhayenti. Those who are in the hut respond in guttural cries; Ho, ho, ho, ho, ho, five times. This crier or vendor having finished his song, throws his merchandise in the hut and returns himself to his. Then, the six others, having estimated the value of that which this man had thrown to their feet, appoint one of their own to ask the vendor if he would like in return to exchange a cap, a shirt, a pair of shoes, or other similar things: after which another Indian allied to the same party comes bringing to the same hut the equivalent of that which had been offered or the merchandise thrown them if the merchandise is not what they want, or if the merchandise is not of an equivalent value of the goods which they are exchanging in return.*

*These ceremonies are accompanied by singing by all parties. There are also sometimes entire villages of Indians which visit alternatively to play this game. It would be better for them to interest themselves at this game only.*

*On Indian Games, Aventures du Sieur C.  
Le Beau... Parmi les Sauvages de  
l'Amérique Septentrionale Vol. II, 1738,  
pp. 79-81.*

*This thesis is  
dedicated to  
Francine and Gabriel*

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## *Introduction*

In his classic ethnohistory of the seventeenth century Iroquois Five Nations, George T. Hunt drew on the observations of the French memoirist, Nicholas Perrot, to suggest that "self-interest" guided Indians from their first contact with Europeans.<sup>1</sup> He went on to create an influential theory that such an inclination led the Iroquois peoples to secure jealously the fur trade and protect their access to trade goods upon which they had grown dependent: "by one means or another" they would control this trade, whether in warfare with their neighbors or by the acquisition of European firearms.<sup>2</sup>

Hunt did not question why it was that Perrot, a trader, had made this ethnological observation in the first place and why, beginning in the eighteenth century, French and English writers alike began to identify the same qualities within Amerindian nature that could facilitate trade with Europeans.<sup>3</sup> Perrot and his contemporaries identified *intérêt* at a moment when opinion at home was changing in regards to goods consumption and market pricing. They showed Indians sharing an acquisitiveness for trade goods that earlier Jesuit writers had ignored altogether. Of more consequence, what constituted a new description of the Indian Trade showed Indians having physical need for European goods. The use of such goods could improve the Indians' social organization and manners; trade could facilitate a cultural transformation commonly understood as the Indians' "civilization."<sup>4</sup> Later in the century, writers built upon such propositions to suggest new means to the Indians' improved social disposition that were explicitly commercial. French trade narratives argued that North Americans' hearts could

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<sup>1</sup>See George T. Hunt, *The Wars of the Iroquois* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1940) pp. 20-21. Perrot's original observation was: "Que l'ambition et la vengeance soient deux passions qui possèdent impérieusement l'esprit des sauvages, l'intérêt l'emporte encore pardessus, et a bien plus d'ascendant sur eux." Nicolas Perrot, *Mémoire sur les mœurs, coutumes et religion des sauvages de l'Amérique septentrionale*, ed. J. Tailhan, (Paris: 1864 reprinted, S.R. Publishers Ltd. 1968), p. 77.

<sup>2</sup>Hunt, p. 35; and appendices on firearms trade.

<sup>3</sup>Saum does not examine the critical dimension of chronology within the ethnological observations he ascribes to fur traders. See Lewis O. Saum, *The Fur Trader and the Indian* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1965), pp. 133-152.

<sup>4</sup>The term "civilization" gained new meaning in the mid-eighteenth century when the older expression of *civilité* began to be used in developmental terms, and to communicate a process of improving the rational powers of individuals and allowing outward comportment and appearance reflect the inner man. See Norbert Elias, *The History of Manners, The Civilizing Process: Vol. I* trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), pp. 35-50; See, also, the eighteenth century establishment of developmental understandings of civilization in George W. Stocking, Jr., *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), pp. 10-19.

be "tamed" (the verb used was *apprivoiser*) through trade goods. English writers hoped that commercial relations, then figuring as a major social meeting place at home, would form an amalgam between European and Indian, and create forms of dependency. Commerce could attract Indians as debtors to European creditors, and give them freedom to act upon their own initiative, improve their condition, and amass disproportionate degrees of wealth among one another. Even credit taken into the forests of America could create an "economy of obligation" tying Amerindian with European. These writers shared the contemporary understanding that credit transactions and related obligations formed the origins and basis of society, and sparked socialization when needs among individuals were met through trust.<sup>5</sup>

By analyzing descriptions of the Indian Trade, this study brings to light ways that Europeans described commerce civilizing Indians and the "commercial" ethnology they were recording between the late seventeenth and mid-nineteenth centuries.<sup>6</sup> The purpose of such a project is to decipher the discourse of commentators, metropolitan investors, military personnel, and administrators who often voiced within the Indian trade description their cultural assumptions and the nature of relationships they believed were possible and most preferable between European and Amerindian. Through their narratives, they betrayed a new conviction whereby trade could benefit or hinder the Indian; and doing so, they often embedded in trade descriptions numerous value judgments, and an explicit means of reaching a virtuous end in trade, beyond a mere account of profit and loss to the European trader.

The virtuous end writers imagined in Indian trading often differentiates their descriptions from the brief commentaries which appeared before the eighteenth century. New narratives devoted more attention and provided sometimes exquisite detail of the trade between European and Amerindian, which in itself becomes a startling phenomenon in sources. An overview of the published literature alone suggests a watershed in trade description occurring at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The Indian trade was highlighted in the work of Baron de Lahontan (1703, republished 1704 and 1715), Claude-Charles Le Roy, Bacqueville de la Potherie (completed in 1702,

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<sup>5</sup>Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: the Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1998), particularly "Chapter Five: The Sociability of Credit and Commerce," pp. 123-147.

<sup>6</sup>Scholarly precedents include, Margaret T. Hodgen, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964); Michèle Duchet, *Anthropologie et Histoire au siècle des lumières: Buffon, Voltaire, Rousseau, Helvétius, Diderot* (Paris: François Maspero, 1971).

published in 1722, and republished in 1723, 1744 and 1753), in the separate chapter devoted to Indian "trade and diplomacy" in Joseph Lafitau's ethnohistory (1724), and the likely forged account of the Montreal trade in Claude Le Bleu's narrative (1738).<sup>7</sup> When this published representation is added to the volume of trade descriptions carried in colonial correspondence from both English and French sources, it becomes apparent that writers shared greater interest in the details of the Indian trade than their predecessors, and their published and written product forms a valuable, but problematic, source for scholars writing colonial history and ethnohistory. A close examination of the ways in which such narrative was a product of, and influenced by, the commercialization at home seems an important investigation to undertake.<sup>8</sup> It seems clear that many of the numerous methodological problems arising in the use of Indian trade documents, now being confronted by scholars, indeed seem to have their very genesis in the mindset of a commercializing European.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Louis Armand de Lom d'Arce, baron de Lahontan, *Nouveaux voyages de Mr. le baron de Lahontan dans l'Amérique septentrionale*, printed in Paris, 1703 and in numerous subsequent editions. Claude-Charles Le Roy, Bacqueville de la Potherie, *Histoire de l'Amérique septentrionale divisée en quatre tomes*, printed in Paris and subsequently in Amsterdam and Paris, with altered titles; Joseph François Lafitau, *Moeurs des sauvages Américains comparées aux mœurs des premiers temps*, published in Paris in 1724 and in numerous translations and re-editions; *Aventures du Sr. C. Le Beau, avocat en parlement ou voyage curieux et nouveaux parmi les sauvages de l'Amérique septentrionale* (Amsterdam, 1738, reprinted in Yorkshire, by S.R. Publishers Ltd., 1966).

<sup>8</sup>Kupperman was attentive to home concerns, particularly political, in her seventeenth century study. Karen Ordahl Kupperman *Settling with the Indians: The Meeting of English and Indian Cultures in America, 1580-1640* (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1980); on the movement towards textual analysis in fur trade sources, see as an example the groundbreaking work of G. Hubert Smith, *The Explorations of the La Vérendryes in the Northern Plains, 1738-43* (original report finished, 1951, reprinted by Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980); on the rising interest in identifying ethnological information and separating distortions in fur trade and exploration text, see Patricia Galloway, "Sources for the La Salle Expedition of 1682," and "Henri de Tonti du village des Chacta, 1702: The Beginning of the French Alliance," in Patricia Galloway, ed., *La Salle and His Legacy: Frenchmen and Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley*, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1982). Also, see the impressive analysis of David Henige, Galloway and others in Patricia Galloway, ed., *The Hernando de Soto Expedition: History, Historiography and 'Discovery' in the Southeast*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997). A complete overview of the "problem" text presents to scholars is well summarized by Charles Hudson, *Knights of Spain, Warriors of the Sun: Hernando de Soto and the South's Ancient Chiefdoms* (University of Georgia, 1997); the problem of changing semantics invested in trade and the language of material culture is discussed by Nancy Cox, "Objects of Worth, Objects of Desire: Towards A Dictionary of Traded Goods and Commodities, 1550-1800," *Material History Review* 39 (Spring 1994): 24-40; semantic analysis is a growing concern among fur trade scholars. See the example of Mary Black-Rogers, "Varieties of 'Starving': Semantics and Survival in the Subarctic Fur Trade, 1750-1850," *Ethnohistory* 33(4) 1986: pp. 353-83; Glyndwr Williams provides an excellent example of textual analysis applied to Anthony Henday's journals in *Beaver* 309 (1978), pp. 41-56.

<sup>9</sup>Paul A. Robinson, Marc A. Kelley, and Patricia E. Rubertone, "Preliminary Bicultural Interpretations from a Seventeenth Century Narragansett Indian Cemetery in Rhode Island," (pp. 107-130) in William W.

It is surely of importance that the transition from pre-modern to modern conceptions of commerce brought about an unprecedented interest in the Indian Trade. It found some of its first detailed description when at home luxuries were less the objects of moral condemnation, a consumer ethic was emerging, and trade theories were finding articulate conceptualization.<sup>10</sup> Appleby characterized the era as "revolutionary" in terms of economic thought, when numerous French and English writers in the last three decades of the seventeenth century discovered virtues in consumption. Turning from older conceptions of balance of trade theory, they understood an elasticity in home consumer demands and the economic possibilities when such basic human traits as envy, love of luxury, vanity and ambition became an engine of production as individuals sought to acquire material goods.<sup>11</sup> While credit, rising production and increasing consumption patterns can be identified in the early modern period, it was the new challenges to "just" pricing of goods, the apology for consumption, and virtues associated with buying practices long deemed vice-ridden, that made the eighteenth century a distinctive period for the imagination, when Europeans apprehended numerous social benefits to be derived from commercial transactions.<sup>12</sup>

It should not be surprising that Indians, too, were viewed differently in such an era, believed to be, as Perrot suggested, prompted by "self-interest." In fact, European writers writing about the virtues of luxury often used Amerindians to demonstrate universal "original passions" underlying a unity of man that included the need to improve one's condition. The albeit sensational Mandeville was not alone in holding that "there is nothing to be found in the world, no not even among the naked savages ... but what by this time have made some improvements upon their former

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Fitzhugh, ed., *Cultures in Contact: The European Impact on Native Cultural Institutions in Eastern North America: AD 1000-1800* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1985), p. 108. Gough suggests the need for interpretive and methodological models in the use of fur trade sources and he lists the works on fur trade/exploration textual analysis provided by Jennifer Brown and Ian S. MacLaren, in Barry Gough, *First Across the Continent: Sir Alexander Mackenzie* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1997), p. 224. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert point out the need for "contextual" analysis of fur trade documents for native history study, see Introduction to Jennifer S.H. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert, *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1996).

<sup>10</sup>See, for instance, Cary's apologies for luxury, where even the poor emulate the rich by wearing goods made of calicoes: John Cary, *An Essay on the State of England in Relation to its Trade* (London: 1695) p. 53.

<sup>11</sup>Joyce Oldham Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 159-160; 169-171.

<sup>12</sup>Neil McKendrick, "The birth of a consumer society: the commercialization of eighteenth-century England," in N. McKendrick, J. Brewer and J.H. Plumb, *Birth of a Consumer Society: The commercialization of Eighteenth Century England* (London: Europa, 1982).

manner of living."<sup>13</sup> With the proposition that commerce softened the manners of nations, exchanged wealth between all, and lay the basis for peaceful relations -- Montesquieu's *le doux commerce*<sup>14</sup>-- the Indian trade now held numerous, evocative possibilities to mentalities perceptibly changed in a commercializing era.

The new Indian consumer was meanwhile drawn in the context of rising supplies and demands for manufactures both in Europe and in the colonies themselves. From the mid-seventeenth century onwards, from almost every European footing in America, the Indian trade held out numerous strategic and economic possibilities, particularly with home markets widening for fur and Indian affairs becoming key to the growing rivalry between France and England.<sup>15</sup> But any real expansion in the Indian trade depended foremost on the rise in the availability of trade goods occurring likely in the last quarter of the century. What Axtel called "the first consumer revolution" among Indians, then, requires qualification.<sup>16</sup> Serious shortfalls in trade goods in the early seventeenth century had long restricted the bounds of trade. The few goods available in New France allowed trade to be monopolized among elites, while *petits habitants* continued to use either grain or *eau-de-vie* as a trading commodity when they exchanged furs from Indians. The very means of controlling trade in early periods also reflected chronic shortages in manufactures, when colonial administrators could lift duties on manufactured imports, benefiting a small portion of the colony's upper ranks, or heavily tax *eau-de-vie*, which seriously undermined *habitant* trading.<sup>17</sup> Similar supply problems marked New England's colonial history, when the availability of trade goods, not Indian

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<sup>13</sup>Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees*, Irwin Primer, ed., (New York: Capricorn Books, 1962) p. 77.

<sup>14</sup>J.G.A. Pocock, "The mobility of property and the rise of eighteenth-century sociology," in *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 115.

<sup>15</sup>Philip D. Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* (Cambridge University Press, 1984); A revived felt process had stimulated demand, especially for beaver pelts, see comments by Bruce G. Trigger, "The Jesuits and the Fur Trade," *Ethnohistory* 12, 1965: 30-98; Harold A. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: an Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), p. 12-13.

<sup>16</sup>James Axtel, "The First Consumer Revolution," in *Beyond 1492: Encounters in Colonial North America* (New York: 1992), pp. 125-151.

<sup>17</sup>Christophe Horguelin, *Prétendue République: Pouvoir et société au Canada, 1645-1675* (Sillery: Les éditions du Septentrion, 1997), pp. 93; 103; Scholars have either poorly chronicled the increase in goods being carried in the fur trade since the time of first contact, or instead posited a gaining demand on the Indian's part for European manufactures. See, for instance, James Walvin, *Fruits of Empire: Exotic Produce and British Taste: 1660-1800* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), pp. 182-185; Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, pp. 16-21.

demand, really set the pace of commerce.<sup>18</sup> The scarcity and high cost of goods, then, likely hedged limits to the North American Indian trade for much of the early seventeenth century,<sup>19</sup> until between 1660 and 1700, exports of woolens and metalwares to the English colonies in America rose two fold and miscellaneous manufactures, tablewares and sewing items increased three.<sup>20</sup>

The English gains in production and the redirection of goods to America in the early eighteenth century made larger supplies of fabrics, metalwares and luxuries available for the Indian trade. And the French, needing to compete with such English trading power, began to mobilize its comparatively smaller supplies to aid its own colonial Indian trade.<sup>21</sup> English scholars generally point to the 1690s as a key period in rising supply,<sup>22</sup> but recent examinations of probate records and estate inventories in England suggests that goods of diverse descriptions were reaching lower strata of society well before the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>23</sup> It is conceivable that the Indian trade, too, was likely benefiting before the end of the century by rising surpluses, certainly if the Indian trade is viewed, as it should be, as a phenomenon almost identical to the peddler trade at home, benefiting from increased consumption and/or consumerism, whatever the case might be.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>As becomes apparent in the Puritan and New England colonies. See Francis X. Moloney, *The Fur Trade in New England: 1620-1676* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931), pp. 21-25; 29-35.

<sup>19</sup>See Leonard Calvert's letter regarding the Maryland trade in 1634: "...I make no doubt but next year we shall drive a very great trade if our supply of trucke fail not. There is not anything doth more indanger the losse of Commerce with the Indians than want of trucke to barter with them." Quoted in A.J. Morrison, "The Virginia Indian Trade to 1673," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 1 (4), October 1921, p. 224.

<sup>20</sup>Cited by Axtel, p. 145.

<sup>21</sup>On the newly recognized French consumer revolution of the eighteenth century, see, Carolyn Sargentson, *Merchants and Luxury Markets: The Marchands Merciers of Eighteenth-Century Paris* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1996), and Cissie Fairchild, "The production and marketing of populuxe goods in eighteenth century Paris," John Brewer and Roy Porter, eds., *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London: Routledge, 1993), 228-248. see, also C.H. Wilson, "The Growth of Overseas Commerce and European Manufacture," Vol. VII, *The New Cambridge Modern History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966) p. 33-34; O'Brien overviews the "circuitous chains of credit" in Britain's growing empire after the Glorious Revolution, see Patrick K. O'Brien, "Inseparable Connections: Trade, Economy, Fiscal State, and the Expansion of Empire, 1688-1815," in P.J. Marshall, ed., Vol. II, *Oxford History of the British Empire: The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 61; and, in the same volume, Jacob M. Price, "The Imperial Economy, 1700-1776," p. 96.

<sup>22</sup>See T.H. Breen, "Baubles of Britain: The American and Consumer Revolutions of the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present* No. 119, May 1988, pp. 73-104.

<sup>23</sup> Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain: 1660-1760* (London: Routledge, 1988) see growth charts in Chapter 1 and comments, pp. 32-41; 191-198.

<sup>24</sup>See, for instance, *The ancient trades decayed, Repaired again*, by A Country Trades-Man (London: T.N., 1678) pp. 21; 38-39. On the larger movement of petty chapman in the English countryside, see Margaret

It is indeed telling that in the period of rising peddler trading in rural areas of England and the North American colonies, Indian traders were carrying almost an identical assortment of goods to Indian consumers. Shamus identifies a mid-seventeenth century rise in "semi-durables" that were being carried from town to town by peddlers not only in England but in the American colonies, to surprisingly lower ranks of society. Her identification of a rising consumption of fabrics, small ironwares and other goods should alert scholars towards a carry-over of the trade from colonial settings to the western Indian towns in the same period. These traders, after all, carried the same fabrics, clothing and small ironwares.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, the South Carolina Indian trader was likely a re-incarnation of the country-side peddler, being of low means, taking goods on credit and trading them with Indians;<sup>26</sup> his trade was supported by volumes of goods that really had no precedent.

The Indian trade was hastened by new quantities of manufactured wares in another way. The seventeenth century colonial trade was increasingly marked by consignment trading between producers and correspondents, either from the colonies themselves, or from the homeland. Consignment trading, where a manufacturer or producer advanced goods and wares to a correspondent, began to supplant the traditional factor trading of the early seventeenth century.<sup>27</sup> In its expansion, the Indian trade of the late seventeenth century would thereafter be undertaken with short term credit that

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Spufford, *The Great Reclothing of Rural England: Petty Chapmen and Their Wares in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Hambledon Press, 1984), pp. 10-13; 34-37; see David Brown's introductory comments to: "The Autobiography of a Pedlar: John Lomas of Hollinsclough, Staffordshire (1747-1823)," *Midland History* 21, 1996, pp. 156-166; on the French peddler, see Abel Châtelain, "Lutte entre colporteurs et boutiquières en France pendant la première moitié du XIXe siècle," *Revue d'Histoire Economique et Sociale* 49 (3), 1971, pp. 359-384; Abel Poitrineau, "Petits marchands colporteurs de la haute Planèze d'Auvergne à la fin de l'Ancien Régime," *Annales du Midi* 88 (129), 1976, 423-436.

<sup>25</sup> Carole Shammas, *The Pre-Industrial Consumer in England and America* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 76-79; 93-95; 292-294; the trading assortments identified by Dechêne are identical to contemporary home peddlers, particularly the proportion of fabrics carried by the Indian trader. See charts offered by Louise Dechêne, *Habitants and Merchants*; Miquelon's breakdown of goods for the Indian trade, too, are remarkably similar to the peddler's pack at home. See Dale Miquelon, *Dugard of Rouen: French Trade to Canada and the West Indies, 1729-1770*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978).

<sup>26</sup> See Spufford on the chapman buying and selling on credit, p. 37, 69; she also identifies a similar pattern of goods being carried in the following proportions: 75 per cent textiles (1/2 being linens); 9 per cent ready-made clothing; 10 per cent ironmongery: "he had knives and forks, curtain rings, hatchets and axes, lanterns, gimlets, hammers, spades, shovels and garden shears, firepans and bellows." pp. 65-66. on the nature of *colporteur* contracts struck between merchants who advanced goods and the traders, to take them "on their backs or by horse," and often selling on credit, Poitrineau, pp. 424-425; 427.

<sup>27</sup> Jacob M. Price, "The Imperial Economy, 1700-1776," in P. J. Marshall, ed., *The Eighteenth Century*, Vol. II of the Oxford History of the British Empire (Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 94-95.



supported such consignment arrangements.<sup>28</sup> Credit had already become an early feature of the colonial fur trade, established by traders with Indians who used furs (and land and labour) as collateral. Thomas argues that credit became a "key facet of the fur trade" as early as the 1650s in the Connecticut Valley, having implications for Indians whose access to furbearers diminished with time.<sup>29</sup> Credit was quickly extended to Indians who traded as factors for English merchants, that is, they carried and traded goods consigned to their care.<sup>30</sup> Although difficult to quantify, this credit expanded by the end of the century, as manufactured wares became more plentiful. Increasingly cheap credit took the Charleston Indian traders inland by the 1690s. They drove their colourful horse-drawn carts and rang hawking bells from their bales of wares. By the eighteenth century, the trade was conducted by the likes of Samuel Eveleigh, who, instead of hiring factors on wages, engaged traders with goods on credit.<sup>31</sup> Virginia's William Byrd, in 1728, described the "common method of carrying on this Indian Commerce," whereby "Gentlemen send for Goods proper for such a Trade from England, and then either Venture them out at their own Risk to the Indian Towns, or else credit some Traders with them of Substance and Reputation, to be paid in Skins at a certain price agreed betwixt them."<sup>32</sup> Byrd was already an outspoken critic of the Charleston traders who he claimed "were trusting so much of their goods to Indians."<sup>33</sup> Carrying goods not their own, and often giving them away as gifts, traders appeared to onlookers as either irresponsible to their creditors, or devilish to their Amerindian traders when they did not get half the value of the goods they traded. Horrifying an informer of the Lords of Trade, the credited

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<sup>28</sup>On the "empire of credit" being established in small, short-term arrangements, see H.V. Bowen, *Elites, Enterprise and the Making of the British Overseas Empire, 1688-1775* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), pp. 92-94; on the Parisian credit market, see Philip T Hoffman, et. al., "Information and Economic History: How the Credit Market in Old Regime Paris Forces Us to Rethink the Transition to Capitalism," *American Historical Review* Vol. 104 (1), February 1999, pp. 69-94.

<sup>29</sup>Peter A. Thomas, "Cultural Change on the Southern New England Frontier, 1630-1665," in William W. Fitzhugh, ed., *Cultures in Contact: The European Impact on Native Cultural Institutions in Eastern North America, A.D. 1000 -1800* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1985), pp. 131-161; see also, Peter A. Thomas, "The Fur Trade, Indian Land and the Need to Define Adequate 'Environmental' Parameters," *Ethnohistory* 28 (4), Fall 1981, 359-385.

<sup>30</sup>"...the English doe often trust them with truck to deal for them as factors, and they have performed it very justly," as Father Andrew White stated of the Maryland trade, see *A Relation of Maryland* (1635), p. 31.

<sup>31</sup>See Crane, pp. 119-120; 122-123; and on the exportation of profits, see Fayer Hall, *The Importance of the British Plantations in America to This Kingdom* (London: J. Peele, 1731), pp. 67-68.

<sup>32</sup>John Spencer Bassett, ed., *The Writings of Colonel William Byrd of Westover in Virginia* (New York: Burt Franklin: 1901), p. 235.

<sup>33</sup>PRO, See response of the Carolina commentator to Byrd's criticisms, "Some paragraphs of letters from South Carolina," C.O. 5/1265 f. 91.

trader could illegitimately claim rank over the Amerindian counterpart: he fumed that Indians carried one trader's luggage and packs of skins from one town to another, "purely out of ostentation saying in my hearing that he made them honour him as their governour."<sup>34</sup> A 1719 query by the Lords of Trade and Plantations of the "State of South Carolina" following the Yamasee War, where such credit was believed to have been at work, reported 200 English Indian traders in the colony's hinterlands, "employed as factors by the merchants of Carolina."<sup>35</sup> As well, a 1720 memorandum to the Lords of Trade, seeking to restore "amity, friendship and alliance of the Indians," "by encouraging trade with them under proper laws and restrictions," sought to prohibit "upon most severe penaltys the selling of them anything whatsoever upon trust, to prevent their running into debt."<sup>36</sup>

To the north, credit now formed the basis of more transactions. By the 1730s, the HBC committee in London was working against the "new" use of credit at the Bay. Richard Staunton, the factor at Moose River in 1739, had reported the "wickedness, extravagance and carelessness of our people there" and was ordered by the committee to undertake a "thorough reform and redress of the evils:" "We agree entirely with you," the committee wrote their factor, "that the new custom of trusting the Indians, is of great prejudice to us and ought never to have been introduced, therefore desire you by degrees and with prudence to reform and put a stop as soon as you can to so evil a practice." The Committee gave the same instructions to its other Bayside traders.<sup>37</sup> But their traders were only matching what the French traders were already offering Indians. As William Tomison discovered when he was sent inland from Hudson Bay after the Conquest, European goods were everywhere among the Indians of present-day Manitoba, "the Natives were cloathed in French cloth, blankets, printed light stuff." He asked a French trader "if the goods belonged to his master [the bourgeois inland], he said no, but that they belonged to a merchant in Montreal, and that he pay'd them all for their service."<sup>38</sup> Most of the credit took the shape of consignment, itself criticized by Andrew Graham,<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>PRO, Letter, Mr. Crawley to Lords of Trade, 30 July 1715, CO 5/1265.

<sup>35</sup>PRO, Reported Answers to Queries, 12 January 1719, C.O.5/ 1265.

<sup>36</sup>PRO, Memorandum to Retrieve the Desolation of Carolina to Strengthen that Frontier," c.1720 CO 5/358 f. 47.

<sup>37</sup>HBC. Letter to Richard Staunton, 17 May 1739, A.6/6.

<sup>38</sup>HBC. 2 October 1768 entry of William Tomison's journal, included in Andrew Graham's Journal of Observations, E.2/6.

<sup>39</sup>HBC. In response to the American Traveller, who claimed the HBC supplied Indians with the cheapest and worst commodities from England, Graham stated that the HBC "purchase the best kind of every

but traders themselves used credit extensively, as the HBC committee found alarming. Widespread credit arrangements eventually struck the extensive branch-lines of the North West Company to the end of the continent. That undertaking was finally matched in the next century by the St. Louis companies plying the Missouri, whose merchants extended credit to the Rocky Mountain trappers and the Spaniards of Santa Fe, offering as Manuel Lisa did to prospective traders in New Mexico in 1812, "whatever quantity of goods it may be...."<sup>40</sup>

It will be argued below that it was such rising surpluses, a gaining interest in venting it to Indians in America, and transactions increasingly undertaken in trust which allowed Indians and their relationship with Europeans to be imaginatively recreated. The ways in which Indians were characterized in trade descriptions were not unanimous by any means. Many writers apologized or condemned consumption, credit and other effects of transactions between Europeans and Indian nations. Writers shaped much of their assessments according to the home debate about the values and ethics of commercial society. In particular, the reliance of Indian traders upon credit turned upon home concerns for the insubstantiality of England's economy now visibly based on public credit. Defoe brought mixed feelings towards this "coy mistress," and even commercial promoters tended to weigh the public good of a burgeoning and increasingly powerful merchant sector in home society.<sup>41</sup>

Meanwhile, many of the new descriptions of the Indian trade were shaped in the context of a shadowy peddler trade that already struck controversy in the English countryside. Even though the moral sumptuary law was by then a dead issue, the concern for *luxury* was nevertheless resonant in the Indian trade. What effect did a profusion of small ironwares, luxuries, fine clothes and frivolous wares have upon the Indian in nature? Were luxuries in and of themselves good or evil? If Indians shared universal traits of acquisitiveness, as trade writers suggested, should they be furnished with necessities or luxuries? Did luxuries improve or destroy Indian morale? Did Indians in a state of nature, possessing universal traits, enjoy an equal foundation in trade with Europeans, or did

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article they always paying ready money and the best price." Andrew Graham's Observations, 1771, E.2/7, f. 49.

<sup>40</sup>Herbert E. Bolton, "New Light on Manuel Lisa and the Spanish Fur Trade," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* XVII, pp. 61-66; on the credit animating the St. Louis trade in 1780s, see, William E. Foley and C. David Rice, *The First Chouteaus: River Barons of Early St. Louis* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), pp. 38-39.

<sup>41</sup>Sandra Sherman, *Finance and Fictionality in the Early Eighteenth Century: Accounting for Defoe* (Cambridge University Press, 1996); Thomas Keith Meier, *Defoe and the Defense of Commerce* (University of Victoria: English Literary Studies, 1987).

Europeans superior in sophistication have certain fiduciary trade responsibilities? Should goods advanced to Indians be characterized as "gifts," or "credits," and what was more salutary to Indian nature: did gifts make Indians indolent and did credit spark them to industry? Finally, and likely the most significant question: did the commercial system being established at home, with its relatively new ethics and moral order, have a universal applicability in America? In other words, was "Indian Territory" at last finding dimension in the Royal Proclamation of 1763, really mapped as a region where Indians hunted and fished or a reserve imagined beyond the influence of English commercial society?

The trade's promoters and detractors jumped at the chance to offer answers, and the ways they did constitute the topic of this study. The new questions being asked about the Indian trade arguably shifted ethnological debates about the American Indian. Both French and English writers ostensibly guided their eighteenth century American expansion on philosophies that, by implication, made them concerned with recognizing indigenous property that could not be stolen, but traded.<sup>42</sup> Trade was, then, celebrated because its alternative was ruled out as a possibility. And requiring both a means to promote trade, and their own vent of goods, Europeans changed Indians into their own likeness. During most of the eighteenth century, the Indian lived in the forest as an open receptacle to European trade goods, a neophyte convert to commerce. Of key importance was the way that commercial transactions seemed to prefigure the ways in which Indians would be envisioned as traders and worthy correspondents. The rising quantities of trade goods, the liberality of credit, and the trust which traders maintained with their Indian counterparts, led to a significant understanding of commercial ethnology, whereby profit was defined in broad ways to include a social, as much an economic, end.

It then becomes a task of this project to identify a context in which Indian trade descriptions appeared and changed according to the rise and fall of virtues

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<sup>42</sup>Pagden has analyzed earlier applications of natural law and the foundations of European international law in the work of the Spanish clerics of the sixteenth century, Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge University Press, 1982); more specifically on Thomist principles guiding the "school of Salamanca," see, Anthony Pagden, "Dispossessing the barbarian: the language of Spanish Thomism and the debate over the property rights of the American Indian," Anthony Pagden, ed, *The Languages of Political Theory in Early-Modern Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 1987). On natural law, and Jean Bodin's fifteenth century influence on the French "freedom principle" in the eighteenth century, see Sue Peabody, *"There Are No Slaves in France": The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Régime* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 26-30. James Tully's work on Locke firmly establishes the philosopher's writings on property with Amerindian dispossession, *A Discourse on Property: John Locke and his Adversaries* (Cambridge University Press, 1980); Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (Yale University Press, 1992), p. 56.

associated with commercial capital. From that perspective, it seeks changing elements of trade narrative which have not yet gained the attention of the few scholars who have subjected such text to analysis. Lewis Saum, whose *The Fur Trader and the Indian*, groundbreaking for its time, analyzed fur trade text as a source shaped by a trader's peculiar circumstances in America. He searched for common ways traders viewed Indians, whether they left writings in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries.<sup>43</sup> In her far more ambitious textual analysis of Columbia Plateau trade narratives, Elizabeth Vibert sought a post-structural understanding of text. But her study, too, neglects possible moments when trading text changed, and, though she offers extensive contextual understandings of trade narrative, does not ask whether trading text changes with time, and if so, why.<sup>44</sup>

In pursuing such a history of Indian trade text, it is important to identify possible methodologies to pursue its study. Two methods have been employed to analyze the way Europeans wrote about the fur trade, both adapted from approaches already used by scholars who work with documents that cannot be corroborated by other eye-witnesses to the same event. The first method, the "traditionalist" approach which shaped the work of Innis and is still used by historians, is characterized by little actual textual analysis (presumably because the scholar believes that too little is known of the significant context, whether personal idiosyncrasies, motives, and interests that came to shape the document when it was written).<sup>45</sup> This approach seeks to uncover as many relevant documents as possible, the scholar assuming that errors in one correspondent's observations will be corrected by others, even if they were recorded in a different place and/or time period. A type of averaging of information takes place which can, it is believed, strain out exaggerations, distortions and errors arising in each document. A "triangulation" thus established between diverse documents, can help the scholar reconstruct historical and ethnohistoric facts.<sup>46</sup> Although this approach has many merits, its very application which blatantly ignores contextual influence, creates its own, significant, problems. The traditionalist tends to identify similar error appearing in

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<sup>43</sup>Lewis O. Saum, *The Fur Trader and the Indian*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1965).

<sup>44</sup>Elizabeth Vibert, *Trader's Tales: Narratives of Cultural Encounters in the Columbia Plateau, 1807-1846* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997).

<sup>45</sup>Harold A. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: an Introduction to Canadian Economic History*, with introduction by Arthur J. Ray (University of Toronto Press, 1999).

<sup>46</sup>Bruce G. Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660* (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), pp. 11-19.

multiple texts, error often originating in the home influences affecting *all* the descriptions from which the scholar draws.<sup>47</sup>

Alternatively, the "modernist" approach, having roots to the nineteenth century geographer Alexander Von Humboldt, attempts to reconstruct the context of a source and the influences upon its writing that can be attributable to the psychology and personal world-view of the author, and the context "that probably went on thousands of times in the minds of certain readers and hearers" that is no longer audible to present readers.<sup>48</sup> This hermeneutic approach places ongoing interest upon the writer who produced the document and the environment in which he wrote.<sup>49</sup> It also requires some optimism on the historian's part that he or she can identify the particular context that shaped the document at the time of its writing. There have been many effective uses of modernist analysis which have ranged from identifying the "commercial landscapes" discernible in Alexander Mackenzie's narrative, the classical humanism shaping European iconography of Amerindian religious practices, European tendencies to depict cannibalism in certain ways as manifest in de Brye's illustrations, to the *Mappaemunde* tradition that makes some sense of Columbus' Journal.<sup>50</sup> However, the modernists'

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<sup>47</sup>Thus, Innis' uncritical use of sources. See Bruce M. White's footnoted criticism of Innis' reading of fur trade licenses. "Montreal Canoes and their Cargoes," in *"Le Castor Fait Tout": Selected Papers of the Fifth North American Fur Trade Conference, 1985* (Montreal: Lake St. Louis Historical Society, 1985), p. 179. Also, Innis' reprinting of Lahontan's blatant, and possibly politically motivated, conflation of canoes permitted per *cong * in New France, in *Fur Trade in Canada*, pp. 61-62; Bruce D. Murphy identifies this error in Lahontan, "The Size of the Labour Force in the Montreal Fur Trade, 1675-1790: A Critical Evaluation," M.A. thesis, (History) University of Ottawa, 1986), p.14. See W.J. Eccles' criticism of Innis, "A Belated View of Harold Adams Innis' *The Fur Trade in Canada*, in *Essays on New France* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 61-79.

<sup>48</sup>The approach likely originates with Von Humboldt. See Charles Whitney, "The Naming of America as the Meaning of America: Vespucci, Publicity, Festivity, Modernity," *Clio* 22 (3), 1993, pp. 195-217, particularly p. 214. See Wood's comments about the documents surrounding Le Salle and subsequent turns in Mississippi historiography, Peter H. Wood, "La Salle: Discovery of a Lost Explorer," *American Historical Review* Vol. 89 (2), April 1984, pp. 295-296 (294-323); on attempts to identify contemporary geographic opinion shaping exploration, see James P. Rhonda, "Dreams and Discoveries: Exploring the American West, 1760-1815," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Ser. Vol. XLIV 1989, pp. 150-152 (145-162).

<sup>49</sup>For some of the "critical issues" of editing, as well as using, exploration texts, see the articles edited by Germaine Warkentin, *Critical Issues in Editing Exploration Texts: Papers given at the twenty-eighth annual conference on Editorial Problems, University of Toronto 1992* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

<sup>50</sup>I.S. MacLaren, "Alexander Mackenzie and the Landscapes of Commerce," *Studies in Canadian Literature*, 7, 1982: 141-50; also, I.S. MacLaren, "Literary Landscapes in the Writings of Fur Traders," *"Le Castor Fait Tout": Selected Papers of the Fifth North American Fur Trade Conference, 1985* (Montreal: Lake St. Louis Historical Society, 1985); Sabine MacCormack, "Limits of Understanding: Perceptions of Greco-Roman and Amerindian Paganism in Early Modern Europe," in Karen Ordahl Kupperman, ed., *America in European Consciousness: 1493-1750* (Williamsburg, Virginia: University

approach, by virtue of its emphasis upon the authors of particular documents, has not been applied so far to fur trade text generally. Therefore, it has yet to identify and explain the history of Indian trade descriptions, and therefore the possible contextual influences affecting a body of writing.

Adapting both traditionalist and modernist approaches makes discernible a history of the Indian trade description in documents. The traditionalist method allows for the comparison of documents that range from personal memoirs to published narratives, from field notes to merchant accounts. As traditionalists search for concurrence among witnesses, this study similarly searches for agreement among authors on topics of the fur trade; however, this study does not accept multiple reportage as indicating fact. Rather, it assumes that some multiple reports instead indicate leading assumptions of a particular age or society and the views that grow from prejudice or faulty social theory.<sup>51</sup> This way, the modernist analysis allows a closer examination of the documents for common ways authors described exchange, its European and Indian participants, goods and the evaluations authors placed upon the outcome of trade.

As Chapter One argues, the French began to change the way they described the Indian trade when they shifted from the traditional idea of *exploitation*, or extraction, to *échange*; they then developed one of the most important textual characteristics of the century, that Indians could be civilized through trade. Trade humanism, the term used here, advanced a secular rather than religious means of improving the social disposition of Indians. This new strategy appears most prominently in the late seventeenth century writings of French metropolitan investors, merchants, colonial officers and administrators. Most of them were attempting to open trading freedoms in New France and the newly discovered regions on the Mississippi. Not only did these trade promoters adopt a theory of commodities that served their ends, their arguments that European goods were of vast importance to meet physical needs produced a new characterization of Indians: impoverished, weak and dependent upon French social interaction (quite literally *commerce*). Most importantly, the French showed a ready adoption of goods into Amerindian culture which both improved Indian life and tamed (*apprivoiser*) what were considered as brutish traits of nature.

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of North Carolina Press, 1995): 79-129; Valerie I.J. Flint, *The Imaginative Landscape of Christopher Columbus* (Princeton University Press, 1992). See, particularly, Chapter 1, 4 and 5.

<sup>51</sup>Eccles recognized the way Frontenac, the "Courtier Governor," wrote reports that anticipated the opinion of his French audience. W.J. Eccles, *Frontenac: The Courtier Governor* (McClelland & Stewart, 1959), p. 52. Zoltvany well describes Le Mothe Cadillac's reports and memoirs which catered the court's opinion, see Yves F. Zoltvany, *Philippe de Rigaud de Vaudreuil, Governor of New France, 1703-1725* (Carleton Library, 1974).

The characterization of the Indian trade as *échange* was radical in the way that it applied a clerical model to secular commerce. A virtuous exchange seems to have been modelled on clerical ideals, as Chapter Two suggests, in a discussion of the church and the fur trade. Missionaries had earlier defined acceptable trading practices. While they steadfastly identified spiritual, as opposed to physical, needs among Amerindians, their own criteria of right and wrong exchange became important to later trade writers. It is not surprising that trade writers of the early eighteenth century, themselves Frenchmen under some pressure to reconcile their trade with a larger civic good, borrowed from clerical understandings of gift-exchange, where goods became *biens*, now meeting the physical needs of Indians.

The eighteenth century French description of the Indian trade, rich in detail, attempted to understand what role these new goods played in Indian society. The voluminous trade descriptions sent home from the troubled colony of Louisiana reveals what was now being imagined as a commercialized Indian in America, which will be the focus of Chapter Three. We will see how the French undertaking "commercial ethnology" identified the passion of self-interest animating Indians in trade, a concept that was concurrently being identified by the English colonists.

In Chapter Four, discussion turns to the French and English writers who were quite anxious to provide new details of the goods traded to Indians. If the clerics had modeled their own exchange in Thomist standards and, as seventeenth century Jesuit *Relations* attest, committed to print very few details of trade goods, authors in the eighteenth century began with new assumptions about the place goods figured in societal development. By virtue of goods seeming to possess a power to transform Indian society for the better or worse, (goods as *biens*, or goods as *bane*), eighteenth century writers drew unprecedented attention to trading goods lists. If earlier clerical views of goods, as products of a fallen world, had once prevailed, now in the Age of Light, goods were viewed as potent agents of social improvement. Their descriptions, indeed, reveal a quite startling development in text, where previously trade goods had been listed as cheap trinkets, they were now characterized as necessities, the *besoins* of the eighteenth century.

Few of these issues were without debate at home, as Chapter Five points out. The Indian trade description was written in the context of controversy over the ways commerce, and the activities of the merchant community at home, worked to society's common good. The expanding Indian trade in America provided a valuable stage upon which a host of dramatic characters could play out the vices and virtues of commercial society. To be sure, the very technique of trade in America and its dissimilarity from



European market exchanges went to key questions about the virtues long advanced by the merchant community of the seventeenth century, whereby free trade and self-interest advanced the good of society. Moreover, the credit founding most of the transactions in America could be viewed as either vice or virtue depending upon the perspective of the observer.

Although some contemporary observers condemned the Indian trade, and attempted to draw boundaries between Britain's expanding credit and the Indian, others adamantly promoted it, as Chapter Six will demonstrate. They saw in the trade, especially after the Seven Years' War, an opportunity to take credit inland, widen markets, create dependency and initiate unlimited demands for goods, ultimately to lead the Indian towards a civil life. This marked a full articulation of a commercial mission to the Indian trade.

The final chapter is devoted to the changing description of the trade in the early nineteenth century, a development that followed the growing unacceptability of the commercial credit supporting such a business venture. The problematic credit relationships holding together the Indian trade seem to have helped establish the North West Company from Montreal. By the nineteenth century, rationalization programs and amalgamations of companies attempted to "reform" the unconventional nature of the Indian trade and place it on an economic footing. Narratives now shaped by a more severe eye to accountability characterized goods advanced to Indians as "debt," rather than "credit." More fundamentally, a pessimism was carried in narratives that no longer saw the Indian's condition improved with the use of trade goods. Rather, the confidence invested in Scottish stadial theories of societal growth placed Indians with their modes of subsistence far from their complex, commercial counterparts. In this, trade narratives showed Indians lacking the abilities to bargain with Europeans, fraudulently outwitted by their white neighbors and losing in trade. This turn in description often represented the eighteenth century trade as a feudal relic, lost in progress. With Indian trade relations depicted as debtor, and the Indian agency replacing the trade post as a place of acculturation, notions of nineteenth century dependency were established.

By following the rising popularity of trade humanism in the eighteenth century to its disappearance in the next, this study will identify some of the hopes Europeans placed not only in the Indian trade but the commercial society growing in their midst. Moreover, identifying what is obviously an important contextual influence in Indian trade sources will provide more understanding of how Europeans came to first

describe exchange with Indians, and how their descriptions of such exchange and the ethnographic assumptions of the "other" trader changed with time.

## CHAPTER ONE

### *"Extraction" to "Exchange" in French Indian Trade Descriptions of the Early Eighteenth Century*

*We believe, furthermore, that you are also incomparably poorer than we... seeing that you glory in our old rags and in our miserable suits of beaver which can no longer be of use to us..... As to us, we find all our riches and all our conveniences among ourselves....*

Chrestien LeClerq excerpt, from *New Relation of Gaspesia*, 1677.<sup>1</sup>

*Ce terme sans dessein, signifie sans intérêt, sans autre mauvaise intention, que celle que l'on fait paroître en parlant ou en agissant*

M. LePage du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane* (Paris: 1758) Vol. I, p.206

*...sans dessein signifie parmi eux qu'ils font un présent sans aucune vue de retour*

Father du Poisson, s.d., (c.1727) *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* (Paris: 1781) Vol. VI, p.379

This chapter identifies a period in colonial history when numerous French correspondents began to describe the fur trade as *échange*. They did so in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, a period coinciding without accident with the French Crown's prohibition of the inland Indian trade. Unlike text produced earlier in the colonization of New France, the description of the Indian trade was now used to suggest that commerce provided numerous benefits for the French and, what was significant for the present study, the American Indian. Trade depicted as *échange*, rather than *exploitation*, allowed metropolitan investors, military officers and many members of New France society to reconcile, at least on paper, their commercial interests with their stated duty to God and King.

Scholarly examinations of the early fur trade in North America often have not appreciated such changes occurring in trade descriptions. This oversight has led to disagreement concerning the commercial motivation of European activities and discoveries inland. Historians often imagine that a civic interest led participants to enlarge royal territories, to maintain the Crown's strategic interests or to expand

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<sup>1</sup>Reprinted as Chrestien LeClerq, "A Micmac Responds to the French," Colin G. Calloway, ed., *The World Turned Upside Down: Indian Voices from Early America* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1994) p. 51.

missionary fields.<sup>2</sup> Fur traders who themselves left documents disavowing a commercial interest in their exploration or Indian diplomacy,<sup>3</sup> have led historians to question the virtues of interior expansion. Was La Salle prompted by religious, rather than commercial, zeal as Parkman once queried? Was La Verendrye a trader who dressed himself as an explorer, as A.S. Morton charged? And was the apparent duplicity in the meaning of his documents a case of fraud perpetrated against the marine ministry supporting his activities? More fundamentally, French description of commerce in America has divided scholarship appraising the guiding values of New France society.<sup>4</sup> W.J. Eccles drew on the same text to argue that in the late seventeenth century, the fur trade fell from priority among colonial administrators, military officers and marine ministry officials who began to support the Indian trade less for its economic value than for its strategic and military benefits, particularly in maintaining French-Indian alliances.<sup>5</sup> Part of this military “ethos” thesis was challenged by Louise Dechêne, who saw a progressive liberalization of commercial activities in the French Regime, particularly within the officer corps, which she characterized as “a highly significant social phenomenon.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Theodore J. Karamanski, *Fur Trade and Exploration: Opening the Far Northwest, 1821-1852* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1983); James Baldwin, *The Discovery of the Old Northwest and its Settlement by the French* (New York: American Book Company, 1901) pp. 131-132; Francis Parkman, *La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West* (Toronto: George N. Morang & Co., 1900). Chapter VII, particularly, 115-119.

<sup>3</sup>La Vérendrye obscured trading interests by stating the strategic importance to France of the western regions and the widened mission fields to be found adjacent to the “Western Sea.” At other times, he pointed out that “independently” of the discovery was the “new advantage” for the colony of the quantity of pelts that would otherwise be lost to the Sioux, and from them to the English. See *Mémoire de Sieur de la Véranderie*, 10 October 1730, F/3/11 f. 304, Archives nationales, le centre des archives d’Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence, France (Hereafter cited AOM). A.S. Morton overlooked the textual turns in La Vérendrye’s writings and chastised the explorer for an apparent duplicity when he wrote the marine ministry about his search for the Western Sea while diverting most of his real energy into the fur trade. Arthur S. Morton, *A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71*, 2nd ed. ed. Lewis G. Thomas (University of Toronto Press, 1973) pp.: 170-173.

<sup>4</sup>J.F. Boshers’s introduction in *The Canada Merchants, 1713-1763* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987). W.J. Eccles. “The Military Establishment in New France,” *Essays in New France* (Oxford University Press, 1987) p.119. J.F. Boshers, “Government and Private Interests in New France,” in *Canadian History before Confederation: Essays and Interpretations* ed. J. M. Bumsted (Georgetown, Ontario: Irwin-Dorsey Ltd., 1979) pp. 105-117. Cameron Nish, “The Nature, Composition and Functions of the Canadian Bourgeoisie, 1729-1748,” *Ibid.*, pp. 118-133. Richard Lortie, “La guerre des renards, 1700-1740 ou quatre décennies de résistance à l’expansionnisme français,” M.A. Thesis, Laval University 1988.

<sup>5</sup>J. W. Eccles, “A Belated Review of Harold Adams Innis’s *The Fur Trade in Canada*,” pp. 61-78; and “The Fur Trade and Eighteenth Century Imperialism,” pp. 79-95, in *Essays on New France*.

<sup>6</sup>Louise Dechêne, *Habitants and Merchants in Seventeenth-Century Montreal*, trans. Liana Vardi (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992), p. 96.

It becomes apparent that beyond undoubtedly important economic and social changes in the colony, this period witnessed a revolution in the description of the fur trade. A model of ideal, virtuous exchange was raised up in reports that described commerce, Indian affairs and exploration well into the closing days of the French regime in Canada. Trade *without design*, returning goods with goods to meet daily needs in America, became the stated activity of French writers, officers and explorers, who continued to represent commerce as an essentially humanitarian endeavor, winning the conversion of Amerindians and harmonizing private interests with a larger public good.<sup>7</sup> The history of the fur trade narrative, and a glimpse of the complexity of this source for historical purposes, begins with analysis of the text produced in early eighteenth century French America.

## I

In the last decades of the seventeenth century, the French fur trade in North America was on the threshold of massive expansion. Geographically, New France occupied a beckoning port of entrance into the interior, a position augmented with the Chevalier de La Salle's successful journey to the mouth of the Mississippi and various French explorations of the regions to the southwest of the Great Lakes and the river routes to Hudson Bay.<sup>8</sup> French traders had successfully learned Indian trade protocol and adopted aspects of Amerindian culture in the technique of trading *en derouine*, or wintering with Indian bands. With brazen pursuit of profit, they now cut off from distant Hudson's Bay Company factories a large proportion of furs on the tributaries of the Great Lakes systems. Those who took part in La Salle's discoveries meanwhile exercised seigneurial trading freedoms in the Illinois Country and down the Mississippi and, added to the expansion of the Great Lakes trade, New France rapidly rose to preeminence in the commerce in fur. In the last moments of the century, when almost a million beaver skins were sent to Europe over a ten year period, most of those returns had moved through New France's port of Quebec.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Galliani explores the strategies of upper ranked church and provincial *noblesse* who sought to control commerce and curtail luxury. Renato Galliani, *Rousseau, le luxe et l'idéologie nobiliaire, étude socio-historique*, Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century, Vol. 268 (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 1989).

<sup>8</sup>Conrad E. Heidenreich, "Mapping the Great Lakes: The period of Exploration, 1603-1700," *Cartographia* Vol. 17 (3) 1980, pp. 32-64. Kevin Kaufman, introduction, *The Mapping of the Great Lakes in the Seventeenth Century* (Providence: The John Carter Brown Library, 1989) pp: 12-15, 19-20.

<sup>9</sup>I am drawing upon the annual totals provided by Milan Novak, *Furbearer Harvests in North America, 1600-1984* (Ontario: Ministry of Natural Resources, 1987). See Beaver Statistics, pp. 37-38. Novak's work does not seem to enumerate contraband furs and those sent from New York to Holland and other

Political developments also welcomed trade expansion, such as the short-lived Treaty of Ryswick (1697), which brought France and England into brief concord,<sup>10</sup> or, more substantially, the final peace brokered between the French with the Iroquois Five Nations peoples in 1701. This diplomatic agreement not only allowed French traders inland with fewer fears for the safety of their property,<sup>11</sup> but also protected Indian carriers who ran the merchandise of the Albany English merchants to the French in Canada, the latter able to trade directly with the interior nations.<sup>12</sup> In such an atmosphere, where profits awaited and Indians seemed to have an insatiable demand for European wares, the fur trade could fulfill one of the "principal objects" of maritime commerce laid down since Colbert's era, that is, to find ways to encourage the production of manufactures and goods of the kingdom and attract product from the colonies, not only for French consumption but also for sale to foreign nations.<sup>13</sup>

It is ironic, then, that at the very moment when the means existed to expand trade inland, the French Crown closed down trading freedoms and inaugurated the era of Restriction.<sup>14</sup> Rather than being encouraged to pursue the trade, the bourgeois, officers of the *troupes de la Marine* and seignorial investors in America faced ever tightening restrictions from continuing and expanding the returns of the previous three decades.<sup>15</sup> By 1697 merchants were prohibited from carrying furs from Forts Frontenac, Michilimackinac, St. Joseph and Miamis -- then centres of the western trade -- and prohibitions outlawed the trade among the military ranks. Long enjoying a right to a portion of trade at their assigned posts, the latter had also been allowed to trade for their

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destinations. Lawson provides statistics for British production. See appendices, Murray G. Lawson, *Fur: A Study in English Mercantilism: 1700-1775* (University of Toronto Press, 1943).

<sup>10</sup>Ralph Davis, "English Foreign Trade, 1700-1774," in W.E. Minchinton, ed., *The Growth of English Overseas Trade in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1969) p. 99. Thomas J. Schaeper, *The French Council of Commerce, 1700-1715: A Study of Mercantilism after Colbert* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1983), pp. 9-10.

<sup>11</sup>Zoltvany, *Philippe de Rigaud de Vaudreuil*, pp. 16; 34-35; Eccles, *Frontenac: The Courtier Governor*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>12</sup>Thomas Elliot Norton, *The Fur Trade in Colonial New York, 1686-1776* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), pp. 9-23; David Arthur Armour, "The Merchants of Albany, New York: 1686-1760," Ph.D. Thesis, Northwestern University, 1965, pp. 63-64.

<sup>13</sup>AOM, Crozat's memoir on the "two objects of maritime commerce," the first being the training up of sailors. 1 January 1717, DFC III/Mémoires/9/5 f. 2.

<sup>14</sup>Marcel Giraud *Histoire de la Louisiane Française*, I, 49-50, pp. 72-73; Also, Marcel Giraud, "La France et la Louisiane au début du XVIIIe siècle," *Revue historique*, CCIV, 1950: 185-208.

<sup>15</sup>AOM, Arrest pour régler la réception de castors venant du Canada et le prix, 30 May 1695, B/17 f. 67.

"table," or the comforts of men under their command. However, the officers' participation in commerce was now prohibited under any pretext.<sup>16</sup>

The Crown meanwhile sought to alter the pace of inland trading by ending the permissions, or *congés*, awarded to individuals to go inland in commercial trading parties. This policy concluded a long metropolitan effort to slow down the pace of trading in New France. As early as 1675, the *fermier* which once purchased pelts without distinction from colonists, was granted permission to buy fur according to their season and quality at graded prices.<sup>17</sup> In 1678, commerce was restricted to town markets which Indians visited in the Spring.<sup>18</sup> The *habitant* who wished to go inland had to purchase a *congé*, or permission, from among the twenty-five granted each year. With overproduction still remaining a problem, the Crown began restricting the *congé* system during de la Barre's administration in 1684;<sup>19</sup> by 1694, it further limited the numbers of those allowed inland; and by 1697, the *congé* was closed altogether.<sup>20</sup> Despite the contradictions inherent in this reapplication of a "compact colony" policy, as Miquelon has termed it, the Crown nevertheless followed such measures to forestall complete economic ruin.<sup>21</sup> Its representatives were concerned as late as 1706 that officers accepted military service in Canada primarily because of the commercial gains to be made from trade,<sup>22</sup> and issued further ordinances and instructions to merchants, officers and others in the colony to desist from trade.<sup>23</sup> Repeated *ordonnances* give evidence of the Crown's inability to control effectively an activity that was soon channeled into a flourishing

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<sup>16</sup>AOM, Ordonnances du Roy portent déffenses à tous officiers, soldats et autres, de faire la traite avec les sauvages dans la profondeur des bois, 28 April 1697, F/3/8 ff.25-26.

<sup>17</sup>AOM, Arrêt pour régler la réception de castors venant du Canada et le prix. The *arrêt* distinguishes *gras*, *demi-gras*, *sec à veule*, *sec*, Illinois, Fonds Ministeriel, B/17 f.67.

<sup>18</sup>Ordinances forbidding inhabitants from going and trading with Indians included in the King's Letter to Frontenac, 12 May 1678, *Collection de manuscrits contenant lettres, mémoires, et autres documents historiques relatifs à la Nouvelle-France* (Quebec: 1884) p. 265.

<sup>19</sup>Ordinances reinforcing the 1682 closure of the conge, in Pauline Dubé, ed., *La Nouvelle-France sous Joseph-Antoine Le Febvre de la Barre 1682-1685, lettres, mémoires, instructions et ordonnances* (Septentrion, 1993), pp. 51- 52. Rich cites 20 licenses granted in 1681, Rich, I: 194.

<sup>20</sup>AOM, B/17 f. 23; Restrictions were placed upon officers receiving presents, see Cornelius J. Jaenen, "The Role of Presents in French-Amerindian Trade," ed., Duncan Cameron, *Explorations in Canadian Economic History: Essays in Honour of Irene Spry* (University of Ottawa Press, 1985) pp. 244-245.

<sup>21</sup>Dale Miquelon, *New France, 1701-1744: "A Supplement to Europe"* The Canadian Centenary Series No. 4 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987), pp. 15; 17-18.

<sup>22</sup>AOM, Mémoire du Roy au Srs. Vaudreille et Raudot, 1706, F/3/9 f. 5.

<sup>23</sup>AOM, *ibid.*, Ordinance 25 May 1707; reaffirming the prohibitions of 1685 against people of quality and merit trading inland; f. 51; the Ordinance of 1707 against trading eau-de-vie, f. 53; against *habitants* carrying fur directly or indirectly to English merchants, f. 54.

contraband activity, this when Frenchmen illicitly moved furs through Albany. Even by 1714, just before the *congé* was reinstated, more ordinances were passed to stop *habitants* from going into the forests without permission, and criticized the "spirit of gain and libertinage" animating their trading junkets.<sup>24</sup>

Moving the Crown to the policy of Restriction were complex socio-economic problems occurring in American colonization.<sup>25</sup> Administrators and clerics voiced sufficient criticisms of the trade by the late seventeenth century that a formidable bloc of opinion now supported the trade's closure inland. The first factor was economic. The costs of maintaining Canada and, after its establishment in 1701, the new colony of Louisiana, the price of Indian alliances in gifts and the support of the *fermier's* fur buying monopoly became all the more burdensome with the disastrous state of the Royal finances after the expensive wars of the seventeenth century, and the ruined condition of the beaver markets.<sup>26</sup> New France's slow growth and small population frustrated the marine ministry, and memorialists cited the expanding fur trade inland as a chief contributor to the colony's difficulties.

Economic strain in the colony was no longer manageable in the traditional technique by which fur was collected in America, comprising, first, a system to collect fur from Indian harvesters (first monopolized and later freed to *habitants*), and second, a monopolized buying body which purchased all traded pelts and marketed them in Europe.<sup>27</sup> Even with the trade's valorization, too much production undermined the value of Canadian fur, particularly when the *fermier* buying system lost control of its buyers and producers. A letter from the marine ministry to a diplomatic envoy in 1705 discussed at length the financial mess of the fur trade and provides some of the contemporary opinion. He was told that the "reunion" of 1675 had allowed the *fermier* to buy up colonists' furs with merchandise advanced from the King's stores. The lure of profit now

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., Ordinance, 19 March 1714, f. 274.

<sup>25</sup>There were few racial condemnations of the inland trade, only the *concubinage* it fostered, that is, the illicit union of French with Indian. The church and state encouraged intermarriage on European terms of both peoples provided that Indians be Catholic converts. See the proposal of curate M. La Vente, to encourage Frenchmen to marry Indian women who had converted. Council Minutes, 1 September 1716, Mississippi Archives Vol. II p. 218..

<sup>26</sup>Patricia Dillon Woods, *French-Indian Relations on the Southern Frontier: 1699-1762* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1980) pp: 18-20; Daniel H. Usner, "The Frontier Exchange Economy of the Lower Mississippi Valley in the Eighteenth Century," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. XLIV(2) April 1987, pp. 165-192. Catherine M. Desbarats, "The Cost of Early Canada's Native Alliances: Reality and Scarcity's Rhetoric," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. LII,(4), October 1995: pp. 609-614.

<sup>27</sup>Christophe Horguelin, *Prétendue République: Pouvoir et société au Canada, 1645-1675* (Sillery: Les Éditions du Septentrion, 1997), pp. 27-30.



animated colonists to buy pelts from Indians by quantity rather than quality, divert energies into trade instead of agriculture, neglect families and spend all earnings from the fur trade on the next jaunt into the woods.<sup>28</sup> The *fermier's* buying representatives, meanwhile, continued to buy on the assumption that the French market could sustain such expansion. This was not the case as poor quality pelts and glutted conditions left the buyer with stock on hand and deeply indebted to the crown on advanced goods. Meanwhile, the colonists, in addition to outright fraud, were charged with having disregarded their own obligations in taking goods from the King's stores, and traded with Indians on relaxed and far too generous standards, which now elevated the Indian producers' own price expectations. With French buying prices now elevated and debt growing at each point of the chain from *fermier* to *habitant*, French markets began to saturate with poor quality beaver as early as the 1680s. By the 1690s, the Canadian fur market was collapsing in Europe and successive *fermiers* who purchased the monopoly often faced bankruptcy when they were obligated to buy back French warehouses already full of musty and rotting skins.

The economics of the trade were made the more bleak by numerous social problems associated with its undertaking. These, too, were identified by both metropolitan critics and the ecclesiastic community. It is important to point out that such social criticisms of the inland trade were based upon a conception of an ideal, hierarchical society, not an hostility towards commerce *per se*. The marine ministry occasionally displayed ancient *noblesse* smobbery towards the third estate,<sup>29</sup> but by the time of restriction its members were galvanized around commercial interests, many founded in the colonies. In America, almost every government administrator, whether the military governor and his subordinate-s in the *troupes de la Marine*, or the civil *gens de plume*, had commercial investments, usually in the fur trade. Officers traditionally enjoyed the control of trade at an assigned post, and profited as *rentiers* by either renting the right to merchants to trade with local Indians, or taking a direct cut in profits and directly investing in their adventures. Although it was extremely rare for officers themselves to actually barter with Indians -- they assumed gift-giving and arbitration roles at their posts

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<sup>28</sup>AOM, Mémoire concernant le commerce, la navigation et les colonies, 12 February 1705, II/Mémoires/7/281 ff. 80-82.

<sup>29</sup>One council of commerce member complained in 1701 that "the profession of trader is vilified and despised by officers and gentlemen," Dale Miquelon, *Dugard of Rouen: French Trade to Canada and the West Indies, 1729-1770* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978), p. 7; see, also, the telling complaints made by the merchant deputies of trade in 1701, W.C. Scoville, "The French Economy in 1700-701: An Appraisal of the Deputies of Trade," *Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 22, 1962: 246-247.

-- they nevertheless struck numerous agreements with merchants, now becoming plain in notarial records.<sup>30</sup> So also, the noble ranks, who had won commercial freedoms earlier in the seventeenth century without fear of losing their noble status, took up commercial opportunities -- in Canada, in the fur trade -- that were all the more tempting as their wealth at home steadily declined in the late seventeenth century.<sup>31</sup>

If there was a brisk commercial spirit among the upper ranks, their members involved with colonial administration and the marine ministry were nonetheless concerned for the perceived ill effects of the Canadian fur trade on colonization. Their concerns for the inland trade, quite distinct from the town trades, grew from numerous social developments becoming evident as French traders began going inland and replacing the middleman "Ottawa" Indians between 1645 and 1670. Wien's analysis of the economic forces attending the movement of Frenchmen to the "Peru" of the upper country, suggests that a rising number of *habitant* participants in the trade, taking not only food stuffs but undoubtedly merchandise, helped derange prices in trade goods offered for furs. With fur prices already falling, the rising volume of goods presented a serious threat to the existing town trades. The inland commerce, undertaken by newcomers, retired soldiers and recently freed indentured servants, also directly undercut the traditional trading rights of propertied townspeople, who had always claimed the most advantageous stalls in the town markets. Some officials attempted to offset the effects of such expansion by posting official prices on merchandise in such places as Trois Rivières. They also voiced increasing criticism towards the trade inland, often being prosecuted with cheap and easily transportable brandy.<sup>32</sup> Many of the characteristics of the inland trade found direct analogy with problems at home perceived by the upper ranks in expanding commercial activities. In France, the social pretensions of the bourgeois

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<sup>30</sup>S. Dale Standen, "Personnes sans caractère": Private Merchants, Post Commanders and the Regulation of the Western Fur Trade, 1720-1745," in Hubert Watelet, ed., *De France en Nouvelle-France: Société fondatrice et société nouvelle* (Ottawa: Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1994), pp. 265-295.

<sup>31</sup>On the commercial freedoms granted to New France *noblesse*, see Arrêt du conseil d'état de sa Majesté qui permit à tous nobles et gentilshommes habitués dans la Nouvelle-France de faire commerce ... 10 March 1685, Pierre-Georges Roy, *Inventaire des insinuations du Conseil Souverain de la Nouvelle-France* (Beauceville: L'Éclaireur, 1921) p. 64. Rich believes that the permission given to nobles and gentry to engage in wholesale and retail trade was part of a larger Colbertist effort to maintain trade in many hands but restraining "far-flung adventures." See Rich, Vol. I, p. 194.

<sup>32</sup>See Thomas Wien, "Le Pérou éphémère: termes d'échange et éclatement du commerce franco-amérindien, 1645-1670," in Sylvie Dépatie, Catherine Desbarats, Danielle Gauvreau, Mario Lalancette and Thomas Wien, eds., *Habitants et marchands. Twenty Years Later: Reading the History of Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), pp. 160-188.

classes, *paraître* values animating the lower ranks, and *luxe* were already identified as widespread problems requiring some address.

By the late seventeenth century, critics of the fur trade saw a vivid mosaic of social vices arising in the trade *en derouine*, vices believed to have serious repercussions upon the colonies on the St. Lawrence and, later, the Mississippi. Foremost in such social concerns were the effects of profiteering among the lower ranks. The trade seemed to seed greed among lowly *habitants*, who in turn neglected husbandry to pursue unearned financial gains. The preamble of numerous Royal *ordonnances* and council judgments attempting to control the Indian trade often pointed to social problems growing as husbands and sons left families to live with trading Indians.<sup>33</sup> A memoir written around 1699 on the colonizing potential of Florida imagined the fur trade's expansion retarding colonial growth. The writer stated that a trade in bear skins and other animals offered some value, but he was careful to promise that there would not be "the inducement to the colony's men to abandon the colony as they do in Canada, to go into the furthest quarters to trade with the Indians." Florida would have "Commerce," but it would be "more grand than the sort in Canada," which had destroyed the colony, ruined the *fermier*, and allowed its best men to leave in trading adventures. "It is never so advantageous for a colony to prevent in the beginnings this sort of commerce which makes a great number of men neglect to cultivate the earth, refuse to marry and thereby stop the colony's advancement," the memorialist wrote.<sup>34</sup>

Profiteering in fur was also a vice linked to idleness, and idleness with low yielding farms, as an early Louisiana colonial promoter wrote in 1706. He argued that the high profits and the lifestyles pursued by traders stifled agricultural progress and imperiled morale in his own infant colony. Colonists, he said, were now accustomed "to the trade with the Indians, the easy profit from which supports them, giving them what they need day to day like the Indians who find their happiness in an idle and lazy life,

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<sup>33</sup>Ordonnance qui défend aux habitants de quitter leurs demeures pour courir les bois ..." 5 Juin 1672, Pierre-Georges Roy ed, *Archives de la province de Québec: Inventaire de Ordonnances des intendants de la Nouvelle-France*, Vol. III (Beauceville: Government Printer, 1919) pp. 268-269.; See 26 June 1669 Council Judgement, Pierre J.O. Chauveau, *Jugements et délibérations du conseil souverain de la Nouvelle-France* Vol. I (Quebec: A. Côté 1885) pp. 558-559; also, *ibid.*, 10 November 1648: remedying the trade in *eau-de-vie* and "les introduire par là dans la société et commerce des plus honnestes gens plutost que de les voir exposez à vivre dans les bois où les libertins gens sans adueu (sic) et fainéans abandonnant leur cabanes et leurs travaux ordinaires qui est la culture de la terre...." p. 535; and *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Council judgement protecting the town trades in 1683: restricting the hours, months and manner of trade with visiting Indians, pp. 861-862.

<sup>34</sup>Mémoire de la Coste de la Floride, ca. 1699, *Margry* IV, p. 321

who have no taste except for an animal life."<sup>35</sup> The high profits won among inland Indians would hardly have been viewed without comment among the upper ranks. It is likely without accident that the social critic, Baron de Lahontan, focused his readers' attention upon the "extravagant profit" of the Indian trade in Canada, where the merchants, "the only Persons that make money here," sold arms, kettles, axes, knives "and a thousand such things," at 200 per cent profit; while further inland, French merchandise fetched 700 per cent clear profit ("those sparks call'd *coureurs de bois* bite the Savages most dexterously"<sup>36</sup>). At the still-existent Montreal trading fair, *habitant* and town people of all stations joined in when Indians arrived, "everybody turns merchant upon such occasions," and women debased themselves in their pursuit of an Indian's furs.<sup>37</sup> The 1705 report, it might be pointed out, also underscored this "odious" underside of the trade, when brigades left Montreal with a little biscuit, pounded corn and some brandy, taking goods worth in France 1500 *livres*, returning in beaver worth 7000.<sup>38</sup>

Much of the concern for profiteering related to the restless ambitions of merchants, the "Bourgeoisie élevée grossièrement" cited in a 1734 review of Molière's *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*,<sup>39</sup> or his equivalent in such characters as the contemptible and clownish cloth merchant, who in plays aspired to higher social status through his wealth, while his opposite, his wife, remained "proud of her class," having "no use for her husband's ambitions."<sup>40</sup> Besides being condemned by the church, profits affected colonial growth by dislocating natural and tradition-bound societal ranks. These profits, after all, fell into the hands of traders and lowly members of colonial society. The *habitant*, it was believed, neglected his land to pursue this unearned wealth in order to enjoy luxurious consumption; the resulting *luxure* led to pretensions against natural social hierarchies and, of course, *paraître* values.<sup>41</sup> The same profits induced an exodus from farming into commerce, and thereby lost to the colony an integral component of agricultural

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<sup>35</sup>Hubert to Council, 1706, *Mississippi Provincial Archives, French Dominion*, Vol. II (Jackson: Press of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1927) p. 232.

<sup>36</sup>Baron de Lahontan, *New Voyages to North America* (1703, reprinted Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1905) pp. 54; 100. He neglected to factor the high transportation charges inland.

<sup>37</sup>Lahontan, pp. 96-97.

<sup>38</sup>AOM, Mémoire concernant le commerce, la navigation et les colonies, f. 89.

<sup>39</sup>Review of "M. Molière, "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme," in *Histoire du Théâtre François*, Vol III (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1967) p. 60.

<sup>40</sup>Henry Carrington Lancaster, *A History of French Dramatic Literature in the Seventeenth Century* Part III, Vol. II, (New York: Gordian Press, 1966) pp. 726-728.

<sup>41</sup>Church *mandements* revisited the issue of *luxure*. Archives du Séminaire de Québec (Hereafter ASQ) Mandement de Mgr. de Laval contre le luxe et la vanité des femmes et des filles dans l'Eglise, 26 February 1682 Carton Séminaire: 15, no. 25.

production when farmers became a peddler class. Meanwhile, those once tightly bound up in the social chain from superior to inferior upon the land ventured, quite literally, beyond the bounds of society and its laws, customs and religion.<sup>42</sup>

The Jesuit historian, Pierre de Charlevoix, well summarized the social questions raised by the Indian trade in his own works, particularly in his "letters" from America written during his reconnaissance of the interior on behalf of the French crown. Written as a series of letters to an aristocratic correspondent, and reprinted as an appendix in the 1744 *History of New France*, Charlevoix brought to the fore the socio-economic factors believed to be significant in the American colonies, particularly the movements of merchants and traders who were rich, or pretended to be so. There was none of the wealth of the British colonies here, no rich men, no one laid up wealth, but all wore fine clothing. Displaying the *paraître* values so offensive to his upper ranked readers, the Canadian merchant spent all he had, "and often makes a parade of what he is not possessed of." After remarking on the steady agricultural growth of the English colonies, he reasoned why Canada did not profit France. The ready answer was the fur trade, "and the faults committed in it are past number:" the newcomers from France arrived with nothing but what they wore on their backs, "were impatient to appear in a better situation," and bought up "at a trifle" the furs from Indians. Profits won in such vice were themselves not substantial. No real wealth accrued to the community; instead, impoverishment was widespread and the aged voyageur or merchant languished in misery and disgrace in old age. The *congé*, reinstated by his visit, had therefore proven a worst remedy for the illegal trade of the *coureur de bois*: the wandering life it encouraged promoted "habits of libertinism." Charlevoix ended his description by stating that "Hence it comes to pass, that Arts have been a long time neglected, a great quantity of good land remains uncultivated, and the country is but very indifferently peopled."<sup>43</sup>

Charlevoix's criticism of the inland trade was patently conventional in New France lore, and in fact echoed Colbert's original colonial priorities of discouraging the colony's unnecessary geographic expansion, and encouraging higher farm production and increased population. Social historians now discount many of the fears that seemed to

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<sup>42</sup>AOM, Speaking about the *coureurs de bois* who exacted the huge profits on trade, the 1705 report stated: Ils ne reconnoissent ni superieur ny juge ni loix ny police ny subordination. Mémoire concernant le commerce, la navigation et les colonies, f.91. Le Sieur's report, summarized by the marine ministry contained the observation of note: "Il se trouve quelques uns de nos françois qui aiment la vie libertine des sauvages et qui se retirent parmi eux en quittant leurs femmes et leurs enf(ants)." National Archives of Canada (Hereafter NAC) Microfilm, Report of Le Sieur, 1700, Piece No. X 9-4 Vol 387 3JJ f.56.

<sup>43</sup>Pierre de Charlevoix, *Journal of a Voyage to North-America* (1761, reprint. Ann Arbor: March of America Facsimile Series, 1966) pp. 112-114; 124-127.

fire early eighteenth century imaginations. Despite what Charlevoix maintained, New France's crops and per capita wheat production probably bettered that of the English colonies by the end of the seventeenth century. The per capita share in the fur trade, ever consolidated and organized between merchants and specialized labourers, was fully divided up within a miniscule proportion of the population.<sup>44</sup> The real "frontier," as Louise Dechêne, has pointed out, was not beckoning in the forests west of the colony, as much as in the land itself. By 1700, the trade robbed few farms of its hands.<sup>45</sup> The revival of Colbert's model of a "compact colony" was, however, extremely effective in raising a traditional conception of an hierarchical society believed most appropriate for colonization. Jean-Baptiste Colbert had been extremely suspicious of the inland trade as it expanded in his time period.<sup>46</sup> He feared the diffusion of the colonial workforce, and he did not approve of the work of traders such as Deluth, who proposed an inland encirclement of the English, rather "that it would be much better to inhabit less country and well populate it, than to raise up a weak colony."<sup>47</sup> For the same reason, he restricted Jolliet from settling and expanding commerce among the Iroquois. By containing the limits of colonization, Colbert hoped to tie colonial production most profitably to the needs of the metropolis, at the expense, both in power and bullion, of neighboring European states.<sup>48</sup> His colony indeed bore a heavy paternalism, whether in local price controls, widespread licensing, or planned settlement.<sup>49</sup> The "compact colony" model, identified by Miquelon, then, imprinted itself upon memoirs concerning Canadian development well into the eighteenth century.<sup>50</sup>

The early seventeenth century writer, Marc Lescarbot, had himself subordinated the third estate within the colony he proposed in the appendix of his

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<sup>44</sup>Morris Altman, "Economic Growth in Canada, 1695-1739: Estimates and Analysis," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser. Vol. XLV(4), October 1988, pp. 684-711.

<sup>45</sup>Louise Dechêne, *Habitants and Merchants*, pp. 90-125; 283.

<sup>46</sup>In his original instructions to Frontenac regarding the inland fort in 1674, Colbert stated that it was the "general rule of the court" not to take lands unnecessarily for France, and that Frontenac should "leave the Indians free to bring their furs without putting yourself to the trouble of going so far to seek them." Colbert to Frontenac, 17 May 1674, Richard A. Preston and Leopold Lamontagne, eds., *Royal Fort Frontenac* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1958), p.115.

<sup>47</sup>Quoted in E.E. Rich, p. 194.

<sup>48</sup>Glenn J. Ames, *Colbert, Mercantilism, and the French Quest for Asian Trade* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996), pp. 6-7; 13-18.

<sup>49</sup>Charles Woolsey Cole, *Colbert and a Century of French Mercantilism* Vol. II, (Hamden, Connecticut, Archon Books, 1964), pp. 62-77; and on Colbert's fur trade policies, pp. 81-82.

<sup>50</sup>Miquelon, *New France, 1701-1744*, on Colbertism and later Canadian policy-makers, see pp. 9-11, 15-17; and the metamorphosis of fur trade licensing and restrictions, pp. 159-162.

narrative.<sup>51</sup> It is no surprise that seventeenth century advisors, then, saw that it would be better to keep trade within the colony, under the supervision of the civil authority and controlled by the just prices of town markets. Meanwhile, the predominant task for Canadian colonization was to place New France on a strong agricultural footing, to enrich a seigneurial leadership and produce surplus crops for export, not lose farm-hands to voyageur brigades and expand the *traite* inland with Indians. Such an ideal was directed to the attention of restriction-era administrators.<sup>52</sup>

Certainly the attendant social chaos of the earlier trade expansion was relevant to the ecclesiastic community which, by the end of the century, seems to have contributed to the Crown's justifications for Restriction.<sup>53</sup> The Church had long contended that when it went inland in *congé*, the fur trade placed Frenchmen beyond the teaching guidance of the curate, and left them without the sacraments.<sup>54</sup> Ecclesiastics also believed a host of social problems arose when families were left in the colony without husbands, fathers and sons;<sup>55</sup> like civil authorities, the church was particularly concerned about trading profits, not only because they so enriched the lower ranks, but because hopes for high profits could animate passions within the trader that led to sin.<sup>56</sup> Ecclesiastics condemned unjust profits not only among traders in their business with

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<sup>51</sup>For some of the brief references to trade, see Lescarbot, Vol. I, p. 61; Vol. II, pp. 323-234; Vol. III, pp. 305, 309, 316, 372, 407; and, cited previously, pp. 210-214. Of first rank in his proposed colony would be the ecclesiastics, then the "principals," and finally, within the "third order" and of lowest position there, were the "merchants, artisans and labourers." "Articles of the Society of those who, with God's Grace, are setting out to plant the faith in the western lands," *Ibid.*, Vol. III, Appendix IV, pp. 328-330.

<sup>52</sup>Instructions to Vaudrueil and Raudot, to inhibit the ruinous fur trade and encourage the production of wheat surpluses to be sent to France. Mémoire du Roi à MM. de Vaudrueil et Raudot, 6 July 1709, *Rapport de l'Archiviste de la Province de Québec* (Hereafter RAPQ) 1952-43 (Quebec: the King's Printer, 1943) pp. 407-408.

<sup>53</sup>AOM, The King's acceptance of the Jesuit stance by 1697 is clear in Mémoire du Roy, 27 April 1697, F/3/8 f. 19. I acknowledge Frégault's doubt that any "opinion" united the church in New France, as the numerous secular priests and three regular religious communities were hardly unanimous in their views, all the more so on secular questions. Guy Frégault, *Le XVIIIe siècle canadien* (Montreal: Collections Constantes, 1968).

<sup>54</sup>ASQ, Pontbriand's 1793 *mandement* urging labourers to observe religious holidays while in the *pays-d'en-haut*; MS-255.

<sup>55</sup>ASQ, Pontbriand's *mandement* of 28 October 1793, for feast days to be observed in the *pays-d'en-haut*, in G. Besserer's compilation of *Lettres pastorales, mandements, etc. des Evêques*, 1831, MS-255.

<sup>56</sup>An interesting comparison is provided by Rink, concerning the Dutch Reformed Church's struggle with the traders in America, see Oliver A. Rink, "Private Interest and Godly Gain: The West India Company and the Dutch Reformed Church in New Netherland, 1624-1664," *New York History* 75(3) July 1994: pp. 245-264, particularly his comments of the church's role among the Indians, pp. 252-256

Indians (condemning unjust pricing in the fur trade as *larcin*, or larceny),<sup>57</sup> but also the profiteering on Indian trade goods sent inland by town merchants.<sup>58</sup> The church furthermore recognized that the seventh deadly sin led to a host of venal offenses, such as libertine behaviour, drunkenness, and sloth that became patently associated with the Indian Trade.<sup>59</sup>

The ecclesiastic criticism of the inland trade also had a practical origin. The church, like the propertied ranks, had lost an enviable source of revenue with the trade's expansion inland. Not only had the Jesuits been amply rewarded in the period when the oligarchic *communauté des habitants* had full control over the colonial fur trade, winning badly needed subventions with each year's trade profits, but the missions had been encouraged by the close connections between the *communauté's* ruling families and the missionaries themselves. The Huron dispersal, the beginnings of an inland trade prosecuted by Frenchman, and its rapid expansion under Jean Talon's leadership, had all undermined the missionaries' authority inland. Their influence was particularly weakened when merchant-outfitters gained new partners in the military. There has remained, as we shall see, a debate about how much the Jesuits directly involved themselves in the fur trade, but it is plain that with the rise of the inland trade the dislocation of commerce from the town fairs, and the loss of oligarchic control over the profits, missionaries lost a significant source of revenue.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Archives nationales du Québec - Montreal (Hereafter ANQ-M) microfilm. See the Montreal Sulpician sermon written between 1723 and 1753. Entitled *le larcin*, the sermon castigated those who would become masters through unjust means, and went on to point out the subtle ways such the deadly sin could dominate business practices, particularly at that time of the year (Autumn), when his audience was about to embark on trade with the Indians (*traffique avec les sauvages*). This "too common sin," was selling too dear or buying goods at too good a price, and profiting by the other's condition of necessity or from his ignorance of market value. The sermon writer distinguished between three prices: the high (*le haut*), the common (*le commun*) and low (*bas*) price: "en vendans trop cher ou achetant a trop bon marché profitant de la nécessité, ou de l'ignorance." Sur le Larcin, in MG 17 Archives du Séminaire de Saint-Sulpice, Montreal, section 3 Antoine Deat papers, Reel 6502.

<sup>58</sup>Ordonnance pour réformer l'injustice des marchands qui prennent le 33e pour cent des voyageurs: "Nous condamnons comme illicite et usuraire le commerce des marchands qui sans être dans les dits cas, équipent les voyageurs qui vont aux Outaouais ou ailleurs, à la charge que ceux-ci leur paieront au retour en castor les marchandises ...." 9 March 1700, H. Têtu et C.-O. Gagnon, *Mandements, lettres pastorales et circulaires des évêques de Québec* Vol. I (Quebec: 1885) 382-385.

<sup>59</sup>See de Gourville to Pontchartrain, June 1712, remarking that "this commerce alone that one can at present derive any utility and this is also what has attracted the few people who are there." *Mississippi Provincial Archives, 1701-1729, Vol. II French Dominion* (Jackson, Mississippi: Press of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1927) p. 68.

<sup>60</sup>See Horguelin, *Prétendue République*, pp. 40-41.



The church, furthermore, had traditionally framed its criticism of the inland trade on the premise that Europeans had a guardianship role to take in commercial matters that touched the interests of Amerindians. Through baptism, Europeans had an obligation of moral rectitude *vis-à-vis* the Amerindian. By the time he wrote his *Histoire de l'eau-de-vie en Canada* (1705), the Abbé Belmont showed the prevailing understanding of the Indian as an "innocent" in nature. The Indian's European counterpart in trade, meanwhile, had often rejected his spiritual responsibilities and was animated by numerous vices, such as avarice, ambition, and sensual pleasure. The Indian, then, had vulnerability in trade and Europeans a fiduciary responsibility that was implicit in their standing before God in baptism.<sup>61</sup>

The use of the guardianship principle already had been applied to brandy, the most problematic trade commodity, and it continued to be relevant to the issue of the inland trade by the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>62</sup> Bishops from Laval to Saint-Valliers applied this principle to a commodity exchange that was considered innocuous in nature at home but vice-ridden in America. According to the church, the sin of avarice, by prompting the European to trade inebriating *boissons* to Amerindians, allowed the trader to win huge profits on the furs that he thereby stole from his customer. Seeing Europeans having fiduciary responsibility in their exchange with Indians, clerics could employ the idea of "entrapment," where Indians became as their hunted animals, themselves "skinned" of their valuables, their families "disrobed and skinned" of their needs, by avaricious traders.<sup>63</sup> Although colonial ordinances initially favored brandy traders by punishing the inebriated Indian within town limits, clerics placed far more blame upon the trader himself whose commerce ruined neophyte and mission Indian alike.<sup>64</sup> In this denunciation, the church and then the state saw the social problems of brandy trading originating with the greed of traders, not Indians.<sup>65</sup> Bishop Laval and the seventeenth century Jesuits were emboldened to such arguments because of their conviction that there

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<sup>61</sup>Abbé Belmont, *Histoire de l'eau-de-vie en Canada*, 1705, Historical Documents 1st Series Vol. 2 No. 8 (Quebec: Quebec Literary and Historical Society, 1840) p. 26.

<sup>62</sup>John A. Dickinson, "'C'est l'eau-de-vie qui a commis ce meurtre' : Alcool et criminalité amérindienne à Montréal sous le Régime Français," *Etudes Canadiennes* No. 35, 1993, pp. 83-94.

<sup>63</sup>Belmont's reprint of the clerical speech to Indians included: Ils vous suivent comme un castor, ou un ours à la trappe, pour vous dépouiller.... vous dérobez et dépouillez vos familles. Belmont, p. 26.

<sup>64</sup>ASQ, Mgr. de Laval to the Séminaire de Québec, 1674, Lettres-Carton N. No. 39.

<sup>65</sup>Jan Grabowski, "French Criminal Justice and Indians in Montreal: 1670-1760," *Ethnohistory* 43(3) Summer 1996: 405-429; and John A. Dickinson, "'C'est l'eau-de-vie qui a commis ce meurtre' : Alcool et criminalité amérindienne à Montréal sous le Régime Français," *Etudes Canadiennes* No. 35, 1993, pp. 83-94.

was something inherently different in the customs of Indians that made them desire liquor as an inebriating medium.<sup>66</sup> And in the ensuing debate over the use of *cas réservé* against brandy traders, the principle that Indians were to be treated as children or minors worthy of protection by the church was upheld by the Sorbonne and Telouse theologians reviewing the Canadian trade. The church therefore would not have approved of the commerce being left unrestricted *dans la profondeur de la forêt*, but, rather, that it should be supervised by the cleric, and some commercial exchanges altogether restricted while Indians were in the midst of their spiritual teaching.

Another reason renders the church's campaign against the brandy trade relevant within a wider discussion of prevailing representations of the trade at the time of Restriction. Not only was there widespread clerical criticism of brandy trading, but also much of it blurred distinctions between more legitimate exchanges and the infamous trade in *eau-de-vie*. Le Sieur de la Mothe Cadillac, who was attempting to characterize the Indian Trade in a virtuous light by the early eighteenth century, admitted that it would take a lifetime to read "all that the missionaries have said, preached and written ... against the trade in brandy and expeditions in the woods [of traders]." He added that the brandy trade had not only been castigated but had given missionaries the occasion of "inveighing against all the French who go and trade among the savages."<sup>67</sup> Indeed, when in 1702 the Jesuit Father Etienne Carheil, longtime missionary to the Iroquois and later cleric at Michilimackinac, was asked to review for the Intendant the possibility of reopening the *congé*, Carheil jumped at the chance to condemn all manner of the interior Canadian trade except one given to voyageurs under the church's supervision. In the Jesuit's condemnation, the trade benefited only the military officers who, in the guise of serving "God and King," were wrecking Indian lives and the missions dedicated to serving them. Carheil's memoir, drawn upon by later clerical commentators, generalized all trade as a brandy trade (he referred to it as the *funeste traite deau de vie*, and *traiteurs deau de vie*).<sup>68</sup> He did not differentiate between a brandy trade and the trade in

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<sup>66</sup>ASQ, See Response to the first point of the cleric's condemnation that "There is not any other example in the Christian World where any church has made a *cas réservé* of this nature, nor in any place where the people are more given to drunkenness and where the crime causes more great disorder," in Response, 1678, Séminaire de Québec No. 28 A Response aux Raisons qui prononcent qu'il faut laisser la liberté de traiter des boissons aux sauvages, s.d. (ca. 1690) MS-17 p. 5. Also, Belmont: J'entreprends cette petite histoire pour faire voir que l'Ivrognerie des Sauvages est une différente espèce de celle tous les autres hommes.... Belmont, p. 1.

<sup>67</sup>Cadillac, Description of Detroit, 25 September 1702, "Cadillac Papers," *Historical Collections: Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society*, vol. XXXIII (Lansing, Michigan: Robert Smith Co., 1904) p. 142.

<sup>68</sup>Étienne de Carheil to Louis Hector de Callières, 20 August 1702, *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents* (Hereafter *Jesuit Relations*) Vol. 65: 190; 199-200.

useful goods but, rather, he made distinctions between the trade inland among the military officers, employing the term *traite*, and the more virtuous town trading, *commerce*, that had traditionally taken place in Montreal, Trois Rivieres and Quebec. These were the traditional fairs that once attracted Indian traders and, by implication, protected their interests by having all trade under the church's supervision and carried out within competitive conditions leading to just price.<sup>69</sup> A reading of the 1712 "Memoire on the Present State of Canada," likely written by the Mgr. de Saint-Vallier, suggests how long-standing were Carheil's distinctions between town market trading, attracting Indians with the furs and other "fruits of their land," for European powder, lead, arms, wool blankets and draperies. This more virtuous commerce had once been "very advantageous and undertaken in tranquility, without disorder or scandal," while the inland trade, begun by avaricious governors sending men inland to cut off the trade, won "excessive profits" and exchanged the hated *eau-de-vie*, with all its attendant sins.<sup>70</sup>

The church's portrayal of Indians and its identification of fiduciary responsibility in commerce were themselves drawn from long-standing ethnological currents of thought that also contributed to the policy of Restriction. The idea of guardianship had been founded upon the conception of Indians being infantile, pre-social, and childlike, and these ethnological generalities had traditionally led observers to believe that Indians were incapable of trading on an equal foundation with Europeans.<sup>71</sup> It was precisely their perceived inability to bargain well that made town trading so important to critics, as within market settings the competitive spirit between traders, not the Indian's bargaining ability, would drive prices to fair or just levels. Meanwhile, Indians were seen as driven by the passions of the child, not the reason of men beyond their majority, neither able to defend their own interests nor fathom the complexities of exchange.<sup>72</sup> The

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<sup>69</sup>Carheil's criticism of the Michilimackinac "traite" is intriguing. He uses *traite* consistently to describe the maligned practice of allowing Frenchmen to go trade for furs inland, "faire d'une manière basse, servile et honteuse un commerce," (p.220); when he advocates a restoration of the town market system, at Montreal and other localities, where exchange would be under church and civic supervision, he uses the term *commerce*, for example, in the sense of "rétablir le commerce des sauvages et de le fixer à Montréal ...." (p.222). *Ibid.*, pp.220-222.

<sup>70</sup>"Mémoire de l'état présent du Canada," 1712, *RAPQ*, 1922-23 pp. 37-39.

<sup>71</sup>Map cartouches are telling in this respect, showing Indians clamouring to have European wares but not trading for them. An example is in the Dutch chart of Frederick De Wit, later used by Louis Renard in 1715, "Septentrionaliora Americae à Groenlandia," Map 20 of Joe C. W. Armstrong, *From Sea Unto Sea: Art & Discovery Maps of Canada* (Toronto: Fleet Books, 1982).

<sup>72</sup>Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Settling with Indians: The Meeting of English and Indian Cultures in America: 1580-1640* (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1980); Benjamin Bissell, *The American Indian in English Literature of the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Archon Books, 1968), particularly chapter One.

nature of their ethnological assumptions explains why seventeenth century writers left few descriptions of exchange, even when they were involved in the Indian trade themselves. Rather, they represented Indians as either giving up their furs in tribute, closely controlled in their trade, or simply defrauded.<sup>73</sup>

When they did describe Indians trading, seventeenth century writers drew from three streams of thought. One depicted Indians in trade as a German 1595 book illustration did, that is, merely being *primitive*,<sup>74</sup> where trade was a disorderly *melée* in which participants grabbed goods. To French and English writers, however, the natural law tradition guided contact, both due to the popular perception of the Spanish treatment of Indians, and to the writings of such natural law writers as Jean Bodin.<sup>75</sup> Bodin had not only clarified the position of slavery in France and in its colonies,<sup>76</sup> but delineated the rights of a nation's citizens, slaves and strangers. It was in respect to the Amerindian's status as a pagan, free inhabitant of America, not as an infidel slave of the European, that his right to property was assumed to be ultimately inalienable.<sup>77</sup> However, writers concurrently believed that Indians having real property rights either did not exercise them, or lived in conditions where rights to property were not necessary. Indeed, a popular way of conceiving the Indian's rights in trade were grounded in an ancient belief that he lived near the East and therefore the idyllic regions of Paradise. In such an environment, Indians were assumed to be too virtuous to undertake the cold calculations

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<sup>73</sup>Radisson's late seventeenth century letter to Charles II assured the court that he had beaten an Indian elder who threatened to take his trade to the French. Cited in Thistle, and note Thistle's comments concerning the questionable veracity of this passage, Paul C. Thistle, *Indian-European Trade Relations in the Lower Saskatchewan River Region to 1840* (Winnipeg : University of Manitoba Press, 1986), pp. 11-12. The same paucity of trade descriptions occurs in English writings. See the cursory treatment of the brandy trade in Daniel Denton, *A Brief Description of New-York* (London: 1670), pp.3-8.

<sup>74</sup>The illustration is included in Mancall, *Deadly Medicine*, p. 24.

<sup>75</sup>Pagden has analyzed earlier applications of natural law and the foundations of European international law in the work of the Spanish clerics of the sixteenth century, Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1982); more specifically on Thomist principles guiding the "School of Salamanca," see Anthony Pagden, "Dispossessing the barbarian: the language of Spanish Thomism and the debate over the property rights of the American Indian," Anthony Pagden, ed, *The Languages of Political Theory in Early-Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). See also L.C. Green & Olive P. Dickason, *The Law of Nations and the New World* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1989).

<sup>76</sup>See Sue Peabody, *"There Are No Slaves in France": The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Régime*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

<sup>77</sup>I am benefiting from Bodin's writings on slavery, and the property rights of strangers and citizens, see Kenneth Douglas McRae, ed., *Jean Bodin: The Six Bookes of a Commonweale* (1606 translation) (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), pp. 33-42; 48-63.

of European bartering.<sup>78</sup> Another seventeenth century understanding followed the lines of civic humanism, that Indians displayed features of the classical age and were animated by virtues that included martial prowess and sacrifice to his community, but not mercantile self-interest. Marc Lescarbot had drawn from the latter two streams when he showed Indians as too virtuous for exchange to take place. Generosity being one of the "principles and seeds of virtue" within Indians, they "do not willingly bargain, and content themselves with that which is given them honestly, disdaining and blaming the fashions of our petty bourgeois, who bargain for an hour to beat down the price of a beaver-skin." He claimed that Acadian Indians had named a young European merchant among them "Mercateria," which "is a word of reproach among them."<sup>79</sup> The same characterization appears in Montaigne's essay "Of Cannibals," where Indians "desire no more than what their naturall necessities direct them: whatsoever is beyond it, is to them superfluous."<sup>80</sup>

Numerous clerics and colonial promoters had, in fact, capitalized upon such characterizations of North American Indians. The English Jesuit, Andrew White, who took part in and promoted Lord Baltimore's colony of Maryland with his *A Relation of Maryland* in 1635, described Indians in such ways. He presented an idyllic period when English colonists and Indians lived side by side at the Baltimore settlement, when the Indians "went dayly to hunt with them for Deere and Turkeys, whereof some they gave them for presents, and *the meaner sort would sell them to them, for knives, beades and the like....*"<sup>81</sup> He remarked that in addition to circulating shell currency (*wampum* and *roanoke*), they "barter also one commoditee for another, and are very glad of trafficke and commerce, so far as to supply their necessities: they show no great desire of heaping wealth, yet some they will have to be buried with them; if they were Christians, and

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<sup>78</sup>Thomas Hahn, "Indians East and West: primitivism and savagery in English discovery narratives of the sixteenth century," *The Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 8 (1) 1978: (77-114), 79-81. Flint's remarks on Columbian mindsets are relevant. See chapters 1,4 and 5 of Valerie I.J. Flint, *The Imaginative Landscape of Christopher Columbus* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992). See Ingram's curious observations of Indians trading without barter in a world the author believed was near the terrestrial paradise. *The Relation of David Ingram from The Principal Navigations by Richard Hakluyt* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, Inc.) p. 558.

<sup>79</sup>Lescarbot, Vol. III, pp. 210-213. But note Sagard, who clearly represented the trading acumen of Indians and commented on Indians inviting him into their cabins and behaving "like the mercers and merchants of the Palais (Royal) at Paris." Gabriel Sagard, *The Long Journey to the Country of the Hurons*, ed. George M. Wrong, trans. H.H. Langton (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1939) pp. 87-88. For other references to trade in the same work, see pp. 45-46; 307 (French reprint); 77; 317 (French reprint).

<sup>80</sup>*The Essayes of Michael Lord of Montaigne*, trans. John Florio, 3 Vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1910), Vol. I, p. 250.

<sup>81</sup>Emphasis added, Father Andrew White, *A Relation of Maryland* (London: 1635) March of America Facsimile Series No. 22 (Ann Arbor : University Microfilms, 1966), p.10.

would live so free from covetousness, and many other vices which abound in Christendome, they would be a brave people."<sup>82</sup>

Many of these approaches to understanding Amerindian trading practices continued long into the eighteenth century. Joseph Lafitau, the Jesuit ethnographer, later identified vestigial traces of the classical age in Amerindian trade practices, along the ideals of Cicero, where Amerindian traders displayed all goods on trading blankets (giving evidence of supply) and therefore possible prices to be pursued.<sup>83</sup> The virtuous Indian in nature, aloof from selfish mercantile tendencies, of course could be used as a means for criticizing home society. In the hand of Maubert de Gouvest, who followed the tradition in his *Lettres Iroquoises* (1755), the Indian in Europe was "extremely surprised" to discover the people there so "completely different in their manners and in their ideas" and shocked at the different meaning of exchange values;<sup>84</sup> the "divine virtue" that the French invested in metal coins, and wanting more this "hard and large metal than a fish or a beef" sharply contrasted with his own hunting and fishing activities aimed to procure things necessary for life. To this fictional Indian, these were "bizarre nations" marked by poverty and riches, "distinctions unknown in our happy deserts."<sup>85</sup> Though made in jest, an anecdote in the *Scots Magazine* of 1742 showed primitivist assumptions of natural virtue guiding Indians when a Six Nations spokesman described the establishment of a British settlement near their towns: Indians and Englishmen "long lived in all peace and quiet, trafficking with our people with all justice and harmony." Then, a lawyer appeared in the settlement who caused quarrels between settlers and Indians, and, soon, Indians were defrauded in their exchanges. The disputes were finally settled when an Indian king who had been absent for a time arrived home, saw the disorders, and ordered the lawyer to be hanged.<sup>86</sup>

Lescarbot's suggestion -- and the primitivist proposition itself -- about Indian generosity was tied to a larger assumption about the Indian's place in the natural world in America. This showed Indians quite self-sufficient in nature's abundance. Those therefore wishing to bolster support for agricultural development in the new colony of

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<sup>82</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

<sup>83</sup>He also employed Hennepin's erroneous comparison of the calumet with Mercury's Caducée, a symbol of just trade. Joseph-François Lafitau, *Moeurs des sauvages américains comparées aux mœurs des premiers temps*, (Paris: 1724) Vol. IV, pp. 53-55.

<sup>84</sup>Maubert de Gouvest, *Lettres Iroquoises*, New Edition, 1 Vol. (Irocoopolis: 1755) CIHM Microfiche, pp. 1--2.

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 2; pp. 61-66.

<sup>86</sup>*Scots Magazine*, Vol. IV, 1742, p. 73.

Louisiana could argue that Indians did not require European assistance in anything except evangelism. For instance, Hubert of St. Malo, the commissary of Louisiana, argued against the diversion of the colony's resources into the interior and condemned the activities of the colonial administrator, Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville, the former Canadian and brother of d'Iberville, and without coincidence avid trader. In the course of justifying his activities in the interior, for which he had requested ever-larger consignments of goods for "gifts" (later charged with trading them on his own account), Bienville represented himself as of central importance to the region's Indians. He argued that they needed not only French goods, but French laws and customs in order to settle disputes among themselves. In opposition to this new ethnological depiction, Hubert of St. Malo stated that Indians were well enough left alone, and could more than live without "the superfluties that we regard as necessary." So abundant was the land and resources of the New World, Hubert suggested, that these "new and vigorous" lands allowed plants to grow better than wheat, thus initially supporting wildlife over crops, and encouraging the great idleness and sloth ascribed to Indian nations.<sup>87</sup> Not only did nature well provide to Indians but also those inland enjoyed a societal organization, if it was merely different from the Europeans'; they were "savage only in name," having regular government among themselves, "no injustices, no quarrels, a very exact subordination and great respect for their chiefs." Hubert pushed this topic to its final conclusion: if Indians did not need Europeans, the governor's gifts, or arbitration, they did not *need* European commerce, either.<sup>88</sup>

By the end of the seventeenth century, then, the potential of an expanded inland trade was offset by existent economic difficulties. But, additionally, a formidable bloc of opinion saw the inland trade with Indians imperiling a colony's very social fabric. Whether they were based on the realities of French colonization or not, such views of the social and economic effects of the fur trade were particularly powerful. The administrative and ecclesiastic criticism of the inland fur trade is found throughout the marine ministry files, as a memo written in Paris in 1716 exemplifies. In view of the difficult problems in Canada, the writer stressed the need to allow colonists capable of work to be free to apply their labour in "production." The report went on to state that the beaver trade had "ruined all those who were misled into undertaking it, and by such the colony had likewise been ruined and was lost without resources." Experience had

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<sup>87</sup>Hubert to Council, 1706 *Mississippi Provincial Archives, French Dominion*, Vol. II (Jackson: Press of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1927) p. 232.

<sup>88</sup>*Ibid.*, 26 October 1717, p. 249.

revealed the legacy of trade and its abuses. Trade encouraged libertine behaviour. Governors seeking trade profits launched wars to protect their commercial stakes. Specie fled inland to show no account. The Indians no longer came to trade in the colony but profited from Frenchmen chasing them into the forests. The writer of the memo urged the Crown to order the just treatment of Indians, and ensure their happiness while protecting their liberty. And in obvious support of the Restriction policy, the writer stated that rather than gathering furs, colonists should engage Indians in raising cattle, sheep and other livestock for trade, and producing wool, meats and other products for the Canadians: "in such manner they would be assured to reconcile the Indians and domesticate them a little, and it would demonstrate to them that it was less difficult to raise animals than to chase beavers."<sup>89</sup>

## II

Despite the trade's condemnation by the church, numerous individuals remained dependent upon the fur trade as a commercial outlet. Not only were there large numbers of illegal traders going inland, but they were receiving goods to trade from upper segments of Canadian society, seigneurial families, and government office holders.<sup>90</sup> Merchants, military officers and administrators continued to look to the fur trade to supplement poor incomes and Crown stipends. It was among these groups, soon to increasingly join with merchant families and develop *sociétés* in trade, that new representations of the fur trade were developed and an ideal of *échange* was coherently stated. To this colonial group must be added another based in the metropolis. Those urging the Crown to free up the Indian trade usually had merchant investors in the colony or direct investors in Paris who sided with them in their efforts.

Whether directed by colonists or courtiers, trade promotion drew attention to common, universal traits shared between Amerindians and Europeans, similarities in acquisitiveness and self-interest, and the possibilities of social concord reached through

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<sup>89</sup>AOM, "Projet de l'instruction qu'on estime qu'il est à propos de donner aux gouverneurs et aux intendants du Canada," 1716, C/11a/121 f. 74.

<sup>90</sup>See notarial records of the "entrepreneurial" officer Saint-Pierre, in Joseph L. Peyser, ed. and trans., *Jacques Legardeur de Saint-Pierre: Officer, Gentleman, Entrepreneur* (Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1996). Gratien Allaire, "Officiers et marchands: les sociétés de commerce des fourrures, 1715-1760," *RHAF*, vol. 40, no. 3, hiver 1987: pp. 409-428. Thomas Wien, "Exchange Patterns in the European Market for North American Furs and Skins, 1720-1760," eds., Jennifer S.H. Brown, W.J. Eccles, and Donald P. Heldman, *The Fur Trade Revisited: Selected Papers of the Sixth North American Conference* (Michigan State University Press, 1994), pp. 19-38.



trade. It was from the body of writing created by trade promoters that an intriguing possibility arises, that new ethnology provided by commercial interests laid the basis for French rationalistic theories of human behaviour of the eighteenth century.<sup>91</sup> These promoters characterized Indians as having physical as much as spiritual need, subsisting in material impoverishment in the forests of America. Moreover, they characterized exchange with Indians as virtuous, potentially serving a role in evangelism. They therefore suggested the place of a Roman Catholic commerce with Indians. By raising up Roman Catholicism, trade promoters implied that exchange could be guided in universal standards of justice and equity, bringing Indians into closer *commerce*, or social union, and acting as a gift of grace to help Indians, not merely extracting natural resources to benefit metropolitan investors.<sup>92</sup>

The trade was characterized differently immediately after restrictions were first placed upon the inland trade. After following royal orders in 1685 and writing ordinances against individuals going into the woods to trade (in part to preserve town trading at Trois Rivieres, Montreal, and Quebec), the Intendant, Jacques de Meulles, sent to the King's attention a memoir defending a free inland trade. Denonville, it should be pointed out, had already implicated de Meulles of trafficking in fur when his memoir arrived. It moved explicitly against prevalent Colbertist fears that trade dispersed settlement and diverted colonists from farms to chase beaver hunters in the woods. "After having examined all sorts of reasons," De Meulles began his defense on strategic and economic grounds. These showed the virtues of having Frenchmen trading "among the Ottawa and all other nations more further removed." According to this view, the town trades, engrossed by a small number of merchants, did not greatly profit the Ottawa Indians who accordingly came in comparatively small numbers; meanwhile, very few *habitants* profited from such a trade. De Meulles saw more advantages in having two hundred canoes of Frenchmen going among the Indians than in 200 canoes of Indians coming to Montreal, as those going inland who found the profits too small would tire of

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<sup>91</sup>Bruce Trigger, "Early Native North American Responses to European Contact: Romantic versus Rationalistic Interpretations," *The Journal of American History* March 1991: 1195-1215.

<sup>92</sup>This characterization of trade in fact substantiates Miquelon's view that even the memoirs of the Deputies of Trade in France were not displaying new liberal views of trade, particularly the still marginal free trade ideas. Although some writers appear to promote trade liberalization, they did not advocate what were still radical free trade commercial theories. For the debate, see, Miquelon, *New France, 1701-1744*, p. 12; Thomas J. Schaeper, *The French Council of Commerce*, pp. 55-63; Scoville suggests that the Deputies revealed numerous liberal ideas in their general comments concerning the French economy in 1701, but returned to conventional arguments to protect local and regional economic interests. W.C. Scoville, "The French Economy in 1700-1701," pp. 249-250.

the work and employ their profits building houses and making habitations. Additionally, those four or five hundred men going far inland would render service to the colony by undertaking exploration and providing intelligence regarding the Iroquois. In such service, gentlemen and seigneurs could employ their children in the trade, similar to the *gros marchands* in France training up their children in commerce; finally, having larger numbers trading at 1200 or 1500 leagues inland without being required to purchase *congés* would allow traders to "sell all that they had in trade at a better price" to the Indians, having not had to purchase their permissions to go inland.<sup>93</sup>

It is not surprising that Louis de Baude, Comte de Frontenac characterized trade in virtuous terms when he argued for permission to build the post of Fort Frontenac where Indians could "refresh" themselves and obtain commodities at the best possible prices. The fort would therefore attract them to the French and away from the Albany merchants.<sup>94</sup> This reference to the Albany merchants was itself purposely loaded. Commerce, as trade promoters repeatedly urged, could facilitate conversion. Colbert himself sent to the Intendant Jacques Duchesneau de La Doussinière et d'Ambault a defense of the brandy trade in 1677, even if it was restricted to the limits of the colony. Colbert pointed out that despite the good reasons for the church to wish to stop the liquor trade with Indians, it was inappropriate for the church to implement the *cas réservé*, denying absolution and sacraments to traders. He argued that "to stop the abuse of a small number could stop a thing good in itself, wanting to abolish the commerce of a staple which would greatly attract trade, and keep these same Indians among the orthodox Christians, as the French are. The French would otherwise run the risk of losing this commerce and the Indians who would go to the English in Boston and the Dutch of Orange *who are heretics*." Colbert pointed out that the French loss of the commerce, by consequence, would spell their loss of the facility to raise up Indians to civil society, their conversion and maintenance "in the sentiments of the good and true religion."<sup>95</sup> Colbert had received these opinions through the "testimony of those who had been a long time in the country."

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<sup>93</sup>AOM, Opinion de M. de Meulles sur les congés qui se donnent au Canada pour aller en traite de pelleteries chez les nations sauvages, 1686, C/11a/121 f.6. The earlier ordinance of prohibition was signed 25 April 1685, and established the legal precedent for restriction by 1707. See it cited in *Mémoire du Roy*, 1706, F/3/9 f.51.

<sup>94</sup>AOM, Voyage de Mr. le Comte de Frontenac au Lac Ontario, 1673, C/13c/3, f. 19.

<sup>95</sup>Emphasis added to Colbert to Duchesneau, 28 April 1677, *Collection de manuscrits contenant lettres, mémoires et autres documents historiques relatifs à la Nouvelle-France* (Quebec: 1884) p. 263.

Such apologetics for trading, many of them claiming possibilities for the Indian's evangelism, remained used throughout the Restriction period.<sup>96</sup> In 1712, Philippe de Rigaud de Vaudreuil and his contemporary intendants, first Raudot, and then Michel Bégon de La Picardière -- all three having financial stakes in the trade -- began sending to the marine council repetitive, if not bothersome, memoirs urging an opened trade. The quill of the minister's secretary in Paris scratched in the margin of one letter: "He speaks of the necessity to reestablish the *congé*." Another letter co-written by governor and intendant, identified the salutary effects of opening up trade with Indians, where cheap trade goods could attract nations to the French, re-unite with the colony the errant *coureur de bois*, and even promote evangelism: "they request the re-establishment of the *congés* in the belief that it is necessary for the commerce of the colony, which is being lost to the English, and for religion," the secretary wrote.<sup>97</sup> Yet more correspondence led two years later to the secretary's note "to be posted for the council," providing members with a working definition of the *congé* while sorting out new policy: "The *congés* are permissions to go and trade with the Indians in the woods," the note stated. In the same meeting, members finally resolved to reopen aspects of the *congé* system for their persistent Canadian administrators.<sup>98</sup>

Most of this effort to highlight the benefits of an inland trade with Indians could be, and likely was, dismissed as tainted in interest. But that does not mean that all aspects of trade apologetics were wholeheartedly disregarded, particularly the notion of a "Catholic" commerce, where trade met not only humanitarian but also the virtuous ends of conversion to Roman Catholic Christendom. Writers suggested that Indians would face either traders following the Roman Catholic faith, and thereby meet just treatment according to universal truths, or Protestant traders, who, unguided by the same principles, would subject them to unjust prices. The fair behavior of Roman Catholic traders promised social adhesion that would tie Indian with French. Such idealized commerce was most clearly articulated in the anonymous Canadian memoir of 1705,<sup>99</sup> written at a time when Canadian merchants were lobbying to have the recently bankrupted *fermier*

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<sup>96</sup>See the summary of Vaudreuil and Raudot's depiction of the *congé*, contrary to the Jesuit's, François-Madeleine-Fortuné Ruelle D'Auteuil, "Mémoire de l'état présent du Canada, 1712," *RAPQ* (1922-23) p. 39.

<sup>97</sup>AOM, Margin notes on Vaudreuil and Begon letter, 12 November 1712, Decisions of the Council, C/11a/123/14.

<sup>98</sup>AOM, Council notes, 3 March 1716, C/11a/123, f.159.

<sup>99</sup>AOM, Mémoire sur le commerce en Canada de castors et autres pelterys, 1705, DFC, FM II/Mémoires/7/282, ff.1-14.

buying monopoly placed within the colony.<sup>100</sup> "On the Commerce in Beaver and other Furs in Canada" was expansive in the claims it made for trade. It began with the first explorations of America and moved to the events of the seventeenth century when the Crown, as the memorialists maintained, had led colonization not out of commercial consideration, but for the souls of the Indians, "who are found living in these sprawling lands in almost infinite number." (...mais surtout pour augmenter le gloire de dieu, et faire travailler à la conversion des Sauvages qui se trouvent habitantes de ces grandes terres dont le nombre est presque infinie.)<sup>101</sup> In the course of their explorations, discoverers had learned of the value of Canadian beaver and obtained exclusive privileges in trade, but never without the Crown's obligation on their part -- and here was the notion of Roman Catholic trade -- that such privileges would be granted only with the passage of priests, padres and missionaries inland, for the conversion of the Indians. The religious wars in France threw into confusion this subordination of commerce to evangelical ends, and the trade was monopolized among St. Malo, Dieppe, Rouen, and Bordeaux merchants -- a possible allusion to towns with large Huguenot communities who won many of the trading rights to the New World's mission fields. As the memorialists suggested of these merchants, they were led by few scruples, exchanged with Indians on blatantly unfair footings, and subsequently built vast fortunes by peddling goods of little value (qu'ils faisoient à tous leurs échanges avec des denrées de petite valeur").<sup>102</sup>

The memorial then asserts that it was Cardinal Richelieu who responded to these developments by forming his Company of a Hundred Associates, apparently because he had learned of the docility and receptivity of the Indian to the faith, and the great good that the kingdom could enjoy by attracting their peltry. To that end, a great many people had come to found their affairs upon the trade in beaver, discoveries were made along the St. Lawrence, and Indian families located on both banks of it, particularly at Tadoussac, who now devoted themselves to killing beaver and other animals for their pelts.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup>On a comparable memoir claiming that allowing Louisiana colonists to sell pelts in France would excite them to trade zealously, AOM, Mémoire du Sr. le Gac sur l'état lequel a été trouvée la Colonie de la Louisiane en 1718, DFC, III/Mémoires/9/8 f.81.

<sup>101</sup>*Ibid.*, f.1.

<sup>102</sup>*Ibid.*, f. 2; On the early trade and its share between both Huguenot and Roman Catholic communities in Rouen, see Gayle K. Brunelle, *The New World Merchants of Rouen: 1559-1630* (Sixteenth century essays & studies; v.16) pp. 52-53; 147; see, also, H.P. Biggar, *The Early Trading Companies of New France: A Contribution to the Industry of Commerce and Discovery in North America*, (New York: Argonaut Press, 1965).

<sup>103</sup>*Ibid.*, f. 4.

Here, then, was the beginnings of a new characterization of trade at the turn of the eighteenth century. As Richelieu had apparently recognized, commerce constituted a valuable intercourse between people -- and the dual meaning of French *commerce*, one economic, the other social, was advantageous for this purpose. Such commerce was undertaken upon his understanding of the "docility and receptivity" of the Indian to evangelism. *Bon commerce*, then, communicated as much a social intercourse as an economic adventure, one that could be undertaken expressly with the view of evangelizing the French trading partners. The memorialists had also deliberately shown the Company of a Hundred Associates as something more than a joint stock approach to gain -- which Charlevoix, by contrast, would argue had not been the case -- and rather as a means by which to open avenues for evangelism by allowing for the building of seminaries and colleges. Richelieu, after all, had reacted to the monopoly gains of the *traite* among merchants not only because they threatened to introduce errant faith among the Indians, *per se*, but also because they undertook a fundamentally unjust commerce among Indians, one founded upon the exchange of cheap, low-value goods in return for high value furs.

One other interesting feature of the memorial should be highlighted. It becomes optimistic of the possibility that trade could benefit the Indians as much as the motherland. The St. Lawrence River would make the French sovereign an absolute master of the country and would enable him to make not only provinces, but *kingdoms* of all the savages who were not his subjects;<sup>104</sup> and that by commerce made with them, benefits would be won for Old France and its new colony. Goods from Old France would flow to New in plenitude: Amien offering up its serge and small wares; Beauvais its ratine fabrics; Rouen its shoes, thread, small (*mercier*) luxuries and blankets; Brittany its thread and cloth; Leon its arms and hardware; Marseilles its oils, soaps and fruit; Languedoc its woolen cloth; and Bordeaux its eaux-de-vie and grapes for wine. Here, then, were the makings of a commonwealth of commerce, strengthening Old France, expanding New, embracing the Indian in a style reminiscent of an age before the divisive wars of religion. A just commerce would be subordinated below the Holy Roman Catholic Church and the Divine dictate to evangelize. The memoir sustains this argument near its conclusion, when it argues that an encouragement to the trade, in this case through the transfer of the fur selling monopoly to the colonists, would facilitate

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<sup>104</sup>*Ibid.*, ff.12-13.

evangelism. Indians, the memoir stated, would more readily take on the religion of those people whom "they negotiate with, drink with, eat with and sleep with."<sup>105</sup>

To characterize those drawing attention to such virtues in the Indian trade as members of a "party" is possible, but only if a caveat is placed upon the use of the term. Most seventeenth and early eighteenth century writers, particularly of published travel and exploration accounts, were fully aware of current politics, key interest groups within the metropolis, and what Germaine Warkentin has identified in Radisson's narratives as the "'I' within such competing groups." These writers seeking to advance their own interests often deliberately made allusions to contemporary rituals familiar to upper ranked readers, and wove within objective description numerous allusions to courtly society and customs.<sup>106</sup> French writers employing trade humanism were themselves drawing on a process familiar to its courtly readers as *civilité*, or *politesse*, in which the behaviour of individuals was regulated according to codes and "outward bodily propriety,"<sup>107</sup> in which comportment, facial express, dress and other "outward" behaviour becomes the expression of the inner man. In the case of Indian trade promoters, the innovation was to expand such a process of "civilization" to the "barbarians" themselves. Even the ways in which they characterized the exchange leading to such civility was long familiar to metropolitan audiences.

Another qualification of the notion of "party" is necessary. That the term is anachronistic in many respects suggests that a group explicitly and subversively countered the Crown's policy of restriction. A clearer understanding would picture individuals in similar economic straits contributing to a movement of opinion, along the lines of a bourgeois-driven, rational "sphere" formed around the idea of a virtuous Indian trade. In this context, numerous, unassociated writers drew attention to the benefits of trading with Indians and argued in rational terms a direction in policy that protected their commercial interests.<sup>108</sup> The "consulting" role played by French merchants in service of

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<sup>105</sup>"... ils prendront aisément celle (la religion) de ceux avec lesquels ils négocieront, boiront, mangeront et dormiront." *Ibid.*, f. 14.

<sup>106</sup> Germaine Warkentin, "Discovering Radisson: A Renaissance Adventurer Between Two Worlds," Jennifer S.H. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert, *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1996).pp. 43-73.

<sup>107</sup>Norberg Elias, *The History of Manners, The Civilizing Process: Volume I* trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), pp. 54-56.

<sup>108</sup>Arlette Farge, *Subversive Words: Public Opinion in Eighteenth-Century France*, trans. Rosemary Morris (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995). Habermas' model is valuably applied in this case, see Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994) pp. 51-55; 67-69. Baker provides correctives to Habermas' view of eighteenth century French society, Keith

the crown has recently been highlighted in Schaeper's work.<sup>109</sup> Periods of trade restriction in Canada, indeed, traditionally sparked the coalescence of groups who sought to win or defend trading rights and freedoms through such a consulting function. The Abbé Belmont identified two "parties" in Canada as having formed lobbies for and against the rum trade, unified enough to send articulate arguments to French referees.<sup>110</sup> The 1705 report also noted that "two interests" had already formed around the matter of trade within the Colony, "so opposed": the one representing the *fermier* and King, badly in debt and wishing to curtail trade, the other, representing the colonists, who emphasized the trade's political necessity in order to keep Indians in alliances and away from the English. The report stated that the colonist interest was ceaselessly requesting trade liberty and those who spoke in favour of the reunion and all its abuses had been the very ones whose affairs had flourished while the king had lost millions of *livres* in extended goods.<sup>111</sup>

The promotion of expanded trade can be located not only within correspondence to the marine ministry. With the beginnings of the Restriction era, a number of published narratives and histories recounted the exploration and discoveries of Le Chevalier de La Salle that clearly attempted to identify the virtues of an inland Indian trade. These published works suggest that an influential group of trade promoters existed in France that lent support and directed the notion of a virtuous Indian trade. A good example of such metropolitan influence is offered by the circle of Jansenist investors who transformed Chrestien Le Clercq's *Premier Établissement de la Foy dans la Nouvelle France* for its Paris publication in 1691,<sup>112</sup> and made virtuous exchange a hallmark feature of the work.<sup>113</sup> Shea and Delanglez have highlighted chapters they suspected were forgeries written by metropolitan commercial backers. Hamilton has argued, quite convincingly, that the entire two volumes of the *Premier Établissement* were forged by the Jansenists Abbé Claude Bernou, Eusèbe Renaudot, and Antoine Arnauld, individuals who had already penned memorials describing the work of La Salle and, following the discovery, were interested in representing the explorer's journey in ways that aimed to

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Michael Baker, "Defining the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century France: Variations on a Theme by Habermas," in Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994) pp. 181-211, particularly p. 183; 190.

<sup>109</sup>Schaeper, pp. 11-13.

<sup>110</sup>Belmont, pp. 9-11.

<sup>111</sup>AOM, Mémoire concernant le commerce, la navigation et les colonies, ff. 80-82.

<sup>112</sup>See Raphael N. Hamilton, "Who Wrote *Premier Établissement de la Foy dans la Nouvelle France*?" *Canadian Historical Review* Vol. LVII(3) September 1976, pp. 263-288.

<sup>113</sup>Chrétien LeClercq, *Etablissement de la Foy dans la Nouvelle France*, Vols I & II (Paris: 1691).

save the reputations and some of the personal financial losses sustained by the group after the Crown began restricting further colonization schemes inland.<sup>114</sup>

Whether it involved part or all of the Le Clercq narrative, this metropolitan influence in a Recollet text was likely not a coincidence. Since Jean Talon's reintroduction of the order to New France, the Recollets had not embraced the Jesuit opposition to inland expansion but instead accompanied individuals who established the new trading posts under Frontenac's supervision. Not really the "lenient confessors" who ignored the mortally sinful rum trade, as early histories suggested, the Recollets instead had a different approach to mission work and the French communities upon whom they relied. They did not adopt the Jesuit reservation philosophy but instead offered little criticism of interactions between European and Indian communities, mostly because as a poor mendicant order they occupied a less fortunate position from which to castigate closely situated communities and the trade that arose from them. Besides bringing to America the liberal views of commerce that the Franciscans had earlier developed, the Recollets also brought the idea of the real need for trade that a better institutionally supported Jesuit might disdain. These friars had often acted as *almoners* in French army postings, and through *lettres patentes* won permission to live in interior regions of America as "apostolic missionaries," where they lived on the charity of Indians and French inhabitants alike.<sup>115</sup>

A metropolitan influence upon the text becomes clear in the ways that Le Clercq's narrative was written as an only moderately disguised apology for the inland commerce established with La Salle's explorations. The hurried and mistake-ridden narrative linked the new discoveries and consequent establishment of trading outposts with a larger evangelical movement divinely ordained by God. It praised the trading establishment of Fort Frontenac (rebuilt the year before the work was published), lauded the controversial trading-governor, Frontenac (to whom the work was dedicated), and, perhaps most importantly, linked trade with Christianization.<sup>116</sup> The narrative's true innovation lay in implying a clerical and divine approval of the commerce in furs, specifically by suggesting that commerce offered a secular means to Christian conversion.

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<sup>114</sup>Shea's introduction to his translation of LeClercq. Hamilton, pp. 269-273; 285-288.

<sup>115</sup>I am relying on excerpted translations of Documents 6 (28 May 1720) and 8 (1751) regarding the mendicant postings in North America, in Finbar Kenneally ed., *United States Documents in the Propaganda Fide Archives: A Calendar*, First Series, Volume I (Washington: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1966) pp. 3-4.

<sup>116</sup>Le Clercq states that Fort Frontenac "maintenant par ces moyens, l'alliance et le commerce avec eux, et les disposait à embrasser le christianisme, qui estoit l'intention principale de ce nouvel établissement," Vol. II, p. 119; also, 112-114; 118-120.



Its questionable authority and quite radical views of French colonization and evangelism likely led to its suppression soon after publication, although the full reasons for such are not known. Like many other suppressed French book titles, however, it is likely that neither its sales nor its circulation were probably greatly affected.<sup>117</sup> Large extracts were to find further circulation through the plagiarism of the controversial Recollet, Louis Hennepin, whose rewritten description of the Mississippi explorations in his *New Discovery* also bore Le Clercq's apology for commerce.<sup>118</sup>

Whatever its readership, the narrative indicates the newer commercial values of Le Clercq's age, where quite literally, *l'établissement de la foi* among the Indian nations followed exploration and expanded trade. Denying most of the Jesuit claims to converts -- pointing out that real mission work had ceased during the Jesuit era in the New World<sup>119</sup> -- Le Clercq argued that God had held back the conversion of the Indians until he saw fit, until now, when the French were making their most exciting discoveries inland. As Cartier had been used by God to extend his kingdom over the waters two centuries before, now God approved and hastened the work of La Salle:<sup>120</sup> the Recollet narrative drew particular attention to the explorer establishing Fort Frontenac and promptly granting lands to the mendicant order for expanded missionary work. This attention was ironic, considering the ire Fort Frontenac's construction drew from other religious orders. Le Clercq venerated this fortification, "la plus hardie, la plus combatuë, et le plus utile au païs."<sup>121</sup> And completely ignoring Frontenac's wrangles with almost the entire clerical community in New France, the narrative lays stress on the governor's role as *apostolic syndic* of the Recollet missions, accepting on their behalf the grounds dedicated to their missions at Fort Frontenac, the seignery of Beaubassin, and properties

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<sup>117</sup>Shea offers no explanation for the suppression. David T. Pottinger discusses the many titles suppressed by the royal censor, and the ease by which they continued to be sold -- at enormous prices. *The French Book Trade in the Ancien Regime, 1500-1791* (Harvard University Press, 1958), pp.60; 72-73.

<sup>118</sup>The second London edition of Hennepin's work (1698) contained the prefatorial statement that William III should turn his attention towards the North American Indian so that they might enjoy converting to the Christian faith and have his "Fierceness and rude Manners softened and civiliz'd by the Commerce of a Polite and Generous Nation, rul'd by the most Magnanimous King in the World." Louis Hennepin, *A New Discovery of a Vast Country in America* Vol. I (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1903) p.4.

<sup>119</sup>Shea provides valuable editorial comments and context. See his translation, Chrétien Le Clercq, *First Establishment of the Faith in New France*, trans. and ed. John Gilmary Shea (New York: John G. Shea, 1881). See his translated volumes. I, pp. 49; and II, pp. 9-13; 35. In the French original, see Vol. II, pp.12-19; 24-26.

<sup>120</sup>*Ibid.*, vol I, pp.1-3; vol. II, pp. 116-118.

<sup>121</sup>*Ibid.* vol. II, p. 106.

granted by La Salle<sup>122</sup> -- all figuring in reality as points of his new inland trading system. Le Clercq's history, then, made the argument that discoveries inland brought about trade expansion which announced the intention of God to convert the Indians, with traders like De Luth prompted by God's design for evangelism,<sup>123</sup> and the private interests of La Salle among the Illinois becoming a way to grant them "la connoissance du vray Dieu, pour les deffendre contre leurs enemis, leur apporter des armes, & les autres commoditez de la vie."<sup>124</sup>

Trade promotion becomes, then, thematic in the narrative. Its suggestion that divine design had prompted secularized explorations and trade expansion, however, was further articulated in the work ascribed to Henry, Chevalier de Tonti, dated 1697. Again published in the period of trade Restriction, it matched the Le Clercq narrative's portrayal of trade. Like the Le Clercq text, it did not discuss mere commercial profits won in inland ventures, but, rather, blurred evangelism with the disbursement of European material goods. In this recounting of La Salle's exploration to the mouth of the Mississippi, said to be written by the explorer's lieutenant, there were no references to cheating in trade, to the destruction of Indians by brandy, or to outright profits in commerce. This is a strange omission considering the financial straits of the man to whom the work is ascribed. The assistant to La Salle and later promoter of inland trade<sup>125</sup> was one of many upper-ranked French citizens who had been impoverished in the latter part of the seventeenth century and hoped to augment their finances in military service and the trade opportunities that such service opened.

*Dernières découvertes* appeared in 1697 amidst growing interest in the Mississippi area and was translated into English in 1698. It remains a problematic source because Tonti denied having ever written it.<sup>126</sup> Its obscure authorship, numerous errors,

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<sup>122</sup>*Ibid.* vol. II, pp. 118.

<sup>123</sup>*Ibid.* vol. II, in particular, Chapter XXI; pp.137-138; He writes: "les grandes découvertes qui se sont faites par ordre du Roy sous le commandement de Monsieur de Frontenac, et la conduite de Monsieur de la Sale, comme estant celle qui promettoit de plus grands fruits pour l'establissement de la Foy." Vol. II, p. 138.

<sup>124</sup>*Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 156.

<sup>125</sup>Introduction to Daniel Coxe, *A Description of the English Province of Carolana, by the Spanish call'd Florida and by the French La Louisiana*, (1722 reprint by University Presses of Florida, 1976), pp. xiv - xxli. Galloway shows the enduring ethnohistoric value of Tonti's authentic correspondence in Patricia K. Galloway, "Henri de Tonti du Village des Chacta, 1702: The Beginning of the French Alliance," in Galloway, ed., *La Salle and His Legacy: Frenchmen and Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley* (Jackson : University Press of Mississippi, 1982) pp. 146-176.

<sup>126</sup>Gabriel Marest reported that Tonti denied the authorship in Letter to Pere Germon, 9 Novembre 1712, *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, nouvelle édition, Vol VI, (Paris: 1781) p. 323. Murphy cites *Dernières*

and quick suppression in France make it less a reliable perspective on the La Salle discoveries than a valuable source for understanding commercial promotion in France. The narrative likely had some roots to Tonti himself. Given its date of publication, the precarious state of Tonti's fortunes at the time, and the ongoing need for the Tonti - La Salle company, which formed to establish the trade concessions earlier granted by La Salle in the Illinois region, it seems reasonable to assume that *Dernières découvertes* was written by a close supporter of the company, whether a family member or investor in France, who was advancing trading interests in court.<sup>127</sup> It then shares with the editors of the Le Clercq narrative a specific publishing context and, not surprisingly, a similar rendering of trade as an essential, virtuous undertaking in America.

The narrative is most remarkable for its characterization of the Indian Trade. The numerous descriptions of Tonti and La Salle exchanging merchandise for goods is noteworthy considering that these matters were never discussed in Tonti's authentic correspondence with the ministry of marine.<sup>128</sup> Furthermore, such exchange is represented in an idealized light, becoming an humanitarian endeavour which underscored crucial differences in sophistication but identical interests between European and Indians. The opening section of the English translation has Tonti apologizing for the work's simplicity of style and lack of "noble and pomp descriptions," which he said might be attributable to his life in America, as "I may have contracted some thing from the Commerce of the Savages of *America* whom I have so long conversed."<sup>129</sup> The narrator later states that these people were men but in name, living without laws, arts, religion, or subordination;<sup>130</sup> these Indians lived wandering lives, took and quit wives at will, and abandoned without consideration the lands they had begun to cultivate. This quite typical

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*découvertes* as Tonti's in his bibliographical section, Edmund Robert Murphy, *Henry de Tonty: Fur Trader of the Mississippi* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1941) p. 98.

<sup>127</sup>Murphy, pp. 7-12.

<sup>128</sup>See, for instance, the complete omission of trade descriptions in his *Relation* to Pontchartrain, "Relation de Henri de Tonty: Enterprises de M. de La Salle de 1678 à 1683, 14 novembre 1684, trans. Melville B. Anderson (Chicago: The Caxton Club, 1898). Instead, Tonti reported the English slave traders, who brought guns, fabrics and other wares inland, presenting a threat to French interests. Library of Congress Microfilm, Tonti à d'Iberville, 14 March 1702; Letter, 23 July 1682. Henri Tonti papers, 1650-1704, Library of Congress Microfilm.

<sup>129</sup>Chevalier Tonti, *An Account of Monsieur de la Salle's Last Expedition and Discoveries in North America presented to the French King*, (London: 1698), pp: 4-5. The French edition merely states "Qu'on ne s'attende pas ici à des descriptions pompeuses, dont on a coûtume d'embellir ces sortes d'ouvrages; on verra régner partout une grande simplicité jointe à une grande exactitude; mon style semblera peut-être rude et grossier, et c'est en cela qu'il paroitra plus conforme au naturel de ces pays ou de ces peuples sauvages." *Dernières découvertes*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>130</sup> *Dernières découvertes*, p.10.

seventeenth ethnological description, though, becomes unique when the narrator states that, notwithstanding these characteristics, Indians well understood their interests and had the sense “qui les rend capables de negociation, de commerce, de conseil...”<sup>131</sup>

The author then draws attention to the way Indians sat "gravely in counsel" to decide matters, the sensibility an Indian exhibited in evaluating trade goods and the solid alliances based upon generosity, usually the European's.<sup>132</sup> The exchanges that ensued between French and Indian did not lead to one-sided profits, but to friendship and mutual benefits. The Illinois Indians, for instance, whom Tonti relied upon for furs at Fort Crèvecoeur, were pictured not so much as a profitable market for the French to vent goods, as a people who benefited from French protection and commerce; the speeches they made allowed the Illinois to receive their offers, not as *sauvages*, “mais comme des hommes tout-à-fait civilisez.”<sup>133</sup> When the French presented gifts for the corn they had previously consumed from Illinois stores, they found the Indians returning goods with generosity; a feast for three days followed when foodstuffs were returned with other gifts (Tonti points out that the French were not miserly with their brandy), and friendships were established. The narrator exclaimed that “nous reconnûmes en ceux-ci beaucoup d’humanité, et une très grande disposition au commerce de la société civile.”<sup>134</sup> This type of exchange, then, took place out of mutual supply, to meet mutual need. Describing his encounter with one Chickasaw, who gave the French presents of food, La Salle is said to have given in return “quelques couteaux, et quelques haches;”<sup>135</sup> In another context, where the French encountered an Indian nation on the Lower Mississippi, the chief greatly appreciated a gold-inlaid sword; as for the chief's wife, to whom Tonti had presented an elaborate box inlaid with tortoise shells and a small knife inside, her reaction gave him reason to think that “ces femmes n’ont pas tout-à-fait le coeur sauvage, et qu’elles pourroient bien s’apprivoiser avec nous.”<sup>136</sup> Meanwhile, another gift given to a young man resulted in his giving a valuable collar; and the French later received game and fruit for food, which they returned with gifts of liqueurs.<sup>137</sup> In a speech Tonti delivered to Arkansas Indians, he offered the protection of the King of France, less to severely rule them as to maintain them in peace, to protect them from their enemies by

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<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p.14; 55.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p.55.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, p.58.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p.157

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.* p.170.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.* pp.170-171.

the force of French arms, to offer them French arts and French riches. He told them that they and La Salle were among them less to steal their treasures than to serve them, less to take their lands as much to show them how to cultivate them, and finally to open up to them French commerce, commerce literally meaning intercourse or social interaction with the French.<sup>138</sup>

If Tonti was the author of this narrative, Giraud has pointed out that he was hardly disinterested in such matters.<sup>139</sup> The trade concessions he and others had won through La Salle brought few returns to offset the expenses of western trade. The Tonti narrative, though, showed a way in which such trade was now described; the trading posts were depicted as being in the King's interest by meeting Indian needs, and bringing them closer to the French through, ultimately, the softening of their manners. As the narrator suggested, the savage heart could be tamed (*apprivoisé*) through the trade in European goods.<sup>140</sup>

This argument was carried to a conclusion in Claude-Charles Bacqueville, le Sieur de La Potherie's history of New France, first published in Paris in 1722, but written and approved for publication as early as 1702, during the Restriction period.<sup>141</sup> Like the impoverished Tonti, whose fortunes rested upon commerce rather than ancient family fortunes, La Potherie did not write his voluminous history of Canada as a disinterested writer. He was born overseas in French Guadeloupe after his father, a descendent of an established, provincial family, had embarked on intercolonial trade and was nearly ruined by plantations fires and English privateers.<sup>142</sup> Family connections with one of the Ponchartrains landed the impoverished son a posting in the marine service in Quebec in 1689. He took part in Le Moyne d'Iberville's campaign against the English in Hudson Bay in 1697 and a year later filled the new position of comptroller of fortifications in Canada, a position in which he would have undoubtedly seen trade possibilities and been well aware of the implications of the Crown's restrictions set forth

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<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.

<sup>139</sup> Marcel Giraud, *Histoire de la Louisiane française*, Vol. I, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1953), pp. 10-11.

<sup>140</sup> Tonti, p.171.

<sup>141</sup> Claude Charles Le Roy, Bacqueville de La Potherie, *Histoire de l'Amérique septentrionale: contenant le Voyage de Fort de Nelson... la Description du Fleuve de Saint Laurent, le gouvernement de Québec, des Trois Rivières & de Montréal depuis 1534 jusqu'à 1701*, 4 Vols. (Paris, 1722); The work was republished with identical illustrations under the title *Voyage de l'Amérique* (Amsterdam: 1723); and republished again in 1753 in Paris.

<sup>142</sup> See biographical note on La Potherie, Séraphin Marion, *Relations des voyageurs français en Nouvelle-France au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Les Presses Universitaires de France, 1923) p. 97. Robert Le Blant, *Les sources narratives du début du XVIIIe siècle* (Montréal: Éditions P. Pradeu, 1936), pp. 68-76.

the year before. He was recalled to family matters in Guadeloupe in 1700 and little is known of his activities prior to his publication's appearance two decades later.<sup>143</sup> He likely continued to invest in shipping ventures from Guadeloupe that took on furs in Canada, as a letter in the marine archives suggests.<sup>144</sup>

His narrative began aboard one of the naval ships taking part in the Hudson Bay campaign led by d'Iberville, ending with the conquering of York Fort and the continued French possession of the trade at Fort Bourbon. Although La Potherie's northern descriptions were of questionable accuracy,<sup>145</sup> the work's most imaginative turns occur in its discussion of trade. Indeed, few, if any, published narratives preceding the book devoted so much attention to the trade with Indians and idealizing it as mutually benefiting both parties in exchange. In the case of these Indians, whose fierceness La Potherie claimed had prevented them from trading with other Indian nations, their disagreeable passions were subdued after they saw these Europeans' good intentions: they cried and jumped for joy, convinced of their friendship and the *bon commerce* which they now saw at hand.<sup>146</sup> La Potherie subsequently provided two chapters to describing the trade and trade customs between Europeans and Indians -- one chapter is entitled "Détail des peuples qui viennent faire la traite au Fort de Nelson."<sup>147</sup> The history itself was given over to describing humanitarian benefits of trade and depicting *commerce* variously as trade and social interaction leading to the Indians' civilization.<sup>148</sup> This ideal depiction of trade is readily seen in the first volume's prefatorial illustration (Figure 1-1) which

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<sup>143</sup>Blair's introductory remarks to her translation of Book Two of *Histoire de l'Amérique septentrionale*, in, Emma Helen Blair, ed., *The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley and Region of the Great Lakes* (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1911) p. 273.

<sup>144</sup>AOM, A legal complaint was made by a Guadeloupe resident by the name of La Potherie against the Company of Beaver in 1711. See La Potherie to Beauharnois, 6 January 1711, Fonds ministériel, B/33 Correspondance envoyée par le roi, 1711.

<sup>145</sup>Introduction to *Twenty Years of York Factory: Jérémie's Account of Hudson Strait and York Factory, 1694-1714*, ed., R. Douglas & J.N. Wallace, (Ottawa: 1926), p. 3. E.E. Rich *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, Vol. I (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1958) pp. 349-35

<sup>146</sup>La Potherie, Vol. I, pp.76-77.

<sup>147</sup>La Potherie, Vol. I, lettre VII, see also, lettre X, "Idée du Commerce," and, providing description of the Montreal trade, see lettre XII, particularly pp. 364-365.

<sup>148</sup>The opening sentences of his second volume, for instance, suggests commerce had "tamed" Indians inland (*Le Commerce a apprivoisé ces Peuples* ). Vol. II, p.3.



Figure 1-1: Frontispiece Illustration from Claude Charles Le Roy, Bacqueville de La Potherie's *Histoire de l'Amérique septentrionale* (1723), University of Alberta, The Bruce Peel Special Collections Library.

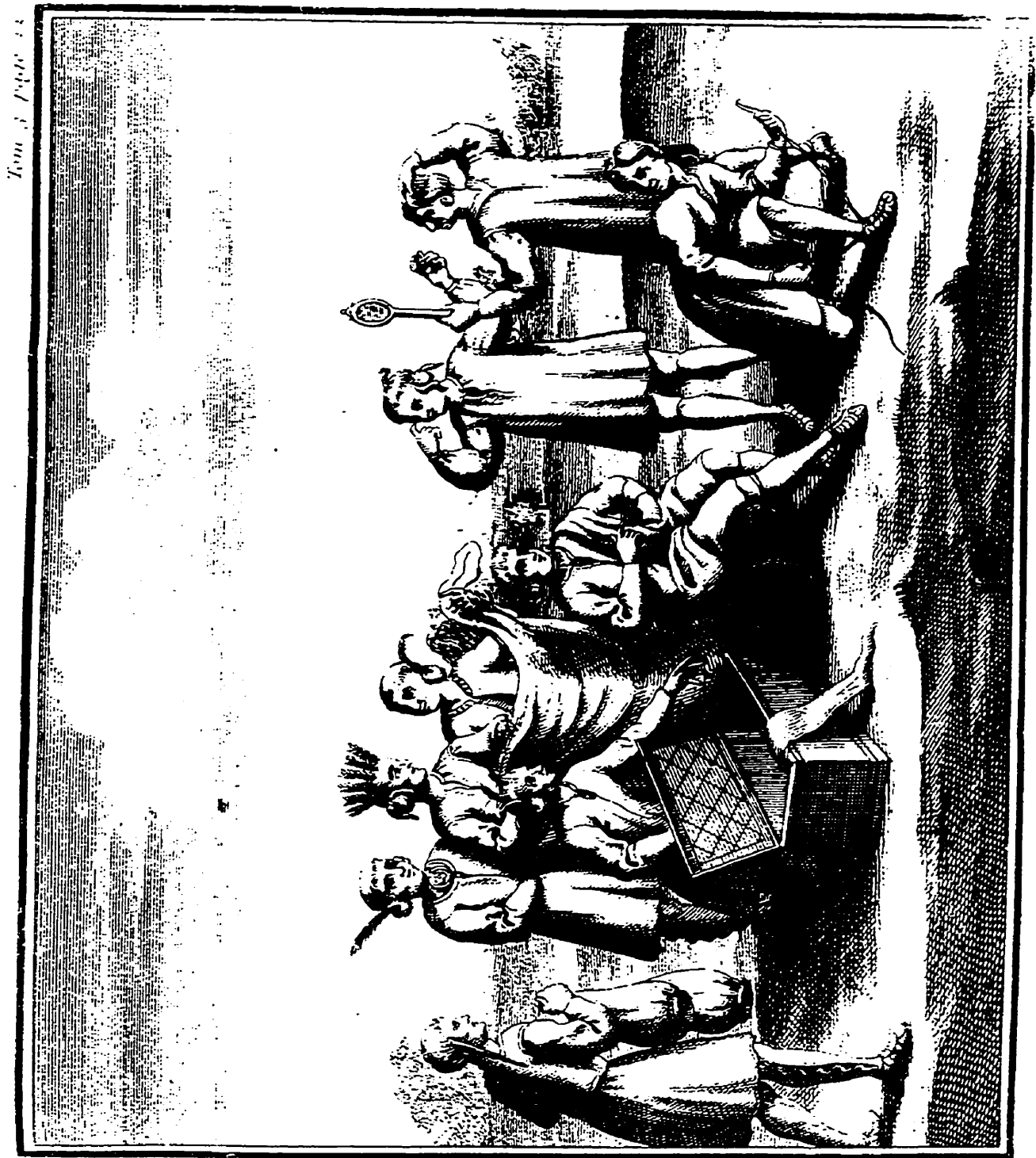


Figure 1-2: Book Illustration, from Claude Charles Le Roy, Bacqueville de La Potherie's *Histoire de l'Amérique septentrionale* (1723), University of Alberta, The Bruce Peel Special Collections Library.



showed Europeans arriving by boat and meeting a group of Indians on the American shore, a large crate opened and trading knives arranged on the beach. The illustration does not show liquor; it also does not show the furs Indians exchanged for the goods. It shows, rather, goods being given as gifts, meeting the needs of Indians. Given the contemporary understanding of *civilité*, some of those needs would be in outward comportment and ornament. Thus, necessities include the ornamental boxes, the rage of Parisian fashion among the upper ranks, mirrors, scissors, and ribbons. The knives communicate both utility and a softening of manners. The same depiction of trade, and goods serving a civilizing function, appears in the work's third volume, an illustration in which depicts Indians (Figure 1-2) scrutinizing European goods in an opened trading chest, trade again depicted as a gift-giving event. These pictures mark the appearance of a trading chest in European artwork depicting contact with Americans, symbolizing European abundance and beneficence, and a trade which bestowed sophisticated goods upon indigent and needy Amerindians.<sup>149</sup> But they also communicate a contemporary notion that manners could be improved, softened through the use of goods.

A second innovation in La Potherie's text is important to note. Downplaying the role of missionaries -- though respectful of such individuals as Gabriel Marest -- the writer depicted traders in quite obviously heroic terms. Traders offered Indians, not rum and unfair prices, but European goods of great value and utility. Nicholas Perrot, upon whose memoir La Potherie drew for his history, is not shown unfairly profiteering, but distributing useful goods among Indians in his westward explorations. A corollary can be cited in La Jérémie's description of the Hudson Bay trade at Fort Bourbon, appearing in 1720 as part of Jean Frederic Bernard's volumes of northern exploration. Jérémie, too, showed Frenchmen providing "all kinds of delicacies and also trading goods, which the natives greatly needed,"<sup>150</sup> and, like La Potherie, Jérémie illustrated Indians seeking trade to enable them to survive their northern locality. It was Jérémie who made the oft-quoted statement, later rejected by ethnohistorians, that Indians become so dependent on trading goods and weapons, that "many of them died of hunger, for they had lost their skill with the bow since Europeans had supplied them with firearms."<sup>151</sup>

The earliest sections of La Potherie's narrative placed considerable stress upon the importance and utility of European manufactured goods. La Salle was described

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<sup>149</sup>See pictures in preface of the first volume, and printed in the third volume, p. 221

<sup>150</sup>Jérémie's Account, p. 40.

<sup>151</sup>*Ibid.*, p.40.

as carrying merchandise of all sorts to the Miamis Indians, “pour l’utilité de ceux qui voudroient lier commerce avec lui.”<sup>152</sup> Following the arctic landing of his ship, the *Pélican*, the writer described Inuit hunters entering into friendship with the crew who could not stop them from shedding their fur clothing to procure knives, scissors, needles, bells, playing cards, music paper, and “généralement tout ce qu'on leur donnoit leur étoit précieux.”<sup>153</sup> Voyageurs took their furs, regarded by their Indian hunters as worthless anyway, in exchange for European wares which the Indians regarded as extremely precious (*qui leur étoit extrêmement précieux*).<sup>154</sup> To punctuate this argument, the writer linked manufactured goods to evangelical ends. La Potherie's most vivid descriptions concerned the knives, hatchets, and iron weapons Perrot carried inland, which astonished the Indians. In their reverence for these goods, they regarded Europeans as Spirits and Gods, and hence, felt protected by them and looked to them to become mediators in all their quarrels.<sup>155</sup> Although accepting a role as mediator, Perrot corrected Indians who believed that he was a god, telling them that he was only a Frenchman, “Que le véritable esprit qui avoit tout fait avoit donné aux François la connoissance du fer et la faculté de le manier comme de la pâte,” and that out of God’s pity for the Indians, he had permitted the French to establish themselves inland;<sup>156</sup> as the beaver was esteemed among the French, there was likely some way to make commerce with the Indians.<sup>157</sup>

The trade apologetics of the work were further developed in La Potherie's description of Perrot exploring the territory to the south of the Great Lakes where he finally met the Miamis Indians. Distributing gifts, he announced himself as the dawning of a light that was coming into their lands. He gave gifts of guns, more useful than their arrows, to protect themselves from their enemies and to use in the hunt.<sup>158</sup> Then he threw awls and knives to the women, and told them to throw away their bone tools, that “ces couteaux vous seront plus utiles” to skin beavers and cut meat.<sup>159</sup> The effect of such goods was immediate. When Perrot refused to venerate the Indians’ Manitou, the chief

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<sup>152</sup>La Potherie, Vol. II, p.13.

<sup>153</sup>Vol. I, p. 81-82.

<sup>154</sup>Vol. II, p. 86; 89.

<sup>155</sup>Vol. II, p.87.

<sup>156</sup>Vol. II, p.89.

<sup>157</sup>Vol. II, p. 90.

<sup>158</sup>Vol. II, pp. 108-109.

<sup>159</sup>Ibid.

asked Perrot for an introduction to the French God, who had taught the French to make hatchets, kettles, and all which men needed.<sup>160</sup>

### III

Anonymous memoirs and narratives from the period, then, suggest that individuals were anxious to characterize trade as a useful vent of goods to Amerindians, and identify the possibilities of an exchange that benefited Amerindians more than hindered them, a gift from a civilized people to the *sauvages*. In doing so, promoters altered the traditional usage of the term, *faire la traite*, commonly translated as "the fur trade." Some attention should therefore be drawn to possible semantic changes occurring in written representations of the Indian trade.

The oft-used expression, *faire la traite*, had been a common business term long before the Restriction era. But it is important to point out that the term did not always communicate contemporary French expressions for exchange, and, in many of its earlier usage, it suggested an "extraction" of resources from America. Paul Le Jeune suggested *traite* was a word of special usage in New France in his *relation* for 1637;<sup>161</sup> the *Dictionnaire universel* of 1697 defined its entry for *traite* quite narrowly, as "commerce avec les Sauvages," and exemplified it with the Canadian fur trade, undertaken with the people there, the "Yuroquois."<sup>162</sup> Previously, the term had found customary service in references to business undertaken by *sociétés* of merchants who formed outfits "pour aller en traite de pelleteries chez la nations sauvages." The 1697 agreement between a *société* and its inland representative showed this traditional use of the word, when it stated that he was to go inland and "traite chez les Outaounais," the contract containing the customary permission for him to "traiter à mon proffit mon fusil et ma couverte."<sup>163</sup>

The striking feature of seventeenth century semantics concerning *traite* (noun, feminine) is that the term referred not to people undertaking trade, but to the extraction of a resource. Traditionally, tax farms in France were characterized as *traites*,

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<sup>160</sup>*Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 109-111.

<sup>161</sup>*Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, ed. and trans. Reuben Gold Thwaites (New York: Pageant Books, 1959 re-edition) Vol. XII, Hereafter "Jesuit Relations," p. 248.

<sup>162</sup>"TRAITE, signifie aussi, Trafic, commerce avec les Sauvages. En Canada on fait la *traite* des castors avec les Yroquois. Il est allé à la *traite* à Montreal." *Dictionnaire universel, contenant généralement tous les mots françois tant vieux que modernes, & les termes de toutes les sciences et des arts*, (La Haye et à Rotterdam: Chez Arnout & Reinier Leers, 1690).

<sup>163</sup>NAC, As seen in "Traite chez les Outaouais, 1697," MG 18 C15.

which individuals won rights to exploit. The earlier expression of the word in fact seems to have gathered meaning from the verb, *traitter*, traceable to the sixteenth century, meaning "to milk."<sup>164</sup> It was this term that was associated with the transportation of slaves *by force* from Africa, the *traite du négro*.<sup>165</sup> Rather than a commercial negotiation with Indians, this word was formed to describe Europeans taking human or natural resources from foreign shores. Indeed, the oldest meaning of *traite* (*traïtte*, or *traict*) literally signified the *exploitation* (in English, the "extraction") of resources,<sup>166</sup> and communicated the leased right to extract wood and other natural resources from the land. When Champlain and his contemporaries used the term in America, this sense of the term was likely being employed; they meant an *extraction* of furs from the forests of America. They did not attempt, or even intend, to draw a great deal of attention to the transaction or commercial exchange with Amerindian participants, but identified a removal of a resource merely supplied them by native Indians.

This differing nuance in meaning is important to highlight. In one representation, the Amerindian entered into negotiation, or *négoce*, which, as mentioned, was not seen as possible given prevalent ethnological understandings. In the other case, the resource itself was highlighted, not the Indian labour supplying it. Precisely because it was associated with resource extraction, *traite* communicated a right granted by the King to exploit that resource, a legal description of concession. Thus, in New France, *traite* traditionally had been used to describe a permitted commercial activity, a leased right to carry on the extraction of furs from specifically stated areas.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>164</sup>The expression *traite des nègres*, that is, the "transportation" of slaves, gained usage in the French language around 1690, while an older use of the word *traite*, signifying the milking of domesticated animals, can be traceable to 1538. See Paul Robert, "Traite," dans *Le Petit Robert, Dictionnaire alphabétique et analogique de la langue française* (Paris: Société du Nouveau Littre, 1979) p. 1998. Robert makes no comment on the concurrent seventeenth century use of the term in the Canadian fur trade.

<sup>165</sup>See the historic definition of *traite*, in *Dictionnaire québécois d'aujourd'hui*, by Jean-Claude Boulanger (Saint-Laurent: Dicorobert, 1993), p. 1195.

<sup>166</sup>As suggested in an example from 1538 cited by Godefroy, "Les habitants ont quinze ans pour faire la *traite* du bois."Frédéric Godefroy, *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française et de tous ses dialectes du IXe au XVe siècles*, Vol. VIII, (Vaduz : Kraus Reprint Ltd., 1965), p.6.

<sup>167</sup>Note, for example, le Sieur de Dièreville's use of *traite*. He uses the verb *commercer*, to describe the trade of agricultural materials, and *traite* to describe the transportation of furs. "S'ils commerçoient, ils ne seroient pas si oisifs," but "on en traite encore les peaux" (in this case, skins of caribou), p.278; and "ils en traitent la peau dont on connoît les usages, et ils la vendent bien," p. 277. See Dièreville, *Relation of the Voyage to Port Royal*. The Jesuit correspondent Raudot showed *traite* in the sense of a concession of the King, and applied it specifically to the trade in the King's Domaine, the "le domaine de Sa Majesté consiste en la traite de Tadoussac," which entailed all rights to enter into the commerce of wines, eau-de-vie and tobacco in Raudot's letter, 1709, Antoine Denis Raudot, *Relation par lettres de l'Amérique*

It would seem that in the era of Restriction, as memorialists and narrators began to begin to ascribe virtues to the French exchange with Indians, a change in traditional usage of the term *traite* appears, most explicitly in the correspondence of the Detroit commander, Le Sieur de La Mothe Cadillac, who should be highlighted in a discussion of new characterizations of the Indian trade.<sup>168</sup> Antoine Laumet, as the Sieur de la Mothe Cadillac, was in desperate financial straits when Louis XIV passed him under Frontenac's patronage in 1697 to find service.<sup>169</sup> Soon dispatched to Michilimackinac and profiting from an eau-de-vie trade which horrified the Jesuits (Father Carheil's lengthy diatribe against the western Indian Trade was undoubtedly directed towards the commander's abuses), Cadillac would later be transferred with the command of the post he had proposed at Detroit, built to better situate French commerce vis-à-vis the English. To Detroit, his wife in Canada discretely dispatched canoes of goods for trade, and, from there, Cadillac sent to France no end of quite fanciful misrepresentations of his colonizing efforts,<sup>170</sup> including a new usage of the term "faire la traite."

The new usage was contained in a lengthy entholological report sent to the marine ministry in 1701 while Cadillac was still posted at Michilimackinac. Cadillac described Indians arriving at the post, exchanging their pelts for commodities: "Ils changent et troquent leurs peaux de castors avec nos marchandises," Cadillac said, "*c'est ce qu'on appelle traiter, ou faire la traite*. Nous leur fournissons de la poudre, des balles, des armes, de l'estoffe, du tabac et de tout ce qui est en usage parmi nous."<sup>171</sup> The officer's definition departed from convention, showing *traite* as equitable trade, and, at that, a beneficial vent of useful goods to Indians.<sup>172</sup> There was no sense of commercial

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*septentionale, années 1709-1710*, ed. Camille de Rochemonteix (Paris: 1904) p. 41. Sagard speaks of "la traite de Kebec," (p.307); he mentions last seeing the Jesuit Nicolas "at the trading place," literally, "de la traict," p.312. Sagard, *The Long Journey*. Justin McCarthy's *Dictionnaire de l'ancien droit du Canada* (Quebec: J. Neilson, 1809) treats the "traite des pelleteries" as a permitted right accorded either to habitants or companies within specific regions, "at the exclusion of all others," pp. 229-232.

<sup>168</sup> A complete collection of Cadillac's correspondence can be found in "Cadillac Papers," *Historical Collections: Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society*, vol. XXXIII (Lansing, Michigan: Robert Smith Co., 1904).

<sup>169</sup> Zoltvany, p. 38.

<sup>170</sup> At Detroit, for instance, he characterized his type of colonization as "substantial," built upon agriculture, unlike its trading French counterparts based merely on "greed and avarice." Report of 1703, "Cadillac Papers," in *Historical Collections of the Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society* Vol. XXXIII (Lansing: Michigan, Robert Smith Printing Co., 1904) 169.

<sup>171</sup> Emphasis added, Relation du Sieur de Lamothe Cadillac, Margry V, p. 83.

<sup>172</sup> For his views of "substantial trading," see his reports, "The Necessity of a Post at Detroit," ca 1701, p. 43; and "Description of Detroit, 25 September 1702," pp: 138-142, in *ibid.*

*extraction*, but, rather, a gift giving from a civilized European to the Indian, not of liquor, but goods *that are used among us*. Cadillac's status as an officer was undoubtedly at play here: *traite* did have a concurrent usage as a special type of commerce undertaken by the military officer, who, being above interest, was allowed to trade goods, often as gifts. The officer, quite literally, could then "faire un commerce, négocier, convenir de certaines conditions."<sup>173</sup>

Cadillac's attempt to define "traite" as *échanger*, though, was part of his larger effort to characterize Indians as having material need and being potentially civilized through a European gift in trade goods. He described nearby Indian nations, particularly French Allies and the recently neutralized Five Nations, as fragmented, volatile, and requiring decisive French leadership. In such a setting, he wrote, commercial intercourse would be of great service when "all men in whatever condition they may be born lack neither venality nor ambition ... and there are always some skillful enough to get credit, to make themselves esteemed and respected by others."<sup>174</sup> By building French houses for chiefs and dressing Indian children in European clothing, Cadillac was certain that he could force Indian society to exhibit new disparities of wealth, to form societal ranks, and its members to take on French manners and ways. This was "the most certain way to make these people subjects of the King, and afterwards to make them Christians."<sup>175</sup> Indeed, his ethnology contained an implicit mandate for Europeans to both provide leadership and bestow manufactured goods; moreover, it argued that the chief direction lay in civilizing Indians not by missionary work, but by promoting vanity through commerce: "Savages being naturally vain," he said, "would see these children among ours, dressed like ours and would esteem it a point of honour" to have their children enrolled in French schools at Detroit, thus exciting more ambition among members of Indian society.

Cadillac's attempt to characterize *traite* as beneficial exchange, meanwhile, had an enduring currency in colonial society. To look ahead into the century, Cadillac's notion of *faire la traite* remained in use. Bougainville's review of the French trading system in 1757, for instance, identifies trade in surprisingly similar terms at a post where the king artificially supported prices through gifts: "on leur fournit *leurs besoins* en

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<sup>173</sup>*Dictionnaire universel*, the example given is: "Cet officier *traite* d'une telle charge, d'une telle terre, c'est-à-dire, il la marchande."

<sup>174</sup>Report of 1703, *Ibid*, "Cadillac Papers," p. 166.

<sup>175</sup>Report of 1703, *Ibid*, p. 167. Cadillac's program relegated missionary work to a lowly position; in another memo, he pointed out to the Marine Ministry, "How can these barbarians be made Christians, unless they are made men first?" Description of Detroit, 25 September 1702, *Ibid.*, p. 140.

échange de pelleteries, ce qui s'appelle faire la traite...."<sup>176</sup> Another definition appeared in the unlikely source of a Jesuit, père du Poisson, who wrote at the distant Arkansas mission, probably in 1727. His letter described an exchange of goods he had initiated with an Indian chief there. After giving him gifts of vermilion, powder and other goods *sans dessein*, he found the chief returning with a present of a painted hide. When du Poisson protested, saying that he had given the gifts *without design*, the Chief answered "est-ce que je traite avec mon père!" and du Poisson reassured his readers that, "traiter signifie ici rendre."<sup>177</sup>

Jaenen has suggested that this last example, that of exchanging *sans dessein*, constituted an Amerindian tradition linked to gift exchange.<sup>178</sup> This possibility cannot be discounted; indeed, Le Page Du Pratz's footnoted comment concerning trade "without design" argued that the Indians in the lower Mississippi recognized this type of gift-giving. Du Poisson, although cynical about the reality of any exchange *sans dessein*, also treated it as a special form of gift-giving.<sup>179</sup> But whether or not Indians had long used this form of exchange is not as important in the present discussion as the point that the French were now adopting it in the eighteenth century and characterizing trade as a potentially equitable event, bestowing valuable goods of a sophisticated society upon ruder Indian nations. Du Poisson's use of the verb *rendre*, or "returning," to describe *traite* is, in this respect, quite significant. The three definitions of *traite* qualified the nature of commerce taking place between the European and Amerindian as fulfilling a classical ideal, an ideal that Europe's upper ranks were reviving in the eighteenth century and which the church and court long hoped was possible, not a one-sided profit in peltry but the "returning" of goods for goods given, and bestowing to Indians what they needed (*leurs besoins*).<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>176</sup>Emphasis added, M. de Bougainville, "Mémoire sur l'état de la Nouvelle-France (1757) *RAPQ* 1923-24. p.66.

<sup>177</sup>Père du Poisson... au Père Patouillet, s.d. (Other du Poisson correspondence suggests that this letter was written in 1727), *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses, écrites des mission étrangères*, nouvelle édition, Vol. VI (Paris: 1781) p. 383.

<sup>178</sup>Jaenen, p. 236.

<sup>179</sup>The full quotation is provided in the preface of the present essay, and appears footnoted in M. Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, Vol. I (Paris: 1758) p. 206. Du Poisson commented that "...je savais que l'espérance du butin les rendoit fort empressés, et quand le Sauvage donne, même *sans dessein*, il faut lui rendre au double, ou bien on le mécontente...." du Poisson, p.134.

<sup>180</sup>See, for instance, the King's instructions in 1702 to post commandants to stop receiving gifts and instead to gather knowledge of Indians' "needs;" he wanted them to give gifts so that the Indians might look on them "as relief for their needs coming from His Majesty's goodness and charity and not as a means of continuing these disorders nor as a price of our friendship." Cited in Jaenen, p. 245.

It need not matter that Cadillac's portrayal of *faire la traite* at Michilimackinac undoubtedly strayed from reality;<sup>181</sup> neither is it important if the Jesuit du Poisson was actually conniving in commerce, as so many Jesuit critics maintained. The definition of *traite* expressed an ideal, an idea that was consistently held up as a standard by which to measure behaviour, morals, and the workings of the French post system in America. Du Pratz's work, an unsparing critique of French mistakes and blunders in America, particularly the short-sighted avarice of military officers whom he claimed were responsible for the Natchez wars, not only drew attention to abuses in trade. He presented this ideal in trade as a real possibility, one that initially benefited the Natchez in the lower Mississippi, attracting them to the French merchandise they had never seen before, and allowing them to take goods in exchange for a part of their own abundant food stores.<sup>182</sup> His own account of giving a pipe "without design" to a Natchez Indian was presented as a lesson for all Europeans to learn: such generosity resulted in a steadfast and economically profitable friendship between Europeans and Amerindians. Following his gift-giving, Du Pratz writes that he had the "agreeable surprise" to see his present returned in a quantity of bear oil far more valuable than he could have imagined, given, as the chief said, "sans dessein, comme à son vrai ami."<sup>183</sup>

Cadillac's sense of *traite*, as ideal commerce, also became the standard by which the scathing criticisms of the French commandant system in the eighteenth century were based. These did not question the rationale behind a trade overseen by a military officer, but drew attention to vices which inhibited commanders from living up to their higher duty to attend to this special type of commerce between the European and the North American Indian.<sup>184</sup> As the Chevalier de Raymond pointed out in his lengthy 1754 memoir, many of the commanders were failing in their duties, disgusting Indians by trading with them at a profit. The Indians regarded them merely as "des chefs de marchandises": instead of giving the King's gifts, the commanders traded them as goods, or gave them to Indians in trifling amounts (*légère bagatelle*). Indians, he said, knew their

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<sup>181</sup>The editorial footnote details the brandy dispatched from M. de Vaudreuil to Cadillac at Michilimackinac in "Mémoire de l'état présent du Canada" (1712) *RAPQ* 1922-23 p. 41.

<sup>182</sup>Du Pratz says that they "s'attachèrent de plus en plus aux François et seroient restés amis très utiles..." Du Pratz, Vol. I, p.179.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, p.207.

<sup>184</sup>Caldwell, pp. 52-53. Pittman's comments on the proportion of the Indian Trade profits claimed by the commandant. Philip Pittman, *The Present State of the European Settlements on the Mississippi* (London: 1770, reprinted in Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1906) pp. 99-100. Eccles' work referred me to the valuable reference to the commandant system in the "Correspondance de Mdm. Bégon," 28 mars 1749, *RAPQ* 1934-35, pp.52, 54.



interests well enough and attached themselves to those who gave them more; they loved their benefactors as much as their generosity; thus the importance of giving them presents in their necessity (*leur nécessité*).<sup>185</sup>

It should be pointed out that other terms besides *traite* were used to describe exchange with Indians, as there were many types of Indian trade, virtuous or not. The Tonti narrative showed the many expressions used to describe his and La Salle's trade for furs in the upper Mississippi and Illinois countries, the narrator using the verbs *trafiquer*<sup>186</sup> (without its present-day connotation in French of illicit trade), *marchander*,<sup>187</sup> and *négocier*.<sup>188</sup> He also used the intransitive verb *traiter*<sup>189</sup> (literally, to treat or to have dealings with), and, finally, the term of this discussion, *traite*.<sup>190</sup> *Commerce* was often used as "commerce du castor," to account for European sales, the price of beaver purchased from colonists, and the profits of an adventure in its full mercantilist sense.<sup>191</sup>

Because it was characterized as a mutually-profitable event, an eighteenth century writer applied a more narrow usage of the term *traite* to communicate the special exchange Europeans undertook with Indians within the forests. A reading of Joseph Lafitau's *Moeurs des Sauvages* suggests as much when he used the verb *commercer* to describe the traditional trade between Indians, while in his one account of European merchants trading with Indians (Spanish traders arriving in Chile), he shifted into the term *traite*.<sup>192</sup> Du Pratz's printer qualified the virtuous trade initially benefiting the

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<sup>185</sup>Raymond, it might be pointed out, sought promotion as a commandant. *Mémoire sur les postes du Canada, 1754 RAPQ 1927-1928*, pp.325-328; 330-331.

<sup>186</sup>M. le Chevalier Tonti, *Dernières découvertes dans l'Amérique Septentrionale* (Paris, 1697) "M. de la Sale en fit une exacte reveüe, y trafiqua des peaux....p. 40; "M. de la Sale y trafiqua quelques pelleteries...." p. 149.

<sup>187</sup>"M. de la Sale marchanda avec lui...." *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>188</sup>"On veut me rendre suspect de quelque intelligence particulière avec les Iroquois par le commerce que j'ai eu avec eux: tout ce commerce ne s'est terminé qu'à négocier quelques pelleteries...." *Ibid.*, p.82.

<sup>189</sup>"Après quatre journées de traite nous nous trouvâmes sur un des bords de cette rivière très navigable...." *Ibid.*, p.51.

<sup>190</sup>"M. de la Sale ... avoit compté sur cette petite recrûë, comme sur un secours nécessaire pour avancer ses affaires, et pour achever sa traite," *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>191</sup>AOM, "Mémoire Concernant le Commerce du Castor, en Canada," 26 June 1751, C 11e/16, f.34.

<sup>192</sup>"Les Nations Sauvages commercent les unes avec les autres de tout temps." (p.52). Lafitau does say at one point that festivities and dancing accompany "les Sauvages en allant en traite chez les autres Nations," (p. 53), but this remains the sole example of this usage. Instead, he says on the same page, that "Il y en a qui se sont au Chef, & en gros au Corpse de la Nation avec qui on commerce, & qui répond par un équivalent...." When describing the observations of M. Frézier in Chili, Lafitau shifts usage. Spanish traders (commerçants) who arrive are met by the people "avec qui ils peuvent traiter." (p.54) Joseph-

Natchez as “Le Commerce ou *la Traite*,” italicizing the latter to suggest a peculiar, local, or special word.<sup>193</sup> La Potherie's history also italicized the word in his text: “La Jeunesse étant allée *en traite* pour la première fois à Montréal”; and “Il raconta comment la *traite* s'étoit faite....”<sup>194</sup> These writers often agreed that there was an absence of profit in this exchange, one that warranted such a special usage: it was “sans intérêt, sans autre mauvaise intention,” as Du Pratz suggested,<sup>195</sup> that is, without usurious exchange or at least unfair prices according to canonical standards. Finally, it was a trade which benefited Indians by meeting their daily needs, and meeting those needs with what now appeared as extremely useful trade items -- manufactured goods from Europe. Although elements of this definition can be found in preceding periods, their convergence in these sources suggests an ideal had struck the imagination of eighteenth century French writers.

Metropolitan usage by the mid-eighteenth century seems to have been reconciled to this semantic characterization of the Indian trade. In his Encyclopedia, Diderot ascribes two prominent meanings of *traite*: (1) the transportation of slaves (*traite des négros*) which retained its earlier association with *extraction*, and (2) the *traite des fourrures*, or the “Commerce du Canada” with its new association of *échanger*, designated as follows: “on appelle ainsi en Canada le négoce que les François font avec les sauvages, de leurs castors et autres pelleties.”<sup>196</sup> In 1771, John Reinhold Forster, translating Jean Bernard Bossu's narrative of his travels in Louisiana, evidently struggled to find an appropriate English equivalent of *traite* for his audience, finally rejecting “trade” in favour of “treat,” or “the exchange or barter of European merchandize against the furs which the Indians take in hunting.”<sup>197</sup>

#### IV.

Many aspects of *échange* were to be celebrated in the years associated with the French Enlightenment. An idealized Indian trade bestowed valuable goods from a *civil* society to its primitive other; trade won friendship, not war; it accrued real wealth to both parties,

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François Lafitau, *Moeurs des sauvages américains comparées aux mœurs des premiers temps*, (Paris 1724) tome IV, pp. 53-55.

<sup>193</sup> Du Pratz, tome I, p.187.

<sup>194</sup> Claude-Charles Bacqueville de La Potherie, *Histoire de l'Amérique septentrionale* (Paris: 1722) tome II, pp. 90; 97.

<sup>195</sup> Du Pratz, tome I, p. 206.

<sup>196</sup> “Traite (Commerce du Canada) .” *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et de métiers*, tomes I-VI, p 859.

<sup>197</sup> See this footnoted definition in the translation, Jean-Bernard Bossu, *Travels Through that Part of North America Formerly Called Louisiana*, Vol. I (London: 1771), pp. 117-118.

not usurious profits to one alone.<sup>198</sup> The ideal survived to the end of the Old Regime, as a letter written to the marine ministry in 1754 suggests. The writer pointed out at length that sin drove men to exact charges for transporting goods between countries. But with this observation conceded, he identified the virtuous elements of trade undertaken in classical and biblical antiquity, and in so doing suggested a possible revival of virtuous trade practices. He stated that "necessity and need" (*la nécessité et le besoin*) are equally common to all men, who carry the things produced in their country to another to exchange (*échanger*) with those who want the same. This was the case in classical ages, he said, when the "first voyageurs" among the ancient patriarchs, "visited reciprocally, and in a spirit of love and tenderness would mutually part with that which they regarded the most precious, or the most useful..."<sup>199</sup>

Analysis of semantics and written descriptions of the Indian trade of the early eighteenth century suggests that commercial promoters drew attention to similar ideals and argued for their applicability in the trade between the French and Indians in America. Such an ideal, *traite*, signified equitable exchange rather than extraction. Much of this ideal, as argued, had its origins in a perceived golden past, in both classical and biblical antiquity, when trade profited both parties in exchange. There was, however, little *laissez-faire* in this conception. Even by the time of Hoquart's administration in the 1740s, when the first liberal ideas were applied by the marine ministry, and Canadian administrators were attempting to have competitive merchant activities replace a military-run Indian commerce, *traite* retained its earlier associations.<sup>200</sup> Such an observation has, in fact, numerous implications. It is difficult to know how *real* and how *imagined* these characteristics of trade were. Given this difficulty, it is nevertheless equally the case that French correspondents were, by the first decades of the eighteenth century, describing the Indian trade in a fundamentally different way. This matter, then, requires some anticipation by scholars drawing from their written sources. Much, indeed, changed in the ways that Europeans were conceptualizing trade and imaginatively conceiving of their Amerindian trading partners. In *échange*, European goods took on vast new meaning and importance *vis-a-vis* the Indian in America. Foremost, material rather than spiritual gifts could "tame" Indians and subdue what were considered savage hearts. Hennipin was one of many who identified new virtues in commerce when he wrote that the only way the

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<sup>198</sup>Desbarats also recognizes the gift-giving ideal associated with Bourbon largess. See Desbarats, pp. 613-614.

<sup>199</sup>Letter of M. Rivière, 23 April 1754, f.166-F/2c/4.

<sup>200</sup>Standen, "Personnes sans caractère", pp. 265-295.

missionary could introduce the gospel to Indians was in gifts "de haches, de couteaux; ou de quelques autres marchandises de l'Europe...."<sup>201</sup> French trade promoters in the early eighteenth century depicted their commerce in similar ways: trade prompted the Christian epiphany. It softened the uncivilized, as argued in the Tonti narrative, and the writings of the Sieur de la Mothe Cadillac and La Potherie. In their descriptions, the fur trade was no longer merely *extraction*, where vast and usurious profits were made, but *échange*, initiated as a gift of manufactured goods, given for the furs Indians saw as worthless, to meet daily needs. Moreover, promoters had significantly expanded the very definitions of profitability in such exchange. Trade benefited Indians, subordinated them, and drew them, in a blatantly material sense, into the paternal care of their opposites, a role once reserved for missionaries. The North American Indian, then, brought not only needs, but the European bore the heavy responsibility of practising such a humanitarian commerce and dispensing the manufactures of Europe in America.

A better understanding of the ways these writers wrote about their commercial activities can lead to a clearer analysis of exploration accounts and contact itself. At the very least, this textual phenomenon should prompt a reconsideration of historical and ethnohistorical theories. W. J. Eccles seems not to have accounted for the rise of trade humanism in the early eighteenth century when he posited that a "military ethos" underlay New France society before the Conquest. It is certain that not only economics of the trade had changed. There was also a significant shift in the ways French correspondents described exchange itself. Military officers, scrambling to make commercial profits in their western postings, described a virtuous exchange to highlight something other than self-gain in their trade. Although trade promoters had already turned to such means before 1697, it was the era of restriction when officers, merchants and administrators in the colony, and the anonymous writers of metropolitan published texts, began to describe commercial activities that benefited the public – and the Indian -- rather than merely filling private purses.

The tendency among the French to describe *bon commerce* with Indian nations has also not been sufficiently addressed by ethnohistorians. Aspects of Richard White's theory of a "middle ground" established between Europeans and Amerindians in the late seventeenth century are indeed founded upon such sources. Cadillac and La Potherie, whom White relies upon extensively, left ethnological observations that are interwoven with new commercial apologetics. Not only in Canada and Detroit, but in the

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<sup>201</sup>Excerpt of Hennepin in *Relations de la Louisiane et du Fleuve Mississippi* (Amsterdam: Chez Jean-Frederic Bernard, 1720) p.292.

Mississippi colony, Europeans anxious to expand commerce inland were inclined to offer new descriptions of Indians as being physically transformed, if not spiritually moved, by commerce. Indians were meanwhile depicted as fragmented, impoverished, and requiring some degree of the French imperial "amalgam."<sup>202</sup> Commercial promoters, as we shall see, were quick to describe an apotheosis occurring with the exchange of goods, where the European's manufactured wares quite literally led the awe-struck Indian into Catholic conversion.<sup>203</sup>

These French correspondents, it is important to point out, did not turn to radical ideas to promote their interests. Free trade ideas, tellingly, were not appearing in their apologetics. Their hesitancy to call for free merchant activities with Indians had many implications for the conceptualization of the Amerindian trader himself, a matter that requires separate discussion. But first, the very model they drew upon to argue the merits of an Indian trade conformed to traditional, clerical, ideals. Their works, then, not only identified the geography inland; correspondents anticipated the countervailing metropolitan opinion against the inland Indian trade and drew attention to physical need among the Indians living along the newly discovered watersheds. The model they drew upon was virtuous according to clerical, and specifically Thomist, standards. If French trade writers appeared to have created a notion of virtuous *échange* with Indians, it was in fact a secularized application of a model already established by the church, a matter to be taken up in the next chapter.

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<sup>202</sup>Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge, 1991) pp. 34; 41-43

<sup>203</sup>William M. Hamlin, "Imagined Apotheoses: Drake, Harriot, and Raleigh in the Americas," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 57 (3) July 1996: 405-428.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *Clerics in the Indian Trade*

Although commercial writers were innovating in their use of an idealized conception of trade, there was little imagination in their new definition of *traite*. In depicting *échange*, rather than *exploitation*, the colonial writer drew from earlier missionary writings that described a virtuous exchange with Amerindian neophytes. This was modeled on classical and scholastic criteria of virtuous exchange and became frequently viewed as an ideal gift economy that missionaries believed was well suited to the Amerindian forest. They in fact often paralleled such an exchange with the vice-ridden one struck in commerce, an alternative root of sin in which European avarice dominated the exchange with Indians and damned those involved with transactions, Indian and European.

The church entered discussions of the fur trade on many points, but clerical writers established two concepts that became important to later eighteenth century writers on the Indian trade. First, they established significant needs among Indians. Following the asceticism of early Christian thought, missionaries applied Church sanctions against the adornment of the outer body at the expense of the soul. According to this view, European goods traded to Indians were not evil as much as irrelevant to the Indian's real need for spiritual guidance. Thus, Gabriel Sagard's *Long Journey* to the Huron mission was shaped in an obvious way that revealed a mission field, not a commercial market, in America. He did not hide his contempt for readers more interested in the commercial prospects of the fur trade than the fate of Amerindian souls before God.<sup>1</sup> Sagard also, as will be pointed out, defined a virtuous Indian trade, the second important contribution to eighteenth century writings, drawn according to the standards of Thomas Aquinas. Missionaries rigorously applied it, arguing that in American forests the elements of exchange in the Apostolic church could be revived in the simple reciprocation of gifts between clerics and Indians. They in turn characterized their own, probably quite profitable, trade with Indians as this virtuous alternative to the merchant's own profit-based exchange.

The way clerics depicted Indian needs and the technique of ecclesiastic trade are of enormous value in understanding the text later left by trade promoters. The

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<sup>1</sup>"Our experience with them showed that they were useful to those who had to trade with them, while we hoped by this means to make our way towards our main purpose, their conversion, the only motive for so long and distressing a journey." Gabriel Sagard, *The Long Journey to the Country of the Hurons*, ed George M. Wrong, trans. HH. Langton (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1939), p. 77.

Tonti narrative, for instance, showed an essentially clerical gift exchange taking place between La Salle and the Indians in the interior. Le Page du Pratz and the missionary Poisson also cite a virtuous trade *sans dessein*, where Indians "returned" goods for the gifts first given them by Europeans. The same writers fully appropriated the cleric's notion of spiritual *need* among Indians, but significantly expanded the nature of such, to include manufactures for the Indian's survival *and* to facilitate his conversion, when goods became, quite literally, *biens*. This chapter investigates, therefore, the church, classical models of virtuous exchange, and the ideal Indian trade that became *traite* in its eighteenth century French sense.

## I.

The previous chapter pointed out that during the "brandy wars" in New France, the church established principles of fiduciary responsibility in trade based upon the European's standing before God through baptism. According to this view, commodities that were innocuous at home, finding their own market there, were not necessarily so in America; moreover, the trade of certain goods could lead the European who traded them to deadly sin when such an exchange led the Indian into error. Missionaries long observed that Europeans failed in the weighty fiduciary responsibility given them by God. This failure prompted missionaries under the Quebec Jesuit superior, Paul Le Jeune, to adopt mission "reservations" on the Mexican and Paraguayan example in 1633 to segregate Indians from the European influence of towns and traders.<sup>2</sup> Trade promoters such as Frontenac argued for the virtues of intermixing French and Indian alike, as the French could then civilize the Indian more easily; but missionaries only grew suspicious of allowing Europeans of low birth and bad morals to have commercial contact with what were viewed as potential converts and innocent neophytes. For such a reason, rather than becoming partners with traders in cultural hegemony, the church consistently viewed the secular means of exchange in trade as a means to tempt Europeans to sin and to encourage the evils of European society to migrate into Indian society.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Cornelius J. Jaenen, *The Role of the Church in New France* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1976) p. 26. John Gilmary Shea, *Catholic Missions among the Indian Tribes of the United States* (New York: Arno Press, 1969) pp. 128-129.

<sup>3</sup>Phillips saw the Jesuits and traders complementing each others' activities. See Paul Chrisler Phillips, *The Fur Trade* Vol. I (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), p. 54; 61;92; 105-107; Ronda cites Jennings, Berkhofer Jr., Salisbury, and Axtell to show the missionaries joining traders in cultural hegemony. James P. Ronda, "We Are Well As We Are': An Indian Critique of Seventeenth-Century Christian Missions," in Olive Patricia Dickason, ed., *The Native Imprint: The Contribution of First Nations to Canada's Character* Vol. I (Athabasca: Athabasca University Press, 1995), p. 223; Given

The European's fiduciary trade responsibilities were figured upon their baptism, but such obligations were also magnified by comparison to the widespread view that the Indian was an "innocent" in nature, while his European counterpart who had rejected his spiritual responsibilities, was animated by numerous vices, such as avarice, ambition, and lust.<sup>4</sup> The resulting conception of Indian vulnerability and European responsibility,<sup>5</sup> allowed Canadian churchmen assessing the upheavals of the brandy trade to place more blame upon the European trader than the Indian who purchased *boissons*.<sup>6</sup> Laval and the seventeenth century Jesuits formulated therefore a principle of guardianship to urge prohibition, arguing that there was something inherently different in the nature, customs, and inclinations of Indians that made them desire liquor as an inebriating medium.<sup>7</sup>

The church's campaign against the trading in alcohol can be cited in the earliest periods of French colonization.<sup>8</sup> After 1640, the Jesuits began assigning penitentials to those guilty of drunkenness at the Sillery and Three Rivers missions. By

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charged them with trading guns; see Brian J. Given, *A Most Pernicious Thing: Gun Trading and Native Welfare in the Early Contact Period* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1994); Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism and the Cant of Conquest* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1975) pp. 56-57; Trigger attempts to show the complexity of the issue which many historians overlook, Bruce G. Trigger, "The Jesuits and the Fur Trade," *Ethnohistory* 12, 1965: 30-98; a defense against the "unfounded" charges of clerics trading in fur is provided by Patrick J. Lomansney, "The Canadian Jesuits and the Fur Trade," *Mid-America* 15(3), January 1933: pp. 139-150.

<sup>4</sup>"Que comme (les anciens barbares) ils n'ont point la connoissance ni de notre avarice ni de notre ambition, ni de la pulspart des voluptés qui sont les alimens de nos vices et de nos concupiscences, l'ignorance du mal en tient beaucoup dans une assez grande innocence." Abbé Belmont, *Histoire de l'eau-de-vie en Canada*, Quebec Literary and Historical Society, *Historical Documents* 1st Ser. Vol. 2 No. 8, 1840, p. 7.

<sup>5</sup>Belmont: "vous suivent comme un castor, ou un ours à la trappe, pour vous dépouiller.... vous dérobez et dépouillez vos familles." p. 26.

<sup>6</sup>Sém. de Québec. See, for instance, Mgr. de Laval to the Séminaire de Québec, 1674, *Lettres-Carton* N. No. 39.

<sup>7</sup>See, for instance the response to the first point of the cleric's condemnation that "There is not any other example in the Christian World where any church has made a *cas réservé* of this nature, nor in any place where the people are more given to drunkenness and where the crime causes more great disorder," in Response, 1678, Séminaire de Québec No. 28 A Response aux Raisons qui prononcent qu'ils faut laisser la liberté de traiter des boissons aux sauvages, 1690? MS-17 p. 5. Also, Belmont: "j'entrepris cette petite histoire pour faire voire que l'Iyvrognerie des Sauvages est une différente espèce de celle tous les autres hommes...." p. 1. Abbé Belmont, *Histoire de l'eau-de-vie en Canada*, 1705? Historical Documents 1st Series Vol. 2 No. 8 (Quebec: Quebec Literary and Historical Society, 1840), p.1

<sup>8</sup>See George F. G. Stanley, "The Indians and the Brandy Trade during the French Regime," *Revue d'Histoire de l'Amérique Française*, VI (4): 489-505; an attempt to analyze Jesuit Relations' description of the brandy trade is offered by R.C. Dailey, "The Role of Alcohol among North American Indian Tribes as Reported in the Jesuit Relations," *Anthropologica* X, 1968: pp. 45-60.



1658, the abby de Queylus declared the sale of brandy a mortal sin.<sup>9</sup> But the most prominent campaign against the trade began in 1660 with Monseigneur François de Montmorency de Laval writing of a *mandement* that established the legitimate quantity of rum that could be given to Indian servants and prohibiting rum from being given free, traded, sold, or bartered to Indians in any other quantity.<sup>10</sup> His use of *cas réservé* against rum traders, where the offender was condemned in mortal sin, denied absolution, and refused the sacraments by his parish priest, was seen as excessive by colonists. Hoquelin has suggested that the church, as part of an "oligarchy" in New France intent upon controlling the fur trade, took its harsh stand because, by doing so, the *petits habitants* prohibited from trading alcohol would also be excluded from the trade. But in the ensuing debate over the legitimacy of the *cas réservé*, broader issues were undoubtedly at stake. The church's measures against brandy trade were on the whole directed towards the trader, not the Indian consumer, and in this respect followed what became the spirit of secular ordinances. The justice system in New France, though directed to uphold the letter of civil and criminal law, consistently turned from prosecuting Indians who directed violence towards colonists and their property while inebriated. The overwhelming numerical superiority of Indians and the large populations of those living in virtually every New France community, led administrators to act leniently towards Indian criminals and instead prosecute those Frenchmen who traded alcohol. Quite different from the New England justice system, which turned with severity towards Indians both in criminal and civil matters after the Pequot Wars, New French communities remained relatively weak vis-a-vis Amerindian populations, and therefore looked to the commodity and its European vendors to find blame for criminal Indian behavior.<sup>11</sup> The very legal and clerical understanding of the problem of the brandy trade, then, placed Indians beyond their own accountability. Both Canadian missionaries and Sorbonne theologians who eventually reviewed and supported Laval's measure by 1662, then, continued to levy the argument that Indian nature was special and warranted the Church's radical intervention. They and Laval argued that there was extraordinary difficulty in governing Indians, and

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<sup>9</sup>John A. Dickinson, "'C'est l'eau-de-vie qui a commis ce meurtre' : Alcool et criminalité amérindienne à Montréal sous le Régime Français," *Etudes Canadiennes* No. 35, 1993, pp. 83-94.

<sup>10</sup>Mandement pour excommunier ceux qui vendent des boissons enivrantes aux sauvages, 15 May 1660, H. Tetu & C.-O. Gagnon, eds, *Mandements lettres pastorales et circulaires des évêques de Québec*, Vol I, (Quebec: 1887) pp. 14-15.

<sup>11</sup> See Dickinson, pp. 83-94; also, Jan Grabowski, "French Criminal Justice and Indians in Montreal: 1670-1760," *Ethnohistory* 43(3) Summer 1996: 405-429.

the latter should be regarded as "minors and pupils," and thus falling within the protection of the church.<sup>12</sup>

Theologians of the University of Toulouse who eventually met on the issue favored Laval's measures and rejected what became the arguments of colonial and trading representatives who stated that the trade attracted Indians to the French, and in their social intercourse with Europeans would be more easily taught European customs and manners. Trade promoters attempted to identify a larger virtue in a smaller vice, when Indians traded liquor from the French, reasoning that if Indians procured spirits from the Dutch, they could be converted to the heretic faith. Rejecting this argument outright, the Toulouse theologians not only approved of *cas réservé* being applied to brandy traders, but also to the *cabaretiers* (tavernhousemen) and *gros marchands* who sold liquor knowing that it would be traded to Indians.<sup>13</sup>

The Sorbonne theologians upheld the *cas réservé* on another ground, that since liquor not only imperiled the security of the colony, but inhibited missionary work, its trade warranted the distinction of not merely venal, but mortal sin.<sup>14</sup> Thus trade in and of itself could inhibit the evangelical message. This possibility was all the more plausible since, in the memories of clerics, it was the Dutch and English protestants who had originally introduced the brandy trade into New France, like sin in the garden, at the time of the English conquest. When the French returned to the colony in 1633, the alcohol trade had firmly taken its root.<sup>15</sup> This depiction of spirits, that they led the potential convert astray, was quite powerful in the seventeenth century. The Jesuits believed that drunkenness encouraged sin among Indians and therefore inhibited the blood of Christ, or the sanctification, of the neophyte.<sup>16</sup> Whether distracting the possible convert, or leading Indians "to day by day abandon their faith,"<sup>17</sup> the brandy trade passed the ill effects of European society to the Amerindian, by "ruining" missions teaching the gospel,

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<sup>12</sup>"Délibérations de la Sorbonne sur les boissons enivrantes," *Ibid.*, 1 February 1662, *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>13</sup>Belmont provides details on the Toulouse and Sorbonne findings, pp. 10-11.

<sup>14</sup>"Déclaration," 9 February 1668, *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73. Also, *Cas Réservés*, 21 April 1669, *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>15</sup>Charlevoix maintained this proposition; see George F. G. Stanley, "The Indians and the Brandy Trade During the Ancien Régime," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique Française*, Vol. 6(4), March 1953, p. 489.

<sup>16</sup>*Jesuit Relations*, 1664, 22: 243.

<sup>17</sup>Mandement 24 February 1662, in *Lettres pastorales, mandements, etc.*, MS-255. Sém. de Québec. See also the collection by H. Tétu et C.-O. Gagnon, *Mandements lettres pastorales et circulaires des évêques de Québec* Vol. I, (Québec: 1887) pp: 15-190.

transforming the Indian home into a resemblance of hell, or changing Indians into "beasts instead of men."<sup>18</sup>

Possibly most important, the church's application of *cas réservé* revealed to contemporaries the imposition of clerical and, by implication, papal authority into a matter that many contemporaries believed was a civil matter. This was a direct interference of the church with the circulation of legitimate foodstuff and "innocuous goods" (*marchandise indifférente*), which could find good or bad use according to the conscience of the user, not the seller.<sup>19</sup> A New French memorial written to the French Crown took this position to counter the ecclesiastic measures against brandy traders, its authors anxious to demonstrate the implications of such a clerical incursion. Previously, papal decrees had sought to stop the trade of guns to the infidels, those who had rejected the Christian message and, thus armed and strengthened, would more directly imperil Christendom. Here, the church was inveighing against the trade of a legitimate commodity in Europe among the *pagan* (i.e., someone who had not yet heard the gospel) in America on the basis of the Indian's state as minor and ward of the church.<sup>20</sup>

As mentioned, the issue of the brandy trade is not trivial to a larger discussion of the general suspicions of the church towards the Indian Trade. It is telling that as late as the early nineteenth century, one cleric's handwritten copies of *mandements* included Laval's and those of later bishops against the brandy trade, suggesting that the notion of guardianship in such commercial matters was not forgotten among ecclesiastics.<sup>21</sup> The idea of a special nature among Indians was preserved in the early eighteenth century by Abbé Belmont in his *Histoire de l'Eau de Vie en Canada*. Belmont, incidentally, also placed stress upon the history of Iroquois warfare against the colony having much of its origins with the avarice of the fur traders, such as Indians who sought profitable markets with traditional enemies or governors like Frontenac who excited Indians to plunder goods from free trading Frenchmen, or again, the pillaging of

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<sup>18</sup>Cited, in order, in *Jesuit Relations* 29: 83; (also, see *Ibid.*, 58: 251); "Délibération de Sorbonne pour la traite des boissons," 1675, in *Mandements*, p. 91; 92. Cadillac wrote that the missionaries lamented the brandy trade because it took away the Indians' ability to understand the gospel and accept God's grace, Cadillac, "Description of Detroit," in "Cadillac Papers," p. 142; Gabriel Marest believed brandy rendered Indians "incapable" of salvation, Marest to Cadillac, 28 July 1701, *Ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>19</sup>Belmont, "comme il est permis en France de vendre des épées, et du vin mesme, "nil interrogantes propter conscientiam." p.10.

<sup>20</sup>Sém. de Québec. See the clerical Response to this memorial, and the merchants' argument that "Jamais les Evêques ne se sont meslés de ce qui Concerne le Commerce de toutes les danrées (sic) ou marchandises permises." Polygraphie 4 No. 28A.

<sup>21</sup>Sém. de Québec. See the mandements of Laval's and others hand copied in G.H. Besserer's notes on Lettres pastorales, mandements, etc. des Evêques de Québec, 1831, MS 255.

merchandise at Fort Frontenac by the Iroquois. The larger Iroquois War of 1684 was "particularly excited by the avarice of merchants...."<sup>22</sup> In this light, Cadillac was quite right, not without some exaggeration though, when he said that the church's condemnation of the liquor trade had prompted the clergy to move "against all the French who go and trade among the savages."<sup>23</sup>

During the Brandy Wars, then, the church established a responsibility for the spiritual welfare of Indians which could override a basic and God-given European right to vent produce and manufactures in *commerce*. Churchmen also tended to show the Amerindian as needing spiritual guidance more than commerce and therefore were quick to show a contrast between their own work and the Indian traders'. The editors of the *Jesuit Relations*, for instance, entrenched the mission's reservation in America with the principle that missionaries were there to instruct, not trade furs with Amerindian charges. Their 1640-41 *Relations* strategically recorded speeches made during a Jesuit negotiation with the Huron Indians to allow missionaries farther inland. The chiefs delivered the speech, "It is true... the father does not come here for our furs; he has no merchandise in his hands. He loves us, he is our father."<sup>24</sup> Another speech was reprinted in the 1642 *Relation* that displayed the priority for Frenchmen to teach, not trade, when a Huron chief said that he intended to deliver to the Iroquois Five Nations the message that the English and Dutch might bring them "axes, kettles, blankets, arquebuses, (but) that is all ... those people do not love them ... they conceal from them the most precious merchandise of all, which the French give without selling it to us; that the latter come to tell us of eternal life."<sup>25</sup>

In the same vein, missionaries highlighted in trade a choice between serving the soul or the temporal needs of the body. The temporal pursuit of fur, the external body of animals, was consistently contrasted with the eternal gains in evangelism. An early seventeenth century sermon delivered in Angers, France, on the occasion of a baptism in 1621 of the Micmac, Pierre Antoine Tastechouan, for instance, spoke of the work of merchants involved in "the simple trade in beavers," the quest for

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<sup>22</sup>See Abbé Belmont, *Histoire du Canada* (1698?) 1840. p.17; on origins and developments of the Iroquois War, see pp. 13-17.

<sup>23</sup>Cadillac, Description of Detroit, 25 September 1702, "Cadillac Papers," p. 142. See, previously discussed, Étienne de Carheil to Louis Hector de Callières, 20 August 1702, *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, Vol. 65: 190; 199-200. And the King's own acceptance of the Jesuit stance by 1697 in AOM, *Mémoire du Roy*, 27 April 1697, F/3/8 f. 19.

<sup>24</sup>*Jesuit Relations*, Lallement and Le Jeune Relations, 1640-41; 21:101.

<sup>25</sup>Vimont Relation, 1642-43, *Jesuit Relations* 26:183.

gold and silver having occasioned "the more celebrated frequentation of the Christians in the west"; but here was a far more edifying and eternal mission to the Indians. Trade was dismissed, then, as winning temporal and transitory gains for a few individuals, while the evangelical work of the Recollets, leading in this instance to the baptism of this soul in France, yielded everlasting rewards.<sup>26</sup>

The *Jesuit Relations*, printed in Paris and having an explicit promotional purpose, became a means to establish distinctions between trader and missionary work. The missionaries strengthened this proposition by depicting Indians as living contentedly in natural abundance and having few real needs for European goods. Le Jeune, then, wrote in his earliest relations that he derived pleasure from watching the Indians trade: they "troquent leurs pelleteries and leur petun contre des couvertures, des haches, des chaudières, des capots, des fers de flèches, des petits canons de verre, des chemises, et choses semblables."<sup>27</sup> But he, or at least the Parisian editor of the *Relations*, did not identify physical needs for European goods. The Le Jeune Relations instead depict Indians as occupying an earlier, virtuous stage of societal development where men were contented with life, "seeking purely and simply only those things which were necessary and useful for its preservation."<sup>28</sup> This view of Indians as essentially self-sufficient, seeking only necessities, and, by implication, not searching after luxuries, had the exotic appeal of Jesuit writings generally, as well as an underlying assumption concerning the natural world in America in particular.<sup>29</sup> Le Jeune elsewhere was confident in God's supply, the mammon of providence in nature. Cape Breton Indians were, then, supplied one way or another in a natural world responding to God's intervention: "If the Winter supplies them with fewer beavers upon the water, it gives them, by way of compensation, more Moose upon the land."<sup>30</sup> Starvation itself was related less to deficiency in nature than to a divinely ordained remonstrance or teaching; in the context of the mission, the Jesuits believed that God rewarded the neophyte hunter and sent the unfaithful or scoffing disbeliever away empty-handed, sometimes to his death by starvation.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Sém. de Québec. Sermon fait en l'église cathédrale d'Angers, 29 April 1621. Polygraphie 13 no. 4.

<sup>27</sup>Paul Le Jeune, 1633 Relation, vol. 5, pp. 262-264.

<sup>28</sup>Paul Le Jeune, 1634 Relation, vol. 7, p. 7.

<sup>29</sup>See chapter II of Gilbert Chinard, *L'Amérique et le Rêve Exotique dans la Littérature Française au XVIIe et au XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: 1934), pp. 127-139.

<sup>30</sup>Paul Le Jeune, 1635 Relation, Vol. 8, p. 159.

<sup>31</sup>1671-72 Relation, Vol. 56, p. 205.

Europeans continued this tradition in the early eighteenth century. The Jesuit, identified by Rochemonteix as Antoine Denis Raudot, wrote the unpublished *Relation par lettres de l'Amérique septentrionale* (1709-1710), with the assumption that nature supplied Indians well. Their own handiwork and hunting skills gave them abilities to survive. These individuals were hardly in need of European manufactures. Indians in the north relied upon bows and arrows, he reported, able to shoot adroitly and kill game at far distances. Raudot showed them learning French smithing skills which allowed them to forge better iron for their arrowheads than those made by French forges and constructing bows out of wood better than those forged by the best French artisans.<sup>32</sup> Although he reported a widespread use of European kettles and axes, his overall description was of Indians without physical need. Indians on rocky, barren places unable to pursue agriculture found their dispensation from a generous God, who "to recompense them has given them better hunting which they have in abundance in their country." The Illinois and Miamis Indians, meanwhile, enjoyed extraordinary abundance of fish and game.<sup>33</sup> As late as 1750, Père Vivier described an America of this order, and the Amerindians living there with needs for spiritual, not material, conversion. To readers of the *Lettres édifiantes*, the Illinois Indians enjoyed seasonal superabundance to draw upon, and, except for areas occupied by settlement, the land "abonde de toutes parts, en toute saison."<sup>34</sup>

Furthermore, the same writers, seeing no real *need* for material goods, viewed their trade as a hapless imposition of European tastes on the simple mores of Indians. It was likely without coincidence that Le Jeune devoted a good portion of his 1634 *relation* to the introduction of European clothing among Indians. He drew attention to social differences that made the trade of clothing to Indians an entertaining imposition of the symbols from a class-ranked society upon a leveled one. Indians, he pointed out, dressed, not to conform to social hierarchies, but according to need and the relative equality shared by all. Their priority during the winter was warmth, and they wrapped around themselves whatever fur they could obtain, "there being no difference at all in their clothes." He pointed out that since meeting Europeans, they were no more advanced, no more civilized, or sophisticated, but were now clothed in disarray, "more motley than the Swiss":<sup>35</sup> he had seen a six-year-old girl wearing her father's greatcoat. "One has a red

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<sup>32</sup>Letter XX, p. 53.

<sup>33</sup>Letters XXIII, pp. 61-62; XLI, pp. 103-105.

<sup>34</sup>*Lettres édifiantes* Vol. 12, Vivier, 8 June 1750, pp. 2-3.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, p.9.

hood, another a green one, and another a gray, and all made, not in the fashion of the Court, but in the way best suited to their convenience." An important continuation of this description states that when they returned to their shelters, the men shed their clothes, except for a strip of cloth, and women took off the bonnets, sleeves, and stockings, the rest of the body remaining covered. "In this, you have the clothing of the Savages, now during their intercourse and association with our French."<sup>36</sup> He also pointed out that the Indians wore French shirts, not on the inside of their cloaks, but on the outside, to repel rain.<sup>37</sup>

## II.

The peculiar and pressing financial straits missionaries found themselves in in America probably led them to describe European goods in such ways. From the start, missionaries hoped to divert funds into missionary ventures that might otherwise establish trading capital. But financial difficulties also led them to trade furs and they were prompted to define a virtuous Indian exchange. Apologetic clerical historians such as Martin dismissed charges of ecclesiastic trading, following the highly edited *Relations* which showed the missionary living in an ideal world beyond profit transactions, especially in fur. But it is clear that not only did the missionaries become involved with commercial expansion, but they became dependent upon it for the support of their inland missions.<sup>38</sup>

Missionaries became involved in the fur trade at many levels. Before the dispersal of the Huron nations, in the period of the *communauté des habitants*, the Jesuits were amply rewarded by oligarchic monopoly of the trade, whereby they won badly needed subventions with each year's trade profits.<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, they acted as important arbiters in small European communities inland and served as quasi justices of the peace and government representatives when they provided statistics on the fur trade to the ministry of marine in France.<sup>40</sup> They witnessed business contracts struck on the spot

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<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, p.11.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, p.15-17.

<sup>38</sup>Mission historians, then, disregard the opportunities that followed the military expansion into interior posts in the late seventeenth century, when they argue that it broke clerical power over Indians and traders, and ended an era of "peace and happiness in the Indians' cabins." Richard E. Elliott, "The Jesuit Missionaries who laboured in the Lake Superior Regions During the 17th and 18th Centuries," *Historical Collections*, Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society, Vol. XXXIII p.33. See, for instance, the backroom brokering taking place between New French officials, Company of Canada directors, the military and the Jesuits in preliminaries to the move to Detroit. Included in Cadillac's "Description of Detroit," 25 September 1702, "Cadillac Papers, pp. 144-147.

<sup>39</sup>See Horguelin, *Prétendue République*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>40</sup>J.H. Kennedy, *Jesuit and Savage in New France* (New York: Archon Books, 1971), 70-78

between members of *sociétés*, bourgeois traders, voyageurs, and labourers, and oversaw the integrity of trade between Europeans and Indians, thus, in some manner facilitating trade expansion.<sup>41</sup> Like colonial governments, inland missions also suffered from scarce currency and had enormous daily needs for country produce. Perhaps inevitably, missions, serving as a meeting place for fur traders and Indians, would use furs as currency or take them as tithes or in payment for ecclesiastic services. A glance at the *liber rationum* (account book) of a mission near Detroit in the mid-eighteenth century reveals the way church services, handyman accounts and daily transaction needs were met with fur circulating as currency at inland missions.

Despite disavowals by clerics themselves, their missions did have a propensity to stockpile fur which, in turn, had a high resale value. The notes in the *Journal des jésuites* suggests some of the difficulties missionaries faced in the handling of these trading commodities.<sup>42</sup> Talon, no friend of the order, identified the Jesuits' fur clearinghouses in the young colony in the 1660s, enough to warrant an *ordonnance* prohibiting them from maintaining their trading activities. This may or may not have been a political stunt. But the marine ministry continued to restrict clerics from trading furs at any of their missions into the eighteenth century.<sup>43</sup>

Missionaries did raise what were considered legitimate profit revenues by traditional means, for instance, by adding value to product. As religious orders in Europe had long practised agriculture and winemaking, French missionaries inland profited at French trading posts by establishing mission forges. The blacksmiths hired at these forges repaired and replaced Indian trade goods, and made money for the missions by doing

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<sup>41</sup>*Jesuit Relations*, Vol. 63, has the example of a missionary in 1685, taking a French trader to task for cheating Indians in trade. p. 117. In a letter of Bigot to La Chaise, 1685, the missionary points out that he had annulled the trade between a Frenchman who had given 20 sols of liquor to an Indian in exchange for 10 to 12 francs worth of beaver clothing off his back, *Ibid.*, p. 135.

<sup>42</sup>See 15 November 1645: "le bruit estant qu'on s'en alloit icy publier la défense qui avoit esté publiée aux Troit Rivières, que pas un n'eut à traiter avec les sauvages, le P. Vimont demanda à Mons. des Chastelets commis général si nous serions de pire condition soubz eux que soubz Messieurs de la Compagnie? La conclusion fut que non, & que cela iroit pour nous à l'ordinaire, mais que nous le fissions doucement." And, 19 July 1647: "autre consult touchant la traite de castors faite à Sillery, sçavoir, s'il la falloit tolérer; le P. le Jeune, le P. Vimont et moy y estions, et fut dit (1) que si le magazin estoit raisonnable, on estoit obligé en conscience de ne les point divertir ailleurs (2) s'il n'estoit raisonnable, qu'on pouvoit dissimuler en conscience, les habitans ayant droit de nature et du roy de traiter (3) que le magazin fut raisonnable ou non, qu'il ne falloit point que nous traitassions." Fathers Laverdiere and Casgrain, eds., *Le journal des Jésuites, publié d'après le manuscrit original conservé aux archives du Séminaire de Québec* (Québec: 1871), pp. 91-92.

<sup>43</sup>Minutes of letters, 27 April 1742, to Father Lavond, 1905 Report of the Canadian Archives, I, p.4.



so.<sup>44</sup> With such profits in hand, clerics could raise supply and offer services. Missionaries were then officially regulated in the possession and distribution of goods as articulated in statements written for the officers of the *Séminaire des missions étrangères* in 1683. Its third rule regulated the way in which goods were taken into the missionary's hands, in "perfect charity." These temporal goods (*biens temporels*) were held in common, "in imitation of the first Christians, who possessed nothing but carried all which they had to the feet of the apostles." They "received that which they would distribute according to the needs and necessity of each one." That *communauté de biens temporels* "must be inviolably guarded," the regulation read.<sup>45</sup>

While revenues were raised from such legitimate work, missionaries also turned to the much more problematic fur trade itself; that is, they turned from justifiable value-adding activities to trading goods in commerce, an activity that by most traditional standards infringed upon canon law. Evidence of such ecclesiastic trading is apparent in mission correspondence. For instance, the Illinois mission sent to the Jesuit *procureur* in Paris in 1704 included a lengthy list of trade goods that more than suggest a profitable Indian trade taking place at the mission. The list, in descending order, had vermilion, musket powder, shot for game, fabrics, *rassade* or beads of certain description, knives ("not the kind common in France, but the kind commonly termed *Jambettes*"), *toiles* of all kinds, hatchets ("good and well made"), hunting guns (with yellow trim, "it is such that sells at the highest price among the Indians"), "shirts made for the trade and others for our usage," leggings, and miscellaneous articles ("une multitude de petits besoins").<sup>46</sup>

It is unclear how many such orders were placed with the Paris agent. The order's *procureur* did caution the mission's directors in Quebec in 1707 after he received a missionary's marten pelts from the Micmac mission, collected, as he said, likely as tithes, ("which he had received from the Indians to help ornament the Micmac church.") The agent had sold the furs, placed on the missionary's account 1000 or 1200 livres, and sent him "une facture de marchandises dont il prétend se servir pour faire bastir cette église," but the agent warned the directors that if such were not used for that purpose the order's metropolitan overseers (*nos bon Pères*) might use the occasion to halt "their

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<sup>44</sup>Contract with Jean Cecile, Toolmaker, 16 July 1733 (Detroit), *Jesuit Relations*, vol. 69, pp. 241. I have benefited from Caldwell's citation of this source, and his comment on Jesuit forges at posts, Norman Ward Caldwell, *The French in the Mississippi Valley: 1740-1750* (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1974) p.54.

<sup>45</sup>Sém. de Québec. François Villars, 1750, *Règlements particuliers pour les officiers du Séminaire des missions étrangères*, Carton Séminaire 95, No. 9.

<sup>46</sup>Sém. de Québec. Lettre et Mémoire général des marchandises, Lettres R, No. 77 and 78.

commerce in the Indies."<sup>47</sup> Such goods then, could build the church, and the trade could, in this narrow usage, meet spiritual and not merely temporal ends, a fine distinction that the American missions were now maintaining.

It was within this context, where furs were accepted as tithes, stockpiled at missions, resold to the colonial *fermier*, or explicitly traded to raise funds, that missionaries faced the criticism that they followed earthly, rather than spiritual, directives at their missions. Charges of ecclesiastic trading were in fact leveled against the very first missions. With the heavily censured trade of furs at Acadia, the first Jesuit mission at Port-Royal, missionaries learned a hard lesson on the way they should and should not represent commercial activities in their efforts of evangelism. The Acadian debacle reaffirmed what were narrowly proscribed commercial freedoms allowed to clerics. Despite what the clerics had to say about the trade carried on with Indians at Acadia -- Father Pierre Biard had argued that evangelical ends justified his commerce in furs to pay for the mission<sup>48</sup> -- the public outcry over this activity underscored an ancient canonical and theological stricture against any such mixing of commerce and ecclesiastical duties, now particularly the case with evangelism to Amerindians. Such trading took place in a century that would see Pascal's *Lettres provinciales* smoldering with accusations that the Jesuits justified secular means to spiritual ends, and when Jansenists criticized the order's secularized interpretation of Catholic doctrine. There is little surprise that severe judgments within and without the Jesuit order condemned this Acadian "trade." Charlevoix himself would hardly support Biard's justifications, later dismissing the move as indiscreet zeal on the missionary's part, and a lapse of judgment animating the order's upper ranks who approved it. He believed misguided devotion had prompted the leading benefactors of the mission, particularly the courtly Mdm. de Guercheville, to load up mission ships with trading merchandise. And he cited Champlain's own statement that only worthy intentions had misled the holy fathers to go into partnership with de Poutrincourt's trading company (establishing Acadia), "which has sowed so many rumors, complaints, and outcries against the Jesuit fathers...."<sup>49</sup> Thus, whether the anti-Jesuit Marc Lescarbot, who published the embarrassing contract of association between the mission, its court backers and merchants who divided the profits of the Acadian trade, or

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<sup>47</sup>Sém. de Québec. M. Tremblay aux officiers du Séminaire 18 June 1707, Lettres M. No. 38.

<sup>48</sup> Jesuit Relations, III:173-177; See his description of the association in lettre Biard au Aquaviva, 31 January 1612, Première mission des Jésuites, p. 91; see, also, Luca Codignola for an overview of early missionary work in America, "Competing Networks: Roman Catholic Ecclesiastics in French North America, 1610-58," *Canadian Historical Review* 80 (4) December 1999, pp. 539-584.

<sup>49</sup>Charlevoix, Vol. I, P. 263-275.

later, the criticism of the Jesuit's great eighteenth century historian, the misguided Acadian venture into the fur trade was fully and finally condemned.<sup>50</sup>

Throughout the seventeenth century, the Jesuits were similarly curbed on numerous occasions. The wider charge of commerce against the order, particularly in its Japanese missions, prompted the second and seventh Jesuit general congregations to write *décrits* prohibiting all commerce or negotiations (*négoce*) at its missions.<sup>51</sup> Probably more serious were the papal bulls of 1633 and 1666, which banned any commerce at the foreign missions, including the Jesuits'.<sup>52</sup> The Sorbonne theologians eventually scrutinized the issue of ecclesiastic trading in fur and their own concerns sparked the stern instruction of a Jesuit provincial to his American subordinate: "to neither look in the corner of your eye nor touch with the tips of your fingers any skin of these animals."<sup>53</sup> The separation of church and merchant work, then, was very early reaffirmed in the work of missionaries and fur traders in their contact with Amerindians.

Some insights grow clear with the Sorbonne pronouncements, however. The charge of ecclesiastic trading points out the contemporary conviction that not only did merchants and missionaries pursue different work, temporal and eternal, but also that these ends opposed each other in America. Clerics argued that their work was devoted to the Amerindian's soul, the merchant's to the Amerindian's peltry. Fur could as easily symbolize currency, and, according to even Aristotelian hierarchies, the lowly outer peltry of the animal. Just as the Amerindian's soul was eternal, cherished by God and, to

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<sup>50</sup>Marc Lescarbot, *Histoire de la Nouvelle France*, vol.5 (Paris: 1618) pp. 664-666; Pierre-François-Xavier de Charlevoix, *History and General Description of New France*, ed. and trans. John Gilmary Shea (New York: F.P. Harper, 1900) Vol. I, p. 263-275.

<sup>51</sup> The *décrits* are reprinted in footnote 2, of Camille de Rochemonteix, *Les Jésuites et la Nouvelle-France au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1893) Vol. I, p.347. Rochemonteix provides a useful analysis of the missionaries' response to the charges. An additional overview of related criticisms of the American Jesuits, particularly Dr. Arnaud's accusations, see appendix of related documents in *Relations inédites de la Nouvelle-France*, vol. 2, (Montreal: Éditions Élysée, 1974) pp. 339-341. The published Decrees note the following: D. 13 of the Seventh Congregation, sternly warning Jesuits to "refrain from engaging in secular business," p. 252; and D.84, forbidding certain business dealings, p. 276-277, John W. Padberg, Martin D. O'Keefe, and John L. McCarthy, eds. and trans., *For Matters of Greater Moment: The First Thirty Jesuit General Congregations* (St. Louis, Missouri: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1994).

<sup>52</sup>My thanks to Francine Michaud for her translation of these bulls. CDXXV "De Missionibus Religiosorum cujuscumque Ordinis ad Japponicas, & alias Indiarum Orientalium Regiones...." 22 February 1633, Urban VIII, Vol VI, *Bullarum Privilegiorum Ac Diplomatum Romanorum Pontificum* (Graz: Akademische Druck, 1965); *Ibid.*,CXII, "Constitutio prohibens mercaturam, et negociationes seculares ecclesiasticos praesertim religiosis quibuslibet in Indiis Orientalibus, et America nunc, et pro tempore existentibus," *Bullarum Privilegiorum*, 1669 p. 344. See Rochemonteix's comments on these in Vol. I, pp. 318-319; 356.

<sup>53</sup>My translation of "ne faut pas mesmes regarder du coin de l'oeil, ou toucher du bout du doigt la peau d'aucun de ces animaux...." *Jesuit Relations*, vol. IX, p.172.

missionaries, tantalizingly close to its conversion, the animal soul was by nature temporal, and, in this case, linked to exchange currency. Both forms of conversion demanded European resources. Thus, the missionaries showed commerce as antithetical to their own work. The Jesuits were not alone in this depiction. Spanish clerics established the same dichotomous ends of the two activities, often to resist civil authorities who would otherwise use missions as trading posts. Those in the southeastern mission fields complained of one governor's attempts "to make us his small merchants... so that we are buying such products as are in this unhappy land in exchange for his knives."<sup>54</sup> Friars at Pecos Pueblo, too, felt tyrannized by the Governor Luis de Rosas, who promised mission inhabitants that they could leave the mission and return to their natural homes if they furnished more hides.<sup>55</sup> As Jesuit fathers did, early Spanish friar missions established a correlation between European commerce and failed missionary work, and they believed that Europeans in America could either profit heaven in souls, or merchant coffers in skins. This was clearly a lesson learned by the 1638 mission of five friars to northern Sañora, Mexico, who relied on the military escort of a colonial governor. According to the mission report, the soldiers extorted feathers and hides from Indians and consequently lost their friendship. The Black Legend of cheating, short-measuring, and seizure of Indian goods eventually led the frays Silvestre Vélez Escalante and Francesco Atanasio Dominguez, exploring in 1776 to the Rockies, to profess contempt for the "vile commerce in peltries." They wrote that they prohibited trade on their mission "in order that the heathen might understand that another and higher motive than this had brought us through these lands."<sup>56</sup>

Missionaries carefully distinguishing their work to that of merchants certainly influenced clerical historians who have depicted voyageurs as being attracted inland for temporal gain and profit, but missionaries as being called "pour rendre plus illustres et divins entre les hommes."<sup>57</sup> The opposition of the missionary from the merchant, however, was a discursive feature of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. The charge of ecclesiastical trading was frequently a powerful weapon used by critics upon particular orders. Among his many claims, Radisson argued that the Jesuits

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<sup>54</sup>Translated in David J. Weber, *The Taos Trappers: The Fur Trade in the Far Southwest, 1540-1846* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1971) p.19.

<sup>55</sup>Weber, p. 19.

<sup>56</sup>Quoted in Weber, pp. 23-24.

<sup>57</sup>Odorie-Marie Jouve, *Les Franciscains et le Canada*, Vol. I, (Quebec: 1915) p.14. For the apathy and avarice of fur merchants towards missionary work, p. 16; on the same problems of the early trading companies, and attempts to reform the same in the Company of 100 Associates, pp. 413-425.

were eager to divert the profits of the Hudson Bay trade to Canada, and that they were disappointed with the establishments of the Hudson's Bay Company not only because they would lose portions of an Indian mission field, but, wanting "to be masters of that trade," would lose their peltry too.<sup>58</sup> Frontenac claimed that the Jesuits coveted beaver pelts more than the souls of Indians,<sup>59</sup> and their "extortion" of fees for absolution constituted the same nefarious commerce as that taking place in furs.<sup>60</sup> Cadillac made the same charges: he claimed that a hundred men had witnessed the particularly evocative sight of Jesuit boats supposedly carrying wafers and wine (Christ's body and blood) for mission masses instead laden with goods.<sup>61</sup> His charge that the Jesuits wanted to curb inland military involvement with commerce to keep "themselves without witnesses in the midst of the woods," was itself a veiled accusation of ecclesiastical trading.<sup>62</sup> Accusations against these *jesuites marchands* followed the order well into the eighteenth century, particularly after the order's major financial scandal in the midst of the Seven Years' War.<sup>63</sup>

Consequently, missionaries who drew commerce and evangelism as opposing forces in America were anxious to characterize their own, necessary, commerce in a virtuous light. The instruction to Father Le Jeune to desist from all forms of commerce, for instance, brought about his lengthy response of 1636, which, given its status as a published *Relation*, suggests a seventeenth century definition of virtuous trade,

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<sup>58</sup>Peter Esprit Radisson, *Voyages of Peter Esprit Radisson* (Boston: Prince Society, 1885) p. 173. He also said Jesuits wept for the unconverted Indians in the northern areas, and that "what pity 't is to loose so many Castors." p. 240.

<sup>59</sup>He said "ils songent autant à la conversion du castor, qu'à celle des âmes," and called the Jesuit missions "pures moqueries." Lettre du gouverneur de Frontenac au ministre, 2 novembre 1672, *Rapport de l'archiviste de la province de Québec pour 1926-1927* (Quebec: 1927), p.20.

<sup>60</sup>See p.63 of "extrait" cited above, footnote 1.

<sup>61</sup>M. La Motte Cadillac, "Description of Detroit; Advantages Found There," in "Cadillac Papers," *Historical Collections* of the Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society, Vol. XXXIII, (Lansing, Michigan: Robert Smith Printing Co. 1904) p.148. Charlevoix cites 1644 as the year when charges against the Jesuits were asserted in Europe, prompting the Company of One Hundred Associates to send a signed declaration to the King assuring him otherwise. Charlevoix, vol. 2: pp. 168-169.

<sup>62</sup>"Description of Detroit," p. 144.

<sup>63</sup>La Haye, *Les Jésuites Marchands, usuriers, usurpateurs, & leurs cruautés dans l'ancien & le nouveau continent*, (Chez les Frères Vaillant, 1759). This was republished in 1824. In Canada, Lahontan continued to accuse the Jesuits of ecclesiastic trading. Canoes were permitted to go from Canada to Illinois missions, under pretext of helping the missionaries, "qui songent beaucoup moins au salut de tous ces pauvres barbares qu'à grossir les revenus de leurs maisons par la quantité prodigieuse de canots de castors qu'ils envoient à Québec sous le nom de Tiber et guatier." Gustave Lanctot, *The Oakes Collection: New Documents by Lahontan concerning Canada and Newfoundland* (Ottawa: J.O. Patenaude, 1940) p. 24.

at least one with which the Jesuit editors in Paris felt comfortable. Le Jeune defended his missionaries who traded furs for their daily needs or took fur as currency or as payment for ecclesiastic services. The superior also argued that the marked-up values on beaver skins used in transactions were defensible considering the labour invested in their hunting and preparation; furthermore, his relation points out that the mission's workmen and labourers would only accept furs, as they constituted "la monnoye de plus haut prix."<sup>64</sup> In this, he defended a practice of using furs as currency, not reselling them for profit.<sup>65</sup> It was for daily needs, as editors hoped the readers of the published *relations* would have seen, that Jean de Brébeuf instructed his assistants in Huronia to carry two or three dozen small knives and other trading goods to buy (*acheter*) fish while going inland, specifying them to tell Indians: "Voila pour acheter du poisson," that is, to purchase, not trade, for their daily needs. Brébeuf also warned his missionaries to be careful in the way that they accepted goods as presents given them by Indians.<sup>66</sup> Although the Jesuits stretched the sense of "daily needs" in Maryland, where their seventeenth century mission sent "out goods for trade with the Indians through the agency of [trader] Robert Clarke and others,"<sup>67</sup> this activity was not characterized as "trade," but *truck*, and there was a great difference "between trading for the sake of lucre and bartering to obtain the necessaries of life."<sup>68</sup> It is noteworthy that the Jesuits officially abstained from the Indian trade in Maryland when planters "relinquished" their trading rights to the governor in exchange for profit shares, apparently because this form of trading would trail into a dark canonical area of reselling, that is, profiting from consigned merchandise.<sup>69</sup>

Their transactions instead met a clerical ideal in commerce modeled on Thomas Aquinas' formula of virtuous trade, where one sold goods at a price purchased them, or according to the labour he had invested in their improvement, and by exchanging

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.170-179.

<sup>65</sup> As confirmed by accounts. See Account Book, Huron Mission of Detroit, 1740, *Jesuit Relations*, vol. 69 p. 247.

<sup>66</sup> Jean de Brébeuf, "Instructions, 1637," *Jésuites de la Nouvelle-France*, Collection Christus No.6: *Textes par François Roustang* (Québec: Desclée de Brouwer, 1961) p.122.

<sup>67</sup> The quotation continues: "either for the profit to be drawn from the trade, the support of the mission, or as a means to bringing the missionaries in contact with the natives, learning their language and facilitating their conversion." Quoted in letter of 1639, in Thomas Hughes, *History of the Society of Jesus in North America: Colonial and Federal* (London: Longman's Green and Co., 1907) pp. 339-340.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p.339

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 379-380.

goods proportionally priced according to the needs of the buyer.<sup>70</sup> The Thomist model built upon other medieval, apostolic, and classical texts that sanctioned usury, and it gathered particular appeal in the American forests, where the missionaries found, or at least imagined themselves, living as did the apostolic Christians whose own lives had been given over to living in Christian generosity and looking to divine providence to meet daily needs. Here, missionaries were reduced to living without luxuries, subsisting on simple and unadulterated food stuffs and giving freely to each other out of their supply of food. In this setting, they and Indians exchanged goods, but their transactions were depicted as gift exchanges, and, as only right with such generosity, gifts made to Indians returned in full and pressed measure.

Even these were priced, as the Tonti narrative would claim, according to their use as necessities for life, not according to the “valeur imaginaire uniquement fondée sur l’avarice.”<sup>71</sup> A 1639 letter of François du Peron in New France to his brother, a fellow Jesuit, reveled in this apostolic existence: “We are lodged and live according to savage fashion,” Peron wrote.<sup>72</sup> Everything transported inland ornamented the church. Wine was used for mass; a few pieces of utility clothing (*habits*) provided simple dress; the fathers carried some prunes and raisins for health. Beyond these necessities, they lived according to providence, upon the charity of Indians who shared what little they might have had, a small quantity of corn, a pumpkin, a fish, a loaf cooked under ashes (i.e., made from corn meal, and, meaningful to any cleric, unleavened). The cleric purchased these gifts, but in a type of inverted commercial transaction: they gave presents to Indians *after* receiving food and other necessities. Thus, receiving gifts from Indians, the Jesuits returned them with “des petits canons de verre, des bagues, des halènes; des jambettes, de la raçade,” as Peron said, “*c’est la toute nôtre monnaie.*”<sup>73</sup>

The Recollet writer Gabriel Sagard identified a similar, quite idealized exchange undertaken with Indian neophytes. Describing three types of exchange at his Huronia mission in 1632, Sagard’s comments well revealed what would become *traite* in its eighteenth century sense. Perhaps the first can usefully be termed “unilateral,” where

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<sup>70</sup>John W. Baldwin, “The Medieval theories of the Just Price: Romanists, Canonists, and Theologians in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society New Series*, Vol. 49, Part 4, 1959, pp.12-13; 15; 40; on Aquinas’ distinction between two types of commerce, *oekonomici*, providing for the direct needs of their household, and *negotiatores*, exchanging for profit, see, p. 65; 71-74.

<sup>71</sup>Henri de Tonti, *Dernières découvertes dans l’Amérique septentrionale*, (Paris: 1697) p. 9.

<sup>72</sup>François du Peron à Joseph-Lambert du Peron, 27 avril 1639, *Première mission des Jésuites au Canada: Lettres et documents*, publiés par Auguste Carayon (Paris: 1864) pp.173-174.

<sup>73</sup>My emphasis, du Peron à du Peron, *Première mission des Jésuites*, p. 173.

Indians arrived at his cabin without expecting anything in return, “out of Friendship,” and “to be taught and to converse with us.”<sup>74</sup> This was the preferred end in European-Indian encounters which was to result in the conversion, not of goods, but of souls. Sagard then cited a second encounter, grounded in vice, where Indians merely stole European goods from the mission, “our knives, spoons, bowls of bark or wood, and other necessary articles.”<sup>75</sup> The third encounter was secularized and virtuous: trade was initiated in the giving of gifts, freely and without interest. In this case, Sagard described Indians giving the missionaries gifts of food, and “in return we also used to give them like small presents such as awls, iron arrow-heads, or a few glass beads.” Or interest, according to the virtuous limits of the Recollets, followed the Franciscan rule. If Indians “borrowed” items like kettles, they returned them with a little gift of food inside.<sup>76</sup>

### III.

Clerics identified a virtuous exchange with Indians in an attempt to reinforce in the American forests the original limitations placed by the medieval Church upon the mercantile community in the middle ages; indeed, the economic model missionaries were describing in New France, and later Louisiana, was at that time losing ground to new commercial understandings.<sup>77</sup> Missionaries were not the only correspondents describing a virtuous alternative in exchange. The church in New France was particularly vigilant about commercial activities in the colony and the transactions that surpassed “just pricing” in the Indian trade, where selling high became usurious. The undated notes of a Sulpician sermon in Montreal from between 1723 and 1753 make the cleric's concerns clear when he addressed the eighth commandment of theft (*le larcin*), and criticized those who became masters “through unjust means.” The sermon pointed out the subtle ways that the deadly sin could dominate business practices, particularly at that time of the year (Autumn) when his audience was about to embark on trade with the Indians (*traffique avec les sauvages*). The sermon's importance, addressing this “too common sin,” cannot be underestimated, because it presents a clear enunciation of what the church deemed

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<sup>74</sup> Father Gabriel Sagard, *The Long Journey to the Country of the Hurons* ed. George M. Wrong, trans. H.H. Langton (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1939) p.84.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> Jacques Le Goff, *Your Money or Your Life: Economy and Religion in the Middle Ages*, (New York: Zone Books, 1988); on Fenelon and his contemporaries, and their writings on commerce, see the first three chapters of Renato Galliani, *Rousseau, le luxe et l'idéologie nobiliaire. étude socio-historique* (The Voltaire Foundation: 1989).



morally right exchange with Indians. It cited *larcin*, then, as selling too dear or buying goods at too low a price, or, in other words, profiting by the other's condition of necessity or from an ignorance of market value. The sermon writer went on to distinguish among three prices, the high (*le haut*), the common (*le commun*), and the low (*bas*) price,<sup>78</sup> and went as far as to suggest a legitimate selling price traders should ask of Indians for their beaver.

These reminders to Roman Catholics of a just price on beaver skins were presupposed upon an hypothetical market price that did not actually exist in the forest setting. The very nature of the Indian trade took Europeans far beyond any competitive conditions and tempted them with profits on investment that exceeded any imaginable "right" price on their goods. The trade, then, enticed the investor into usury, a sin New French clerics frequently discussed in their sermons, "since God declares that he regards such commerce as abominable."<sup>79</sup> Not only traders were condemned in such a sin, but so were merchants in town who profited on Indian trade goods sent inland.<sup>80</sup> The deadly sin of avarice meanwhile led to a host of venal offenses, such as libertinage, drunkenness, and sloth, some of the unsavory influences of the Indian Trade.<sup>81</sup>

In many respects, the church's reaction to vice in the Indian trade displayed its own concerns towards a society increasingly commercialized. Like home clerics attempting to preserve the status of provincial, landed families against the rising merchant classes, they were equally concerned about the unbounded limits of commercial ranks inland, among indigenous peoples. A Capucine missionary in Louisiana lamented such excited movements inland, when it complained of the parsimony of the *Compagnie des Indes*, which forced the priest to give mass in the room of a military officer, and worse still, in the company's *magasin*,<sup>82</sup> nearby where Indian trade merchandise was

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<sup>78</sup>Commandement Sur le Larcin, in MG 17 Archives du Séminaire de Saint-Sulpice, Montreal, section 3 Antoine Deat papers, Reel 6502, Archives nationale du Québec, Montreal.

<sup>79</sup>Lettre pastorale, ca. 1690, *ibid.*, p. 265.

<sup>80</sup>*Ordonnance* pour réformer l'injustice des marchands qui prennent le 33e pour cent des voyageurs: "Nous condamnons comme illicite et usuraire le commerce des marchands qui sans être dans les dits cas, équipent les voyageurs qui vont aux Outaouais ou ailleurs, à la charge que ceux-ci leur paieront au retour en castor les marchandises ..." 9 March 1700, H. Têtu et C.-O. Gagnon, *Mandements, lettres pastorales et circulaires des évêques de Québec* Vol. I (Quebec: 1885) 382-385.

<sup>81</sup>See de Gourville to Pontchartrain, June 1712, remarking that "this commerce alone that one can at present derive any utility and this is also what has attracted the few people who are there." *Mississippi Provincial Archives, 1701-1729, Vol. II French Dominion* (Jackson, Mississippi: Press of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1927) p. 68.

<sup>82</sup>Sém. de Québec. Lettre du Père Raphaël de Luxembourg aux Messieurs de la Compagnie, 30 August 1724, Fonds Verreau, Carton des Evêques, No. 172.

undoubtedly heaped. He drew attention to the vices throughout the territory, the concubinage, the thefts, and other "fearful injustices" that included enormous usury. Resonant in Quebec culture, this criticism against unjust gain and commercial values lasted beyond the Conquest, when troubled parishioners heard one sermon-writer query in the 1760s: "When was there more impenitence or corruption of morals? When was there more *luxe* in lifestyles? When was there more chicanery in *les procez*? More fraud in commerce?" He believed that in his society there was nothing in the world more common than envy, when small prosperity excited jealousies, when "our needs being satisfied, but our desires not being, we ourselves complain, even though our granaries are full and our coffers rich, and to that end, we are unhappy in our prosperity, and poor in our abundance...."<sup>83</sup>

These were complaints of clerics in a commercializing age, made acute in a colony bent upon trading with Indians at a profit. They more than suggest that the church stood before a problematic trade at the beginning of a commercialized age. In almost all respects, the view they promoted of the Indian Trade was rooted in the past: goods were of no real value in an Indian's salvation; their traffic was not necessary; the nature of trade transaction was suspect, and commodities themselves could injure or detract from the salvation of the mission neophyte. Themselves criticizing the ends of the secular fur trade, missionaries promoted the means of an alternative exchange modeled on virtuous Thomist standards. Gifts following gifts, profits arising *sans dessein*, and trade being not usurious, were some of the views promoted in clerical writings.

It will be seen that English trade writers did not visit such matters in the same ways as their French counterparts. It is quite interesting that French trade promoters representing a growing commercial presence in French society embraced as their own the virtuous exchange identified by clerics. The commerce they promoted was fully in accord with these clerical standards but was adapted to the changing features of debates on luxuries. As has been seen in Chapter One, trade promotion now showed material, as well as spiritual, *need* among Indians. In doing so, trade promoters explicitly rejected the missionary's depiction of the Indians' nature and the sufficiency of their environment. But they did not challenge the *ways* the trader should trade. Just as missionaries showed transactions being the exchange of gifts, trade promoters showed trade as a gift of the European to the Indian. *Échange* benefited the Indians as much if not more than, the Europeans involved. Examining the new ways commercial writers viewed Indians, and

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<sup>83</sup>Sém. de Québec. Sermon, possibly Recollet, "De tempore tribulationis," Polygraphie, 19 no. 13.

introducing the quite different English equivalent in the early eighteenth century, will be taken up in the next chapter.

## Chapter Three

### *Self-Interest, the Indian Trade and Commercial Ethnology*

*"one can only govern Indians through fear and self-interest, and more by self-interest than by fear."*

– Memoir on Louisiana, 1746

*"what Price your goods are at which wee hope are Cheep for we esteem a good market above any other thing..."*

– Mohawk Sachem speech to Albany  
Commissioners, 1704<sup>1</sup>

In the previous chapters, it has been argued that French writers promoting commerce described an ideal trade taking place with Indians. Using a clerical model of virtuous exchange, they redefined significant needs among Indians, primarily for material goods, and in so doing provided an ethnology that served commercial ends. The very role they suggested goods played in Amerindian lives will be taken up in the next chapter. For the present, aspects of commercial ethnology deserve to be highlighted. Most histories of anthropological thought tend to ignore the writings of travelers, military officers and missionaries early in the eighteenth century or group together their observations as part of a "colonial ideology" in respect to Indians that justified either their conquest or evangelism. They also concentrate their efforts on the leading writers of the Enlightenment, particularly Buffon, Voltaire, Diderot, and other French philosophes who used comparative methods to form ethnological treatises, leading, ultimately, to the huge presence of the Scottish ethnology of the late eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup> However, this view of anthropological thought arguably removes it from its commercial context<sup>3</sup> and discounts the possibility that the growing colonial correspondence on the Indian trade arising early

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<sup>1</sup>Lawrence H. Leder, ed., *The Livingston Indian Records: 1666-1723* (Gettysberg: Pennsylvania Historical Association, 1956), p. 196.

<sup>2</sup>Michèle Duchet, *Anthropologie et Histoire au siècle des lumières: Buffon, Voltaire, Rousseau, Helvétius, Diderot* (Paris: Francois Maspero, 1971), on comments concerning travel writers, see p. 14; On earlier anthropological generalizations, see Margaret T. Hodgen, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964), pp. 36, 354-382; on a wider synthesis of ethnological thought, see, Olive Patricia Dickason, *The Myth of the Savage: and the Beginnings of French Colonization in the Americas* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1984).

<sup>3</sup>Ronald Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); Christopher J. Berry, *Social Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997).

in the eighteenth century has any significance in changing views of Amerindians.<sup>4</sup> A notable feature of the eighteenth century was the rationalistic approach to understanding the behavior of exotic peoples.<sup>5</sup> The French and English correspondents who promoted trade or encouraged directions in Indian trade policy were quite early in the eighteenth century identifying a universal interest among Indians to trade and acquire European goods, and defining "self-interest" as an Indian's driving passion. The sudden rise in Indian trade descriptions that followed growing Anglo-French rivalries in America seems to have anticipated, if not provided some of the textual source for, eighteenth century rationalistic ethnology, and, as such, will figure as the primary investigation of this chapter. In order to do so, it will address correspondence describing the disputed southern frontier, where Canadian and English traders were competing early in the eighteenth century. After addressing the French ethnological concept of *intérêt*,<sup>6</sup> the chapter turns to the English equivalent, and introduces the different ways in which the English depicted the Indian in trade.

#### I.

French observers in America sought to explain three ethnological problems in the early eighteenth century as the Indian Trade became critical to expanding imperial initiatives. As English trade increased and supplies of manufactures expanded, French colonial correspondents attempted to explain the nature of gifts in the Indian trade, the wants and needs of Indians, and the possible outcome of credit. These questions were particularly urgent given the ways that English traders were breaking out of traditional colonial settings and going inland. English trade directly weakened French claims to the upper Mississippi and Illinois country by 1698, and later undermined French power in the new

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<sup>4</sup>This proposition concurs with the views of Celestin, who sees the "untutored" travel writer and the philosophes as part of the same discourse: "far from being isolated, antagonistic, even mutually exclusive entities, the traveler's discourse and the philosophe's discourse on the exotic forms a network of text informing, supplementing, feeding one another, even if, ultimately, their purposes often diverged." Roger Celestin, *From Cannibals to Radicals: Figures and Limits of Exoticism* (University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 66.

<sup>5</sup>A useful overview, and a stating of his own rationalist position that concedes elements of relativism, is provided by Bruce G. Trigger. "Early Native North American Responses to Contact: Romantic versus Rationalistic Interpretations," *The Journal of American History* March 1991, pp. 1195-1215; introductory comments in Martin Hollis and Steven Lukes, ed., *Rationality and Relativity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982); I.C. Jarvie, *Rationality and Relativism: In Search of a Philosophy and History of Anthropology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984).

<sup>6</sup>See Lewis O. Saum's chapter devoted to "The Force of Self-Interest," which he sees shaping Indian trader text between the eighteenth and nineteenth century, *The Fur Trader and the Indian* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1965), pp. 132-152.

colony of Louisiana. Now with English goods being given away as gifts, advanced as credit, or traded at a much lower rate than their own goods, the French began revising traditional views of Indians.

Challenges to older ethnology appeared with the rise of English competition for regions discovered by the Chevalier de La Salle. The French, disconcerted by decaying relations with inland nations, sent a flood of ethnological description that sought to explain Indian behaviour in trade. No element of French-Indian relations more disturbed the French than the problems of the gift-exchange, possibly because beneficence to Indians in presents was part of the official policy dictated by the court of Louis XIV.<sup>7</sup> It might be remembered that a guiding element to Restriction policy was an order given to officers to give gifts liberally to solidify Indian alliances and for the same not to receive Indian gifts of hides and furs. French commercial promoters depicted their trade explicitly in such terms, as a gift exchange that primarily benefited the Indian. In these transactions, the gift of French manufactures was hoped to soften the Indian's manners and obligate him to remain faithful to the French benefactor. Long practiced in New France, the assumption that gifts could create harmonious social relations was now challenged in French-Indian relations decaying in Louisiana.

The French immediately identified English manufactures being at play in these problems. Already by 1689, the Canadian trade was imperiled by Albany traders who sold goods, particularly strouds, at rates two to four times cheaper than the French. Such price differentials had been one of the reasons why the French went inland from the St. Lawrence, either to establish forts to divert trade from following the Hudson drainage or to perfect the technique of trade *en drouine*. This French strategy, in turn, prompted some of the first English expansionism. The New York governor, Thomas Dongan had believed that English traders could follow the Frenchmen inland to completely squeeze them out of the Indian trade altogether. Such expansionism did not make much economic sense to the Albany merchants who stood to gain more by maintaining their town trade, protecting their monopoly and profiting even on the goods still traded via its Five nations allies and by the late 1690s, the "Far" (Shawnee) Indians. Robert Livingston, in the years after the Peace of Ryswick, became one of the few active supporters of an inland trade

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<sup>7</sup>A careful analysis of French gift expenses is offered by Catherine M. Desbarats, "The Cost of Early Canada's Native Alliances: Reality and Scarcity's Rhetoric," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd Ser. Vol. LII, No. 4, October 1995, pp. 609-630.

until the matter finally gained real application in the 1720s.<sup>8</sup> In the meanwhile trading in town to Five Nations Indians and later using the "Canadian" trade to vent its surpluses to New France, New York became emblematic of the preponderant power of English merchandise in colonial affairs.

The English ability to sell merchandize cheaply to Indians became readily apparent to the French in the first three decades of Indian-French relations in Louisiana.<sup>9</sup> English manufactures soon weakened and broke French ties with the Natchez, aborted them with the Creek, and exacerbated them with the traditional French ally, the Choctaw. The Chickasaw remained far from any French influence soon after the turn of the century, when English manufactures were threatening relations with the Arkansas, Illinois, and even the distant Wabash. Virginian, and particularly South Carolina traders were at work here. In the latter colony, the proprietarial Indian trade literally broke its bounds when cheaper English goods opened up new possibilities for trade and enticed peddlers inland, sometimes to staggering distances. Crane argued that the Charleston trade had gone inland after 1692, when the colony's laws prohibiting trade beyond the Savannah towns were no longer enforced and overland routes were discovered by way of the Creek Villages and rivers to the west. Traders arriving at the forks of the Alabama River soon established a thriving trade with the Chickasaw villages. From the same base, traders gained footholds on the upper Mississippi. By 1699, Charleston merchants were exporting 65,000 deerskins annually, furs such as beaver, and Indian slaves from their distant trading regions.<sup>10</sup> When he reached the upper sources of the Mississippi, Le Moyne d'Iberville remarked on the English and their expanded trading influence, communicating such concerns in a detailed description of an Englishman he discovered, dressed Indian style and liberally distributing gifts and goods for slaves.

An immediate French response was to establish numerous theories of what prompted Indian behavior in such contexts and their ethnological observations were carried in a surge of carefully drafted memoirs on the Indian Trade. Written by governors and military officers, the correspondence was also written by individuals now posing as Indian trade "specialists," like the former Canadian trader, soon governor, Jean-Baptiste

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<sup>8</sup>See Arthur H. Buffinton, "The Policy of Albany and English Westward Expansion," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 8 (4), March 1922, pp. 327-366; and Helen Broshar, "The First Push Westward of the Albany Traders," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 7 (3), December 1920, pp. 228-241.

<sup>9</sup>Patricia Dillon Woods, *French-Indian Relations on the Southern Frontier: 1699-1762* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1980).

<sup>10</sup>Verner W. Crane, "The Tennessee River on the Road to Carolina: The Beginnings of Exploration and Trade," *MVHR* 3 (1), June 1916, pp. 3-18.

Le Moyne de Bienville. Whether military officers, *gens de plume* or those merely in bad enough straits to seek government sinecure, numerous Frenchmen offered memoirs to the marine ministry advising the nature of Indian trading behaviors and offered new ethnological explanations for the terrible straits French colonial fortunes were entering.

An immediate interest fell upon the tradition of gift giving. By 1740, the expensive Natchez wars had led to significant increases in gift distribution, acknowledged but always justified by administrators. Despite estimates that they were escalating in value to tens of thousands of *livres* annually,<sup>11</sup> gifts were depicted as necessary to keep Indians in French alliances, and the quasi-corrupt military corps, Bienville leading it, was not above laying stress on this necessary Indian convention to enlarge the size of the annual King's gifts for officer trading accounts.<sup>12</sup> With gifts necessary in ever larger quantities, colonial correspondents wrote lengthy memos on the subject. One written in 1732 pointed out that the small number of troops in the upper reaches of Louisiana necessitated such gifts to the Indians, who regarded presents as "tribute," and who would otherwise accept them freely (*grace*). The writer was optimistic that with time and when the English threat ended, Indians would not be able to object to the continual diminishment of this "burdensome tribute."<sup>13</sup> Gifts, to this writer were extorted from the French in their weakened military position. To others seeking government appointment, gift-giving was far more complex and rooted deep in Amerindian customs and demanded the services of only experienced Frenchmen. Raymond Amyault, former Canadian trader and Louisiana council member, wrote a lengthy memoir the same year to request a commission for military service inland, and described gift-exchanges that obviously begged his talents. His experience had taught him "a perfect knowledge of the character and customs of Indians and many of their languages." Knowledgeable of the "universal negotiations" of Indians, he had later applied his abilities in the deer skin trade of Louisiana after the bursting of the Mississippi Bubble in 1719. Turning his discussion to the Natchez Wars, he placed emphasis upon the requirements of gift-giving. The Indians, he said, accommodate their affairs according to gifts, and "ordinarily take the side of those who give them the most, less from fear than obligation." The English presented in this respect a considerable threat

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<sup>11</sup>AOM. In the previous three years, a report said that there had been 150 million *livres* of trade goods required to attach all the Nations to the French. See *La Louisiane, guerre des sauvages Natchez*, 19 April 1732. C/13a/14. f. 174.

<sup>12</sup>AOM. Governor Perrier, who accepted the *compagnie des Indes* gifts for Indians, was criticized for having gone and sold Limbourg cloth, "proper for presents." *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*



to the French alliances with the Choctaw and Natchez, and with English goods in the hands of the Chickasaws, these enemies of the French were now spreading news as far as the Illinois country that "the English are liberal and would furnish them abundantly with beautiful merchandise at a just price."

The Amyault memoir offered some contradictory ethnography, as his French contemporaries were likely aware. They already had enough reports, and Amyault had stated explicitly, that Indians felt little, if any, obligation to those who gave them small gifts. Amyault made the quite inconceivable statement that Indians did not have confidence in those who spoke their languages (saying that those who did had the liberty to quarrel with them and threaten them). Rather, they listened to gifts, a universal language, apparently, giving a mark of one's sincere friendship. "One present of ten small guns made properly by a commandant makes more of an effect in the minds of Indians than ten thousand *livres* given by a commandant who passes himself as a common interpreter." He was not above describing his French contemporaries, the "base men of self-interest," whose poor handling of Indians led them to distribute presents in huge quantities; and through their poor skills the French had become the Indians' "tributors."<sup>14</sup>

There were so many of these memoirs explaining the meaning of gifts, often written by inexperienced *gens de plume*, that the Commander General of Louisiana, Etienne de Périer summed up their contents as "balderdash."<sup>15</sup> In the midst of the Natchez Wars, he was particularly worried about this Indian convention, especially by 1727, when diplomacy in the Illinois Country was decaying with English influence. More critical were relations with the Choctaws, Talapouses, Alabamas and Caouitas, who had sent chiefs to Mobile for talks and to receive presents from the French. Despite his own gift-giving, he noted that the English that year had constructed storehouses of goods among the Caouitas and the Talapousses. The Choctaws were not above receiving them, too. In a memoir pointing out these developments, Périer turned his attention to the numerous theories in circulation concerning gifts and attempted to set the record straight. Despite what idle *gens de plume* said, Indians did not look at gifts as "tribute" from the French (which carried odious connotations to a French administrator), but as payment of wages for their military service. He believed it was right and just that Indians demanded gifts for their alliances, and considering their indispensability in fighting the allies of the English, he believed they "earned" these gifts.

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<sup>14</sup>AOM. Louisiane Mémoire de Raymond Amyault, 20 January 1732, C/13a/14 f. 273.

<sup>15</sup>AOM. Perier Memoir, 1 August 1727, C/13a/12 f. 10.

But French contemporaries assessing this explanation of gifts might have used Perrier's own expression, "balderdash." The French had confidently believed that gifts sealed trust and solidity in alliances. The Intendant in Canada had once sent a memoir concerning gift giving from Canada that communicated little of the self-interest among the Ottawa that the French now contended with among Louisiana Amerindians. The Ottawa used gifts to keep their relations with the French in harmony, to make sure that there were no "obstacles" between the peoples, and to appeal for low prices on goods.<sup>16</sup> Such an understanding of gifts had allowed the French to view Indians according to the ideals of classical humanism; Indians were fearsomely revengeful, glorious in bravery, but they did not plan for the 'morrow.

Amyault still adhered to this older view of Indians and suggested that fewer trade goods could be given if offered with proper speeches. But this was not the case. Clearly distressing administrators, almost all of them transferred from Canadian service into Louisiana, was the fact that gifts were proving entirely ineffective in keeping Indians in alliance. Despite their handling, speeches, and politics, military officers were reporting that Indians responded more to the sheer quantity of merchandise given, and, more distressing still, struck peace with the trader who offered the lowest prices on goods. Perrier himself had all but admitted that this was the case. His own argument that gifts were given for services rendered, as payment, did not necessarily assure the French of an Indian nation's future fealty. The Choctaws certainly felt few obligations arising from the gifts they had received; they were calling for a storehouse of merchandise, which would be "good and necessary to keep them in our interest."<sup>17</sup> The older view of Indians indeed provided the French few means to explain why an Indian nation, in alliance with the French and receiving gifts (whether in *extortion*, *tribute*, or *wages*) could so easily be won over by the English.

The immediate French explanation for such behaviour became "self-interest," that the inundation of English goods demonstrated an Indian's willingness to grab the best bargain and discount his previous obligations for the purposes of self-gain. This quite revolutionary observation was made clear in numerous examples. French

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<sup>16</sup>See, for instance, the discussion of gifts in Jacques Duchesneau de La Doussinière et d'Ambault's memoir on the fur trade, 13 November 1681. The Ottawa Indians, he said, come to Montreal and gave gifts for the following purposes: "to be in peace with one another, to enjoy great liberty in their commerce, to be treated well when they were in Montreal, to never be deceived in the exchange of merchandise which they sold, and for us to respond liberally to their presents...." Pierre Margry, Pierre, ed., *Découvertes et établissements des Français dans l'ouest et dans le sud de l'Amérique Septentrionale, 1614-1754*, *mémoires et documents originaux*, Vol. II., (Paris : D. Jousaust, 1976), pp. 266-267.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.* f. 12.

officers saw the seeming amity of Indians and their easy alliances with the French (the Chickasaw and Choctaw, "naturally" love the French more than the English, as Bienville once blissfully maintained),<sup>18</sup> disappear with the first English goods inland. The Chickasaws, initially friendly to La Salle's lieutenant, Henry de Tonty, were the first to leave French alliances completely. The Choctaws, whom the French attempted to maintain in war against the Chickasaws, soon wavered and threatened to establish peace with French enemies in order to trade English goods. The entire negotiations with the Alabamas devolved upon whether the French could match English prices on cloth, guns, power and ball. According to one observer in 1734, the only thing presently interesting the Alabamas in the French was the superior quality of French powder and Limbourg cloth. These reached them through trade with the Choctaw.<sup>19</sup> But with French and English Limbourg possessing fewer differences in terms of quality, as Canadian observers sourly noted, this French advantage was tenuous indeed considering the better prices on the competition's fabric.<sup>20</sup>

Officers sent to negotiate and shore up alliances were quick to interpret the self-interest and competitiveness prompting Indians to go to the English as duplicity, treachery or self-serving greed. This was particularly the case in the 1730s when an unprecedented volume of Bristol, London, and Birmingham goods were going into French territory. Most, if not all, of it was priced at half the cost of French goods; lowly English traders were also giving lavish gifts. To a Choctaw chief in 1734, a trader gave more gifts than any French military officer could match, and additionally distributed a complete set of clothing to each of the prominent warriors of the nation. Choctaws, and the Abikas and Akaapas tribes welcomed English into their midst when promised good prices ("*bon marché*"), as Bienville peevish in 1735. The "disposition of the chiefs" was already affected by English liberality, he said, despite his reproach for their "ingratitude towards the French."<sup>21</sup> One later negotiator with the Chickasaw learned not only the influence of English goods, but also their insidious effects upon the Choctaws, and warned ominously that in "the manner of (the English) merchandise, it would not be difficult for them to forget their obligations to us."<sup>22</sup> The French found this particular turn

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<sup>18</sup>AOM. See Bienville to minister, 20 February 1707, Correspondance générale, C/13a/2.

<sup>19</sup>AOM. Bienville letter 5 April 1734, C/13a/18 ff. 64.

<sup>20</sup>AOM. See Canadian observation on the preference of Indians to the English scarlatines over the ones made in Languedoc, that even a Frenchman could not tell the two articles apart, and even the Indians who are great judges of fabrics. They wanted the English product because of its price. C/11a/26 ff. 152-153.

<sup>21</sup>AOM. Bienville letter, October 1735, C/13a/20 ff. 185-186.

<sup>22</sup>AOM. Vaudreille letter 6 January 1746, C/13a/30. ff. 13-17.

in Indian affairs all the more distressing: as soon as gifts were dispersed to appease disaffected Indians, officers saw agreements dissolve with the next shipment of goods brought inland by a mule-driven English cart.

French correspondents did turn their attention to explain such self-interest, particularly the officers manning poorly supplied posts who found declining whatever "influence" they imagined themselves having among nearby Indian nations. Their annual salaries were expended in "small presents" made to Indians at the posts, often having little effect.<sup>23</sup> They recognized the role of trade in these poor relations, and that competitive prices were at play in upsetting Indian sympathies. Among their Choctaw allies, they noted that "on the manner of price they give the English liberty to come trade among them."<sup>24</sup> There is an indication that they attempted to redress their sinking influence by identifying to Indians the "true" nature of trade with the English. Officers were careful to make a distinction between the liberality of the French King's "gifts," which were not expected to be returned, and the English presents that constituted "credits" that were expected to be paid back. More will be said of this important distinction below, which was undoubtedly communicated to Indians in French speeches.

But Indians were in turn quite aloof to any obligations attached to the larger English gifts and their perceived fickleness led to other characterizations. The Indians, motivated by "self-interest" (*intérêt*), would "love the one who brings them the most." A later memoir on the state of the Louisiana colony pointed out, "one can only govern Indians through fear and self-interest, and more by self-interest than by fear."<sup>25</sup> Bienville would seethe over the duplicity of the famous Choctaw headman, Red Shoes, who by 1734 had visited the English at Georgia (although he denied it to Bienville). Red Shoes was now accompanying four English traders following up his visit and introducing them into villages. His treacherous "faction" of helpers were not stopped by the Choctaw supposedly faithful to the French; the chiefs, Bienville fumed, "did not object" to these incursions, and accepted presents "because the Indians don't know how to refuse."<sup>26</sup> Red Shoe became symbolic of Indian falseness, which Bienville would take up again with the Abikas, who had been offered lavish gifts and good prices if they visited the English traders on the River Kaapas in Chickasaw territory. He said that the nation had

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<sup>23</sup>AOM. Bienville letter 1 April 1734, C/13a/18.

<sup>24</sup>AOM. Bienville letter October 1735 C/13a/20 f.189.

<sup>25</sup>AOM. Mémoire sur l'état de la colonie de la Louisiane en 1746. C/13a/30. f. 261.

<sup>26</sup>AOM. Bienville letter October 1735, C/13a/20 f.187. On Red Shoe Shoes from the English perspective, see Richard White, "Red Shoes: Warrior and Diplomat," David G. Sweet and Gary B. Nash, eds., *Struggle and Survival in Colonial America* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1992), pp. 49-68.

considered and rejected the offer, but as "self-interest is the dominant passion of these people," some within proposed the strategy of accepting the English offer and continue trading with the French and "have commerce with the one and the other." To that end, a chief and some of his family had stealthily slipped out of their village by night to visit the English. There, they were offered better prices and an invitation to come to Carolina to work out a trade agreement. It was only when they considered the risks involved that the party returned to their village.<sup>27</sup>

The avidity Indians displayed in following the largest gifts and lowest prices on trade goods particularly frustrated administrators despite all politics, speeches, and gestures of generosity. Rather than being guided by the speeches of an officer, Indians were more readily wooed by the lowly and disreputable peddler: they appeared greedy for goods, were offended at bad prices, and thrived in a bargain. One officer giving presents to the Choctaw chiefs in 1732 remarked that these were received "with satisfaction," but he was skeptical as to their effect: "as the Indian is naturally self-interested, he is extremely prudent, and he does not count on those who cannot give him limbourg and the other merchandise proper for their use, according to which the present that one makes to them makes the *parole* (officer's speech) 'more strong.'"<sup>28</sup> Hardly resolute or bound by a classical ideal of honour, the Indian was corrupted by the self-interest any European could in fact identify within himself. He followed the larger gift or the lowest price. Missionaries were probably right when they saw the rise of English goods leading to the growing problems with the Choctaw. They reported that the English were profiting from a particularly damaging rumor that the French could never furnish the Indians their needs in limbourg cloth.<sup>29</sup>

The French interpretation of Amerindian behavior had consequences for their strategies in Indian Affairs. With their small supplies often disrupted by the strained economics of the Regency, the French attempted to provide their goods at a lower price. In this, two approaches were advocated. One was to simply increase merchandise supplies through the creation of inland storehouses, a strategy advocated by Bernard Diron d'Artaguiette, the commandant at Mobile. There, French relations with the Choctaw were increasingly problematic by 1726. Others advocated the increased dispersal of the King's gifts, to lower the overall price of French manufactures. However, the Louisiana Council, the body making immediate decisions on such matters, chose a

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<sup>27</sup>AOM. Bienville letter 26 April 1734, C/13a/18, ff. 181-182.

<sup>28</sup>AOM. De Cremons letter 15 May 1732, C/13a/14, f. 113.

<sup>29</sup>AOM. Bienville memoir, "Sur les Sauvages," 1 January 1734 C/13a/18 f. 208.

traditional approach of increasing control over goods and prices. In the Choctaw case, they attempted to do so by leasing out an exclusive trade to Diron, and prohibiting colonists from free trading. Through this approach it was hoped that the trade regulated by the commander would stop colonists from entering the trade, and overcharging Indians on European wares.<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile, colonists demanded the court to artificially lower the prices of goods being sold to traders through the Louisiana offices of the *Compagnie des Indes*. As one memorial writer suggested, building forts, not storehouses, instilled respect that should be followed up with the "more essential" strategy to appeal to Indian "self-interest" by bringing them merchandise at "below the good prices of the English."<sup>31</sup> The French also knew of the expense Carolina and Georgia traders faced bringing goods by horse overland to the upper Mississippi, and they attempted to tighten up English entrances such as at Mobile -- long a point where their goods infiltrated into Indian country.<sup>32</sup> Some writers, therefore, urged transportation innovations to lower price on goods. One correspondent sending "A general idea of the manner upon which the Louisiana commerce can be based," proposed that eau-de-vie, vermilion, mirrors, limbourg cloth, and hardwares could be sent from New Orleans in stages to the distant Wabash and Illinois. By using large barges and avoiding the private small ships presently plying the river and exacting huge tolls, goods could be sent to the fort at Natchez at a thirty per cent markup on French prices, to the Wabash at forty per cent, and finally to the Illinois, at fifty per cent -- a large reduction on the current prices.<sup>33</sup>

The French ethnological concept of *intérêt*, then, constituted a new understanding of a commercial affinity between Indians and Europeans. It is clear that such self-interest was not viewed as a positive feature of Indian character. It was, however, a fundamentally new view of the American Indian, one in which universal traits of acquisitiveness were identified, and, given the concurrent problem of English, French and Spanish colonists to similarly pursue self-interest in contraband trade one to another, yet another example of the ways that material goods satisfied needs and drove demand in the Americas.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>AOM. Diron Letter, 17 October 1729, C/13a/12 f.149.

<sup>31</sup>AOM. Mémoire sur l'état de la colonie de la Louisiane en 1746. C/13a/30, f. 262.

<sup>32</sup>AOM. See Bienville's seizure of English goods, such as cheap limbourg cloth, in 1734. Bienville letter 24 February 1734, C/13a/18 f. 9.

<sup>33</sup>AOM. Idée générale de la manière dont le commerce de la Louisiane peut se former, C/13c/1 ff. 119-128.

<sup>34</sup> Henri Folmer, "Contraband Trade between Louisiana and New Mexico in the Eighteenth Century," *New Mexico Historical Review* XVI (3), July 1941, pp. 249-274.

Such ethnological revisionism was hurried as current distribution escalated and Choctaw relations finally ended by the end of the 1720s. In October of 1729, Governor Perrier reported the Natchez attack on their post (Fort Natchez), where inhabitants were killed and the fort sacked of merchandise. Not only were the Natchez now at war with the French, but they were influencing the French trade with the Choctaws, who were now close to openly rebelling.<sup>35</sup> The French were already aware of the most obvious source for Choctaw dissatisfaction -- the estimated 33 English traders already among the Chickasaw, advancing goods in credit and often requiring only half to be paid back.<sup>36</sup> For the moment, blame fell upon the criticized Diron, the commandant posted to the nation, who was believed to have exacted too high prices from Indians in his exclusive trade rights. Dispatched to investigate was the Sieur de Regis, whose report castigated the commandant's role in extracting debts from Indians and raising their hostility towards the French. Even before arriving in the Choctaw territory, Regis' journal hints at the obvious inundation of English goods and consequent influence in the region. Chiefs frequently demanded from him French goods at English rates. He reported even the distant Illinois Indians were frequenting the English traders nearby.<sup>37</sup>

Diron himself would justify his actions at Mobile on the basis of the few goods that were actually available to him and the meager supply of gifts given up by the *Compagnie*. Already by 1727, Diron had become alarmed at the large amounts of goods and storehouses the English had established among the Alabama, Talapouches, Cautitas and Chouamnous and the English ability to send massive amounts of merchandise as presents and trade items to the Chickasaw and Choctaw.<sup>38</sup> The English were offering bolts of limbourg, guns, shirts, and powder at far lower rates than the French, "a fact opening the eyes of the Chickasaws," Diron had pointed out, and apparently those of the Choctaw nearby. Initially using strong methods to keep the Choctaw in the French trade (at one point pillaging Choctaw villages that had accepted English goods from the Chickasaw), Diron then began advancing goods on credit out of *compagnie* stores, and now in credit relations, the prices on goods had by necessity been charged at a higher rate.

With larger supplies of English goods inland by the first decades of the eighteenth century, relations worsened between the French and their allies. The urgency of an officer's mission to the Choctaws in 1729, prompted by Governor Périer, suggests

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<sup>35</sup>AOM. See Perrier letter, 5 October 1729, C/13a/12 f.35.

<sup>36</sup>AOM. Sieur La Fleur to Diron 22 July 1729, *Ibid.*, f. 170.

<sup>37</sup>AOM. Journal du voyage que j'ay fait dans la nation des Chactaws 1729-30, *Ibid.* ff. 67-100.

<sup>38</sup>AOM. Letter of M. Diron, 17 October 1729, C/13a/12 f. 149.

that high prices from small supply were seen as a grave political affront to the Indians. The officer met a chief who complained of "the excessively high prices that they [the French] ask for their goods" and the officer promptly returned to him a sizable amount of presents, 800 livres worth, and made the offer of a warehouse of goods if it would stop them from turning to the English.<sup>39</sup> As reassuring as this might have been to the nation, the warehouse was not established and an agent later met with a Choctaw chief and reported that the French were still selling limbourg cloth, guns, white blankets, beads, "and all other goods," at far higher prices than the English, a situation that "grieved" the chief who reiterated that *he wanted a warehouse of goods in their midst*.<sup>40</sup>

## II.

The French identified commercial affinities among Indians in a moment of rising rivalry with the English. It is valuable, here, to turn to the case of the English colonists, the precedents to their trade expansion, and a similar observation of "self-interest" among the Indians they encountered inland.

As they were first described in official correspondence, the English colonization schemes in America showed the Indian trade subordinated to other aims, most particularly the establishment of colonies, or the Indian's religious conversion. Such ideals were patently stamped on petitions seeking the first concessions in America from their English sovereign, where colonization was more often presented as a means to expand the Church. English petitions almost repetitively negated or obscured the personal profit motives that might prompt their authors' activities, laying stress instead upon the spiritual work or the common good that such ventures would effect. The first English petitions for the expansion of the Virginia and New England grants or to establish completely new ventures in the Americas began with such reassurances. The proposed scheme for South American colonization promised that its primary task would be "the conversion of the people inhabiting there abouts to the Christian faith, and for the enlarging of his Majesty's Dominions and increase of trade, and traffique for diverse commodities."<sup>41</sup>

The arrangement of priorities was not accidental. Those seeking leased rights or charters placed evangelism at the front of their supplications as such traditionally had been the stated aim of western European expansion. The Spanish had

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<sup>39</sup>Mississippi Provincial Archives, Vol. I., p. 19.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>41</sup>Public Records Office, Kew, Great Britain (Hereafter, "PRO"). See Roger North and Robert Harcourt petition, 1627, CO 1/4 f. 17.



sought to extend Christendom with their principalities, first in the Reconquest, then in the Americas; in both settings, the legal instrument often drawn up by the sovereign was the señoral grant. Among the French, the *seigneurial* award, offered rights to new territory in exchange for the adventurer's faithfulness to the Crown and his taking up responsibilities to convert the conquered infidel or heathen, whichever be the case, to Christianity.<sup>42</sup> The notion of extending Christendom first, trade later, was resonant in the Spanish colonization policies that extended a societal order, rather than merely territorial boundaries, based upon Augustine's model of the City of God, where Divine rankings were established and Christian law upheld.<sup>43</sup>

Similar ends marked proposals for later English colonization, as more than suggested in the "Defence of Plantations" written in 1627. Its author stated that previous projects, undoubtedly referring to Roanoke, had failed so miserably because of the guiding virtues of the participants. "If we intend to prosper in our plantations in the Indies and in our trade in that country, it behove us first to seeke the Kingdom of God and his righteousness to that end that we honoring him as our good father he may bless us as his deare children."<sup>44</sup> The writer argued that if the colonizer's first priorities remained the Indian's conversion, the provision of the English poor, and "lastly" to "fill our owne cuntry of England with many blessings," then far more success would surely follow, particularly with the obvious fulfillment of natural law and the observation of Amerindian's rights to property. Having planned not to "drive the Indians from their habitations by violence nor to take away their goods from them forcibly and unjustly by covetousness," the memorial writers proposed "to convert them by instruction and good example," and to live in close proximity with them. The petitioners also promised "to convey to them together with the Gospel the most delicious commodities that we have here with us," a plan they believed would place the enterprise in God's blessings.<sup>45</sup>

The petitioner's characterization of commodities as "delicious" should not be overlooked, because any virtuous vent of European material goods was contingent upon a larger effort to hurry Divine dispensation. Any lobby seeking commercial entrance into America's vast territories usually took care to differentiate between activities that hurried conversion -- virtuous endeavours -- and those prompted by avarice. The

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<sup>42</sup>See example offered by Dickason of Papal grants, in L.C. Green & Olive P. Dickason, *The Law of Nations and the New World* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1989), p. 175.

<sup>43</sup>On this, see Lyle N. McAlister, *Spain and Portugal in the New World, 1492-1700* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), pp. 24-25. On the señorialism, see p. 28-29.

<sup>44</sup>PRO. "Defence of Plantations, 1627," CO 1/4 f. 92.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, f.93.

petitioner could therefore cite the alternative. In a bid to win one colonial chartering, the author of a 1625 "Brief noates on ye busines of ye Amazones," began by identifying the straggling English settlers already there who lived "dispersed amongst ye Indians without government and have ranged about a large countrie." The writer stated that these vagabond Englishmen "may make use of many thousands of ye Indians, who are rewarded with glass beades, and ironworks, *or some such like contemptible stuffe*, for through which, they house them, work for them, bring them victuals."<sup>46</sup> Divorced from society and the larger mandates of God and King to convert the Indian, the trader moved from his virtuous design; goods once "delicious" became "contemptible:" the cheap manufacture exacted slavery, not free labour.

At least on paper, Christian, not mercantile, expansion was to order priorities in first colonization. Undertaken among newcomers, however, the very temporal ends to English trade, the disorders immediately attending it, and rising violence between Indians and colonists joined the Indian trade with pithy and lowly associations. In its earliest phases, the English fur trade was an extractive industry, and its merits judged according to the ways that it detracted from a particular colony's prosperity or its relations with Indian nations. These trades contributed in no small part to a colony's first remittances, and therefore were jealously guarded. Prior to their expansion, they were carried out sporadically, similar to booty raiding, or organized according to explicit proprietorial rights, being monopolized by a particular lease-holder with nearby Indians.<sup>47</sup> The Scots at Stewartstown, Carolina, within a year of their troubled colonization in 1685, were establishing "correspondence and ttrade" with neighbouring Indians, particularly the Yamasee, but reported that "these our endeevors do already provock the Inevey of sevrall particular persones, who, meinding their own privat Interist mor than that of the lords proprietors or good of the province ... render us contemptible in the eyes of the Indians about us."<sup>48</sup> The typical seventeenth century grant to land, such as the one extended to Edward Nicholas in 1662, included the "government of the same with the trade there unto belonging during the natural life of him."<sup>49</sup> So also, the earlier incursion of Captain

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<sup>46</sup>PRO. Brief Noates of ye busines of ye Amazones," 1625, CO 1/4 ff. 9-10

<sup>47</sup>PRO. See New York's governor, Colonel Dongan writing to the governor of New France, de la Barre in June 1684, speaking of Iroquois close to New York, "having traded with the government above forty years and no where else." New York had a claim to trade with them by virtue of its territory. He did, however, allow the French to trade among them if they should wish. CO1/54 f. 344.

<sup>48</sup>Cardross letter, 27 March 1685, George Pratt Insh, ed., "The Carolina Merchant: Advice of Arrival," *Scottish Historical Review* 25 January 1928, p. 104.

<sup>49</sup>PRO. Warrant, 5 April 1662, CO 1/16, f. 105.

William Claybourne upon Lord Baltimore's grant in the Chesapeake, ("who had a desire to appropriate the trade of those parts unto himself"),<sup>50</sup> in this case Kent Island, resulted in violent skirmishes, and the Privy Council reviewing the case decided that Claybourne was not in the right "to plant or trade there or in any other parts or places with the Indians or Savages within the princincts of Lord Baltimore's patent."<sup>51</sup> Proprietorial trade invested in the individual or a company can be traced northward. The Hudson's Bay Company formed in 1670, sparking interest in English trading opportunities in the southern colonies, established its Indian relations in proprietorial terms, forming "compacts" with those near its factories, that is, by right of their monopoly to the "lands and rivers of them, ... that they had transfered the absolute propriety to you, or at least the only freedome of trade." In 1680, the London Committee instructed its bayside factors to perform ceremonies that established such compacts, "by the custome of their country ... thought most sacred and obliging to them for the confirmation of such agreements."<sup>52</sup>

By the conclusion of the seventeenth century, as activity expanded with increased numbers of traders and larger volumes of goods, the conception of proprietorial trading rights with the Indians near or adjacent to colonies had to be overhauled. Virginians protested when the South Carolina government seized the goods of its Indian traders allegedly because they had not purchased licenses to trade in its hinterlands. Colonel Jennings pointed out the historic precedent of the Virginia grant, "especially since most of the Indians with whom we trade live some hundreds of miles from any of the inhabitants of Carolina." However, merchants inclined to view such rights as monopolistic were already apprehending the virtues of a free trade with Indians who, they maintained, could not be assigned to a particular colonial hinterland. This matter was raised when South Carolina traders were arrested and their goods seized by a Georgian Indian commissioner in 1735, who claimed that their incursions into Georgian territory, without license, was throwing "disorder" into the trade. The Carolina governor claimed his colonists had an established right to the trade of the Cherokee and Creek Indians, that Carolina traders had traded with them before the creation of Georgia. The Council and Assembly of South Carolina pointed out the Cherokee chief's visit to London where a Treaty of Friendship and Commerce promised Indians that Carolina traders would "furnish them with all manner of goods they should want and to make haste to build houses from Charles Town toward the Towns of the Cherokees behind the great

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<sup>50</sup>Andrew White, *A Relation of Maryland* (1635) March of America Facsimile Series No. 22) p. 31.

<sup>51</sup>PRO. Whitehall, 4 April 1638, CO 1/9 ff. 224-225; on Claybourne, see Williams, pp. 224-225.

<sup>52</sup>PRO. To Governor Nixon, 29 May 1680.

Mountains." Charleston merchants moving against the Georgian restrictions also cited the advantages of the trade, presently employing 300 of the "poorer sort of people" who "find a constant employment therein," the 800 horses used yearly, and the enduring advantages of the trade because of cheap prices, which kept the Indians "dependent" upon "thy Government."<sup>53</sup> The most effective argument, however, was one cited by the Carolina traders themselves, that prohibiting English traders from the frontiers of another colony would only "embolden" the Indians and give "them room to believe that [Georgia colonists] there are a separate distinct people from us." They also suggested that Georgian trustees held rights to an exclusive trade within the bounds of the government, "no more than any other province in America have with the Indians within their respective limits."<sup>54</sup> Considering that the Georgian Indian agent was promptly fired for his actions, and the entire issue dropped, it is possible to suggest that the expediency of proprietorial trading had been largely eclipsed by a free trade alternative, one in which "dependency" through free commerce was imagined as a possibility.

The change in the English conception of the Indian trade, from a leased extraction of a particular landowner or colonial government, to one freely accessed by all colonists, occurred as well-supplied, credited, traders were going impressive distances inland to reach new Indian markets. To return to earlier moments of the trade, however, this extractive industry had often been removed from the Crown's direct supervision and its organization fell upon individuals and companies who had won rights to the trade, and whose factors obeyed the directives of their merchant backers. In almost all of its earliest sites, whether from fishing vessels, the planned landing parties of traders, or more organized factories, the resulting English trades were sporadic, sometimes ill planned; the participants worked like privateers, motivated by similarly high profit potentials; its only real organization, according to Morrison, followed the Virginian Indian massacres that forced traders to consolidate their trade within forts.<sup>55</sup>

As among the French, the seventeenth century narrative describing trade as extraction left little characterization of English *exchange* with Indians. This did not mean that there was not a consistent return of furs from the Virginia Company and other concerns. Rather, the joint stock colonies such as at Jamestown restricted private

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<sup>53</sup>See Memorial of Merchants of South Carolina to Lords of Trade, 4 July 1735, C.O.5/ 365 ff. 37-39. Petition of Council and Assembly of South Carolina, 17 July 1736, *Ibid.*, f. 158.

<sup>54</sup>Petition to Lords of Trade from South Carolina Traders, 9 December 1735 *Ibid.* ff. 24-26.

<sup>55</sup>PRO. A petition defending English colonization initiatives mentions the many fur traders already attracted to American shores. CO 1/9 ff. 279-280. See Morrison, p. 228.

enterprise, and there was often little said about the Indian trade undertaken by individuals.<sup>56</sup> More at play, however, was a chronic shortage of trade goods which reduced the very possibility of trade. Barely supplied with their own needs, colonists could hardly provide Indians with any large amount of truck.<sup>57</sup>

This shortage can be discerned in the letter of a factor to a London merchant house in 1634, quoted by Morrison: "...I make no doubt but next year we shall drive a very great trade if our supply of trucke fail not. There is not anything doth more indanger the losse of Commerce with the Indians than want of trucke to barter with them."<sup>58</sup> The problem of raising sufficient truck restricted the limits of English trade for most of the century. New York's activities in the first years of the English regime depended not on English but on Dutch duffels and Indian blankets. In the puritan colonies, the "stranger" among the pilgrims was not only the excluded English sinner, but the Dutch company peddler who resolutely maintained himself in small trading sites on the upper coastline of Maine and New England. Difficulties in procuring English wares led colonists often to differentiate between goods for Indians and goods for themselves, not really because they differentiated between buyers of fundamentally different religious sympathies, but because they sought to evade the letter of the Navigation Acts and enjoy duty free entrance of the stuffs to their colonies. Dutch Indian blankets, recognized as cloth and therefore charged according to the Navigation Acts, were imaginatively called *evadoules* by the New Yorker, which "cannot be called cloth" since they were "not ever worne by any Christians only by the Indians."<sup>59</sup> New Yorkers, it might be pointed out, continued to call goods either "Christian" or "Indian" according to where they were to end up in trade.<sup>60</sup>

Whatever their designations in trade, it was often Dutch, not English, manufactures which supported New England's and Virginia's Indian trades for many of

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<sup>56</sup>Morrison, p. 221.

<sup>57</sup>See Leonard Calvert's letter regarding the Maryland trade in 1634: "...I make no doubt but next year we shall drive a very great trade if our supply of trucke fail not. There is not anything doth more indanger the losse of Commerce with the Indians than want of trucke to barter with them." Quoted in Morrison, p. 224.

<sup>58</sup>Quoted in A.J. Morrison, "The Virginia Indian Trade to 1673," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 1(4), October 1921, p. 224.

<sup>59</sup>PRO. Petition of Mayor and Aldermen of New York, November 1669, CO 1/20.

<sup>60</sup>National Archives of Canada, Ottawa (Hereafter "NAC"). New York Albany Indian Commissioners Letterbooks, Hence, Governor Burnet's instructions to take oaths of Albany merchants suspected of trading "Christian Goods" to the French in 1723, recorded 19 June 1723, and prohibition of 29 June 1723, against "selling of Indian goods to the French," Microfilm Reel C1220, f. 43.

the years of the seventeenth century.<sup>61</sup> Even by 1709, when Governor Dudley in New England noted the rising volumes of exports from the colony in every other commodity except furs,<sup>62</sup> he remarked how war with France had severely restricted the availability of English woolens, and consequently closed down almost completely the Indian trade.

The poorly supplied trade of the early years was in turn associated with a number of necessary, if unsavory, steps of first colonization. From Roanoke and Maryland, New England and Massachusetts Bay, furs were exported as remittances to pay colonial debts, or simply to attract dearly needed European commodities for struggling and sometimes starving agricultural colonies.<sup>63</sup> The exchange with Indians often merely for food, was by natural design expected to cease once agriculture took hold. Furthermore, with the precipitous decline in Amerindian populations near first colonists,<sup>64</sup> and the surprisingly quick depletion of furbearers (or their scarcity in periods of Indian warfare), Maryland, New England, and New Hampshire were among the first English colonies to lose their Indian trades. Indeed, from the mid-seventeenth century to the Revolutionary War, many of the English colonists lost significant participation in the Indian trade altogether.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>PRO. See estimate of 1634, when the Dutch procured 7000 lbs weight of beaver in their settlements within New England, CO 1/6 f. 67. Also, the worries of Captain William Tucker, for the Dutch trade in the colony, "to our great prejudice of trade with the Natives of that Country...." in Tucker Memorial on the Dutch Trade in Virginia. CO 1/6 f. 211.

<sup>62</sup>He listed, fish £30,000; timber £2000; oil £5000; tarr and gums £10,000; and furs £1000. Dudley to Lords of Trade, 1 March 1709 ed. Cecil Headlam, *Calendar of State Papers: Colonial Series, America and West Indies June 1708-1709* (London: 1922), p. 235.

<sup>63</sup>See John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1985); David Beers Quinn, *Set Fair for Roanoke: Voyages and Colonies, 1584-1606* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), pp. 34-37. On the wild profit potential of the fur trade prompting the first colonists to Maryland's Tobacco Coast, see J. Frederick Fausz, "'To Draw Thither the Trade of Beavers': The Strategic Significance of the English Fur Trade in the Chesapeake, 1620-1660," Bruce Trigger, Toby Morantz and Louise Dechêne, eds., *"Le Castor Fait Tout": Selected Papers of the Fifth North American Fur Trade Conference, 1985* (Montreal: Lake St. Louis Historical Society, 1985), pp. 42-71.

<sup>64</sup>"... how strangely they have decreast by the Hand of God, since the English first setling of those parts." Denton, then, did not tarry on trade with a people fast disappearing before colonists, hurried aside by "a Divine Hand ... removing or cutting off the Indians." Daniel Denton, *A Brief Description of New-York* (orig. published 1670, republished by March of America Facsimile Series, No. 26), pp. 3, 7-8.

<sup>65</sup>PRO. On Maryland, see Lord Baltimore's Answer to Inquiry about Maryland, reporting that there was "generally a good correspondence kept with them all ... as to the trade of those Indians with whom this province corresponds it is not considerable, they are generally an idle people who take no care for anything but food which they gayne by hunting and fishing and sometimes they sell to the English the skins of such beasts as they kill which is their only commodity that they have to sell and it is not considerable." Lord Baltimore's Answers, 26 March 1678 CO 5/723 f. 38. See, also, Dean R. Snow, "Abenaki Fur Trade in the Sixteenth Century," *The Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology* 6 (1), pp.

The Indian trade exhausted itself in colonies where transportation opportunities did not exist to allow traders farther inland or middleman Indians to visit the colony itself. Maryland's trade flourished and died out in the three decades before 1660.<sup>66</sup> Lord Baltimore stated in 1678 of nearby Indians: "sometimes they sell to the English the skins of such beasts as they kill which is their only commodity that they have to sell and it is not considerable."<sup>67</sup> In colonies where production of furs steadily diminished, trade was maintained to keep up Indian relations. The similarities, in such cases, with the French gift-giving tradition, are apparent, except in a key respect. These English strategies maintained an appearance of exchange. The gaining severity of English civil law, imposed upon debtor Indians, worked to stop the appearance of any free gift of English manufactures.<sup>68</sup> Furs declining in number, Indian demand staying inelastic, many colonies turned to taxes to subsidize the trade, that is, maintain a quantity of goods in exchange for ever smaller returns in fur.<sup>69</sup> Massachusetts Bay colonists, through the direction of their council, raised funds for "provisions, cloathing and all other supplies suitable for a trade with the said Indians" of the colony (taken from the tax on polls and estates), in order to maintain its trading links with Indians.<sup>70</sup> Public funds, drawn on the assembly, were used to build more distant trading houses by 1702.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, in Massachusetts, the increasing strategic importance of trade with Indians led to a key Act for Regulating Trade with Indians in 1694, reinstated in 1699 and again in 1713, whereby the colony monopolized the trade and prohibited free trading in order that "the Christian religion be not scandalized, nor injustice done to the Indians by extortion, in the taking of

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1976: 3-11. Cumulative returns on a ten year basis show that rapid colonial development and rising populations in settlement colonies offset the percentage of fur as an export to the point that on the eve of the American Revolution, less than 1 per cent of the 13 colonies' exports were made up of furs. Murray G. Lawson, *Fur: A Study in English Mercantilism* (University of Toronto, 1943), pp. 68-72. Novak provides some data for the early colonial period, see Beaver Tables, Milan Novak, et.al, *Furbearer Harvests in North America: 1600-1984* (Toronto: Ministry of Natural Resources, 1987), pp. 37-40.

<sup>66</sup>Fausz, p. 42-43.

<sup>67</sup>For the full quotation, see footnote 65.

<sup>68</sup>Jan Grabowski. "French Criminal Justice and Indians in Montreal: 1670-1760," *Ethnohistory* 43 (3) Summer 1996, p. 409. If Puritan justice was initially lenient to Indians, the quick and decisive Pequot War of 1637, and the previous effects of epidemics, allowed Puritans to assert greater jurisdictional control. See, Lyle Koehler, "Red-White Relations and Justice in the Courts of Seventeenth-Century New England," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 3 (4), 1979, pp. 1-31; Yasuhide Kawashima, *Puritan Justice and the Indian: White Man's Law in Massachusetts, 1630-1763* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1986), pp. 29-31.

<sup>69</sup>See Kawashima, pp. 85-86.

<sup>70</sup>PRO. Minutes of Council of Massachusetts Bay, 9 January 1700, CO 5/788 f. 11.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, 13 August, 1702, f. 189.

unreasonable or excessive prices for the good sold unto them...."<sup>72</sup> The Massachusetts truck-house system, supplemented by the voyages of "province galleys" which brought cheaper priced trade goods up and down the Maine coast, offered wholesale prices to Indians, not only for their good, but to stop the maligned private trader. This system was eventually offered up as a model to the Board of Trade in 1756 for other colonies to follow.<sup>73</sup>

The truck-house system was most attractive to the colonial governor but stood at odds with the assembly whose members balked at providing necessary funds. They also reacted to such strategies that maintained exchanges, but at the expense of commercial freedom. Not only were higher prices restricted, but credits to Indians were prohibited. Thus, even at factories, the 1699 regulations of truck houses stipulated that "the Indians be not trusted at any time for any considerable matter, nor any considerable pledge of their left with the English." Although even the most conscientious factors continued giving credits, they were instructed not "to trust or give Credit to the Indians for Goods sold them upon any pretence whatsoever," as an act of 1726 stipulated.<sup>74</sup> At another situation where furbearer depletion had ruined the feasibility of free trade, the New England Council by 1727 approved of presents for Indians raised on the assembly, "to be employed in trade with the Indians, that they be supply'd at easy rates with everything they want, will be effectual toward drawing them from their dependence upon the French."<sup>75</sup> It was in the context of subsidizing the trade itself, that the Indians "be constantly supply'd at easy rates," that colonists usually requested the governor to give larger "presents" from the "Royal Bounty." Since commercial matters and funds for trade goods subsidies tended to fall on the assemblies, the governor's traditional role in distributing presents from the King was stretched to subsidize rates on Indian goods.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, with fewer colonists actually participating in the trade, the cost of subsidies soon raised protest. Georgia's Indian trade benefited so few of its citizens by 1752 that its members were complaining of the onerous cost of gifts, raised by its trustees, which far

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<sup>72</sup>Kawashima, p. 86-87. The 1727 act also outlawed the selling of goods on credit, "upon any pretence whatsoever." *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>73</sup>Kawashima, p. 90.

<sup>74</sup>See Ronald Oliver MacFarlane, "The Massachusetts Bay Truck-Houses in Diplomacy with the Indians," *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. XI 1938, pp. 53-56.

<sup>75</sup>PRO. Minutes of New England Council, 26 June 1727, CO 5.916 f. 9.

<sup>76</sup>See William Drummer's letter to Lords of Trade, highlighting the need for the King's Presents to be augmented in the hands of the governor, as the same had been "graciously done for the western Indians" of New York. CO 5/869 f. 382.



exceeded proportionally in value the same gifts raised in South Carolina's assembly, made up of "sixty of the richest and most sensible inhabitants" who enjoyed the profits of the fur trade.<sup>77</sup>

Meanwhile, in the fewer colonies where the Indian trade still thrived, increasingly smaller numbers of colonists actually participated in the trade, to the point that by the end of the seventeenth century, the trade benefited monopolies of merchant and trading families. Based on principles of open resource extraction, the trade caused almost immediate local furbearer depletion, raised competition between hunter and middlemen Indians, and stretched farther into the trading hinterlands of a colony. As these hinterlands became more distant, costs and risks to investments rose precipitously. Rather than drawing increasing numbers of individuals into the trade, then, the very logistical problems of transshipment, credit, storage and marketing -- and such problems growing as hinterlands widened -- encouraged monopolization, where fewer and fewer colonists were actually winning any significant profit shares. Maryland's dwindling trade, relinquished by planters into the hands of the governor quite early in the seventeenth century, showed how farmers could not be distracted to take up the intricacies of the commerce. The case of New York's fur trade, ever monopolized into the hands of a few merchant elites by the eighteenth century, is illustrative.<sup>78</sup> All but those willing to invest high risk capital followed canoe routes inland, for most were like Lederer, who wrote in 1672 about the high profits that beckoned among the Indians there: "though perhaps I might have run a great hazard of my life, had I purchased considerably amongst them."<sup>79</sup>

By the eighteenth century, the trade's significant capital investment and business specialization placed it among specific merchant groups within colonies, who tended to turn to local politics to protect their own interests and export profits altogether. The self-interested Charleston merchants and traders dominated the assembly after blame for the Yamasee War fell upon their trading practices: particularly at fault was the use of extensive credit among Indians who appeared to have revolted to free themselves from debt. Closing their ranks to protect their livelihood, the merchants dominated the assembly and wrote the first Indian trade regulations. Planters who objected to the tax

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<sup>77</sup>PRO. James Crokath to Lords of Trade, 10 November 1752, CO 5/374, ff. 22-23.

<sup>78</sup>Cathy Matson, "'Damned Scoundrels' and 'Libertisme of Trade': Freedom and Regulation in Colonial New York' Fur and Grain Trades," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Series, Vol. LI, NO.3, July 1994, pp. 389-418.

<sup>79</sup>Lederer, "Touching Trade with Indians," pp. 26-27.

funds being raised to pay for Indian gifts were not long in complaining about such things.<sup>80</sup>

The peculiar place that the Indian trader occupied in his colony meant that this branch of commerce often met with fewer supporters and more frequent suspicions. The trade's quick degeneration into violence and competition allowed it to be associated with the first colonization activities, such as Raleigh's Roanoke, which raised participants, capital, and debilitating problems, upon the promise of plunder and privateering. The search for instantaneous, easy -- albeit unearned -- wealth, in spite of its moral gravity, motivated privateers and the fur trader alike. Here, little distinguished the fisherman from the pirate who robbed Indians of furs, or the freebooting merchant trading "beyond the line,"<sup>81</sup> who indiscriminately provided Indians with provisions, armaments, powder, shot, "and such like furniture for warr" contrary to the likes of settlers.<sup>82</sup> John Lederer's journal in 1672 suggested the close ends of gold-seeking, privateering and fur trading when he wrote that it was hoped that not only would the "far Indians" of Virginia fetch fur for the colonists, but also the precious metals assumed to be in their possession.<sup>83</sup> The Jamaican administrator, Thomas Modyford, seems to have seen piracy and Indian trading as similar pursuits, at least positioned below virtuous farming in colonization. He ensured the Lords Commissioners of Trade that the colony's resident pirates were moving whether they liked to or not, into sedentary agricultural lives. With their aging boats unable to assist them on their raids, "most of our pirates are turned merchants, trading with the Indians for hides, tallow, turtle shell and logwood." He was confident he would reduce the last of them after their ships finally wore out: "those that must stay on shore must plant or starve."<sup>84</sup>

In the changes discernible in colonial priorities from Roanoke to the joint-stock ventures backing Puritan and Jamestown colonies, at Plymouth or Chesapeake Bay, investors were later gathered upon the promise that colonies would grow with agriculture. Their leaders brought barely hidden contempt for any still existent search for "gilded" dirt

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<sup>80</sup>Crane, pp. 119-120; 122-123; and on the exportation of profits, see Fayer Hall, *The Importance of the British Plantations in America to This Kingdom* (London: J. Peele, 1731), pp. 67-68.

<sup>81</sup>On an overview of piracy, see Kris E. Lane, *Pillaging the Empire: Piracy in the Americas: 1500-1750* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), pp. 28-29; 34-35.

<sup>82</sup>PRO. Minutes of New England Council, CO 1/2 f. 57. See, also, the council's report of Captain Jones, fisherman, who had "robbed the Natives home, of their furs, and offered to carry some of them away prisoners." *Ibid.*, f. 60.

<sup>83</sup>See John Lederer, *The discoveries of John Lederer, in three several marches from Virginia to the west of Carolina*, (London: 1672, March of America Facsimilie Series, 1966), pp. 26-27.

<sup>84</sup>PRO. Thomas Modyford to Secretary of State, 30 November 1669, CO 1/24 f. 166.

in the Americas, and it was in the agricultural ethos of colonization where the fur trade found further castigation.<sup>85</sup> Beyond the avarice animating the trade in skins were a host of social and political concerns with the trade: the offenses easily made, injustices committed in its forest setting and problematic miscegenation. This suspicion likely had as much economic as social origins. Separatist pilgrims in America characterized the activity as largely vice-ridden, because not only many of the traders nearby abandoned themselves to sin, or, in the case of the trader Roger Williams, problematic free religion,<sup>86</sup> but, probably more the case, attracted meager skins away from pilgrim traders. Since such remittances were of importance to maintain the political and religious independence envisioned in the Mayflower Compact, any nearby drain on the colony's revenues could be seen as a grave threat.<sup>87</sup> The independence of the puritan trader William Pynchon, who "combined religious piety with the profit motive," undermined his community's social and economic solidarity when he expanded trade up the Connecticut River in the 1650s.<sup>88</sup> The Puritan criticism of Thomas Morton's break-away fur trade colony (started after Morton was expelled from Plymouth on suspicion of murder) provides a more telling case in point. He and others actively competed for the furs that might otherwise go to nearby Plymouth, and the Friends presented the vice believed to be natural to places where illiberal mixing of peoples, sexes, politics and religion took place with the exchange of commodities.<sup>89</sup> In defense of the colony of Ma-re Mount (Pilgrims renamed it Merry-mount), Morton wrote part of his *New English Canaan* (1637) to point to virtuous elements in the Indian trade prosecuted there. He began with the proposition

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<sup>85</sup>Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Settling with Indians: The Meeting of English and Indian Cultures in America, 1580-1640* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1980), p. 14.

<sup>86</sup>Winthrop S. Hudson's introduction to Roger Williams, *Experiments of Spiritual Life and Health* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1863), pp. 13-15.

<sup>87</sup>PRO. See the note of Captain Wiggin, of New England, 19 November 1632, on the bad reputation of the colony perpetuated by the likes of Thomas Morton, who had fled from England under suspicion of committing murder, "falling out with some of the Indians," and was banished from the New England plantation. He now spread rumours about the Friends and attracted the furs that should have gone to the colony. CO 1/6 f. 183.

<sup>88</sup>Ted Morgan, *Wilderness at Dawn: The Settling of the North American Continent* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), pp. 176-177; a careful study of Pynchon's trade in the Connecticut Valley is offered by Peter A. Thomas, "The Fur Trade, Indian Land and the Need to Define Adequate 'Environmental' Parameters," *Ethnohistory* 28(4), Fall, 1981: 359-385; also, Peter A. Thomas, "Cultural Change in the Southern New England Frontier, 1630-1665," in William W. Fitzhugh, ed., *Cultures in Contact: The European Impact on native Cultural Institutions in Eastern North America, AD 1000-1800* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1985), pp. 131-161.

<sup>89</sup>See Kupperman's description of Morton's colony, pp. 25-26. PRO., The comment in the Puritan memorial to the Secretary of State listed Morton's sins of furnishing "his natives with gun powder and shott and taught them to use them." CO 1/6 f. 185.

that Indians had all that they required in food, vitals and clothing, and accommodated European goods into existing exchange traditions with other Amerindians. Rather than hoarding, he stated that Indians moved goods to others, as part of a tradition of moving surplus into areas of need. Such methods of redistribution and the simple existence of life in the forest meant that trade was not in itself harmful. Indeed, "though they buy many commodities of our Nation," he wrote, "yet they keepe but fewe, and those of special use."<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, in their enjoyment of perpetual natural abundance where all goods were held in common property ("Platoes Commonwealth is so much practiced by these people"), Morton argued that Indians did not trade for luxuries but for their daily use: they "are not delighted in baubles, but in usefull things."<sup>91</sup>

Puritan critics could paint more effectively a different picture of trade, especially the ready evidence of degeneration offered in the rum trade, which even Morton could not fully counter. Sensitive political considerations were at the forefront of these concerns and not only pilgrims looked askance at the Indian trader in their midst. Trade could empower either the trader or the enemy Indian beyond the likes of colonists whose success, after all, depended upon a weakened Indian presence and solidarity within their settlements. Both of these issues were certainly at play in the theme of apotheosis that follows English exploration literature from Drake onward, revealing a consistent colonial fear of the explorer or the fellow planter who gained huge personal power with Indians by presenting them with impressive trade goods. The Indians, seeing the European's ironwares and other goods, consistently fell, as they did before Drake, upon the beach sand and forest clearings to worship the European arrival. Accounts invariably assured Elizabethan readers that the individual in question vehemently disavowed such supernatural status, and by this convenient place of respect he enjoyed an enviable position to lead Indians to conversion to the true faith.<sup>92</sup> Apotheosis was not a theme restricted to English seventeenth century colonists, as it appears in the Swedish trader's accounts as well.<sup>93</sup> But the theme played itself out in assembly meetings which reported

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<sup>90</sup>Thomas Morton, *New English Canaan, or New Canaan: Containing an Abstract of New England* (Amsterdam: Jacob Frederick, 1637), pp. 41-42; 54; 56-57.

<sup>91</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>92</sup>Thomas Hahn, "Indians East and West: primitivism and savagery in English discovery narratives of the sixteenth century," *The Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 8 (1) 1978, pp. 79-81.

<sup>93</sup>Thus, Printz at New Sweden, is reported by a contemporary in the 1640s, to have made evangelical speeches to the Indians on the Delaware, who "wanted to hear more about their great God, who was as superior to their own as the guns and cannon of the Christians were superior to the bow and arrow of the Indians." Amandus Johnson, *The Swedish Settlements on the Delaware, 1638-1664* (Baltimore: Geneological Publishing Co., 1962), p. 379.

on individuals who broke with their colonial ranks, gained wealth, and amassed too much personal influence with Indians in trade. Their frequent flights from the colonial periphery made their loyalty suspect, their fealty to the crown questionable.

More troubling, the trade carried out by renegade colonists empowered Indians with transferred technology that, at least in the imaginations of colonists, was far superior to the Amerindian's. Exaggerated reports of the gun trade -- whether by the Dutch, as the French charged, or by the Jesuits, as the English charged -- and the perceived power of the quite awkward arquebus in enemy hands re-appear in early colonial writings. What is now known of the inefficiencies of the early seventeenth century firearm suggests that the frequent reports of the colonial rival's gun trade reveal the troubled imaginations of those viewing the Indian trade itself.<sup>94</sup> Colonists saw Indians not only empowered but overthrowing each other with new European wares, the imagined role of the arquebus in the final fall of Huronia being possibly the first myth of transferred technology. The dislocating cultural effects of firearms constitutes a complex historical question;<sup>95</sup> nevertheless, to the end of the study period, the fear of the gun trade resonates as a type of English folklore.<sup>96</sup>

### III.

During the period when proprietary trading was being undermined by the incursions of credited, free traders, a conception of a virtuous Indian trade began to appear in English colonial correspondence. The Carolina merchants, then, were presenting memorials, some cited earlier, that pointed out the number of the "poor" colonists given labour in consignment trading, and Indians gaining a "dependency" upon the colony through this free trade. These memorials were, of course, self-serving, anticipating the changing

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<sup>94</sup>Brian J. Given, *A Most Pernicious Thing: Gun Trading and Native Warfare in the Early Contact Period* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1994); See, also, PRO. Rule No. 7 for "bettering the Government of Virginia," being "None of the Natives to taught to shoote in Gunns..." Min. of New England Council 2 July 1623, f. 166.

<sup>95</sup>See the complexity of the issue of the firearm trade dominating French-Spanish trade relations by the early eighteenth century, when the Spanish prohibited French traders from Taos (New Mexico) for fear that they would trade guns. Elizabeth Ann Harper, "The Taovayas Indians in Frontier Trade and Diplomacy," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* Vol. 31, Autumn 1953, pp. 268-89.

<sup>96</sup>"About forty years ago, they were described by Sir Alexander McKenzie as having carried their victories as far as the borders of the Arctic Ocean and across the Rocky Mountains, chiefly because the fire-arms, which they had purchased from the whites, had not yet found their way as an article of traffic to the northern tribes. Thus formidably equipped the Crees had a great advantage over their comparatively defenceless neighbors, whom they stigmatized as slaves." George Simpson, *Narrative of a Journey Round the World during the Years 1841 and 1842* Vol. I, (London: Henry Colburn, 1847), p. 87.

conditions of the late seventeenth century, particularly the growing French influence among the Indians. By the end of the seventeenth century, the English were convinced that they held a "providential" advantage over the French to sell goods at a lower price to Indians. As French interior explorations posed a threat to the English seaboard, the English began to redefine the Indian as an individual who shared commercial affinities with the Englishman, above all driven by the passion of "self-interest," who awaited inland as a buyer of English wares.

The English had ample opportunity to encourage such commercial ethnology. At Albany, the governor John Montgomery, greeting the Six Nations in 1728 in the context of trade and diplomacy talks, pointed out that "Besides the two qualities of Bravery and Honesty, his Majesty is convinced that you are a wise people and good judges of your own interest."<sup>97</sup> There was no coincidence that such remarks were made at a meeting of the Albany Indian Commissioners with the Six Nations. There, Indian speeches were carefully copied and sent on to London. The very trade, overseen and regulated at Albany, provided a view of Indian trading abilities and interests, where Indians were not only won over by English prices, but remained skillful bargainers who demanded that prices be ever lower. The Shawnee, therefore, asked for "cheap penny worths" of goods;<sup>98</sup> to which the commissioners observed that "you can easily distinguish the vast differences in the price of goods you buy here and those you have from the French which are above one-half dearer than we sell them...."<sup>99</sup> the Five Nations, and after the Tuscararow joined the confederacy, the Six Nations, bargained for rock bottom rates on strouds; the Miamis Indians who arrived in 1723 were given blankets, strouds and rum "to show your people what goods we have to supply you with."<sup>100</sup>

The English remained ever concerned about French influence among these consumers. The Albany commissioners reprinted the journal of its own Indian trader inland, who described the activities of the French trader, Jean Coeur, who established Fort Niagara. Coeur now invited the Six Nations, and particularly the Cayuga and Onandaga, to frequent his "great store of goods in the house at Jagara... he had formerly given strouds at 8 beaver skins a blanket but now he had sett it at three a choice French blanket at the same price, a fine french gune at 7 lbs kettles and powder their weight in

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<sup>97</sup>NAC. Albany New York Indian Commissioner Letterbooks Speech of John Montgomery to Six Nations, 2 October 1728, F. 264. Microfilm Reel C-1220.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, Far [Shawnee] Nations Speech 8 April 1723.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, Reply to the Far Nations.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, Speech to Miamis Indians, 12 July 1727.

bever a fin men shirt as appear fine Rattine stockings at 1 ¼ bever, four French potts pure brandy at 1 bever.”<sup>101</sup> Following the concerted program of Governor Burnet to compete with the French by establishing Fort Oswego, the Six Nations representatives at Albany complained that the new storehouse there had not brought enough goods to lower prices sufficiently: while dry goods prices were satisfactory, powder was still sold “by the gill,” (i.e., in short measure and therefore expensive). And by 1726, when the Six Nations agreed to allow English traders in their midst, the fifty canoes that went to trade resulted in more protracted talks at Albany about unfair pricing, impositions, and false weights and measures.<sup>102</sup>

The ethnological concept of self-interest accompanied the rising volumes of trade goods carried by the English. It was noted by Governor Nicholson of Maryland in 1699 who urged the southern colonies to extend trade posts inland to meet French threat, “to sell their goods on terms so cheap as to exclude the French from competition.”<sup>103</sup> His warnings were heeded by 1700 by New York's Governor Bellomont, who was being similarly prompted by Robert Livingston; and Joseph Blake in Carolina, to extend the fur trade to meet French threat.<sup>104</sup> The possible vent of British manufactures to a large Indian market was already perceived by such colonial promoters as Daniel Coxe, Jr. whose *A Description of the English Province of Carolana* identified the value of interior exploration and the untapped resources inland (on lands reserved by his father for his projected “Carolana” colony). He pointed to the navigable streams and large numbers of peoples who could form markets for English goods. The fur trade, he said, would be as valuable and favorable to England's balance of trade as gold and silver were.<sup>105</sup> The same reasoning appeared in the original 1689 patent application for the colony to be established inland from Carolina and to the east off the bounds of Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania, cited one of its chief values as depriving the French “of one of the richest branches of their commerce, the trade of furs most of which are brought out of this

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<sup>101</sup> Journal of Lawrence Clause, 12 October 1727. F. 207a.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, Commission's report to Burnet, 27 April 1726.

<sup>103</sup> Crane, p. 11.

<sup>104</sup> Crane, p. 12; Helen Broshar, “The First Push Westward of the Albany Traders,” *MVHR* 7(3): December 1920, pp. 228-241; and for the Bellomont and Livingston proposals, see Arthur H. Buffinton, “The Policy of Albany and English Westward Expansion,” *MVHR* 8 (4), March 1922, pp. 327-366.

<sup>105</sup> Daniel Coxe, *A Description of the English Province of Carolana, by the Spanish call'd Florida, and by the French la Louisiana* (1722, reprinted by University Presses of Florida, 1976), pp. xxix., 10-14, 26-27; 97-98.

country to Canada amounting to £50,000 yearly profit to them by modest computations."<sup>106</sup>

In Virginia, Governor Spotswood linked the possible wealth of the interior countries with Indian self-interest, when, in 1718, he responded to the Lords Commissioners of Trade and Plantation's request for information about the French settlements inland. By this time, the French *congé* had been reinstated. With Vaudreuil's strategic lobbying in France, a new scarcity of beaver prompting Parisian hatters to urge for an increased trade, and, by 1715, the Regency's new marine council which advocated more expansionism in America, New France's fur trade began to make expansive gains over its previous high-water marks. An ever-closer union of military with commercial ranks was creating what Miquelon described, by 1721, as "a kind of military-commercial complex that came to dominate the trade of the interior...."<sup>107</sup> Expressing his regrets that so few Englishmen had discovered the headwaters of the colony's rivers, Spotswood pointed out that he himself had gone to the west and learned from Indians that his colony possessed an easy westward communication to the Illinois Country. This possibility was all the more important to the English, as, since La Salle's discovery, the French were now able to go from the St. Lawrence to the Gulf of Mississippi, thus effectively surrounding the English: "by their commerce with the numerous nations of Indians settled on both sides of the lakes, they may not only engross the whole skin trade, by may when they please, sent out such body of Indians in the back of these plantation."<sup>108</sup> Spotswood had already enunciated his hope that the Tuscararo Treaty, which his government had lately undertaken, would settle the trade "upon a just and equal footing, and a due administration of justice in all controversys arising between them and the English *will create in them a liking to our laws and government and secure a necessary dependence on the colony for a supply of all their wants* as the instructing their youth in the principles of Christianity, will in a generation or two banish their present savage customs and bind them by their obligations of religion to be good subjects and useful neighbours."<sup>109</sup>

It is remarkable that the Lords Commissioners of Trade and Plantations, viewing trade as a strategic means of the state, began by the early eighteenth century to

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<sup>106</sup>PRO. "Account of the Country for which a Patent is desired in North America," ca. 1689 CO 5/1 ff. 48-49.

<sup>107</sup>Dale Miquelon, *New France, 1701-1744* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987), pp. 159-160.

<sup>108</sup>PRO. Spotswood to Lords of Trade, 14 August 1718, C.O.5/1318.

<sup>109</sup>Spotswood to Lords of Trade, 9 March 1714, *Calendar of State Papers - Colonial Series* Vol. 1702 to 1714, p. 304.



estimate the strength of Indian alliances according to the volume of trade they established, in pounds sterling value. Thus, in South Carolina, in the wake of the Yamasee War -- hardly a coincidence -- a 1719 memorial answered a question asked about the State of South Carolina, ("the strength of nations near South Carolina)" computed not by numbers, but trade. Thus, the 9000 Indian men estimated to be in the environs of the colony, traded at an estimated £10,000 yearly in cloth, guns, powder and iron ware.<sup>110</sup> A similar Query, written in 1720 calculated the Indian men to number 9200, who could be divided into three parts: those the Carolina traders had formerly traded with but who were cut off now by French traders (3400), 200 now at peace with Carolina "and trading with us," and the third, the Cherokee nation of 3800, "at present at war with the French."<sup>111</sup>

It was, however, William Keith, in Pennsylvania, who possibly provided key promotion of the concept of "self-interest" guiding Indians and therefore the possibilities presented in an expanded Indian trade. Appointed lieutenant governor of Pennsylvania in 1719, Keith was quick to identify the inroads of the French on the Mississippi and present their commercial opportunities as a strategic threat to English colonies. For that purpose, he sent second-hand information of the geography inland as well as wild exaggerations of the French trade inland. (He claimed that at Fort Pontchartrain, 400 French traders met annually, and at Michilimackinac, there was "a vast concourse of traders sometimes not less than a thousand, beside canoemen[!]"<sup>112</sup>)

Keith's writings were blatant attempts to promote the Indian trade based upon aspects of commercial ethnology. The French, he said, had always sought to bring Indians into their interest, "but as it is in vain to persuade an Indian to think otherwise than that those are his best friends who can help him to the best bargain, the Iroquese or Five Nations have hitherto been preserved by the Dutch or English at New York, chiefly on account of finding better markets there than with the French."<sup>113</sup> Turning to the obvious solution, Keith stated, "since this friendship and correspondence is by experience no otherwise to be acquired than by trade, it will necessarily follow, that the trade ought by all means to be encouraged and extended with our utmost care and diligence." The same letter bears the hazy outlines of Keith's notion of a "national" trade from the colonies, one that benefited all Englishmen:

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<sup>110</sup>Reported Answers to Queries, 12 January 1719, CO 5/1265, f. 382.

<sup>111</sup>Queries Relating to Carolina, 1720, CO5/ 358 f. 13.

<sup>112</sup>William Keith to Lords of Trade, 16 February 1719. CO 5/1265 ff. 315-319,

<sup>113</sup>*Ibid.*, f. 320.

The trade itself consists in the exchange of a very few simple commodities, viz. they take from us the woolen manufactures of Britain, gun-powder, shott, firearms and trinkets for which we receive in barter furs and skins, and this being an almost total exchange of British produce or manufacture, through the hands and by the navigation and labour of British subjects in these colonies, suppose it only for an equal quantity in value of goods which are either wanted at home or may be justly placed to Great Britain's credit upon the balance of trade with forreign countries.<sup>114</sup>

Keith figures in importance not only for his early memoirs on the Indian trade and its economic and strategic potential, but for his later, unfinished history of the English colonies in America. One volume was published in 1738 before his death. *The History of the British Plantations in America*, addressing the early Virginia grant, nevertheless carried Keith's notion of a "national" trade, one which was grounded on the virtues of classical trade, where the mercantile community served the needs of the state, as the Roman trade had. The introduction to his *History* devolves, for instance, upon a definition of trade as "a voluntary, Exchange of Things we possess, for those in the possession of others, either to supply the necessaries and conveniencies of Life, or to secure, in the End a certain profit to ourselves."<sup>115</sup> The former was trade ascribed to the "Patriarchal State," the latter was ascribed to the trade arising out of more populated civil states. Keith described the ideal civil trade arising in the classical age of Rome, where "the interest of the particular members was made subservient on all occasions to that of the public; which being the standard of all commercial dealings, trade was regulated according to the advantages or disadvantages that accrued thereby to the community, and body politic...." He went on to say that "it is inconsistent with the Nature of Things to suppose, that a Civil Government ought to permit, much less encourage, any traffick or private gain to be carried on, which evidently appears to be prejudicial to the public interest and prosperity of the common-wealth, the last and greatest object of every good citizen's care and ambition."<sup>116</sup> He did not criticize trade itself in this view; indeed, he suggested that trade "has been too frequently treated with contempt," but "we shall be

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<sup>114</sup>*Ibid.*, f. 323.

<sup>115</sup>Sir William Keith, *The History of the British Plantations in America* (London: 1738). CIHM 35357, p. 3.

<sup>116</sup>*Ibid.*, his references to Rome are on pp. 4-5.

forced to acknowledge that it is the merchant's proper business and care to enliven and circulate the vital juices of the body politic...."<sup>117</sup>

It was Keith's conception of trade that came to bear on his history of America. He conceptualized Rome as warlike, intent upon conquest, and carefully subsuming trade and commerce to benefit its military strength. Annexed in conquest, the sprawling regions of the Roman empire were subjected to the Roman government, "always protected from insults by the legions, and left at full liberty to reap the benefit of commerce in what shape they pleased to pursue it, were no sooner disengaged from that yoke, than they began to model themselves into separate independent governments or commonwealths." Much of Keith's narrative moved towards the gaining popularity of free commerce, regulated by the government for the benefit of the whole, the "national trade," that he sought to promote.

Keith had no opportunity to apply such a model of trade to the case of the Indian trade in America. He did, though, figure in the promotion of the Indian Trade at home, becoming the subject of newspapers when American Indians visited London in the early eighteenth century and reinforced the emerging idea of a commercial Indian. Magazine and newspaper reports of these visits were extensive. Often orchestrated by trade promoters, such as the 1733 visit of the Georgian Creeks who accompanied Ogilthorpe, they explicitly underscored the importance of trade in Indian affairs. Thus, visits usually resulted in an audience and gift-exchange with the King, a meeting with the Lords Commissioners of Trade, or, in the case of Queen Anne's Four American Kings from New York, a meeting with the directors of the Hudson's Bay Company.<sup>118</sup> The mercantile aspects of such visits were clear in papers that reported trade news. Cumings' famous visit with Cherokee chiefs in 1730 was reported by magazines, particularly the dinner with Carolina merchants at Pontack's coffee house.<sup>119</sup> The same visit was punctuated by a negotiation with the Lords Commissioners of Trade over the articles of a treaty "of friendship and commerce," well publicized in the newspapers," in which Keith stepped in to write draft the treaty itself, using "symbolic" language that he believed

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<sup>117</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>118</sup>HBC. The London Committee, who met with the Four Sachems, wrote Governor Fullerton to confirm information they provided concerning the French at Hudson Bay. HBC, Committee to Fullerton, 29 May 1710, A.6/ 3 microfilm reel 36.

<sup>119</sup>*Daily Journal*, 29 September 1730.

would be most meaningful to the Cherokees.<sup>120</sup> The *Daily Journal* noted that "altho' these People are ignorant of our language, yet they know when they are impos'd on, and have themselves the most inviolable Regard for their Engagements...."<sup>121</sup> The Creeks who accompanied Ogilthorpe appeared as these visiting commercial agents. Papers reported their meetings with the Lords Commissioners and particularly the appeals by their chief, Tomochichi, who requested substantial increases in trade and "standard weights and measures."<sup>122</sup> Certainly the three Cherokee chiefs who arrived in London in 1765 suggested the bargaining abilities of Indians, when they argued that settlers were invading their hunting areas and when they expressed their "surprise that having often heard of learned persons being sent to instruct them in the knowledge of things none had ever appeared...." They entreated the court that some such men might soon be set "to instruct them in writing, reading, and the comprehension of things."<sup>123</sup>

#### IV.

Undeniably, the first decades of the eighteenth century saw changes in ethnology as interest in the Indian Trade increased among Europeans. Writers described self-interest as what guided Indians, and identified shared affinities between the Amerindian and commercial peoples. Such affinities were identified at a time when manufactured wares also allowed colonists to pursue trade inland. Rising competition between the French and English prompted the dispatch of larger quantities of goods to maintain Indian alliances.

Despite the changing view of Indians, there were differences between French and English promotion of the same Indian trade. The French, it has been noted, criticized the English tendency to advance credit instead of gifts to Indians. The English did not deny that they were advancing credits to Indian nations;<sup>124</sup> instead, as early as 1709, they were criticizing the Frenchman's "gift"-giving policies. The promoter of the Indian Trade in South Carolina, Thomas Nairne, that year suggested as much to the Lords

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<sup>120</sup>See Foreman, pp. 51-52. Some coverage of the visit is provided in *The Daily Journal*, 29 September 1730. The treaty is best described in the *Universal Spectator, and Weekly Journal*, 15 August 1730; See *Universal Spectator*, 3 October 1730.

<sup>121</sup>*Daily Journal* 30 September 1730.

<sup>122</sup>Foreman, p.59. On a comparable visit to France, see the 1725 visit of Illinois chiefs reported in *Mercure de France*, Decembre 1725, pp. 2833-2856.

<sup>123</sup>*Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. XXXV, 1765, pp. 95-96. On the origins of this visit, see John Pitts Corry, *Indian Affairs in Georgia 1732-1756*, (Philadelphia: G.S. Ferguson, 1936), pp. 14-16. On the Four Kings, see Richmond P. Bond, *Queen Anne's American Kings* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952).

<sup>124</sup>The reports by 1616 of mortgages drawn up between Virginians and neighboring Indians had a catalytic effect on colonial trade promotion in its earliest days. See A.J. Morrison, "The Virginia Indian Trade to 1673," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol 1 (4), October 1921, pp. 219-220.

Commissioners of Trade and Plantations. He reported his colony's vulnerability to the Indian trading allies of the new French colony on the Mississippi. He was optimistic that "the English trade for Cloath always attracts and maintains the obedience and friendship of the Indians, they effect them most who sell best cheap." The letter itself was a thinly veiled petition to have duties removed on exported deer skins, but it also carried the English criticism of French gift-giving and the virtuous English alternative. Of Indians now in the English interest, the Talaposies and Chickasaws "employ" themselves slaving Indians of the lower parts of the French Mississippi, Nairne wrote. "The good prices the English traders give them for slaves encourages them ... some men think that ... serves to lessen their numbers before the French can arm them and it is a more effectual way of civilizing and instructing them." He went on to say that the French had been "so liberal of their presents yet they entirely decayed the people of the lower parts from their duty," and he pointed out that such pernicious gift-giving had not worked among the faithful (and industrious) Talapoosies who had repulsed the French from their territory, presumably to embrace the English trader who offered low-priced wares.<sup>125</sup>

More will be said of the perceived differences between the French gift and the English credit in Chapter Five. Significantly, the same period saw writers debating the merits and problems of the Indian trade in the context of larger misgivings about commerce itself. The trade promoter identifying Indian self-interest was raising questions concerning the values of home society. If Indians were prompted by self-interest, did the virtues of mercantile activities at home necessarily follow the same good ends in America? Did the Indian's capacity to trade suggest the universal bounds of commercial society? Not all responded to such questions in one voice. Indeed, as Kawashima has pointed out, the Puritan commercial relations with Indians immediately displayed "a curious mixture of two seemingly contradictory objectives - the colonists' economic interests and the promotion of white-Indian amicability." At the same time hoping to encourage trade to bind Indian with European, Massachusetts Bay administrators began to redefine the very limits of English commercial freedoms, eventually prohibiting credit by 1727, eliminating free traders, and monopolizing trade to colonial-administered truck houses where goods were sold at wholesale prices and liquor and guns were narrowly restricted in the trade itself.<sup>126</sup> English trade newspapers and magazines might have celebrated the visits of American "Kings" as evidence of a new commercial market. They stressed the common trading interests exhibited in the treaties and agreements they

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<sup>125</sup>PRO. Thomas Nairne to Lords of Trade, 10 July 1709, CO 5/382, ff. 24-25.

<sup>126</sup>See Kawashima, chapter 3: "White-Indian Trade Regulations," pp. 72-92.

established through the Lords of Trade, and the good-will derived by gifts given them. The common *Grub-Street* press, however, laughed at such optimism. On the visits of the numerous American Kings in the early eighteenth century, it lampooned their arrival, and their regal red, scarlet clothing. These "chiefs" slept on tables to distinguish themselves from their common Indian followers. The King's fine swords, given as gifts, were made off with by women of low morals and sold to pawn-brokers.<sup>127</sup> There was the report of one of Alexander Cuming's Indian Chiefs, "Friday night about 11, the Indian Prince walking in Covent Garde, was pick'd up by the infamous Jenny Tite, who took 2 rings off his fingers, and made oft with them."<sup>128</sup>

A debate indeed fell upon the possible virtues of both trade and the goods passing hands in America. Did the Indian's self-interest, motivating him to trade for European goods, actually work to his benefit or to his detriment? Many Europeans followed the trade promoter's suggestion that all men possessed a universal drive to acquire goods and improve their condition. Having identified the Indian as driven by passions of self-interest, commercialized Europeans could remark about the Indian's needs and fall into argument about what constituted the means to satisfy them, the subject fully explored in the following chapter.

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<sup>127</sup>*Grub-Street*, September 17, 1730.

<sup>128</sup>*Grub-Street*, September 27, 1730.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *Goods in the Eighteenth Century Indian Trade*

*Perte et gain c'est marchandise*

- Antoine Loysel, *Institutions coutumières*, 1607

Eighteenth century correspondents concluded that "self-interest" motivated Indians in the period when Europeans themselves were viewing luxuries differently. After the turn of the century, French and English writers began debating the virtues, in respect to both national economies and personal fortune, of buying goods beyond one's necessities.<sup>1</sup> They concurrently began to inventory the virtue and vice of the vent of goods to Indians in trade.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, in this period, a movement that demoralized both sumptuary laws and debates on luxury seemed to increasingly influence English and French writers who identified many more virtues in Indian trade goods than had their predecessors. Central to the shifting terms of discussion were the new, far more optimistic, views of trade emerging in the eighteenth century, whereby trade could reward both parties of an exchange and goods benefit Indians themselves. As suggested in previous discussions, French clerics and missionaries had adhered to a pre-modern view of luxuries and a tradition of asceticism in Christian thought. Whatever the origins of the consumer society,<sup>3</sup> any suggestion about the virtues of material goods in Amerindian society was conspicuously absent in clerical correspondence from America. The Thomist standard of just exchange shaped transactions between missionaries and Amerindians. The seventeenth century *Jesuit Relation* highlighted few benefits of trade goods among Amerindians -- and offered few detailed accounts of goods changing hands -- following a quite ancient Christian aversion towards bodily adornment at the expense of the soul. The early church fathers had established the very foundations of later missionary writings,

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<sup>1</sup>See Joyce Appleby, "Consumption in early modern social thought," in J. Brewer and R. Porter, *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 162-176.

<sup>2</sup>Archeologists reading trading lists, such as Umfreville, see significance in the ordering of objects, such as Umfreville's citation of ice chisels, third in the "principal things necessary for the support of an Indian and his family." see Woolworth and Birk, "Description of the Artifacts," in Robert C. Wheeler, Walter A. Kenyon, Alan R. Woolworth and Douglas A. Birk, eds., *Voices from the Rapids: An Underwater Search for Fur Trade Artifacts, 1960-73* (Minnesota Historical Archaeology Series No. 3, 1975), pp. 71-72.

<sup>3</sup>See Sara Pennell's comments, "Consumption and Consumerism in Early Modern England," *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 42 (2), 1999, pp. 549-564.

where material goods betrayed secular ambitions, independence from God, and adorned the outer man: the sin of Pride identified by Augustine.<sup>4</sup>

The eighteenth century's changing view of the consumption of material goods welcomed a new turn in trade descriptions, where Indians could conceivably benefit from increased use of European wares. The debate on luxury itself turned explicitly upon evidence that Indians' acquisitiveness was prompted by a universal inclination to improve their condition. Although writers often used the example of the American Indian to form arguments that luxury was legitimate, if not appropriate, to higher civil societies, they nevertheless saw Indians led by common needs and the means, given opportunity in trade, to satisfy them.<sup>5</sup> Nicholas Barbon, who countered the earlier seventeenth century trade writer Munn (the apologist for "parsimony, frugality and sumptuary laws" as a means to enrich a nation), identified infinite national resources that benefited from their trading, not hoarding, of virtues in luxuries, particularly fabrics, and the benefits of "fashion" that prompted purchasing and emulative behaviour among a nation's citizenry.<sup>6</sup> All these propositions could significantly reshape discussion of the American Indian trade. Even if luxury was not natural to the rude setting of the Amerindian, the eighteenth century writer was inclined to argue that the acquisition of goods was a necessary course of development towards social emolument, hierarchy, and organization. Stadal theories of social development, widespread even in the early eighteenth century, could accommodate a view that all manner of men, from the refined European to the savage American, desired material improvement that moved both to higher stages of societal development.<sup>7</sup> Whether the Indian shared in Barbon's natural

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<sup>4</sup>Christopher J. Berry, *The Idea of Luxury: A Conceptual and Historical Investigation* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 90.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 126-139; on origins of materialism, as defined by Karl Polanyi, and a discussion of the British cotton industry, see Chandre Mukerji, *From Graven Images: Patterns of Modern Materialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), pp. 2-9; 210-242; Alan Hunt, *Governance of the Consuming Passions: A History of Sumptuary Laws* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996); Margaret Spufford, *The Great Reclothing of Rural England: Petty Chapmen and their Wares in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Hambledon Press, 1984), pp. 9-13.

<sup>6</sup>See Nicholas Barbon, *Discourse of Trade* (London: 1690), pp. 6-7; 10-11; 16-17; 62-67.

<sup>7</sup>Melon, for instance, points out that the first French colonies in Madagascar had started well, where the "Indians began to reconcile themselves with our exchanges" (*s'appropriiser*) but soon sensed the spirit of domination and the hopes to subjugate them, and relations were broken: pp. 722-723; in his chapter on luxury (pp. 742-749), he saw the necessity of luxurious consumption growing within a large and sophisticated citizenry, and a progressive legitimatization of consumption as sumptuary laws fell away. The Indian, like the first Europeans, had little luxury, and, using a missionary's writings, he contended that: "Une vie libre, mais sauvage, des moeurs féroces, le peu de commerce avec les nations policées, l'ignorance des commodités, tout contribuait à éloigner le luxe de leurs cabanes; et nous ne pouvons nous faire une idée plus nette et plus juste de ces premiers temps qu'en les comparant au genre de vie que



social "distinctions," or Montesquieu's notion of *intérêt*, or Mandeville's "self-preservation,"<sup>8</sup> Indians and Europeans shared an inclination to purchase, and, in working to provide natural trade commodities to do so, improve their condition.<sup>9</sup> At the very least, the changing debate on luxury allowed Europeans to establish new ethnological descriptions of Indian *needs*; trade promoters could imagine universal demands for European wares and beneficial improvements with the Indian's "condition" being met in trade.<sup>10</sup>

In such a way, goods could become "politicized" in new ways. Narratives communicated the proposition that goods had an implicit power to transform Indian condition, customs, and even society, a proposition that earlier clerical writers either willfully ignored or dismissed as simply wrong.<sup>11</sup> Some of the power of goods occupied the imagination of De Peyster, who had helped the British cause during the American invasion of Montreal by mobilizing Indian allegiances, not through speeches and promises, but through gifts of manufactures. He later set the list of goods into a rhyming poem, the

Broaches, medals, bridles, saddles  
Large rolls of bark, awls, watap, gum  
Lines, sponges, pipes, tobacco, rum,  
guns, powder, shot, fire-steel and flint,  
salt pork and biscuit, without stint;  
rich arm bands, gorgets and nose bobs  
Made of French Crowns and Spanish cobs;

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mènent aujourd'hui les Hurons et les Iroquois." p. 746. Jean-François Melon, "Essai Politique sur le Commerce," (1734), in M. Eugène Daire, ed., *Économistes financiers du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Chez Guillaumin, 1843).

<sup>8</sup>Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees* (N.Y.: Capricorn Books, 1962) on universal "self-preservation," pp. 211-215; 257; on improvements everywhere exhibited, even "among the naked savages," p. 77.

<sup>9</sup>"There was never any part of mankind so wild and barbarous, but they had difference and degree of men amongst them, and invented some things to shew that distinction." Barbon, p. 16. On Montesquieu's comments on self-preservation possessed by all creatures, see Letter LXXXIX (p. 213); and on the virtues of luxury, see Letter CVI, p. 244 in Jean Starobinski, ed., *Montesquieu, Lettres Persanes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973).

<sup>10</sup>See entry for "Luxe," where "ce désir d'être mieux, qui est et doit être dans tous les hommes ... le sauvage a son hamac qu'il achète pour des peaux de bêtes; l'Européen a son canapé....." in Diderot's *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, Vol. II (1762, reprinted New York: Pergamon Press, ) p. 763.

<sup>11</sup>For work on goods in Europe, and the problem of "politicization" of material objects, see Jean-Christophe Agnew's critique of T.H. Breen's theories of goods in revolutionary America, "Coming up for air: consumer culture in historical perspective," in John Brewer and Roy Porter, eds., *Consumption and the Worlds of Goods* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 32-33.

Lac'd coats, chintz shirts, plum'd hats for chiefs,  
and for your beaux, silk handkerchiefs;  
Paint, mirrors, blankets, moultins, strouds,  
to clothe the living and make shrouds  
For those who might in battle fall,  
or die by rum, at Montreal.<sup>12</sup>

Identifying and analyzing descriptions of European trade goods in the Indian trade is the chief task of this chapter. It becomes clear that lists of goods appended to many Indian trade descriptions were hardly neutral reportage, but, rather, often written to demonstrate the ways in which goods played in hastening the Amerindian's societal development. Goods fell into one of two categories, virtuous or vice-ridden, based upon eighteenth century opinion that they could act as *biens* in the improvement of the Indian's "savage" existence. A close analysis of common trading goods inventories demonstrates some of the ethnological assumptions that the description of the Indian trade effected in the Age of Light.

#### I.

John Lawson's 1700 observation of Indians in Carolina suggested the fascination an Englishman could see in Indians, "them of English dress," who wore "hats, Shooes, Stockings, and Breeches," and the universal demand they exhibited for consumer goods. His wider list of "necessary" commodities for the colonial trader already revealed the rising consumerism of the English colonies, which would become significant after 1740. He included luxury articles for "Use and Merchandize" such as "Linens of all sorts," to which "you must add *Haberdashers*-wares, hats ...[and] a few Wiggs."<sup>13</sup> Such surplus was evident on the fringes of colonial frontiers and along the first trunklines of communication established with the interior. Ironwares, particularly guns, seemed to have reached more Indians before the end of the century;<sup>14</sup> larger supplies of fabrics from both England and France were offered Indian consumers during a period of rising competition

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<sup>12</sup>De Peyster's speech at L'Arbre Croche, 4 July 1779, Wisconsin Historical Society Collections, Vol. XVIII, 387-388; an overview of material goods in trade is provided by Pauline Desjardins and Geneviève Duguay, *Point-à-Callière: From Ville-Marie to Montreal*, trans. Käthe Roth (Montreal: Septentrion, 1992), pp. 49-64. See, also, Bruce M. White, "The Trade Assortment: The Meaning of Merchandise in the Ojibwa Fur Trade," in Sylvie Dépatie, Catherine Desbarats, Danielle Gauvreau, Mario Lalancette and Thomas Wien, eds., *Habitants et marchands. Twenty Years Later: Reading the History of Seventeenth- and Eighteenth- Century Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), pp. 115-137; also, Bruce M. White, "Encounters with Spirits: Ojibwa and Dakota Theories about the French and their Merchandise," in *Ethnohistory* 41 (3), Summer 1994: pp. 369-405.

<sup>13</sup>John Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina* (London, 1709), pp. 88, 192.

<sup>14</sup>J. C. Yerbury, *The Subarctic Indians and the Fur Trade, 1680-1860* (University of British Columbia Press, 1986) pp. 20-24.

and colonial warfare. Such items were variously characterized as "luxury" or "necessary," depending on the opinion, or strategic interests, of the reporter.<sup>15</sup>

Some writers defined the value of the fur trade according to the principles of balance of trade theory. The Amerindian market caught the attention of Charles Devenant, whose report on trade for the English parliament in 1715 argued that whether to the Spaniards or Indians ("both desirous of, and wanting our Commodities"), a market for English goods lay in new American plantations, forming the means to balance English payments and "so increase the General Bulk of our Trade."<sup>16</sup> But others saw more at stake in the vent of goods, for beyond guns and hundredweight measures of powder and ball was a dazzling array of goods going to the Indian in trade. Staples ranged from bells, combs, mirrors, to long lists of other vanities.<sup>17</sup> Ornate knives, cutlery, mirrors, "boxes of glass" (beads), and trunks of "wearing apparell" would customarily round out trading canoe manifests.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See Ray and Freeman's list of a wide range of trade goods available at Hudson Bay, pp.130-131; although they emphasize a "short list" of goods demanded by Amerindians, Arthur J. Ray and Donald B. Freeman, *Give Us Good Measure': an economic analysis of relations between the Indians and the Hudson's Bay Company before 1763* (University of Toronto Press, 1978), pp. 225-227. Rich points out the range of trade goods, E.E. Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company*, Vol. I (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1958) pp: 153, 298. On the interesting trading demands among individual Indian nations, see Bruce G. Trigger, *The Children of Aataensic: A History of the Huron People to 1660* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), pp. 358-360; 409-411.

<sup>16</sup> Charles Davenant, *An Account of the Trade between Great-Britain, France, Holland, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Africa, Newfoundland, etc.* (London: A. Bell, 1715) pp. 72-73.

<sup>17</sup> Perrot made the comment concerning the moral traits of Indians, that if they had mirrors "they would change their appearances every half hour." But the early eighteenth century writer, making notes on Perrot's manuscript wrote, "That's something they are never without." See p. 143 and footnote to the anonymous comment, Nicolas Perrot, "Memoir on the Manners, Customs and Religion of the Savages of North America," vol. I, *The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley and Regions of the Great Lakes* ed., Jules Tailhon, (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1911). On mirrors, see Lahontan: "The Savages prefer your little Convex Glasses of two inches diameter to any others, because they give but a faint representation of the pimples and blotches upon their faces. I remember that while I was at Missilimakinac, one of the pedlers call'd Coureurs de Bois, brought a convex glass that was pretty large, and consequently represented the Face with some deformity. All the saves that saw this piece of catoptricks, thought it no less miraculous than the awaker of a clock, or a magical lanthorn or the spring of a machine. But what was most comical, there was among the rest of the spectators a Huronese girl who told the pedlar in a jocose way, that if the glass had the virtue of magnifying the objects really, as it did in appearance, all her she companions would give him in exchange as many beaver skins as would make his Fortune." Lahontan, *New Voyages to North-America* Vol. II, p. 430.

<sup>18</sup> Manifest of the trading license of Benjamin Frobisher, who fitted out two canoes from Montreal, 10 April 1769. RG4 B28 vol. 110 pt. 1. NAC microfilm. Trading rivalries were intensified by English or French traders offering "plenty" of goods at low prices. See Lawrence Clause journal entry, regarding his meeting with Jean Coeur who enticed Five Nations Indians with his "great store of goods," offering French blankets at reduced prices, a "fine french gune", "fin mens shirt", "fine ratine stockings." Journal of Lawrence Clause, 12 October 1727, Journals of the Albany Indian Commissioners, NAC microfilm.

There is a debate whether the disbursement of Indian trade goods was revolutionary from the Indian's perspective. Scholars cannot agree upon adequate measures of cultural change that might have occurred with the Amerindian's consumption of European goods, and whether such goods were accommodated or assimilated into Indian society. There is disagreement concerning the point in time when Indians became truly "dependent" upon goods and little consensus on exactly what characterizes such dependency.<sup>19</sup> Archeologists have uncovered larger percentages of European goods in Amerindian graves in the middle decades of the seventeenth century, particularly near the English colonies and at Huronia. But, given the complexity of the social question of consumption, both in European and Amerindian contexts, such discoveries hardly point conclusively to revolutionary changes in Indians' buying behaviour, or a cultural transformation due to new consumer activities.<sup>20</sup> Numerous contemporary writers certainly recorded increased Indian consumption, and historians have used their reports to point to significant change occurring in the seventeenth or early eighteenth centuries. Axtel in fact uses such sources to posit that the Indian's new consumer behaviour predated the English consumer revolution. He accepts the 1679 statement by a colonial observer that from Hudson Bay to the Carolinas, "many Things which they wanted not before because they never had them are by ... means [of the trade] become necessary both for their use & ornament." And he uses Montaigne to suggest that the Indians had been "cosoned by a desire of new-fangled novelties."<sup>21</sup>

But to accept such observations without an adequate regard to context takes historical analysis to arguably problematic conclusions. Few colonists had such expansive views of Indians in America to comment on general trends in consumption patterns. Although an able observer, John Banister held what on this question was a limited perspective.<sup>22</sup> Montaigne knew little of even the Brazilians he might have

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<sup>19</sup>Axtel, James, "The First Consumer Revolution," in *Beyond 1492: Encounters in Colonial North America*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 125-151; Bruce Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660* (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987); also, see Serge D. Genest, "Continuités et ruptures des réseaux commerciaux des Amérindiens du Nord-Est: de la préhistoire récente à 1625," M.A. Thesis, University of Laval, 1989, p.18, and concluding chapter.

<sup>20</sup>Axtel relies upon the Seneca and Onondaga grave studies, showing sharp increases in manufactures just after 1650, as indicative. Axtel, p. 145. Peter A. Thomas, "Cultural Change on the Southern New England Frontier, 1630-1665," in William W. Fitzhugh, ed., *Cultures in Contact: The European Impact on Native Cultural Institutions in Eastern North America, A.D. 1000 -1800* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1985), pp. 131-161.

<sup>21</sup>Axtel, p. 132.

<sup>22</sup>See his section "Of the Natives," (ca. 1679), Joseph and Nesta Ewan, eds., *John Banister and His Natural History of Virginia: 1678-1692* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1970), pp. 373; 382-383.

interviewed in Rouen, and there is strong evidence that his essay "On Cannibals" was written more to answer contemporary political and religious questions of the day, rather than to offer objective ethnographic commentary.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, Montaigne's interests clearly lay not with identifying consumerism, but with identifying its opposite, the idyllic simplicity among the Indians that exposed the problem of commerce at home. He described Indians "that hath no kinde of traffike... no use of service, of riches or of povertie; no contracts, no successions, no partitions...."<sup>24</sup>(...*il n'y a nulle espece de trafique, nulle cognoissance de lettres, nulle science de nombres, ... nul goust de service, de richesse, ou de pauvreté, nuls contrats....*)<sup>25</sup> When contemporary reports of Indian consumerism are compared, they reflect the complex context in which they were written: a commercializing European in colonial society. Such should be considered before using them to estimate the timing and magnitude of Indian consumer revolutions. For instance, when Dr. Alexander Hamilton remarked on the Mohawk sachems who arrived in Boston having "all laced hats, and some of them laced matchcoats and ruffled shirts," he was not reporting increased buying habits among Indians. Rather, Hamilton was really making a political statement concerning sachems who appeared, as he said, "à la mode Français." The comment communicated the panic, particularly at Boston, inspired by Indians appearing in French garb.<sup>26</sup> In fact, Hamilton's statement finds its most meaningful context in the shift occurring in his society (eventually celebrated by Smith), where a community's unity was organized around "commercial exchanges rather than government authority."<sup>27</sup> To Hamilton, the news was not Amerindian consumerism, but French imperialism. French goods gave evidence of exchange, and exchange, evidence of subordination of the Indian buyer to the French seller.

Beyond such a political consideration was the undoubtedly important issue of the sheer novelty of such manufactured wares reaching Indian markets. Recent studies of probate records suggest that, while there was significant expansion in English

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<sup>23</sup>See introductory comments by Karen Ordahl Kupperman, ed., *America in European Consciousness, 1493-1750*, University of North Carolina Press, 1995.

<sup>24</sup>*The Essayes of Michael Lord of Montaigne*, trans. John Florio, 3 Vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1910), Vol. I. p. 245.

<sup>25</sup>Michel Eyquem de Montaigne, *Essais: Reproduction photographique de l'édition originale de 1580*. ed. Daniel Martin, 3 vols. (Geneva: Slatkine Press, 1976) Vol. I "Des Canibales," p. 308.

<sup>26</sup>Quoted in T.H. Breen, "The meaning of things: interpreting the consumer economy in the eighteenth century," in J. Brewer and R. Porter, eds., *Consumption and the World of Goods*, p. 252; on anthropological perspectives of goods and their meaning, see, Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood, *The World of Goods: Towards and Anthropology of Consumption* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 36-47.

<sup>27</sup>Appleby, "Consumption in early modern social thought," p. 168.

consumption of goods, households still possessed a sparse amount of "semi-durable" goods by the end of the seventeenth century. Even with the wider perambulations of petty chapmen so troublesome to the trades, there was likely a smaller mass market existent among the lower ranks as previously suggested by Spufford.<sup>28</sup> Whetherell's recent study of probate records identifies significant expansion, but larger consumption of foreign imports and manufactures occurring most dramatically among the middling, particularly the commercial and trading ranks, while the same expansion was less striking among both the lesser gentry and the lower working classes.<sup>29</sup>

Such a context is valuable for understanding the novelty such articles still presented to contemporary observers, and, more importantly, the polemical value of the description of Indian trade goods. Miquelon points out that most of the cargoes to New France, full of what contemporaries would view as a dazzling variety of wares, were going to the Indians inland, not the *habitant* of New France. These cargoes -- especially in France -- would have been levied with considerable difficulty from the port cities and freed up for a high profit exchange in which few colonists could take part.<sup>30</sup> Not only French observers would have taken great interest in such a wide variety of goods, going, in most cases, to Indian customers. The Committee of the HBC spent a great deal of time as late as 1712 finding manufactures and suppliers for its annual outfit. It exhorted agents to "look out for Beads which are necessary to be sent this year, and to Buy them as cheap as they can. Likewise all the small trading goods which the secretary is to pay for when bought;" the committee also interviewed gunsmiths, manufacturers and others who might provide goods.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Margaret Spufford, *The Great Reclothing of Rural England: Petty Chapmen and their Wares in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Hambledon Press, 1984).

<sup>29</sup>See Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain: 1660-1760* (London: Routledge, 1988), growth charts in Chapter 1 and comments, 32-41; 191-198.

<sup>30</sup>See Dale Miquelon's lengthy section devoted to cargoes sent to Quebec in the early eighteenth century in *Dugard of Rouen: French Trade to Canada and the West Indies, 1729-1770* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978); Louis Dechêne analyzes the goods being carried by Montreal Indian traders in an analysis of Alexis Monière's accounts for the 1720s. See charts offered in *Habitants and Merchants in Seventeenth Century Montreal*, trans. Liana Vardi (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); an extremely valuable analysis of Jean-Baptiste Blondeau's goods taken into Indian Country is provided by Bruce M. White, "Montreal Canoes and their Cargoes," in *"Le Castor Fait Tout": Selected Papers of the Fifth North American Fur Trade Conference, 1985* (Montreal: Lake St. Louis Historical Society, 1985). Josée Desbiens, "Le niveau de vie et l'univers domestique des artisans montréalais entre 1740 et 1809," M.A. Thesis, University of Montreal, 1991, pp. 56-59, 65; on a later period, of value is the discussion of David-Thierry Ruddel, "Consumer Trends, Clothing, Textiles and Equipment in the Montreal Area, 1792-1835," *Material History Bulletin* 32 (Fall 1990): pp. 45-64.

<sup>31</sup>HBC Minutes for 8 April 1712, London Minute Book, A.1/33.

These goods destined for the Indian trade, in turn, found far less neutral reportage than has been assumed. Modern readers can all too easily overlook the very novelty and interest that goods could possess in published trading narratives. Lahontan likely had in mind the powerful suggestions of the extremely detailed list of trading goods he provided in his narrative. In his often polemical *Mémoires de l'Amérique Septentrionale*, Lahontan had already leveled criticism at the merchant class in Canada, the huge profits of the trade inland, and the greedy activities of the *habitant* at Montreal trade fairs when he included a list of "merchandise proper for them [the Indians]." Among Indians whom Lahontan celebrated as naturally virtuous, more civil than his "savage" European counterparts, and generous to a fault, were traders vending goods that were, in fact, shoddy and suitable only for the dregs of French society. He began his list with necessities by conventional standards, that is, implements used to procure food, the "short and light guns," powder, lead, large and small hatchets, knives, arrow heads, and large kettles. He also listed gun flints, *aleines de cordonnier* (shoemaker's awls) and fish hooks. These items were followed by consumption products, that, except for the *eau-de-vie*, and Brazillian tobacco, were fabrics of often base quality. These were the caps of small blue Serge fabric, shirts of common thread (from Brittany), stockings (*bas d'estame courts et gros*). He additionally listed sewing materials (needles, threads of all colours) and Venician beads.<sup>32</sup> The list's appearance in his text -- in fact appearing in his discussion of exorbitant profits in the trade -- was neither accidental in its situation in the text nor incidental to his argumentation. Lahontan, who contrasted the "marchands sauvages" with the "Négocians Chrétiens, qu'ils font leur grande Divinité de l'or et de l'argent," had used trade goods to make his point.<sup>33</sup>

Whether such goods were "necessities" or superfluties was not really as important to Lahontan as the spectacle of unjust gains being made in the Indian trade.<sup>34</sup> It is, however, arguably the details Lahontan provides of the types of wares, and his interest

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<sup>32</sup>See list *Mémoires de l'Amérique septentrionale*, in Réal Ouellet, ed., *Lahontan: Oeuvres complètes* (Montreal: Presses of the University of Montreal, 1990) I: p. 611.

<sup>33</sup>Vol. I. p. 74; His unpublished note on the Trade of Canada: "Les marchandizes qu'on apporte ches les sauvages sont des fusils, de la poudre de plomp, des haches, des chaudières, des couteaux, des aiguilles, du fil à coudre et à faire des rets. quelques étoffes. couvertures, capots, chemizes, etc., mais point d'argent car ils en ignorent la qualité et le prix." Lanctot, ed., *New Documents by Lahontan*, p. 26.

<sup>34</sup>Indeed, it is not surprising that the English translation of Lahontan in 1703, a text noted by Ouellet for its logical style bereft of much of the original text's irony, carried the same list but in other places made significant alterations in translation, that is, instead of listing "arms, kettles, axes, knives and other necessities," listing them as "arms, kettles, axes, knives and a thousand such things." Arguably, in its translation, Lahontan's trading list lost its ironic intent. Lahontan, *New Voyages to North America* Vol. I. (1702, reprinted, Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Co., 1905), p. 54.

in the justice, according to natural law, of the exchange itself (including the real value of pelts that were traded by Indians to gain the French wares)<sup>35</sup> that places his account firmly in the eighteenth century. The benefit of goods, and their very description, had been more narrowly prescribed in previous accounts. When they listed goods at all, missionaries showed them meeting strictly utilitarian ends. When the Jesuit writer Le Jeune, in 1633, listed goods in the trade as merely, "blankets, hatchets, kettles, capes, iron arrow-points, little glass beads, shirts and many similar things,"<sup>36</sup> he deliberately turned his eyes from lurid details of sumptuous consumption. Hennepin described trade goods among the Indians near Niagara as meeting physical needs, particularly to cover the nudity of the Indians with the "seven or eight gowns, and some pieces of fine cloth, which they cover themselves with from the waist to the knees."<sup>37</sup>

There was likely some strategic considerations in such description. The cleric and missionary tended to show Indians having few needs for European transactions that ended with material commodities changing hands. They therefore truncated the published trading goods list; the missionaries gave few details to a reading public, whatever its dimensions, of the quite wide array of trade goods being sent to New France and Louisiana before 1763 -- the silk threads, serge, taffetas, *bigouterie*, and luxury articles of all sorts.<sup>38</sup> Even if Quebec superiors had included in their annual reports the lists of fabrics, cloth, and draperies that subordinate missionaries were trading to Indians, the *Relations* editors in Paris undoubtedly would have removed them. There were certainly few, if any, mentions of the brightly coloured blue and red cloths, beautiful *scarlatines*, and patterned and brightly coloured cloths that missionaries ordered from Paris.<sup>39</sup> Nor were published the trading guns (with yellow trim, "it is such that sells at the highest price among the Indians"), "shirts made for the trade and others for our usage,"

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<sup>35</sup>Such as the *castor d'hiver*, valued at 4-1-19 s. *Oeuvres complètes*, Vol. I, p. 611.

<sup>36</sup>"Des couvertures, des haches, des chaudières, des capots, des fers de flèches, des petits canons de verre, des chemises, et choses semblables." Le Jeune's 1633 Relation, in *Jesuit Relations* Vol 5: pp. 264-265.

<sup>37</sup>Hennepin, *New Discovery* pp. 83-84.

<sup>38</sup>See "Lieux de production ou de fabrication des principaux articles importés de France au Canada avant 1763," *Rapport de l'archiviste de la Province de Québec pour 1949-51* (Quebec: Redempti Paradis, 1952), pp. 71-82.

<sup>39</sup>See the requisition of the Jesuit, Garnier, for such fabrics from his brother, who was also a Jesuit. He requested for him not to send yellow or green fabrics because the Indians never liked to wear it in their clothing. Lettre du S. Charles Garnier à son frère, n.d. (likely 1645) *Rapport de l'archiviste de la Province de Québec pour 1929-30* (Quebec: King's Printer, 1930), p. 36.



leggings, and miscellaneous articles ("une multitude de petits besoins") that missionaries were ordering for their missions inland.<sup>40</sup>

Before the changing effects of the consumer revolution, the English, too, adhered to the practice of placing the Indian's spiritual needs before any material. Trade promoters adeptly anticipated this carefully respected hierarchy of needs. Already cited has been the English petition of 1625 seeking a monopoly lease in South America. Its writers attempted to bolster the merits of their proposed monopoly by criticizing previous English settlers who purchased labour from the indigenous peoples with "glass beads, and ironworks, *or some such like contemptible stuffe*."<sup>41</sup> Another promised "to convert them by instruction and good example," to live in close proximity with them, and "to convey to them together with the Gospel the most delicious commodities that we have here with us."<sup>42</sup> To his courtly audience, the merchant and investor was careful to describe goods in such a way that trade appeared either subsumed or not to more virtuous ends, whether the evangelism of the Indian or the colonization of the continent.

This traditional view, that Indians had little real need for goods, conformed to popular understandings of exchange. Prior to the eighteenth century, few writers would suggest that trade goods themselves facilitated evangelism, as commercial exchange was usually characterized, and criticized, as not equally benefiting receiver and giver. Antoine Loysel, the French customary lawyer writing his adages in the early seventeenth century to aid law counsel, spoke of trade, by definition, as being characterized by loss and gain. His contemporaries did not see the possibility for an equal exchange, but rather, goods passing hands rising and falling in value according to the conditions of the sale and the passions animating buyer and seller. These were the grim realities beyond clerical standards of exchange. Loysel, then, coldly asserted that there was no friendship in trade; as there were "more foolish buyers than foolish sellers," it was believed that the acquisitive passion could override one's better senses, and the prudent calculations of the seller placed him by nature in a better position in exchange.<sup>43</sup> Montaigne himself agreed -- and his writings on commerce should really be read alongside his essay, "On 'Cannibals.'" He believed that "the profit of one man is the damage of another," and lamented the fact that, according to nature, "no man profits but

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<sup>40</sup>Lettre et Mémoire général des marchandises, Lettres R, No. 77 and 78, Sém. de Québec. For a fuller discussion, see chapter two.

<sup>41</sup>PRO. Brief Noates of ye busines of ye Amazones," 1625, CO 1/4 ff. 9-10

<sup>42</sup>PRO. f. 93.

<sup>43</sup>"Il y a plus de fols acheteurs que de fols vendeurs," Loysel, p. 382.

by the loss of others."<sup>44</sup> He even drew on classic writers of medicine, who had believed that "the birth, increase, and augmentation of everything is the alteration and corruption of another." Consumption, whether of food or of goods, resulted in the decrease in the stock, vitality, and profit of the other – and, such theories, having resonance in medical theory, were quite dramatically overturned in the period of the consumer revolution.<sup>45</sup> In this earlier context, it is not surprising that traders were anxious to assure readers that the profits that arose in their exchange (and the losses sustained by the Indian), would be offset by a greater good in spiritual work or a colony's founding.

The assumption that there was inequality in the value of trade goods passing hands in America also shaped early illustrations of the Indian Trade. It should be pointed out that there are few pictorial representations of exchange between Europeans and Indians prior to the eighteenth century. In a wide search of the numerous woodcuts and later engraved pictures of Indians, supporting a sub-genre in Americana literature in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Indian trade found little representation. The exception is found in the wood-cut illustration, "How Indians conduct their commerce," accompanying Girolamo Benzoni's 1565 *La Historia del Mondo*. It was later engraved in Theodore de Bry's *America* volumes between 1594 and 1596.<sup>46</sup> This illustration shows Indians in peaceful exchange one to another – but not with Europeans. Its subject sharply contrasts with the more prevalent depiction of Indian cruelty, revenge, and cannibalism. It is telling that in these first illustrated books of America, Indians did not exchange with, as much as torture, maim, and consume – according to the still popular writings of Spanish and Portuguese seafarers – the European newcomer.

By the mid-seventeenth century, illustrations of the trade between newcomers and Indians becomes discernible, not surprisingly, in Dutch cartography drawn to complement its overseas trading supremacy. But in such representations, Indians are depicted as passive, providing labour, and giving cheap product to Europeans. A good example appears in the map cartouche, probably dating from 1675, showing New

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<sup>44</sup>"The Profit of One Man is the Damage of Another," *The Essayes of Michael Lord of Montaigne* trans. by John Florio, 3 Vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1910), p. 109.

<sup>45</sup>Porter points to the remarkable upending of these views in the midst of the commercial revolution, when eating and drinking in large quantities were viewed as a prescription for good health. See, Roy Porter, "Consumption: disease of the consumer society?" in J. Brewer and R. Porter, eds., *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 58-81.

<sup>46</sup> Michael Alexander, ed., *Discovering the New World: based on the works of Theodore de Bry* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), found in Chapter 4, "Benzoni in the New World."

France and Greenland (Figure 4-1).<sup>47</sup> The picture shows European traders elevated above the Amerindians, one of whom has a string of beads in hand. The illustration is reversed and adapted in Hendrick Donker's map of 1678, showing Hudson Bay and Northern Canada (Figure 4-2).<sup>48</sup> Here, Dutch traders open up crates of merchandise to Indians. Their natural trading commodities, including furs, lie around the Indians' feet. The Europeans in both representations enjoy an elevated, and, suggested here, an advantageous bargaining position in the trade. This high-profit exchange takes place, meanwhile, in bold view of the map reader, beyond any moral sanction. What is arguably depicted, therefore, is a profitable *extraction* of natural resources, provided by Indians.

Map illustrations and narratives describing the Indian trade, in any case, are extremely rare for these earlier periods. When the Indian trade was discussed, writers tended to describe trade as extraction, that is, emphasizing the unequal value of exchange commodities by which metropolitan readers – often potential investors – could benefit. In these depictions, such exchange was not viewed as necessarily wrong from any moral standpoint. Rather, the natural commodity in the new world was being given up to European traders by Indians, much like they did in descriptions of Spanish colonial silver mines, where Indians provided low-priced labour to move extremely precious natural resources.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Detail of cartouche appearing in the map of America and Greenland by Joachim Otten, 1745. National Archives of Canada, NMC 17609. The cartouche is traced to De Wit's 1675 map in R.V. Tooley, ed., *The Mapping of America* (London: Holland Press Cartographica 2, 1980).

<sup>48</sup>"Pacaarte vande Norder Zee Cuften Van America," 1678, National Archives of Canada, NMC 24910.

<sup>49</sup>On the common description of "nakedness", see Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Settling with the Indians: The Meeting of English and Indian Cultures in America, 1580-1640* (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1980), p. 41.

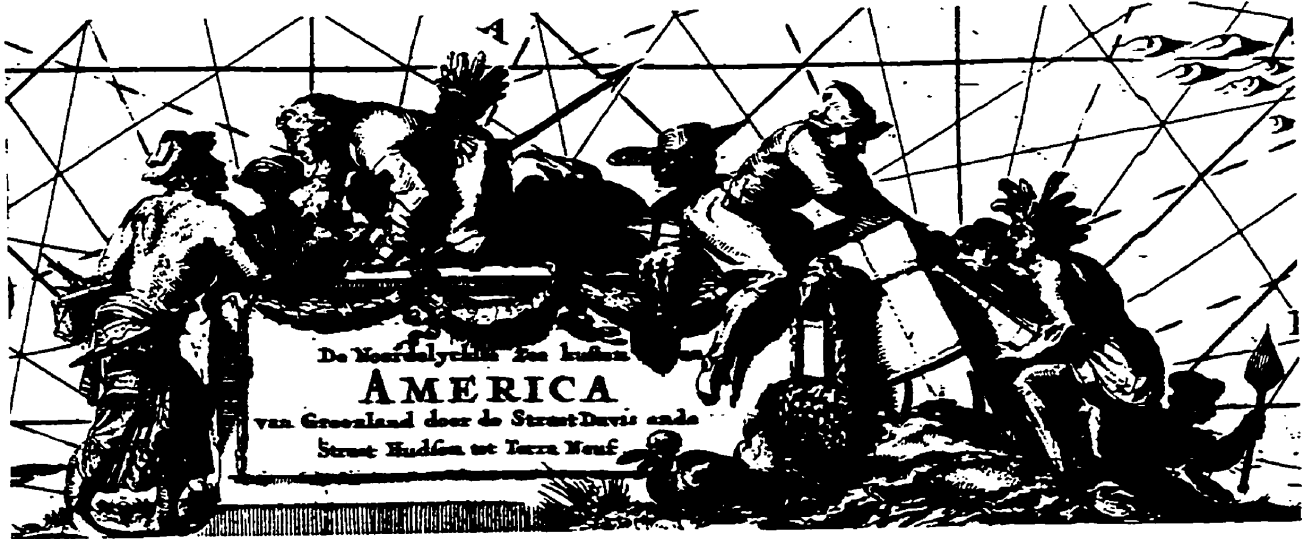


Figure 4-1: Map Cartouche in Joachim Otten's Map of America and Greenland, 1745, used originally by De Wit, 1675, National Archives of Canada, NMC 17609.



Figure 4-2: Map Cartouche in Hendrick Donker's "Pacaarte vande Norder Zee Cuften Van America," 1678, National Archives of Canada, NMC 24910.

The early colonial narrative explained sharp profit gradients by pointing out the Amerindian's demand for cheap European goods, and his fortuitous taste for trash. A different understanding of value – either due to gullible nature, innocence, providential design or reduced mental sensibility – welcomed a high profit commercial investment. Such considerations were often encoded into letters and narratives seeking to attract further investors and courtly backers to colonial schemes. Verrazzano's letter to the French king in 1523 established a literary tradition of this sort for the next century, when it reported a demand for cheap goods among the Narragansett Bay Indians. The French were by the time of its writing using treaties and negotiations to extinguish Amerindian claims to land, which likely prompted observations which underscored, indeed, the ease by which Indians could be placated and rights extinguished with low value wares, especially in copper goods.<sup>50</sup> "Both men and women have various trinkets," he reported; "They do not value gold because of its colour; they think it the most worthless of all, and rate blue and red above all other colors. The things we gave them that they prized the most were little bells, blue crystals, and other trinkets to put in the ear or around the neck. They did not appreciate cloth of silk and gold, nor even of any other kind." He went on to say that "They are very generous and give away all they have."<sup>51</sup>

Certainly there would be truth in such an observation. There is little reason to doubt the outlines of Verrazzano's reportage. The cosmology of Northeastern Woodland Indians helps explain their demand for blue crystal and copper objects, which, among Northeastern Coastal Indians allowed them to "think good."<sup>52</sup> These goods' novelty, too, undoubtedly prompted Indians trading behaviour. But Verrazzano's own interest in the exchange, and its recurrence in his letter, suggests the reporting strategies of early writers. Here was an impressive and ready market, and, likely of more consideration, a potential for high profit. Verrazzano's fleet was, after all, mustered by

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<sup>50</sup>See Olive Dickason's comment concerning the developing French tradition, in the South American wood trade, of using treaties to establish relations with Indians. Green, L.C. & Dickason, Olive P., *The Law of Nations and the New World*, University of Alberta Press, 1989. Also, see, Pagden's discussion of the different English and French uses of natural law in establishing treaties. Pagden, Anthony, *Lords of all the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France: c. 1500-c.1800*, (Yale University Press, 1995).

<sup>51</sup>Giovanni de Verrazzano to Francis I, 8 July 1524, in David B. Quinn, ed., *New American World: A Documentary History of North America to 1612*, Vol. I (New York: Arno Press, 1979). p. 283, 285.

<sup>52</sup>George R. Hamell, "Trading in Metaphors: The Magic of Beads," in *Proceedings of the 1982 Glass Trade Bead Conference*, Charles F. Hayes III, ed., (New York: Rochester Museum & Science Centre, 1983), pp. 5-28.

Rouen merchants, and outfitted, like most expeditions of discovery with sizable amounts of truck.<sup>53</sup> Any return voyage would require tangible evidence of profits to come. When he stated that "they came near enough for us to throw them a few little bells and mirrors and many trinkets,"<sup>54</sup> he was revealing his concerns as one of the shareholders in the adventure. The same holds true of his observation of the Micmac, who were "most violent," insisting upon trading over the surf near present-day New York, taking only in exchange "knives, hooks for fishing and sharp metal."

It is more telling that Verrazano's Italian copy (the original French letter disappeared) was taken up by Richard Hakluyt the Younger, who further underscored such profit potentials. Providing an English version in his *Divers voyages* (1582), Hakluyt adopted the phrase "such like trifles," to describe the wares Verrazano's French crew took to the Carolina Indians; he added, "and such like toys," to the list of bells and beads esteemed among them.<sup>55</sup> A colonization promoter, Hakluyt might be expected to emphasize the profits offered in the Indian trade. He had already translated the Columbus letter and others of first Spanish contact, all making evident the easy and profitable Indies trade: Indians had curious demands for low-value merchandise and gave up high-value country products to the European vendor. The Columbus Letter, whose authorship is likely attributable to court scribes and not the seafarer, itself contained the observations of sailors bartering gold from Indians for rusted barrel hoops and broken glass, affirming the wild profits beckoning in the very surf of the New World. So high was such gain that the letter states that Columbus intervened for the Indians' sake, regulating the exchanges that were frantically taking place on the beaches of the *Indes* (and thereby assuaging his audience's fears of usurious profiteering.)<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Gayle K. Brunelle, *The New World Merchants of Rouen: 1559-1630*, (Sixteenth century essays & studies; v.16), p. 32.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 287.

<sup>55</sup>I find these discrepancies when comparing Hakluyt's with the modern, and more careful, translation of the Verrazano document appearing in Quinn, *New American World*, p. 283, 285. Hakluyt translates the Italian as: "To the itent we might send them of our things, which the Indians commonly desire and esteeme, as sheetes of paper, glases, bels, and such like trifles" (p. 392); ... Among whom we saw many plates of wrought copper, which they esteeme more than golde which for the colour they make no account of azure and red. The things they esteeme most of all those which we give them, were bels, christal of azure colour, and other toys to hang a their ears or about their necke. They did not desire clothe of silke or of golde, much less of any other sort...." (p. 389) Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations Voyages, Traffiques, and Discoveries of the English Nation* (Reprint, Edinburgh: E. & G. Goldsmid, 1889).

<sup>56</sup>See *Epistola de Insulis Nuper Inventis by Christoforo Colombo*, trans. Frank E. Robbins, March of America Facsimile Series, No. 1, pp. 11-12

To an audience of possible investors, it was important that early exploration narratives represented European trade denominators as cheap trinkets, traded at enormous profit. Thus, the "trinket" (with its definition as a "small ornament or fancy article, usually an article of jewellery for personal adornment"), or "trifle" (with roots to "cozening, cheating") or "bauble" ("a showy trinket or ornament such as would please a child")<sup>57</sup> appeared as key word choices in overseas promotional writing. Archer's Account of Gosnold's voyage in 1602 included a typical description that "Our captain gave him a straw Hat and a pair of knives, the Hat awhile hee wore, but the knives he beheld with great marvelling, being very bright and sharpe, this our courtesi made them all in love with us."<sup>58</sup> Indians appeared figuratively and literally naked, welcoming European wares; and authors returned to the itemized list of cheap goods, invariably ending with the phrase "and other trifles" to show the low entry costs for such commerce, even if the reality was hardly the same. Brereton's relation reported that Indians "offered their fairest collars or chaines, for a knife or *such like trifle*."<sup>59</sup> Earlier in an aside, Brereton stated that "captaine Gosnold presenting their Lord *with certaine trifles* which they wondered at, and highly esteemed"<sup>60</sup> and alluded to physical and material poverty in the statement that "the Salvages neither in this attempt shall hurt us, they being simple, naked and unarmed, destitute of edge-tools or weapons."<sup>61</sup> The point to such description was found at the relation's end: "the charges whereof shall be defraied by our first returne, of fish and some commodities of Sassafras, Hides, Skinnes and Furres, which we shall also have by trading with the Salvages. The proove of which commodities shall encourage our merchants to venter largely in the next."<sup>62</sup>

Any future investment in subsequent voyages often depended on a writer's choice of words, or the adopted means of presenting American exchange commodities. Among English correspondents, Lederer's 1672 exploration narrative (which Morrison

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<sup>57</sup>See "Trinket," Vol. XVIII, p. 542; "Trifle," Vol. XVIII, p. 522; and "Bauble," Vol. I., p. 1011, J.A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner, eds., *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

<sup>58</sup>Gabriel Archer's Account to "North Virginia," 1602, in David B. Quinn, and Alison M. Quinn, eds, *The English New England Voyages, 1602-1608*, Ser. 2 Vol. 161 (London: Hakluyt Society, 1983), p. 134.

<sup>59</sup>M. John Brereton, "A Briefe and True Relation of the Discoverie of the North Part of Virginia, 1602," *Ibid.*, p. 156.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, p.154.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 175.

believed was fictional, mere "Indian traders' talk")<sup>63</sup> provided glowing reports of the fur trade to prospective English colonizers to Virginia and, not without accident, included a chapter on the Indian Trade. He said that Indians near settlements would "greedily barter" for axes, hoes, knives, scissors and trading cloth, while remote Indians, if offered toys, knacks for children, looking glasses and pictures, "would purchase them at any rate." He went on to say: "Could I have forseen when I set out, the advantages to be made of trade with those remote Indians, I had gone better provided...."<sup>64</sup> Rosier's *True Relation* of 1605, used the language of poverty to describe the first encounter in trade: "...when we showed them knives and their use by cutting of stickes *and other trifles*, as combs and glasses, they came close aboard our ship, as desirous to entertain our friendship."<sup>65</sup> He went on to say that they gave them "things we perceived they liked, when wee shewed them the use: bracelets, rings, peacock-feathers, which they stucke in their haire, and Tobacco pipes." The actual goods were likely prefigured upon Iberian precedent, though Martin Pringe, captaining his American vessel had it "furnished with slight Merchandizes thought fit to trade with the people of the Countrey," and listed the "Hats of divers colours, greene, blue and yellow, aparell of coarse Kersie and Canvass readie made, Stockings and Shooes, Saws, Pick-axes, Spades and Shovels, Axes, Hatchets, Hookes, Knives, Sizzers, Hammers, Nailles, Chissels, Fish-hookes, Bels, Beades, Bugles, Looking-glasses, Thimbles, Pinnes, Needles, Threed, *and such like*."<sup>66</sup> He followed up the phrase by making clear that "such like" commodities were cheaply procured in Europe, as revealed in his enumeration of the skins of "beasts" in America. The "Cases (skins) and Furies being hereafter purchased by exchange may yeeld no smal gain to us."<sup>67</sup>

The 1584 narrative ascribed to John Aubrey dwelt at length on the fortuitous native market for tin, which the junior Hakluyt underscored in his margin edition with the tantalizing phrase "Tinne much esteemed." Aubrey explained that "We exchanged our tinne dishe for twentie skinned, woorth twentie Crownes, or twentie

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<sup>63</sup>A. J. Morrison, "The Virginia Indian Trade to 1673," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Ser. 2 Vol. I (4), October, 1921, p. 234.

<sup>64</sup>"Touching Trade with Indians," in John Lederer, *The Discoveries of John Lederer, in three several marches from Virginia to the west of Carolina*, (1672) March of America Facsimilie Series, 1966, pp. 26-27.

<sup>65</sup>James Rosier, *A True Relation of the most prosperous voyage made this present yeere 1605*, *Ibid.*, pp. 268-269.

<sup>66</sup>Martin Pringe, *A Voyage set out from the City of Bristoll at the charge of the chiefest Merchants.... in the year 1603*, *Ibid.*, pp. 214-215.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 225.



Nobles: and a copper kettle for fiftie skinnes woorth fiftie Crownes. They offered us very good exchange for our hatchets, and axes, and for knives, and would have given any thing for swords...."<sup>68</sup> The overriding concern for profits from early colonization attracted interest, as Henry Hudson remarked on catching a glimpse of early French fishing vessels returning with "many beaver skinnes and other fine fures, which they would have changed for redde gownes. For the French trade with them for red cassockes, knives, hatchets, copper, ketles, trevits, beades, *and other trifles*."<sup>69</sup> The French, meanwhile, described the same exchanges. Cartier's trade with the St. Lawrence Iroquois was described as being undertaken with "knives, glass beads, combs and other trinkets of small value, at which they showed many signs of joy, lifting up their hands to heaven and singing and dancing in their canoes."<sup>70</sup>

Few of these writers were overlooking the larger component of a profitable exchange: the amicable relations that would likely result from trade, and the possibility of an harmonious displacement of Amerindians from the lands required by colonists. To mindsets rejecting dispossession outrightly, until John Locke and Emerich de Vattel gave legitimacy for agriculturalists to displace Indians,<sup>71</sup> such negotiations promised a trouble-free prosecution of a colonization scheme, at least from the European's point of view.<sup>72</sup> The Haklyut reprint of Thomas Hariot's 1590 narrative of the "new found land" points first to the valuable natural commodities, including furs which "will yeelde good profite," and deer skins" to be had of the naturall inhabitants thousands yeerely by way Virigina" seemed to have brought such a definition of profitable

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<sup>68</sup>John Aubrey Narrative 1584, in David Beers Quinn, ed, *The Roanoke Voyages: 1484-1590*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ser. Vol. I (London: Hakluyt Society, 1955) pp. 100-101.

<sup>69</sup>Henry Hudson, the Third Voyage, 1609, in G.M. Asher, ed., *Henry Hudson the Navigator*, 1<sup>st</sup> Ser. Vol. 27 (London: Hakluyt Society, 1860), p. 60.

<sup>70</sup>Quoted in Harold A. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999) p. 17.

<sup>71</sup>Budd records the answer of English colonists to Indian grievances in 1685, that they had come among them "by their own consent, and for what commodities which we had bought at any time of them, which we had paid them for, and had been just to them, and had been from the time of our first coming very kind and respectful to them..." Thomas Budd, *Good Order Established in Pennsylvania and New Jersey* (1685), March of America Facismile Series, No. 32, p. 32.

<sup>72</sup>Anthony Pagden, "Dispossessing the barbarian: the language of Spanish Thomism and the debate over the property rights of the American Indian," Anthony Pagden, ed, *The Languages of Political Theory in Early-Modern Europe* (Cambridge Univeristy Press, 1987); see, also, James Tully, *A Discourse on Property: John Locke and his Adversaries* (Cambridge University Press, 1980); Martin H. Quitt, "Trade and Acculturation at Jamestown, 1607-1609," *William and Mary Quarterly* 3<sup>rd</sup> Ser. Vol. LII (2) April 1995, p.229. On Vattel's influence, see Olive Patricia Dickason, *The Myth of the Savage: and the Beginnings of French Colonization in the Americas* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1984), p. 139, and on the history of the debate, pp. 127-193.

exchange.<sup>73</sup> Hariot went on to subordinate the high profits of such exchange to the ultimate end of subordinating Indians below a civil government, that

they are a people poore, and for want of skill and judgement in the knowledge and use of our things, doe esteeme our trifles before thinges of greater value: Notwithstanding in their proper manner considering the want of such meanes as we have, they seeme very ingenious; For although they have no such tooles, nor any such craftes, sciences and artes as wee; yet in those thinges they doe, they shewe excellencie of wit. And by how much they upon due consideration shall finde our manner of knowledges and craftes to exceede theirs in perfection, and speed for doing or execution, by so much the more is it probable that they shoulde desire our friendships and love, and have the greater respect for pleasing and obeying us. Whereby may bee hoped if meanes of good government bee used, that they may in short time be brought to civilitie, and the imbracing of true religion.<sup>74</sup>

## II.

We have seen, then, some characteristic features of Indian trade descriptions written before the eighteenth century. Writers tended to dismiss the value of European goods, particularly in consideration of the exchange commodities American Indians offered in return. The Indian's real needs were spiritual, not material; trade profited the European rather than the Indian, and the Indian trade itself, in picture and text, constituted a profitable extraction of American resources. Such assumptions shaped John Banister's observations of Virginian Indians, probably sketched in 1679. Remarking on the Indians' replacement of skin and fur clothing with fabrics traded from Europeans, Banister said that "they cover their nakedness with a flap of red or blew cotton & wrap themselves up in a mantle or matchcoat of Daffields." Those who wore English coats, wanted them in "divers colours... & therefore the traders have them cut partly from pale, gules [red] and azure."<sup>75</sup> He remarked on their complete adoption of English knives and axes, replacing traditional hand-crafted wares made of reeds and stone.<sup>76</sup> Though the Indian Trade had its

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<sup>73</sup>Thomas Hariot's *Virginia by Theodore de Bry* March of America Facsimile Series No. 15 (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1966), pp. 10 and 11.

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>75</sup> Bannister, pp. 374-375.

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 382.

black reputation (“esteem’d the great cause of all our troubles”), Banister believed that it provided the only *vinculum pacis* (“bond of peace”) between Indians and newcomers, especially since “many thing now are become absolutely necessary to the preservation of their lives....”<sup>77</sup> But, despite such consumption and its value in maintaining peace, Banister saw little fundamental changes brought about in the Indian's acquisition of European goods. He believed that “to be drunk and swear is the only piece of civility these bararous [sic] people have learnt of us Europeans[.]”<sup>78</sup>

Although it is difficult to chart changes in such assumptions, particularly in texts written for a variety of audiences, it is possible to suggest that they were replaced by new sensibilities becoming widespread in the eighteenth century, particularly with the idealization of trade itself. Most noteworthy was a change in the way that European believed their goods could bring Indians into what Hariot termed “civilitie.” According to Greenblatt's analysis, Hariot shaped his writing around a radical conception of religion as a necessary means of establishing civil government. Whether he was an atheist or not, he seems to have believed, with Machiavelli, that religion served an important function of striking fear into man, and, in America, Hariot developed this proposition in relation to Indians; through sophisticated goods, Indians would revere the Christians, convert to the European religion, and, through fear of God, subordinate themselves beneath a civil government.<sup>79</sup>

As Greenblatt points out, the proposition was radical by suggesting a practical consideration in a religious question, whereby even false religion could be used as a means of maintaining or establishing a civil state. But Hariot, it should be remembered, did not see trade goods bringing Indians into conversion, or, for that matter, *civility*. Few seventeenth century writers would suggest, as eighteenth century writers did, such a material moment in the epiphany.

Undoubtedly central to such a change was a new conception of trade. Trade goods were more frequently suggested as finding equal returns in trade, whereby an exchange could benefit both parties. The century's earlier trade promoters suggested as much. Later, Benjamin Franklin, the French physiocrats, and the Scottish political economists showed trade as an opportunity for two parties in an exchange to mutually profit. Although social theorists questioned the degree to which free trade could be

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 384-385.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 377.

<sup>79</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, “Invisible Bullets,” in *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 26-27; 30.

undertaken with savage states, the eighteenth century conception of trade held that a nation enjoyed an infinite fund of certain commodities, and its citizenry possessed an infinite demand for goods. They could increase their standards of living in the exchange of surplus, one nation to another, and enjoy peace with its neighbors. The vent of goods from a civilized to savage nation was, then, no longer dismissed as simply grievous to Indian interests. In such a context, writers could identify the *ways* in which a trade benefited both parties, and the goods exchanging hands could constitute evidence of the profits Indians enjoyed in their trade. French correspondents could thereafter quibble over the degree of profit accrued to Indians, according to this new radically different definition of virtuous trade. Likely there was little accident that Henri Joutel, no friend of La Salle, reported to the marine ministry that his master had loaded up, not necessities for Indians, but "showy merchandise" in anticipation of trade,<sup>80</sup> while La Salle himself, ever needing to defend his projects, reported that he distributed "knives, hatchets and other similar things *that they had need of*."<sup>81</sup>

Eighteenth century map illustrations followed this new characterization of exchange. The cartouche appearing in a 1702 New Sweden map<sup>82</sup> displays the new European interest in the fur trade. It is here undertaken in the most agreeable circumstances. Sharing the same stature in the illustration, Indians and European apparently share the profits of exchange. The amicable outcome of such trade, meanwhile, takes place while inter-tribal warfare rages nearby. De Fer's "L'Amérique meridionale, et septentrionale (1699), contains an illustration whereby the European holds out goods to the Indian. The European's palms are open, fully disclosing his intentions. These goods are attracting the Indian from the forest, that evocative place of wilderness beyond civil society.<sup>83</sup> Probably the most clear representation of eighteenth century trade

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<sup>80</sup>NAC. The "marchandises de clinquallerie." He also said that "leurs canots etoient chargez de differentes marchandises sur tout d'eau de vie que les sauvages aiment beaucoup mai ay a fait de bense aux françois de leur endonner sous peine d'excommunication." Joutel mémoire, Henri Joutel journal, 3JJ 386 piece no. 9. Reel 444.

<sup>81</sup>NAC. Mr. La Salle "leur fit entendre ... qu'il leur donneroit del couteaux et del hachet et autre chose semblables dont ils ont besoin et qu'on leur changerait pour des peaux de beaufs." And elsewhere: "mais nous leur dismes que nous n'avions pas de marchandises pour leur donner à présent mais qu'ils courage à chasser que nous leur prirent traitteront toutes leurs peltries à nostre restour à leur portenont ce qu'ils ont besoin et que sy ils vouloient porter." Journal de M. de la Salle, 1682, 3JJ No. IX 13 Reel F-444; f. 25.

<sup>82</sup> Campenius's *Kortbeskrifning om Provincien Nya Sverige*, 1702, published in Seymour I. Schwartz and Ralph E. Ehrenberg, eds., *The Mapping of America* (New York: Harry N Abrahms, 1980).

<sup>83</sup>Plate 51 No. 60. De Fer, 1699 L'Amérique méridionale et septentrionale, in R.V. Tooley, ed., *The Mapping of America* (London: Holland Press Cartographica 2, 1980.)

idealism is found in William Faden's 1777 Map of the Inhabited Part of Canada<sup>84</sup> (Figure 4-3). Here, the European and Indian meet in an obviously equitable arrangement to exchange goods. They are smoking pipes, evidently agreeing on the outcome of exchange. Such a standard meanwhile clarified vice in the trade. Lahontan, then, makes plain his moral judgement concerning the French Indian trade in his 1701 frontispiece illustration<sup>85</sup> which includes the shadowy figure of an Indian trader. A weighty morality is communicated in the place where the trade takes place, in the background of the illustration and in near darkness, where the Indian is quite literally falling prostrate before the trader.

Most of the omissions in lists of trading goods can be better understood in light of the contemporary tendency to prove that some manner of equity in exchange had been achieved. Few lists of trade goods provided by trade promoters, for instance, included the trading plates that were engraved with bacchanalian poems, as popular as they were among Indians.<sup>86</sup> There seems to be no report, published or not, of the crucifixes and relics meeting decorative, rather than religious, purposes in the Indian trade -- and smithed in ever larger quantities in Montreal, Albany, and Philadelphia.<sup>87</sup> Presently only archeological digs give any evidence of the work of the New France silversmith Pierre Huguet dit Latour, whose silver cross for the Indian trade bore an illustration of an Indian drinking whiskey out of a bottle.<sup>88</sup>

The description of goods provided by promoters, rather, highlighted the social benefits Amerindians won in their exchange with Europeans. The most common evidence of such social benefit was the affinity struck between the Indian and the European's culture, when European goods passed hands. When the *Mercure de France* published a lengthy report in 1746 of the visit of Illinois Indians to Paris, it devoted space to the gifts given the visitors, particularly the complete set of French clothing to each

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<sup>84</sup> National Archives of Canada, C-7300.

<sup>85</sup> From frontispiece, Baron de Lahontan, *New Voyages*, (1703) (reprinted, Chicago: L. A. C. McClurg and Co., 1905.)

<sup>86</sup> Such as the ceramic plate found at the Fort Charlotte site with the French limerick, translated as: "At the bottom of my bottle/ I imprison love/ For the juice of the grape / makes my heart burn with passion. *Voices from the rapids*, p. 89.

<sup>87</sup> See photograph and description of one double barred cross minted in Montreal and a major trade item in the late 1700s in the English and French trades. Carolyn Gilman, *Where Two Worlds Meet: the Great Lakes Fur Trade* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1982), p. 100. On the importance of the fur trade to Canadian silversmithing, see foreword by John E. Langdon in N. Jaye Fredrickson, *The Covenant Chain: Indian Ceremonial and Trade Silver* (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1980).

<sup>88</sup> Fredrickson, p. 62.



LaSalle's Bibliothèque de Montréal, 1777; in W. Faden's *General View of the State of the Empire of Great Britain*, 1791.

Figure 4-3: Cartouche from William Faden's 1777 Map of the Inhabited Parts of Canada National Archives of Canada, C-7300.

chief which included scarlet red jackets with silver trim, and the King dispersing watches, medals on gold chains, guns, and shoulderbags.<sup>89</sup> Such otherwise trivial notes reassured readers that Indian alliances had been strengthened, the Indian being imagined as having benefited from his meeting with French negotiators. When Indian Affairs became critical in colonial affairs, at a time when clothing had already acquired significant symbolic meaning to Englishmen,<sup>90</sup> the clothing trade received considerable attention for much the same reason. Cloth gifts and trade goods provided a reassuring spectacle, for the Indian who took on the dress and accouterments might as easily take on the religion and laws of the European visitor.<sup>91</sup> Certainly London newspaper readers might have taken heart from the account of Oglethorpe's visit in 1734, when Prince William gave a watch to one of the Cherokee chiefs, Tomochichi. The Indian supposedly agreed to "call upon Jesus Christ every morning when he looked at it," when he was instructed to do so.<sup>92</sup> The English were long reassured by the Indian who took on their dress: as early as 1665, the New York Indian commissioners had asked Iroquois Five Nations Indians who considered themselves friends of the English, to be "dressed in English Apparrell and their hair cut after the manner of the English," to allow the colonists "to distinguish betwixt those Indians who live among the English and others...."<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup>*Mercure de France* 1746, pp. 2833-2834; also, the King's gifts: "sa médaille avec une chaîne d'or, un fusil, une gibecière, une épée, une montre, et un tableau, dans lequel doit être représentée l'audience qu'ils ont eue du roi, p. 2852.

<sup>90</sup>On the symbolic importance of clothing, see Alan Hunt, *Governance of the Consuming Passions: A History of Sumptuary Laws* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), p. 42-43; in the later fur trade, see James A. Hanson, "Laced Coats and Leather Jackets: The Great Plains Intercultural Clothing Exchange," in Douglas H. Ubelaker and Herman J. Viola, eds., *Plains Indian Studies: A Collection of Essays in Honor of John C. Ewers and Waldo K. Wedel* (Washington: Smithsonian Contributions to Anthropology, No. 30, 1982), pp. 105-117; an excellent overview of assimilation and acculturation of European manufactures, particularly clothing, see chapter 3, "The Stuff of Life," in Colin G. Calloway, *New Worlds for All: Indians, Europeans and the Remaking of Early America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1997), pp. 42-67.

<sup>91</sup>PRO. See Governor Nicholson's account of gifts given to the Indians of Carolina in 1720, which included among the hats, coats, stockings, shoes, printed calicos, beads toys, small looking glasses and vermilion, were 4 doz. "prints of his Majesty and of Royal Family in small Guilt frames, Prints of his Majesties Arms, a few new guineas, 1/2 guineas, crowns, half-crowns and shillings to be strung on red ribbon and worn by ye chiefs." An Account of Several Things Proposed for Governor Nicholson to Carry with him in order to make Presents to the Head Men of the Indians in Carolina," CO 5/358 f. 30.

<sup>92</sup>Benjamin Bissell, *The American Indian in English Literature of the Eighteenth Century*, (New York: Archon Books, 1968), p. 65.

<sup>93</sup>PRO. Message to Chief of Mohawk Indians, 9 September 1665, CO 1/19, f. 233. For a similar attention to the degree to which the Iroquois, Huron and Ottawa Indians were growing crops and abandoning the

Lahontan scorned such optimism, saying of the Canadian allies that "They have no other consideration for *England* or *France*, than what depends upon the occasion they have for the Commodities of these two Nations."<sup>94</sup> But it is hardly coincidental that, in the eighteenth century, when Anglo-French rivalries rose and many Indian alliances were in question, artistic representations of visiting Amerindians in Europe tended to show chiefs fully clothed in French or English European dress. The visits of Queen Anne's four "American Kings" in 1711 were punctuated by numerous portraiture sittings in which they were shown wearing European clothes; newspapers reported the watches and other gifts given them while in London.<sup>95</sup> The report of the Amerindian's visit to Europe usually concluded with some mention of the material goods given them, these signifying cemented friendships and what readers hoped was awe inspired in the hearts of the *savage*. *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1765 was typical in noting the Cherokee chiefs who visited London that year. Having presented grievances to the Lords Commissioners of Trade and Plantations, the Lords had apparently addressed their concerns, "dismissed them well pleased, and his majesty has ordered them a variety of presents...."<sup>96</sup>

Alarming to the French by 1716, then, was the report that English *scarlatines* were preferred among the Indians, even more than those created in Languedoc, not because of differences in quality, but price.<sup>97</sup> A vent of fabrics suggested an alliance was sealed -- and likely an enduring one, considering the value of clothing at the time in Europe and its place as part of one's estate passing from one generation to the next. The French marine ministry must have earlier taken heart from the report of Ste. Colombe, an ecclesiastic traveller with Le Moyne d'Iberville, who said that the Indians along the inland waterways had highly esteemed the adventurer's gifts -- the hooded coats made after the Canadian fashion, the knives, pails, kettles and other baubles (*babioles*) -- more than "all the gold in the world" and carefully preserved them, even the coat given by

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chase, "et quelques-uns des hommes commencent à s'habiller à la française." *Mémoire de l'état présent du Canada* (1712) *RAPQ* 1922-23. p. 37.

<sup>94</sup>Baron de Lahontan, *New Voyages to North America* (1703), reprinted Chicago:L A.C. McClurg and Co., 1905), pp. 58-59.

<sup>95</sup>See Richmon P. Bond, *Queen Anne's American Kings* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952); Eric Hinderaker, "The 'Four Indian Kings,' and the Imaginative Construction of the First British Empire," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. LIII (3) July 1996: pp. 487-526.

<sup>96</sup>*Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. XXXV, February 1765, pp. 95-96. There is also the telling addition to the outfit of gifts sent for Governor Nicholson's expedition to the Chickasaw, being, 4 doz. "prints of his majesty and of Royal Family in small gilt frames, prints of his majesty's arms...." C.O.5/358 f. 30.

<sup>97</sup>NAC. See Response of 9 October 1716, C/11a/36 f. 151.



La Salle to a chief fifteen years before.<sup>98</sup> Suggesting dire consequences were the charges made by Canadian administrators in 1735 against the merchants at Detroit and Michelimackinac who "under pretext of assuring their creditors for the advances made them to the Indians" took not only eau-de-vie but English merchandise which "directly tends to favor foreign commerce and ruin that of the colony's."<sup>99</sup> The crime of clothing Indians with foreign wares offended mercantilist sensibilities, and in America, raised the very spectre of treason. Such were the suspicion directed to the individual charged in 1738 of trafficking diverse sorts "de callemoindes, mousselines, tauelles et cottons" of the English to Indians.<sup>100</sup>

The importance Europeans placed upon clothing and the attention they paid to Indians who wore or did not wear their fabrics has undoubtedly led historians to exaggerated estimates of the assimilation, rather than a more likely accommodation of trade clothing among Amerindians.<sup>101</sup> Certainly the accommodation of fabrics, woven wares and ornaments into existing Amerindian cultures has consistently gone unseen until recently. The European's belief that trade goods passed unchanged into Indian usage allowed them to imagine that something of a social and political connection had been effected with the exchange of commodities.<sup>102</sup> Samuel Hearne, then, remarked on the clothing of inland Indians, saying that "it gave me no little uneasiness to see so many fine fellows of Indians and their Families not only Cloath'd with the Canadian goods finely ornimented, but ware also furnish'd with every other Necessary artical, and seem'd not to be in want of any thing."<sup>103</sup>

Interest in home goods meanwhile transcended any contemporary predilection to use clothing to identify the possible rank and importance of the Indians

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<sup>98</sup>NAC. Piece X-6, "Extrait d'une lettre de Rochefort du 4 juillet 1699 sur la Rivière de Mississipi par Mr. de Ste. Colombe," Archives de la marine, 3JJ vol. 387, National Archives of Canada microfilm reel 475.

<sup>99</sup>AOM. Beauharnois and Hoquart, 23 April 1735 F/3/12 f. 220.

<sup>100</sup>AOM. Memoir of Michel de Villebois, 27 April 1738 F/3/12 f. 337.

<sup>101</sup>See Prince's comments regarding generalizations and her own conclusions, Nicholette Prince, "Influence of the Hudson's Bay Company on Carrier and Coast Salish Dress, 1830-1850," *Material History Review* 38 (Fall 1993), pp. 15-26

<sup>102</sup>On the aesthetics of silver "ornaments" and their meaning in Navajo culture, see Louise Lincoln, "Navajo Silver, Navajo Aesthetics," pp. 37-49, *Southwest Indian Silver from the Doneghy Collection* ed. Louise Lincoln, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982). Also, Wilcomb E. Washburn, "Symbol, Utility and Aesthetics in the Indian Fur Trade," in *Aspects of the Fur Trade: Selected Papers of the 1965 North American Fur Trade Conference* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1967).

<sup>103</sup>1774-75 journal entry, J.B. Tyrrell, ed., *Journals of Samuel Hearne and Philip Turnor between the Years 1774 and 1792*, (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1934), p. 105.

themselves.<sup>104</sup> The Hudson Bay trading captain system and its corollary in other trades, whereby military uniforms were given to Indian headmen, was initially established on the premise that rank could be created within the leveled social organization of Indian bands.<sup>105</sup> Traders and observers emphasized not only clothing, but ornaments, jewelry, and a large list of other commodities, in the conviction that Indians were transformed in some measure by these goods' exchange.

Meanwhile, reports of these commodities share bias in the prejudices, and sometimes the social criticisms of their writers, as descriptions of the liquor trade suggest. Mancall's recent study on the Indian liquor trade addresses some of the key questions of production, quantities and effects of alcohol, and the difficulties historians encounter when they use textual descriptions of this particular trade.<sup>106</sup> Descriptions of the alcohol trade could quickly diverge from neutral reportage and become subjective text that arguably betrayed a great deal about colonists and the hopes they invested in their relations with Indians. Similar to the often inflated reports of the gun trade in early colonial history, the report of alcohol trading often became shaded by the European's own fears of Indian uprisings and violence.<sup>107</sup> It was no coincidence that military officers who closely observed Indian alliances were the ones who wrote voluminous reports on the liquor trade, revealing the new political uncertainties of the early eighteenth century. In vividly recorded moments, alcohol transformed the Indian into a violent adversary. In its

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<sup>104</sup>There was, of course, the tradition in mercantilism to place emphasis upon the conquest of one nation over the other in clothing, as an early English writer feared in *La Mode de France*, which had conquered English fashions in the mid 17th century: "'Tis not a triviall Remark ... that when a Nation is able to impose, and give laws to the habit of another, (as the late Tartars in China) it has (like that of language) prov'd a Fore-runner of the Spreading of their Conquests there...." see *Tyrannus or the Mode: In a Discourse of Sumptuary Lawes* (London; G. Bedel, 1661, reprinted by Early English Books Microfilm Series, 1641-1700), p. i.

<sup>105</sup>Although few fur traders reported any real success in such social engineering, see their reports in James Parker, *Emporium of the North: Fort Chipewyan and the Fur Trade to 1835* (Edmonton: Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism/ Canadian Plains Research Center, 1987), pp. 89-91; on the trading captain system, see Toby Morantz and Daniel Francis, *Partners in furs : a history of the fur trade in eastern James Bay, 1600-1870* (Kingston, Ont. : McGill-Queen's University Press, 1983); and a close study of the captain system appears in Toby Morantz, *An ethnohistoric study of eastern James Bay Cree social organization, 1700-1850*, Canadian Ethnology Service, Mercury series, No. 88 (Ottawa : National Museums of Canada, 1983).

<sup>106</sup>Peter C. Mancall, *Deadly Medicine: Indians and Alcohol in Early America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995): 11-28.

<sup>107</sup>Brian J. Given, *A Most Pernicious Thing: Gun Trading and Native Warfare in the Early Contact Period* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1994), pp. 111-117.

exchange, this trading good momentarily and unexpectedly unraveled an alliance and left the military officer inland exposed to treacherous and insane duplicity.<sup>108</sup>

The description of the liquor trade could certainly give an author license to pursue his criticism of merchant avarice, and the problems he saw arising in the colonial setting. The trade lent itself to an author's criticism of commercializing society at home, as John Lawson's narrative suggests. Having earlier described the Indians, "them of English dress" in the Carolinas, Lawson's narrative<sup>109</sup> went on to describe the rum trade, which in fact speaks more of the instability of trade relations than occupying voluminous correspondence written to and from the Lords Commissioners of Trade and Plantations and the ethics of his own commercial society at home. Dedicated to describing America, "in her Natural Dress, and therefore less vitiated with Fraud and Luxury," Lawson's narrative is most concerned about the effects of travellers to America, persons "of the Meaner Sort ... hir'd by the Merchants, to trade amongst the Indians." With this generalization clearly established, he takes up Charleston's merchant class, which by then held an almost supreme rule over colonial society (they being "absolute Masters over the Indians"), and therefore possibly making an allusion to a similarly growing power among merchants at home. Almost completely shrouded in cryptic witticisms, the narrative contains both detailed description interlaced with particularly evocative and likely fictitious asides which speak to such commercial concerns. Lawson describes, for instance, Indians building a large canoe to go across the ocean and visit England directly to trade their furs. At first glance, Lawson might appear to be ridiculing the "Indian merchants" who wished to bypass the high prices offered by the English traders to go directly to English merchants. Rather than succeeding, the Indians' canoe capsized during a storm and most of the Indians' best men were either drowned or picked up by a passing ship and enslaved. But from another reading the story seems to be intentionally ironic, whereby naïve Indians believe that England was "inhabited with a better sort of People than those sent amongst them," who would give them a just value for their peltry.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup>NAC. See officer's report, *Relation d'un voyage interressans au Canada*, 1753, who pointed out that eau-de-vie supplied by the English had excited many Indians into murder and other mayhem. He claimed that it was the sin of avarice which "introduces all the drunkenness and all the unhappiness that accompanies it," and without that "unhappy passion, there would be peace and tranquility" among the Indians. Even Montreal streets were given over to the "hideous spectacle" of Indians drinking, despite the work of the missionaries; the most cold-hearted still traded the brandy despite the judgement of the magistrate and the disapproval of God. Archives de la marine, service hydrographique, Série 3JJ, Reel F-651. ff. 746-775.

<sup>109</sup>John Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina* (London: 1709), March of America Facsimile Series.

<sup>110</sup>"They believ'd it could not be far thither (England), esteeming the English that were among them, no better than Cheats, and thought, if they could carry the Skins and Furs they got, themselves to England,

The narrative's ironic slant is then extended to a discussion of Indians trading alcohol by a "mouthful measure," accepted as true by some scholars,<sup>111</sup> but which is likely fanciful, intentionally included, again, to throw contempt not upon this Indian trading institution, but the disorderly English system of weights and measures.<sup>112</sup> Lawson states that Indians inland would choose a headman with the largest mouth to trade on their account, whereby he is carefully watched to see if he swallows any during the trade. If caught giving "false" measure, the Indian is struck to the ground and another "mouthpiece" is chosen. Lawson's irony falls upon his audience, who would laugh at Indians trusting an appointed headman -- and any such system of weights and measures -- whereby the trader would undoubtedly swallow more than he passes on to those trusting his trading ethics.

The description of the liquor trade, then, could stray from neutral reportage. What, if any, should be accepted of the "mouthful measure" becomes a difficult task of reading a trading text. Moreover, given the ways that trade, in its ideal eighteenth century conception, should prompt Indians to civil ends, the liquor trade often found a new manner of description that presents its own problems for the historian. If Daniel Denton, then, used the rum trade in the seventeenth century, to show Indians being providentially cleared off the lands valued by English newcomers,<sup>113</sup> the eighteenth century writer tended to see civil virtues arising from the exchange of alcohol. It might be remembered that traders, and Colbert himself, had traditionally responded to the clerical charge that liquor waylaid the neophyte from a Christian life, by arguing on the contrary that it attracted Indians to the French, and eventually Roman Catholicism. The eighteenth century trade promoter drew to light far more virtues in the liquor trade, often by suggesting that a ready supply of alcohol could spark industry in Indians who would bring more furs to exchange for this greatly desired commodity. Thus, while the Tonti narrative laid stress upon Frenchmen accompanying La Salle not being "stingy" in the

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which were inhabited with a better sort of people than those sent amongst them, that then they should purchase twenty times the value for every Pelt they sold abroad, in consideration of what later they sold for at home." John Lawson, pp. 11-12.

<sup>111</sup>Mancall, pp. 58-59.

<sup>112</sup>See Chapter Five, following.

<sup>113</sup>The promotional pamphlet to draw English settlers to the newly claimed territory of New York, placed the liquor trade into his larger picture of a "providential" decline of Amerindian populations that welcomed settlers. The lethal effect of European rum conveniently cleared space for Europeans to colonize, and Denton's description of the liquor trade showed Indians helpfully killing themselves or each other through systematic drunken ceremonies, Daniel Denton, *A Brief Description of New-York*, (1670) Ann Arbor : University Microfilms International, 1972, English Books, 1641-1700, pp. 1-10.

brandy they gave as gifts to Indians, effecting social concourse and closer relations, others showed alcohol extending Indian needs. The main promoters of the Indian Trade in New York, where liquor flowed prodigiously, reported that liquor was a necessary commodity to spur on industry among Indians, who were otherwise slothful;<sup>114</sup> William Johnson admitted its necessity to excite "industry" and sought to restrict its use only after other trades had finished.<sup>115</sup> Hudson Bay writers also argued the virtues of liquor as a means of increasing production, that Indians bringing inelastic demands for other goods were prompted to hunt more diligently to trade for rum; by placing high prices on liquor as a commodity, Indians were also diverted to trapping the most valuable furs.<sup>116</sup>

For this reason, the demand side of the alcohol trade in the seventeenth century, whereby the commodity itself lowered production on the Indian's part, was thoroughly reversed in the eighteenth. While previous writers believed that alcohol ruined Indian morale, and hunting abilities, and that it brought about social upheavals ultimately ruining the European trade (and the supply of furs), the French governor of Guyana, M. Fidemont, by 1767 could write a memoir thoroughly dismissing such charges. His request for Indian trade goods boldly asserted new understandings of consumer behaviour. He dismissed the ancient notion of "oeconomy" and noted instead that "trifles" (*baguettes*) and similar "trading merchandise superior to ours" were drawing Indians to a rival colony. He sent a list of goods to the marine ministry that could move Indians to the French interest: the "Shirts of common fabric," "fabrics painted with large floral designs and bright colours;" hatchets of "good quality," beads (*rassade*); and the large hats of "false" gold and silver that were once destined for the Canadian Indians (now lost by the Conquest). But, most of all, he highlighted the importance of alcohol, a commodity "which pleases more particularly the Indians." Fiedmont proposed that liquor (*boissons*) not only created a fortuitous addiction (*accoutumer*) among Indian consumers, but in its larger dispensation, increased needs among Indians (*qui multiplient leurs besoins*), and

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<sup>114</sup>Indians, the Albany traders reported through Colden, traded for their necessities and had no reason to trade more without liquor available: "the vent of liquors ... suprus them on to an unwearied application in hunting...." Cadwallader Colden to Lords of Trade, 9 March 1764, *NYCD* 7: p. 613.

<sup>115</sup>He believed Indians would bring only half the furs they presently did, to purchase clothing etc. They also had an "extreme desire" for it. William Johnson, "Sentiments, Remarks, Etc, ..." *NYCD* 7: 665.

<sup>116</sup>HBC. "To prevent the natives from hurting themselves with brandy and strong waters; we at none of the settlements exchanges that commodity for any furs but the following viz. martines, cats, foxes, colours, wolves, and bears.... If the native were to receive brandy for whatever kind of fur, etc., they bring down, they would trade little or nothing else which would end in their ruin, and the company's affairs. Please to observe keeping up spiritous to the above value makes the natives trap valuable furs...." f. 70, Andrew Graham, "Observations on Hudson's Bay, 1771," E.2/7, Reel 4M2.

by implication joined them and their labour more closely to the French interest. He cited the example of French plates and ceramic wares that already served such a purpose.<sup>117</sup>

### III.

As anthropologists have consistently argued, goods usually have symbolic meaning within human society.<sup>118</sup> It is to be expected that writers could, and did, choose to describe trade goods, and especially manufactured wares, to strengthen the underlying argument shaping a memoir, letter, or published narrative. It would be almost impossible to find a coherent single message communicated by writers who left lists of the commodities traded to Indians. However, it is possible to suggest that in the eighteenth century, trade goods were characterized more frequently as *biens*, whereby they served the same function as the good works of missionaries. Quite literally, the missionary's *biens* converted barbarians beyond Christendom through the good example they provided.

From this perspective, reports of goods were likely not corresponding to what were older and, by then, quite defunct sumptuary discourses in the trade with Indians.<sup>119</sup> Goods once fitting categorically into sumptuary laws to maintain social hierarchies and sexual divisions were not replaced with similar lists reporting the Indian trade.<sup>120</sup> While luxury still concerned contemporaries, and continued to animate debate in both England and France until the nineteenth century, sumptuary discourses had already changed by the seventeenth century, switching from moral to economic regulation, and becoming predominantly protectionist in intent. The same holds true in American sumptuary legislation.<sup>121</sup> It should not be surprising, then, that correspondents from

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<sup>117</sup>AOM. "Ce qui flatte le plus particulièrement les Indiens est la boisson que l'on épargne trop ici à laquelle cependant il ne serait pas mal de les accoutumer ainsi qu'à l'usage de toutes les choses d'une grande consommation qui multiplient leurs besoins les mettent dans le cas de ne se pouvoir se passer de nous." M. de Fiedmont to Minister, 11 March 1767, F/3/95 f. 85.

<sup>118</sup>Douglas and Isherwood, *The World of Goods: Towards and Anthropology of Consumption*, pp. 36-47.

<sup>119</sup>Alan Hunt, *Governance of the Consuming Passions: A History of Sumptuary Law* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996).

<sup>120</sup>"The richest and most sumptuous Apparell be of Velvet, Sattin, Taffaty, and other stuffs of silke onely without any enriching or adorning, save two gards of embroidery of silke, or two laces, which laces or gards of Embrodery shall not be larger than the breadth of one finger, nor to be used upon mens clothes, save onely about the capes, and round about the bottome of their cloakes, downe the sides and about the knees of their breeches... *Lettres Patentes de Déclaration du Roy, pour la Réformation du luxe des habits et Règlement d'iceux*, trans. and published in London: Henry Scile, 1634, referenced in Donald Goddard Wing, ed., *Short-Title Catalogue of Early English Books* (Ann Arbor, 1994), 16848, pp. 3-4.

<sup>121</sup>October 1717, An Act in Addition to an Act Concerning Free Trade, *Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut, from May 1717 to October 1725* (Hartford: Case, Lockwood and Brainard, 1872), p. 23.

America did not describe goods disrupting Indian social hierarchies, if they were believed to exist at all, or that European goods would make Indian consumers upstarts with their European counterparts.

However, a more obvious literary tradition continued to have resonance, and perhaps found amplification, in eighteenth century descriptions of the trade, whereby writers intended to cite the benefits, or *biens*, of goods in the Indian trade. Similar in the ways that from the beginnings of colonization,<sup>122</sup> trade goods were believed to carry pestilence,<sup>123</sup> and that infectious diseases could be wreaked upon Amerindian populations through a few blankets and handkerchiefs, so could the trade good become a positive agent in an Indian's social development.<sup>124</sup>

This tradition can be seen shaping reports of apotheoses occurring in America, when writers suggested that Indians confused Europeans as Gods at first contact, often after viewing these newcomer's technology and merchandise. Scholars tend to explain narrative reports of apotheoses in two ways, that either the European misunderstood the Amerindians' gift-giving practices and believed their gifts constituted religious or quasi-religious sacrifices; or, that the European misunderstood Indian beliefs in *manitou* spirit, which was believed to infuse all living and non-living matter. In the latter case, the Indian's admiration of such a spirit in useful and beautiful objects was confused in the European understanding of an omnipotent God.<sup>125</sup> A closer analysis suggests that such reports changed between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in

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<sup>122</sup>See Thomas Budd's comment: "They were told, that we sold them the Small-Pox, with the Mach Coat they had bought of us...." *Good Order Established in Pennsylvania and New-Jersey* (Philadelphia, 1685) *Jersey* (1685), March of America Facsimile Series, No. 32.

<sup>123</sup>See the 1721 Act in Connecticut makes clear, establishing heavy fines for peddlars, petty chapmen and other "evil minded persons (who) have carried goods from town to town, and have vended them in many places of this colony, to the great hazard of his Majesties good subjects." October 1721, An Act for the Preventing the Small Pox being Spread in this Colony, *Ibid.*, pp. 276-277.

<sup>124</sup>The albeit atypical case of Jeffrey Amherst, is worth highlighting, when he distributed among Pennsylvanian Indians items from a small pox hospital during the Pontiac War. My thanks to Barry Gough for drawing to my attention this incident's record in the Amherst papers. James Axtel, *The European and the Indian: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) p. 314; Bernhard Knollenberg, "General Amherst and Germ Warfare," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 41(3) December 1954: 489-94; 762-763; In Donald H. Kent's addendum to Knollenberg's article, he points to *Papers of Col. Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21654, folio 168 pp. 218-219. Account of Levy, Trent and Co. against Crown for June 1763: "To sundries got to replace in kind those which were taken from people in the hospital to convey the small-pox to the Indians. 2 blankets, 1 silk handkerchief, and 1 linen handkerchief. finally endorsed by Thomas Gage."

<sup>125</sup>On this, see, William M. Hamlin, "Imagined Apotheoses: Drake, Harriot, and Raleigh in the Americas," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 57(3) July 1996: pp. 405-428; from the Amerindian' perspective, see James Axtel, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 10-19.

respect to a key element within them: the role of goods taking Indians to a moment of epiphany. In many respects, the shift occurred as goods changed from being passive, to active, agents of such conversion.

Traditionally, European newcomers in America invested little power in trade goods to effect evangelicalism among Indians. This is the case with Hariot, the inclusion of whose account in Haklyut's *America* is noted above. The more prominent case of apotheoses in Hariot's writing was, however, first published in his *A Briefe and True Report of the new found land of Virginia* (1588), and it is this example which will be analyzed here. The author witnessed Indians at Roanoke won over to the English through their material goods, particularly the European navigational instruments and time pieces. Whether it was Hariot's own interests as a mathematician, man of science, or possible atheist, that came to bear on the description is not clear, but it nevertheless becomes a text worth repeating in entirety. He states:

Most things they sawe with us, as mathematicall instruments, sea compasses, the vertue of the loadstone in drawing yron, a perspective glasse whereby was shewed manie strange sightes, burning glasses, wildfire woorkes, gunnes, bookes, writing and reading, spring clocks that seeme to goe of themselves, and manie other thinges that wee had, were so straunge unto them, and so farre exceeded their capacities to comprehend the reason and meanes how they should be made and done, that they thought they were rather the works of gods then of men, or at the leastwise they had bin given and taught us of the gods. Which made manie of them to have such opinion of us, as that if they knew not the trueth of god and religion already, it was rather to be had from us, whom God so specially loved then from a people that were so simple, as they found themselves to be in comparison of us. Whereupon greater credite was given unto that we spake of concerning such matters.<sup>126</sup>

Greenblatt's explanation of this extraordinary account has been addressed earlier. It is, however, interesting to note an interesting feature of the text. For all the novelty that the instruments and mechanical devices present to Indians, they actually prompt little belief among the Indians that the English were gods. Hariot, then, did not represent apotheosis taking place because of the material goods the English carried. Rather, the goods so impressed Indians that they accorded more "credite" to the

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<sup>126</sup> Thomas Hariot, "A Brief and True Report," 1588, *The Roanoke Voyages*, David Beers Quinn, ed., Vol. I, Second Series, No. CIV (London: Hakluyt Society, 1955), pp. 375-376.



European's evangelical message. As Hariot stated, such goods were believed to be “the works of gods then of men, or at the leastwise they had bin given and taught us of the gods.” The actual agent which prompts the Christian epiphany, then, is not found in the material good. Moreover, nowhere does Hariot suggest that goods effect the social order of European government that he believes would benefit the Indians; it would be Europeans themselves who evangelize, and, through fear of their God, Indians would find a civil society.

The same holds true in other seventeenth century accounts of apotheoses. Pierre Esprit Radisson described an apotheosis of sorts occurring among Indians to the northwest of the Great Lakes. He stated that he and his companions struck agreeable relations with these Indians, who, after receiving gifts from the trader, held him in esteem: “we weare demi-gods,” he wrote. But this esteem, if it did take Indians to an epiphany, was based upon Radisson's generosity, not European manufactures. It is beneficence that makes Radisson and his Indian companions appear as “Demi-gods.” Beneficence recurs in the narrative and becomes related to the vision of courtly society that Warkentin believes shapes the piece.<sup>127</sup> Radisson, then, describes the significance of his *gift-giving*, not the gifts themselves, and argues that it was really the sheer size of presents he lavished on Indians that made the greatest impression. Generosity yielded respect, he reported: “Amongst such a rowish kind of people a guift is much, and well bestowed, and liberality much esteemed; but not prodigalitie is not in esteeme, for they abuse it, being brutish.”<sup>128</sup>

The trade good, meanwhile, could also strike awe or respect among Indians. Radisson, for instance, describes meeting with Nadoneseronons Indians, enemies of the Cree, who “came in great pompe, as you shall heare. First they come to make a

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<sup>127</sup> Germaine Warkentin, “Discovering Radisson: A Renaissance Adventurer Between Two Worlds,” Jennifer S.H. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert, *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History*, (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1996), pp. 43-73; another impressive analysis of the text's veracity is offered by M. William Wykoff, “The Land of the Eries in 1653: An Analysis of Radisson's Captivity Voyage,” *Terrae Incognitae*, Vol. XXVII 1995, pp. 15-45.

<sup>128</sup> The description is as follows: “We destined 3 presents, one for the men, one for the women, and the other for the children, to the end that they should remember that journey; the we should be spoaken of a hundred years after, if other Europeans should not come in those quarters and be liberal to them, which will hardly come to pass.” They proceded to describute a kettle two hatchets, six knives and a sword blade in the first gift; 22 awls, 50 needles, 2 “gratters of castors” (to dress beaver skins), 2 ivory and two wooden combs, “with red paint,” 6 tin looking glasses (mirrors); the third gift beoing “brass rings, of small bells, and rasades [beads] of divers colours....” The last gift was given to the children, so that they would understand “that they should be allwayes under our protection, given them wherewithall to make them merry and remember us when they should be men.” Gideon D. Scull, ed., *The Voyages of Peter Esprit Radisson* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1967), pp. 199-200.

sacrifice to the french, being Gods and masters of all things, as of peace, as warrs; making the knives, the hattchetts, and ye kettles rattle, etc.”<sup>129</sup> But the reported apotheosis is really quite similar to Hariot's: the European goods bring about respect for the European. Radisson, then, reports the deliberate use of merchandise to “putt the men in such a terror that they knewed not what was best to run or stay.” He and his Indian companions fired off their guns, brandished their swords and threw gunpowder into the fire “to make a greater noise and smoake.”<sup>130</sup> Trade goods, then, could serve to bring respect to the European, often to demonstrate supreme military power and that God almighty was with them. The seventeenth century Swedish traders described their use of goods in such a way, to raise esteem among Indians, and, by doing so, convince them of the greater certainty of the Christian message. In the 1640s, Printz in New Sweden is reported to have shown the Christian God, “as superior to their own as the guns and cannon of the Christians were superior to the bow and arrow of the Indians.”<sup>131</sup>

Meanwhile, trade goods had little role to play in the actual apotheosis in seventeenth century writings. Drake's encounter with Indians on the American west coast,<sup>132</sup> certainly, disavowed such a proposition. An extremely complex text, Drake's narrative is evidently shaped by his intended courtly audience. He uses numerous means to show the virtues of his adventure into this, claimed Spanish territory. The examples he shows of equitable trade established between his men and the Amerindians becomes one means of showing such virtue. The example of Indians along what was likely the coast of California, “entring into traffique with our men,” served Drake's purposes to show an amity the commander maintained with the people there, to the point of upholding their rights to barter. “Notwithstanding they would receive nothing at our hands, but the same must be first cast upon the ground, using this word, *Zussus*, for exchange, *Toytt*, to cast upon the ground. And if they mislike anything they cryed, *Coroh, Coroh*, speaking the same with ratling in the throat. The wares we received from them were arrows of reeds, feathers, and such bones as afore described.”<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>129</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 213.

<sup>130</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 215.

<sup>131</sup>Quoted in Amandus Johnson, *The Swedish Settlements on the Delaware, 1638-1664* (Baltimore: Geneological Publishing Co., 1962) p. 379.

<sup>132</sup>An overview of the 1577-80 voyage is recounted by Derek Wilson, *The World Encompassed: Drake's Great Voyage: 1577-1580* (London: Allison & Busby, 1998).

<sup>133</sup>W.S.W. Vaux, ed., *The World Encompassed by Sir Francis Drake, Being his next voyage to that to nombre de dios*, First Series, No. XVI, (London: Hakluyt Society), p. 52.

The virtuous elements of Drake's voyage are thereafter emphasized in its more northerly beach landing, where the crew encounters Indians who apparently had no previous contact with Europeans. Drake became anxious to return the gifts given him by a native chief, eventually tossing a hat into the elder's hands, whereupon the man was left "wondring at us as at gods...."<sup>134</sup> But Drake does not explicitly suggest that apotheosis occurred with the exchange of material goods. Rather, the Indians seemed to have been in awe of the Europeans by the time they landed to make repairs to their boat. It was "the sight of such things as they had seene or heard of before that time: their errand being rather with submission and feare to worship us as Gods, then to have any warre with us as with mortall men." Indeed, Drake seems to construct his narrative in such a way as to suggest that he had used trade goods to correct the Indian's misplaced reverence. He "used all meanes possible to intreate them, bestowing upon each of them liberally good and necessary things to cover their nakednesse; withall signifying unto them we were no Gods, but men, and had neede of such things to cover our owne shame; teaching them to use them to the same ends, for which cause wee did eate and drinke in their presence, giving them to understand that without that wee could not live, and therefore were but men as well as they. Nothwithstanding nothing could perswade them, nor remouue that opinion which they had conceived of us, that wee should be Gods."<sup>135</sup>

If such discussion turns to later periods of the century, however, it can be suggested that apotheoses occur more directly because of the European trade goods passing hands. By this moment the trade is conceived as softening Indian manners, undoubtedly contributing to the conception of *civilization* arising in the eighteenth century. Civility, not fear, is effected through trade goods. Certainly, the European continued to revive an older use of trade goods, usually with fire arms, to win the awe and respect of Indians.<sup>136</sup> But the eighteenth century correspondent now looked to some measure of civil improvement, in manners, in the softening of *moeurs*, as we have seen, in savage hearts through trade goods. As noted in Chapter One, both the Tonti and La Potherie narrative saw trade goods potentially taming (*apprivoiser*) the Indians in America. This was arguably a departure in text, where trade promoters had begun to argue that the very sophistication of European wares could bring about the softening

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<sup>134</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>135</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 120-121.

<sup>136</sup>See examples of Europeans using firearms to inspire awe in Indians, Alexander Ross, *The Fur Hunters of the Far West: A Narrative of Adventures in the Oregon and Rocky Mountains*, Vol. I (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1855), p. 4.

manners and some of the civility that was earlier to be achieved only after Christian conversion. It was precisely this radical new means of achieving *civilité* that appears in the writings of Lamothe Cadillac, who, as noted, argued that trade goods could establish features of a civil society, after which the Indian could convert to Christianity. In this new era, then, trade goods themselves could take Indians to an epiphany, and their acquisition among Indians lead to the softening of manners, and eventually their "civilization" according to the term's eighteenth century understanding as social improvement.<sup>137</sup>

This matter can be highlighted in descriptions of trade goods appearing in three narratives. The first is the unpublished narrative of Nicholas Perrot,<sup>138</sup> the trader of the Great Lakes region who, in retirement, wrote a memoir for the Canadian intendant, probably completed by 1718, but available in fragment form soon after the turn of the century. Within the marine ministry, copies of the memoir circulated to later published writers, notably Charlevoix,<sup>139</sup> but, more immediately, Claude-Charles Le Roy, Bacqueville de la Potherie. The second is taken from La Potherie's text (written by 1702,<sup>140</sup> published in 1716,<sup>141</sup> 1721, 1722, and 1755), which undoubtedly reflects the influence of the Perrot document<sup>142</sup> and the interviews he claimed to have had with "many Voyageurs in those countries." So extensive was this plagiarism that Blair, providing an early translation of these two texts, believed that to reproduce the first seven chapters of the La Potherie narrative would be a "useless repetition" of Perrot's document.<sup>143</sup> The third narrative was written by Claude Le Beau (1738);<sup>144</sup> little is

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<sup>137</sup>On the eighteenth century transformation of *civilité* to *civilization*, see Norbert Elias, *The History of Manners, The Civilizing Process: Vol. I* trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), pp. 35-50; See, also, George W. Stocking, Jr., *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 10-19.

<sup>138</sup>Nicolas Perrot, *Mémoire sur les Moeurs, Coustumes et Relligion des Sauvages de l'Amérique Septentrionale*, J. Tailhan, ed., (Paris: 1864, reprinted in Yorkshire, by S.R. Publishers Ltd., 1968).

<sup>139</sup>See introductory comments provided by Tailhan and Blair in Emma Helen Blair, ed., *The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley and Region of the Great Lakes*, (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Co. 1911), pp.15-17; 29.

<sup>140</sup>See, for instance, the censor's permission appearing at the conclusion of Book IV in the 1723 Amsterdam edition, dated 5 June 1702. See editorial notes by Robert Le Blant, *Histoire de la Nouvelle France: Tome I: Les Sources Narratives du début du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: P. Pradeau, 1936), pp. 79-80; also, Séraphin Marion, *Relations des voyageurs français en Nouvelle-France au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Les Presses Universitaires de France, 1923), p. 97.

<sup>141</sup>Blair notes this edition, but I have not been able to refer to it for analysis.

<sup>142</sup>I will use for these purposes the 1753 edition of Claude le Roy, Bacqueville de la Potherie, *Histoire de l'Amérique septentrionale* (Paris: 1753), and have compared this identical passage with the 1722 edition.

<sup>143</sup>See Blair's editorial comment, Emma Helen Blair, *The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley and Region of the Great Lakes*, (Cleveland, Ohio: Arthur H. Clark, 1911), p. 275.

known about the author except that he came from an influential family, if not of the Blood, who enjoyed a place as lawyer in the prestigious Paris parliament before his family brought charges against him as a libertine. Convicted, he was briefly imprisoned and later deported with others who had committed the same offense, to Quebec to serve their sentences. Procuring work in a merchant house, he shortly afterwards absconded with goods which he used to purchase his passage from Quebec to New York and finally to his asylum in Amsterdam, where he wrote his narrative on the Indians of North America.<sup>145</sup> Both contemporaries and historians have recognized Le Beau's plagiarism of Lahontan, Lafitau, and, significantly, La Potherie.<sup>146</sup> The second and third narratives, then, have a common thread of reportage that trails, in some manner, back to Perrot. Also, all three maintain a perspective based upon personal experience, and, in their successive elaboration of the Perrot text, reveal their views of trade goods passing hands in America, taken from their works in the following way:

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<sup>144</sup> *Aventures du Sr. C. Le Beau, avocat en parlement ou voyage curieux et nouveau parmi les sauvages de l'Amérique Septentrionale* (Amsterdam, 1738, reprinted in Yorkshire, by S.R. Publishers Ltd., 1966), Vol. I, pp. 86-87.

<sup>145</sup> Bibliographic research on Le Beau and reprinted documents referring to him in Canada are provided by J-Edmond Roy, "Des Fils de Famille envoyés au Canada - Claude Le Bleu, *Proceedings and Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada* Second Ser. Vol. VII, 1901 (Ottawa: Copp-Clark, 1901) pp. 7-33; see, also, Étienne Taillemite, Claude Lebeau, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol II, 1701-1740 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), pp. 373-374.

<sup>146</sup> Roy included the damning 1738 review of the narrative, Roy, p. 29-30; and cites the plagiarism, p. 31.

<i>Perrot</i>	<i>La Potherie</i>	<i>Le Beau</i>
<p>Les Scioux, qui n'avoient aucune connoissance des armes à feu et autres instruments qu'ils (the Ottawa Indians) leurs voyoient, ne se servans quae de cousteaux de pierre de moulange, de haches et de cailloux, espérèrent que ces nations nouvelles qui s'estoient approchées d'eux leur feroient part des commoditez qu'ils avoient; et, croyans qu'ils estoient des esprits, parce qu'ils avoient l'usage de ce fer qui n'avoit pas de rapport avec tout ce qu'ils avoient, comme les pierres et autres choses, ainsy que je l'ay dit, ils les emmenèrent à leurs villages, et puis les rendirent à leurs gens. p. 85.</p> <p>... [All these villages sent deputies to the Ottawa,] "pour leur marquer la joye sensible qu'ils avoient de les avoir trouvé, et les exhorter d'avoir pitié d'eux, en leur faisant part de ce fer qu'ils regardoient comme une divinité", p 86.</p> <p>The Ottawa, again: Ils leur donnèrent aussy une bagetelle, soit cousteaux ou alaisnes, que les Scioux témoignèrent estimer beaucoup, levant les yeux au ciel et le bénissant d'avoir conduit ces nations dans leur pays, qui estoient en estat de leur procurer de si puissants moyens pour faire cesser leur misère. Les Outaoïas qui avoient quelques fusils les tirèrent, et le bruit qu'ils firent les épouvanta tellement, qu'ils s'imaginèrent que c'estoit la foudre ou le tonnerre, dont ils estoient maistres pour exterminer ceux qu'ils vouloient. p. 86.</p>	<p>Les sauvages les prenoient souvent pour des esprits et pour des dieux.... Vol. II: p. 87.</p> <p>... on le prit un jour chez les Pouteouatemis pour un Dieu. .... On leur avoit dépeint le François tout velu (les Sauvages n'ont point de barbe) ils croyoient que nous étions d'une espèce différente de celle des autres hommes, ils furent étonnez de voir qu'ils étoient faits comme eux, ils les regardèrent comme un présent que le Ciel et les esprits leur avoient fait, d'avoir permis qu'un de leur semblable entra dans leur païs. Vol. II: p.87-88.</p> <p>Ils l'adoroient comme un Dieu, ils prenoient de ses cousteaux et de ses haches, qu'ils encensoient avec leur bouche de la fumée du tabac.... Vol. II: 89.</p>	<p>On leur échange pour des armes, de la <u>poudre, des balles, des Capots</u> à la Canadienne, <u>des Habits à la François</u> <u>chamarrés de Dentelles ou d'or faux, qui leur donnent une figure tout à fait grotesque</u>, par rapport à leurs Mitasses qui sont des pièces de drap ou de Mazamet dont ils font leur chaussure ordinaire, faute desquels ils vont toujours nus jambes, ne portant d'ailleurs jamais de culottes. Il y en a aussi, qui par fantaisie achètent des chapeaux bordés d'un large galon d'or ou d'argent faux, qui étant posés sur leur chevelure crasseuse, nouée d'un côté et teinte de l'autre, leur donnent un air tout à fait hideux.</p> <p>On diroit à les voir alors, que ce sont des diables et <u>la ville un enfer</u>, parce que ces barbares qui marchent sans cesse par les ruës, <u>se mattachent le corps et le visage plus que jamais, crovant par là se mettre sur leur propre</u>. D'un autre côté <u>les hûllemens, le tintamarre, les querelles &amp; les dissensions qui surviennent entre ces différentes Nations sauvage &amp; nos Iorquois, augmntent encore l'hor'eur de ces spectacles; car quelque précaution qu'on prenne pour emplcher ls Marchands de leur donner de l'eau-de-vie, il y en a toujours quantité qui son ivres-morts</u>; d'autres qui 'a demi-ivres tu]ent leur aversaires là qui ils en veulent, se tûent eux-mêmes avec lur couteau; ce qui arrive rarement 'a la verit'e, mais n'eanmoins quelquefois, tant ils sont foux et furieux dans la boisson. I:87-88</p>

<p>Les Outaoüas partirent sur ces nouvelles pour aller au nord, chercher à commercer avec ces nations [the Nipissing], qui leurs onnèrent toutes leurs robes de castor pour des vieux cousteaux, de vieilles alaisnes, de mauvais retz et des chaudières usées et hors de service. Ils en furent de plus très-humblement remercie. p. 93.</p>	<p>Perrot n'avoit garde de recevoir toutes ces adorations. Il s'outint à la vérité ces honneurs jusqu'au point où la Religion n'étoit point interessé. Il leur dit qu'il n'étoit pas ce qu'ils pensoient, qu'il étoit seulement François. Que le veritable Esprit qui avoit tout fait avoit donne aux François la connoissance du fer et la faculté de le manier comme de la pâte. Que voulant avoir pitié de ses creatures il avoit permis que la Nation Française se fut établie dans leur païs pour les retirer de l'aveuglement où ils étoient. Qu'ils ne connoissoient pas le véritable Dieu auteur de la Nature, que les François adorent, et que lorsqu'ils auroient fait amitié avec eux ils en recevoient tous les secours possibles; qu'il étoit venu pour leur en faciliter la connoissance par la découverte qu'il faisoit des Nations. Et comme le Castor est estimé des François, il vouloit voir s'il n'y auroit pas moyen d'en faire le Commerce. Vol. II, p. 89-90.</p>	<p>On leur échange aussi pour leurs pelleteries <u>du vermillon, des chaudières, des marmites de fer et de cuivre et en un mot toutes sortes de quinquailleries.</u> I:88</p>
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The excerpts reveal ways in which Europeans viewed goods, by the eighteenth century, as effecting a positive moral influence among Amerindians. To begin with Perrot's description, trade humanism appears where trade goods were invested with a new significance in their circulation among Amerindians, particularly in the way that apotheosis occurs with trade goods themselves. Perrot most interestingly shows goods being handled, and revered, as religious objects. It is worthwhile to point out that it is the Ottawa and Huron middlemen, not Frenchmen, who introduce such goods to the interior nations, in this case to the Sioux. Perrot, providing the political movements following the fall of Huronia, saw the circulation of such goods as key to historical change. But it is interesting that in Perrot's memoir, such goods do not take Indians towards Christian enlightenment, but, rather, to the extremely harsh bargaining and the contempt of Indian middlemen. Like trade promoters of his century, Perrot showed these Indians having imposing physical *needs* for such goods.

La Potherie, however, recasts the key moments in New France history. His narrative, although fully plagiarizing Perrot's ethnological descriptions, circumvents the historical events of earlier expansion of Ottawa and Huron middleman, and places far

more emphasis upon the French movements inland. In this, he transfers the moment of apotheosis to the period of expanded French trade inland. Moreover, he evidently conflates Perrot's description of apotheosis considerably. Rather than describing the Ottawa's encounter with the Sioux, he describes the Frenchman's encounter with the far Indians to the southwest of the Great Lakes. He makes these Frenchmen, not Ottawa middlemen, confused as Gods. The difference is more striking when it is pointed out that while Perrot's memoir ends in the 1690s, Perrot himself did not describe the same events, a curious omission considering the drama attending such an exchange of goods he had supposedly personally witnessed. Possibly, La Potherie gathered up these details in conversations with other traders, but it is more conceivable that his retelling of events has strategic intent, and possibly involves conflation. La Potherie places yet more attention on the trade good itself in this narrative, where, if Perrot's gun was viewed as a spirit, La Potherie shows the Frenchman's axes and knives being incensed with smoke in an Indian religious ceremony. A final observation relates to the Indians' evident, and expansive, need for French goods. As Chapter One has pointed out, large portions of La Potherie's narrative highlight the Indian market for European goods; these descriptions show, too, the Indians' need for such wares, to the point where the Indian thanks heaven for sending them. Perrot, then, is said to use advantageously for evangelism this thankfulness, and the mistaken reverence, a point strengthened with the likely fictionalized exchange of speeches that has Indians thanking heaven for allowing Perrot to come in their midst (a direct reference to the Restriction policies of the French). Here, La Potherie assures the reader that Perrot was careful not to allow misconceptions of his deity (he was, after all, only a "Frenchman") to go long unaddressed.

Both Perrot and La Potherie, despite their differences, show the new turn to eighteenth century descriptions which highlighted the benefits of trade goods, where goods as *biens* literally lead the trader into the service of evangelism. But both accounts also show Indians benefiting from the exchange, procuring the goods they need. Perrot indeed, places emphasis upon the happiness of the far Indians to exchange prime beaver pelts to procure even the worn-out and second-hand wares peddled them by middleman Indians.

The third case shows yet another deviation in Perrot's original historical observations. Le Beau, although plagiarizing extensively from La Potherie's text, changes the effects of goods completely. The opportunity of showing apotheosis, for all its literary appeal, is curiously bypassed altogether. Rather, Le Beau's emphasis falls upon the town trade at Montreal. La Potherie had devoted attention to this institution -- and the unsavory



activities attending its prosecution -- having more interest in promoting the inland trade. But Le Beau conflates La Potherie's account considerably. Underlined portions of these excerpts show the text directly plagiarized from La Potherie. It is evident that Le Beau's conflation allows the author to argue that the Indian trade and its goods transform Indians into "devils," and Montreal, where the trade took place into a "hell." The details of the trading goods are here deliberately provided; while his predecessors highlighted utilitarian goods, Le Beau embellishes La Potherie's description of the sumptuous tradewares, particularly the hats of false gold and silver, striking up an appearance among Indians completely hideous. He conflates this aspect of La Potherie's text to show, not the virtues of an inland trade, but the insufficiencies of trade in taking Indians to their social improvement. This, again, is not a recourse to sumptuary laws; there is no hint that the trade goods encourage individuals to aspire to higher social status either among their own superiors or among Europeans. The trade good, and brandy, took the Indian further into moral turpitude. Le Beau's view of trade goods possibly relates to the larger theme of skepticism in the work, where the author frequently uses rational arguments to dissuade Indians from superstitious beliefs and ritual.

Goods being identified as *biens* in turn allowed writers to highlight what was arguably their most pressing consideration: a universal need among Indians for European wares. Most descriptions of apotheosis, in fact, suggest not so much wonder among Indians receiving European wares, as gratefulness. The goods now bartered with Indians were necessary for the Indian's existence, quickly integrated into their lifestyle, and supplanting ruder traditional wares. Trade promoters anxious to reveal needs for European wares among Indians tended, then, to reshape trading goods lists accordingly. Perrot was careful to demonstrate a beneficence in trade in his memoir,<sup>147</sup> and the French, as has been suggested, tended to view exchange as primarily gift-giving, meeting physical needs among Amerindians. The beneficence is communicated in royal epistles to Canada instructing governors to supply merchandise "propre pour les besoins des sauvages en assés abondance pour leur oter tous pretenté d'en aller chercher a chouegens."<sup>148</sup> In an age when goods became a central element of reported apotheosis, their very description changed in a key respect: once characterized as *trifles*, they now became *necessities*.

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<sup>147</sup>Ne les obligeoit-on pas à le reconnaître par des présents considérables, qui n'estoient reconnus que par des très médiocres, mesme leur faisoit-on sçavoir, en les leur faisant, que ce n'estoit que par compassion de leur misère. Perrot, p. 96.

<sup>148</sup>King's memoir to Hocquart, F/3/11, f. 222.

It is difficult, again, to clearly chart a transformation of such terminology. Different audiences looked to different characterizations of the value of goods. It is to be expected that metropolitan investors continued to search for "trifles" and "baubles" rounding out trading lists. But there is nonetheless an overall switch in word choice in the eighteenth century. La Potherie certainly never used such terms. Neither did La Salle and the Crown's memorial writers in America. Some measure of this textual change from "trifles" to "necessities" can be demonstrated in clerical correspondence, where Indians were more frequently reported as possessing physical, as well as spiritual, needs in America. La Harpe, attempting to establish a French trade to Spanish colonists, enlisted the support of Spanish missionaries for his cause which shows this transformation occurring in the 1720s. His letter was written to a Recollet padre from the Superior of the Spanish mission in Las Texas. It spoke of augmenting the missions overseen by the padre among the Assinaïis, to place the "infidels" under the cross, but it turned to a frank discussion of the need for assistance in that part of America: "Write to your friends in New Mexico, Paral and the New Kingdom of Léon that they will find among the Nassonites or among the Natchitoches all the merchandise of Europe, of which they would have need, at a reasonable price, upon which they would have undoubtedly considerable profit." This, he said, was "a sure means to open commerce, rendering service to many people who are in the necessity of merchandise and being far removed from Europe will not permit them to have such for a long time."<sup>149</sup> The key phrase were "people who had the necessity of merchandise" ("dont ils pouront avoir besoin.... qui sont dans la nécessité de marchandises...") Indeed, it is evident that with such new word choices, there is a shift in the conception of who the Indian was, and the environment he inhabited, whereby he now had numerous *needs* for trade goods. Thus, the list of trade goods for missionaries in 1704<sup>150</sup> contains such phrasing, *pour d'autres besoins aux Sauvages*, and *une multitude de petits besoins*.

This was not an isolated case of such characterization of Indian needs. It has been noted that La Salle (1681) used the phrase "et autres choses semblables dont ils ont besoin" in his memoirs aimed to have the Crown continue support for his

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<sup>149</sup>Au Révérend Père Marsillo, de l'ordre des Récollets, s.d. Margry, Vol. 6 (Paris: Jouaust et Sigaux, 1886), pp. 68-69; see, also, in the same volume, the letter of the recollet Father Sant-Iago de Rebaldo to Father Beaubois, requesting merchandise for the *besoins de ma famille*, pp. 464-465. These letters suggested to Folmer that "The Spanish priests and the governors themselves were as much engaged in this illicit trade as the tradesmen," Henri Folmer, "Contraband trade between Louisiana and New Mexico in the Eighteenth Century," *New Mexico Historical Review* Vol. 16 (3), p. 264.

<sup>150</sup>ASQ. Lettre et Memoire generals des marchandises, Lettres R, No. 77 and 78.

explorations.<sup>151</sup> La Salle's adventure had been floated with Canadian and metropolitan loans; the memoirs he sent back to the marine ministry were detailed in ethnology as well as in the amount of truck he was giving away as he bought his passage through the Illinois, then the Arkansas, then the lower portions of the Mississippi. His memoirs contained enough ethnographic trivia to frustrate the marine secretary given the job of summarizing them;<sup>152</sup> but, within them, La Salle was clearly drawing attention to material needs among the interior nations. Thus, among the Illinois, he gave 500 livres of merchandize, according to the custom of the country, as his speeches "would not be listened to if they were not accompanied by presents." The speeches he had made to Indians, read in Paris afterwards, highlighted his speech to Indians to allow him passage to the south, to find a "more convenient route to Europe" to be able to offer them "better prices" on the European goods they wanted.<sup>153</sup> This not being convincing to them, he continued with exchange commodities themselves, such as the hatchets and "*autres choses dont ils avoient besoin,*" and threatened that if they did not help him, they would be at least jealous of the advantages he would give to their neighboring Indians, principally in offering a blacksmith ("*dont ils avoient eux même un extrême besoin*"). Finally, La Salle reported that he had made the Illinois small presents and promised to bring "des haches, des couteaux, des epouilles et des aleins, qui sont les marchandises qu'ils estiment le plus et leur dit que commes notre nation en avoit une très grande abondance il en fourmiron t aussie à leur voisins à qui il les pria de le faire sçavoir."

La Salle's memoirs, dated 1681, showed the place manufactures would play in Indian diplomacy with European expansion inland and growing rivalries between the French and English, each being played out in the material concerns of Indians. They revealed in this manner a commercial view of the North American Indian who shared an affinity for European wares, and *needs* for them. La Salle, for instance, sent to Paris a detailed list of the presents given to the Miamis, "tellement nécessaire," if they would accept his speeches, and listed them in the following manner: (1.) Tobacco (2.) A piece of blue fabric, "to cover their dead." (3.) A piece of red fabric, "to cover the ground where

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<sup>151</sup>NAC. Journal de M. de la Salle, 1682, 3JJ No. IX 13 Reel F-444. f. 25.

<sup>152</sup>NAC. See notes prefacing La Salle's Relation for 1679-81, where the secretary of the marine pointed out that, "if one is curious to know the customs of the Indians," the piece was well written, but agreeable as it was an history, "it is sometimes tiring to read." Relation des découvertes et des voyages de la Salle ... 1679, 80, 81, in Archives de la marine, 3JJ Vol. 197, Reel F-442.

<sup>153</sup>"Qu'il alloit faire un grand Canot de Bois pour aller chercher des marchandises en Europe par un chemin plus commode que celui des rapides de la Rivière de St. Laurent afin de leur donner à meilleur marché." *Ibid.*

the blood of their brothers had spilled. (4.) 20 capots, "to dress their dead." (5.) 50 hatchets, "to serve to erect a magnificent tomb to their ancestors." (6.) Collars, bracelets, and beads, red paint, earrings. (7.) 30 sword blades (8.) red blankets (9) 3 large kettles. (10. & 11.) 40 *capots*, 40 shirts, 40 blankets "for men, for women and for children." A full case of knives, hatchets and other merchandise "that they esteemed most" (12.) 6 guns.

These explorers, so dependent upon commercial capital for their very subsistence, ably described Indian needs for European merchandise. Ste. Columbe, mentioned earlier, reported that d'Iberville "a fait quantité des presents aux sauvages avec lesquels ay a fait alliance, les présents consistant en capots faits à la manière dont les gens du Canada les portent, des couteaux, a scauz, chaudières et autres babioles pareilles qu'ils estiment plus que tout l'or du monde, aussi les conservent-ils longtemps, un des chefs de ces gens la aient montre un capot encore tout neuf que Mr. de la Salle lui avot donné il y a 12 ou 15 ans."<sup>154</sup> Le Sieur, among the Illinois Indians, sang the Calumet and accepted from them gifts: "je répondis à ces présents par un peu de chaque marchandises mais sur tout par 6 haches, deux beaux fusils et environs 60 livres de poudre ce qui leur donna une haute idée des françois et les disposa a bien recevoir tout ce que je leur fis dire par le meme M. Pinet."<sup>155</sup> The Indians could offer buffalo, bear, wildcat, and wolf skins "par les peaux desquels en leur donneroit de la poudre et des balles et autres marchandises que leur seroient nécessaires. Que c'étoit une nécessité qu'ils pressent auprès des François puisqu'ils avouoient eux mêmes qu'ils ne pouvoient se passer de leurs marchandises et que le moien de riens par manquer.... j'accompagne ce discours de 30 livres de poudre, autant de balles, de six beaux fusils, de 10 haches, de 10 brasses de tabac, etc."<sup>156</sup>

The characterization of European manufactures as "necessities" becomes, arguably, the dominant feature of eighteenth century text. "Ils le serrvent avec plaisir lorsqu'on leur y approtera les marchandises qui leur sont nécessaires d'autant plus qu'ils n'en peuvent avoir de la baye de Hudson qu'a avec beaucoup de peine tant a cause de la longuer de cemise...."<sup>157</sup> And Indians in America bring skins, "qu'ils échangent contre quelques legumes comme du tobac et contre quelques ustenciles."<sup>158</sup> Thus, even the

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<sup>154</sup>NAC. Extrait d'une lettre de Rochefort du 4 Juillet 1699 Sur la Rivière de Mississipi par Mr. de Ste. Columbe, Volume 387 Piece X-6, 3JJ, reel 475.

<sup>155</sup>NAC. Le Sieur Report of the Natches 4 April 1700, Piece X 9-3, Vol 387, 3JJ, f. 37 Reel 475.

<sup>156</sup>NAC. *Ibid.*, Le Sieur Report, f. 54.

<sup>157</sup>Le Sieur. f. 56.

<sup>158</sup>NAC. Claude Delisle, Description géographique et historique de l'Amérique Septentrionale et méridionale, 3JJ piece 386 Reel 444.

missionary could say that "...nous priames pour un autre present de couteaux et autres choses qu'ils estiment beaucoup...",<sup>159</sup> and Pere Marest, in 1700, could say with confidence that "ils lui font des presens et lui donnerent toutes les choses dont il a besoins."<sup>160</sup>

#### IV.

Certainly, it is difficult to show clear watersheds in changing descriptions. As we have seen, such "necessaries" appeared in early narratives, and "baubles," "trifles" and "toys" continue to describe Indian wares in the eighteenth century. But there was nevertheless a new emphasis upon manufactured wares, and Indian needs for them, that becomes increasingly apparent in the period of increasing consumption of goods in Europe. Earlier, seventeenth century writers, both Catholic and Protestant, often dismissed such matters. There were inclined to view European goods as irrelevant in discussions of Amerindians: any wares made in a fallen natural world were equally insufficient to meet the spiritual needs of Indians.<sup>161</sup> John Smith's narratives tended to ascribe little redemptive value in earthly trade goods, European or otherwise. He linked New and Old World ornaments with the fallen world, and, not surprisingly, saw them in the Indian's devil worship [in this case, the feast of the dead tradition], where a corpse was "adorned with chaines, copper and beades, and covered with a skin, in such manner as the deformity may well suit with such a God." Amerindian funerary practices showed European wares finding the same ends of religious error, with the corpse disemboweled, dried and "about the most of the joints and necke they hang bracelets or chaines of

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<sup>159</sup>NAC. Lettre de J. F. Buisson, 2 January 1699, Vol. 387 3JJ piece X-13, 13th page, Marine Archives microfilm.

<sup>160</sup>*Ibid.*, Lettre de P. Marest, 19 July 1700, Piece X-15.

<sup>161</sup>See, for instance, the 1647 Massachusetts missionary pamphlet containing the Puritan view: "We are upbraided by some of our Countrymen that so little good is done by our professing planters upon the hearts of the Natives... if wee would force them to baptisme (as the Spaniards do about Cusco, Peru and Mexico...) or if we would hire them to it by giving them coates and shirts, to allure them to it (as some others have done,) we could have gathered many hundreds, yea thousands it may bee by this time into the name of Churches; but wee have not learnt as yet *that art of coyning Christians, or putting Christs name and Image upon copper mettles.*" Emphasis added, *The Day-Breaking if not the Sun-Rising of the Gospell with the Indians in New-England* (London: Richard Coates, 1647, ), p. 19. Wood only in passing mentions Indians trading with the English; his most detailed description is given to the Narragansettes who bought up goods from the English at a cheap rate and then sold them at "double profit" to other Indians. William Wood, *New England's Prospect* ed. by Alden T. Vaughan (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1977), p. 81.

copper, pearle, and such like as they use to weare: their inwards they stuff with copper beads and cover with a skin, hatchets *and such trash*."<sup>162</sup>

Following this view into the eighteenth century, critics of society and those embracing primitivism became equally jaded about the effects of manufactures among Indians. Rousseau's natural man presupposed a mental and conditional environment that could hardly accommodate or need the wares of Europe.<sup>163</sup> Lahontan, already mentioned, created his fictionalized Indian character, Adario, to identify the "original sin" of European property which extended to European trade.<sup>164</sup> The Indian who wandered in fiction or in person into eighteenth century Philadelphia, Paris, or London became the perfect means for writers to demonstrate the error of imagining any superiority in civilization's manufactures. The Indian visiting Europe instinctively dismissed European tastes and luxuries, and laughed, as the Indian character did in the play *Arlequin Sauvage* in 1721, "at the attachment we have to frivolous things."<sup>165</sup>

But there was nevertheless a change in the trade descriptions which tended to promote the view of European goods as *necessities*, as *biens*, finding universal use in the hands of Amerindians and effecting some degree of improvement in the Indian's condition. During this period, the French and English imagined their merchandise as having an agreeable affect upon Indians because of two assumptions they shared: (1) that Indian culture contained some elements of affinity with their own, a universalism that writers on luxury were capitalizing upon, and (2) that their own culture was in a greater degree of development or sophistication, a difference manifest in their superior handwares.<sup>166</sup>

But, arguably, these assumptions might not have prompted a new description of goods if there had not already been an inclination among Europeans to imagine their goods finding value beyond exchange value, that is, having a universal, not

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<sup>162</sup>My emphasis. John Smith, "Description of Virginia, 1621," in Lyon Gardiner Tyler, ed., *Narratives of Early Virginia: 1606-1625* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1907), p.109.

<sup>163</sup>Francis Moran III, "Between Primates and Primitives: Natural Man as the Missing Link in Rousseau's *Second Discourse*," pp. 49-51; 54-56.

<sup>164</sup>Réal Ouellet, ed., *Lahontan: Oeuvres complètes*, Vol. I (Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1990), pp. 59-61.

<sup>165</sup>*Mercure de France*, June and July 1721, pp. 22-24. On the rise of primitivism see Benjamin Bissell, *The American Indian in English Literature of the Eighteenth Century* (Archon Books, 1968), pp. 19-22; 39-44; 47-48; and on the reaction of Samuel Johnson and others to primitivism, pp. 50-53.

<sup>166</sup>See entry for "Luxe," where "ce désir d'être mieux, qui est et doit être dans tous les hommes ... le sauvage a son hamac qu'il achète pour des peaux de bêtes; l'Européen a son canapé....." in Diderot's *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, Vol. II (1762, reprinted New York: Pergamon Press), p. 763.

relative, use-value. The conception of relative use-values was identified in the mid-nineteenth century and soon used in anthropological theories that drew from contemporary commodities theory.<sup>167</sup> Marx distinguished use-, from exchange- values. He believed that a commodity's use-value was not actually universal, since it was apprehended by societies in certain stages of development. His famous illustration was that of the magnet; all societies might place an exchange value upon the magnet, but its true use value as an engine for the navigational compass was understood only by societies in certain higher stages of development.<sup>168</sup> In this, however, Marx was drawing distinctions in criticism of late eighteenth century political economy, which tended to ascribe universal use values in goods. Indeed, an extremely important characteristic of eighteenth century writers was an assumption they shared that their good's use-values were readily evident in all human societies. Thus, they tended to disregard the ways manufactures were accommodated or even altered within Amerindian cultures, and imagined wares finding quick integration within Amerindian populations. It was in such a way that the Tonti narrative had argued that goods could "tame" the Indian's heart and La Potherie believed that trade with the French "tamed" Indians.

The universal use-value of European wares in America was assumed by the first English settlement promoters. Richard Hakluyt the Elder supported the Virginia enterprise because of the possibility that it would encourage production of English woolens, and more: "we shall not onely receive many precious commodities besides from thence, but also shal in time find ample vent of the labour of our poore people at home, by sale of Hats, Bonets, Knives, Fish-hooks, Copper kettles, Beads, Looking-glasses, Bugles, and a thousand kinds of other wrought wares, that *in short time may be brought in use among the people of that country....*"<sup>169</sup> Hakluyt pointed out that there was no great problem of trade in America: "If the people be content to live naked, and to content themselves with few things of meere necessity," then trade could not occur "unless this nature be altered." He went on to say that "If the people in the inland be clothed, and desire to live in the abundance of all such things as Europe doth, and have at home all the

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<sup>167</sup>See, particularly, Chapter II, "Exchange," in Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Samel Moore and Edward Aveling, trans. (New York: Bennett A. Cerf & Donald S. Klopfer, 1973), pp. 96-106.

<sup>168</sup>C.A. Gregory, *Gifts and Commodities* (London: Academic Press, 1988), pp. 7-17.

<sup>169</sup>Richard Hakluyt, Pamphlet for the Virginia Enterprise, 1585, Document 47, *The Original Writings and Correspondence of the Two Richard Hakluyts*, E.G.R. Taylor, ed., Sec. series, Vol II (London: Hakluyt Society, 1935), p. 332.

same in plentie," there would be no possibility of trade."<sup>170</sup> But to Hakluyt the very attraction of America as a colonial prospect was the scarcity of European commodities, and the ease by which he believed they could be introduced and assimilated into Amerindian lives.

English optimism over the ease by which trade goods could pass into Amerindian usage has been noted in the writings of the Puritan writer and radical, Roger Williams.<sup>171</sup> He, too, believed that there was a providential scarcity of European goods in America:

O the infinite wisdome of the most holy wise God, who hath so advanced Europe above America, that there is not a sorry Howe, Hatchet, Knife, nor a rag of cloth in all America but what comes over the dreadfull Atlantick Ocean from Europe.<sup>172</sup>

To Williams, it was by natural design that there was no circulation of the same coinage between Amerindians and Europeans. Since symbols of value carried no universal meaning for the other (whether the English Crown, or the Amerindian shell-wampum), the only exchange commodities left were furs and English manufactures, and thus, the European cloth rags found their market among Amerindians, while the "treasures" for Europeans, "those Furres which are after worne upon the hands of Queens and heads of Princes," were first collected in "foule hands (in smoakie houses)" of Indians.<sup>173</sup>

There was, then, an opportunity in the eighteenth century to expand upon an older view of universal use-value in goods traded among Amerindians. Trade promoters could lay emphasis upon the virtues of manufacturers, the ease by which they were integrated into Indian customs, and the positive changes they wrought among their new users. Establishing a universal use-value on their goods, and suggesting real improvements, or simply allowing the Indian to survive a harsh environment, the European's goods became *biens*. Possibly of more consequence and becoming the topic of the next chapter, the trader who brought such goods inland, could be characterized as an evangelist in a commercial age.

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<sup>170</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 332.

<sup>171</sup>See Winthrop S. Hudson's introduction to Roger Williams, *Experiments of Spiritual Life and Health* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1863), pp. 13-15.

<sup>172</sup>Roger Williams, *A Key into the Language of America ... 1643* (Menston: The Scolar Press Limited, 1971), p. 158.

<sup>173</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 158.



## Chapter Five

### *Critics and Apologists of the "Black Art:" The Business of Indian Trading in America*

*"Here is a Specimen of the Albanian Spirit and how little the true welfare of the public is considered by that worthless Crew!"*  
- Peter Wraxall's New York Indian Records (1754)

*"A man cant do anything with pleasure while those one trades with have and do use all the black art they are master of to cheat and deceive as if they had no conscience nor religeon even much worse than our Savages."*  
- Philip Livingston, ca. 1750

*"Notions of Prosperity would Increase; though it would not increase their real necessities, yet it would furnish them with Imaginary Wants..."*  
- Merchant Testimony during the debates on the State and Condition of the HBC Monopoly (1749)

The goods which were listed in trading narratives can valuably point to the commodities that Europeans believed were useful and necessary in Amerindian conditions. This textual phenomenon might suggest that older views against luxuries were still resonant in Indian trade discourse, but as has been shown, this seems not to have been the case. The eighteenth century apologist for luxury often identified a universal human drive to improve one's condition and made careful distinctions between the sophisticated society in which luxuries were beneficial to a larger economy, and the simple environment of the savage, where utilitarian goods were far more appropriate. The noble needed his soft bed, as the Indian needed his *hammock*, the latter acquiring it with skins in trade, as the article on "*Luxe*," appearing in the *Encyclopedie*, stated – in fact one of the benchmarks of changing views of luxury among the philosophes.<sup>1</sup>

As mentioned, primitivists could deny physical need among Indians for European wares and trade detractors imagined England's growing commercial society and the perceived problems within it, come up against a formidable barrier in America. In the eighteenth century, this region was Indian Territory. Indeed, arguably one of the very reasons why the Indian Trade became an urgent topic of discussion in the eighteenth

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<sup>1</sup>As quoted, p. 120, see "*Luxe*," in Diderot's *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, Vol. II (1762, reprinted New York: Pergamon Press), p. 763. Particularly useful is Berry's chapter to the Eighteenth Century debate in Christopher J. Berry, *The Idea of Luxury: A Conceptual and Historical Investigation* (Cambridge University Press, 1994).

century was the evidence it provided for or against a viably universal commercial world. As traders thrived in America, they adopted numerous methods of exchange and modified or changed commercial practices at home. Their activities led observers to question the very limits of European commercial society. To critics, these practices were abhorrent and "unfair," and, rather than being allowed to expand into the forests of America, commerce should be reserved to settled colonies. To them, too, the Indian trader became a dark symbol of commercial irresponsibility. To apologists, however, traders merely took forward a virtuous commercial technique, and established relations with Indians that would lead to their civilization. Those advancing commerce saw the merits of movable wealth and, particularly, credit in the trade.

This chapter addresses the techniques of trade of the eighteenth century in order to examine in more detail the discussions they prompted, not only of the commercial capacities of the American Indian, but, more fundamentally, of the limits of the commercial society at home.

## I

Long before the late seventeenth century, the Indian trade gained many of its defining characteristics in the coastal trades established by the French from Rouen and Normandy in the sixteenth century. Once finishing industries were established in Paris (Allaire identifies the first Canadian fur recorded in the city in 1545), ship-owners and fishermen had the incentive they needed to plan organized trading junkets. Immediately undermining such ventures from the investor's point of view were problems maintaining control over trading standards (the rate on trade with the Indians), the volume of goods being expended in trade, and risks to investment capital. These problems were in part addressed by ship-owners who themselves or through an appointed accounting representative in America maintained vigilance over the volume of goods being exchanged for furs (price); and rising returns on investment offset the risks involved. The profit potential in overseas investments in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries prompted not only merchants to invest goods but landowners to invest income, particularly from landowning rents, in ventures that won comparatively high returns on their money, sometimes as high as 25 to 27 per cent.<sup>2</sup> Whether investing in the stock or sending merchandise in profit share arrangements, the investor profited or lost

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<sup>2</sup>For an overview, see H.P. Biggar, *The Early Trading Companies of New France: A Contribution to the Industry of Commerce and Discovery in North America* (1901, republished, New York: Argonaut Press, 1965); Bernard Allaire, *Le commerce des fourrures à Paris et les pelleteries d'origine canadienne en France (1500-1632)* (Ph.d. Thesis, University of Laval, 1995), pp. 69-70; 81-82; 182-183.

proportionately to his or her original investment. Investors could also advance money in high risk loans, *la grande aventure*, which paid back large interest before a venture's profits were shared.<sup>3</sup>

Merchants used the *tiercement* system of investment in these adventures, whereby they advanced small amounts of capital into numerous ventures to reduce risk. Meanwhile, the division of profits from the overseas trading junket were not new; they were devised in the high middle ages, once applied to the Levant trade, now to the shipping ventures from Rouen and Normandy to Canada, and can still be recognized in the "Adventures to the Northwest," appearing in Montreal merchant accounts books after the Conquest.<sup>4</sup>

Financial challenges, however, were only part of the ongoing "problem" of the Indian trade. Participants had to reconcile elements of a European market economy with an Amerindian exchange tradition that cast a commercial unorthodoxy upon the Indian trade. When Miles McDonnell, in 1811, wrote from York Factory that "our trade in the interior is not by any means to be comprehended at least not be governed by those maxims which regulate commerce in a civilized country,"<sup>5</sup> he was speaking of the complex social obligations that traders had to meet in America, and the related expenses in either gifts or trade goods that served to procure not only furs but provisions, Indian labour, and social expenses. The French were particularly apprised of the special nature of such a trade early in the eighteenth century through such works as those written by Hennepin. Gifts such as hatchets and knives (which the Indians "esteem as things of great price,") were absolutely requisite, and trade was impossible "without their [the traders] having made some present of this nature... After such the barbarians come to *enfanter*, so to speak, to adopt those who have made these presents."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>From France, lending rates on Canadian ventures could rise as high as 40 per cent, while to South America, they could rise to a staggering 60 per cent. Gayle K. Brunelle, *The New World Merchants of Rouen: 1559-1630* (Sixteenth century essays & studies; v.16), pp. 32; 38-49.

<sup>4</sup>On the Montreal "pedlar" trade to the Little North, see Victor P. Lytwyn, *The Fur Trade of the Little North: Indians, Pedlars, and Englishmen East of Lake Winnipeg, 1760-1821* (Winnipeg: Rupert's Research Centre, 1986). See Account book of Forrest Oakes, Montreal and the "Adventures" struck between himself as bourgeois and Montreal Merchants like Lawrence Ermatinger, in NAC, Ermatinger Estate Papers MG 19 A2.

<sup>5</sup>1 October 1811, Vol. I Selkirk Papers Copybooks, p. 72.

<sup>6</sup>Louis Hennepin extract in *Relations de la Louisiane et du Fleuve Mississipi* (Amsterdam: Jean Frederic Bernard, 1720), p. 292.

Although securing capital and protecting investment remained challenges within the trade,<sup>7</sup> the most pressing problem facing traders was reconciling these social obligations and Amerindian definitions of profit to the exigencies of a European market economy -- with rising and falling values on trade commodities, interest on investments, transportation charges and direct responsibility for the value of trade goods entrusted in their hands. Without reconciling here the debate of what actually prompted Amerindian trading behavior, whether universalistic profit-motives of an "economic" Indian,<sup>8</sup> or the values they ascribed to trading goods which had meaning only within Amerindian culture,<sup>9</sup> it can nevertheless be said that Europeans entering a trade to procure valuable goods discovered that Indians followed customs of reciprocity in order to profit themselves in social relations. This did not mean that Indians did not seek profitable exchange;<sup>10</sup> there was more complexity in Indian economic understandings than being

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<sup>7</sup>Dunn provides an excellent overview of the "financial framework" of post-Conquest Indian policy, in chapter two of Walter S. Dunn, Jr. *Frontier Profit and Loss: The British Army and the Fur Traders, 1760-1764* (London: Greenwood, 1998).

<sup>8</sup>On the key approaches to the debate: E. E. Rich, "Trade Habits and Economic Motivation Among The Indians of North America," in *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, vol. XXVI, no. 1, February 1960, pp. 35-53. Abraham Rotstein, "Trade and Politics: An Institutional Approach," *Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology* Vol. 3 no. 1 1972, pp. 1-28. Eccles argues the case for their views and discounts work which depicts Indians as commercially motivated in his review of Trigger's *Natives and Newcomers*, in "Review of Books," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. XLIII, July 1986, pp. 480-483. Anderson describes the "communal" kinship relations of the Dakota Sioux subsuming individual interests to the larger community's welfare. This, he saw as fundamentally different from the individualistic profit motives guiding traders involved in the "rapacious" fur trade. Gary Clayton Anderson, *Kinsemen of Another Kind: Dakota-White Relations in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1650-1862* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984). The prominent feature of Amerindian exchange was goods traded as gifts, leading to social relationships. Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 97-99. See Daniel K. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of Colonization* (University of North Carolina Press, 1992), pp. 21-22.

<sup>9</sup>On the relativist application, reconstructing Indian metaphysics to understand the value of trade goods among Amerindians, see George R. Hamell, "Trading in Metaphors: The Magic of Beads," in *Proceedings of the 1982 Glass Trade Bead Conference*, Charles F. Hayes III, ed., (New York: Rochester Museum & Science Centre, 1983), pp. 5-28; George R. Hamell, "Strawberries, Floating Islands, and Rabbit Captains: Mythical Realities and European Contact in the Northeast During the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Journal of Canadian Studies* Vol. 21, No. 4, Winter 1986-87, pp. 72-95. A useful overview, and a stating of his own rationalist position that concedes elements of relativism, is provided by Bruce G. Trigger, "Early Native North American Responses to Contact: Romantic versus Rationalistic Interpretations," *The Journal of American History* March 1991, pp. 1195-1215.

<sup>10</sup>Frank Tough, "Indian Economic Behavior: Exchange and Profit in Northern Manitoba during the Decline of Monopoly, 1870-1930," *Journal of Historic Geography* 16 (4), 1990, pp. 385-401. Carlos and Lewis have contributed to an argument that Indians responded productively to rising prices in competitive trade situations. Ann M. Carlos and Frank D. Lewis, "Indians, the Beaver, and the Bay: The Economics of Depletion in the Lands of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1700-1763," *Journal of Economic History* 53 (3), 1993, pp. 465-494.

“ignorant of values except as expressing wants,” as Kellogg suggested in her study.<sup>11</sup> Recent scholarship viewing Indians as “shrewd consumers” has refined our understandings of their trading abilities:<sup>12</sup> they obviously knew market dynamics well enough to raise competitive conditions, i.e., European demand, and therefore prices on furs.<sup>13</sup> Richter characterized the communal economy of Indians as “upside-down capitalism,” where profits were anxiously sought for the benefit of the group, not the individual.<sup>14</sup>

These differing conceptions of profit are discernible in European and Amerindian gift-traditions preceding trade. Europeans already exchanged gifts between themselves to support a cash-poor economy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,<sup>15</sup> and gifts were, in turn, an integral component of business in America. Robert Sandors, Albany merchant and Indian trade commissioner, dispersed gifts liberally to his business partners and correspondents. He sent barrels of oysters and other delicacies deep into Indian territory to French officers. These correspondents, in turn, procured goods from him which they traded with Indians.<sup>16</sup> But Sandors' gift giving was undertaken to establish and maintain social relations, which in turn reduced risks and developed trust between himself and his correspondents. Ultimately, these social relations safeguarded investment and enhanced a trade's profitability. It was to reduce risk and better a family's collective wealth that individuals established strategic social relations with other families,

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<sup>11</sup>Louise Phelps Kellogg, *The French Régime in Wisconsin and the Northwest*. (New York, Cooper Square Publications, 1968, origin. published 1925), p. 364.

<sup>12</sup>Arthur J. Ray, “Indians as Consumers in the Eighteenth Century,” in Judd and Ray, eds., *Old Trails and New Directions* (1980), p. 267. On his remarks that Indians did not necessarily follow the “maximum-yield” profit-motive of Europeans, see Arthur J. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Roles as Hunters, Trappers and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870* (University of Toronto Press, 1974), pp. 65-67. The most careful study of prices, institutions and ceremonies in the fur trade and the influences of competition remains Ray and Freeman's, see “Chapter 12: Variations in exchange rates and levels of competition.” Arthur J. Ray and Donald B. Freeman, *“Give Us Good Measure”: An Economic Analysis of Relations Between the Indians and the Hudson's Bay Company before 1763* (University of Toronto Press, 1978), pp. 241-243.

<sup>13</sup>As is presented by Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* (University of British Columbia Press, 1992), pp. 8; 28-29.

<sup>14</sup>Richter describes “upside-down capitalism,” in Daniel K. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The People of the Iroquois League in the Era of Colonization* (University of North Carolina Press, 1992), pp. 21-22; on the issue of redistribution, wealth and the attainment of prestige, see William E. Simeone, *Rifles, Blankets, and Beads: Identity, History, and the Northern Athapaskan Potlatch* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), pp. xviii-xxi; 18-20.54-63.

<sup>15</sup>See Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: the Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1998), particularly “Chapter Five: The Sociability of Credit and Commerce,” pp. 61-64.

<sup>16</sup>NAC. Robert Sanders Letterbooks, 1752-1755.

and, through marriage ties, officers and merchants joined *sociétés* in the Indian trade from New France.<sup>17</sup> On the Indian side of the exchange, there is disagreement as to what function the gift played in trade, whether Indians simply went through the motions of friendly exchange to ensure subsequent good trade, or if gifts were removed from the later exchanges altogether.<sup>18</sup> It is clear, however, that to Indians gift exchanges were undertaken to open trade which itself led to key social and political relations that defined profit.

Whatever role gifts played, Indians consistently reminded Europeans of their absolute necessity before trade could begin. The HBC traders ultimately developed a gift exchange tradition around its factories;<sup>19</sup> the Dutch first learned the importance of generous gifts and low prices on trade goods in their first encounter with the Mohawks (Arent Van Curler deeply offended a sachem inland in 1634 when he brought no gifts, but expected these Indians to trade with the Dutch<sup>20</sup>) and gift-giving remained a crucial aspect of the New York trade when the English inherited it from the Dutch.<sup>21</sup> The

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<sup>17</sup>See, for instance, the marriage contract and notarial business agreements struck between the "entrepreneurial" officer, Jacques Legardeur de Saint-Pierre, and his merchant brother-in-law, in Joseph L. Peyser, ed. and trans., *Jacques Legardeur de Saint-Pierre: Officer, Gentleman, Entrepreneur* (Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1996). Gratien Allaire highlights, through notarial records, the creation of such *sociétés* in the Troupes de la Marine. "Officiers et marchands: les sociétés de commerce des fourrures, 1715-1760," *RHAF*, vol. 40, no. 3, winter 1987, pp. 409-428; J. F. Boshier examines the family and religious ties established between merchants *The Canada Merchants, 1713-1763* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

<sup>18</sup>White argues that gifts were made with future self-interests in mind. Bruce M. White, "A Skilled Game of Exchange: Ojibway Fur Trade Protocol," *Minnesota History*, Vol. 50 (6), Summer 1987, pp. 229-240; see, also, his "'Give Us a Little Milk,' The Social and Cultural Meanings of Gift Giving in the Lake Superior Fur Trade," *Minnesota History*, Vol. 48 (2) Summer 1982, pp. 60-71. Cornelius J. Jaenen, "The Role of Presents in French-Amerindian Trade," ed. Duncan Cameron, *Explorations in Canadian Economic History: Essays in Honour of Irene Spry* (University of Ottawa Press, 1985), pp. 244-245. Also, Colin G. Colloway, *Crown and Calumet: British-Indian Relations, 1783-1815* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), p. 137. I am presently pursuing the possibility that the gift gave evidence of large supply, and therefore "just" price, in an article, "Amerindian Price Understandings and Supply in the Colonial Fur Trade." A valuable overview of trading relationships is offered by Tanis C. Thorne, *The Many Hands of My Relations: French and Indians on the Lower Missouri* (University of Missouri Press, 1996), p. 48.

<sup>19</sup>Ray sees the gift-exchange affirming alliances and friendship, an institution that was ultimately adapted to the trade. *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

<sup>20</sup>Van Curler did not bring gifts and the sachem reprimanded the "scoundrel" Dutch who brought neither gifts nor offered low prices, unlike the French. 30 December 1634, "Arent Van Curler and his Journal of 1634-35," Part VI, *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the year 1895* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1896), p. 93. On the importance of gift exchanges between the Delaware and Swedes, see Armandus Johnson, *The Swedish Settlements on the Delaware, 1638-1664* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1962), pp. 376-377.

<sup>21</sup>NAC. Albany New York Indian Commissioner Letterbooks, see proceedings between 1721-28, Microfilm Reel C-1220.

Recollet, Gabriel Sagard, provided an example of the disaster that met Frenchmen who gave offending (worthless) gifts to trading Indians.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, the Sagard example suggests that Indians related the tenor of the gift, its value and size, to the possible integrity of the trade that resulted, and they themselves traded either fairly or unscrupulously according to the nature of the European gift. Certainly La Salle was not exaggerating when he said that the interior nations with whom he hoped to establish trading relations saw gifts as *tellement nécessaire*;<sup>23</sup> and his Frenchmen followers repeated their observation that Indians used gifts to "weigh the truth" of the trader's speeches.

While the costs of gifts frustrated both the French and the English, particularly when competition with trading Indians caused an escalation of the gifts' value, in the early eighteenth century, gifts became a central feature of colonial Indian Affairs and the Indian trade itself.<sup>24</sup> The Carolina governor in the midst of Indian depredations claimed that the gifts given to the Cherokees had become so excessive, "that we may properly say, We are become Tributaries, we buy their friendship at too dear a rate...."<sup>25</sup> Gifts became so costly, that they can sometimes captivate the historian's attention and be removed altogether from a discussion of trade. While it is true that colonial administrators often separated the gift -- drawn by the governor on the King's

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<sup>22</sup>Sagard recorded his ship landing at Tadoussac, where they met a band of trading Indians well known to the French. The chief was "dissatisfied with the small present of figs that our captain made him" when he left their ship. The chief, La Forière, threw the gift into the river in anger "and counselled his savages to come on to our ship one after another and take and carry off from it all the goods they needed, and give in exchange as few peltries as they liked, since we had not given him what satisfied him." Sagard then reported that the Indians boarded the boat "with such insolent boldness," and "took out from between decks what they wanted, only giving in furs for it what they chose, without anyone being able to hinder or resist them." Following this, the Amerindians "through fear, or sorry for the wrong they had done to the French," took council, "and discussed wherein and to what extent they might have defrauded [the French] and having levied an assessment upon themselves brought skins to the value, and more than the value, of the loss they had inflicted. These were accepted, and a promise given to forget all that had passed and continue always upon the old friendly terms." Father Gabriel Sagard, ed. and trans. George M. Wrong, *The Long Journey to the Country of the Hurons* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1939), p. 45. The original French uses the phrase, "*et d'y prendre et emporter toutes les marchandises qui leur faisoient besoin, et d'en donner si peu de pelleteries qu'ils voudroient, puis qu'on ne l'avoit pas contenté*," p. 298.

<sup>23</sup>NAC. See his comments concerning the *f*500 of gifts he distributed to the Illinois, as the custom of the country was that his hosts wouldn't listen if his words were not accompanied by presents. In this occasion he wished to convince them that the Mississippi would offer them a better road than the St. Lawrence, "afin de leur donner à meilleur marché." *Relation des découvertes et des voyages de la Salle, 1679, 1680, 1681*, Archives de la Marine, Côtes Nord-Est d'Amérique, Canada, 3JJ, Vol. 197, NA Microfilm Reel F-442.

<sup>24</sup>See Wilbur R. Jacobs, *Diplomacy and Indian Gifts: Anglo-French Rivalry along the Ohio and Northwest Frontiers, 1748-1763* (Stanford University Press, 1950), pp. 12- 14; on differences between French and English gift appropriations, see pp. 29-38.

<sup>25</sup>PRO. Letter from Governor and Council of Carolina, 26 January 1716/17 C.O.5/1265 f. 93.

account or Civil List -- from the cost of subsidizing trading goods prices, an expense borne by the assembly, it is important to appraise the gift exchange as part of a complex of trade relations Amerindians demanded from Europeans. Amerindians did not separate the two because exchange established a reciprocity that was either explicitly or only symbolically embodied in the gift, and used it to form social connections to Europeans.

These social expectations constituted indeed some of the key differences of the European and Amerindian exchange traditions. Trade was not isolated from larger, and quite expensive social events. Traders were detained in their travels, as the trading missions of La Verendrye and Anthony Henday proved on the prairies of present day Canada. (Both complained of the numbers of feasts they would be required to attend, sometimes daily).<sup>26</sup> Trade broke down between enemy nations, and, conversely, Indians expected social relations to grow with exchange, to either facilitate literal kinship through marriage or "fictive" relations. Thus, traders prosecuting a successful trade were quickly immersed in Amerindian society, joined by successive, strategic marriages within specific bands.<sup>27</sup> The gifts they distributed were either completely unaccounted for, or carried in accounts as business expense.<sup>28</sup> In many cases, such as with Charles Charlebois, the trader likely saw gifts and calculated their value, as credit. Whatever the case, a trader usually began to stray from an orthodox relationship with his creditors due to curious position he occupied between European and Indian socio-economic realities.

In a related matter, these Europeans had to reconcile another social expectation Indians brought to trade: the limitations they imposed on market dynamics that Europeans allowed to freely operate with the exchange of most commodities. Much analysis has already been directed to the Amerindian's expectation of an inelastic price on European trade goods in the fur trade.<sup>29</sup> Indians took offense at rising or changing

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<sup>26</sup>I am using Henday's journal as it appears in Andrew Graham's *Journal of 1767*, see entries 30 July, 14 September 1754, E.2/6; also, Pierre Gaultier de Verennes, the Sieur de La Vérendrye, in 1738, remarking on the Cree inland: "Of necessity we had to be patient. Nothing that I could say to the (Assiniboine) guide to make him hasten was of the slightest use. .... he took us twenty-two leagues off our route in order to reach a village of 102 families.... A great feast was made for us and all the men, who did not lack a good appetite." *La Vérendrye Journals*, Biggar ed.

<sup>27</sup>See Jacqueline Peterson, "Prelude to Red River: A Social Portrait of the Great Lakes Métis," *Ethnohistory* 25 (1978), pp. 54-56; John E. Foster, "Wintering, the Outsider Adult Male and the Ethnogenesis of the Western Plains Métis," *Prairie Forum*, 1994, pp. 5-13.

<sup>28</sup>Arthur J. Ray, "The Hudson's Bay Company Account Books as Sources for Comparative Economic Analysis of the Fur Trade: An Examination of Exchange Rate Data," *Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology* 6(1), 1976, p. 42.

<sup>29</sup>Elizabeth Mancke, *A Company of Businessmen: The Hudson's Bay Company and Long-Distance Trade, 1670-1730* (Winnipeg: Rupert's Land Resource Centre, 1988), pp. 59-75.



standards possibly because they believed such changes provided evidence of discourtesy from the trader, or bad faith in the trade he wished to pursue. Ray and Freeman have posited that successful trading relationships, then, required the creation of "institutions" that reconciled a European's trading system with the traditional Amerindians'. Their conclusions are, in this respect, quite contrary to those of Delâge, who believes that the Europeans traded goods according to exchange values in the pursuit of accumulated capital, which ultimately impoverished Indians who exchanged according to use values.<sup>30</sup> Actually, quite the opposite seemed to have occurred. The on-going HBC trade succeeded due to the accommodations of both traders. Richard White would argue that the Great Lakes trade similarly required a "middle ground" established where Indians and Europeans "negotiated" and reconciled their different customs for the benefits both sought in trade.<sup>31</sup>

These accommodations become visible in numerous settings. With respect to the issue of price, one strategy useful to the HBC, after earlier attempts to manipulate standards failed,<sup>32</sup> was the development of the "overplus" trade which applied an invisible "Factor's standard" to European trade goods. Simply put, the HBC short weighed and short measured indiscrete trade items. While traders left prices stable on discrete items -- guns, fabrics -- they manipulated what became the Factor's Standard, the one that the factor exacted on indiscrete goods, to derive needed profits. Andrew Graham, the Bayside trader who left detailed descriptions of his work in America, listed beads, shot, powder, tobacco, and vermilion as the most prominent commodities of this description; all required the European's weighing or measuring devices. He pointed out that by use of the Factor's Standard, the Company could raise the value of a typical outfit of goods purchased by an Indian from 115 beavers (they used "made beaver" as the trading unit) to 166 beaver through such an "overplus trade."<sup>33</sup> As Ray and Freedman point out, the

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<sup>30</sup>Denys Delâge, *Le pays renversé: Amérindiens et Européens en Amérique du Nord-Est, 1600-1664* (Montreal: Boréal: 1991), pp. 104-126.

<sup>31</sup>See chapter on the Fur Trade, in Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*, (Cambridge, 1991).

<sup>32</sup>HBC. The London committee continually exhorted bayside factors to raise prices on goods, especially when furs fell in value: when the French traders were ill supplied, they believed such events might allow traders like John Fullerton at Albany Fort, to raise the standard, or to argue to Indians that better quality wares, such as the French powder, knives, awls and hatchets he had on hand, justified higher prices. Committee to Fullerton, 30 May 1705, A.6/3. The committee believed that "very good" guns, kettles, hatchets and knives sent to Governor Sergeant in 1684 would enable him to "advance" the standard. See letter to Governor Sergeant, 16 May 1684, in E.G.R. Taylor, ed., *Copy-Book of Letters Outward: 1680-1687* (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1948), pp. 120-122.

<sup>33</sup>HBC. Andrew Graham's Observations 1771, E.2/7.

Indians became sensitive to this manipulation in indiscrete goods, using the expression, "Give us good measure" in their speeches to factors. Diminishing returns from the overplus trade at each new fort, indeed, suggests that Indians became more scrupulous in watching for the traders' short-measures.<sup>34</sup>

The HBC overplus is distinguished as a technique of trade by where it occurred in the exchange, that is, after furs were counted and measured as discrete trading goods, a price in Made Beaver was assigned, and prices were then manipulated when Indians chose European wares. Upon choosing the necessary indiscrete wares, such as powder, they were shortchanged in the European's standard of weight and measure. Since Indians at the Bay brought largely inelastic demand for European goods -- itself a "problem" from a European's perspective -- and purchased about 70 beavers worth of commodities in the same assortment,<sup>35</sup> the overplus trade allowed the factor to strike more profit from their trade when necessary.

While European observers saw these practices as chicanery, in historical analysis, they are better viewed as a necessary means of reconciling one way of trading with another, particularly at key moments in colonial history, such as during the wars of the late seventeenth century when trade goods became exorbitantly expensive, or when gluts in production lowered the value of particular furbearer species. (Andrew Graham, it should be pointed out, suggested that another line of profit lay in quacking medicines to the Indians, such as sugar, seed ointments, and "salves of colours made up of deers fat and bees wax coloured with paint and several other innocent things."<sup>36</sup>)

The HBC overplus constituted only one of many ways in which Europeans reconciled the demands of the Committee in London with the Indian's social requirements in trade. Since they are overlooked in the literature it is worthwhile highlighting them, because representations of the Indian trade centred upon these necessary strategies that appeared manifestly "unjust" to contemporary Europeans. Many of the traders prosecuting factory or river trading, that is, from established European trading posts or within town markets, were able to manipulate European standards of weight and measure. But the French, when they abandoned town trading and sent traders to spend winters

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<sup>34</sup>Arthur J. Ray, & Donald B. Freeman, *"Give Us Good Measure": An Economic Analysis of Relations Between the Indians and the Hudson's Bay Company before 1763*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978).

<sup>35</sup>HBC. See Graham's breakdown of the typical purchases, including 1 gun, 5 lbs powder, 2 hatchets, 3 yards cloth, 1 kettle, 1 ice-chisel, 1 file, 2 fire steels, 10 flints, 2 knives., etc. *Ibid.*,

<sup>36</sup>HBC. "This business is transacted by the Factors only, always taking care to give them nothing that might hurt them. I myself have traded eight hundred beaver at York Fort in one summer by the above method. A factor who deals and talks with them in the Doctors way is much thought of." *Ibid.*

within Indian communities *en derouine*, tended to rely less upon weights and measures to change price<sup>37</sup> and instead manipulated the standard of the pelt traded, that is, they traded higher quality pelts from Indians and remained discriminatory over the type and quality. Buyers thriving on a valorized fur trade, from the 1680s onwards, purchased pelts by the number; after appeals of the *fermier* in France allowed his representatives to impose restrictions on what they purchased, colonists and later bourgeois who actually prosecuted the Indian Trade became discriminatory over which skins they accepted from Indians. By the 1720s, the French recognized Indian pelts as a discrete trade commodity finding value in a comparatively comprehensible system of numbers (1,2,3, etc.), qualities (*summer, winter, etc.*) age, or size, (*young, old, etc.*) and even point of origin (*Illinoise, Canada, etc.*) The French and Indians therefore had a common understanding of a universal value upon skins not determined according to indiscreet weights and measures once trade begun. La Potherie, then, saw six “species” of beavers which had six “different prices,” including the *gras d’hiver*, the *demi-gras d’hiver*, the *gras d’été*, the *sec d’hiver*, and the *moscovite*. He pointed out that this classification obliged the Indians to trade the best skins possible.<sup>38</sup>

This French system likely grew from an ongoing difficulty in New France and Louisiana to procure sufficient quantities of trade goods to compete with the English. Some subsidization of this trade is thereafter recognizable, either in French attempts to keep prices of goods offered to Indians low through ordinances, or through ever larger disbursements of the King’s gifts. These were either given by officers at posts, thereby lowering the overall price of trade goods that merchants offered Indians, or were traded by officers as merchandise in their own right. Some of the resulting contemporary differentiation between French and English transactions might have arisen from their two conditions of supply, whereby English traders were characterized as advancing Indians “credits” and Frenchmen advancing “gifts.”<sup>39</sup> This differentiation did not arise from a disapproval of credit, per se.<sup>40</sup> However, it might be remembered that La Potherie

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<sup>37</sup> This is suggested in the Spanish reforms in the Illinois country. As Governor Ulloa decreed in 1767, when he outfitted two boats to the upper country, “Soldiers or Sailors shall not be permitted to take provisions at their discretion as is the custom among the French.” Instead, rations would be issued in the evening “by weight and measure.” cited in Daniel H. Usner, Jr., *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley before 1783*, (Chapel Hill: University of Carolina Press, 1992), p. 237.

<sup>38</sup> La Potherie, Vol. I, pp. 267-269.

<sup>39</sup> AOM. Sieur La Fleur to Diron 22 July 1729, C/13a/12., f. 170.

<sup>40</sup> Delâge posits that geographic exigencies and differences in the development of commercial capital among the French led them to early adopt strategies in the Indian trade that markedly differed from those

depicted the French trade as essentially gift-exchange. His descriptions and book illustrations did not describe furs returning to traders from such advances (credit) as much as the manufactures finding Indian owners without reference to repayment (gift). He certainly did not draw attention to credit (his only description of credit was derived from Nicholas Perrot's meeting with Maskoutch Indians who had earlier pillaged his wares. "We have borrowed your guns," they told him when they wished to establish peace, "we do not pay you for your guns and merchandise... we have only placed your merchandise to your credit."<sup>41</sup>)

With fewer goods to offer in trade, the French were in less of a position to advance large amounts of credit to Indians. They therefore abided by a discriminatory system of buying that appeared distinctive to contemporaries. The French not only discriminated between the products purchased from Indians. Being in the position to offer fewer goods, the French discriminated between Christian Indian and pagan Indian traders, exacted high "pagan" prices from the one and gave attractive "Christian" prices to the other, to whom they also extended credit.<sup>42</sup> To the majority of others, the French maintained careful parsimony and, being short in goods, gave larger gifts in public ceremonies to try to match English largess in trade.

Such practices invited comment by contemporaries. As a 1682 letter from the New France Governor Le Febvre de la Barre suggests, there were two different buying practices among the French and Protestant traders. He reported that the English and the Dutch to the south bought furs from Indians for their "entire value" (*leur valeur entière*),<sup>43</sup> while the French *fermier* bought only a quarter of the furs "by preference" according to quality and the rest "at a certain price." He noted the "better" prices the English and Dutch traders offered Indians and the often stated criticism of the French system that discriminated between the Indians' furs and offered afterwards low prices. The Dutch, he said, were not remiss in telling Indians that the northern system constituted a theft of their "toil and work."<sup>44</sup>

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employed by the Albany traders (then Dutch); the Dutch blatantly pursued profit, while the French used social relations and missionary work to maintain trade. Denys Delâge, *Le pays renversé: Amérindiens et Européens en Amérique du Nord-Est, 1600-1664* (Montreal: Boréal: 1991), pp. 104-126.

<sup>41</sup>Chapter XXI, p. 28.

<sup>42</sup>Delâge, 128-132.

<sup>43</sup>The Dutch offered better prices, "et pren[ent] les castors pour leur valeur entière, la Compagnie prenant le quart par préférence, et le reste [à] certain prix..." Lettre de La Barre au Marquis de Seignelay, 12 novembre 1682, *La Nouvelle-France sous Joseph-Antoine le Febvre de la Barre*, p. 57.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*

Having much larger quantities of goods, the Albany Dutch and later the English traders of New York appeared more generous, not only in what they purchased, but in what prices they offered for Indian pelts. But La Barre had not noted the ways that these traders evaluated pelts according to their weight, using highly suspect weights and measures to do so. To a European observer assessing this trade, the English were *indiscriminate* in what they purchased, but Indians were *disadvantaged* by their peltry being handled as indiscrete trading goods, evaluated according to variable weights and measures. Indians did not apparently voice grievances with this aspect of the trade as the English compensated for a system with enormous variations in weights and measures by offering apparently higher prices for the fur *after* it had been weighed and measured. In this respect, they purchased pelts indiscriminately and in bulk, and so appeared not only to welcome *all* fur but offered higher prices for it. Pierre de Charlevoix described the same buying systems differentiating French and English practices in the 1680s, but they likely existed in his own period of the 1720s.<sup>45</sup> Charlevoix believed that the dramatically different values accorded to trade goods in part led to the last of the French-Iroquois wars. They were still recognizable as late as 1770, when the New York merchants, Phyn and Ellice, discovered that Canadian bourgeois inland traded fur of a far higher quality, possibly one of the French traditions surviving the Conquest. Canadian traders still discriminated between the pelts they purchased from Indians while New York markets bought up beaver in bulk quantities at lower prices and subjected them to "culling" in England - the primary reason the company felt it necessary to label their shipments to England as "Canada Beaver" and not to be subjected to the "culling" as were purchases of New York.<sup>46</sup>

The French, then, maintained a system visibly different from the Dutch and subsequently the English to the south on the seaboard.<sup>47</sup> Unlike HBC traders, the

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<sup>45</sup>He described it as the way the English, under New York Governor Thomas Dongan, had launched trade war against the French, "supplying the Iroquois with goods at a lower rate than the French could do, because the company which then controlled all the fur-trade, took by preference one-fourth of the beavers, then tenth part of the leather, and other furs, and purchased all the rest at quite a moderate rate." P.F.X. de Charlevoix, *History and General Description of New France*, Vol. III, trans. John Gilmary Shea (Loyola University Press, 1962), p. 217.

<sup>46</sup>NAC, Letter to Hayman Levy, 6 July 1770. Phyn and Ellice Letterbooks, Vol I, Microfilm Reel, M-473.

<sup>47</sup>"The American Traveller" argued that the HBC "arbitrarily imposed" changing standards upon Indians, not according to the value of European manufactured goods, "but solely according to the Quantity of the latter [the Indian' furs], the whole of which be it more or less than on other Years, they calculate so as to get for their own, whose Quantity is nearly the same every season." *The American Traveller: Or, Observations on the Present State, Culture and Commerce of the British Colonies in America* (London: E. & C. Dilly, 1769) p. 21. Andrew Graham refuted the charge as "the offspring of ignorance, absurdity and malevolence;" *Andrew Graham's Observations on Hudson's Bay, 1767-91*, ed. Glwyndwr Williams,

English there traded by variable weights and measures, giving powder, for instance in bags "too small,"<sup>48</sup> and, handled the Indians' furs themselves as indiscrete items. Such differences can be identified throughout the Southern Frontier. In 1724, for instance, the governor of Louisiana felt it was necessary to "carry on trade with them [the Choctaws] on the same basis as do the English,"<sup>49</sup> and, as late as 1735, his traders had to fully adopt the English system to keep the Alabamas in French trading alliances. This "system," too, offered a much more generous standard, apparently the chief reason why these Indians had demanded it of the French. It replaced the older French way based on numbers of skins with a system which classified them according to size and *weight*. The new system would recognize skins as large (weighing two or more French *livres*), medium (1.25 to 2 *livres*) and small (under 1 *livre*). The French were more than glad to adopt this system in many respects: although based upon a much more generous standard, the trade benefited the European trader who wielded the weights. Furthermore, the new system would stop Indians from keeping the smallest skins they had for the French, to trade by the number, and take the largest to the English, "as there is no reference in our [present] trading tariff to the weight of the skins...."<sup>50</sup> Now that the French weighed skins, Indians would lose on some of their trade. Whereas before, they could trade by the number and receive as much as an ell and a half of Limbourg cloth for 10 or 12 *livres* of skins, now they would have to trade fifteen *livres* of skins for the same amount of cloth.<sup>51</sup>

## II.

These techniques of barter were undoubtedly critical to the fortunes of traders. But they also cast the Indian trader, from a metropolitan perspective, in dark shadows of suspicion.<sup>52</sup> Being themselves credited with goods, they advanced the same as gifts or credit to Indians in ways that brought them into disrepute with supplying agents and, as will be seen in Chapter Six, with metropolitan merchant houses. Their distance from

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(London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1969), pp. 326-327. Possibly, the "American Traveller," identified by Williams as Mr. Clunie, a London Wharfinger, saw furs valued according to their quantity elsewhere. An examination of late seventeenth and early eighteenth century HBC records does not suggest that employees weighed furs before recognizing them as "made beaver."

<sup>48</sup>18 August 1666, *The Livingston Indian Records*, ed. Lawrence H. Leder, (Gettysburg: The Pennsylvania Historical Association, 1956), p. 29.

<sup>49</sup>Mississippi Provincial Archives, Vol. I, pp.17-18.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 262.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup>Philippe Jacquin, *Les Indiens blancs: Français et Indiens en Amérique du Nord (XVIe-XVIIIe siècle)* (Montreal: Éditions libre expressions, 1996), pp. 11, 43-56, and on the gaining literary trope devoted to the Indian trader, see p. 164, and generally, chapter 7, "Nous sommes tout des sauvages."

colonial society and therefore merchant law allowed them to escape as debtors into the Indian bands they had already joined through marriage or strategic social relations. Holding little real property in towns from which they had drawn credit, Indian traders could escape far into the continent, reappearing only to take on the consigned goods of merchants in other towns. Moreover, with his business conducted across two different societies, traders returning to civilization exhibited unsavory spending habits, squandering their earnings from adventures on consumable commodities, saving little, and abandoning responsibilities they had to families, neighbors and trade backers. That, or they gained profits illegitimately and rose in wealth in social rankings. Of the “many strange Revolutions” Lawson recognized occurring in America were the French Indian traders “from despicable Beginnings, which in a short time arrive to very Splendid Conditions.”<sup>53</sup>

Meanwhile, the techniques of trade they employed prompted some observers to argue that a fundamental inequity supported the Indian Trade. Europeans trading with Indians quickly forgot scruples that might have guided exchanges at home. Straying from the market and religious principles of the metropolis, the Christian lost his ethics when the opportunity raised itself. As Indians themselves often voiced grievances with weights and measures,<sup>54</sup> the European observed that the end of Christendom seemingly marked the end of any ethics governing trading. In the 1740s, Philip Livingston commented on the unpleasant aspect of being a commission merchant, outfitting these traders who disappeared into the woods. He said he was not being able to enjoy his business when “those one trades with have and do use all the black art they are master of to cheat and deceive as if they had no conscience nor religeon [sic] even much

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<sup>53</sup> John Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina* (London: 1709), pp. 12-13; see, also, his remarks on what appeared as the unconventional marriage of a European trader to an Indian woman, p. 23.

<sup>54</sup> See, for instance, the 1700 meetings between the governor and the Five Nations where the Sachem, Sadeganachtie, demanded “good regulation of the trade,” and asked that “let us not be wrong'd and overreach'd as wee have been, but let goods be as cheap as formerly.” He said, “let goods be as cheap as formerly,” listing generous standards on strouds; and that the commissioners should not let the beaver traders “goe to the old Trade again,” where they “used to take a piece of stick as long as your arm... and then they take that beaver and puts it in a scale and a piece of lead in the other scale, and if does not weigh down that piece of lead, they scruple to take it.” Conference of the Earl of Bellomont, 28 August 1700, NYCD vol. VI, p. 733. Also, the grievances the next year, after the sachems responded that prices were better in Quebec and bear and elk and moose skins were in greater demand. But the crux was, “moreover your weights are too heavy which you weigh the Bares and other skins withall, and we are often times not fairly dealt with by ye Traders.” Meeting with the Five Nations, 18 July 1702, NYCD Vol. IV, p. 987.

worse than our Savages."<sup>55</sup> The New Sweden officer Peter Lindström, suggested as much in a 1691 description of Amerindians along the Delaware River. It included a chapter on the "Commerce, Trade, and Dealings of the American Savages and How their Goods are Sold to the Christians, and also on the Merchandise of the Christians in disposal from them to the Savages." He said that Indians capably bargained when they traded fur for native currencies of shell roanoke and wampum, but "when one pays for them with the merchandise of the Christians, one can make an excessively large gain and profit in the trading with the Savage."<sup>56</sup> He claimed that once barter involved European goods, "the savages really do not understand this trade" and lost heavily upon the exchange. His examples included the Christians and Indians pulling cloth by its corners at the time of its trade, "so that he for three ells barely gets more than two; which the savage thinks should be thus, and does not understand himself cheated in this."<sup>57</sup> He also stated that "The savages also allow themselves to be greatly cheated in the sale of powder," which was sold by the European's handful.<sup>58</sup> Lindström wrote the account long after he had returned to Sweden (only days before his death, as it turned out), and his evaluations should be carefully considered in light of what contemporaries said to the contrary,<sup>59</sup> as well as later observations of the same Indians being extremely sharp dealers and discriminating buyers, especially with cloth. The New York councils heard consistent grievances from the Six Nations that British ells "should be Longer and the pounds heavyor for we find by Experience that your Ells are Short and your Pounds Light."<sup>60</sup>

But likely Lindström intentionally placed emphasis upon elements of an inherently unjust trade taking place between Indians and "Christians." Indians themselves used religious metaphor to criticize European weights and measures, an interesting turn in their own speeches demanding just measure. At New York, for instance, a sachem complained about unfair weighing practices at Albany, and promised that he would invite ministers and learn Christianity *after* prices were cheaper and weights were no longer heavy, "for then we can afford to buy a good honest Coat to go to Church withall, which

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<sup>55</sup>Quoted Thomas Elliot Norton, *The Fur Trade in Colonial New York, 1686-1776* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), p. 64.

<sup>56</sup>Peter Lindström, *Geographia Americae: With an Account of the Delaware Indians*, trans. Amadus Johnson (New York: Arno Press, 1979), pp. 223-224.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 225-226.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.* p. 226.

<sup>59</sup>Printz described in 1643, the "naked" Indians being "regengeful, clever in dealings and doings," as recounted in Amadus Johnson, *The Swedish Settlements on the Delaware, 1638-1664*, Vol. I, p. 375.

<sup>60</sup>Meeting 3 September 1720, NYCD Vol. V.



we cannot now, for it would be scandalous to come to Church with a Bear Skinn on our backs."<sup>61</sup> Benjamin Franklin retold the folkloric account of a visiting Indian to Pennsylvania who believed that when Europeans went to church to learn "good things," the "real purpose was to consult how to cheat Indians in the price of Beaver."<sup>62</sup> De Peyster, in the rhyming record of the speech he made to interior nations in his journey of 1779, told them that the French

... are not your friends,  
They only mean to serve their ends! ...  
I heard Gebau [a Jesuit who flagrantly traded skins in his mission] say, 'tis no sin  
To sell each pound, one otter-skin:  
This priest cares not how dear he sells,  
to those he styles poor infidels;<sup>63</sup>

How much Indians understood that they were being "cheated" can animate rationalistic and relativistic debate no end,<sup>64</sup> and likely, as the Lindström example suggests, Europeans so distracted by their own method of trade, implicitly carrying its own standard of right and wrong, were overlooking the Amerindian's evaluation of the exchange. Both parties coming into trade arguably reconciled their systems of exchange to accommodate the other and, in the end, mutually profit. Indians undoubtedly considered the inconvenience of traveling to other traders when they accepted the European's short-measuring techniques. Furthermore, following White's proposition of "middle ground" accommodations arising in trade,<sup>65</sup> it is possible that Indians turned their eyes from the European's short-measuring techniques in order to preserve the appearance of unchanging standards. They considered these more important to maintain because social relationships arising in the trade, whether fictive or not, depended upon them.

But returning to the present discussion, such strategies that served to reconcile the European trade to the Amerindian's alarmed contemporaries and mobilized

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<sup>61</sup>Meeting with the Five Nations, 18 July 1702, Vol. IV NYCD, p. 987.

<sup>62</sup>Benjamin Franklin, *Two Tracts: Information to those who would remove to America and. Remarks concerning the Savages of North America* (London: John Stockdale, 1784), pp. 38-39.

<sup>63</sup>See translated copy of De Peyster' speech made at L'Arbre Croche, 4 July 1779, in Vol. XVIII, *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, pp. 377-383.

<sup>64</sup>See, for instance, the analysis of anthropological observation in Dan Sperber, "Apparently irrational beliefs," in *On Anthropological Knowledge: Three Essays* (Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 36-45; and Ernst Gellner, "Relativism and Universals," in *Relativism and the Social Sciences* (Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 83- 100.

<sup>65</sup>See his chapter devoted to the fur trade, Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge, 1991).

European opinion. Indeed, it was in his transactions with Indians, in Indian Territory, where the trader revealed problems inherent in a commercializing society at home. Thus, there was something of a warning for home society in correspondence collected by the Board of Trade concerning the Indian Trade. These revealed the possible ends and means of merchants and traders who enjoyed full freedom in America and commanded both the ethics of exchange and allowed their self-interest seemingly to run without limit. A letter writer from the troubled Carolina colony in 1718, spoke to this problem of self-interest, when traders had engrossed the country "thro' a Mercenary and Ignorant temper which reigns in most of our people."<sup>66</sup> Lahontan threw the shadow of the merchant over his own society, as much as the Indian's, when he had his fictive Indian, Adario, recount that there were some merchants who made a small gain on the good and fairly priced commodities they sold Indians, and others who won excessive gain on merchandize that looked good, but whose values Indians did not have the ability to know, such as on hatchets, kettles, powder and guns.<sup>67</sup> Adario then points out the problem, that "if a merchant hasn't a right heart, and if he has not the virtue to resist the many temptations that the negotiation exposes him, he will always violate the Law of Justice, of equity, charity, sincerity, and good faith."<sup>68</sup> Lahontan, through his Indian character's voice, seems no longer to speak about American as much as European conditions and the problems contemporaries perceived in the increasing presence of commerce in their society.

Certainly the same can be suggested in the writing of Colonel Robert Rogers. In 1766, Rogers was a famed Indian fighter from the French-Indian War, by then unemployed and requesting from the Lords Commissioners of Trade and Plantations an assignment or administrative posting in America.<sup>69</sup> It was likely to raise his reputation as a capable Indian agent that he made, according to the *Monthly Review*, the injudicious decision to write a play and "exposing himself to ridicule, by an unsuccessful attempt to entwine the poet(')s lays with the soldier's laurels."<sup>70</sup> The play *Ponteach: or the Savages*

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<sup>66</sup>Excerpt of correspondence dated 17 December 1718, CO 5/1265, ff. 247-248.

<sup>67</sup>Les marchands nous font plaisir; quelques-uns nous portent quelquefois de bonnes marchandises, il y en a de bons et d'équitables, qui se contentent de faire un petit gain. ... enfin je connois bien des négocians qui ont l'âme juste et raisonnable, et à qui nôtre Nation est très redevable; d'autres pareillement qui n'ont pour but que de gagner excessivement sur des marchandises de belle apparence, et de peu de rapport, comme sur les haches, les chaudières, la poudre, les fusils, etc., que nous n'avons pas le talent de connoître. Réal Ouellet, ed., *Lahontan: Oeuvres complètes II* (Les Presses de l'Université de Montreal, 1990), p. 865.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup>He did not have long to wait. Despite the sorry reception to his play, the Lords of Trade supported his chief bid: the administration of an inland trading post, the busy Michilimackinac.

<sup>70</sup>Review, "Ponteach: or the Savages of America," *Monthly Review* February 1766, Vol. 34, p. 242.

of *America*, as literature went, was no less than "one of the most absurd attempts we have ever seen,"<sup>71</sup> the editor wrote. But despite its failure as literature, Roger's play suggests some of the current European evaluations of the Indian trade in America.

The play concerns the Pontiac War, and begins by introducing two characters named M'Dole and Murphey, Indian Traders who arrive in the first scene to their trading post. This remarkable beginning, vividly bringing the exchange between European and Amerindian to view, immediately focuses attention upon the profiteering concealed in the forests of America and drew considerable irony in the fact that these English traders would later be murdered for such practices.

M'Dole: "So, Murphey, you are come to try your Fortune  
Among the Savages in this wild Desart?"

Murphey: "Ay, any Thing to get an honest living..."

M'Dole asked him if he was experienced as a fur trader. "Know you the Principles by which it prospers, and how to make it lucrative and safe?" Murphey admits being "unacquainted with your *Indian* Commerce, and gladly would I learn the Arts from you, Who're old, and practis'd in them many Years." Taking pity on the naive newcomer, M'Dole announces that he would inform him "of all the secret arts by which we thrive," and taking an inventory of Murphey's rum, blankets, wampum, powder, bells, "and such like Trifles as they're wont to prize," he teaches the "fundamental maxim" by which "it's no Crime to cheat and gull an *Indian*."<sup>72</sup> His apprentice is shocked by this, "How! Not a Sin to Cheat an Indian, say you? Are they not men? hav'nt they a Right to Justice as Well as we, though savage in their manners?"

The trader says that if the newcomer quibbled with such moral points their lessons would end, for "This is the very Quintessence of Trade." He pointed out that the trading house that they used had been built by "old Ogden," who retired on earnings achieved by buying "by weight" and having "made the ign'rant Savages believe that his Right foot exactly weigh'd a Pound." M'Dole then taught his pupil of the use of rum, "the great engine" of trade, which made his inebriated customers believe that he was "generous and just." He showed the newcomer his scales, "honest, but so well contriv'd, that one small slip will turn three pounds to one; which they, poor silly souls! ignorant of weights and rules of balancing, do not perceive."<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>Robert Rogers, *Ponteach: or the Savages of America, A Tragedy* (London: Printed for the Author, 1766.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.* Act 1 Scene 1 p. 4.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 5

The play continues with Indians entering M'Dole's trading house, first drinking the rum generously offered, then parting with their falsely weighed furs for a cask of rum. Murphey, the apprenticing clerk, is amazed: "By Jove," he exclaims after the Indians' departure, "you've gain'd more in a single Hour than ever I have done in half a year. Curse on my Honesty! I might have been a little king, and liv' without Concern."<sup>74</sup>

In the first lines of his play, Rogers proved the necessity for supervision (his own) of a trade where lowly peddlers cheated Indians, and through unfair gain aspired to the life of kings, living without concerns. But it was the spectacle of flexible weights and measures, the easy manipulation of a buyer's trust and the fantastic gains tempting a merchant to over-reach in trade which were evocative issues in the imaginations of theatre-goers. Europeans were indeed intrigued by the spectacle of the fur trader's chicanery which revealed how the worst elements of human nature, bound by law and state regulation at home, broke down almost immediately in Indian Territory. Here, laws of exchange considered to be universal appeared specific to home society, and at that, easily swept aside in the pursuit of gain. Moreover, any proximity to the just price of the market was lost here in the forests of America.

Such matters resonated in the debate at home about the place trade should occupy in society. In 1718, William Wood could still cite large sections of British society who did not "perceive the inseparable affinity between the landed and the trading interest...."<sup>75</sup> Trade writers like Defoe still grappled to locate the ethics that had guided canonism in his mercantile world.<sup>76</sup> The problem of reconciling calculating self-interest appropriate for the market place, to the needs of a civil society, would continue to bother Adam Ferguson.<sup>77</sup> Whether in deciding the virtues of credit, by then supporting a massive amount of public finance, or the ethics of a marketplace no longer bound to medieval conceptions of a just price, home audiences were likely extremely sensitive to news of commerce in Indian territory. The "reformers" of the New York Indian Trade drew the

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<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>75</sup>Cited in Thomas Keith Meier, *Defoe and the Defense of Commerce* (University of Victoria, English Literary Studies, 1987), p. 34.

<sup>76</sup>See Meier's overview of the early eighteenth century, where the "new commercial age" was still grounded upon canonism, the condemnation of all economic activity beyond that necessary to support an individual in a hereditary station in life. To do more was to be guilty of avarice...." *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 28; on Defoe's system of "retributive virtue," see pp. 92-95. Sandra Sherman examines the debate about the "fiction" of credit in the early eighteenth century, in *Finance and Fictionality in the Early Eighteenth Century: Accounting for Defoe* (Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>77</sup>As, for example in his *History of Civil Society*, see Christopher Berry, *Social Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), pp. 29; 133-144.

worst nightmares of a commercial society in their descriptions of mercantile self-interest animating the Indians traders in America. Their ready access to print media and high standing in colonial society allowed Sir William Johnson, Peter Wraxall, Robert Livingston and Cadwallader Colden in the 1740s to campaign against the "vile" practices of this colonial trading community, specifically the Albany traders, "ignorant and illiterate and so enslaved to the love of money that they have no other principle of action," as one of them wrote.<sup>78</sup> Most of these criticisms were used to urge an imperialistic redirection of the trade to crush the French influence among New York's traditional Indian allies. But their strategy was clearly guided by a consideration of their audience and a home concern for merchants who were allowed to pursue, as Peter Kalm described the motives of Albany traders, "avarice, selfishness and immeasurable love of money."<sup>79</sup> Robert Sandors, an Albany merchant, believed that such "malicious people" blamed Albanian traders "right or wrong" for offenses, which they actually knew nothing about.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, correspondents and memoir writers were anxious to question the moral scruples of the trader in this, the Indian's natural setting, where law was absent and traditional certifications of respectability -- property, taxes and social standing -- were meaningless.

There was no lack of examples to show how quickly an unsavory aspect of commerce came to the fore in the fur trade, this setting where self-interest was given free limits and a society's mercantile class held sway. If commerce ideally tied together individuals in trust, and credit itself became a means of establishing the basis of society -- itself a popular proposition advanced in the early modern period -- the Indian trade revealed how quickly ties that bind could be snapped where the upper ranks were weak in number and commercial law had little enforcement.<sup>81</sup> The correspondent entrusted with goods quickly sought his own advantage at the expense of both his creditor and the Indians he met in transactions. The Lords of Trade caught sight of these shadowy figures whose sins were not against God as much as to their commercial correspondents at home and the Indians who were denied equitable exchange for their natural commodities. Where unjust exchanges were seen as leading in great measure to the Yamasee War, one observer remembered Carolina traders tramping through Indian lands "not giving half the

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<sup>78</sup>Thomas Elliot Norton, *The Fur Trade in Colonial New York, 1686-1776* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), pp. 62-65.

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 64-65.

<sup>80</sup>Quoted in David Arthur Armour, "The Merchants of Albany, New York: 1686-1760," Ph.D. thesis, Northwestern University, 1965, p. x.

<sup>81</sup>Muldrew, pp. 61-64.

value for the goods they took;" and in one case using Indians as cheap labour and "purly out of ostentation saying in my hearing he had made them honour him as their governour."<sup>82</sup> Virginian traders were accused of offering "easier rates" to the Indians if they wholly destroyed Carolina, this only to procure deer skins and slaves; Virginian traders were in other settings "cheap-selling [Indians] goods and kind usage" which set the Indian to mischief.<sup>83</sup> Thus, traders did not quibble with selling Indians guns, having "more regard to their own gain, then the security of their distressed neighbour, and the Public good." And the merchant's black heart was again revealed in Carolina itself, where the assembly was monopolizing the trade and creating regulations that protected their interests before the colony's.<sup>84</sup>

In this place where the pursuit of self-interest had no bounds, Indian traders committed two sins. In competitive conditions, they advanced goods not their own, either as gifts or in onerous credit arrangements with Indians. In places where a trader engrossed the trade, he advanced prices, which garnered profits to himself while disadvantaging his merchant correspondent. Or, he offered low prices on some wares, and higher on others in order to, in the end, overreach a transaction. In these latter cases, it was ultimately the producer at home who lost when a consignment trader cheated the Indian buyer. Other sins went to the heart of questions concerning consumerism at home. It was believed that traders who enjoyed too liberal credit were themselves too free in giving large supplies of goods to Indians who did not earn them. James Wright, Georgia's governor, summarized what he believed were the effects of the trader's liberal credit lines among the Indians. The latter had "arrived at the height of mischievous wantonness and insolence." If traders could be men "of property and character, who can be confided in," Wright believed that some of the ills of the trade could be corrected, whereby Indians would be supplied "with goods sparingly, or otherwise according to their Conduct and Behaviour," since "an oversupply of goods makes them Wanton, Insolent, and Ripe for every Kind of Mischief. And that a Moderate Supply keeps them within decent bounds and makes them observe a Submissive, Proper behaviour."<sup>85</sup> Wright subsequently drew up a list of commercial offenses traders committed nearby, whereby the "unlimited numbers of traders are suffered to go amongst them and who in general take every base

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<sup>82</sup>PRO. Mr. Craley Letter, 30 July 1715, C.O.5/ 1265.

<sup>83</sup>PRO. Excerpts found in ff. 91-92, C.O.5/ 1265.

<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*, excerpt of letter, dated 17 December 1718, f. 247; and Kettleby Letter, co-signed by "Several Merchants Trading to Carolina," 16 September 1716, f. 11.

<sup>85</sup>PRO. James Wright to Hillsborough, 12 December 1771, C.O.5/ 651, ff. 93-94.

advantage and make use of every method of cheating and defrauding them as do the outsetters in the back parts of the Province."<sup>86</sup> The problems attending the trade eventually prompted Lieutenant-Governor Thomas Dumford in West Florida to urge Parliament's regulation of the Indian trade, due to "the strong desire of Gain which reigns in the Human Breast."<sup>87</sup>

As he rose in Indian affairs administration, William Johnson posted many stories of trade abuses to the Lords Commissioners of Trade and Plantations in an effort to curtail and restrict trade that he saw benefiting a few and imperiling the many. Johnson, himself a former trader, was not an Indian trade promoter. Due to his own warnings posted in memos to England, an eventual prohibition of trade and a delineation of Indian Territory, as created in the 1763 Proclamation, came about.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, it was the commercial strategies he advocated, the limits to be placed on exchange, and the inapplicability of maxims of British commerce in America, that show that Indian Territory was as much a commercial idea as a conception of Indian hunting and gathering society. He seized upon the issue of unfair weights and measures as a primary cause of Indian unrest. He strategically reported that these "men of lowest means" used such techniques not only to defraud Indians but cheat men of higher status among Indians, the sachems and chiefs. His stories of abuse concerning weights and measures had a consistent theme, for instance, the Ottawa chief "of great influence," whose furs were devalued and trade goods inconsistently weighed and withheld from him; or the account of a Seneca warrior of "influence and ability," being similarly cheated in trade.<sup>89</sup> To Johnson, Indian Territory was the region, by definition, where British commerce became distorted into plunder, and the very English soul ran to vice. It was, he said, remarkable what "lengths some of that character (of lowest means) will go when subject to no controul..."<sup>90</sup> His solution was to demarcate the very limits of British commerce, here along the frontiers of the eastern colonies.

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<sup>86</sup>PRO. Wright to Hillsborough, 8 May 1771, C.O.5/ 651, f. 64.

<sup>87</sup>PRO. Dumford to Hillsborough, "Some Thoughts on the Indian Trade," 19 February 1770, C.O.5/ 577, f. 343.

<sup>88</sup>The literature on Sir William Johnson is voluminous. On Johnson's contribution to the Royal Proclamation and biographical information, see James Thomas Flexner, *Mohawk Baronet: A Biography of Sir William Johnson* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1989), p. 274; Milton W. Hamilton, *Sir William Johnson: Colonial American, 1715-1763* (Port Washington: National University Publications, 1976).

<sup>89</sup>See William Johnson, "Review of the Trade and Affairs of the Indians in the Northern District of America, in *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York* Vol. VII, pp. 955-957.

<sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 955.

Among Johnson's more controversial proposals was the tariff, or list of prices, for merchandise at each trade post, "proportional to their distances and the expense attending the transportation of cargoes, which was done on such principles as rendered it agreeable to the traders and satisfactory to the Indians."<sup>91</sup> He also sought the elimination of credit, now available to the "very dregs of the people ... who all in this country easily obtained credit for goods at an advanced price," and who went into Indian territory. It was natural "that regularity, honesty or discretion could not with propriety be expected of them, especially as it clashed with their private interests."<sup>92</sup> It was the same who then sold "some articles below the first cost, and extorting upon others, that the merchants who supply the goods must suffer, members of the traders be ruined and the Indians universally discontented."<sup>93</sup> Johnson, then, looked to have the boundless English system of credit stopped before it went inland, traders closely supervised and the free market of rising and falling prices on goods rather idealistically arrested.

Meanwhile, it was the expansive directions of the trader's self-interest and the problem of reconciling passions for profit to civil obligations that received a great deal of attention, particularly when "unlawful trades" tested a community member's own loyalty. The problem was recognized early in the century, when traders throughout the Americas blatantly pursued their self-interest at the expense of fellow colonists. Cotton Mather, whose own brother-in-law was convicted of trading with the French and enemy Indians, believed such "unlawful" Indian trading had "begun a new Day of Temptation upon the Land; and raised a mighty Flame among the People."<sup>94</sup> William Penn not only had to defend the religious principles of his colony. He had to vow that he had received not "one six pence" from the French Indians he met in diplomatic meetings.<sup>95</sup> Soon after the Yamasee War in Carolina, the Tuscararo War in Virginia and the degenerating relations between the English settlers and Indians up and down the expanding fringes of English settlements, English "foreign traders" were suspected at work. They were either exciting Indians to attack fellow colonists with promises of low priced trade goods, trading indiscriminately with Indians who regularly raided other Englishmen, or exciting warfare between Indian groups to buy slaves.

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<sup>91</sup>*Ibid.* p. 960.

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 961.

<sup>93</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 965.

<sup>94</sup>Cotton Mather, 19 June 1706, *Diary of Cotton Mather*, Vol. I (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1957), p. 565.

<sup>95</sup>PRO. Penn to Lords of Trade, 26 August 1701, CO 5/1261 ff. 61-63.



The problematic place of British commerce in Indian territory was uppermost in the social and political questions of South Carolina, where its trade reached its most productive period between 1696 and 1715 (interrupted by the bloody Yamasee War, sparked, by most accounts, by trade abuses). Correspondence from the proprietors of South Carolina by 1715 underscored the benefits of the "considerable quantities of skins" traded from Indians, but soon recognized the problem of self-interest animating its commercial ranks, especially with goods in such high demand, finding ever higher pricing, and such affairs tempting merchants to act in flagrant abandon to the good interests of their colony. South Carolina merchants, enriched by trade, were trading with the Spanish to the South, and the French at New Orleans. Their ships floated into New Orleans laden with limbourg cloth and other wares. Carolina merchants boldly established houses within Louisiana itself to sell direct and on account to French officers. The former trader, Ogilthorpe, who rose to administration in the colony, confessed that his good relations with Charleston traders were now in ruins as he attempted to stop such contraband trade. The Spanish and French with whom they traded were now committing offenses among the colony's Indian allies. In such circumstances, it was apparent that commercial interest simply did not work to the common good, especially when traders offended Indians through fraudulent practices and the only remaining solution was to take security for the trader's good behavior. ("If we suffered the Indians to destroy them for such offenses, we should give them the government from the King, and if we did not, they would take a national revenge of us all..."<sup>96</sup>)

New York's fur trade reached its heights under similar circumstances. Contemporaries viewed Albany merchants as cowards and traitors for their self-serving commercial activities.<sup>97</sup> The colony was stage for a protracted fight between governors and traders, beginning with Dongan's administration, whose initiatives in westward expansionism in the 1690s were met from the start among the Albany traders with apathy. They knew their cheaply priced goods attracted Indian middlemen and traders, and that it was more profitable to stay at home than to go inland. Beginning in 1700, such Albany merchants as Robert Livingston believed the colony's security lay in the trade's westward expansion, and applauded the governor's construction of the Fort at Onondaga to solidify direct ties between the colony and the Far Indians, likely Shawnee. By the 1720s, the merchant community's unwillingness to establish direct trading links to these distant Indian nations was clearly undermining the colony's good. Merchants chose, rather, to

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<sup>96</sup>PRO. Ogilthorpe, 1715? COS/383 f. 232; also Correspondence of Proprietors, 9 July 1715, *Ibid.*, f. 2.

<sup>97</sup>See introduction to Armour, "The Merchants of Albany, New York," pp. 1-11.

ship goods to New France via Christianized Six Nations runners, and thus supply French merchants and officers inland to prosecute the trade.<sup>98</sup> Even the God-fearing merchant, Robert Sanders, former Albany mayor and one of the town's Indian trade commissioners, had running accounts with French officers inland and merchants in Montreal. His books identified French correspondents with bale insignia that maintained their anonymity: doves, weigh scales (evenly balanced!), and peace pipes.<sup>99</sup> Bellomont's reaction was to revive Dongan's strategic trade expansionism so that a direct trade with inland Indians would meet the colony's common good. His colony's traders already charged with outfitting the "northern" Indians to attack the frontiers of Virginia and South Carolina, he had much reason to attempt reforms to the spirit of the fur trade. The establishment of Fort Oswego was one part of his plan. The other was to place tariffs on Indian goods going to Canadian traders which resulted in the storm of merchant memorials in London and New York claiming that they were patently unconstitutional, especially when traders suspected of trading to the French were required to provide testimony to the Indian trade commissioners or face fines.<sup>100</sup>

The Indian trade's expansion, then, in some measure tested the degree to which Britain's self-serving commercial ranks really worked to the good of the whole. When Governor Bellomont's Acts were finally overturned as contrary to the rights of Englishmen and commercial law, the issue vividly caught the contradictions of mercantile self interest and civic humanism promoted by eager traders and merchants in England since the seventeenth century.<sup>101</sup> Trade reformers in the 1720s meanwhile cited a virtuous, classical, alternative to the ways English commerce was prosecuted in the Indian trade. They sought a trade that benefited the good of the commonwealth, not merely the few. Wraxall, then, raided the colony's ancient Indian Affairs records to send the Lords Commissioners of Trade his influential (if highly annotated) memoir on the

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<sup>98</sup>See Thomas Elliot Norton, *The Fur Trade in Colonial New York: 1686-1776* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), pp. 9-23, 63-64; Allen W. Trelease, *Indian Affairs in Colonial New York: The Seventeenth Century* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1960), pp. 334-353.

<sup>99</sup>NAC. Robert Sanders Letterbooks. Norton seems to err when he identifies one of the illustrations as a chicken. It is clearly a dove, and likely chosen by a military officer for its value in communicating the idea of peace in trade. On the Canadian trade, and Sanders letterbooks, see Norton, pp. 121-124.

<sup>100</sup>PRO. See, Petition of London Merchants, 19 November 1720, C.O. 5/ 1055, f. 4; Also, NAC, on oath-taking and problem of New Yorkers taking "Christian" goods to Quebec traders for trade with Indians, see, in particular, 19 June 1723, Minutes of the Commissioners of Albany Commissioners of Indian Affairs; also, related petitions, letters and memorials 1725-26 in *NYCD*, Vol. V, pp. 748-763.

<sup>101</sup>On the commercial promotions of the seventeenth century, see Steve Pincus, "Neither Machiavellian Moment nor Possessive Individualism: Commercial Society and the Defenders of the English Commonwealth," *American Historical Review* 103 (3), June 1998, pp. 705-736.

place in which trade figured in the colony's Indian Affairs. Wraxall castigated the policies of the Dutch traders before the arrival of the English, whose own avid self-interest now undermined the colony's Indian affairs; he condemned the English traders whose trade freedoms led them to use faulty weights and measures, cheat Indians and weaken key Indian alliances with the English.<sup>102</sup> Cadwallader Colden., too, identified the self-serving greed of the Albany Dutch. Writing to a London publisher, he reported "the Scandalous attachment of the first Dutch settlers to the getting of Money of which I have again and again been assured to be the truth & of which strong proofs remain... that sometimes when an Indian came into some of their houses to trade rather than that he should go to try the market at a neighbours house they would suffer the Indian to turn into bed to their wives." Smith then turned to the present, and possible outcome of such greed continuing in his colony: "The Richest men among the Indian Traders are not in the least ashamed in having the basest cheating of the Indians discover'd & this so far prevails that it has allmost entirely destroy'd the Morals of that part of the Country so that they are become a proverb in other parts of the Country further than he has an interest with them... But who knows how far this infection may spread if all sense of shame be destroy'd & they be suffer'd to enjoy the sweat of the sin & avoid the punishment justly due to it."<sup>103</sup>

Perceptible in the concerns raised in the colonial fur trade, then, were fundamental questions about the virtues and vices of English commerce. Certainly the fur trade became a favoured resort to early trade promoters at home. By the early eighteenth century, they could celebrate the Royal Exchange as the temple of England's cult of commerce; but they could also, as Addington did, see it as a veritable den of iniquity and the Indian trade an example of everything presently wrong with the commercial ranks. The *Spectator*, then, repeatedly visited the thorny problem of virtuous commerce in the Americas. Its pages included a condemnation of the "barbarous Europeans" who had murdered thousands of Indians for gold, an obvious reference to natural law, and letters criticizing the Royal Exchange. More harshly, the *Spectator* printed the revealing, likely

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<sup>102</sup>His footnote, for instance: "I suppose Pouder was sold by the Bag and the Albany People according to their general and usual Practice of Action had cheated the Indians and made their Bags less. It was by such Mean and dishonest Methods that they became Odious and Contemptible to the Indians, lost their Esteem and Confidence and that great improvement of their trade with the Western and farr Inians which might have fallen into their hands and by that means sucred those Indians to our Interest. Trade is the best and surest foundation to secure their Alliance, etc." footnote 1, See Peter Wraxall, *An Abridgment of the Indian Affairs*, Charles Howard McIlwain, ed., (New York: Benjamin Bloom, 1968), p. 61.

<sup>103</sup>Letter to Peter Collinson, May 1742, *The Letters and Papers of Cadwallader Colden* Vol. 2, Collections of the New York Historical Society for the Year 1918, (New York: The Society, 1919), pp. 259; 260-262; see also William Smith, Jr., *The History of the Province of New-York, from the First Discovery to the year 1732*, (London: 1756), pp. 159-164 CIHM microfiche 40691.

fictional, story of a young Thomas Inkle, of London, who at twenty years of age had decided on an adventure of trade and merchandise to Barbados "to improve his Fortune." His shipmates were attacked and killed by Indians on an American shore and the young man in escaping was harboured by an Indian maiden with whom he fell in love. The woman becomes a personification of America in the essay, having "limbs, features and wild graces of the Naked America." She hid the visitor from her peers and brought him seashells, glass beads, and spoils "so that his Cave was richly adorned with all the spotted Skins of beasts." This symbolic reference to America and the skin trade then turned critical: Having fallen in love in the context of American simplicity, and its virtuous exchanges, the man convinces his Indian bride to escape with him to London, but on the passage back he begins to worry about the loss of time, his failed fortune, and debt ("the many days interest of his money"). When he arrives in London he sells his Indian bride with child to a West Indian merchant to recoup some of his financial losses.<sup>104</sup>

As English colonists did, so the *Spectator* promoted a classical civic humanism for the merchant community to adhere. An issue from 1712 opened with a quotation of Cicero:

laying every Thing open,  
so that what the Seller knows,  
The Buyer may no means be ignorant of

The editorial related the need for traders to own up to what is theirs and what is not, and account for First Manufactures, and to right the "common and prostituted behaviour of traders in ordinary Commerce." The editorial returned to Cicero, that "Your profit ought to be the Common Profit, and it is unjust to make any Step toward Gain, where in the Gain of even those to whom you sell in not also consulted."<sup>105</sup> The same moral issue was revisited in a letter said to have been written by a trader at the Royal Exchange, who sought to give "good lectures to young traders," on the right and wrong ways of trade. The writer contrasted two examples in the persons of "Honestus" and "Fortunatus." The first carried substantial goods, traded with his own stock, and husbanded his money to best advantage without taking advantage of the dire straits of his workmen and "makes modest profit by modest means." He was contrasted with Fortunatus, whose ignorance and elevated self-opinion led him to stock poor quality goods, his "blustering" persistence in a sale always prompting promises he could not

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<sup>104</sup>See No. 50: 27 April 1711; No. 509: 14 October 1712, in Donald F. Bond, ed., *The Spectator* (Reprinted by Oxford Press, 1965). The Inkle account is found in Vol. I, No. 11: 13 March 1711, pp. 49-51.

<sup>105</sup>*Ibid.*, No. 546, 26 November 1712, pp. 453-455.

keep. His activities revealed a blind pursuit of gain by any means, to "raise a considerable fortune by imposition on others, to the discouragement and ruin of those who trade in the same way."<sup>106</sup>

The call to better direct the Indian trade towards the common good would prompt the idealistic hopes for a "national trade," envisioned by William Keith, the Albany conference of 1754, and eventually the Lords of Trade united plan for the Indian Trade, all efforts undermined by colonial politics. Many of the proposals had direct bearing on the ways and means of Indian commerce, and by implication, English commerce at home. Peter Wraxall in 1755 proposed that all goods be disposed of from selected English forts by an appointed factor, that "frauds and impositions on the Indians" be discovered, and an individual regularly inspect traders' weights and measures, as part of his campaign to have the English strike equitable relations and closer political allegiances with the Indians, along the lines of the French example.<sup>107</sup> After the Conquest and perceptible in the initial idealism of a unified plan regulating the North American fur trade, the Board of Trade and Plantations crystallized many of the age's concern for commerce in Indian Territory. The original plan would allow Indians of the Southern Department to choose a "beloved man" to take care of their interests in trade. Commissioners would decide, from time to time, the trade tariffs at the posts.<sup>108</sup>

The Board of Trade, however, was fully conscious of the constitutional and economic dangers of tampering with British trade freedoms. Already heavily criticized for the close regulation of the Quebec trade and the establishment of an Indian Territory in the Royal Proclamation, where trade was prohibited in large tracts of America, the Lords in writing the "Plan for the Future Management of Indian Affairs" of 1764, saw tariff proposals advanced by Wraxall and Johnson as attractive but "a regulation of great difficulty and delicacy." Fixing prices in the Indian Trade, though needed, was a dangerous precedent:

Since it is in its nature inconsistent with and might in its operation be restrictive of that freedom which is one of the first principles of Commerce and cannot either in justice and reason be fixed without the mutual consent of parties having adverse and contradictory interests.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup>*Ibid.*, No. 443, 29 July 1712, p. 57.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 January 1755/56, Peter Wraxall, "Some Thoughts upon the British Indian Interest in North America..." p. 27

<sup>108</sup> "Plan for the Future Management of Indian Affairs," 10 July 1764, *Ibid.*, pp. 638-640.

<sup>109</sup> The board implored Johnson to send them examples of precedents or "reasons and arguments that do not occur to us" so that such regulation could be pursued. *Ibid.* p. 636.

Because it overturned a basic principle of English commerce, of rising and falling prices based upon demand and supply, the board urged William Johnson to supply it more information about the proposal; it specifically asked for precedents in the trade that might guide such legislation through what was expected to be difficult reception in the House. Benjamin Franklin, it might be pointed out, also noted that Johnson's proposal to have a general tariff "seems contrary to the Nature of Commerce for Government to interfere in the Prices of Commodities. Trade is a voluntary Thing between Buyer and Seller, in every Article of which each exercises his own Judgement and is to please himself."<sup>110</sup>

The frequent and well publicized visits of Amerindian chiefs in England, previously noted, usually revived the issue of false weights and measures in the Indian trade. The Cherokee chiefs in 1730, negotiating the treaty of "friendship and commerce"<sup>111</sup> elicited comments from the *Daily Journal* editor: "altho' these People are ignorant of our language, yet they know when they are impos'd on, and have themselves the most inviolable Regard for their Engagements...."<sup>112</sup> Papers reporting the visit of the Georgian Creeks in 1733, noted that Tomochichi's request for increases in trade with his people was accompanied by a demand for "standard weights and measures."<sup>113</sup> There was also the curious idealism of one Pribner, who, in 1733, began his utopian community among the Cherokees of South Carolina with the goal to teach them weights and measures and other matters of importance in "preserving their liberties."<sup>114</sup>

The concern for fair weights and measures was carried further by Governor Chester, in Pensacola, West Florida, who sent to the Board of Trade in 1772 a

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<sup>110</sup>He went on to say that, "Suppose on those Terms: pose either Trader or Indian is dissatisfied with the Tariff, and refuses to barter on those terms: Are the Refusers to be compell'd? If not, Why should an Indian be forbidden to take more Goods for his Skins than your Tariff allows if the Trader is willing to give them; or a Trader more Skins for his Goods if the Indian is willing to give them? Where there are a number of different Traders, the separate desire of each to get most Custom will operate in bringing their goods down to a reasonable price. It therefore seems to me, that Trade will best find and make its own Rates. And that Government cannot well interfere, unless it would take th ewhol trade into its own Hands, as in some colonies it does, and manage its own servants at its own risque." "Remarks on the Plan for Regulating the Indian Trade," 1766, Leonard W. Labaree, ed., *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, Vol. 13, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), pp. 439-440.

<sup>111</sup>*Daily Journal*, 29 September 1730; *Universal Spectator*, 3 October 1730.

<sup>112</sup>*Daily Journal* 30 September 1730.

<sup>113</sup>Foreman, p.59. On a comparable visit to France, see the 1725 visit of Illinois chiefs reported in *Mercure de France*, Decembre 1725, pp. 2833-2856.

<sup>114</sup>Benjamin Bissell, *The American Indian in English Literature of the Eighteenth Century* (Archon Books, 1968), p. 39.

list of complaints of the Indians which not only suggested the means to political security in their region. He reported their "poverty and beg'd exceedingly to be supplied in all their wants," he wrote, and included their reports of fraudulent traders "in diminishing their weights and measures, and of their not selling agreeable to the tariff, and beg'd to be furnished with a copy of the tariff, and which weights and measures to serve as standards, by which the trade should be regulated and said that they would then live in peace and quiet."<sup>115</sup>

### III.

The trade that developed in America, however, could be promoted as easily as it was criticized; those with stakes in the trade often suggested that the trader should not be vilified, but celebrated; not restricted, but allowed freedom. Indeed, not all agreed with such writers as Robert Beverley, whose *The History and Present State of Virginia* (1705) lamented the trade because "The English have taken away great part of their Country, and consequently made every thing less plenty amongst them. They have introduc'd Drunkenness and Luxury amongst them, which have multiply'd their Wants, and put them upon desiring a thousand things, they never dreamt of before."<sup>116</sup> Others believed the multiplication of these wants was a good and necessary thing for Indians. Moreover, England was in the throes of a debate over the credit animating commercializing society and the large amount of public credit supporting government itself. Certainly credit could be feared, especially after the South Sea Bubble of 1720. The fictitious quality of credit appeared as a theme in early century plays, novels, and essays.<sup>117</sup> But, as Defoe argued, it was not credit itself that was evil. If properly placed in another person, credit served as "mutual confidence which one man reposes in another." He saw the utility of credit and blamed the "Chymist" who created "Air-Money" in stock-jobbing and abusing public confidence.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>115</sup>PRO, Letter from Governor Chester, 20 February 1772, CO 5/589.

<sup>116</sup>Robert Beverley, *The History and Present State of Virginia*, ed. by Louis B. Wright (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1947), p. 233. Beverley also makes his strongest condemnation of the English in his section on "the Treasure or Riches of the Indians," remarking on the currency used by Indians before the English came among them, using Peak, Roenoke and other shells (and such like trifles made out of the Cunk shell. These past with them instead of Gold and Silver, and serv' d them both for Money, and Ornament. It was the *English* alone that taught them first to put a value on their skins and furs, and to make a Trade of them," p. 277.

<sup>117</sup>See, Sandra Sherman, *Finance and Fictionality in the Early Eighteenth Century: Accounting for Defoe*, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

<sup>118</sup>See Sherman, *Finance and Fictionality*, pp. 24-27; 37-41.

So could trade promoters propose benefits in extending, not restricting, commerce to the Indians in America. They imagined virtuous connections of "such "mutual confidence" between the European and Indian, the benefits of strengthening, not weakening, commercial ties binding newcomers with Amerindians. We have seen that in New France, memorials and narratives urging trade expansion cited numerous social benefits to be derived from the Indian trade's expansion. Following the reinstatement of the *congé*, colonists asked for the freeing up of trade at the King's Posts and elsewhere, now arguing that the trade's expansion would bring goods at lower cost to Indians. With the numbers of traders and supply of goods would increase, prices of these Indian "necessities" would thereby decrease, resulting in harmonious relations.<sup>119</sup> These were not free trade arguments, *per se*; the marine ministry itself only encouraged liberalization in the Indian trade by the 1740s, when New France Intendant, Gilles Hoquart, attempted to displace some of the military ranks out of the trade and replace them with private merchants and entrepreneurs. Versailles supported these measures, because it was believed that monopolies within the officer corps kept prices high, while merchants following their self interest would offer competitive prices, strike good relations with Amerindians and remain diligent to keep trade from being abused.<sup>120</sup> The government subsequently began to auction the trading leases at some of the western posts -- by no means all of them -- to the highest merchant bidders in Montreal and Quebec.

Long before these developments, however, French merchants had argued that the *fermier's* buying monopoly, and high prices on European goods, hurt the Indian trade and implied that freeing aspects of the trade would lead to lower prices for Indians who needed trade goods.<sup>121</sup> In Louisiana, especially after the dismal failure of monopolized trade concessions, numerous writers advocated that colonists should be

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<sup>119</sup> See for instance, the anonymous report on the post system, and the report on Niagara, where the King reserved the trade, "mais ses employés le régissent mal, d'une façon onéreuse pour les sauvages et lucrative seulement pour eux." The writer saw free trade allowing for an abundance of trade goods and lowering prices for Indians. *Le Bulletin des recherches historiques*, vol. XXXVII, no. 6, Juin 1931, p. 424

<sup>120</sup> S.Dale Standen, "Personnes sans caractère": Private Merchants, Post Commanders and the Regulation of the Western Fur Trade, 1720-1745," in Hubert Watelet, ed., *De France en Nouvelle-France: Société fondatrice et société nouvelle* (Ottawa: Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1994), p. 281.

<sup>121</sup> For reference to the earlier buying freedoms given to the *fermier*, see the marine ministry's instructions to Le Febvre de La Barre, governor of New France. He was to prohibit habitants of Sieur de la Chesnaye from trading with Indians near Tadoussac as they were apparently dropping prices on manufactured goods. Lettre du ministre Seignelay, 10 avril 1684, *La Nouvelle-France sous Joseph-Antoine le Febvre de la Barre, 1682-1685, Lettres, mémoires, instructions et ordonnances*, textes établis et présentés par Pauline Dubé (Québec: Septentrion, 1993), p. 147. Free trade arguments figure in the anonymous pamphlet, *Mémoire sur le Canada* (La Rochelle, 1716) p. 3.



freed to trade with Indians, provided that the monopolized buying *compagnie* offered colonists low-priced goods and purchased their furs. It was hoped that moving goods rapidly out of the storehouse would place surpluses in the hands of larger numbers of voyageurs, whose competition would lower the price of goods and attract Indian consumers.<sup>122</sup>

These earlier strategies sought to subordinate a trader's self-interest to the needs of lower prices in a competitive trading environment. But they did not necessarily suggest that Indian demands were elastic. For instance, calls for freer trade were often accompanied by the proviso that the size or numbers of canoes would necessarily be limited, and so also the quantities of merchandise and credit allowed to the trader. It was believed that prices offered to Indians would be lowered when many traders were restricted to taking fewer goods to trade. The French, hoping for a re-establishment of the *congé* in 1710, for that reason, argued that Indians would always go to the "cheapest market" to obtain their "necessaries," but they would pay whatever price if they were supplied at their door. By limiting the numbers of canoes inland, traders would no longer be burdened with too many goods, and therefore lose the incentive to go further afield to find markets which would raise prices.<sup>123</sup>

By mid-century, however, plans to free commerce were framed on the assumption of unlimited and elastic Indian demand. Joining this proposition with the concept of merchant self-interest, memorial writers imagined a virtuous free trade expanding with Indian commerce. For instance, the memoir of La Rochelle merchants, in 1764, highlighted the benefits of freeing the Louisiana trade and criticized the tradition of leasing monopolies to certain companies at the exclusion of others. Written after the Conquest, when the French were forced to travel the great distances up the Mississippi to the western regions in order to tap into Indian markets, the memorialists sought to show the virtues evident in freeing up such a trade for its more efficient prosecution.<sup>124</sup> The merchants began by pointing out the false justifications for a monopolized trade, notably

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<sup>122</sup>The plan emerged in a proposal to the ministry of marine in France in 1713, by M. Duclos, "Memoir ... concerning the Province of Louisiana," Mississippi Provincial Archives, 1701-1729, *French Dominion*, Vol II, (Jackson: Press of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1929), pp. 84-133. He advocated that the company buy peltries at reduced rates and make its profits on the sales of goods to colonists. See, also, Abstract from Dispatches from Canada, Re: Canada, Indian Trade, Etc., 1747 *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York*, E.B. O'Callaghan, ed., (Albany: Weed, Parsons and Co., 1856) (Hereafter *NYCD Paris Documents*, Vol. X., 207.

<sup>123</sup>Sieur d'Aigremont to Count de Pontchartrain, 18 November 1710, Wisconsin Historical Collections, Vol. XVI, pp. 265-567.

<sup>124</sup>La Rochelle Memo, dated 1764, Documents appartenant à la chambre de commerce de la Rochelle, Reel 0778, ANQ-M.

the assumption that a free trade would be supported for the most part by alcohol, raising numerous disorders among the Indians. They also challenged the view that numerous irregularities, frauds and other problems arose when traders were in competition, following "each one's ambition." Even if God had given the most virtuous representative of a company strength to avoid the temptation of the profits of an alcohol trade, the problem of alcohol could never be solved by giving the trade to only one merchant. On the contrary, they said, larger numbers of traders would increase the supervision of the trade, and traders would inform on those abusing Indians with alcohol.

But beyond this, the greatest problem of monopoly trading was the fact that it placed only one trading representative among the Indians. Even if he sold goods at the same price and received "pelletries on the same footing," the memorialists argued that the Indians would not be satisfied. Monopolies, they stated were "odious" to the Indian. Turning to the cases of the Arkansaw, Illinois, and Missouri nations, the merchants argued that unchanging prices offered through a monopolized trade offended a mercantile interest among Indians. There were, the writers stated, other reasons prompting Indian hostilities towards their neighbours, beyond "the spirit of conquest and expansion:" "Suppose for a moment," they said, "that the Indians were animated like us by the interest of Commerce, that as a result, their true interests consist in the trade with many rival nations concurrently, rather than with one." They said that only by the French placing many traders among Indians could they stop Indians from going to the English, as "the rivalry and independent interests which animate those from the same nation would create the same effect as the joined competition of traders from different nations."<sup>125</sup> In proof, the memo pointed to the case of the Alabama and Choctaw Indians who had shown that they would never trade with a single nation, but with French and English at the same time. They pointed to the example of Red Shoe, the Choctaw chief, who traded adeptly with French and English, and stated that:

The exclusive trades are odious to the Indians, all barbarians know perfectly their interests in this respect. The Natchez's experience shows them that there is never a better market than when there are many traders (commerçants) among them.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>125</sup>*Ibid.*, f. 7.

<sup>126</sup>*Ibid.*, f. 8.

Similar views appeared in English writings, particularly those of trade reformers who sought the same low-price ends of less popular executive tariff and tax strategies, achieving them through increased competition among traders.<sup>127</sup> It was believed that competition would force traders toward a market price and ultimately offer Indians cheaper goods, as Governor Spotswood of Virginia believed. Spotswood believed that credit arrangements elevated the initial prices of goods sold to traders, which forced traders to act dishonestly with Indians. He saw abuse in the fur trade originating with impoverished traders going into debt when they procured goods at too high prices and promptly cheat Indians in their trade.<sup>128</sup> His reform, then, would be to increase the numbers of traders, lower the quantities of goods they carried, and allow a competitive market to raise the decorum of the trade, therefore raising the overall justice of the exchange. To use a market mechanisms, and particularly competition, to change the tenor of the trade was integral to these plans, since it was often believed that the moral integrity of the trade eventually determined the profits that arose.<sup>129</sup>

Calls for trade freedoms, however, became most perceptible after the Conquest, in an era when physiocratic trade writings were gaining greater popularity. As the 1764 La Rochelle memo had suggested, free trade was demanded by Indians with whom Europeans wanted to form agreeable relations. The same sentiments shape the 1766 account in the *London Chronicle*, anonymous and erroneously attributed to the father of Alexander Henry the Younger.<sup>130</sup> The *Account of the Captivity of William Henry in 1755* was likely never published when it was "reviewed" in the *London Chronicle* as an obvious prank, possibly written by Benjamin Franklin or Johann Reinhold Forster.<sup>131</sup> In the course of the review, the writer dismisses a book which had lately come from

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<sup>127</sup>Cadwallader Colden, Report on Indian Affairs, 1751, Vol. IV, *The Letters and Papers of Cadwallader Colden* (New York: The New York Historical Society, 1919). He saw the duties urged by the governor having the effect where "the fair trader is discouraged, & the knavish part of the Traders get an advantage of the honest," pp. 281-282.

<sup>128</sup>He thought the remedy was to assign one spot for the trade, thus reviving market conditions and therefore what might be termed "just price." See Spotswood's 1715 recommendations in footnote 23 on pp. 46-47, of Murray G. Lawson, *Fur: A Study in English Mercantilism 1700-1775* (University of Toronto Press, 1943). On William Keith's views on the Indian Trade see PRO. Keith to Lords of Trade, 16 February 1719, CO 5/1265 ff. 315-319.

<sup>129</sup>See the French memo, "Resources of Canada," 1703, which saw the peltry and fur trade moving "in proportion to the justice or injustice with which the Governor and Intendants act towards the Indians, who perform the hunting," *NYCD*, Vol. 9, p. 757.

<sup>130</sup>See James Bain's 1901 introduction to Alexander Henry, *Travels and Adventures in Canada and the Indian Territories between the Years 1760-1776* (1809, republished Edmonton: M.G. Hurtig, 1969) p. xv.

<sup>131</sup>Leonard W. Labaree's remarks, in his edition of *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin* Vol. 15, pp. 145-147.

press, as "containing little entertainment or information," and for that reason only printed excerpts that displayed "how widely different from ours (the Indians') opinions are of those regulations of commerce by which one nation proposes to make advantage itself in distressing the trade of others. The Europeans think such regulations wise and good; the Indian it seems, the highest folly and wickedness."<sup>132</sup> In this, the piece became explicitly political, promoting the free trade ideology merchants were holding dear in the colonial periphery. Franklin, indeed, had joined the ranks of colonial writers who saw the rise of the authority invested in the King in parliament as threatening constitutional freedoms, and advocated, with many, the return to full liberties in trade, that the constitution had laid out.<sup>133</sup> Franklin's own correspondence with Lord Kames and the French physiocrats suggests the ways in which free trade could find its avid support among colonists. The Mohawk corn myth, appearing in the William Henry narrative, provided evidence of its logic in nature, particularly when it was presented by the Indian to the (likely thieving) English Indian trader.<sup>134</sup>

The corn myth is recounted by one of the Iroquois sachems who meets with Henry. He tells the creation myth of the Five Nations who at the time of their creation possessed different produce. The Oneida enjoyed nuts and fruit, the Mohawk corn. To all in common were given the beasts, birds and fishes. After a time of "communicating freely to each other as their wants required," a spirit came among them and put evil into their hearts. The Mohawks, then, saw their surplus of corn and said, "let us oblige (their neighbours) to give us a great deal of fruits, beans, roots." Animosity arose between the five nations as their trade unequally benefited each other and the Great Spirit grew angry:

Wretches, did I not freely give to each of you different kinds of good things, and those in plenty, that each might have something in his power to contribute to his brother's happiness, and so increase the happiness and strengthen the union of the whole....<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>132</sup>Quoted in Bain's introduction to *Travels and Adventures*, p. xvi.

<sup>133</sup>See Milobar's treatment of the "country ideology" adopted by merchants on the colonial "periphery," particularly their adoption of free trade in the empire as a political agenda. David Milobar, "The Origins of British-Quebec Merchant Ideology: New France, the British Atlantic and the Constitutional Periphery, 1720-70," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 24 (3), September 1996, pp. 364-389.

<sup>134</sup>See "Positions to be examined," Franklin to Kames, 1769, Vol. 16, *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, pp. 107-109.

<sup>135</sup>*Ibid.*, p. xxii.

The story then turned to the English and French, who had "long practiced the same wickenedness towards them, making everything dear that they exchanged with them... Corlaer (the Governor of New York) says he, first makes Ontantio (the Governor of Canada) pay dearer for strouds and blankets; then Ontonio makes Corlaer pay as much dearer beaver; what, at best, can either of them get by this, but his own inconvenience and the other's ill-will?"<sup>136</sup>

Franklin, if he was the writer, likely had not intended for the piece to have had any bearing on Indian Affairs. Franklin consistently argued that the Crown maintain control of the Indian Trade. But the free trade movement invariably touched upon the issue and merchants tied to Indian Trade revenues often adopted the free trade issue simply to allow them to pursue their fortunes unimpeded by government. For that reason, merchant apologists did not actually show the unconventional methods adopted by traders overseas, rather, they tended to show commercial maxims at home having resonance and viability in the forests of America.

Free trade proponents saw increased numbers of traders benefiting Indians by carrying ultimately cheaper wares. One of the most formidable treatises on the fur trade in America was written by Joseph Robson, 1759, in his *Account of Six Years Residence in Hudson's Bay*. It is most associated with the gaining criticism of the monopolized Hudson Bay trade, but, unlike contemporary critics such as Dobbs, Robson's account went beyond the failures of the Company to explore and colonize inland from the shores of the Bay, and became explicitly moral in tone. Formerly a HBC surveyor and building supervisor, Robson showed the trade failing to provide for the Indian's welfare, both economically and morally. Debauching and robbing Indians, Bay traders turned them away from the light of Christianity and into the arms of the encroaching French traders. In pointing to the HBC, Robson shows the genesis of a commercial mission in Britain, where the Company, having "for eighty years slept at the edge of a frozen sea," continued to sit on unmobilized capital on the shores of its American charter rather than employing capital stock in hand to their advantage and going inland, the capital stayed wasted in warehouse, while its owners profited by stock expansions. (He mentions twice the Bubble, in this respect). Robson eventually espoused the sterling ethics of merchants at home, that one could not make real profit on cheating and speculation. Instead, profit was acquired on commission charges, low prices which augment manufacturing at home, shipping and insurance. Therefore, all benefited, not simply a few. The arguments Robson put forward were powerfully innovative in one

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<sup>136</sup>*Ibid.*, p. xxiv.

respect: he separated the merchant Indian trader from the mere peddler, the former working on short term profits for his own selfish ends, the latter steadily augmenting the wealth of all, including the Indians inland.<sup>137</sup>

These calls for an increased, just trade with Indians, which benefited producer and buyer, were succinctly voiced by the writer of *The American Traveller*, (1769). Its author, suggested by Williams to be a Mr. Clunie, a London wharfinger,<sup>138</sup> identified himself as "an old and experienced trader," who drew attention to the Hudson's Bay Company to criticize the ways and means of the northern Indian trade. The traveller began his criticism by positing that the northern situation of the Hudson Bay Indians, their seclusion "from the more informed Part of Mankind... and the Sterility of their Country,"

confined their cares within the narrow circumstances of the indispensable necessities of life, without supplying a single article, that could suggest, much less gratify a thought of any thing farther, necessarily brought commerce with them back to its original, of immediate barter, or exchange of one commodity for another, without the intervention of money, the artificial medium made use of in countries of more extended intercourse, and produce, to supply the defects, and remedy the inconveniencies of such barter.<sup>139</sup>

It was in such special circumstances whereby Britain confronted a savage market, where particular advantages, "sufficiently obvious," presented themselves. The writer, moving towards a criticism of monopoly privileges given to the HBC, stated that Britain could vent its produce and manufactures which were most plenty and cheap, "at their real value" to these northern nations ("those who want, and not being able to procure them elsewhere," and

beat not down their price on account of that plenty, nor require such accuracy and ornament in the manufacturing of them, as make them come dearer to the vender without being of greater use to the purchaser; and for any deficiency in which they would be rejected by other purchasers; and brings in return the produce of the country of the barterers, at the low rate set upon it by those who do not want it, who have no other vent for it, and consequently are glad to exchange it at any rate for what they do want, and cannot obtain otherwise; not to dwell upon

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<sup>137</sup>Joseph Robson, *An Account of Six Years Residence in Hudson's-Bay* (London: T. Jeffery, 1759)

<sup>138</sup>*Andrew Graham's Observations on Hudson's Bay, 1767-91*, ed. Glwyndwr Williams, (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1969), pp. 326-327.

<sup>139</sup>*The American Traveller* (London: E. and C. Dilly, 1769), pp. 12.

the great national advantage of its being unmanufactured, and thereby affording employment to the various artificers, who prepare it for use.<sup>140</sup>

Robson and the "traveller" deserve to be highlighted because these assumptions would form the basis of later arguments by critics of the fur trade, particularly Edward Umfreville, whose *Present State of Hudson's Bay* argued the viability of an alternative to the older monopoly trade, and the more desirable actions of free trade. Umfreville's treatise, written in 1789 and dedicated to "the Merchants, Traders and Manufactures of Great Britain," drew faithfully on Arthur Dobbs' campaign of 1749 against the HBC charter, but it too went beyond a criticism of lost colonization and exploration opportunities in monopoly trading. Umfreville criticized the way property was being extended into Indian Country and proposed remedies. He saw an inefficient waste of trade goods among the Canadian traders from Montreal, and proposed an alternative, a "united company," which would carry business over an unlimited extent of country, among the Indians. He showed the virtues of this approach by suggesting that Canadians procured some 303 packs of peltry, while the HBC procured 249, but that at same time the Canadians carried some 54,000 lbs of goods in its canoes, while the HBC carried only 16,800.<sup>141</sup> Plainly, such disparities revealed the "great oeconomy which is used on one side and the enormous expenditure on the other." Indeed, instead of practicing economy, the Canadians were "careless of the property entrusted to them ... impatient of all order and decorum."<sup>142</sup> In that respect, capital inland went to no advantage, at least in terms of the Indians, ruining them in two ways: Being "careless of property," the Canadian "debauched them and flattered them." The Hudson's Bay Company, however, employed too much attention to its property and cheated and alienated the Indians.

In entering the discussion of weights and measures, Umfreville took recourse in history. "The first traders to these parts," he states, "acted upon principles much more laudable and benevolent, than their successors seem to have been actuated by." Having read several letters "of an early date," Umfreville said "they appear to have had the good of the Country at heart; and to have endeavored by every equitable means, to render their commerce profitable to the mother country." Thus, instructions to factors

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<sup>140</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>141</sup>Edward Umfreville, *The Present State of Hudson's Bay Company: Containing a Full Description of that Settlement and the Adjacent Country; and Likewise of the Fur Trade: With Hints for Its Improvement* W. Stewart Wallace, ed. (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1954), pp. 112-113.

<sup>142</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 113.

were "full of sentiments of Christianity and contained directions for their using every means in their power, *to reclaim the uncivilized Indians from a state of barbarism, and to cultivate in their rude minds the human precepts of the gospel.*"<sup>143</sup> These same instructions told factors to trade "equitably and to take no advantage of their native simplicity." The servants of the Company were likewise instructed to behave "orderly and live in sobriety and temperance." Had these instructions been adhered to, the country would "be an ornament to the state, and a gem in the Imperial diadem." But, instead, York Factory returns declined as Indians were maltreated and exploited; and while the HBC used "the insulting epithets of pedlars, thieves and interlopers" against Montreal traders, they were really of the same cloth. Their Standard of Trade, established in London, was "a farce," and the "pernicious overplus" had successively diminished returns.<sup>144</sup>

Umfreville was, in this respect, part of a movement that saw a British advantage in manufacturing in Indian affairs. Britain's surplus and cheap goods should not be profligately dispensed to Indians, thus debauching them, neither should they be held selfishly in the hands of traders who sold them at high prices and therefore discouraged manufacturing at home. Free trade would enlarge the numbers of Indians served in commerce, excite industry, and take goods from nation to nation. Thus, a memo of the Board of Trade to the king in 1721 cited the "providential" advantage given the English of furnishing Indians "at honest and reasonable prices" European commodities. The memo cited as one of the ways to secure and improve the American colonies, included "cultivating a good understanding with the Native Indians," and recommended that colonials be encouraged to intermarry with Indians, regular gifts distributed in the King's name to Indian nations, encouraging trade, not monopolies and not engrossing the trade in one single colony.<sup>145</sup>

Peter Wraxall, critic of the fraudulent practices of the New York Indian traders, believed trade could act to form the basis of such "good understandings." One of many New Yorkers seeing in Britain a "providential" manufacturing advantage over the French, and an ability to offer goods at lower prices, Wraxall wrote a memoir on Indian affairs well footnoted with comments that underscored the ways in which the "dearness of goods and the unfair treatment" Indians had met among English traders had turned them to the French. "In the Indian Trade we have many natural and constitutional advantages

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<sup>143</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>144</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 37-43.

<sup>145</sup>"State of the British Plantations in America, 1721," pp. 591-630, NYCD, Vol. 5.



over the French and it is this which has obliged the French to have recourse to so many base and Artful Measures to carry on their Influence and Views with regard to the Indians, but more honesty and Generosity on our side would have in a great measure defeated the whole System of French Policy."<sup>146</sup>

Perhaps the best forum for the ideals of free trade, where commercial freedoms were imaginatively played out among acquisitive Indians, in the debates in England over the continuation of the Hudson's Bay Company. Here, Robson and many others voiced numerous conclusions about Indian acquisitiveness and the best means to lead them and British manufacturing to the common good, the former towards civility in the goods they obtained and the industry arising from their trade, the latter, to higher production. The debates of 1749 well summarized the opinion of the Indian trade and the hopes that many people invested in it by the mid-century. It is important to note that the most important issue to the committee and to their witnesses was the presumed injustice of trade undertaken in monopolistic conditions. Although the ultimate end of free trade or monopoly was to be larger trade and therefore the largest possible vent of English merchandise, the means to that end imagined by free trade promoters, was justness and equity. The witnesses, then, almost unanimously sought to identify the virtues of a free trade in the Bay, for the Indian's benefit. Thus, Joseph Robson, who later published many of the statements made at the hearings, was asked for information on the trading standard. In this, he suggested that if Indians were offered lower prices, they would purchase more merchandise and bring more furs and pelts, taking fewer to the French. Richard White, an HBC clerk for seven years, also reported the high standard exacted of Indians, and that the traders "generally double the standard" against the Indian. Responding to the decidedly loaded question whether the governor of the company "should do his duty and purchase their goods at the cheapest rate," White responded that he should, "since it would be for the advantage of the Publick to give a more advanced Price; as it would encourage the natives to bring more skins down."<sup>147</sup> White then reported abuses of Indians in trade, refusing them credit for necessary goods, traders beating them and refusing them provisions. Finally, he reported the profits distinguished by the name of the

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<sup>146</sup>Peter Wraxall, *An Abridgment of the Indian Affairs*, Charles Howard McIlwain, ed. (New York: Benjamin Blom: 1968), footnote 1, p. 205. Also: "I suppose Poudet was sold by the Bag and the Albany People according to their general and usual principle of action had cheated the Indians and made their bags less. It was by such mean and dishonest methods that they became odious and contemptible to the Indians, lost their esteem and confidence..." p. 61, footnote 1.

<sup>147</sup>Papers Presented to the Committee Appointed to Inquire into the State and Condition of the Countries Adjoining to Hudson's Bay and the Trade Carried on There," (London: 1749) CIHM Reprint, pp. 217-218.

"over-plus," where the trader shortened measures of powder and other goods and thus exceeded the footing of the standard.<sup>148</sup> Arthur Dobbs, who had already added dubious reports of inland waterways in his work, contributed equally dubious information regarding the HBC profits on merchandise, being some 2000 per cent, suggesting that such shenanigans reduced the overall vent of goods to Indians.

London merchants promoting free trade were not remiss in offering ethnological information. John Tomlinson (who had no experience with the Hudson Bay, but claimed to have read maps and books and joined in "conversation with the world and the general nature of things") argued that the trading standard and the inherent problems of a monopoly trade eventually brought few skins to market. If Indians were given just treatment and offered lower prices on goods, they would bring more skins. This recourse to the implied guiding passion of self-interest was probed closer by the committee. Asked if the same Indian offered goods at lower prices would not simply bring fewer skins for the same goods (which evidence suggests was the case), the merchant said they "would be more diligent and other nations would be discovered." Meanwhile, the committee pressed the merchant further, asking whether it would be advantageous to the company to send £1000 worth of goods when they might have the same skins for £500. The merchant answered that it would be advantageous to the *manufacturer*. Indeed, merchants in the committee maintained the ethnological proposition that self-interest directed Indians and that cheaper trade goods would increase their productivity and "diligence" in trade. Thus, the London merchant John Hanbury, surprised by the Company's prices, said that such profits discouraged trade "for that the Indians in the Southern colonies are like other people, some more industrious than others," and John Hardman, a Liverpool merchant, believed that the company's standard did not give sufficient encouragement.

The consensus during these deliberations, at least among merchants, was that lower prices would increase the vent of trade goods, and Indians gaining surpluses of goods would be inclined to trade them with their neighbours, thus exciting industry among these more distant nations. This, in fact, was one of the most important arguments to emerge in the proceedings, a concept integral to trade promotion: the Indian's apparent inelastic demand could be changed to accommodate a "notion of prosperity": As the merchant Hardman argued:

Notions of prosperity would increase; though it would not increase their real necessities, yet it would furnish them with imaginary wants; that if one man, for example was to bring

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<sup>148</sup>*Ibid.* p. 219.

down the furs caught by ten, he would doubtless have some reward for his labour; that reward would be further encouragement to undertake still more; his necessities and desires would increase in proportion to his prosperity.<sup>149</sup>

The question addressed was, then, the best means by which commerce could be employed to strike up industry among Indians. Not only were prices seen as instrumental, if not deterministic, but also gifts. Reminiscent of Thomas Nairne's charge against the French as having made Indians indolent through gifts ("so liberal of their presents that they entirely decayed the people of the lower parts from their duty"<sup>150</sup>) was the debate on Indian gifts taking place in Charleston, the same year as the HBC proceedings. Merchants had reacted to the Crown's changes to gift giving policies to both South Carolina and Georgian Indians. The Duke of Bedford had earlier attempted to economize the Crown's gifts to Indians by sending trade goods already purchased in England at a lower rate, to be an annual disbursement; the goods were to be divided between the two colonies and their distribution overseen by an appointed person of the governor. The Commons House of Assembly soon objected to the innovation on tradition, stating that it was better to have funds sent for the house's discretionary use, for time to time to give Indians visiting the colony presents, than to have annual disbursements. They had their eye to expenses, since an Indian's visit usually included entertainment, food and lodging, in addition to the gift, which would fall upon the assembly's burden. Their reasons, though, were drawn upon the principle of self-interest: "if they once get a Notion how large the present is that is now intended to be sent annually for the future by the Crown, it will draw such a Concourse of them down here .... And, at the same Time, the Indians (by the Loss of Time in coming and returning such long Journeys) will neglect their Hunts for skins, and by so easily acquiring so much goods, grow indifferent towards that useful Employment."<sup>151</sup>

#### IV.

Thus, trade was seen as a valuable means for the civilization of Indians. If properly directed, and market forces allowed to operate, industry and wants could be established. Such a possibility was immediately seized upon by the Montreal trading community after the Conquest. Montreal's trade, and the security it derived from post-war regulations, had

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<sup>149</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 233.

<sup>150</sup>Thomas Nairne to Lords of Trade, 10 July 1709, CO 5/82. f. 25.

<sup>151</sup>26 May 1749, J.H. Easterby, ed., *The Journal of the Commons House of Assembly* (Columbia: South Carolina Archives Department 1962) pp. 204-205.

goods moving in credit relationships. Sales were on a credit basis:<sup>152</sup> from the London merchant, to the Montreal merchant-trader, to the bourgeois inland and their petty traders, and finally to the Indian himself, sales were on a credit basis.<sup>153</sup>

Montreal merchants were by no means the only ones to use credit. Detroit Indians demanded from Sir William Johnson in 1761 that the English traders extend them credit as the French had before them.<sup>154</sup> Now allowed to trade through the town's advantageous line of communication inland, (they "resorted hither for the purposes of trade and commerce for the extension of which into the interior parts of America the country has advantages over every other," as Fowler Walker opined<sup>155</sup>) these merchants met restrictions in the Royal Proclamation of 1763 that prompted them to identify virtues in increased free trade. The unsigned and undated "State of the Countries and Trade in North America Claimed by the Hudson's Bay Company," reaching the Lords of Trade suggests ways in which the North American Indian could be recast into a commercial individual and free trade becoming a key means of civilizing him. Arguing, like many anti-monopolists did during the HBC debate of 1749, that free trade would prompt many individuals with few goods inland in exploration, it suggested that if the lands were settled "and the trade improved by Civilizing the Natives," a ready market and valuable vent for English manufactures would ensue. The HBC, the memorialists noted, had not brought the best manufactures to improve Indians, they instead traded "the most trifling things, imposing upon Natives Ignorance, trifles of no use, for medicines to cure them of all their diseases and to make them fortunate and successful in their wars or hunting; and selling such trifles and what other iron and woolen goods they carry and tobacco and spirits at reasonable prices...."<sup>156</sup> By throwing open the trade, the memorialists saw a

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<sup>152</sup>See Iguarta's comments on the extensive credit supporting the business community, holding together the fur trade. José Eduardo Iguarta, "The Merchants and *Negociants* of Montreal, 1750-1775: A Study in Socio-Economic History," Ph.D. Thesis, Michigan State University, 1974, pp. 138-139.

<sup>153</sup>Note Dunn's comments on the flow of credit to the Indians. He cites missionary reports on Indian preferences to buy on credit, and to maintain the trust of traders who would supply them. Dunn, pp. 21-22.

<sup>154</sup>Dunn, p. 22. There are frequent, passing references to the issue of credit in the Indian trade. See quotation of the trader Thomas G. Anderson, whose goods were extended in credit arrangements by 1801. He was angry at a rival trader in the Iowa country who had the "intention of stealing all the credits I made to those Indians last fall," quoted in Jacob Van der Zee, "The Fur Trade in the Early Development of the Northwest," *Iowa Journal of History and Politics* 12, 1914, pp. 485-86.

<sup>155</sup>BL, Harwick Papers, Fowler Walker, "Considerations on the Present State of the Province of Quebec," 35914, 1 March 1766, f. 20.

<sup>156</sup>BL, Harwick(sp?) Papers, 35910, f. 9.

discovery of a Northwest Passage, an increase of trade goods, and eventual improvement of Indians in the process.

They were as eager to suggest that commercial relations, already tying together the merchant community at home, could do the same in American forests. Merchant promotions of the Indian trade tended to cast contempt upon expensive gift giving and "trusting," which showed no account and exacted few obligations from the Indian towards the giver. The French, it might be noted, recognized ill-spent trust, where "the greed of the French Traders leads them to lend easily, and more than the savages can pay; that gives rise to quarrels..." as Louvigny pointed out to the marine council in 1720.<sup>157</sup> They did, however, identify the virtues of credit properly extended to the Indian, and traders themselves seemed to have represented gifts in accounts as Indians as "credit." The journal of the Northwester, Charles Chaboillez who visited present day Manitoba in 1797 provides evidence of the ways that expensive social relations were at times represented as credit. He reported that Indians brought "gifts" such as fish and other food products, which he promptly "repaid" in merchandise.<sup>158</sup> His few "gifts" to Indians, those he did not expect to return, were characterized in his journal as *sans dessein*, an interesting revival of the term that figured in French narratives fifty years before.<sup>159</sup> Most of his transactions, however, were characterized as credit, in fact, fetching a wide range of profit expected in return.<sup>160</sup> Unlike gift-giving, credit transactions in fact won large profits to the creditor.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>157</sup>Louvigny to Council, 15 October 1720, Wisconsin Historical Collections, pp. 389.

<sup>158</sup>NAC. 14 Sept 1797, ... found one Indian tent old Eruntes and two sons... the former made a present of twenty pieces dried meat and eight sturgeon for which I paid him twenty eight pints rum and gave them each two pints sans dessein..." Journal of Charles Chaboillez, 1797, Masson Collection MG 19, C1 Vol. 1.

<sup>159</sup>See above example; also, 19 Sept. "stopped the boisson expended about 1/3 keg mix rum *sans dessein* ...; and Sept 26, "the old man made a present of four dressed skins and six beavers for which I gave him two gallons rum and the boisson begun expended mostly a large keg *sans dessein*."

<sup>160</sup>See entry, 26 August, "they took at credit thirty skins," which comprised four pints rum, three large knives, three small knives, three gun worms, three awls and nine gun flints which were, as Chaboillez kept note in his journal cumulatively worth 3 skins (1000% profit). On 27 August, he wrote that others "begd to have at ct (credit) as they intended to winter at the River aux Painbisat gave the Renard six skins and Nethainigan seventeen skins at credit gave them each 1/2 fath. tobacco 2 gun flints 1 gunworm, 1 awl, 1 measure powder, 1 measure shott, 20 balls. He wrote in parantheses the goods' value of 8 skins -- a profit of 212%. On 11 September, however, he gave two Indians 57 skins of credit, with goods worth 22 skins (259% profit).

<sup>161</sup>For instance, note James Sutherland lamenting the "unexpected Debt" of his house to a NWC man who had sold to the previous HBC master a horse on credit, and "obliged to pay so dear for being on Trust." See W. Raymond Wood and Thomas D. Thiessen introduction of their edition of *Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains: Canadian Traders Among the Mandans and Hidatsa Indians, 1738-1818* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), p. 65.

Credit was, then, one of the ways traders raised prices on trade goods, an apparently acceptable practice in the eyes of Indians. In most of its occurrences, traders advanced hunters goods in late summer or early fall, expecting repayment the following summer. Morantz, who studied credit at James Bay, concludes that the "debt system" of the HBC trade was almost immediately established at the post of Eastmain in 1719, and such a system had its origins in the seasonal nature of the fur trade itself, and the variable success in the hunt.<sup>162</sup>

But beyond the large profits in its return, credit was seen as becoming the sinews tying Indian with trader. One anonymous author of a memorandum outlining the benefits of the Indian Trade in fact viewed credit in such ways. Regarding the system of the King's Posts, the writer stated that an Indian family coming to such a post

whether they had been successful in their hunting or had nothing to exchange they were alwise (sic) supplyd with necessarys until the chance of the hunt should enable him to pay, and in case of sickness or death their wives or orphans were maintained and supported until capable to provide for themselves. This created the strongest tyes of gratitude friendship and interest in both partys, the Indian was spurr'd to industry and eagerly pursued the most probably means of obtaining wherewith to repay his Benefactor.<sup>163</sup>

The memorandum was dated 1767, addressed to the Lords of Trade and Plantations at the moment when Carleton was attempting to vitalize the old French trading system for British benefit. It was signed by former Canadian governor general Murray, who certified that "the above Remarks coincide entirely with my Notions and opinions of the matter in Question." But the remarks and idealism are patently of Sir Guy Carleton's imagination, discussed in the next chapter, and, because of Murray's endorsement, it is well possible that Carleton himself drafted the letter. The report described the old French King's Post system – itself lauded by Carleton -- where trade was overseen by a disinterested officer and carried out by a merchant. The report went on to say that, "The merchant farming the posts, his agents or factors on the other hand was bound by interest to supply the Indian, to keep him sober and support him in distress as the only means to recover his property for if the poor savage is abandoned in the hour of

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<sup>162</sup>Toby Morantz, "'So Evil a Practice': A Look at the Debt System in the James Bay Fur Trade," in Rosemary E. Ommer, *Merchant Credit and Labour Strategies in Historical Perspective* (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1990), pp. 203-222.

<sup>163</sup>PRO. Emphasis Added, Memorandum on the King's Posts, ca 1767 CO 42/6 f. 109.

want, or dyes by means of intoxication, as he leaves no property behind him so the merchant loses his debt."<sup>164</sup> It was by this "friendly intercourse," and "by this fatherly treatment of the Indians, which the French have alwise found it their interest to practice and encourage... the Indian saw the exchange or traffick they made with the eyes of sobre reflection, looked forward with joy for the returning season of meeting with the Trade whom they considered as their father friend and benefactor, .... and formed such a attachment to the trader and the nation to which he belonged as neither time, change of power, the address of the English nor any other consideration could efface."

It should be pointed out that in no way was credit here characterized as gifts; neither was it "trusting," which was often seen as a faulty advance of goods into Indian hands, where debts and resentment accumulated. Trade promoters were deft at distinguishing one faulty advance of goods from better ones. After the Conquest, Charles Stuart, Sir William Johnson's counterpart as Supervisor of the Southern Indian Department drew quite explicit parallels between the redemptive virtues of credit and, as is most interesting, the slothful vices of gift-giving and misapplied trusting. In his speech to the Choctaw, long troublesome allies of the English, the superintendent carried the news that the French had abandoned the country and the English traders had for some time brought "such a supply of goods amongst you as you had not been accustomed to under the French Government, and if you have not been happy and easy it has been your own faults..." Stuart pointed to their laxity in hunting as one of the problems arising from oversupply. He said, "had you been industrious good hunters, you could not have been so poor and destitute of all the necessarys as I see you are, but instead of being employed in getting skins, your peoples time has been taken up in insulting and plundering our own inhabitants." While the French had employed them "as soldiers" and "paid you annually with presents we never had occasion for your assistance in that way ... instead of annual presents we have given you plentiful trade and if you are not industrious to reap the benefit of it in its full extent you must blame your selves."<sup>165</sup>

If advanced with care, credit could affect strong social bonds. Indeed, the English observer inland probably looked with a great deal of concern at the faulty advances of goods as witnessed by Samuel Hearne in 1774-1775. Going inland to inspect sites for the Hudson's Bay Company's posts inland, he was anxious to discover the prices the competition offered to Indians, the size of their gifts and the volume of trade being diverted to Canada. Presenting the possibility of establishing a HBC house inland to

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<sup>164</sup>*Ibid.*, f. 109.

<sup>165</sup>PRO. Speech of Supt. of Indian Affairs to Choctaw, 1771, CO 5/ 73 f. 312.

Indians, he recorded their doubt as to its success, "saying that the Pedlors by this time has to much influence, and that I ware to late in comeing. The Pedlors genorosity is much talk'd of, and are say'd to give away great quanies [sic] of goods for nothing, and as for Knives, Steels, Worms, Flints, awls, Needles and Paint, these Indians would Persuade me that they Never Trade but are given gratice to those who ask for them. Guns, Kettles, Powder, Shott, Cloth, Gartering etc., they also tel me are much cheaper then at the Company's Standard." He thereafter remained vigilant to discover the "trootth of this very Extraordinary account," and learn the trading standards of the Canadian traders.<sup>166</sup>

To return to the views of the Georgia governor, James Wright, it was the trader's poor judgement in extending credit that alarmed him. The colony's relations with the Creek were degenerating, and the governor blamed matters on the "general and very improper footing" of the Indian trade which had delivered them to "the height of mischievous wontoness and insolence." Thus, it was preferable "that the Indians are supplied with goods sparingly, or otherwise according to their conduct and behaviour ... a moderate supply keeps them within decent bounds and makes them observe a submissive, Proper behaviour."<sup>167</sup> Lord Thomas Dunford, governor of West Florida in 1770 wrote down "Some Thoughts on the Indian Trade" that year in order to redress the indiscriminate credit offered Indians. Likely thinking of the case of Carolina, where too much credit was blamed for Indian warfare, the governor stated that legislation should limit credit, possibly by limiting the very large quantities of goods traders carried. Indians who received fewer goods and less easy credit "would find it necessary to pay more attention to their hunting to supply themselves and the traders would always make proper returns to their merchants (which at present is not always the case.)"<sup>168</sup>

Like the French, then, the English in no way condoned the creation of debt among Indians, but, rather, properly extended credit in order to establish ideal relationships of obligation.<sup>169</sup> Andrew Graham complained about massive indebtedness

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<sup>166</sup>Entry for 1774, J.B. Tyrrell, ed., *Journals of Samuel Hearne and Philip Turnor between the Years 1774 and 1792*, (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1934), p. 105; see, also, pp. 156, and his concern for the Canadian standard "at less than half the Company's Standard," p. 160.

<sup>167</sup>Memorial of James Wright to Earl of Hillsborough, 12 December 1771 CO 5/651 f. 94.

<sup>168</sup>Thomas Dumford, "Some Thoughts on the Indian Trade," 19 February 1770, CO 5/577 f. 345.

<sup>169</sup> See instructions from the Committee of the HBC to Richard Staunton at Moose River in 1739: "We agree entirely with you that the new custom of trusting the Indians, is of great prejudice to us and ought never to have been introduced, therefore desire you by degrees and with prudence to reform and put a stop as soon as you can to so evil a practice." HBC. Letter to Richard Staunton, 17 May 1739, A.6/6. The practice of trusting is reported in Joseph Isbister's journal at East Main for 1738 and the Committee wrote him to say that it should never have been introduced. Letter to Isbister, 17 May 1739, A.6/6.



among Indians: "I never could find why goods were trusted to Indians but I am sure it is pernicious to the company," he wrote in one of his journals, "and has at this time arrived to a great length at all the settlements, Churchill excepted... I know no way to remedy this evil but that all Factors should endeavour to break this custom by degrees." He pointed out "the goods that goes in debt are the principal viz guns, cloth, iron work, brazile tobacco, powder and shot, etc. above 2000 beaver is trusted to the natives at York Fort and Albany and not much less at Severn."<sup>170</sup> But, the same writer still imagined a place for credit when "the hungry are fed, the naked are cloathed, and the sick furnished with medicines, I appeal to any Gentleman of probity and justice whether a method more tender, humane, kind and benevolent was ever adopted by any people connected with Indians?"<sup>171</sup>

The English, then, espoused a faith in the market, whether in credit relations, or healthy advances in goods that excited industry and allowing dependency to tie Indian with European. This faith became resonant in memorials from Montreal's merchant community, often penned by the London agent, Fowler Walker. These celebrated the older French approach to trade that had allowed traders inland to great depths of the continent, but whose efforts were undermined by over regulation and corruption, and profiteering merchants ruining the smaller merchants in the colony.<sup>172</sup> Among the numbers who lent their names to petitions to free the Indian trade for the Indian's benefit, was Benjamin Frobisher, later integral in establishing the northwest fur trade and the North West Company. As early as 1766, he wrote of the virtues of traders wintering with the Indians, an argument against the Royal Proclamations which forced Indians to visit traders at a few military posts. With free trade, traders would disperse far inland in the old French territories, meet Indians who would otherwise not be inclined to travel the far distances to the posts. Rather than acting irresponsibly, Frobisher argued that it was in the trader's best interest to act responsibly among Indians inland, and moreover, "the greatest part of the traders are men of property, settled in Montreal and give bonds for their good behavior to a great amount."<sup>173</sup>

The same optimism in free trade regulating itself best and sparking natural virtue in the forests of America arose in the memorial of Robert Rogers who at his

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<sup>170</sup>HBC. Andrew Graham's Observations, 1767,8,9 E.2/6 f. 101.

<sup>171</sup>Observations on Hudson's Bay by Andrew Graham, E.2/9 f. 183. Reel 4M2 Hudson's Bay Company Archives.

<sup>172</sup>BL, Harwick Papers, Fowler Walker, "Considerations on the Present State of the Province of Quebec," f. 20.

<sup>173</sup>BL, Harwick Papers, Benjamin Frobisher, 35914 10 November 1766, f. 203.

posting at Michilimackinac in 1767, urged the freeing up the trade inland, as it excited industry among Indians. The presence of a trade, Rogers argued, "excites and encourages him to greater industry and assiduity in hunting, it animates men, women and children to exert themselves to the utmost for the procuring (of?) things as will be usefull or ornamental to them."<sup>174</sup> He then saw the free market working to both improve Indians in industry and tempering the avarice of traders. Certainly Rogers was far from being a disinterested observer. His own officer career had been tarnished with the suspicion that he was opening up fur markets in contradiction to the Royal Proclamation; and the Jonathan Carver exploration, which would bankrupt him, had definite commercial motives.<sup>175</sup> Carver's own wonder that the Hudson's Bay Company, holding a monopoly of the Cree trade and so maltreating these "honest people," held out the possibility of a virtuous expansion of free trade inland. In order that the HBC could no longer "impose on any people who in any manner bear the resemblance of humane beings," he stated that "A factory set up at the Great Carrying Place .. well supplied with articles for the Indian trade would in a long time draw a great part of those innocent people who are thus treated like brutes by the company at Hudson's Bay."<sup>176</sup>

Thus, numerous traders taking their goods to Indians would assure them of a safe and stable existence, and ready access to superior weapons, gunpowders, and supplies. The same optimism was shared by trader, John Gray, who wrote his "Reflections on the Fur Trade" in 1768 to characterize an idealized free market inland that would civilize Indians. The misguided notion of concentrating the fur trade at military posts for close supervision and regulation was based, he pointed out, "on opinion that the Indians are wiser and more civilized people and more attentive to their own interests than they really are." Instead, Gray argued, Indians had a "natural disposition... to ease and indolence:" "The French, who were well acquainted [sic] with the temper and disposition of these nations," he claimed, issued passes to go inland to traders to meet

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<sup>174</sup>BL, Harwick Papers, Robert Rogers, Establishment of the Fur Trade in the District of Michilimackinac, 1767, 35914, f. 235.

<sup>175</sup>Rogers' military command at Michilimackinac was scandalized by allegations of sending belts to enemy Indians and planning to use fur trading profits to lead an Indian rebellion against the English. Later acquitted of the charges. Rogers nevertheless ended up in prison for bad debts, mostly arising from private trading and his support of Carver's failed and discredited explorations. On the issue of promoting the fur trade, see the successive re-writing of Carver's exploration journals, in which commercial apologetics become contained in the speeches of Indians, who argued "with great energie" the necessity of "maintaining and opening a corispondence with the English..." p. 117; similar emphasis on the benefits of opening the trade are found in version II, p. 124-125 of the journal. John Parker, ed., *The Journals of Jonathan Carver and Related Documents, 1766-1770* (Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1976).

<sup>176</sup>Version II of Carver's journal, *Ibid.*, p. 131.

Indians who otherwise would not visit the French. Traders did not abuse the Indians in the French Regime because they dared not. Instead, men of property and standing became involved with the trade: "it was usual for only the most credible people of Canada to engage in this branch of trade, such as the sons of the noblesse and gentry, or of the officers of the army, or the richest and most respectable burghers of Montreal, whose regard for their own character and the reputation of their families was a powerful incentive to an upright and honorable behaviour in the management of it." Admitting that the mercantile spirit of the British might increase the numbers of merchants in the trade, and "some of them may be persons of low families and indifferent reputations," he believed that, in any case, among Indians who would hold traders accountable for their actions, the passion of self-preservation would order their behaviour.<sup>177</sup>

## VI.

The eighteenth century trader thrived upon the assumptions of his age, that his personal character gave him a right to credit, and, through diligence and hard work, such confidence invested in him by others would not go unrewarded.<sup>178</sup> The confidence invested in an individual ideally obligated the receiver to the creditor; the same obligations would tie merchant not only to bourgeois inland, but also to the Indian. Indians tied to merchants in such credit arrangements were expected to pay off credits through remittances, and subordinate his actions to the paying off of debt, in order to justify the confidence extended him. Such a subordination likely defined the "dependency" Europeans imagined they could create with the Indian through trade, well suggested the cartouche of a 1759 map of America showing the Indian chief tied to the European by a ribbon attached to his wrist.<sup>179</sup> As Spotswood of Virginia had imagined possible, a trade would create in them "a liking to our laws and government and secure a necessary dependence on the colony for a supply of all their wants..."<sup>180</sup>

Credit relations implicitly ordered the hierarchical commercial world of Montreal after the Conquest. Merchant, Lawrence Ermatinger, writing to one of his own creditors in London, William Priestly, in 1773 stated that "This is a very bad year for

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<sup>177</sup>BL, Harwick Papers, John Gray, "Reflections on the Fur Trade," 1768, 35914, f. 322.

<sup>178</sup>A helpful overview of the ethics of commercial capitalism is offered by David Burley, "'Good for all he would ask': Credit and Debt in the Transition to Industrial Capitalism - the Case of Mid-Nineteenth Century Brantford, Ontario," *Histoire sociale/ Social History* XX (39) May 1987, 79-99.

<sup>179</sup>Partie Orientale de la Nouvelle France ou du Canada, c. 1762, plate 28, in Joe C. Armstrong, *From Sea Unto Sea: Art and Discovery Maps of Canada* (Toronto: Fleet Books, 1982).

<sup>180</sup>Spotswood to Lords of Trade, 9 March 1714 *Calendar of State Papers -Colonial Series*, p. 304.

Canada, nothing selling and the immense quantity of goods on Hand will much lessen the orders for Goods next year," he wrote. "You will I dare say be surprised when I tell you that I have not sold £50 of all the goods invoiced from your house, and the savages had a very bad hunt owing to the mild winter we had last all over this Country, which unables [sic] the savages to pay their credits owed to the traders amongst them which greatly shortens their remittances, and of course does Hurt us."<sup>181</sup> Here, Indians were assumed to be working diligently to remit their creditors, barring, in this case, climatic changes that affected their hunt. Credit formed a chain linking Indian to trader, trader to town merchant, and so forth.

Ermatinger himself had few accounts to refute or substantiate his claims for virtuous credit relationships established with Indians. Surviving accounts of Montreal merchants, for instance, make clear that credit underlay much of the early eighteenth century French fur trade. Alexis Lemoine Monière's accounts carried with the trader Antoine Despains recorded a variety of credit instruments drawn up between town merchants and Indian traders, such as the 1748 advances of trading shirts, various sizes of *capots*, trousers and fabrics.<sup>182</sup> So, also, Pierre Guy's accounts with traders between 1700 and 1714 were primarily based on credit advances, where goods were forwarded in small quantities into the hands of many traders or carried as joint stock in *sociétés*. Such credit was repaid when furs returned from Indian country.<sup>183</sup>

The credit given traders undoubtedly extended to Indians, but traders themselves left few, if any, accounts of these transactions. Louise Dechêne points to the "remarkable ease" by which fur traders gained short-term credit from Montreal's merchants. Rather than providing an accounting for their credited goods, these traders enjoyed a year in either redeeming them, or at least providing remittances, and, when they could not pay back anything, their debts often remained for long periods on the books of merchants.<sup>184</sup> Many small-scale merchants, such as Monière, meanwhile "learned the business in the wilds," and himself used quite simple book keeping techniques to account for his advances to traders.<sup>185</sup> Miquelon, indeed, saw such business practices as a characteristic Canadian strategy, whereby business was made more efficient and stable in short-term credit arrangements, on annual terms, and confined between close friendships.

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<sup>181</sup>NAC. Ermatinger to William Priestly, 29 September 1773. Ermatinger Estate Papers, Reel C-4556.

<sup>182</sup>McCord, See, "Pour 1749: Ouvrages de la Baye," Monière Accounts, M-850.

<sup>183</sup>McCord, Livres de comptes of Pierre Guy, M-847.

<sup>184</sup>Louise Dechêne, *Habitants and Merchants in Seventeenth Century Montreal*, trans. Liana Vardi (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), pp. 100-107.

<sup>185</sup>*ibid.*, pp. 99-102.

They were also reciprocal. Debit and credit transactions continually cancelled each other. Although they sought to reduce risks as much as possible, merchants at the uttermost sections of commercial hinterlands were "invariably attached to the brittle twigs of a second or third party's own debtors" in Montreal and among fur traders.<sup>186</sup> The books of Monière, Augé, and others in Montreal indeed best communicate the means by which the merchant-outfitter reconciled his advances to a bourgeois or trader inland, himself leaving little record of his own advances to Indians.<sup>187</sup>

Such commercial arrangements would be changed in the nineteenth century. By then, growing metropolitan concern for accountability forced reforms. Debts would be more carefully maintained in the fur trader's Indian Blotter, where, in addition to provisioning expenses, and the costs of Indian gifts, the Indian appeared far more blatantly in profit and loss calculations.<sup>188</sup> Certainly in the meanwhile, the Indian trader and his advances to Indians made him suspicious to observers. The Dutch "wood-runner," and the "contemptible" Virginian or Carolinian, or the Pennsylvanian trader, who was "as wild as some of the most savage Indians, as Witham Marsh in 1744 claimed, were likely being assessed as commercial liabilities who showed little detailed accounting for the credits advanced them.<sup>189</sup>

But to those promoting trade, virtues outweighed the vices of "Indian commerce," as Robert Rogers had called it, particularly the credit relations that, once established, could create a dependency between creditor and debtor. In this, the trade promoter was inclined not to accept the stark limitations of "Indian Territory" delineated most succinctly in the Royal Proclamation of 1763. The Indian trade, to them, held out the tantalizing opportunity for a commercial mission among the Indians, the subject of the next chapter.

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<sup>186</sup>Dale Miquelon, *Dugard of Rouen: French Trade to Canada and the West Indies, 1729-1770* (Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978), pp. 77-79.

<sup>187</sup>See, for instance, the accounts of Alexis Lemoine Monière, "Brouillard des vents... à crédit," M-850; Étienne Augé, M-852.

<sup>188</sup>See below, Chapter Seven; I am drawing here, an example from Cumberland Accounts, 1869, "Indian Debt Book," B.49/d/99.

<sup>189</sup>"...as wild as some of the most savage Indians, amongst whom they trade for skins, furs, etc. for sundry other kinds of European goods and strong liquors. They go back in the country, above 300 miles from the white inhabitants; here they live with the Indian hunters till they have disposed of their cargoes; and then, on horses, carry their skins, etc. to Pennsylvania." June 24, 1744, Witham Marshe, *Lancaster in 1744: Journal of the Treaty at Lancaster in 1744, with the Six Nations* (Lancaster PA.: The New Era Steam Book and Job Print, 1884), pp. 15-16.

## Chapter Six

### *Commerce Dispelling the "Indian Darkness": Britain's Commercial Mission after the Conquest*

*Where, let it now be asked, is that nation or people of the earth so likely to be the intended instruments of divine providence, in dispelling, either Popish or Indian Darkness, than we of this reformed countrie, this enlightened and happie land?"<sup>1</sup>*

Charles Bulkley, Sermon "...on Occasion of the Surrender of Quebec," 1759

*This would be "the last dallings you will have with me you may get Richer Castmers but you never will get onester one."*

John Edger, trader, to Montreal Merchant John Stenhouse, 6 September 1778

Many of the social and political concerns arising from the Indian trade were shaped in the context of colonial and imperial priorities, when the English and French had used trade to compete with each other and establish favorable relations with Indian allies. The decades after 1764, however, constitute an important period for textual representation of Indians and the Indian Trade. Economically, the fur trade became less important to many but a few British colonies, and fur made up an ever smaller proportion of American exports. English colonies were swelling in population and diversifying their economies. Even in New York, furs to Europe figured as five per cent of its exports before the revolution.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, in such settings where Indian trading remained an important economic pursuit, changing priorities in Indian Affairs made traditional ways and means of that trade more problematic. The very difficulty of sustaining the credit advances in the trade fell under the more careful scrutiny of colonial administrations in the period of peace; eventually, the metropolis supporting credit advances demanded "oeconomy" and forced reforms in accounting practices that significantly changed the way that goods changed hands in the American Indian trade.

As we shall see in the next chapter, the rise of accounting reforms accompanied a growing pessimism towards the Indian trade. In the immediate years after

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Bulkley, "The Signs of the Times, Illustrated, and Improved, in a Sermon preached at the Evening-Lecture in the Old Jewry, on Sunday, October 21 1759, on Occasion of the Surrender of Quebec," (London: C. Henderson, 1759) p. 27.

<sup>2</sup>Murray G. Lawson, *Fur: A Study in English Mercantilism Between 1700-1775* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1943), pp. 70-72. See, also, Lawson's detailed tables of long and short-haired exports.

the Conquest, however, optimism took up the possibilities of trade. They were particularly visible to those who argued that Britain had inherited with the Conquest a commercial mission to the American Indian. This chapter examines the leading elements of that proposition and highlights some of the trade promoters who advanced them, most having interests in the newly conquered trading communities in Canada. It will be suggested here that in the two decades following the Seven Years' War, numerous descriptions of a commercialized Indian come to the fore in trade writings. This development seems to have been encouraged in the commercial conditions of the period. Credit networks in the trade seemed to have been enhanced, particularly at Montreal. As a result, traditional means of exchanging goods with Indians were enhanced, and, in terms of description, Indians became identified as ideal, commercial correspondents, benefiting from credit and the civilizing effects of commerce.

These matters are traditionally overlooked in scholarly treatments of imperial planning after the Conquest. In much historiography, retrenchment policies developed by the Lords Commissioners of Trade and Plantations appear to be naively aimed at discouraging settlement and denying the interests of land companies, while giving lands west of the Alleghany Mountains over to a heavily regulated merchant community. The Lords of Trade, then, discouraged settlement and sought to place an unworkable regulation of the trade in a bid to reduce tensions on the frontier, largely in order to prevent a recurrence of Pontiac's War among other disaffected Indian nations.<sup>3</sup> Since this retrenchment directly threatened grieving English colonies and sparked movements towards revolution, the administrative and practical bungling of post-war retrenchment forms a distinctive thread in American historiography. But retrenchment also had roots in a contemporary opinion that a commercial mission should be given new priority in the post-war era. This chapter examines in more detail this side of policy. It devotes considerable attention to theories of societal and colonial development, and debate concerning the effects of commerce in colonial history. This lengthy diversion will allow for a treatment of post-war plans for the Indian Trade, and the idea centrally at play,

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<sup>3</sup>Jack M. Sosin, *Whitehall and the Wilderness: The Middle West in British Colonial Policy, 1760-1775* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), particularly Chapter Three. See, also Marjorie G. Reid, "The Quebec Fur-traders and Western Policy, 1763-1774," *Canadian Historical Review* Vol ? (1) March 1925: 15-32; Clarence Walworth Alvord, *The Mississippi valley in British politics : a study of the trade, land speculation, and experiments in imperialism*, 2 Vols. (Cleveland : Arthur H. Clark, 1917); Peter Marshall, "The Government of the Quebec Fur Trade: An Imperial Dilemma, 1761-1775," in Bruce Trigger, Toby Morantz and Louise Dechêne, eds., *"Le Castor Fait Tout": Selected Papers of the Fifth North American Fur Trade Conference, 1985* (Montreal: Lake St. Louis Historical Society, 1985), pp. 122-145.

that in the American forests existed a valuable market for home manufactures, and trade now presented a valuable means to civilize Britain's newest consumers.

## I.

Given the almost ruinous expense of the Seven Years' War, the British Government faced numerous strategic and economic dilemmas after the signing of the Treaty of Paris. Beyond pressing economic questions were fundamental moral imperatives. Numerous British commentators perceived a long-felt but now seemingly acute possibility of moral decay which had a direct bearing on new proposals concerning the fur trade's administration. Many of the proclamations for days of thanksgivings and the sermons preached in non-conformist and establishment churches alike, whether in Boston or in London, counseled British vigilance and circumspection, not bellicosity, now that the French threat had been lifted. This feeling was first expressed with the 1759 Conquest of Quebec, when, as many responsibilities as freedoms in the "howling wilderness" seemed to have fallen into British hands, and when no one could tell "what great and glorious Things God is about to bring forward in the World; and in this New World of America in particular."<sup>4</sup> Anglo-American writers stated that "shall not the Wilderness now become a Fruitful Field?" and vowed to take their place as God's most ardent laborers.<sup>5</sup> The Scottish missionary society, meeting on news of Quebec's Conquest, believed the unfolding of events had meaning of this sort. Surely Providence had set aside French obstacles in America and now a divine invitation was extended to take "the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession."<sup>6</sup>

The sense of a mission given to the victors, and it leading somewhere inland among the Indian nations, sprang not only from evangelical congregations raising money to send missionaries. Prior to the Revolutionary War, Britain itself was being re-organized by proto-industrialization, and its merchant communities were taking part in a rapidly expanding trading empire.<sup>7</sup> A population quite reconciled to the idea of

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<sup>4</sup>Samuel Woodward, *A Sermon Preached October 9, 1760 Being a Day of Public Thanksgiving on Occasion of the Reduction of Montreal and The entire Conquest of Canada* (Boston: 1760), p. 36. Nathaniel Appleton, *A Sermon Preached October 9: Being a Day of Public Thanksgiving Occasioned by the Surrender of Montreal and All Canada*, September 8, 1760 (Boston: 1760), pp. 15-18; 26.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>6</sup>"An Account of Some Late Attempts by the Correspondents of the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, to Christianize the North American Indian," (Edinburgh: 1763), p. 6.

<sup>7</sup>Patrick K. O'Brien, "Inseparable Connections: Trade, Economy, Fiscal State, and the Expansion of Empire, 1688-1815," in P.J. Marshall, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Vol. II: The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 56-57.



mercantile expansion and what O'Brien called an "Imperial destiny," had often mustered commercial interests overseas with religious and evangelical enterprises.<sup>8</sup> The imagined connection between merchant enterprise and Design became more clearly apprehended when post-war home politics tended to discourage, for cost reasons and fears of defense expenses, the expansion of trade inland and discourage settlement, much to the chagrin of London and colonial merchant communities.<sup>9</sup>

The proposition that commercial profits could join God's work after the Conquest was itself shaped according to an imperial ideal. Intellectuals and political pamphleteers argued that victory brought Britain to a cross-roads in planning. One way led to decline, another involved Britain in weighty duty, leading to national transcendence. Now no longer "groaning under and crying out against" French aggression, Britain could decline into decadence if she did not take up the mantle of this higher work. The conviction was all the more certain with a classical historiographic turn by mid-century that identified cycles in history and scrutinized the fates of Rome and Sparta, and certainly commercial Athens.<sup>10</sup> From this reading, Britons then could fear their own plummet from preeminence and emulate Imperial forerunners, "sunk under the Weight of their own Acquisitions."<sup>11</sup>

Many of the decisions after the Peace were shaped in such considerations. In traditional historiography, retrenchment issued from the concerns of cautious ministries having learned the lessons of war and fearing military commitments that accompanied abuses of the fur trade.<sup>12</sup> As a front to their concerns, the clauses of the 1763 Royal Proclamation severely restricted trade freedoms and established a boundary between settlements and the newly defined Indian territory. As a policy, it has been pictured alternatively as an emergency expedient or an example of continuity, which tied post-war English Indian treaties with those pursued before.<sup>13</sup> But British retrenchment

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<sup>8</sup> O'Brien, p. 70; Boyd Stanley Schlenker, "Religious Faith and Commercial Empire," *Ibid.*, pp. 128-150.

<sup>9</sup> Glyn Williams and John Ramsden, *Ruling Britannia: A Political History of Britain 1688-1988*, (London: Longman, 1990), pp. 99-101.

<sup>10</sup> See Michael Kammen's "William Smith, Jr., and Historical Writing in Anglo-America, 1660-1760," in William Smith, Jr., *The History of the Province of New-York*, Michael Kammen, ed., Vol. I (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1972); R.N. Stromberg, "History in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XII (1), 1951, pp. 295-304.

<sup>11</sup> "The Comparative Importance of our Acquisitions from France in America," (London: 1762), p.3.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Sossin, 100-101. David Milobar's summary in "The Origins of British-Quebec Merchant Ideology: New France, the British Atlantic and the Constitutional Periphery, 1720-70," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 24 (3) September 1996, pp. 364-367.

<sup>13</sup> For interpretations of the Royal Proclamation, see Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Policy in the Formative Years: The Indian Trade and Intercourse Acts* (Harvard University Press, 1962), pp. 16-23;

seems to have been far more complex than a policy simply shying from expensive military commitments. Retrenchment was justified upon theories of societal development and principles of colonization. Most British commentators who contributed to the establishment of the boundary, the restrictions of the Royal Proclamation, and the larger vision behind the new Indian policy, saw themselves enacting policy as a means to a social end. Many administrators and colonial overseers, such as Lord Shelburne, did not wish to follow French precedents in colonization for that reason. These were judged overextended and matching the pretensions of a lower, primarily military, society. Reading colonial history this way, some British saw the American spoils falling to a commercial people with a particular duty to initiate a prudent societal development, not diplomatic disarrays, among Indians inland. Consideration of this context goes to the heart of an understanding of many of the textual descriptions of the fur trade after the Conquest. The assumption of an organic element guiding colonization helps make sense of the policy to leave Indians their hunting territories and stop colonists from "planting themselves in the heart of America."<sup>14</sup> Policy was formed with a desire to place colonization on its proper course of development and civilize Indians through a "system" of commerce in which the fur trade would figure centrally.

At the heart of concerns over the American conquest were questions of the size into which Britain should territorially expand, and the freedoms given to merchants in new territories. Quebec, in particular, seemed to present such responsibilities in bold relief. It was not merely a matter of choice between a small West Indies plantation or Voltaire's acreages of snow.<sup>15</sup> Haphazard expansion on both counts, geographical and mercantile, required military commitments which the five successive British ministries before the Quebec Act, despite their differences, were quick to rule out. Such expansion would also defy the principles of English colonization established in the seventeenth century.

Although some pamphleteers believed that not only Canada, but all the regions where French influence was felt among Indians, should be claimed by the British,<sup>16</sup> most writers were hesitant to support such a program on principle. The

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Dorothy V. Jones, *License for Empire: Colonialism by Treaty in Early America* (University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 45-46.

<sup>14</sup>NAC. "Hints, Relative to the Division and Government of the Conquered and Newly Acquired Countries in America," 1763, ff. 248-253, Shelburne Manuscripts, MG 23 A4, Vol. 12.

<sup>15</sup>Philip Lawson, *The Imperial Challenge: Quebec and Britain in the Age of the American Revolution* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), pp. 9-12.

<sup>16</sup>[Charles Lee] *The Importance of Canada Considered; in Two Letters to a Noble Lord* (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1761), pp. 2-5; 11-13; 22-23.

pamphleteer "Cato" was particularly troubled by the social implications of lumpish enlargements of Britain's possessions, as laid out in his "Whether it is possible that the Immense Extent of Territory acquired by this Nation at the Last Peace, will Operate towards the Prosperity or the Ruin of the Island of Great Britain" (1765). Now that Britain's immensity in America would span the "North-pole to the Gulph of Florida, and how far west, I really do not know,"<sup>17</sup> the writer feared colonization schemes would bleed the nation of much-needed skills and population, lead to competitive industry in America, and, most important of all, allow the avarice and selfishness of merchants to run unchecked and wreak havoc in foreign policy. The last of these concerns overshadowed Cato's publication, in which, even in the most distant extreme of Empire, those "mercenary wretches, who, for the sake of private Gain" could undertake their commerce and bring "on the ruin of the whole."<sup>18</sup>

Cato's hesitations had obvious implications for the fur trade (as his footnoted reference to Sir William Johnson's "honesty and mercy" towards Indians makes plain),<sup>19</sup> but they did not have a source in the "lessons of war," as Sosin argued, or the immediate possibility of ongoing Indian uprisings, as Pontiac's War in the Spring of 1763 seemed to confirm. Cato was more reasonably guided by two inspirations: the image of a mercantile community which followed, as all conceded, principles of self-interest, but which in America would wander too far from the oversight of England's disinterested upper ranks. In these leveled regions their freedoms would be unbounded, and the quite lustrous maxims of self-interest would work to the opposite of Britain's common good; Cato also shaped his analysis around what were obviously Turgot's stadial theories of social development, the forerunner of Scottish four-stage theory.<sup>20</sup> In this, the preferred dimensions of a mercantile society had geographic correspondence. The vainglorious and grandiose Spanish empire, now ruined, provided Cato an example. Also instructive were the failures of the French who in North America had dissipated their population inland and neglected improvement in favour of reckless military engagements. What purpose could France's conquered tracts serve commercial England? Cato pointed out that the

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<sup>17</sup>Cato, "Thoughts on a Question of Importance Proposed to the Public: Whether it is possible that the Immense Extent of Territory acquired by this Nation at the Last Peace, will Operate towards the Prosperity or the Ruin of the Island of Great Britain," (London: J. Dixwell, 1765), preface, pp. vi.-vii.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 30-31 .

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>20</sup>Ronald Meek *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976). On an overview of Scottish societal theory, Christopher J. Berry, *Social Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh University Press, 1997).

lowest savages subsisted by hunting and thereby "need by far the greatest: Quantity of Ground," the pastoral stages required less land, and, finally, the last stage, that of "agriculture and Commerce," needed the least land of all three.<sup>21</sup> For Britain to expand into such geographic extremes and its commercial ranks disperse into Indian territory where laws could not follow them surely contravened laws of societal growth and predicted troubles to come.

The sheer immensity of the American conquests brought additional fear of a chronic loss of the British population, threat of rivalry on new borderlands, or the beginnings of unstoppable expansionism. As argued by the writer of the "Comparative Importance of our Acquisitions from France in America" (1762), the Roman Empire's difficulties in expansion could foretell Britain's own barbarian invasions, jealousies arising among European rivals, and hunger for empire-building that would drive the British into endless expansionism. Canada's possession would now mean that "all Louisiana must be added...."<sup>22</sup>

Whether they urged the acquisition of all or few of France's American possessions, pamphleteers shaping arguments around stadial assumptions: wrote publications resonant with ideals of progress. They believed that nations rose from hunting and gathering cultures to commercial societies, and their own society occupied this sophisticated upper ranking. Inheriting principles of Montesquieu's *De l'esprit des lois* (1748), which identified geographic and historical developments in a nation's laws, and Turgot's *Discours* (1750), which best articulated the ideals of eighteenth century progress, writers promoting any direction in colonial policy looked to the teaching of experience and the logic of geography: they consequently feared degenerative decline and hoped for positive progress in a colonization scheme.<sup>23</sup> This assumption of an organicism in colonization, that a colony grew from seeds planted and carefully cultivated, and which took root or withered according to proven principles of growth, was hardly in the background of thought, particularly since English colonization had long been predicated on similar ideals. Both English and French writers from the late seventeenth century had turned to Roman law to validate their colonial expansion, and took recourse in natural law arguments to prove *dominium*, the essential beginning point in any colonial venture. Unlike early Spanish conquistadors and some Calvinist writers, the English and French drew a principle from the Roman idea of *res nullius*, where empty, unimproved land was

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, footnote comment, p.25.

<sup>22</sup> "The Comparative Importance of our Acquisitions from France in America" (London: 1762), p. 4.

<sup>23</sup> Kamman, p. xxxi.

common property and open to the invasion of improvers. By the late seventeenth century, this notion was refined with John Locke's principles of property, where property was a value-added commodity and rights to its possession were won when a person "mixed his labour with and joint to it something that it is his own."<sup>24</sup> The principle that the resulting *dominium* was derived by God's laws, rather than grace, was central to this approach to colonization. It was assumed that self-evident obligations were given to all humans to improve the earth, Indian or European. Such a formulation took the French and English to the same ends of earlier Spaniard expansion, but with different means: the Spaniards had justified Amerindian dispossession by nullifying their property rights and did so by refuting their intelligence or identifying their error before God. English pamphleteers instead made agriculture the central mandate of all men, and the defining criterion of a "proper" expansion of one people over another in Empire-building. They also saw trade, not plunder, as the best means by which to strike relations with aboriginals.

By the same measure, the English and French saw their Spanish predecessors dedicated to extraction, rather than agricultural improvement. The Spanish thirst for gold and silver shaped what Pagden has called the "triumphalism" of the English and French colonial discourse. They saw themselves, not lured into amassing specie in colonization, but developing resources. The resulting differences, at least to contemporaries, were stark: one society founded upon the earth's real improvement, the other founded upon insubstantial, mere symbolic, values represented in gold and silver, as Montesquieu's condemnation of the Spanish had shown. The English trade promoter, Josiah Childe, had previously stated that the Spaniard's "intense and singular" activity in mining had distracted him from "Cultivating the Earth, and producing Commodities for the Growth thereof."<sup>25</sup>

At the cornerstone of English colonization theory, then, were Lockean ideas of property,<sup>26</sup> where "The Labour of his Body, and the Work of his Hands," constituted one's property, removed from Nature, and "mixed his Labour with."<sup>27</sup> His identification of stadial growth towards a society characterized by complex property

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<sup>24</sup>Anthony Pagden, *Lords of all the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France: c. 1500-c. 1800* (Yale University Press, 1995) pp. 76-77. James Tully, "Aboriginal Property and Western Theory: Recovery of a Middle Ground," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 11(2) Summer, 1994, pp. 156-159.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, Montesquieu quoted on page 69, Childe, on page 72.

<sup>26</sup>James Tully, *A Discourse on Property: John Locke and Adversaries* (Cambridge University Press, 1980) pp. 110-113.

<sup>27</sup>John Locke, "Of Property," in Peter Laslett, ed., *Two Treatises of Government* (Cambridge University Press, 1967) 305-306.

relations was contrasted in the case of America's vast "deserts" and the Amerindian's own state in nature. Despite the agricultural work of the Five Nations and Huron, the Indian was pictured more often as a wandering hunter and gatherer and therefore deriving few natural rights to soil, while the agricultural activities and labour investment of the English led to property relations established between individuals, thus creating society in its essential form. Emeric de Vattel's articulation of the "agricultural argument," summed in his influential *Le Droit de gens ou principe de le loi naturelle* (1758), argued that the Amerindian's continued reliance upon roaming lifestyles spent hunting and fishing, and their rejection of the self-evident obligation to improve the earth allowed the English or French to justly colonize and legitimately fight Indians who stood in their way.<sup>28</sup>

But these very justifications had as their foundation an agenda of agricultural improvement that could not be overlooked by British critics of expansion after the Conquest. Insubstantial or negligible development in new world colonies was associated with an over extension of settlement, a sacrifice of agriculture to reckless wandering, to symbol over substance, to "roaming" rather than real sovereignty. It was precisely upon theories of social development that the English placed the French precedent in America under great scrutiny. After the Conquest, Quebec's condition was linked to reckless expansion that might have suited the French, a people whose societal refinement, as the English were fond of imagining, lay below their own. Pamphleteers were unanimous in arguing that the French were not a commercial but a martial race, and their vain soldier administrators had propelled them into innumerable American wars and breathless expansion into the interior, all to France's own ruin. This reading of French American history was underlined with the English reprinting and translations of Pierre de Charlevoix's and Le Page du Pratz's narratives either during or immediately after the Seven Years' War. Charlevoix's *Journal of a Voyage*, appearing in London in 1761, fell into the hands of book buyers who remarked on the "damn'd stuff" of Roman Catholicism in its pages, and its key, if not ominous, passages describing the lower Mississippi: "if the cultivation of lands is not first attended to, trade, after enriching a few private persons, will soon fall to nothing, and the colony never be well settled."<sup>29</sup> Le Page du Pratz, who condemned the laxity of agriculturists in the rich Louisiana colony and the destructive work of the French military, unwittingly refortified an English justification for Conquest

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<sup>28</sup>Pagden, p. 72-79.

<sup>29</sup>See Pierre de Charlevoix, *Journal of a Voyage to North-America* (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1761) Vol. II, pp. 209; 309, with the margin markings and notes left by "Williamson," the book's eighteenth century owner. The work is reprinted by the March of America Facsimile Series, 1966.

in his own translation. It is telling that du Pratz editions appeared in key moments of Anglo-French rivalry: 1758, at the beginning of the Seven Years' War, 1763, in the midst of policy formulation afterwards, and 1774, in the midst of the Quebec Act crisis.<sup>30</sup> The English editor prefaced the 1763 English translation by pointing out that the French had repeatedly failed in colonizing and lost hope in improving the region because they believed that as "the Mississippi Scheme failed in 1719, every other reasonable scheme of improving that Country, and of scraping any advantage from it, must do the same."<sup>31</sup> Both du Pratz and, more importantly, Charlevoix (who proved as valuable for the English as Bartholome de Las Casas' writings did for Black Handers) offered ample proof of the care Britain should take in simply adding French territory to her own, when France's own expansion had been motivated by a spirit of luxury and the scheming of traders, and guided by martial values that, by extrapolative reading, hardly befitted a commercial England.

If the French and their authors could offer lessons of colonial negligence in the post-war period, there were still the images most pamphleteers entertained of England itself that tempered their acquisitive tastes. Since the late seventeenth century, commonwealthmen and merchants believed their commercial society had grown from its very geographic limitations, excluded from poisoned Spanish American riches, gathering strength in maritime trade and steadily developing institutions and laws to protect property. Josiah Childe had offered his own voice to a chorus of commercial promoters in England who identified the virtues of commerce, the noble industry it sparked and the real wealth it amassed. His lengthy preface to his 1698 edition of *A New Discourse of Trade* reminded readers of the moral prudence of low interest rates, and offered his plan for an economy dedicated to virtuous creation of product rather than indolence through usury.<sup>32</sup> Commercial apologists not only imagined their society lustrous with commercial ornamentation, but commerce itself defending Britain with the "sinews of power," the Bank, money supply (that translated into real power for military defense), and self-interest ultimately buttressing the common good. Meanwhile, the very "cult of

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<sup>30</sup>Henry C. Bethloff points this out in his introduction to M. Le Page du Pratz, *The History of Louisiana, or of the Western Parts of Virginia and Carolina* (London: T. Bechet, 1774), republished in March of America Series, 1972.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, p. ii.

<sup>32</sup>See introduction, Sir Josiah Childe, *A New Discourse of Trade*, (London: J. Hodges, 1698).

commerce" that included an ethic of individual profit for the common good,<sup>33</sup> was imbued with constitutional republicanism and natural law theory which, as one pamphleteer would warn, posed questions over the property rights of Amerindians themselves. These, "by virtue of Providence" had been placed in the North American possessions, and they therefore had a right to the land. Complicating any idea of France's supposed sovereignty of vast territories inland were these Indians "humbly awaiting the Progress of events, by which in due time, they would probably have advanced, as our own progenitors have done, from the rude ignorance of a state of nature, to the splendid acquirements of civilization."<sup>34</sup> These "Plain Facts" listed, albeit in a Philadelphia pamphlet in 1781, hinted at the very reluctance many could share in gathering the unimproved lands from the French which bore few of the prerequisites for *dominium*, whether property relations or real sovereignty, and hinted, as we shall see, at the more proactive role a commercial England could provide these Indians "humbly awaiting the Progress of events."

To a British commentator of the time, the French were also associated with tyranny, Popery, and negligible commercial development, the triad conditions of the French state. Absolutism and religious blindness worked to curtail freedom, and ultimately commercial wealth, as most self-congratulating British believed.<sup>35</sup> They could adeptly link the French regime in America with few of the "liberties" British colonists and their restive merchant communities avowedly possessed. Even within the American "Great Debate" of the 1760s, when the issues of commercial and trade restrictions, taxation without representation and the curtailment of other true British "liberties" began to form the agenda of revolution, writers turned to the English, not French, colonial example which showed original colonists escaping in the seventeenth century from tyranny and religious persecution. Their self-funded societies had charters enshrining independence and liberty, approved by King.<sup>36</sup> Connecting commerce with hallowed notions of liberty, a balanced government and constitutional monarchy, the English could dourly condemn the French precedent. They saw French colonialism guided by the hand

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<sup>33</sup>Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation: 1701-1837* (Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 55-59. Isaac Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism: Political Ideology in late Eighteenth-Century England and America* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 44-45.

<sup>34</sup>Plain Facts: Being an Examination into the Rights of the Indian Nations of America to the Respective Countries (Philadelphia: R. Aitken, 1781), p. 6.

<sup>35</sup>See Milobar, pp. 368-370.

<sup>36</sup>Michael Kammen, "The Meaning of Colonization in American Revolutionary Thought," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XXXI July-September 1970, pp. 340-343.



of a "tyrant," whose military regime in America had needlessly expanded borders that had ultimately undermined commerce.<sup>37</sup> Pamphleteers agreed that English commerce, in pursuit of self-interest, worked "to the common good and the hatred of tyranny."<sup>38</sup>

After the Conquest, vivid lessons were quickly drawn from French attempts at colonization in Indian Territory. These betrayed a Catholic irresponsibility, the shadow of a tyrant king, and negligible evidence of commercial development. Geographical expansion had undermined the supporting structures of commercial society, most notably solid property relations and well supported credit. William Johnson, sending Lord Shelburne reports of the Illinois country, lauded the bounty and beauty of the region, but could not help but point out the errant ways of the French which had led to the ruin of the inhabitants "living among, or near Indians." The French had the "mistaken policy" to aim at "establishing military, instead of commercial, colonies in North America," Johnson reported, and had the French instead contented themselves with "improving the country they actually possessed, they would have rivaled the English in the most valuable American commodities and increased the commerce of France."<sup>39</sup> Johnson consistently dispatched descriptions of the old French trading system, condemned its expansion, and warned of the conditions it afforded. He asserted that "to trade in the Indian Country the people of Canada neglected Husbandry" in its chief colony of Canada.<sup>40</sup>

The supporting pillar of a commercial society, confidence in credit, found narrow girth here. This observation was made by the first Englishmen sent to survey and inventory the conquered French outposts. They found little evidence of sound credit and property relations, fixed or circulating capital, and hard currency in French Indian Territories. Even by 1788, contrasts could be drawn between the way the French had operated the fur trade from Montreal and what the English merchants, now the North-West Company, had established in circulating capital "in the Upper Country, or Indian Trade, above Cataraquoi." In the pamphlet, "A Review of the Government and Grievances of the Province of Quebec" (1788), in which concerns were voiced over the loss of the chief fur posts into American hands after the revolution, the writer revived the

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<sup>37</sup>See, Steve Pincus, "Neither Machiavellian Moment nor Possessive Individualism: Commercial Society and the Defenders of the English Commonwealth," *American Historical Review* 103 (3), June 1998, pp. 705-736.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.* pp. 707; 723.

<sup>39</sup>William Johnson report 10 July 1766, Shelburne Manuscripts, MG23 A4 Vo. 12. NAC.

<sup>40</sup>William Johnson to Shelburne, 22 September 1767, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of New-York* ed. E.B. O'Callaghan, Vol. VII (Albany: Weed, Parsons and Co. 1857), pp. 951-952.

model of colonization appropriate to a commercial nation. Largely given over to Black Hand retelling of Spanish colonization, where "extension of territory is an extension of cruelty and conquest," the pamphlet then turned to the French case. Common with all "despotick" countries, the French had paid "more attention to extending the empire, than to improve its acquisitions," and "although that country was under the dominion of France about one hundred and sixty years, she was still ignorant of its powers and resources." The writer then enunciated Britain's mission, that it was "*left to the commercial spirit and enterprise of Britons*, to find out and open these resources...," and that nothing was "so desirable, so politic and so virtuous ... so well adapted as the promotion of public credit by the medium of free and public commerce...."<sup>41</sup> In proof, the pamphlet included a summary of the Montreal's circulating property invested in the Indian Trade, generously estimated at no less than 1,386,000 pounds sterling.

If that sinew of proper colonization, circulating capital, was absent in the French regime's Indian Territory so was credit confidence and a money supply to support an inland economy. English administrators did not have to venture far from Montreal to find that irresponsible expansion had been both geographic and economic, and they likely saw a relation between one form of expansion and the other. François Bigot's last years as intendant had left the infamous paper issues, those ephemeral symbols of value that had rapidly devalued and lay stagnant, as it turned out, in the pockets of English speculators who had purchased them from habitants after the Conquest. The "Canada Paper" gave lessons of an enormous moral dimension, that English merchants had rushed in where they should have been restrained, to speculate on France's fictitious colonialism and suffer accordingly. Not only had Bigot's liberality and the "great Frauds" among colonial administrators issuing the money demonstrated a French propensity to extravagant expansionism, but the French King's initial disavowal for any responsibility to the tender demonstrated the close relations between a "despotick" Crown and its uncommercial state.<sup>42</sup>

Not only did the very problem of a circulating medium in Indian Territory face Quebec administrators, but also the French example which vividly linked rashness in currency issues with the rush inland of a colony's thin resources. As paper could be overextended or abused by its issuers, and "the great chain of credit and commerce"

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<sup>41</sup>Emphasis added, "A Review of the Government and Grievances of the Province of Quebec" (London: 1788), pp. 7-8; 14-15.

<sup>42</sup>Observations on the Canada Paper, 28 October 1766, Shelburne Manuscripts, RG 23 A4 Vol. 16 ff. 190-208.

snapped when issuers had no equivalent "to answer for what the paper is valued at,"<sup>43</sup> the result of French extravagance were outposts in Indian Country that were chiefly characterized as military, rather than commercial, establishments. Supported by little investment capital and dubious paper currencies, inhabitants were in turn suspicious towards credit arrangements of any kind. There were many opportunities to draw examples of the "French Way." The prudent HBC writers, adept at fetching any means to show the reliability of its factor approach to trade -- the ghost of Arthur Dobbs and other expansionists still in the air -- had gone to lengths to differentiate between the rough shacks and camps of credited Montreal traders inland with its own first forts, wisely left on the periphery of Rupert's Land. Their first strike inland in 1755, which they characterized as the solid and reliable Henley House, "whose handsome appearance had been the pride of the chief factor of Albany," was burned to the ground by Indians influenced by property-poor French peddlers.<sup>44</sup> HBC employees had long criticized the French who impinged on what they perceived to be their charter rights; the French were squatters whose shifting camps and vagrant ways did little justice to commercial maxims; moreover, they later castigated the English interlopers who "not only Build Huts and small places of Defence on the Company's Lands," but used the old French trading systems and former bourgeois traders to do so.<sup>45</sup> The related criteria of capital investment and property relations provided a definitive means to judge merit in European expansion into Indian Country. If one or both were absent, so were the supporting features of society itself, and it should be pointed out that whatever the historical merits of a "spirit of solidarity" uniting the rag-tag French-English peddlers in the 1760s through 1790s, as argued by Giraud,<sup>46</sup> English contemporaries believed the opposite was occurring: the very mobility of the traders inland, their shoddy huts and storehouses, the lack of investment capital, and property relations were in a very classic sense anti-social. Their communities had lost much, if not all, of their cohesion the farther inland its members went.

The breaking of the "Great chain of credit and commerce" had grave implications apparent to an eighteenth century audience accustomed to notions of social hierarchy, where a social ranking was natural and inherited from God. As community

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<sup>43</sup>Reflections on Coin in General; on the Coins of Gold and Silver in Great Britain in Particular; or those Metals as Merchandize; and also on Paper Passing as Money," (London: J. Waugh, 1762), p. 15.

<sup>44</sup>Marcel Giraud, *The Metis and the Canadian West* Vol. I, trans. George Woodcock (University of Alberta Press, 1986), p. 141.

<sup>45</sup>See Fort Albany's complaints to Major Robert Rogers, Giraud, p. 153. and references to Cocking's observations, pp. 156-157; 172.

<sup>46</sup>Giraud, p. 180.

members broke their ranks and places and rushed into the leveled Indian regions, so they lost their accountability to peers and superiors, and the reach of law itself. Thus, not only did society lose the bonds connecting one rank with the next, the essential form of society, the society lost its continuity with historical precedent. The resulting lack of history struck the imagination of John Macdonnell, a trader transferred for the first time to the Northwest in 1793, who noted in his journal that his brigade passed older French forts established by La Verendrye and his sons near Lake Winnipeg, "of which there is now not a vestige remaining except the clearing ..this place is overgrown with brush so as [not] to be known except from the traditions of the antients."<sup>47</sup> His diary includes other such traditions, oral, not written, barely recording the past of French voyageurs. Their human structures, as few as the written texts inland, were hardly permanent, quickly consumed by time and the forces of nature. John Sutherland saw the impermanence of French colonization when he first established his post on the lonely shores of Lake Burlingoro, near Portage de Delisle in 1792 (present-day Saskatchewan). He was quite taken aback when he discovered "the antient remains of an Old French House" near his own. From trading Indians he learned that its precise location had been mostly "out of their memory" and that only a mother of one of the Cree Indians at Sutherland's post (whom he estimated at "four score years of age") remembered the traders there when she was a young woman. He estimated the post's dimensions as best he could but commented in an account to London that the remaining structure with "the slightest touch moulders to dust." He carried a piece of one log back to his post and "tied it to the Judge of my House as a rare piece of antiquity," he said, "in this Wild Country where history is unpreserved."<sup>48</sup>

Eighteenth century Englishmen saw nature overtaking the impetuosity of polite nations in these lands. The weak tendrils of small property were choked in Indian Territory. The British were not a little dismayed in the circulating medium used inland that was often struck in the skins of animals, not in durable metal. Although Robert Rogers, in arguing the merits of inland commerce, could point to the virtues of such a currency where "Profits of this trade does not Come to British subjects in Cash but what is much better in Furr and peltry all which are to manufactured and turned perhaps to ten

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<sup>47</sup>Diary of John Macdonnell, 1793, *Five Fur Traders of the Northwest* ed. Charles M. Grant (Minnesota Historical Society, 1945), p.107; 109.

<sup>48</sup>James Sutherland Journal, 18 December 1792, *Escabitchewan Post Journal, 1792-93*, B.64/a/1 Hudson's Bay Company Microfilm, IM 52.

times their original Value,<sup>49</sup> the fur trade had long produced both a product and a necessary circulating medium in New France. And the very use of fur and skins as currency revealed endemic laxity among the inhabitants and their few actual returns from the lands. Protestants after the Conquest were quick to link the sorry French affairs inland with their currencies, some of them beaver skins, others the deflated French *livre*. The raving Huguenot preacher, Huet de la Valinière, who visited the Illinois Country in 1786 devoted much of his preaching to the insubstantiality of currencies in these communities that were, he made clear, given over to the Indian trade. Its indolent members survived only on the few remittances they could make in fur rather than agricultural surpluses. Not unlike a holy prophet, he fell upon these New Subjects to search out explanations for the country's undeveloped abundant resources and the "cause for the people's misery." What are left of his disjointed sermon notes written in French and English reveal his consistent message: that there was a causal link between the expansion of horrid French paper issues, the colonist's own sloth, and their minimal remittances offered up in a fur trade. In one sermon, "The Dollar's Complaint," (*Complainte de la piastre*) the Reverend turned to the poor value of French *livres* still circulating:

Thou couldst forseer indeed that skins not sufficient,  
Decreas every day, being not permanent  
When thou mulplyest and doublest thy wants  
The trader profiteth and loseth no warrants

Taking on the voice of the offensive circulating medium, the preacher added:

My name is as much in use as my species scarce  
... when from the best he made a pitiful country,  
Having me still in hand in great a quantity  
Now the dollar is not so much as French a livre  
'Tis that which causeth thee so pitiful a life  
... let me go and hide over as far as the world's end.<sup>50</sup>

The English faced enough problems determining the sterling value of coins in circulation in Quebec, as revealed in the value translations listed in the *Ready*

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<sup>49</sup>Plan of Robert Rogers, 1767, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, Vol. VI (Albany: The University of the State of New York, 1928), p. 47.

<sup>50</sup>NAC. Récit de la conduite du Révérend Huet de la Valinière, 1786-1788, MG 23, GIV, 3. Microfilm reel C-4472.

*Reckoners*.<sup>51</sup> But coinage itself became an almost moot question when spending habits among colonists made specie flee to the homeland. In the early 1760s, at least one correspondent believed that "the *Greatest* Commercial object to his Nation is to obtain a *a medium* to enable the Americans to purchase the manufactures of Britain...."<sup>52</sup> Unorthodox paper emissions were a resulting strategy of colonization, and any unnecessary expansion inland would, it seemed, entail further dubious paper expansion. Paper issues already went to the heart of a growing division between merchant communities in America and the British Parliament which had passed laws to prohibit assemblies from issuing paper in the early 1740s. Paper emissions had been noted by Hall in 1731. Particularly the South Carolina Indian Traders immediately sent home any hard currencies they had: "for whatever is gained in Money or Kind, after their own necessities are supplied, is sent always Home to Britain, and there only centers. It is certain that all the Money which our People in the Plantations acquire by Means of their Trade with any People whatsoever is constantly transmitted here, even to the putting themselves under the Necessity of establishing a Paper Currency, as many of them have already done."<sup>53</sup> In the immediate aftermath of the Conquest, the Lords Commissioners of Trade took up the issue with more resolve, sending assemblies further restrictions. They also received written histories not only of Quebec's troubled past in François Bigot's circulation of bills of exchange and card money, but also of the checkered story of English colonial issues since the seventeenth century. These included notorious and flagrant examples of paper currency issued by assemblies with no regard to their intrinsic worth; or the mysterious ways, "still not exactly known," in the case of the Massachusetts Bay colony and in Phipps' invasion of Canada, where bills of credit drawn from military suppliers began circulating as legal tender. Isolated from the oversight and regulation of England such currencies expanded yearly, deflated accordingly, and wreaked their havoc. Although merchants agreed that the "superior fitness of Gold and Silver for a medium of traders" was plain to all, the "particular Circumstances in the Colonies" made such paper issues a necessary evil of the New World.<sup>54</sup> Its issuance, then, was not only necessary, but merited as one of the rights of the "Sons of Britain" who believed that any people "sent

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<sup>51</sup>See, *The Ready Reckoner: for the Province of Quebec, Nova-Scotia and the States of America* (Quebec: William Moore, 1790).

<sup>52</sup>NAC. Note by "S.G., nd., probably 1763, Vol. 11, f. 10. Shelburne Papers.

<sup>53</sup>Fayrer Hall, *The Importance of the British Plantations in America to This Kingdom* (London: J. Peele, 1731), pp. 67-68.

<sup>54</sup>NAC. "A plea of the London Merchants in Favour of paper Currency in North America," 1766, Shelburne Manuscripts, Vol. 10, f. 262.

out to explore and settle a New World, for the Mutual Benefit of themselves and the Common Parent," won a right to such paper values.<sup>55</sup>

But these very realities of colonization, when trade and commerce were extended to the naked American shores, could only inspire caution among British ministers and the Lords of Trade determining the future of the fur trade in America. The French and their fur trade might have been over-extended, as their currencies were inland, but the British need not rush inland as rashly. Commerce between individuals relied ultimately upon law, law upon tradition, and tradition upon the historic property relations that determined the nature of society. The Canadian traders inland, sheltered beneath tents and rough cabins, not controlled by social ranking and obligations, and beyond law, were before and after the Conquest only the remnant of their societies, hardly having *dominium* in its classical sense, and therefore any form of property rights. When William Tomison, an HBC employee, defied the threats of a nearby Canadian trader, he brought to the fore this distinction that, "he must be a man of greater property and better principles before he can talk in that daring insulting manner against the Hudson's Bay Company's servants."<sup>56</sup> To an eighteenth century mindset, the careful establishment of property inland was a priority, as property constituted a bundle of obligations extended between individuals who were hierarchically dependent and responsible to each other under law.

The prudence of extending only in small steps such property was already recognized by Tomison in a 1767 diary immediately after the Conquest. He cautioned the Hudson's Bay Company from sending traders inland at a moment when the first English "pedlars" were leaving La Chine to compete for the Bay's trade. "The long knowledge I have of the affairs in Hudson's Bay makes me affirm, that however advantageous it may be to two or three poor peddlers from Canada to drive a wretched and vagabond life after a few furs, I do not think it is, and am certain it would not be worth the notice of an Honourable Company of Gentlemen to Follow such a pitiful game."<sup>57</sup> Andrew Graham drew similar virtue from factors prudently laying aside "fruitless undertakings about the Forts [on the Bay], such as building out-houses, etc. etc. etc. a distemper we are subject to...." He believed that if they "look sharp after the fur trade in all its branches," they would "overturn all the schemes of the Canadian pilferers without applying to birch-rind

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<sup>55</sup>NAC. May 1763 Report from Virginia, Shelburne Manuscripts, Vol. 11, f. 202.

<sup>56</sup>HBC. William Tomison to Robert Longmoore, 15 February 1780, Hudson House (Lower) Journal, 1779-1780, B.87/a/2.

<sup>57</sup>Tomison's observations are included in Glyndwr Williams, ed., *Andrew Graham's Observations on Hudson's Bay, 1767-91* (London: HBC Record Society, 1969), p. 264.

canoes and such like wild schemes that is impracticable."<sup>58</sup> There was meanwhile something instructive in the case of the English merchants in Canada. They immediately rushed inland and undertook, as the French did, their unorthodox commerce. The HBC factors learned that the new English traders were abusing trading standards as much as their French predecessors had, changing rates on guns, cloth and powder at will, surviving on puny remittances made to their home investors and little else, all in a theft of the HBC's chartered freedoms. When Hudson's Bay staff heard of the "company" of Canadian traders on the Saskatchewan in 1772, including a mix of New and Old Subjects such as Maurice Blondeau, Thomas Corry and George McBeath, what shocked the company's servant, Tomison, was the reckless standard they offered on trade, their "generosity" in giving away goods (not their own, but commissioned by Quebec merchants) and trading at prices reduced four-times those of the HBC's own goods.<sup>59</sup> Such were the charges made by "men of greater property" against those who ran impulsively into the forests of America, where, far from law, they could so quickly lose all accountability to their creditors at home.

More will be said of the efforts made by Montreal merchants to protect their approach to commerce. It is, however, no wonder that after the Conquest a spirit of retrenchment guided official British policy. Quebec's economy and commercial hinterland was in a state of chronic underdevelopment, and much attention would have to be directed, as a merchant memorial suggested, to maturing the "Infant Commerce to and from that Part of the World."<sup>60</sup> The very schematics of overextension had left Montreal at the farthest fringe of French colonization, awash in the "speculative spirit"<sup>61</sup> after Conquest, and commercial footing becoming more insubstantial the farther inland observers went. At Fort Chartres, abandoned by the French after the end of the war, the officer George Croghan (who probably without coincidence, became one of the advocates of the agricultural Ohio Company), reported to General Gage in 1767 that it was the prior bad management of paper currency inland that seemed to have "fixed such an aversion in the minds of the French that they never will supply us with Provisions, except they are either paid on the spot in cash, or such commodities as they want."<sup>62</sup> Survivors in these communities were given over to trade as primitive bartering, and capital extended to its

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 268.

<sup>59</sup> See Glyndwr Williams' comments concerning the comparative standards, pp. 275-276.

<sup>60</sup> Constitutional Documents, The expression was used in "Petition of the London Merchants," 1764, pp. 236.

<sup>61</sup> A.L. Burt, p. 45, and a beneficial overview discussion, on pp. 106-112.

<sup>62</sup> NAC. G. Groghan to Gage, 12 January 1767, Shelburne Manuscripts, MG 23 AV Vol. 12.



practitioners was minimal. Samuel Morrison, who went inland from Montreal in 1767, discovered a Frenchman south of the Great Lakes, surely symbolic of the old French Regime. He jotted down in his diary, with obvious wonder, that the trader had "but one Bail two trunks of dry goods, and two bags of Brandy that I see in his camp."<sup>63</sup> Captain Harry Gordon, commissioned to explore the newly acquired territories of the Ohio and Mississippi, remarked that the English "hardly have the dominion of the country," ironically getting nothing from the inhabitants with the sterling money they carried and all the goods apparently passing between inhabitants in primitive bartering and credit agreements.<sup>64</sup>

The lessons learned from French colonization prompted the writing of some of the most severe clauses of the Royal Proclamation issued in September 1764. These curtailed free trade, reduced the numbers of posts seized from the French, and radically contained the physical limits of Quebec itself. Unkempt French rootlets were necessarily snapped, limbs pruned. Lord Barrington's influential prescription was to leave all colonization on the coast or near the coast. He would have Indians, if they desired British goods, travel to the English and carry with them America's bulky and weighty wares overland.<sup>65</sup> Those who did propose expansion inland, making land speculation appear as virtuous agricultural husbandry, defended their projects, as William Johnson, Benjamin Franklin and others affiliated with the Ohio Company, on the precedent of Julius Agricola in Britain, who furnished "an excellent example" of how the British should expand into the interior, where agriculture was to be the first priority and the Indian Trade could be centered within such colonies, better "than by wandering traders among the Indians."<sup>66</sup>

These policies which established Indian hunting grounds, should be considered in the context of economic concerns in Canada itself, for, by pruning the mass, the Lords of Trade, secretaries of state and colonial administrators hoped that they could revive the ungainly inheritance of the Conquest. Discriminating observers began criticisms of French expansion with Canada itself where they believed true commercial ranks had been undeveloped, and the *habitant* enjoying far too many freedoms. The

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<sup>63</sup>NAC. 8 May 1767 Samuel Morrison Diary, MG 23 GIII 5.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, Diary of Expedition, 1766, p. 109.

<sup>65</sup>NAC. Barrington Letter, 10 May 1766, Lord Barrington File MG 23 A5.

<sup>66</sup>NAC. Remarks on the Plan for the Future Management of Indian Affairs by Mr. Jackson, N.D., c.1767, Shelburne Papers, MG 23 A4 Vol. 13, f. 124. For an overview of the Ohio Company, see introduction to Kenneth P. Bailey, ed., *The Ohio Company Papers, 1753-1817: Being Primarily Papers of the "Suffering Traders" of Pennsylvania* (Arcata: 1947), pp. 6-13.

problems presented by such a society worried General Murray, whose first reports to his British overseers described not the chaotic aftermath of conquest, but the historic neglect of resources that consequently marked New France society itself. Every branch of commerce had been monopolized, a thicket of French legal customs had created a "litigious" people who were inattentive to future product: these "were circumstances under which no country could thrive," Murray noted. "As they will not be subject to such inconveniences under a British government," he assured the Lords of Trade, "they must of course apply more closely to the culture of the land." Indeed, his eye turned to that beginning point of any colony and the society rising upon it: the nature of the soil, so productive that it made the *habitant* lazy and allowing people to bend "all their attention" to the fur trade to the neglect of fishing and husbandry. As far as even the Upper Country Indian Trade, "this very branch may be further extended, than ever it was under the French, by reason of the Superior diligence and application of the British traders."<sup>67</sup>

Murray's would be the first of many British assessments that recognized things strikingly amiss in the old French colony. Administrators fretted about the insufficient ranking of the society, the colony's unfitness for representative government, and its incapacity to provide sufficient talent to fill government offices. They were quick to undertake an official census of the *noblesse* in Canada<sup>68</sup> (Carleton would later dismiss any possibility of "the Dignity of the Throne, or Peerage to be represented in the American Forests")<sup>69</sup> and note the "indolence" of the inhabitants who had not even fitted sashes to their windows.<sup>70</sup> Colonel Burton's Report of Three Rivers stated that "the laziness of the people, and the alluring and momentary advantages they reaped from the Traffick with the Indians in the Upper Country ... have hitherto prevented the progress of Husbandry." He guessed that 100,000 acres of land was bound up in seigneurial tenure, with only 16,000 of it actually cultivated.<sup>71</sup> General Gage's Report of Montreal, where the fur trade supplied almost all the revenues, stated that the "French Management" of the trade, which included selling permits and allowing droves of Frenchmen to live in the Indian Territories, was not "worthy of our Imitation."<sup>72</sup> Those commonly involved in the Indian Trade, he reported, whether as voyageurs or traders, led "thro' a Habit of Indian

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<sup>67</sup>BL. James Murray, "State of Government in Quebec, 5 June 1762, Harwick Papers. 35813 f. 94.

<sup>68</sup>BL. List of Canadian Nobless Resident in Canada, Haldiman Papers, Miscellaneous Correspondence 21885 f. 31.

<sup>69</sup>Carleton to Shelburne, 20 January 1768 DCHC, p. 296.

<sup>70</sup>BL. See James Fowler's description n.d. (1766?) Harwick Papers 35914 ff. 65-68.

<sup>71</sup>Colonel Burton's Report, *Canadian Constitutional Documents*, pp. 83-84.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, General Gage's Report, p. 93.

Manners and Customs, at length to adopt their way of life, to intermarry with them and be savage," and they never returned to the colony. Despite edicts that attempted to stop the flow of the colony's lifeblood, there were "hundreds amongst the Distant Indians."<sup>73</sup>

Administrators and English commentators also turned to the past to establish how France had overextended itself in its bid for colonization. When the editor of the 1763 translation of Le Page du Pratz's narrative revived memories of the "Mississippi Scheme" he resurrected a key moment of French colonialism, when dubious speculation had been used by the French crown to drive colonization. According to this view, the French had not colonized upon agricultural development, but upon insubstantial speculation; likely few by 1763 would have forgotten Louis XIV's Louisiana Company and the attempt to extend Empire in America upon John Law's infamous banking system, bidding to convert national debt into a circulating medium.<sup>74</sup> In England, John Law's speculation over the unimproved lands and mines of Louisiana in the first decade of the eighteenth century cast a long shadow over a "despot" and a colonization that contrasted with mercantile England, a "Nation of Liberty."<sup>75</sup> The critics of Law and the tragic financial consequences for the English who invested in the Mississippi believed Law had concocted a game appealing to those looking for "any way of getting money, beyond industry (which alone can make us truly a Great and Flourishing People.)"<sup>76</sup> The Louisiana Company shares derived value only in rising speculation and to that end the company remained only an ephemeral entity on a vast tract of Indian Territory. This "Chimera: or, the French Way of Paying National Debts,"<sup>77</sup> was symptomatic of French colonization, in which investors had regarded, not the actual product to be created, but "the number of ships to be sent annually to the *East Indies*, the extent of their Colonies and Plantations in the Louisiana, and on the Banks of the Mississippi, what Rents in time shall accrue to the Stock."<sup>78</sup> Not just untilled tobacco plantations were associated with Law and his experiment in deficit financing: the Canadian fur trade was caught up in the bubble, as suggested in Bernard's *Recueil de Voyages au Nord* which illustrated its

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<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>74</sup>Lande Pamphlet Collection, National Library of Canada, "A Full and Impartial Account of the Company of Mississippi, otherwise called the French East-India Company, Projected and Settled by Mr. Law," (London: Printed for R. Francklin, 1720).

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, "A Letter to John Law upon His Arrival at Great Britain," (London: Printed for J. Roberts, 1721), p. 21.

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup>*Ibid.*, "The Chimera: or, The French Way of Paying National Debts," 1720.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 46.

"Descriptions des Castors et de leur Industrie," with a picture of animals and Huron Indians industriously providing product at a time of heightened excitement among European speculators.<sup>79</sup>

Retrenchment, then, sought to curtail a westward rush of credit and restrict the Indian trade to a reduced numbers of posts, all "to prevent the Traffick of wandering traders who by cheating and misusing the Natives frequently bring on National Quarrels."<sup>80</sup> As constitutional development was pictured growing organically, so also the colony "must ever be the Principal points of View, in forming it's Civil Constitution, and Bodies of Laws," as Carleton advised in 1767. He believed colonization without such consideration would "be little better than mere Castles in the Air," and he looked to the foundation "firmly laid" of a colony in a judicial-legal firmament and careful defense.<sup>81</sup> What Carleton added to the firmament was the concept of custom and tradition, but his primary means of colonization was part of a commercial vision. Indeed, the guiding economic ends of the Royal Proclamation are located in reports of the Lords Trade Commissioners, who believed that "they can only be secured and improved by an immediate establishment of regular government in all such places, where planting and settlement, as well as Trade and Commerce, are the immediate objects."<sup>82</sup> "But as no such regular civil Government is either necessary or intended can be established; where no perpetual Residence or planting is intended," the commissioners continued, "it will be sufficient to provide for the Free trade of all your Majesty's subjects under such regulations and such Administration of Justice as is best suited to that end." And they pointed out the "justice and humanity" of the King's proclamation that placed "under Your Majesty's immediate protection, to the Indian Tribes for their hunting grounds."<sup>83</sup> Here, "where no Settlement by planting is intended immediately at least, to be attempted; and consequently where no particular form of Civil Government can be established on."<sup>84</sup> Such were the immediate interests of ministries whose attention to social theory defined the vast tracts of Indian Territories to the west of English settlements, withdrew Quebec's

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<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*, "Descriptions des Castors et de leur Industrie des Canots, Habitations, Habillemens, manière de vivre des Sauvages du Canada...." 1720. See, also, Lawrence M. Lande, *the founder of our Monetary System: John Law, Compagnie des indes, and the Early Economy of North America* (Montreal: Lawrence Lande Foundation for Canadian Historical Research, 1984).

<sup>80</sup>NAC. 10 May 1763, Lord Barrington File, MG 23 A5.

<sup>81</sup>25 November 1767, Carleton to Shelburne, DCHC, p. 282.

<sup>82</sup>Lords of Trade to Egremont, 8 June 1763, pp. 138-139.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 139.

<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 139.

own boundaries to a more prudent base, and suggested that where "The Advantage resulting from this restriction of the Colony of Canada will be that of preventing by proper and natural boundaries, as well as the Ancient French inhabitants as others from removing and settling in Remote places, where they neither could be so conveniently made amenable to the Jurisdiction of any Colony nor made subservient to the Interest of the Trade and Commerce of this Kingdom...."<sup>85</sup>

## II.

Probably the most compelling evidence required to buttress retrenchment was found, then, in the nature of Quebec society and the communities resting upon the profits of the Indian trade. The western regions were increasingly viewed as a region where English credit showed little account, turned to debt, and sometimes dragged down the largest and most respectable merchant houses of London. The Indian Territory laid out by Johnson, approved by the Lords Commissioners of Trade, and lauded by Barrington forced Indians to travel to the English rather than the other way around. The boundaries of Britain's commercial world were made meaningful during Pontiac's War. The uprising had grievously ruined many Indian trader fortunes, leaving numerous "Suffering Traders" petitioning the English government for restitution of its plundered wares. The Pennsylvanian and London firms of Baynton, Wharton, Morgan, Trent, Levy and Franks, with goods sacked by Indians valued upwards to £85,916 NY currency, were by no means the only merchants to fall in Indian Country.<sup>86</sup>

More lessons of the problem of credit in Indian country were being learned in the newly conquered centre of the North American Trade, Montreal. There, trade was being vigorously prosecuted in the atmosphere of speculation and liberal credit arrangements often finding new trails westward, as seen in the surviving letters and accounts of the struggling Montreal merchant, Lawrence Ermatinger. Whatever the merits of Creighton's depiction of a cohesive merchant community dedicated to exploiting the resources of the St. Lawrence valley,<sup>87</sup> Ermatinger was representative of the more common businessmen drawn to Montreal after the Conquest. Most were young, gaining merchant experience as junior representatives of London houses, and many of their business ventures were prone to failure. Ermatinger himself had faced numerous

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<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>86</sup>My thanks to Harry Duckworth for his comments concerning Montreal merchants, many of whom had had lost heavily in the Pontiac lootings. See, also, introductory comments of Kenneth P. Bailey, *The Ohio Company Papers, 1753-1817: Being Primarily Papers of the "Suffering Traders" of Pennsylvania*, (Arcata, California, 1947), pp. 1-14.

<sup>87</sup>Donald Creighton, *The Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1937).

difficulties in trade. He gained his London credits, and supported his extensive fur trade operations, not from one merchant house, but sometimes from as many as four separate houses. He returned standard letters to his numerous London creditors, such as to the merchant who advanced him buttons and paper, with the assurance that "your property is trusted into Hands that never will make bad use of it."<sup>88</sup> His Canadian experience was blighted upon arrival in Montreal immediately after the Conquest. When many town merchants were reeling from the financial disaster of the Pontiac Uprising, his first partnership with one merchant who lost goods dragged him into a proceeding at Chancery.<sup>89</sup> Like many Montreal merchants, heavily extending credits to traders, he bemoaned the severe application of the law in the matter of seized goods, particularly when they were his own.<sup>90</sup>

Although some of his contemporaries have stolen the attention of historians, particularly those who later established the first associations of the North West Company, Ermatinger probably best represents the eighteenth century business traditions of the Indian trade, where the credit taken into the forests had to be carried upon many backs. Ermatinger's bourgeois traded furs on his account. The merchant also solicited furs directly from independent Indian traders inland, promising the highest possible prices through his connections in London.<sup>91</sup> The goods he procured from London, all on credit, were consistently poor in quality: he claimed that Birmingham hardwares did not sell well, probably because of their price: "Damaged calicoes, handkerchiefs and every cheap woolen drapery or cheap linnens are articles which fetch a tolerable good price."<sup>92</sup>

These Montreal merchants in turn outfitted the Indian trade inland, where liberal credit again tied merchant to trader, and then to Indian. Many traders were drawn from the cloth of John Edger, who drew credit so extensively from merchant John Stenhouse that he could no longer get "one sixpence worth of goods on my name" at Detroit. Although Edger undoubtedly received goods from other merchants in Montreal – Detroit was a massive credit clearinghouse – he indignantly wrote to Stenhouse of being "sorry I had the fortune [*sic*] to deal [*sic*] with you as I could get goods from Different

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<sup>88</sup>NAC. Letter to Alsopp and Wells, 1 October 1770, Ermatinger Estate Papers MG 19 A2, C-4556.

<sup>89</sup>NAC., Commission of Bankruptcy awarded against Lawrence Ermatinger, late of Montreal, now of London, 25 January 1770, Court of Bankruptcy Commissions: Docket Books, microfilmed copy of the PRO Registers, B.4/20.

<sup>90</sup>NAC. See his correspondence to Forest Oakes, 1773-1775, 1 September 1773; 30 March 1775. Ermatinger Papers, MG 19 A2 (3), Vol. 31.

<sup>91</sup>NAC. Letter to Nicolas Marchessau, at Detroit, 2 May 1771 Reel C-4556.

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.*, To Thomas Bridge, 27 September 1771.

people in Montreal when I got them from you."<sup>93</sup> Most of these inland traders returned remittances inconsistently, or only after lengthy periods of time. And since Montreal merchants advanced small quantities of goods to numerous traders, the collective weight of such credit was enormous, enough that Montreal and Quebec houses were soon placing strain on their London creditors. Indeed, in 1771, a distressed London merchant contacted Ermatinger to help reconstitute the goods he had extended unwittingly into the western forests through Canadian credit arrangements. The merchant faced bankruptcy in part due to the goods he had lost inland. Having previously sent a representative to Montreal to seize what he could, he now asked Ermatinger for his own candid judgement over the merits of the remaining, sizeable, debts.

Ermatinger did not offer much good news. He pledged his help in the matter, "for everything in this country has hitherto been managed in such a manner the Pity of every Honest Man."<sup>94</sup> But rather than condemning the manner of the advances inland, Ermatinger was more critical of the strong-handed tactics of the merchant's representative who had tried to seize remaining goods. His methods had apparently prompted debtors not to produce payments, but to escape farther into the forests to live with the Indians. Thus, a Mons. Aviare made the claim that the merchant had unfairly profited on his consigned furs and, in retaliation, he had retired to Indian Country, along with his debts; two other correspondents, Shindler and Le Blanc had "spent these three years in the Upper Country, where they carry on a trade with the Savages, they are both afraid to come to Montreal or any Part of this province, for fear of being arrested and imprisoned by some of their Creditors." There was also little hope for the debts in François Estere's hands. He had little means to pay his remittances and the merchant's agent had foolishly not accepted anything but a full amount, whereupon Estere had transferred the merchant's goods to Mr. Adhamer in the Upper Country, and absconded to Martinique; The merchant's agent had also seized the remaining goods of Joncaire Chabert and sold them at public auction. Chabert had in consequence taken all his family to live in the Upper Country at Detroit. There was the case of one Barbon, "he keeps close among the Savages, However, in a place where he can be found;" at least Barbon was negotiating through a friend to settle his accounts; De Mollee "is at present 600 leagues from Montreal. Perhaps he might pay some time or other. It is a very bad debt at

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<sup>93</sup>NAC. See correspondence and lists of merchandise, John Edger to John Stenhouse, 21 July 1778, 6 September 1778, pp. 2355-2356, Microfilm reel C-1340.

<sup>94</sup>NAC. Ermatinger to Francis Byboth, 19 January 1771, Ermatinger Estate Papers MG 19 A2 Microfilm Reel C-4556 ff. 48-50.

present." There was François Chevallier, who had absconded with goods to Michilimackinac, "shut up in his own house, eats and drinks what he has left, what your agent would think to insist on the whole of Gods knows of He ought to have taken what he had then left and afterward settle the remainder in the best manner." And finally, Catin, who was presently in the Upper Country, probably the best debtor yet, who Ermatinger believed would prove faithful in his responsibilities, "provided you are diligent for I assure you, the best what the French call of an *honnet homme* wants to be watched and looked after."

The way that Ermatinger characterized such outstanding debts is of interest, as he displays the paternal relations that, by necessity, had to be maintained by a creditor with a remitter in Indian Country, and the softer methods required to reclaim debt. The dark shadow of "Indian country" as an escape to debtors was indeed growing as a reality in the British Montreal trade. Such paternalism also grew in relationships established between the Montreal merchant, and his bourgeois inland. Throughout the 1770s, Ermatinger either sent goods as a subsidiary merchant in an "adventure" inland, or organized them himself with his bourgeois, Forest Oakes, a trader of moderate capital. Such investments were profit-shares, where the investor put up goods in certain proportion to an "outfit" and either won profit or incurred loss in the same proportion after a canoe brigade ventured and returned from Indian Country. Ermatinger and his bourgeois inland maintained separate books; Ermatinger's own kept track of the many outfits he was involved with each season, such as the one in 1770 where Ermatinger and four other merchants made up the outfit of a typical "Northwest Adventure." Costs in such adventures were either negotiated on their creation, or established according to custom, many of them trailing back to the French Regime. Thus, the Montreal merchant advanced the bond for traders getting licenses (and, as Ermatinger's books suggest happened, lost such when their bourgeois misbehaved inland); the merchant bore the cost of feeding and accommodating brigades while in town; the bourgeois, however, accepted all costs to upkeep canoes; he, being responsible for the safe carriage of the goods inland, also paid for the encouragement of the canoe brigade -- the most important being the payment of "drams" of rum after difficult stretches of the journey.<sup>95</sup>

The merchant was also responsible for extending credit to the bourgeois and members of the brigade, and such credit represented a significant outlay of goods for such adventures. Ermatinger kept a separate book of engagements.<sup>96</sup> This contained the

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<sup>95</sup>NAC. Account Book, Forest Oakes MG 19 A2 Series 1, Vol. 3.

<sup>96</sup>*Ibid.*, Engagements des voyageurs par l'ouest, MG 19 A2 Series 1, Vol. 2.



customary contracts signed between the city merchant and each member of a brigade, from the highly priced guides, to the *gouvernails*, *devants* and finally the labouring canoesmen. These laid out the conditions of employment, banning individuals from trading among the Indians on their own account and for each to be an "honnet homme;" Ermatinger often paid a finding fee to an agent who signed up voyageurs in the regions where such skilled canoeists were found, such as at Terre Bonne. He also put up, in addition to the stated wage, a blanket of a certain point, two cotton shirts, a thick *metasse*.

The same engagements, written early in the season, established a credit relationship between merchant and employee. Employees or their wives began drawing on Ermatinger goods and small cash advances long before engagements actually began and their advances often transcended their yet-to-be-earned wages in debts. Thus, to G. M. St. Aubin, of L'île Jesus, whose wage was set at 320 livres, Ermatinger advanced one pound in cash, cotton shirts, tobacco, and "a noble striped cap." By the time he entered another engagement, St. Aubin owed Ermatinger a weighty £8-11-9. Joseph de Fond, a Montreal resident and contracted guide, receiving 665 livres (£9-9-1), in January started borrowing on Ermatinger cloth, thread, flannel; by May he was borrowing cash, whereby he now owed some £13-3-7.5. By June 8, Ermatinger advanced to his daughter shoes and blankets worth six shillings.<sup>97</sup> Toussant L'hyvarnois, of Longuille, had an outstanding balance of £11-14-11 by the time of his engagement. Between the 9 of May to the 11th, he purchased a knife worth a shilling, a note in hand worth 19 dollars (with a three shilling charge), tobacco and red shoes, running up a tab worth £17-19-5. L'Hyvarnois paid off £5 when he purchased his equipment, only to run up a further £1-1 debt with expenses in town.<sup>98</sup> Significant expenses were borne by the merchant when engages broke engagements, such as the case of Joseph Mainville, who charged Ermatinger for his equipment then absconded into Indian Country without fulfilling his contract. Ermatinger was forced to hire a man in Mainville's place, costing, in total, £22-5-0 in debt. In 1789, fifteen years after the event, Ermatinger was still accruing interest on the outstanding amount at six per cent per year.

These arrangements were arguably characteristic of the credited fur trade, bearing both the traditions of the *tercement* merchant tradition, now supported with liberal lines of London credit. Ermatinger engaged and re-engaged individuals who had outstanding debts, and while engaged, they accrued more. Sometimes simple extravagance ensured closer bonds of obligation between merchant and voyageur. Such

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<sup>97</sup>*Ibid.*, See entries for 1774.

<sup>98</sup>*Ibid.*, See entry in 1774 engagements.

was the case of Joseph Defond, a guide who stood £15 -15-1 in debt upon his engagement with Ermatinger. He had the merchant advance cash to a "woman by your order" of £2-15-13, and similarly had his daughter-in-law sent a "fine black velvet." By May, in time for another engagement, Defond had accumulated a staggering £37-13-0 in debt.<sup>99</sup>

The Indian trade, established in such credit relations, maintained connections between all involved. When confidence was broken and/or advances recalled, ties that linked members of society snapped. In such moments, the town's fur merchants and traders took sides, sued for their lost goods and appeared to Edward William Gray, Montreal's first sheriff, as a particularly unsavory lot. The call for British bankruptcy law among Montreal's English merchants was understandable in this light. Merchants wanted any legal means to withdraw credit when it had been over-extended. For that reason, a conspicuous list of debtors and bankrupts often signed letters to the Lords of Trade requesting British merchant law be applied in lieu of the older French merchant code (far more lenient towards bankrupts) and to have British bankruptcy proceedings protect their property. This would ideally make bankruptcy quick and effective, and disallow the bankrupt from assigning his goods to friends and give the bulk of his goods to preferred creditors over others.<sup>100</sup> There were also those who signed petitions to have merchant law to have the division of insolvent goods more equitably divided.<sup>101</sup>

Sheriff Edward Gray frequently remarked about the poor character of fur merchants. His office administered Indian licenses and took the bonds (some 83 licenses were processed in Montreal alone in 1767) of traders, usually paid by merchants; he built and maintained the town's jail. His letterbooks display the considerable time he devoted to seizing goods of unremitting debtors and bankrupts. Indeed, it is in Gray's books where the dark dimensions of Indian Country imposes itself as a commercial entity, a region where law seemed to have little meaning and the relations of property became lost with surprising ease. Often hired by London merchants, Gray usually reported that a debtor and his effects had absconded, as the case in 1767 of Charles Sanguinet, to the fur trade post of Michilimackinac, or the similar escape of the problematic debtor and Indian

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<sup>99</sup>*Ibid.*, See entry 1774 engagements.

<sup>100</sup>*Ibid.*, Memorial of 21 November 1768 signed by George Gregory (later bankrupt); T. Aitkin, (Indian trader), Paterson and Grant (whose house fell shortly afterwards), Samuel Jacob (who fled to the United States after the Revolution after his bad debts brought a merchant house in London down) and George Allsopp.

<sup>101</sup>Signed by Jacob Vander Hayden, James Finlay (see his troubles with the Montreal sherrif), John Thompson, Samuel Holmes, William Haywood, John Porteous, James Morison, John Stenhouse and Randle Meredith) *Ibid.*, f. 212.

trader, James Finlay. When Gray managed to seize goods, his reports to London houses were disappointing, to say the least. Indian traders banded together on such occasions and suppressed bids by crowding auctions, sometimes buying up seized goods for the use of the original debtor.<sup>102</sup> More typical was the case of the "great villain" trader St. Germaine, sued by Hugh Finlay. Finlay had to vie with many creditors to divvy up furs from his bankrupted correspondent.<sup>103</sup>

Such credit relations were spun into complex webs in the community and trailed unexpectedly into the forests to the west. Thus, when Gray was asked by the London merchant, Peter Travers, to recover the debts he had extended to seven Montreal merchant/traders, Gray's investigation uncovered a labyrinthine network of credit undoubtedly dismaying Travers. Mr. James Finlay, who benefited from some of the credit, claimed not to be able to remit until he had some payments from another trader, Mr. Todd, who was in Indian Country with £100 worth of his goods. Gray was able to get £255 of the £448 advanced to Joseph Howard (his new bride able to draw the money), but little else would arise from the debt to this Indian Trader -- Gray believed he could pay £30 on the remaining £193. Other goods lent to William Grant and Co. had been sent on to Jacob Jordon, who had lent to J. Dumas (and Dumas himself owed to Jacques Gagnier, and was already a direct debtor to Travers of £27.) Philip Jacobs had lent to Captain Johnston, who had lent to James Finlay, Indian trader, and so on.<sup>104</sup>

No wonder Gray's close proximity to these debtor relations made him cynical of the ways of the Indian trade. He believed it was impossible for "men of honest and upright intentions" to have many friends in Montreal.<sup>105</sup> To James Goldfrap, whose capital was ill used in Montreal, Gray could only send condolences: "from what I have been able to observe honest men and gentlemen do not seem to be calculated to thrive here the contrary is to[o] evident."<sup>106</sup> But his comments suggested something of the Indian trade itself, the nature of its credit, and the growing problem of Indian Country as a commercial dilemma.

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<sup>102</sup>NAC. See case of Croften's auction, 13 June 1767, "He had so many friends that there were few bidders, so that the effects sold low.... the who amounts to about £45 currency. I believe the goods were bought in for his use." Edward William Gray Papers, MG 23 GII3 Vol. 1.

<sup>103</sup>*Ibid.*, To Finlay 31 August 1767.

<sup>104</sup>*Ibid.* .Correspondence, Gray to Peter Travers, 19 October 1767.

<sup>105</sup>*Ibid.*, 27 April 1767. Vol. 1.

<sup>106</sup>*Ibid.*, 22 August, 1768 to James Goldfrap.

### III.

There was, meanwhile, little actually unique about the credit relations established in the Montreal fur trade. The nature of business with Indians and the conditions of a Montreal economy arguably cast the Indian trader in a dark light. Colonial economies were already established on liberal short-term credit arrangements, problematic from the metropolitan perspective. The Colonial Debts Act of 1732 was passed in part to protect the advances of home creditors and allow for a colonial merchant's real estate to be seized for outstanding book debt.<sup>107</sup> Indian trade regulations passed within colonial assemblies, usually by merchant representatives, in turn, attempted to protect their credit, and limit its extension inland among Indian nations.<sup>108</sup>

However, only in the closing decades of the eighteenth century were reforms undertaken, for numerous reasons, that would notably change the ways that goods were changing hands. The high profits of the Indian trade and the speculative attraction of colonial trading undoubtedly led London merchants to continue their liberal advances. In fact, few shadows were falling upon Indian Territory immediately after the Conquest. Hudson's Bay traders like Tomison might have cast contempt upon the shacks and lowly habitations of Montrealers, but Montrealers could and did rally behind the virtues of free trade, and rallied, as Milobar has pointed out,<sup>109</sup> a comprehensive defense of British liberties in commerce that were to be extended to Indian Traders. While the bankrupt could look with dismay at his debtors in Indian Territory, those involved with the Indian trade and depending upon its revenues, tended to characterize unrecoverable debts as credit to be redeemed in the future. They established, as we have seen, a virtuous hierarchy of dependency, from creditor in London to Indian consignee in the forest. Lawrence Ermatinger, then, tended to characterize his albeit risky advances inland, and finally the Indian creditor inland, in such ways.<sup>110</sup>

While principles of growth shaped aspects of colonial planning, they in no way precluded the British from imagining virtue in such credit arrangements in the North America wilderness. The very criticisms leveled against the French begged a virtuous

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<sup>107</sup>Jacob M. Price, "The Imperial Economy, 1700-1776," in Marshall, *The Eighteenth Century*, p. 96.

<sup>108</sup>See Verner M. Crane, *The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732* (University of Michigan Press, 1959), pp. 120-123.

<sup>109</sup>David Milobar, "The Origins of British-Quebec Merchant Ideology: New France, the British Atlantic and the Constitutional Periphery, 1720-70," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 24 (3), September 1996, pp. 364-390.

<sup>110</sup>NAC. Ermatinger to William Priestly, 29 September 1773. Ermatinger Estate Papers, Reel C-4556, See chapter 5, footnote 185.

British alternative. Indeed, those individuals promoting prudent planning and defining an Indian Territory upon which reckless trade would not impinge, were met by interest groups who relied upon an expanded trade and characterized commercial expansion as virtuously British. It was in Canada where the outlines of such a response can be best illustrated.

The Conquest left a commercial mission in these lands now won in war. "And, as to the poor American Indians," a sermon-preacher in London cried in 1759, "as they have never had the opportunitie of corrupting, so neither of improving, this grand dispensation of divine mercie and love" would now be delivered in English hands. These responsibilities were implicit in Conquest: the untilled field, the unsaved soul both awaited inland. Both bore heavily on the minds of the sermon-writer who queried, "where, let it now be asked, is that nation or people of the earth so likely to be the intended instruments of divine providence, in dispelling, either Popish or Indian Darkness, than we of this reformed countrie, this enlightened and happie land?"<sup>111</sup>

The British were not only freed as the Israelites were in a promised land, but were now bound, as one preacher advised, to follow the Conquest with "humility," "modesty," "charity" and "future obedience": "Then only may we expect God's further Smiles upon us."<sup>112</sup> Certainly the stark dimensions of "Indian Territory" as established in the Royal Proclamation could not in any sense allow the English to abdicate from those responsibilities as a commercial nation. Too much anticipation had been placed in the fur trade as a moralizing, even Christianizing force. Arthur Dobbs had drawn on this eighteenth century tradition when he urged the abolishment of the HBC charter partly on the grounds that "What an immense Trade might be begun and carried on from these Countries; for the Natives, being numerous, and of a humane disposition, inclin'd to trade, upon having an equitable Trade with us, would be soon civilized, and become industrious, in such rich and delightful Climates?"<sup>113</sup>

Dobbs also drew from an imaginative preconception of the "rich and delightful climates" certain to be located in the interior of America. The 'garden myth' first established after La Salle's discoveries on the Mississippi left a visual imprint of the

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<sup>111</sup>Charles Bulkley, "The Signs of the Times, Illustrated, and Improved, in a Sermon preached at the Evening-Lecture in the Old Jewry, on Sunday, October 21 1759, on Occasion of the Surrender of Quebec," (London: C. Henderson, 1759), p. 27.

<sup>112</sup>Jonathan Townsend, "A Sermon Deliver'd at Medfield, October 25, 1759: Being a Day of Public Acknowledgement of the Smiles of Heaven upon the British Arms in America: More Especially in the Reduction of Quebec," (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1760), pp. 24-26.

<sup>113</sup>Arthur Dobbs, *An Account of the Countries Adjoining to Hudson's Bay, in the North-West Part of America* (London: J. Robinson, 1745), p. 59.

interior in the minds of English and French alike, and remained influential even to Jefferson's commissioning of the Lewis and Clarke expedition. The providential flow of the Illinois, Mississippi, Arkansas, and other rivers connecting the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, and northern rivers connecting them to Hudson Bay allowed Europeans to imagine Lahontan's fictitious Long River, the *mer du l'ouest*, and the mythical passages to the Pacific. By the very characteristics of a garden, Europeans expected the interior to be well watered and, hence, Europeans believed that an interconnected system of lakes and rivers awaited inland for discoveries and commerce. Dobbs in fact believed that only a few leagues inland, the frigid environs of Hudson Bay gave way to the same comfortable climate of the interior lands of the French, supported by interlinking and transcontinental waterways.

This background of thought was evocative after the Conquest, particularly since even Dobbs' "north-west" passage was oriented not strictly West, but took a hypothetical southwestward bend into what was essentially Canadian hinterland. Indeed, Dobbs had originally planned his voyages from Hudson Bay inland to cut off the Canadians from the Louisiana colony in the discovery of his passage. The accounts provided him by Joseph La France probably helped in that regard. The French-Indian informant whom Dobbs credited for much of his geographical speculations, had begun his travels in Montreal, travelling inland to the Lakehead, north to Hudson Bay and southwestward to Lahontan's great and mythical Long River. Dobbs also drew on the fictitious letter of the Spaniard, Bartholomew De Fonte, who claimed success in sailing north at the beginning of the century along the western coast of America. The De Fonte letter stated that his ship sailed up a large river to Hudson Bay, where he met a Boston ship. Both sources allowed Dobbs to map the north-west passage (as the more accurate Delisle map of 1752 could not even resist from doing), as veering south, into the fabled Canadian trade hinterlands.<sup>114</sup> The north-west passage was, then, never distinct from the hinterland waterways of Quebec which appeared to have taken Canadian traders on breathtaking jaunts inland. The 1762 entry for "Canada" in *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce* made note of Canada's indefinite limits north, south and west into the continent, all sides carried away on inland streams. "The whole country abounds with very large rivers, which it is endless to enter into a detail of," the article points out and remarked that "How far the limits of the country the French intend to possess, may

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<sup>114</sup>See Joseph LaFrance, "A New Map of Part of North America, 1744" and Joseph-Nicolas Delisle, "Carte des Nouvelles Decouvertes, 1752," in Joe C. Armstrong, *From Sea unto Sea: Art and Discovery Maps of Canada* (Scarborough: Fleet Books, 1982).

extend, is not yet known," and "The reader will easily perceive, by casting his eye upon our map of America, that St. Lawrence and the Mississippi, with lakes and rivers that run between them, surround by land all the provinces on the main of America...." <sup>115</sup>

Few imagined that Quebec, situated in glaciated Shield geography, did have limitations later demonstrated in arduous trade canoe routes. <sup>116</sup> In the immediate years after the Conquest, the heights of land and portages, and particularly the cargo limitations of the minuscule North Canoe, were not anticipated by optimists who believed that a commercial opportunity beckoned inland, and commerce exhibited the possibilities that Roger Williams had originally ascribed to it. It was the attractive aquatics of the garden myth that charmed William Robertson in his *History of America* (1777). Robertson saw a special commercial opportunity in American waterways, all having implications for the land and its savage peoples. Africa, without river communications, Robertson argued, was "destined to remain for ever uncivilized;" North America "is of a form extremely favorable to commercial intercourse ... itself watered with a variety of navigable rivers, those regions can be said to possess whatever can facilitate the progress of their inhabitants in commerce and improvement." <sup>117</sup>

A special geographic inheritance, then, was formulated in the English mind after the Conquest. A providential reversal, where the "lines of trade" established by the French were now in English hands, was immediately recognized by contemporaries. Quebec could now be used as a beachhead of exploration, as a New Yorker pointed out to the Commissioners of Trade and Plantations, when he stated that "Quebec by nature is the post of Exploration." <sup>118</sup> The sheer trading possibilities presented with the new acquisition were recognized concurrently as a valuable vent for English manufactures and an entrance to missionary field, as a 1759 London pamphlet rejoiced. "For one Indian we trade with in Hudson's Bay (not exceeding three or 4000 in number) the French probably trade with one Hundred in Canada" through the Laurentian entranceway now held by Britain. <sup>119</sup>

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<sup>115</sup>Malachy Postlethwayt, "Canada," (1762 entry) in *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce* 4th ed. 1774 Vol. 1 (New York: Augustus M. Kelley Reprints, 1971).

<sup>116</sup>See Morse's discussion, Eric W. Morse, *Fur Trade Canoe Routes of Canada: Then and Now* (University of Toronto Press, 1989), pp. 27-32.

<sup>117</sup>William Robertson *The History of America* Vol. 1, (London: Strahan, Cadell, 1777), p. 250.

<sup>118</sup>See petition of Samuel Sleeper to Hector Cramake, 9 November 1770, Colonial Office, Original Correspondence, Board of Trade, Quebec 1767-1771 CO 42/8. National Archives Microfilm B-24.

<sup>119</sup>"Considerations on the Importance of Canada, and the Bay and River of St. Lawrence....." (London: Printed for W. Owen, 1759).

By God's or nature's design, the former French possessions presented alluring possibilities. When the Lords of Trade presented the Crown an Inventory of the "advantages of the cessions" they turned almost immediately to the fur and skin trade, formerly in the hands of the French, "now fallen intirely [*sic*] and exclusively into the Hands of Your Majesty's Subjects...." Next in importance to these raw import products was the opportunity now to vent English manufactures. Once in French hands (even the New York merchants had supplied the French with goods rather than trading directly with Indians), now the English would be "Supplying all of the Indian Tribes upon the Continent of North America with European Commodities immediately through the Hands of English Traders."<sup>120</sup>

This geographical consideration was likely at hand when the provisions of the Royal Proclamation concerned the King in Council, as communicated by Charles, Earl of Egremont, Secretary of State. The creation of an Indian Territory, he told the Lords of Trade, would mean that such lands would have no legal jurisdiction and thus become "derelict" and the King had made his pleasure known to have jurisdictional authority extended to the Indian Country and vested in Quebec.<sup>121</sup> Even the Lords of Trade, who recommended on strategic diplomatic grounds against Canada's choice for such a legal role, agreed that only with jurisdiction would such lands be property of Britain, or they would be "considered abandoned or derelict."<sup>122</sup> Jurisdictional authority of this type suggested that Quebec possessed natural advantages. The issue became more important as administrations began to imagine traditions and trade customs inland that were particular to the Canadian people. Administrators already agreed by 1767 that aspects of the *code marchand* of 1664 and the civil law bound in the Custom of Paris should be maintained in Canada -- unwisely swept aside in the Royal Proclamation. So also should be Quebec's custom of the interior trade. Entrenched in ancient usage and in many respects an apprenticed craft, it would deserve some place in Quebec's civil life.

This regard for Quebec's traditional ties to the fur trade made the issue of jurisdiction relevant to Guy Carleton who continued to express interest in the legal matter until jurisdiction was assured in the Quebec Act of 1774, to the displeasure of the English colonists to the south. Carleton then began asserting the act's clauses upon reports of English rum traders defrauding and murdering Indians inland,<sup>123</sup> and finally tested the

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<sup>120</sup>Lords of Trade to Egremont, 8 June 1763, p. 136.

<sup>121</sup>Egremont to Lords of Trade, 14 July 1763, p. 141.

<sup>122</sup>Lords of Trade to Egremont 5 August 1763, p. 151.

<sup>123</sup>6 October 1773.



act's authority in the case of one Ramsay, implicated in the murders of Lake Ontario Indians. He hoped that Quebec's chief justice would seize the opportunity to make Quebec the natural law-giver in Indian territory. In describing the arrest of Ramsay in Albany, his removal to Quebec and imprisonment awaiting trial, one member of the legislative council stated that the judge had "perhaps rather stepped out of the usual road," but a diversion from the common rules was surely warranted "in this part of the World."<sup>124</sup>

Geographical considerations were complemented by those historic in nature. Quebec's earlier history in trade, seen as a custom that could not be denied, seems to have influenced Lord Egremont to believe that the Indian trade should be controlled by the Government of Quebec.<sup>125</sup> Overlooked in compilations of Canadian constitutional documents from the 1760s and 70s is the interest administrators like Guy Carleton took in the fur trade, maintaining and protecting its right, like features of the New Subject's laws, to Conquest society. In the same year (1767) when Carleton ordered Adam Mabane's overview of the Quebec judicial system, and commissioned Quebec and Montreal merchants to present reports on commerce, he began imagining, as did Lord Shelburne of the Lords of Trade, that Indian Affairs could "answer the valuable purpose of Commerce and Peace."<sup>126</sup> Whitehall established a new priority to create "some General Plan formed upon the Principal of Justice ... restraining in future those settlements and for preventing effectually the Frauds and Irregularities of the traders,"<sup>127</sup> and hear more closely the Indians who voiced grievances for justice in land frauds,<sup>128</sup> while concurrently urging the regulation of commerce.

This point seems to be all the more important given the history of the British policy in the west, and Shelburne's own ideal view of commerce. Carleton had been introduced to the workings of the fur trade under William Johnson's instruction. Through Shelburne, he was referred to the old colonel, "whose bravery and success among the Indians in the last war" had been demonstrated in "a most disinterested manner of action."<sup>129</sup> But his tutelage was actually quite short-lived. Johnson had grown trenchant in his ideas concerning Indian Affairs. Since 1752, his prominence as an intermediary

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<sup>124</sup>Cramake to Dartmouth, 22 June 1773, C.O. 42/8 Original Correspondence of the Board of Trade.

<sup>125</sup>Prucha, p. 20.

<sup>126</sup>Shelbourn to Johnson, 11 December 1766, C.O. 5 Vol. 225 Letters from Secretary of State (Indian Affairs) 1766-1768. National Archives Microfilm C-13158.

<sup>127</sup>Shelbourne to Johnson, 13 September 1766. CO. 5, Vol. 225, p.2.

<sup>128</sup>Shelbourne to Johnson, 11 October 1766. *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup>Shelbourne to Carleton, 20 June 1767. Entry Book 7 C.O. 43/1, Entry Books of Commission.

between Britain and its Indian subjects had risen. He enjoyed a massive personal following in Britain with no end of celebrity, and his activities had spread wide a notion of ideal aristocratic supervision of Indian Affairs. Carleton had little of Johnson's experience in the Indian trade and given the depressed state of the economy in Quebec, and the exodus of French Canadians to the western banks of the Mississippi, had all the more reason to encourage the trading community. Unlike Johnson, Carleton also had a stake in defending the reputations of New Subjects and their capacity to travel inland without suspicion.<sup>130</sup>

So it was that Carleton began to outline the historic custom of the fur trade in Quebec. In a 1767 letter that promised to ascertain the value of the canoe traffic that the French had sent into Indian Country, he identified the quite amazing inland forays the French had undertaken, "some of them 900 leagues beyond Michilimackinac to great lakes and regions unknown to any of his Majesty's Old Subjects," he wrote to the Colonial office.<sup>131</sup> It was Carleton who upended Johnson's rationale by suggesting that such information would have to be submitted to "his Majesty's wisdom which shall be most for his service and the Good of his People," that is, to "suffer the Canadians to lead his Old Subjects into these Countries and push together that trade which found them possessed of, or to confine them to a few forts where those Indians can never come, and that are as unknown to them as to the country people of Great Britain."<sup>132</sup> Carleton made a veiled threat that these far nations would combine and threaten the peace and suggested a positive role in trade, that if traders went among them, "to suffer them to live dispersed," such combinations would not occur, and traders "whose safety and whose interests require they should treat them well," would not be led to fraud and violence, "as happened in trade near our own frontier, when our people have hope of immediate Refuge."

Here were the makings of a powerful trade apology, where trade freedoms allowed to merchants would force them to regulate their own conduct, and Britain would reap the rewards of the older French system of trade. There was also something of an ironic answer to commercial concerns towards Indian Country, whereby civilized men defrauding Indians in nature, were presently taking "refuge" in nearby colonies, away from Indian retribution.

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<sup>130</sup>20 March 1767, Carleton to Colonial Office, CO Entry Books, Canada 1766-1770, Letters to Secretary of State.

<sup>131</sup>20 March 1767, Carleton to Colonial Office, CO Entry Book 12, Canada 1766-1770, Letters to Secretary of State.

<sup>132</sup>*Ibid.*

At the moment when historical continuity was being established between the civil law of the Old Regime and the Quebec Act, Carleton began questioning fifty traders, "French and English," and promised the Lords of Trade that the trade would suffer "if the present restraints are to continue." Carleton described traders as "useful instruments" that could "improve the ... to a degree unknown before, to the Benefit of Great Britain and the Detriment of its natural Enemies."<sup>133</sup> The Lords of Trade, particularly Lord Shelburne, found Carleton's information of Quebec's trading opportunities "highly satisfactory." The idea of commerce, rather than ill-guided colonial expansion, obviously struck a chord with the workings of the Lords of Trade. Shelburne had great respect for Johnson, but it was clear to him that the Indian Trade could be the "useful instrument" and one particularly suited to the new British outpost. He mentioned the "disorders and inconveniences attending the back settlements and Indian Trade," but here he was thinking more of the English colonial variety, undertaken with freedoms granted by colonial assemblies rather than regulated by the executive. He was clearly struck by the possibilities of the older French system. He saw that "it is unfortunate that the Indian Trade is so peculiarly circumstanced as to require any strict regulations. It is the general Nature of trade to regulate itself, and it may be hoped that it will in time do so in America, without those heavy expences which at present attend it."<sup>134</sup> The Lords of Trade, at any rate, were attentive to the need of Carleton's work and said that "an accurate knowledge of the Interior Parts of North America would contribute much towards enabling the Majesty's Ministers to judge soundly of the true Interests of the different Provinces," and recommended Carleton to pursue his design and encourage "such Adventurers as are willing to explore those Parts which have not hithertobeen much frequented and consequently are scarcely, if at all, known particularly towards the territories comprised in the Charter of the Hudson's Bay Company Northward and the Country beyond the Lake Superior Westward."<sup>135</sup>

Carleton's program was not innovative, but it caught the spirit of the Royal Proclamation's notion of Indian Territory, steady colonial growth and incremental foundations of commerce. By maintaining trade, rather than stimulating a too rapid expansion of colonial boundaries, some believed that they could maintain the integrity of an Indian Territory intact and take up responsibilities implicit with conquest. In this

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<sup>133</sup>Carleton to Lords of Trade, 20 March 1767.

<sup>134</sup>Shelburne to Carleton, 20 June 1767. Entry Book 7 C.O. 43/1, Entry Books of Commission, Instructions, Warrants, Canada-Quebec 1. Public Records Office.

<sup>135</sup>Lords of Trade to Carleton, 14 November 1767 Entry Book 12 Canada 1766-1770.

answer to the very pessimism implicit in the creation of Indian Territory, Carleton and Shelburne believed the very maxims of English commerce would sufficiently regulate human actions, the risks to investment prompting merchants to be wise in their choice of traders to credit goods, traders themselves choosing their trusted Indians well.<sup>136</sup>

Carleton's encouragement of trade also looked more to the interests of New Subjects. His recommendations never gave substance to the trading community's agitation for full liberty and a rapid extension of credit inland. Rather, he sought to sustain the historical custom of trade in Quebec at the moment he was reviving the Custom of Paris, the Old Regime's legislative mastery over the Indian territories, and reviewing with interest the *code marchand*.

But he was not the first to lend support to a notion of a trade custom, now a British opportunity. Some idea about the French system of trade surfaced in the memorandum prepared by Lt. Governor H.T. Cramacké's tabulations for Quebec in 1761. He believed the French had gone into the Illinois valley, to the Miamis, Michilimackinac, La Baye, Nipegon, St. Joseph and Niagara trades and brought to the French market about £135,000 sterling in furs a year.<sup>137</sup> But the sheer extensiveness of French penetration of North America from Montreal was not fully apprehended in London until after Carleton had dispatched his first "adventurers" and begun compiling notes and a map drawn from New Subject traders. On 2 March 1768, he drew a map of "the Western posts which the French formerly occupied; and how far they extend beyond Michilimackinac." He had no idea how the French positions corresponded with "their exact positions on the Globe" as his informants had no understanding of the use of mathematical instruments, "but they all agree" that the farthest distances reached were two and a half, or three months journey beyond Michilimackinac and reckoned the distance about 900 leagues.<sup>138</sup> He subsequently pieced together the elements of the military commandant system and its gift-giving system. "By their conduct they avoided giving jealousy, and gained the affections of an ignorant, credulous, and brave people, whose ruling Passions are Independence, Gratitude, and Revenge, with an unconquerable love of strong Drink." The fur trade, then, "thus managing them by address, where force could not prevail," strengthened their positions without giving offense.

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<sup>136</sup>See, for instance, what appears to be Carleton's apologetics in Chapter Five.

<sup>137</sup>H.T. Cramacké, "An Account of the Indian Trade in the Upper Country," 10 August 1761, to Governor Murray, RG 23 A4 Volume 16, Shelburne Papers transcripts, National Archives of Canada.

<sup>138</sup>Carleton Report 2 March 1768 CO Entry Book 12, Canada 1766-1770, Letters to Secretary of State.

He went on to state that the country was divided into districts, under the command of a military officer, and "the only restraints laid on the traders were" not to go beyond the borders of his district, and not to exceed regulations on the amount of liquors that he traded. Upon entering their licensed area, traders "had full liberty to go among the Indians, and accompanying them to their hunting grounds...."<sup>139</sup> The report listed the Forts at Niagara, Toronto, Frontenac, Detroit, Miamis and Michilimackinac, Lay Bay, St. Joseph, Illinois, and the Northern Posts, where he guessed that upwards to 118 canoes had departed from and returned to Quebec each season.

#### IV.

Carleton's interest in the fur trade accorded with a current view of stadial growth in colonization. He saw agriculture, not expansionism, as the best means to colonial strength. For that reason, he did not become the figurehead of trading interests in Quebec, but of agriculturists. In 1789, he headed the Montreal and Quebec chapters of an agricultural improvement society, where the chief concerns of the British ministry were well represented in the administrator's presence.<sup>140</sup> But Carleton's mind did not believe that the territories inland were to be left undeveloped. The post-Conquest years and Britain's possession of Quebec held numerous meanings to English administrators. Historically and geographically suited to commercial expansion, the fur trade was perceived by some as the means to expand British interests peacefully into the Indian Territories established with the Royal Proclamation. Others quibbled about the ways such commerce should be prosecuted. Whether such trade would be free, restricted, venting purchased or credited goods, restricted to the coast or taking advantage of the riverways imagined inland, such a trade would nevertheless fulfill a providential commercial mission. Through it, British contact with the Indian nations would continue, but the land purchase system, that unwieldy aspect of colonization, would be curbed. Most of the policies developed before the Quebec Act were animated by the hope that growth would follow such a cautious and responsible set of priorities.

The ways and means of fulfilling such a mission was, of course, debatable. Lord Hillsborough's was long the policy guiding Murray and other Canadian officials, to open the trade but restrict it to forts, prohibit rum, and give no credit for goods in value

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<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> *Papiers et lettres sur l'agriculture recommandés à l'attention des cultivateurs Canadiens par la Société d'agriculture en Canada, imprimés en 1789*, National Library of Canada.

beyond 50 shillings.<sup>141</sup> These were imagined as principles of commercial development. By 1767, the realities of the trade, enduring French competition, and Indian expectations made Hillsborough's plan unworkable. By then, Shelburne informed the British Cabinet that rum was necessary; so were traders, "worthless and abandoned fellows" as they were, if the trade was to be maintained. Credit, too, was not only a feature of the trade, but prohibiting it was, as Shelburne admitted, "founded upon inadequate ideas of Indian manners."<sup>142</sup> But whatever way Britain's commerce would reach Indians inland, some agreement was reached. Beyond the reduced borders of Quebec, a colony now stimulated to answer commercial, rather than military, ends, lay a hinterland that welcomed a special commercial, and if sermon writers were to be believed, a wondrous spiritual mandate.

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<sup>141</sup>See Hillsborough's plan, and remarks of Shelburne, "Plan for the Future Management of Indian Affairs," ff. 167, Volume 12, Shelburne Papers.

<sup>142</sup>*Ibid.*. Shelburne's comments on Hillsborough, ff. 194-195.

## Chapter Seven

### *In Resemblance to their Old Fathers of the Forests: The Nineteenth Century and the decline of Trade Humanism*

*"A warrior once, a miserable trapper now."*

- excerpt, the New Monthly Magazine's review of Chateaubriand's *The Natchez*, 1827<sup>1</sup>

*"Naturally neither Company cared to keep records of that ignominious and discreditable warfare, when ambushes, surprises, and slaughter swelled the balances and paid the dividends."*

"Romance of the Fur Trade: The Companies," *Blackwood's Magazine* Vol. CLXIV, 1898, p. 502.

*"The habits of trade and avidity of gain have their corrupting effects even in the wilderness, as may be instanced in the members of this aboriginal emporium...."*

Washington Irving, *Astoria* (1836) p.70.<sup>2</sup>

Description of the Indian trade underwent change in the course of the nineteenth century. Probably the most striking dissimilarity of the Victorian trade narrative from its predecessors was the way it no longer described trade playing a role in the Indian's social improvement. This seems a curious development in an era celebrating trade as both a civilizing and religious force in other colonial settings. Not only politicians but novelists were imagining virtues in free trade that would open up "dark" Africa and bring the light of civilization to the south seas.<sup>3</sup> But on many colonial peripheries, the virtues of free trade were offset, or contradicted, by larger misgivings concerning the activities of unscrupulous traders and their degradation of aborigines.<sup>4</sup> In a period when greater differences were being established between civilized nations and their "rude" counterparts, free trade was often seen as appropriate only among

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<sup>1</sup>Review of the Viscount de Chateaubriand, *The Natchez*, "Tales of Indian Life," *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, Part II, 1827, p. 82.

<sup>2</sup>From Richard Dilworth Rust, ed., Washington Irving, *Astoria, or, Anecdotes of an Enterprise beyond the Rocky Mountains* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1976), p. 70.

<sup>3</sup>See the treatment of free trade themes in mid-Victorian literature, analyzed by Peter Bratlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 30-33; I have also benefited from George Levine, *Darwin and the Novelists: Patterns of Science in Victorian Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

<sup>4</sup>Jane Samson, *Imperial Benevolence: Making British Authority in the Pacific Islands* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), pp. 21-25; 29-32.

sophisticated, European, nations.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the prospects of trade would not shine brightly upon American Indians in the nineteenth century. Writers by the 1820s viewed Indians and their commercial affinities in new ways. They frequently exaggerated stories of unjust gains made from Amerindians, and constructed their trade descriptions to highlight, not virtuous innocence within the Amerindian's nature, but degraded intellectual ability. Narratives also characterized the outcome of exchange differently. Now, trade either led to the Indian's continued life in savagery or it further debased him, so that the final outcome of the Indian's exchange with the European was moral and physical impoverishment.

This lost faith in the outcome of trade was part of complex developments in social and economic thought. One key movement in the nineteenth century was a reassessment at home of the virtues of credit. A growing emphasis upon individualism and new ways of establishing trust in transactions led to a break in what Muldrew termed the "contractual society," based in large measure upon complex credit transactions.<sup>6</sup> With dependency no longer envisioned as ideally attaching creditor and remitter, an investor's more critical mind feared its opposite, that the remitter and his dishonoured debts would tie him to financial ruin. These understandings of exchange were integral to a changed view of dependency in the Indian trade, where Indians were now seen as receiving, but not returning profitable commodities. In the nineteenth century, goods advanced to Indians, once described as "credit" to be repaid in the future, were now termed irredeemable "debt."

Such shifts in text are important to highlight, as changing understandings of advanced goods had themselves a context of crises at home in commercial credit and economic theory.<sup>7</sup> The rise of evangelical economic thought, associated with Thomas Malthus, argued with the political economists of the late eighteenth century that natural "laws" drove economic prosperity. Early nineteenth century writers saw the "Wealth of

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<sup>5</sup> See George Stocking, Jr., *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), pp. 26-33.

<sup>6</sup> See Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1998), pp. 329-330.

<sup>7</sup> Mary, MacKinnon, "English Poor Law Policy and the Crusade against Outdoor Relief," *Journal of Economic History*, 47 (3) 1987, pp. 603-625. Peter Mandler, "Tories and Paupers: Christian Political Economy and the Making of the New Poor Law," *Historical Journal*, 30 (1), 1990, pp. 81-103; Peter Dunkley, "Whigs and Paupers: The Reform of the English Poor Laws, 1830-1834," *Journal of British Studies*, 20 (2) 1981, pp. 124-149. Boyd Hilton's perspectives are very valuable, see *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1795-1865* (Clarendon, 1988), and especially *Corn, Cash, Commerce: The Economic Policies of the Tory Governments, 1815-1830* (Oxford, 1977).



Nations" partly in social terms, and imagined positive benefits from ending improvident charity, and encouraging, rather than discouraging, industry in such measures as poor law reform. Malthusian principles would heavily influence the redrawing of ideas of civilization and, certainly, the trade with aborigines in the colonies.<sup>8</sup> Malthus himself had drawn on colonial narratives and the case of the American Indian to show that populations grew or shrank according to the availability of food and the natural, instinctual and positive "checks" imposed upon growth, and made such observations to buttress his harsh opinion towards ill-spent charity to the poor.<sup>9</sup> Economic reforms arising in the Malthusian period, then, not only changed the Indian trade, but how it was reported. Like many at home who distinguished between natural poverty and "indigence," traders similarly identified the social effects of imprudent charity imagined in traditional trade customs, particularly the gift exchange and credit. Fear that aid to the poor encouraged their poverty and discouraged their industry indeed formed a new means to define indigence among Indians. Traders identified the source of low production in "irresponsible" trading practices and some of them joined metropolitan auditors in trying to remove such trade practices for the Indian's own improvement. Thus, David Thompson's reference to the "axiom of the civilised world, that Poverty begets Poverty" had resonance even in discussion of the Indian trade itself.<sup>10</sup>

A new characterization of Indians, and numerous myths of the trade, in turn emerged in the period.<sup>11</sup> Credit became debt, and that debt among Indians was often depicted as an irredeemable advance according to new standards of accounting. If before, the trade's various costs and advances had not been reported carefully, they often were now, and the Indian, the costs attending the trade and credit became more sharply

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<sup>8</sup> Stocking, 32-35; see, also, "Christianity, Malthus and Political Economy," in R.A. Soloway, *Prelates and People: Ecclesiastical Social Thought in England: 1783-1852* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), pp. 93-97; 107-110; and Joyce Appleby, "Consumption in early modern social thought," in J. Brewer and R. Porter, *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 170-171.

<sup>9</sup>M. Godelier overviews Malthus and his use of ethnographic materials in "Malthus and Ethnology," in J. Dupâquier, A. Fauve-Chamoux and E. Grebenik, eds., *Malthus Past and Present* (London: Academic Press, 1983), pp. 125-150.

<sup>10</sup>Quoted by Vibert. See her remarks about Malthus, Elizabeth Vibert, *Traders' Tales: Narratives of Cultural Encounters in the Columbia Plateau, 1807-1846* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), p. 125.

<sup>11</sup>See Howard R. Lamar, *The Trader on the American Frontier: Myth's Victim* (Texas A&M University Press, 1977), pp. 21-34; 36.

understood as drains on investment capital.<sup>12</sup> The age of economy can be seen in the establishment of the North West Company out of Montreal; but it was the economic strains of the Napoleonic wars and the rising cost of trade goods that significantly changed trade descriptions. The nineteenth century description was thereafter coloured with the reporter's assumption that Indians took more goods in trade than returned in commodities. Moreover, the same writers believed that the Indian's morale suffered with such advances of material goods. It is telling that in this period, when exchange was so thoroughly discredited for its possible virtues, that the government Indian agency replaced the trade post as a site where Europeans endeavored to civilize the Indian. Here, goods were advanced in order to encourage agricultural education, rather than traded -- and the dependency that many historians view Indians falling into in the period, became a feature of written description.<sup>13</sup>

#### I.

Throughout North America, the Indian trade after 1821 became more expensive according to new standards of business practices. This does not mean that it became less profitable. In the rising centre of the American fur trade from St. Louis, the profits of the first half of the nineteenth century were massive by most standards. The Santa Fe trade was freed with Mexico's independence, and the Missouri's entrance to the western reaches of the Rocky Mountains allowed companies to hire either as brigadesmen or wagon drivers the surplus labour of the Canadian fur trade. The credit infused into these trade routes was itself impressive, advanced by merchants in eastern cities and not seeing return for numerous seasons.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Ray points out the difficulties of accounts analysis. Arthur J. Ray, "The Hudson's Bay Company Account Books as Sources for Comparative Economic Analysis of the Fur Trade: An Examination of Exchange Rate Data," *Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology* 6 (1), 1976, pp. 30-60.

<sup>13</sup>I am attempting to define a dependency which has led to present-day definitions, though this has hardly met with unanimity. Thus, Krech III cites numerous types of dependency that have been identified by Rich, Ray, Bishop, and Morantz, and his own, on "The Trade of the Slavey and Dogrib at Fort Simpson," p. 138; 141.

<sup>14</sup>For papers of the St. Louis Companies, see Appendix E., Chittenden. Thomas Forsyth letter 24 October 1831, pp. 926-928, see Forsyth's comment, p. 928: "All traders at the present day give credit to the Indians in the same manner as has been the case for the last sixty or eighty years. That is to say, the articles which are passed on credit are given at very high prices." Hiram Martin Chittenden, *The American Fur Trade of the Far West* Vol. II (Stanford, California: Academic Reprints, 1954).

The investment capital risked in each year's shipments was drawing petitioners to request the U.S. government's protection of life and property.<sup>15</sup> The great problem for Santa Fe traders continued to be its high risk and expense, particularly since credit was extended virtually across a continent.<sup>16</sup> But the place of the American Indian in these ventures and his participation in credit networks, was markedly different. At the furthest reaches of the great St. Louis companies were often European mountain men, not Indian trappers, who produced fur returns. These trappers accompanied wagon trains, and overall disbursements of trade goods were thereby reduced. Whether using the Santa Fe trail to reach California, and from there to reach as far north as Utah, crediting merchants extracted larger quantities of product from distant regions with fewer goods, certainly fewer than the those once required by Indian traders. The few trade goods carried in many of the first wagon trains to Santa Fe in fact signalled to Spanish officials the very obvious point that many of these "traders" were really trappers, and they were licensed accordingly.<sup>17</sup> As a consequence, the Indian himself figured less as a credited individual inland. Moreover, degenerating relations between wagon train drivers and their crews with the Indians they encountered inland, such as the Comanches and Osages, were redrawing understandings of the Indian in the commercial metropolises crediting such adventures. Rather than participating in trade directly, Indians were viewed as profiting in these expanding commercial enterprises only when they attacked trains and pillaged goods; as an early historian put it succinctly, in terms of profit, merchant red years constituted Indian black years, and vice versa.<sup>18</sup>

The changing place of the Indian in the Indian trade becomes clear in published narratives. Washington Irving's embellishment of Captain Bonneville's journal in *The Rocky Mountains: or, Scenes, Incidents, and Adventures in the Far West* (1837),<sup>19</sup> presents some of the recurrent literary characterizations of the fur trade for much of the

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<sup>15</sup>F.F. Stephens, "Missouri and the Santa Fe Trade," *The Missouri Historical Review* 10 (4), July 1916, pp. 233-262.

<sup>16</sup>Lewis E. Atherton, "Business Techniques in the Santa Fe Trade," *Missouri Historical Review* Vol. 34, April 1940, pp. 335-341.

<sup>17</sup>Ewing Young in the Fur Trade of the Far Southwest, 1822-1834," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 24, March 1923, (1-35), p. 8; a valuable study of the socio-economic implications of colonial credit in Mexico is offered by Linda Greenow, *Credit and Socioeconomic Change in Colonial Mexico: Loans and Mortgages in Guadalajara, 1720-1820*, Dellplain Latin American Studies, No. 12 (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1983).

<sup>18</sup>Stephens, pp. 248-249.

<sup>19</sup>Washington Irving, *The Rocky Mountains: or, Scenes, Incidents, and Adventures in the Far West* 2 Vols. (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea, and Blanchard, 1837).

nineteenth century. Irving made heroes of trappers who ventured far to the west, despite the obstacles of wilderness and Indians; he differentiated between the mountain man and the Canadian "northman" with blatant patriotism ("A man who bestrides his horse, must be essentially different than a man who cowers in a canoe.")<sup>20</sup> His heroes were adventurers who individually flouted danger in pursuit of fur. Individualism itself became embodied in the figure of the mountain man: "...the American trapper stands by himself," as Irving claimed. Such heroes were resourceful and independent, and one of them was worth, according to Irving, three Canadians in any wilderness outpost.<sup>21</sup> The place of Indians in trade was meanwhile left unclear in the narrative. Irving's wilderness seems to have abhorred barter. One of the chiefs appearing in the narrative, then, had "acquired some of the lights of civilization from his proximity with the whites as was evinced in his knowledge of driving a bargain."<sup>22</sup> But even once introduced, commerce becomes changed by nature. Reckless trading habits are a feature of the wilderness. Trappers and traders acquire the "rifles, hunting knives, traps, scarlet cloth, red blankets, garish beads, and glittering trinkets, at any price" or by overextending their credit at their annual rendezvous.<sup>23</sup> Irving, finally, brings a characteristic nineteenth century pessimism towards trade goods in Amerindian society. Goods offer little redemptive value to Indians, who were destined to remain "savage." Irving, for all the romance he brought to J.J. Astor's commercial adventure in *Astoria*, similarly questioned views of commerce as uplifting the Indians inland; rather, trade had a "corrupting" effect, "even in the wilderness," where traditional trading sites in the Northwest, ("aboriginal emporiums") actually attracted Indians to lives of indolence, rather than industry.<sup>24</sup> It is in such a characterization that Irving revived the term "trinkets" to describe the trade goods in both of these narratives.<sup>25</sup>

The understanding that Indians were corrupted by European commerce arose in early nineteenth century publications of the Viscount de Chateaubriand. In 1827,

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<sup>20</sup>pp. 20; 26.

<sup>21</sup>p. 33.

<sup>22</sup>p. 39.

<sup>23</sup>pp. 202-204.

<sup>24</sup> *Astoria*, p. 70.

<sup>25</sup> Hence, at the beginning of *Astoria*: "Indians, as yet unacquainted with the artificial value given to some descriptions of furs, in civilized life, brought quantities of the most precious kinds, and bartered them away for European trinkets and cheap commodities. Immense profits were then made by the early traders and the traffic was pursued with avidity," p. 5; articles "of use or fancy" cleared 200 per cent profit for merchants [a use of Lahontan] p. 6;

the novelist hurriedly published his *Travels in America*, where he evinced his hostility towards the church and mixed feelings towards commercial society in his sketchy depiction of North American Indians. He drew comparisons between the French colonists, intent upon "civilizing" the Indian -- itself a lamentable goal in Chateaubriand's view -- and the Protestants who "occupied themselves little with the civilization of the savages: they thought only of trading with them:"

Now commerce, which increases civilization among peoples already civilized and among whom intelligence has prevailed over manners, produces only corruption among peoples whose manners are superior to their intelligence.<sup>26</sup>

In this view, commerce led Indians to their corruption:

When the Europeans penetrated America, the savages lived and dressed by means of the product of their hunt and carried on no commerce among themselves. Soon the foreigners taught them to barter for arms, strong liquors, different household utensils, coarse cloth, and beads... Pursued by the European avidity and by the corruption of civilized people even in the depths of their forests, the Indians exchange at these trading posts rich furs for objects of little value but which have become for them objects of prime necessity. Not only do they deal in the hunts already accomplished, but they make disposition of the future hunts, as one sells a harvest still standing in the field.

These advances accorded by the traders plunge the Indians into an abyss of debt. ... Thus civilization, entering through commerce among the American tribes, instead of developing their intelligence, stupefied them. The Indian has become perfidious, selfish, lying, and dissolute; his cabin is a receptacle for filth and dirt. When he was nude or covered with animal skins, there was something proud and great about him; today European rags, without covering his nudity, merely attest to his misery: he is a beggar at the door of a trading post; he no longer is a savage in his forests."<sup>27</sup>

The novelist, then, used primitivism to suggest that original virtues in nature were corrupted by commerce. "A warrior once, a miserable trapper now," was the striking excerpt chosen by *New Monthly Magazine* in its review of Chateaubriand's *The*

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<sup>26</sup>The English translation of *Travels* first appeared in London in 1828. I have used Richard Switzer's translation, *Chateaubriand's Travels In America* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1969), p. 180.

<sup>27</sup>p. 182.

*Natchez*, in 1827.<sup>28</sup> Here, Indian society did not actually progress in the exchange with a sophisticated society. Recurring in many British and American publications of the early nineteenth century was the conviction that the Indian's culture was arrested, despite all social intercourse with Europeans. The *Parthenon's* review of F. V. Hayden's ethnography of the Missouri Indians suggests these trends. The work argued that continuity had been maintained between ancient and modern tribes, and that there was little progress in social development through trade. "No essential variations can be traced between the Indians of the furthest antiquity and the peoples *who now barter the product of their hunting and trapping with the fur companies.*"<sup>29</sup> *Scots Magazine*, still optimistic of universal forces of progress leading Indian and European alike, reviewed the Duke de la Rochefoucault's *Travels through the United States* and expressed its dismay that the Americans apparently believed Indians could never be civilized and that nothing could destroy their "savage habits."<sup>30</sup> The 1844 account of the *Manners, Customs, and Antiquities of the Indians of North and South America*, published in Boston, reveals this dour viewpoint. Having overviewed the extent to which Indian customs had changed since "our forefathers first became acquainted with them," the author stated that "in general," Indians in the west were the same as those in the east "except so far as contact with the white races has degraded him, or the introduction of a few of the arts of civilization, has modified his existence. He has now the horse and the rifle, the steel knife and the iron tomahawk; he has blankets, instead of skins, and kettles of iron instead of stone. But still he is, for the most part, a savage, - living chiefly by the chase, and finding his greatest delight in taking the scalps of his enemy. He is still the same superstitious child of nature ...."<sup>31</sup>

This emerging view of the possible outcome of trade is not startling given the gaining acceptance of Scottish views of stadial societal development. Long part of philosophic anthropology before the mid eighteenth century,<sup>32</sup> stadial views had traditionally not precluded the possibility that beneficial material goods exchanged from

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<sup>28</sup>Review of the Viscount de Chateaubriand, *The Natchez*, "Tales of Indian Life," *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, Part II, 1827, p. 82.

<sup>29</sup>Emphasis added, *The Parthenon* No. 43, 21 February 1863, p. 239.

<sup>30</sup>*Scots Magazine*, Vol. 63, August 1801, pp. 550-552. The translation of Rouchefoucault's *Travels* first appeared as the Duke de la Rochefoucault, *Travels through the United States of North America, the Country of the Iroquois and Upper Canada in the years 1795, 1796 and 1797* (London: R. Phillips, 1799).

<sup>31</sup>My emphasis. *The Manners, Customs, and Antiquities of the Indians of North and South America: by the Author of Peter Parley's Tales* (Boston: Bradbury, Soden and Co., 1844), pp. 295-296.

<sup>32</sup>Stocking, pp. 14-19.

one culture to another could help "improve" manners. Trade promotion had originally thrived on the apparent differences between the sophisticated society of Europeans and the primitive state of Indians in order to argue that goods found a role in the latter's possible civilization. By the mid-eighteenth century, most notably through the works of Anne Robert Jacques Turgot, the Baron de l'Aulne, and finally William Robertson, theories of societal development were refined. Indians now found greater distances, hierarchically, from the ideal of European civilization. Turgot had shown that human progress gained in the accumulation of experience; Robertson added a fourth stage to Turgot's conception of three clear steps in social development, to illustrate societies progressing from hunting and gathering cultures, to pastoral, to agricultural and, finally, to commercial in their organization. Such stages were determined according to the means of subsistence dominating each form of societal development.<sup>33</sup> Robertson himself had gathered much of his information of the Americas through published narratives and extensive correspondence and he seems to have influenced William Smith, Jr., whose own work contained Robertson's important conception of "condition" being an importance consideration in societal development.<sup>34</sup> In this, Robertson separated an Indian's "situation" from his "condition," the former being the natural situation in which he found himself, the second, the cumulative improvements he had undertaken in his environment in order to survive. Robertson and later Scottish thinkers broadened this understanding to suggest that ideas, conceptions of property, and relationships established in the protection of property, were distinctive to one's condition.

With a more definite set of criteria to determine civil society, and notions of private property restricted to members of that society, writers tended to see the trade of goods, though appropriated by Indians for their benefit, having little civilizing influence. Adam Ferguson's *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767) underlined this view, where the Indian's property, in whatever form, was defined according to his condition. Whether furs or utensils that were purchased with them, the Indians' property remained

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<sup>33</sup>See Ronald Meek, *Social science and the ignoble savage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); also, P.J. Marshall & Glyndwr Williams, "Savages Noble and Ignoble: Concepts of the North American Indian," *The Great Map of Man-kind: British Perceptions of the World in the Age of Enlightenment* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1989), pp. 187-226.

<sup>34</sup>See William Smith, *The History of the Province of New-York*, Vol. I., "their government is suited to their condition. A people whose riches consist not so much in abundance, as in a freedom from want; who are circumscribed by no boundaries, who live by hunting, and not by agriculture, must always be free, and therefore subject to no other authority, than such as consists with the liberty necessarily arising from their circumstances. All their affairs, whether respecting peace or war, are under the direction of their sachems, or chief men."

common property to the tribe or to the family.<sup>35</sup> With this brake on wealth accumulation, self-interest led Indians to acquire their few necessities, but "their desires of fortune extend no further than the meal which gratifies their hunger."<sup>36</sup> Thus, the Scots gave few reasons to hope that disproportionate gradations of wealth could be established among Indians through trade, leading ultimately to the differing ranks so characteristic of more highly developed societies. Moreover, since commerce in and of itself defined the highest stage of societal progress, and possessiveness and notions of property were presumed foreign to the savage condition, Indians were pictured as undertaking primitive barter exchanges, rather than sophisticated trading; like the ancient Romans, they held the "commercial arts" in contempt.<sup>37</sup>

Among those who embraced late eighteenth century conceptions of stadial social development, some doubts fell on the proposition that trade could, in itself, effect change in Indian society. The Scottish tradition, viewing progress as dependent upon unintended consequences of actions and modes of subsistence, tended to see the introduction of trade goods as irrelevant to the Indian's course of progress. The French, following their own associationist tradition in which human progress was related to the growth of reason, grew similarly pessimistic about the role of trade in civilizing processes.<sup>38</sup> By the turn of the century, more pessimism grew from features of ethnological thought. Europeans were distancing themselves from the history and environmental conditions of darker skinned people. Although far more popular among the French, polygenist theories were gaining currency. In England, with the evangelical revival rejecting such Biblical heresy on principle, a growing conception of cultural and physical determinants of higher and lower "races" was nevertheless gaining considerable popularity.<sup>39</sup>

There were, in fact, French writers who applied more pessimistic appraisals of Indian cultural and social improvement prior to their political revolution. Dispossessed of their Canadian and Louisiana possessions by 1786, the marine ministry revisited the issue of civilizing Indians in the case of its Guyana colony. That year, the Baron de Besuer proposed to the marine ministry to establish a mission to civilize the

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<sup>35</sup>Part II, section 11, Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society, 1767*, ed. Duncan Forbes (Edinburgh: University Press, 1966), pp. 82-83.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 93; see, also Ferguson's comments on traders in the "rude ages" who are "short-sighted, fraudulent, and mercenary," Part III, sect. IV. p. 143.

<sup>38</sup> See Stocking, p. 16.

<sup>39</sup>Stocking, pp. 48-50; 63-65.



Indian and black inhabitants of the colony by using a program of religious instruction. A marine ministry writer appraised the merits of the plan for the King in council, acknowledging the long history of similar, but failed, civilizing programs. Though he would not dismiss out of hand the possibility of civilizing a portion of this humanity -- he believed that some of the American Indians now living in Europe had begun undergoing such improvement -- he had few hopes for the plan's success in America. He was particularly pessimistic that the missionary could provide the circumstances necessary to keep men in "political society," calling and fixing Indians in work, industry, arts, laws and obedience to law. Indians, spread in that vast continent and enjoying such extensive liberty, were able to nourish themselves without difficulty and fell in among the worst class of European society. They were, then, difficult if not impossible to civilize. The writer then pointed out that the Baron himself had not produced good results in his previous civilizing experiments, this while giving Indians "sheets of cloth, knives, scissors, etc." and his dispensation, over forty years, of 1000 *ecus* annually in presents. Such presents had been, in the writer's words, "useless." "I would be far from approving a plan to dispense 25,000 *livres* to civilize the Indians. My advise is that we should leave them resting in freedom in their cabins, which would demand from us nothing."<sup>40</sup> It is important to note, however, that the King approved of the scheme and later underscored the importance of religion in the instructions sent to the missionary taking over the work.<sup>41</sup>

By the early nineteenth century, pessimism over the possible effects of trade goods among Indians became widespread. Indians were seen as possessing immutable savage natures, explained by racial theories, that ruled out a possible redemptive role in goods. For instance, the *New Monthly Magazine* in 1824, published "Indian Anecdotes" that give evidence of such pessimism. The North American Indian stood "in the highest ranks of uncultivated man," the editor wrote. A lover of freedom, "nothing can bend him from savagery, being indissolubly attached to roaming the vast forests and beautiful savannahs of his native land." Trade did not prompt civility; rather, the editor pointed out the ways in which the Indian had been "persecuted, belied and cheated, by the whites," and Indian uprisings prompted by "backwoodsmen, and the

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<sup>40</sup>Lettre de M. Maloues sur la proposition du administrateur de Guyanne (Cayenne) relativenent a la civilisation des Indiens," 16 July 1786, F/3/95 f. 53.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, see Letter 1 October 1787, f. 54.

knavery of white traders." "The time approaches very fast when in all the vast tracts east of the Mississippi not a single aboriginal American will remain."<sup>42</sup>

Certainly such pessimism grew from changing relations being established between colonists and Indians in numerous areas of North America. The declining political fortunes of Indian nations after the Conquest, and especially after the War of 1812, the widespread effects of European epidemics in the early nineteenth century, and the apparent ease by which Indian nations were being pushed westward by agricultural colonizers, prompted many observers to believe that the Indian, as a "race," was similarly doomed as aboriginal peoples in other "improving" colonies.<sup>43</sup> Not surprising, any conception of equity in commercial and social exchange appeared manifestly unreasonable to Europeans. They instead turned to humanitarian missions to save what were perceived to be the last of the Indians. Or, more aggressively, they advocated the complete displacement of wilderness and the dispossession of its obdurate peoples by agricultural land owners.<sup>44</sup> The 1820 "Memoir of an American Chief," running in the same magazine, cited "a melancholy truth that in almost all cases where the people of newly discovered or uncultivated regions have been thrown into communication with Europeans, they have imbibed all the worst vices of their instructors without receiving one virtue of civilized life in exchange for those which they have lost by the intercourse."<sup>45</sup> It seemed the natural course of things that Indians either disappeared with the advent of settlement, whole nations becoming extinct, or, when they enjoyed distance from Europeans, "remain with most features of resemblance to the old fathers of their forests."<sup>46</sup>

The lost faith in equitable exchange was darkened further in a wider undermining of earlier universalistic assumptions. Gaining in currency was a conviction that God's creation did not change with time, or, that fallen nature did not improve. The

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<sup>42</sup>"Indian Anecdotes," *New Monthly Magazine* Vol. XI, 1824, p. 277.

<sup>43</sup>See Arthur J. Ray, *I have lived here since the World Began: An Illustrated History of Canada's Native People* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1996), pp. 136-141; 151-156; see, also, the subsistence perspectives offered by Shepard Krech III, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), pp. 138-140; 192.

<sup>44</sup>Hanke's perspectives on the period are applicable. See Lewis Hanke, *Aristotle and the American Indians: a study in race prejudice in the modern world* (Chicago : Regnery, 1959), pp. 99-100; Robert M. Utley, *The Indian frontier of the American West, 1846-1890* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984); on social and economic changes in plains Indian societies, see Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), pp. 181; 188-192; 199-201.

<sup>45</sup>"Memoir of an American Chief," *New Monthly Magazine*, July to December, 1820, p. 519.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 519.

*North British Review*, in 1846, succinctly stated this pessimistic view, and its application to the case of Amerindians, when it challenged the theory of "volition" -- once a leading element of French and English philosophy of the eighteenth century. This discredited theory held that self-interest and the desire to improve one's lot led to a society's improvement. "Thus some noted philosophers have maintained that man was from the first a savage animal, and thus civilization and intellectual superiority are the slow and progressive results of his own efforts and experience." But the editor turned to what "we think:" "wiser philosophers" held that parents teach manners to children. The review went on to summarize "a learned and luminous exposition" of a professor John Stark of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, who used scriptural authority to prove that "no wild tribe had enlightened its own ignorance, or subdued its own ferocity," and "from our first parent, made in the image and after the likeness of God, we have indeed received, in consequence of his transgression, a heritage of woe, but we have likewise received, by the same inheritance, those attributes which ('with faded lustre wane') still distinguish our fallen humanity from the brutes that perish."<sup>47</sup> The editors, therefore "entirely agree with Mr. Stark regarding the civilized condition of the first families of mankind" but found less support for his related theory that domesticated animals had been domesticated since creation, and wild animals wild to the present.<sup>48</sup>

Accounts bringing pessimistic appraisals of the Indian's potential for improvement similarly thrived on reports on trade injustices. Contemporaries often explained these injustices according to a belief in the Indian's prejudicial intellectual deficiencies. In numerous histories of the fur trade, writers argued that progress promoted some peoples and left behind others. Trade injustice was an expected outcome of the encounter between a sophisticated, intelligent, society and barbary. Thus, the fur trade had unjustly "wrung from the hard hands of Indians" the profits which in turn impoverished and debased Indians. The history of "The Fur-Trade and the Hudson's Bay Company" (1859) noted the profits Europeans won in the trade on the furs they collected from Indians: "it is difficult to say how far the griping system by which these excessive gains are produced has been productive of the general misery among the natives subject to it..."<sup>49</sup> Here was something of an inversion of the concerns of seventeenth century writers, where the European was presumed to suffer from usurious inequity in trade. Now Indians did. The 1859 tract has other significance as it contributed to the concurrent call

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<sup>47</sup>"History of Domesticated Animals," *The North British Review* Vol. V, May 1846, p. 2.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>49</sup>"Fur-Trade and the Hudson's Bay Company," p. 24.

for the end of the HBC charter and the agricultural improvement of the country. No doubt individual traders "are generous and humane," the pamphleteer wrote, but "the profits -- the very existence of the company, as at present constituted -- depend on keeping the whole territory under their rule a vast hunting-grounds ... upon keeping whole nations of Indians as hunters and trappers, and discouraging anything like civilization and agricultural settlement."<sup>50</sup>

The pamphleteer then drew attention to what was a visible change in the economics of the trade in discussing the subarctic exchange, prosecuted in regions apparently sparse of food supply: "The *wants* of Indians, in a region where buffalo or deer are to be found ... are limited to ammunition and a few articles of iron and tin; and their *desires*, to the possession of a few trinkets." But in most of the territory where the trade now was prosecuted, the Indian was in critical need of food and European supplies to survive, and traders capitalized on the exchange they undertook in such conditions, discouraging in the process any to settle and farm for themselves, in dread that Indians might "become less valuable as hunters."<sup>51</sup>

The pamphleteer had in mind an alternative to the fur trade, agricultural improvement, where Indians would benefit from growing food more than from a trade where their real interests were always compromised. Nineteenth century historians, for that matter, depicted the fur trade as the primary agent of abuse towards the Indian. Now appended to their histories was a notion that progress was fortunately moving European agricultural technique over the wilderness. In this course of events, the Indian, his savagery and/ or trade inequity was also being lost. J. Loughborough, in his retelling of the "History of the American Fur Trade" (1849) was not apologetic in this outcome. "It is a singular and striking manifestation of the wisdom of Providence, in educing good out of evil, and rendering the worst passions of human nature subservient to the ends of virtue, that the fur trade, which had its origin in vanity and avarice, has, nevertheless, essentially contributed in many ways, to the lasting welfare of mankind."<sup>52</sup> He reasoned that a natural design was implicit in the ongoing European demand for furs which sent traders to the distant reaches of America, from which the contact, not the trade itself, facilitated a movement towards civilization. A similar view was recalled by the former fur trader, writer and Red River resident, Alexander Ross, who could call fur companies "pioneers of civilization," but saw little value in their existence other than playing a role in the first

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<sup>50</sup>p. 26.

<sup>51</sup>p. 26.

<sup>52</sup>J. Loughborough, "History of the American Fur Trade," p. 305.

stages of civilization. Ross described the Pacific, North-West and Hudson's Bay companies successively passing away, as aboriginal tribes, "once so formidable...fast melting away." Now the fur trade was "almost perished," and "the plough is fast following the axe." He saw a proliferation of churches and schools within Indian villages and "the hymn of peace has taken the place of the wild song of the savage."<sup>53</sup>

It is likely that Ross himself was being influenced by new racial ideas, whereby cultural and physical features were believed to endure within environmental conditions. Thus, on-going, debilitating attributes followed human groups, one generation to the next.<sup>54</sup> At the time that Ross wrote, rational thought and foresight were seen as defining features of progressing, civil society. Indeed, Indian savagery was no longer located beyond the civil state, or characterized by poor sophistication or polish in one's manners, but, rather, by the extent of apparent irrationality marking one's behaviour. The nineteenth century account, accordingly, seized upon examples of trading abuses to reveal the insufficiencies of Indian intellect and the almost predictable chicanery he was exposed to in his trade with Europeans. The essayist in *New Monthly Magazine*, then, found it interesting that Indians "exhibit, on the one hand, the matured device, and ingenious frauds of civilized rapacity; and, on the other, the natural alarm of a primitive people, *too guileless to negotiate*, too feeble to avert, but still too conscious of its injustice to submit."<sup>55</sup>

It was in the mid and late nineteenth century, when trade injustices were both exaggerated and, at times, fabricated. Manhattan Island, for instance, gained its infamous association with trader chicanery in the mid to late periods of the century when one after another historian of New York, employing writing styles resonant with themes of progress, exaggerated profits made upon unsuspecting Indians. This historical interpretation of the sale of Manhattan Island then became accepted text-book fact. The writers, for instance, converted into contemporary, and miniscule, dollar values the "beads" that bought Manhattan. They highlighted these trinkets and baubles, and discounted the diversity of trade goods actually traded, particularly the utilitarian and

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<sup>53</sup>Ross linked the commercial pursuits of companies to an evangelical outcome. "The Pacific Fur Company, the earliest pioneer of civilization on the Columbia....," p. Alexander Ross, *The Fur Hunters of the Far West: A Narrative of the Adventures in the Oregon and Rocky Mountains*, Vol. I (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1855), vii.

<sup>54</sup>On these conceptions of race, see Stocking, pp. 63-66; and his citation of the 1850 publication of Robert Knox's *The Races of Men*; Knox was pessimistic of human progress in time, and believed that no race could overcome the limits of its heredity, Stocking, p. 65

<sup>55</sup>"Fragments from the Woods," *The New Monthly Magazine*, 11, 1824, (60-70), p. 60.

likely extremely valuable ironware tools that could facilitate the excavation of wampum shell.<sup>56</sup> The point such authors made in these accounts was not that Europeans and Indians placed different values upon goods in exchange, but, rather, that Indians had overlooked, or were unable to recognize, the amazing hoodwinking taking place in the exchange.

The Manhattan account was not the only evidence being used by writers to demonstrate degraded intellectual ability among trading Indians. Indians were shown cheated not on indiscrete goods, which related to the technology of weights and measures, but now on discrete items, a matter that went to intellectual insufficiency.<sup>57</sup> The editor of the "Indian Anecdotes," offered evidence of such trading inability to readers of the *New Monthly Magazine*, in 1824. It reprinted excerpts from J. Buchanan's *Sketches of the North American Indians*,<sup>58</sup> taking interest in the possible "fable" taken from the annals of the Dutch regime in New York. According to the story, Albany traders had demanded land from the Indians in America "as much as a hide would cover, to raise greens for their soup." The story went that the Indians granted the request and that the Dutch cut the hide into strips and encircled a large piece of ground on New York island, "'upon which they built strong houses,' and planted 'great guns' against them."<sup>59</sup> The editor followed this story with an account "even less ceremonious" of the English after the Dutch, who "asked no leave of the Indians, but took possession of what land they wanted, encroached upon their hunting and fishing-grounds, and very quickly got into disputes with them and spilled their blood."<sup>60</sup> Buchanan's original retelling of the account included the observation that the Indians, seeing the Dutch use the hide this way, "were surprised at the superior wit of the whites...."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>See Peter Francis, Jr., "The Beads That Did *Not* Buy Manhattan Island," *New York History*, Vol 67 (1), January 1986, pp. 5-22.

<sup>57</sup>Kersey finds it "curious" that contemporaries highlighted the "shoddy" goods traders sold to Miami Seminole Indians in the late nineteenth century, when "most informants suggest just the opposite." Harry A. Kersey, Jr., *Pelts, Plumes, and Hides: White Traders among the Seminole Indians, 1870-1930* (Gainesville: The University Presses of Florida, 1975), p. 32.

<sup>58</sup>Its excerpts are found in James Buchanan, *Sketches of the History, Manners, and Customs of the North American Indians, with a plan for their melioration*, 2 Vols. (New York: William Borradaile, 1824).

<sup>59</sup>*New Monthly Magazine*, Vol. XI, 1824, p. 278.

<sup>60</sup>Trading good manifests, (such as Staten Island purchase by the Dutch, including "Duffles, Kittles, Axes, Hoes, Wampum, Drilling Awls, Jews Harps and diverse other small wares,") and other land transfers by early seventeenth century Dutch and Swede traders are recounted C.A. Weslager, *Dutch Explorers, traders and Settlers in the Delaware Valley: 1609-1664* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1961), pp. 160-161.

<sup>61</sup>Buchanan, Vol. I, p. 25.

Pessimism about the possible benefits Indians might enjoy in trade was found not only in histories. Reports of the trade tended to show civilization disappearing, not expanding, in fringes of trading contact. Thus, degeneration was suggested in the 1842 supplement to *Saturday Magazine* on the "Fur and Fur-Trade" as the trader voyaged deeper into the "remotest wilds of North America." The publication stressed the long distances from civilized Montreal to the regions where traders found themselves "in the depths of wilderness," intertribal warfare, and abundant wildlife and openly thought it strange that men, "more or less civilized," should voluntarily abandon the comforts at home to "wander through wildernesses and sterile plain, the companions of wild beasts, or of men almost equally wild."<sup>62</sup> Here, the Indians were left unaffected by the European's goods, while traders, as the accompanying illustration more than suggests, became degenerated (Figure 7-1).

Degeneration became a truism in the history of the Hudson's Bay Company:

It is not necessary to investigate the cause, but experience has shewn, that it requires much less time for a civilised people to degenerate into the manners and customs of savage life, than for savages to rise into a state of civilisation.<sup>63</sup>

Or, Loughborough, recounting the case of the French *coureurs des bois*:

It is astonishing how much easier it is for the most civilized being to descend into barbarism, than for the most intellectual savage to rise into the civilized state. In the first case, twelve months uninterrupted association with savages, almost uniformly effects the result; whilst we believe there is *no example in history of a grown savage having been converted into a civilized being.*<sup>64</sup>

Loughborough qualified the statement by suggesting that the process of civilization was an essentially rational undertaking. A people's civilization, therefore, took generations in its accomplishment, while the debasement of the *coureurs des bois*, requiring no rational effort, could occur almost immediately.

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<sup>62</sup>"Fur and Fur-Trade," *The Saturday Magazine*, Supplement, No. 615, Vol. XX, January, 1842, p. 41.

<sup>63</sup>"Fur-Trade and the Hudson's Bay Company," p. 6.

<sup>64</sup>My emphasis. He explained that, "To our mind the reason is clear and satisfactory. Civilization is the creation of reason, and implies a conquest over the passions and the appetites; barbarism consists in the almost undisturbed reign of the latter. The one state requires a constant and steady effort of mind, the other requires none. The one is a rational condition - the other an impulsive one. Loughborough, p. 308.

FUR AND THE FUR-TRADE. I.



Figure 7-1: "Fur and Fur-Trade," *The Saturday Magazine*, No. 615, Vol. XX, January, 1842, p. 41, *University of Calgary McKimmie Library*.



Fur traders themselves admitted the same degenerative transformation. While they could resist going about clad in pelts, the trader nevertheless was dependent upon wild meat and the Indians supplying it. In the western reaches of Rupert's Land, an "old winterer" like Archibald McLeod in Fort Chipewyan in 1825, saw a clear difference between himself and those at home: "such mortals as we, estranged from the world in a manner and sequestered from Civilized Society, the most wretched state Man can be inflicted with..."<sup>65</sup> When William Macintosh told his friend at Slave Lake that he planned to retire from a career of ill health and privation in 1833, to settle on the Ottawa River, he was quite confident that no matter what difficulties lay ahead of him as a farmer, "the man who can be pleased to pass days, months and years in the Indian Country in the banks of a lake or river confined to the courser foods, and deprived of almost every comfort, can have no difficulty to content himself in any situation in the civilized world..."<sup>66</sup> The trader could see his lot resembling Adam and Eve's after the fall, which was hardly an idyllic view of primitivism, when sin caused men to cover themselves with the skins of animals, as Roderick McKenzie wrote in his personal notes. Gaining a reputation for his bookish interests and transporting the first library into the interior, he had fully imbibed the Scottish enlightenment and particularly the Four Stage theory of social development. Among the many comments he made concerning Indians and their comparison with ancient barbarians, he noted that when civilized Romans arrived at their islands, the barbarous and therefore uncivil Briton was attired in skins.<sup>67</sup>

George Simpson is associated mostly with a harsh new administration of the fur trade after 1821.<sup>68</sup> It is valuable here, however, to point to the same characterizations of trade appearing in his likely ghost-written *Narrative of a Journey Round the World During the Years 1841 and 1842*, published in 1847. Unlike the promotional turns in La Potherie's narrative, which had argued a role trade could play in the civilization and ultimate Christian conversion of the Indian, the Simpson narrative is far more pessimistic towards this possibility. This change is quite telling, as the narrative

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<sup>65</sup>McCord. A.R. McLeod letter, 31 May 1825, M2783, Robert McVicar Fonds, McCord Archives.

<sup>66</sup>McCord. William MacIntosh Letter to John McDonell, 8 May 1833 M2799. HBC Fonds, McCord Archives.

<sup>67</sup>NAC. See note 189, of Roderick Mackenzie notes, Masson Collection, MG 19, C1 vol. 44, NAC microfilm, C-15639.

<sup>68</sup>Ute McEachran, *The Reorganization of the Fur Trade after the "Merger" of the Hudson's Bay Company and North West Company, 1821-1826* (Toronto: York University, Department of Geography Discussion Paper No. 39), pp. 12-13.

appeared at a time when the HBC's charter was under threat of closure.<sup>69</sup> Instead of arguing for a positive role of the fur trade in civilizing Indians, and therefore buttressing the company's heavily criticised monopoly, the narrative voice cites widespread Indian poverty and indebtedness. Thus, at Michipicoton, the Lake Superior fisheries were inconsistent in their availability, "and in such cases the miserable natives are maintained, for weeks and months at a time, at our posts, on potatoes and salted fish. *But it is not in this way alone that the poor savages are indebted to the fur-traders.* To give them the benefit of moral and religious instruction," the Company established a Wesleyan missionary among them.<sup>70</sup> The Simpson narrative describes Indians as thieves, or declining in population, and rather than taking up the opportunity to laud the beneficial effects of the Company's trade goods upon inland Indians, the voice ridicules their use: the hapless array of clothing (on a chief, "the tail of his shirt answered the purpose of a kilt."),<sup>71</sup> or the comical meeting of Europeans who wore night shirts to appear as "mandarins" while meeting chiefs who wore "scarlet coats and plenty of gold lace, had very much the cut of parish-beadles."<sup>72</sup> The trading apologetics are in this way of a certain stamp in the Simpson account: the virtues of a monopoly "under systematic and judicious management" are highlighted, while free trading leads, as among the Salteaux, to the Indian's impoverishment: "proportionally drained of their natural wealth."<sup>73</sup> It is

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<sup>69</sup>On the expansionist movement, see Doug Owsram, *Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992). See, also, George Simpson's letter supplied to the Colonial Office at the time of the 1837 charter hearings. He pointed out the virtues of monopolization protecting Indians by stopping the alcohol trade, the company's efforts to establish missions, and its regulation of the trade. He argued that if the trade was freed, the furbearers would be overhunted, the traders leave the regions inland and "that unfortunate population, thus left to their own resources, must inevitably perish from cold and hunger, - the use of the bow and arrow, and other rude implements formerly affording them the means of feeding and clothing themselves, being now unknown, and our guns, ammunition, fishing-tackle, iron works, cloth, blankets and other manufactures having become absolutely necessary for their very existence." Simpson to Pelly 1 February 1837, in *Copies and Extracts of Correspondence Which took place at the last renewal of the Charter...* published by Colonial Office, 8 August 1842 (Peel Collection Microfiche No. 104), pp. 15-16.

<sup>70</sup>Sir George Simpson, *Narrative of a Journey Round the World During the Years 1841 and 1842* Vol. I. (London: Henry Colburn, 1847), pp. 31-32. The Hopkin's diary entry for 25 May 1841 shows an interesting difference from the published text regarding Michipicoton: after fishing failed, "to enable them to go to their hunting grounds it is absolutely necessary to provide them with imported provisions, as it would be beyond their power to support themselves by the Chase in this poor and exhausted Country, so that the existence of the Indians entirely depends on the Fur Traders [who are at hand to rescue them from starvation]." Edward Martin Hopkins "Draft Manuscript of Simpson's Narrative," Transcription by Tracy Pelland. Many thanks to Ian MacLaren for pointing out this source.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 35.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 42.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 44.

possible that the authors were not thinking in terms of the later expansionist debate -- and the piece's many allusions to the settlement potential of Rupert's Land were to haunt Simpson in his own testimony during later parliamentary inquiries. But the narrator rarely misses an opportunity to demonstrate another benefit of the Company in the region, that is, a business supporting Indians as wards. Trade neither raises nor uplifts Indian morale. However, the Indians appear to need the company's direction and periodic charity to survive. According to the Governor of the HBC, this indeed seems to be *the* redeeming feature of his company and its monopoly, and in fact, the fur trade itself.<sup>74</sup>

## II.

Nineteenth century trade writers not only provided new characterizations of exchange, but, given the close associations of the fur trade with specific regions of North America, shaped some geographic understandings as well. The geographic orientations of the fur trade, especially after 1821, allowed for a prevailing view of Rupert's Land as northerly and inhospitable; the region itself was dismissed as undergoing any noticeable improvement. An observer in the early part of the century was pessimistic about the wilderness region's possible improvement. Moreover, Indians "in the wilderness" were viewed as living in an arrested state of social development, hunting rather than pursuing agriculture; missionaries and critics of the HBC monopoly lamented the very commercial pressure upon Indians not to improve their condition or take up sedentary agricultural lives, but to continue their hunt which kept them in a state of dependency. Owrarn, who identified this foundation of early thought towards Rupert's Land, argues that it was subsequently challenged in the concerted efforts of Upper Canadian "expansionists" by the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>75</sup>

It is not clear, however, why such a prevailing mind-set towards Indian trade regions became so widespread by the early nineteenth century. R. Douglas Francis, examining western imagery, has attributed some of these associations to the earlier, rational tradition of fur traders who emphasized the regions of the fur trade as obdurate to change.<sup>76</sup> But, as has been pointed out, numerous eighteenth century writers had not taken such a dour view of the fur trade; rather, they and their metropolitan contemporaries

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<sup>74</sup>Simpson was quick to argue, from the way they hunted furbearers, "the recklessness with which the Indians destroy, often in mere wantonness, all ages at every season." *Ibid.*, Vol. I., p. 85.

<sup>75</sup>See Owrarn, pp. 11-12; 15-17; 26.

<sup>76</sup>See R. Douglas Francis, *Images of the West: Changing Perceptions of the Prairies, 1690-1960* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1989).

tended to espouse faith in "volition," a force guiding societies through stages of progress - and trade, a means to lead Indians to their civility.

A key change that might have led to pessimistic views of wilderness regions lay in the commercial relations that connected Europeans to the New World, particularly those established in the fur trade. By 1824, the fur trader Robert Miles wrote to a fellow trader to point out that "economy is the order of the day:" these traders were witnessing changes to traditional ways that commercial capital supported their exchanges, and felt themselves more closely harnessed to ethics of accountability.<sup>77</sup> In the early nineteenth century, metropolitan agents and creditors of the fur trade were part of a larger financial world defining new criteria of acceptable business practices. Bankers and crediting individuals now demanded from their remitters closer attention to both book-keeping and reporting. The most immediate implication of this "order of the day" were significant changes, not just in the Indian trade itself, but in ways the trade was reported. The trader now described exchange more clearly with an eye to profit and loss estimates, and disclosed more information concerning the ways that he expended the consigned and credited goods in his care. Therefore, not only the Indian, but the fur trade regions were placed under far more critical commercial appraisals, and assessed for their productivity according to a new standard of "economy."

It is possible, then, that gaining pessimist appraisals of the European "Other" had important commercial origins. It is generally assumed that new ethnological theories in the period grew from the mass of ethnological data gained in late eighteenth century explorations. The sheer volume of this data led to comparative anatomy studies, phrenology, comparative linguistic analysis, a renewed debate about human polygenesis, and, finally, by the 1840s, a racial understanding of European and non-European peoples.<sup>78</sup> These broader currents in ethnology were undoubtedly influencing the fur trade description. So also were the declining political fortunes of Indians after the War of 1812, the aggressive land policies in the United States and the destitution and social malaise of Amerindian groups living near colonial settlements.

However, writers were also responding to changing commercial relations between Europeans and Indians. In fact, in terms of fur trade description, commercial pressures were forcing Europeans to view Indians more frequently as passive and exploited negotiators in trade, and conceptualizing trade itself as leading to Indian

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<sup>77</sup>McCord. Robert Miles to McVicar, 31 January 1824, McVicar Fonds, M2793.

<sup>78</sup> Stocking, pp. 48-50; 63-65

dependency. In this new view, the Amerindian correspondent was figuratively transformed into the European's ward.

Fur trade historians have not sufficiently accounted for such changes occurring in descriptions. Many instead suggest that "socio-political and socio-cultural change" was marking many Indian societies following the establishment of the fur trade, particularly during and after the era of competition.<sup>79</sup> These scholars draw from the ample evidence supplied in fur trade accounts and published narratives in the early nineteenth century to argue that large regions became over-trapped and over-hunted. Indians initially enjoying the rising competitive conditions of the fur trade became dependent upon traders, and impoverished when their over-trapping led to ever-smaller fur harvests.<sup>80</sup> It is clear, however, that writers in this period were under greater pressure to provide detailed reports of a region's carrying capacity of both valuable furbearers and megafauna. Perhaps more than his predecessors, also, the nineteenth century fur trader was responsible for estimating the wealth of Indians inhabiting the region, a post's provisioning expenses, and other accounting matters now demanded by metropolitan directors and investors.<sup>81</sup>

It is not surprising that the wilderness and the peoples living within it were pessimistically appraised by writers more critically assessing Indian condition according

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<sup>79</sup>See Yerbury's comment on the development of schools of continuity and change among ethnologists and ethnohistorians, J.C. Yerbury, *The Subarctic Indians and the Fur Trade, 1680-1860* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), pp. 3-4.

<sup>80</sup>Thus, Bishop states, "However, prior to 1800, both furs and game were plentiful and Indians could obtain enough pelts to supply their trade needs with ease," p. 11; he states that between 1810 and 1821, furbearers grew scarce, as did the cervines, (moose and caribou)... "Cases of starvation grew more numerous after 1815..." pp. 11-12; "by the late 1820's the transition was over. The Ojibwa by then, totally reliant upon the trading post for survival, were eking out a meagre existence," p. 12; his conclusions are drawn from sources cited on pages 228-262, see Charles A. Bishop, *The Northern Ojibwa and the Fur Trade: An Historical and Ecological Study* (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974); Anderson also believes that "steady competition produced dramatic ecological changes, as staple animals declined in number" in the Upper Mississippi regions "... A noticeable decline had occurred since 1817, as herd animals disappeared 'very rapidly,' from Sioux country." Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind*, pp. 106-107.

<sup>81</sup>Instead, new assessments of provisioning and other costs has led historians to posit widespread environmental changes and an impoverishment among Indians in North America. Ray's influential study of Indians in the fur trade has concluded that environmental stress and changing exchange traditions accompanying the rapid rise of competition after the Seven Years' War, led some Indians -- particularly woodlands Indians -- to increasingly depend on trader's goods. As megafauna became depleted in their vicinities through over-hunting, these Indians turned to traders to procure fabrics to replace traditional skin clothing, and ironwares to allow them to harvest small furbearers for trade, especially muskrat. Indians relying on such harvests were occasionally left destitute when populations of small furbearers went through cycles. Arthur J. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Trappers, Hunters, and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), pp. 117-165.

to new standards, "Indian territory" for its productive potential and traditions of the fur trade now imagined as leading to social problems, dependency and poverty. The nineteenth century reporter was often far more attentive to describing costs of the trade. His new concerns can, therefore, suggest a new impoverishment among Indians who asked for aid from traders, or new provisioning problems in regions of the trade – often the subarctic regions and boreal forests – where food was purchased at high cost.

More significantly in terms of their text, writers attentive to “economy” brought social assumptions to their descriptions about the fur trade, one of the larger features of economic writing in the early nineteenth century.<sup>82</sup> They recognized “poverty” as having a source and remedy in fur trade traditions. George Simpson, then, not only reported rising and falling trends in fur returns, but was keenly interested in the condition of Indians, which to him spoke volumes of information for planning. Thus, he characterized Indians near Cumberland House, in present-day Manitoba, as dependent by the 1820s on muskrat harvests, writing that since muskrat populations increased or decreased according to water levels, "the Indians of Cumberland are therefore at times the most Wealthy and independent in the Country and at others the most Wretched."<sup>83</sup> Few eighteenth century observers made such careful assessments of wealth or poverty – in European standards -- among Indians. Indians in the new trading areas of the Mackenzie and the subarctic were indeed often assessed for the social outcome of expensive trading practices, and appeared as "paupers," "thieves," and "beggars."<sup>84</sup> From the subarctic, to southwestern British Columbia, to the plains, a critical turn to economic assessment appears in text that identifies "poverty" among Indians in the early nineteenth century. Wentzel's 1807 letter to Roderic McKenzie concerning the Mackenzie Delta Indians suggested that

Indolence, robbery and murder are the consequences of an opposition in trade: people would suppose it would rouse their attention to industry, having goods at a lower price, but far to the contrary; drunkenness, idleness and vice are preferred; they are, indeed, of a beggarly disposition....<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> R.A. Soloway, "Christianity, Malthus and Political Economy," *Prelates and People: Ecclesiastical Social Thought in England: 1783-1852* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), pp. 93-97; 107-110.

<sup>83</sup> Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, p. 121.

<sup>84</sup> Even David Thompson's description in 1798 of the regions of the Chippewa, meaningful to historians who wish to demonstrate megafaunal depletion, followed the trend of an economizing era. He reported -- for whatever its worth as evidence -- that the Chippewa territories were "almost wholly destroyed" of game at that time. Quoted in Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind*, p. 73.

<sup>85</sup> Quoted in Yerbury, p. 70.

These writers were exhibiting the new economic concerns of the first decades of the century, even when they described themselves. George Nelson, an XY trader on the Chippewa River in 1804, for instance, exemplified this tendency when he described his dependency on nearby Indians for foods through a trade in "a little ammunition and a few silverworks to trade provision - for we have now nothing else to trade. We subsist upon Indian Charity."<sup>86</sup> Moreover, the English who had once been confident that they enjoyed a "providential" advantage to offer goods at a lower price to Indians, and that such prices would stimulate their industry, now assumed that goods offered in trade too lowly priced, gifts, advances and easy credit, all led to the Indian's demoralization.<sup>87</sup>

There was, then, more reason for reporters to urge economy for the sake of Indians and trade. Simpson's memorable line of changes to one fort in the post-amalgamation period held that "This is precisely that description of management which I am anxious to see established throughout this Country, having for its end strict economy, great regularity, *the comfort and convenience of the natives*, the improvement of the Country, and the most minute attention to every branch of the business."<sup>88</sup> Economy was a means to the best end for all, whether the commercial creditor or Indian inland. Hence, the early nineteenth century trader was quick to identify demoralization that had apparently followed the traders' liberality in the period of competition and the vast gifts and unpaid credits extended them. Such had harmed, not benefited, Indians who consequently appeared impoverished or hopelessly dependent upon the trade in this period.<sup>89</sup>

If they were quick to cast judgment on the unwise business practices of their predecessors, the same traders were now anxious to justify their own expenditures leading to other characteristics in reportage. Under great pressure to justify credit, they

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<sup>86</sup>Quoted in Bruce M. White, "The Trade Assortment: The Meanings of Merchandise in the Ojibwa Fur Trade," in Sylvie Dépatie, Catherine Desbarats, Danielle Gauvreau, Mario Lalancette and Thomas Wien, eds., *Habitants et marchands. Twenty Years Later: Reading the History of Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), p. 129.

<sup>87</sup>So John Stuart is quoted in 1833: "It is a Mistaken idea that a high price will even induce the Indians to bring a larger quantity, quite the reverse they are naturally indolent, when they get their wants for little they will labour but little, and if they Could get their wants for nothing they would do Still less." Quoted in Yerbury, p. 117.

<sup>88</sup>Emphasis added, Quoted in Rich, Vol. II, p. 496.

<sup>89</sup>"In regard to the proposed reduction on the standard of Trade, no question exists that it would be much to the interest of the concern and beneficial to the Indians could it be effected, if at the same time the system of giving presents and treats was abolished..." George Simpson, quoted in Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, pp. 195-196.

described their advances as meeting the survival needs of Indians. They reported costs of provisions as exorbitantly high near their posts, and therefore suggested, or often blamed directly, a scarcity of game nearby. The widespread reports of starvation, high prices on provisions, and Indian impoverishment occurring in numerous early nineteenth century reports, indeed, should be critically reassessed. It is certainly not clear whether these reports reflect real change in the boreal, sub-arctic, and climax forest environments underway in the late eighteenth century, or a more significant change in the way traders reported their trade.

The leading cause for such new reportage seems to have been a growing financial crisis attending not only the rising competitive conditions of the northwest, but also the prohibitive cost of shipping, insurance, and trade goods becoming acute in the French wars. The contraction of credit to numerous colonial settings was affecting most American business ventures in the early nineteenth century. The Louisiana economy collapsed in 1830s when metropolitan financial houses and banks began tightening credit.<sup>90</sup> Fur traders, representing inland the merchants who advanced them goods, were simultaneously required to identify costs and to more carefully account for their advances to Indians.<sup>91</sup> The resulting pressure upon traders to better account for their inland business is seen in the records of the Hudson's Bay Company during the price crisis of the French Wars. At that time, the Governor and Committee attempted to standardize reports from their factors. These reforms were underway by 1810, following the creation of the northern and southern departments and the implementation of a "new system" of accounting. Factors and traders now had to account for the "remainders" on hand at the end of a trading season, and the ways that trade goods had been expended not only in their barter for furs but in meeting operating costs. In this, traders were to distinctly record the cost of wages, provisions and shipping, etc. at their own posts and add such costs to the invoiced prices of goods. An accountant was sent to the bayside factories in 1810, "for the express purpose of directing you how to keep the factory accounts according to the new system for conducting the trade in future," as the committee wrote that year to each of its factors.<sup>92</sup>

The committee, on another occasion, wrote that

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<sup>90</sup>Merl Reed, "Boom or Bust - Louisiana's Economy during the 1830s," *Louisiana History* Vol. IV (1), 1963, pp. 35-53.

<sup>91</sup>Or the "Indian Accounts" maintained by the 1820s, Shepard Krech III, "The Trade of the Slavey and Dogrib at Fort Simpson in the Early Nineteenth Century," in *The Subarctic Fur Trade*, p. 100.

<sup>92</sup>The Committee to John Thomas, at Moose Factory, 31 May 1810, A.6/18, f. 12, 17; a valuable overview of the "new system" appears in the committee's letter to Auld and Thomas, 30 May 1812, *Ibid.*, f. 71.



We fear that many of the traders have been so little accustomed to accounts that they do not consider their circumstances [*in particular, transport expenses to their posts and provisioning costs*] but imagine that if the value of the furs exceed the invoice prices of the goods bartered for them that they are trading at a profit when the inverse is the fact.

You must therefore direct separate accounts to be kept at each post of the goods paid for provisions that you may have proper grounds on which to calculate the expenses and you can then give the traders general instructions to consider the goods worth so many per cent more than the invoice price.<sup>93</sup>

By 1818, the London Committee reminded factors that year of the need for better accounting, considering "the matter of such importance to the concern that any officer neglecting to do so will fall under our displeasure."<sup>94</sup> They also sent "printed and ruled books for the purpose of keeping the accounts on a distinct and uniform plan" to their traders.<sup>95</sup> Many of these developments were taken further following the amalgamation, when George Simpson came to embody "economy" in the fur trade, the union of concerns and the development of the Council System. All of these developments not only made the trade more efficient from a metropolitan point of view, but also made the traders actually exchanging goods with Indians more accountable, too. Indeed, key features of the "reformed" fur trade followed the amalgamation of 1821: the quota system of beaver harvesting, new limits on credit, reduction in gift giving and ever-smaller indents of merchandise, all of it overseen by far more vigilant traders.<sup>96</sup>

These developments are rarely associated with Montreal companies, but increasing need for accountability can be traced to the coalescence of trading houses in the late 1770s. The loosely knit North West Company (NWC) concerns, tied together by "common-law" agreements -- themselves increasingly suspicious to British investors in the early nineteenth century<sup>97</sup> -- seem to have formed in large measure to allow agents

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<sup>93</sup>*Ibid.*, letter to Thomas Thomas, 26 May 1813 f. 102.

<sup>94</sup>On this, see Ute McEachran, *The Reorganization of the Fur Trade after the Merger of the Hudson's Bay Company and North West Company, 1821-1826* (York University, Department of Geography Discussion Paper No. 39), pp. 11-12.

<sup>95</sup>William Williams, 19 May 1819, A6/19 London Correspondence Book Outwards, f. 144.

<sup>96</sup>E.E. Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company: 1670-1870* Vol. II (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1959), pp. 406; 469-472; see Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, pp 195-197.

<sup>97</sup>see Gordon Charles Davidson, *The North West Company* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1918), p. 13.

and merchants to force bookkeeping reforms among their bourgeois trading with Indians inland. Consequently, the history of the rise of the to the amalgamation in the 1821 suggests an enormous effort among merchants to undertake management reform in order to protect increasingly unacceptable crediting arrangements long associated with the eighteenth century fur trade.<sup>98</sup> Original stockholders had united to end competition and pool capital.<sup>99</sup> Montrealers themselves seemed to have had less to do with the amalgamation, if Duckworth's intriguing suggestion is borne out, that London agents encouraged the NWC mergers as a means of protecting their own advanced goods to different Montreal houses.<sup>100</sup> To these crediting agents, it made sense that Montreal merchants holding their goods were not concurrently wasting them in competition with each other. In other respects, it is telling that one of first tasks of the new NWC was to send William McGillivray inland in 1785 to bring improved bookkeeping practices among the bourgeois traders;<sup>101</sup> in 1787 the same Montreal merchants were at Michilimackinac to sign commercial treaties with Chippewa and Sioux trading nations as a means to encourage them to pay their credits.<sup>102</sup>

These reforms were intended to force traders to greater accountability. But such changes in fact overturned traditions of the eighteenth century fur trade. The trade had thrived on the large supplies of goods and credit placed in the hands of individuals who traded on whatever terms they believed would profit themselves and their creditors. Among HBC factors, credit awarded to Indians was traditionally given to those individuals who had influence over other band members. The factor used his judgment to choose to whom he would advance goods. He hoped that crediting one Indian would

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<sup>98</sup>See E.E. Rich, on financing arrangements of the original 1775 concern, and credit arrangements that extended to Indians who traded fur, E.E. Rich, *Montreal and the Fur Trade* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1966), pp. 69-70.

<sup>99</sup>E.E. Rich, *The Fur Trade and the Northwest to 1857* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967), pp. 172-174.

<sup>100</sup>I am thankful for my correspondence with Duckworth on the matter of book-keeping. See, Harry W. Duckworth, "British Capital in the Fur Trade: John Strettell and John Fraser," J.S.H. Brown, Donald Heldman, W.J. Eccles, eds., *The Fur Trade Revisited*, (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994), p. 44.

<sup>101</sup>See Duckworth's suggestions that accounting changes occurred in 1785, possibly introduced by William McGillivray, See introductory essay by Harry W. Duckworth, ed., *The English River Book: A NWC Journal and Account Book of 1786* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), p. xxv; Igartua originally believed that accounting was improved with the Conquest, when British merchants imported new practices, José Eduardo Igartua, "The Merchants and *Negociants* of Montreal, 1750-1775: A Study of Socio-Economic History," Ph.D. Thesis, Michigan State University, 1974, pp. 125-128.

<sup>102</sup>See Gary Clayton Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind: Dakota-White Relations in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1650-1862* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press 1984), pp. 71-72.

facilitate his return the following season, and influence others in his band to follow. Thus, the advance to an influential individual in the band might spark greater industry among the many. For much of the century, factors appointed trading captains within bands -- who received special treatment, suits of clothing, flags and other gifts -- in an effort to establish fortuitous lines of credit in their bands. Humphrey Martin, instructing his replacement as factor at York factory in 1762 outlined the use of credit in this way. He pointed out that

It is usual at York Fort to trust Indians very largely and should they not clear all their debt as it will happen some years to very good Indians, yet the next year we trust them tho not so much as before, which enables them often to pay all they owe.<sup>103</sup>

Ray suggested that the factor extended "variable lines of credit" into bands, and that in his instructions Martin had told his replacement to credit "good" Indians, but it is clear that York factors extended credit liberally and only reduced it as debts were accrued among individuals. In fact, Martin was only saying that even "very good" Indians were sometimes not able to clear their debts, in which case lines of credit were reduced the following year. The factor was informed that above all "harshness will not do with uplanders;" liberality was to mark the factor's trade and credit was to form a means of binding Indians with Europeans at that post. In this way, there was an optimism that credit was a positive element of the trade, and, the factor made an assumption that Indians eventually paid back their advances: "the next year we trust them tho not so much as before which enables them to pay all they owe."<sup>104</sup>

Inland, among independent traders working with consigned goods, or chief factors working within the HBC factor system, credit was largely left to the discretion of those undertaking the trade with Indians. Few individuals in the eighteenth century would have felt the need to justify their actions in such circumstances. In the case of a factor, he was responsible for maintaining correct supplies in indents and report surpluses on hand at the end of the season. He was expected to expend supplies at a rate which turned a profit for his superiors -- i.e., maintain the company's standard as best as he could.<sup>105</sup> The "over-plus" among factors became the gauge by which some of that profit was identified, and if a factor showed enterprise in raising such profits, he was awarded with a bonus to his wage at the end of the season. The credited trader inland -- more typical of those from

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<sup>103</sup>Martin to Ferdinand Jacobs, 31 August 1762, B.239/6/23 f. 14.

<sup>104</sup>Quoted in Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, p. 133.

<sup>105</sup>See comments on factors and principals in David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the integration of the British Atlantic Community: 1735-1785* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 123-131.

Montreal and the English colonies -- enjoyed even more freedom to pursue his business with Indians in ways he judged best.

To have expected more reporting from one's correspondent inland would have implicitly undermined his independence, and the confidence between creditor and remitter. In this period, traders won the freedom to reconcile the creditor's demand for returns on goods, or at least the interest accrued annually on credited goods, to the Indian's own particular demands in trade.

A trader's independence inland was indeed jealously guarded. The York factor, Richard Norton, suggests as much in his response to the HBC committee's call for accountability in 1738. At that time, the London committee was objecting to the "new" use of credit at the Bay and informing Richard Staunton, the factor at Moose River in 1739, to undertake a "thorough reform and ... put a stop as soon as you can to so evil a practice."<sup>106</sup> But when Norton received his own request to have his warehouse-keeper "do keep a warehouse book and enter therein every particular parcel of goods or skins that are traded with the Indians, and also the quantity and sorts of goods that is traded for such skins, etc.," Norton replied that such a request was "impracticable," if not impossible for various reasons. He was willing to account for the total "overplus," but, not actually how such an overplus was achieved:

...your honours does require to know how the overplus is accounted for. This, among other things, may it please your honours, is a point of management and is what by long servitude and experience I have attained to, therefore with submission I cannot think of being so prejudicial to myself as to communicate to anybody a knowledge that I have so dearly bought, and have so great dependence on. Therefore I humbly hope your honours will not insist on that injunction.<sup>107</sup>

There was always a possibility that a credited individual could poorly serve his metropolitan merchant. Andrew Graham criticized Canadian competitors inland who, among other sins, traded goods at far too low a rate (which by implication harmed the interests of their Montreal creditors more than themselves). He believed that despite the ways that such prices were drawing away the HBC Indians from trade, factors could redress the situation. If they "look sharp after the fur trade in all its branches," they could "overturn all the schemes of the Canadian pilferers."<sup>108</sup> But, Graham did not specify the

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<sup>106</sup>HBC. Letter to Richard Staunton, 17 May 1739, A.6/6.

<sup>107</sup>Letter 67, from Richard Norton, 17 August 1738, K.G. Davies, ed., *Letters from Hudson Bay, 1703-40* (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1965), p. 256.

<sup>108</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 268.

ways that each factor should undertake such a trade. Such would be left to their discretion.

The advent of "economy" in the early nineteenth century allowed for an overturning of this tradition, but it did more than that. Fur traders began to assess more carefully the cost of the trade and advances made to Indians. The most significant cost to traders was provisioning, always drawing significant goods from the fur trade, which now were more carefully accounted for by the trader. Their new attention to such operating costs can be vividly seen among Hudson's Bay Company men who now justified them in the post's "journal of daily occurrences," rather than the "accounts" ledger. Traditionally, provisions and gifts to Indians figured in the accounts under general expenditures; traders also turned to their journals to describe the occurrences of a day, where mentions of provisioning Indians frequently appeared. The journals in early periods of the inland trade, in fact, can be used as a valuable source of information concerning the provisioning trade, since traders often did not specify the cost or quantities of provisions they traded with Indians in the accounts.<sup>109</sup> By the nineteenth century, however, traders were directed to keep separate accounts of their provisions.<sup>110</sup> With this cost becoming more visible in their accounts, and traders facing pressure to curb unnecessary expenses, they turned to journals to do so. They therefore left entries that highlighted high food costs, problems traders encountered procuring enough food in their vicinities, and, if they advanced goods, the dire "need" among Indians for such advances. It is often from this qualitative, not quantitative, source where historians have gathered evidence of change -- i.e., that Indians became more impoverished, more dependent, game became depleted, Indians needed more assistance, and so forth, in the early nineteenth century.

The age of economy, then, prompted new reporting that arguably presents an illusory index of change for historical analysis. It seems more likely that traders were providing far more detail, and much of it pessimistic, that justified the turn in more detailed financial accounts. Such is suggested in the diary of Alexander Henry the Younger. Responsible for enormous quantities of NWC merchandise, he was careful to record and justify his expenses inland. In 1799, for instance, he reported the "extravagant terms" he was forced to enter with provisioning Indians who brought him the flesh of big

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<sup>109</sup>George Colpitts, "Victuals to Put into our Mouths": Environmental Perspectives on Fur Trade Provisioning Activities at Cumberland House, 1775-1782," *Prairie Forum* 22 (1), Spring 1997, pp. 1-20.

<sup>110</sup>"You must therefore direct separate accounts to be kept at each post of the goods paid for provisions that you may have proper grounds on which to calculate the expenses and you can then give the traders general instructions to consider the goods worth so many per cent more than the invoice price." To Thomas Thomas, 26 May 1813 A.6/18 f. 102.

game they hunted. The trade that year was still extremely profitable, as Henry carefully reported in his journal ("house expenses" for 17 people being 1500 skins, "debts" in the fall of 982 skins, repaid with 618, with a "total cost" of 1864 skins: "I had a clear profit of upward of £700, Halifax Currency.")<sup>111</sup> By the 1820s, economizing in the amalgamated concerns shifted description further. Council meetings -- themselves part of a larger accounting measure in the trade -- resolved to have traders and clerks report the total numbers of Indians, "particularizing the tribes, chiefs, head of families ... the average debts given and returns brought to the Company together with their general character and habits of life."<sup>112</sup> It is no surprise that traders displayed a sharpened interest towards their surroundings in such a context.<sup>113</sup> From the phrase traders used to describe the Indians who periodically died of starvation ("no less than fourteen natives of this establishment paid the debt of Nature from starvation"<sup>114</sup>), to the accounting language used in the midst of fur trade rationalization, trade journals suggest the emergence of a new type of description of the Indian trade. Thus, the comment of one at Grand River: "after giving them 21 skins misc on credit and 12 gratis. Lent the Great Chief 1 pair leggings, 1 brayet and 1 bonnet of crimson...."<sup>115</sup>; or James Porter, at Slave Lake in 1800, "(The Red Knives Band) drew 343 skins of credit traded 314 plus of differen[t] peltries value of 41 skins of pack cork and 45 of castoreume. Gave a good many trifling presents to the Indians Rather more liberal than usual because they all pay lending well."<sup>116</sup> The HBC directors' call for more accountability in 1811, the amalgamation of concerns in 1821, and the massive economizing in staff and trade goods that followed the Deed Poll, prompted traders to record far many more details of the costs of the trade.

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<sup>111</sup>Red River entries, 1799-1800, Elliott Coues, ed., *New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest: The Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry* Vol. I (Minneapolis: Ross and Haines, 1965), pp. 2-5.

<sup>112</sup>McCord, HBC Fonds Minutes of Council 8 July 1822, M2765. See, also, on Council resolutions, Rich, Vol. II, p. 490.

<sup>113</sup>Instruction 8, sent to William Auld: "You will direct traders and others who keep journals to notice the circumstances of the seasons in summer as well as in winter, the dates of the opening of the rivers the fall of the leaf, ripening of grain, etc.... a list be sent home of officers and men in each factory who keep Indian women with the number and age of children belonging to each. We also wish an account or report as can be made out of the Indian population within the district of each factory, distinguishing their nation or language the number of hunters in each band or under one chief specifying those who trade with the Canadians...." To William Auld, No day listed, May 1813, f. 111.A.6/18

<sup>114</sup>McCord, HBC Fonds Letter to John MacDonald, 10 April 1833, M2798.

<sup>115</sup>NAC. W. Ferdinand Wentzel Journal at Grand River 1804-1805, Masson Collection, MG 19 C1 Vol. 8.

<sup>116</sup>NAC. James Porter Journal at Slave Lake 1800-1801, Masson Collection, MG 19 C1 Vol. 6.

Besides prompting a characterization of Indians as being more "needy," and the environment recently "denuded" of big game in the early nineteenth century, accountability brought into sharp relief the trader's difficulty in negotiating differences between Amerindian exchange and the market exchange at home. If before he had grouped numerous expenses into a larger dispensation of goods that required little justification, now advances, gifts, and credit became obvious in a trader's accounts. Among other textual change, it was in the context of accountability that goods became characterized as "debt" rather than "credit." Although signifying an identical advance of goods, the "credit" given by a trader like Charles Chaboillez had a far more positive connotation, signifying, as Defoe had suggested, "confidence one in the other." Chaboillez, it might be recalled, recorded his direct barter in skin values, recorded his few gifts as *sans dessein*, and "credits" to Indians to be repaid at variable rates of interest. His use of the term "credit" (as well as his use of the term *sans dessein*) was part of an eighteenth century idealization of goods being advanced, at a profit, to Indians with a view to their return.

The growing use of the term "debt," however, communicated far different understandings. The debtor could as easily be characterized as irresponsible, or impoverished. Debt suggested a one-sided exchange, in which the goods advanced were not yet, and sometimes unlikely to be returned in like measure. The indebted Indian, therefore, became a trading liability, and, if viewed through more critical accounting practices, became "dependent" on the trader. Taken a step further in reportage, the gifts, advances and other social conventions of the trade could be viewed as leading, not to the Indian's redemption through the responsibilities invested in him by the trader, but to his becoming the trade's ward in dependency. Thus, though it is an increasingly accepted truism of the fur trade that it functioned according to credit arrangements, as Royce Kurtz points out,<sup>117</sup> the characterization of credit as debt occurred in the nineteenth century, as the trader's accountability for that debt increased.

Advances of trade goods, whether as presents or as credit, increasingly led to a characteristic ethnological feature of trader text, those identifying "Indian giving," that is, a tendency among Indians to give "gifts" to Europeans with a view of return, or, more commonly still, ungratefulness among Indians for the presents they received from Europeans, the "villany for kindness" that Peter Skene Ogden complained about when he

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<sup>117</sup>See Royce Kurtz, "Looking at the Ledgers: Sauk and Mesquakie Trade Debts, 1820-1840," in Jennifer S.H. Brown, W.J. Eccles and Donald P. Helman, eds., *The Fur Trade Revisited: Selected Papers of the Sixth North American Fur Trade Conference, Mackinac Island, Michigan, 1991* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994), pp. 143-159.

described "Indian gratitude."<sup>118</sup> Saum's study of trader descriptions did not recognize that his nineteenth century sources seemed to compound reports of Indians receiving and not returning in kind. In fact, the early nineteenth century accounting practices were forcing traders to become vigilant of shortfalls in the return of goods in they gave or advanced to Indians. Indeed, their tendency to identify "Indian giving" was itself a nineteenth century phenomenon in many respects. Eighteenth century accounts, for instance, largely ignored such advances. Rich, searching for any account of gifts in trader accounts, believed traders placed them in their overplus trade, that is, the cost of such goods were absorbed with little account in the larger profits made on indiscrete trade goods. In his study of HBC accounts, Ray corrected this view by demonstrating that traders traditionally placed advances such as gifts as "general expenses" in their accounts.<sup>119</sup> Morantz, in her work on credit, suggests that gift giving in the trading captain system -- increasing appreciably in times of competition -- were absorbed into the post's general expenses.<sup>120</sup> Credits, meanwhile, were often kept in separate ledgers and not actually resolved in the accounts sent home.

With the implementation of the HBC's "new system" in 1810, traders reported the "remainders" of trade goods at the end of the season, and they now accounted for their expenditures over the course of the trading season. Credit extended to Indians, therefore, had to be reported explicitly in the expenditure accounts. The HBC committee knew the implication of such reportage. If a trader was forced to show all the goods he extended in credit as expenditure, he might stop giving credit for the sake of his reputation at home, which, in times of competition, would turn Indians from the company's trade. If, however, credit was recognized as skins traded, to be collected in the future, it would throw off calculations of profit. Moreover, a trader might be tempted to give credit freely since it could represent a profitable trading season.

The committee resolved the matter by deciding that credit should appear as expenditure. These credits, however, would only be represented as half their value:

It has therefore been proposed to allow credit to be taken for one half of the value (as a medium) of all debts remaining unpaid on the day of closing the accounts. If on further

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<sup>118</sup>See Lewis Saum, analysis of "Indian giving", in *The Fur Trader and the Indian*, pp. 138-140; 142.

<sup>119</sup>See, Arthur J. Ray, "The Hudson's Bay Company Account Books as Sources for Comparative Economic Analysis of the Fur Trade: An Examination of Exchange Rate Data," *Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology* 6 (1), 1976, p. 42.

<sup>120</sup>Toby Morantz, "'So Evil a Practice': A Look at the Debt System in the James Bay Fur Trade," in Rosemary E. Ommer, *Merchant Credit and Labour Strategies in Historical Perspective* (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1990), pp. 208-209.



observation this deduction appears to be too great a different rate will be adjusted when we receive more current information. In stating the Indian debts we do not require a list of the goods advanced to each Indian to be sent home, but a list of the names of the Indians who remain indebted at the closing of the Books, with the total value of goods advanced to them and the number of Made Beaver they have to pay.<sup>121</sup>

Competitive conditions in the trade forced this concession to credit traditions. With the amalgamations of the concerns, however, credit would be recognized for 100 per cent of its value, and therefore the trader assumed all responsibility for his advances. In some regions, a "ready barter" system was undertaken, often without success. But such accounting developments are nevertheless important to note, particularly since they prompted traders to closer attention to estimates of profit and loss in their trade. Furthermore, such accounting reforms occurred at a time when traders, similar to the churchmen leading economic reforms at home, became anxious to identify ill-spent aid to Indians. The more fervent evangelical mandates taken up by traders reflected some of the larger movements of evangelical thought. The credit of grace, similar to the credit of trade goods, now had more accountability and required among its benefactors at least some threadbare evidence of remittance, to God, in the first case, or to the trader, in the second. Some of the HBC directors themselves were affiliated with the Clapham sect and the Church Missionary Society, and by the 1820s, they gave support to missionaries inland, who, likely significantly, were enjoying few harvests of souls.<sup>122</sup>

Trade goods themselves found less service in this more important mission movement. An individual such as James Keith in the nineteenth century, for instance, saw evangelism and trade as quite separate undertakings. Keith was part of a larger moral change occurring in the trade, when he remonstrated traders who did not observe the Sabbath at their posts;<sup>123</sup> or heard the apologies of fur traders who had gone on alcoholic binges.<sup>124</sup> He was intent upon both economizing expenses and, not coincidentally,

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<sup>121</sup>Committee to Auld and Thomas, 30 May 1812, A.6/18 ff. 74-75.

<sup>122</sup>See Frank A. Peake, "Fur Traders and Missionaries: Some Reflections on the Attitudes of the Hudson's Bay Company Towards Missionary Work among the Indians," *Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology* 3 (1), 1972, pp. 72-93.

<sup>123</sup>McCord. Keith to McVicar, 30 May 1826, M2780.

<sup>124</sup>McCord. George Armstrong's apology for lasting into drinking, "a cursed system of drinking has been the bane of my reputation," his "common failings," had "preceeded altogether from thoughtless indiscretions, by no means from a wicked and deprived disposition." George Armstrong to McVicar, 25 February 1831, M2797.

establishing in 1822 "that Philanthropic institution in the Wild Land," a Bible society. To that end, he raised money from York Factory traders and others in the northwest. The society, he said, would embrace "universal sentiments of benevolence to the human species, as that of distributing to them the only sacred record extant, which certainly in the estimation of all rational beings, must exceed all other worldly gifts."<sup>125</sup> Keith certainly saw little redemption occurring in the goods either legitimately traded or thieved by Indians in the subarctic fur trade. Keith would later see that his "gift" to the Indians was spiritual, not material, and given the rising rage of "economy," hoped to see as little debt given to Indians under his own management.

After the union of concerns, Keith was at Fort Chipewyan, the vigilant administrator of economy in the shadow of George Simpson. He sent letters to his contemporaries like Robert McVicar, who were resisting Keith's notice of the "necessity of restricting the debt system." Keith believed that once this "defect" was done away with and liquor discontinued, "we ought consequently to prepare the minds of the Indians, the trade and the country at large cannot fail ultimately to reap the most essential benefit."<sup>126</sup> To Keith, the system of credit which had developed in the eighteenth century was in large part irredeemable debt. An Indian, like the Chipewyan who took debt at two houses, was to be upbraided as "he ought take impressed with a full conviction of the impropriety [*sic*] and even necessity of delivering in the payment which would much cure them of their wandering and unsettled habits..."<sup>127</sup> He believed that the trader who advanced credit acted with "inconsistency, or extravagance." Robert McVicar, trader at Fort Resolution in 1826, was apprised of the economizing mission of the Deed Poll and the new measures of the amalgamated trading companies. He was fully conscious of the need to reduce and finally dispose of older credit instruments. In response to the criticism of his HBC superior, he pointed out that he had confined the limits of his "advances" which once had been "ammunition, iron works and clothing" but now constituted ammunition and tobacco "and not an inch of strouds or any other sort of dry good had been given them in debt."<sup>128</sup> Meanwhile, he assured his superiors that he was preparing Indians for the inevitable, that he would be "discontinuing the debt system" of the past (he did not use

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<sup>125</sup>McCord, Keith to Robert McVicar, 7 February 1822, M2768. Keith died 19 June 1838 and left money for a Bishop seat in the west. See PRO, Keith's bequest, leaving funds in his will "for the purpose of establishing, propagating and extending the Christian Protestant Religion in and amongst the native Aboriginal Indians in that Part of America Formerly Called Rupert's Land," TS 18/794.

<sup>126</sup>McCord, Keith to McVicar, 10 September 1825, M2774.

<sup>127</sup>McCord, Keith to McVicar, 5 March 1826. M2777.

<sup>128</sup>McCord, McVicar to Keith, 11 May 1826. M2769.

the term "credit") and insist that Indians, particularly the northerly Chipewyans, should clear their accounts before they could expect any more trade.

### III.

Many of the new ways of describing trade had origins, however, not only in the rise of cost accounting, but also in the fluctuation of profit potentials in the Indian trade, a growing criticism of the risks attached to such investments, and the pessimism among traders themselves towards the fur trade as a viable economic pursuit in the nineteenth century, particularly during the era of competition.<sup>129</sup> The risks to investment were increasingly untenable in Montreal, one of the last metropolises to support a fur trade economy in America. There, venture capital was finding safer application in other local economic diversification, when it presented itself.<sup>130</sup> Former fur traders like James McGill were turning to banking and other business ventures within the Montreal community, even when the first amalgamations of houses were promising safer haven for investment. Indeed, even with the news of the 1789 merger and the Athabaska's lucrative trade now within reach of the community's traders, McGill turned down the offer to invest. He did not want "his money a float in his time of life," he said.<sup>131</sup> Either investing locally or maintaining stock in the safer, improving, Detroit trade, McGill's financial prudence still lends him a better reputation, if a recent history is any indication, compared with the risky and "irresponsible" partners of the Northwest Company, who took investment capital too far inland.<sup>132</sup>

McGill's financial departure from the northwest trade can provide a valuable index of the rising risks associated with such adventures, and, as trade reached the Rocky Mountains, the ways that such risks to investment capital were becoming unacceptable among Montreal concerns. The first mergers among Montreal houses were shaped as strategies to protect lines of credit depended upon by fur merchants and traders. In turn, much of the reporting and narrative writings of the "north-westerners" can be

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<sup>129</sup>As early as 1799, the Northwester Angus Mackintosh at Detroit, when asked to take on a fellow Scot's boy into the Indian trade, gave his "candid opinion" that "the insight he can acquire of business in this quarter is not much and I think if his ideas lead him to being a merchant you should place him in a place where he could acquire a more universal knowledge ...."NAC., To Mr. Macomb, 10 June 1799, Angus Mackintosh Letterbooks, MG 19 A31 Vol. 2.

<sup>130</sup>See Georges Bervin, *Québec au XIXe Siècle: L'activité économique des grands marchands* (Quebec: Septentrion, 1991).

<sup>131</sup>HBC, Frobisher to Simon McTavish, 8 December 1791, NWC Documents, F.3/1. Microfilm Reel 5M1.

<sup>132</sup>Stanley Brice Frost, *James McGill of Montreal* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), pp. 57-58; 76-79, and that McGill "was the fur trader like no other," pp. 149-150.

recognized as a strategy to represent in virtuous light a crediting venture that verged on the cavalier. The first, short-lived, merger occurred in 1779 when Americans threatened the western post system, later in 1783-84, when commercial credit holding together the fur trade was almost exhausted. Subsequently, the company's expanding inland trade was undertaken with huge quantities of credited goods that required more accountability, vividly recorded by competitors who witnessed the Canadian goods passing Cumberland House in 1786 with a Jurial Baldwin, bourgeois, leading a brigade of no less than twenty canoes: "belonging to his employer well loaded with goods," he reported.<sup>133</sup> These outfits were purposely large and groaning with credit, in order to bypass the middlemen Assiniboine and Cree traders on the plains and place traders in the rich and distant Athabaska region of present-day northern Alberta. To those dependent upon such a risky trade, co-partnerships and careful character analysis of traders themselves were a means of alleviating the concerns of metropolitan creditors and better organize the ways that credited goods were being traded inland.<sup>134</sup>

The use of mergers to protect lines of credit, were not only imposed by metropolitan agents. The Montreal community was showing the strains of the credit supporting the inland fur trade. As early as 1791, competition was rising and the Northwester, John Gregory, told the crediting agent, Simon McTavish, that "the jealousy of almost all the people of Montreal, Concerned in the Upper Country Trade augments daily."<sup>135</sup> Already, an enormous devaluation of consigned merchandise was taking place inland.<sup>136</sup> Credit was not only being unwisely expended to meet rival trade companies. In

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<sup>133</sup>HBC, 12 September 1786, Cumberland Post Journals, B.49/a/18.

<sup>134</sup>McGill Library Rare Books. Blackwood carefully judged the character of traders at Michilimackinac, who worked "in this country without justice," see Blackwood letter, 25 June 1806, Thomas Blackwood Letterbook, 1806-1807 MS 432/1. The more frequently cited case of judging character arises from George Simpson's character book, see Glyndwr Williams, ed., "The 'Character Book' of George Simpson, 1832," *Hudson's Bay Miscellany: 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1975), pp. 151-236.

<sup>135</sup>HBC., John Gregory to Simon McTavish, 24 October 1791, NWC Correspondence, F.3/1.

<sup>136</sup>Wentzel's description of his bitter struggle in 1804 with an XY house is applicable, vividly showing how the goods taken inland could be expended, not in trade for furs, but to oust, in particularly grim fashion, one's competitor. The North-westerns, enjoying more credit at its Grand River post began an irresponsible commodities war in November of 1804, when Wentzel expended half a keg of powder "in oppressing him by firing at every thing we could...." in order to scare away game; then, the chief trader began using liberal gifts and low prices to woo Indians from bringing furs and provisions to the competitor. He forced Indians to burn XY *capots* and other traded goods. Just shy of Christmas, the XYers were then taken to the brink of starvation, to the point where they had no energy to check the nets under the ice of a lake nearby. Wentzel then seized his competitor's goods in trust, and sold them goods at exorbitant prices to survive the winter. NAC. See 15 November, 10, 11, 18 December, 1804. W. Ferdinand Wentzel Journal, Masson Collection, MG 19 C1 Vol. 8.

1789, a "Voyageur" writing in the *Montreal Gazette* lamented the enormous losses he and other bourgeois sustained when they advanced credit to canoemen, who in their "needy situation," drew wages before their service. Many of these having given false names and places of residence, absconded before their engagements commenced. He urged a policy that "no Bourgeois shall engage a man who has not a certificate, of his real name and place of abode, sign'd by the Priest of the parish he belongs to."<sup>137</sup> Other problems were presenting themselves at the same moment. In 1790, a newspaper article on "The Trade of Quebec," pointed out that "the furr-trade is on a rapid decline, and the moment the Americans take possession of the Western Posts it will scarcely be an object worthy of attention" and the writer urged merchants to "awake from their Lethargy" and begin trafficking lumber, "an unfailing source of wealth and prosperity."<sup>138</sup> Further strains on the commercial credit supporting the fur trade are discernible in the social problems growing within the community's employee base. A 1791 appeal to Montreal's French community was intent upon forming a fund for the assistance of infirm voyageurs, their widows and children, drawn from wages of employees of fur companies;<sup>139</sup> (the editor of the *Gazette* lauded the fund as a much needed, worthy development, and that it rehabilitated the reputation of this "important branch" of commerce that the church had long pictured in hideous and unjust ways).<sup>140</sup> An English theatre benefit held shortly thereafter offered "for the relief of the poor Voyageurs, their Widows and Orphans," raised money for a fund being collected at the Beaver Club.<sup>141</sup>

One of the final mergers in Montreal, the North West Company of 1795, grew out of such a problematic financial context. It is likely without coincidence that with their fortunes resting upon ever further movement in the continent, the Northwesters imaginatively connected the commercial credit perilously supporting their ventures with the common good.<sup>142</sup> Their activities should not be viewed as a real "vision" of trans-

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<sup>137</sup>*Montreal Gazette*, 17 December 1789.

<sup>138</sup>*Montreal Gazette*, 1 July 1790.

<sup>139</sup>"Pour faire un Fonds," *Montreal Gazette*, 13 January 1791.

<sup>140</sup>Seulement nous observerons que le commerce des pelleteries devenu par ce projet (d'un fonds) d'une plus grande utilité, vu son extension prochaine, cessera d'être dorénavant envisagé d'après les tableaux injustes et affreux qu'en a offert la malignité ecclésiastique, à quiconque étoit desposé à l'exécution d'aucune des manoeuvres essentielles à cette branche importante." *Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup>*Montreal Gazette*, 24 February 1791.

<sup>142</sup>See Haldiman's comment, 6 May 1784, that "for the better security of the North West Trade to this Province, one company are formed at Montreal. They purpose exploring the country this summer in order to find a passage to the most distant posts, entirely within our line, behind apprehensive that the

continental exploration, embraced by the merchant community.<sup>143</sup> The credited Montreal businessman was adept at representing his self-interest as meeting a civic good and he wrote many things to reveal virtue in an increasingly unacceptable means of carrying on the trade inland. In the "exploration" undertaken with trade, the Montreal community strengthened notions that the merchant's unhampered efforts naturally contributed the larger good of society. Montrealers equated pooled capital (and reduced competition) with a higher civic purpose to be effected in trade with distant, yet-to-be discovered, Indians.<sup>144</sup> The Americans' threat, not only to their own trade, but to the British colonies on the St. Lawrence, prompted the same merchants to join the virtues of commercial capitalism with state security. Thus, General Haldiman, hearing the first reports of the division of the northwest trade into sixteen shares of profit, learned not only of the credit supporting the entire Montreal trade, and that the traders were mostly men "of low circumstances, destitute of every means to pay their debts when their trade fails,"<sup>145</sup> but their trade's civic virtues as well. Benjamin Frobisher informed him that despite the American War and the high costs of goods and heavy insurance, "the natives have been every year amply supplied" by them and that "Posts that the French were unacquainted with have been discovered."<sup>146</sup>

By the late 1790s, the virtues of exploration were played out by Montreal merchants in an obvious bid to divert criticism from an expensive, risky, and frequently violent trade taking place in Indian Country. With Montreal fortunes depending on this trade, merchants in the larger NWC concern provided London with stunning maps of the interior of the continent, which, not surprisingly, exaggerated the distances they had taken their capital. The extract of a Montreal letter appearing in *Gentleman's Magazine* promoted the virtues of commercial arrangements between London and Montreal

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Americans will materially interfere with the trade... Haldiman to Robertson, in Douglas Brymner, ed., *Report on Canadian Archives 1888* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1889), p. 67. See Davidson, pp. 61-62

<sup>143</sup>As suggested by Richard Somerset Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains: The British Fur Trade on the Pacific, 1793-1843* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997), p. xv; pp. 4-10.

<sup>144</sup>Some of these virtues are perceived in Cary's poem: on Montreal: "Great mart! where center all the forest's spoils,/ the furry treasures of the hunter's toils:/within the walls the painted nations pour,/and smiling wealth on thy blest traders show'r..." lines 80-83; also, "How blest the task, to tame the savage soil... But oh! a task of more exalted kind,/ to Arts of peace, to tame the savage mind,/ the thirst of blood, in human breasts, to shame/ To wrest, from barb'rous vice, fair virtue's name;/ Bid tomahawks to ploughshares yield the sway,/ And skalping-knives to pruning hooks give way..." lines 54-63 See, Thomas Cary, *Abram's Plains: A Poem*, ed. D.M. R. Bentley (London: Canadian Poetry Press, 1986). My thanks to Ian Maclaren for directing me to this source.

<sup>145</sup>Charles Grant to Haldiman, 24 April 1780, *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>146</sup>Benjamin Frobisher to Dr. Mabane, 19 April 1784, *Ibid.*, p. 63.

merchants by underscoring the ways the trade was meeting a larger civic good. The writer used the possessive, "our traders," to speak of the ever deeper movement of individuals from Montreal, taken with Peter Pond into Athabasca and "Cook's River." The map showed the trade now tantalizingly close to Cook's Pacific entrance to the mythic Northwest Passage; the published letter congratulated not only Montreal merchants, but, implicitly, the way that their trade had taken England's representatives to the country of "Arabaska," which was "exceedingly fine, and the climate more moderate than here [Montreal]; which is owing to its propinquity [*sic*] to the Western Ocean." The letter writer cited twenty-one posts built between Lake Superior to Slave Lake, and therefore, a means of communication, "where traders are posted to trade with different tribes of Indians," at a distance, Montreal to Slave Lake, of 1750 leagues.<sup>147</sup> The same magazine printed a report of Mackenzie reaching the Pacific.<sup>148</sup>

Alexander Dalrymple, who was attempting to argue his own geographic theories of the northern coastlines, found the exaggerations of Montreal traders, especially the distances they claimed to have gone inland, quite maddening. Himself trying to promote the amalgamation of the HBC with the East India Company, and, using northern routes to get "necessities" to the Indians inland (he claimed the difficult passage of Montreal canoes forced traders to carry only liquor), Dalrymple had little patience for Canadian cartography.<sup>149</sup> But the very exaggerations of Montrealers were drawn in a bid to legitimize the credit arrangements forming a foundation of their trade; the ever-deeper movement of capital inland allowed traders to reach new Indian markets, and the remitters of London houses were now virtually smelling the salt air of the Pacific. Some Montreal merchants, meanwhile, supported Dalrymple's ideas and cited the advantages of amalgamating the HBC with Montreal merchant concerns, to effect such virtuous ends of commercial capital when Laurentian know-how and initiative exploited the neglected western hinterlands of the HBC.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>147</sup>*Gentleman's Magazine*, March 1790, "Extract of a Letter from \*\*\*\*\*, of Quebec, to a Friend in London," March 1790, pp. 197-198. See, also, Map of Pond's adventure to "Cook's" or Slave River.

<sup>148</sup>*Gentleman's Magazine*, 1790, p. 1046.

<sup>149</sup>Alexander Dalrymple "Memoir of a map of the lands around the North-Pole : 1789. scale 1/10 of an inch to 1 degree of latitude," (London : Printed by George Bigg, 1789), pp. 26-27, University of Calgary Library Special Collections; See, also, his *Plan for promoting the fur trade, and securing it to this country, by uniting the operations of the East-India and Hudson's-Bay Companys* (London : Printed by George Bigg, 1789), Glenbow Archives, Calgary.

<sup>150</sup>Mackie suggests an "idea of a British transcontinental commerce connecting the Canadian colonies or Hudson Bay with the Pacific, an idea much older than the political idea of continental confederation within British North America," Richard Somerset Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains: The British*

The promotion of commercial credit in the fur trade did not have to be represented in the blatant exaggerations of Northwesters. John Long's *Voyages and Travels of an Indian Interpreter and trader*, published in London in 1791,<sup>151</sup> suggests some of the subtler means employed by individuals promoting commercial capital in the 1790s.<sup>152</sup> Long's narrative can, in fact, be read as promoting the virtues of the Canadian fur trade, the benefits of keeping Montreal's merchant hinterlands, and remedying their difficult access by gaining entrance through the chartered Hudson Bay routes, itself quite a politicized issue at the time of its publication.<sup>153</sup> Indeed, the very list of subscribers for the Long journal ranged from Joseph Banks, to Joseph Baren, to Alexander Dalrymple, who, similar to French upper-ranks interested in using the fur trade as a vent for manufactures,<sup>154</sup> had shown interest in using commercial activities in the last of the British colonial outposts in the North for geographic exploration. Alexander Dalrymple's own original interest in the Montreal community had activated some designs for David Ogden and Evan Nepean's proposed overland expedition from Montreal in 1790, finally undertaken with a supply granted to Captain Holland. Indeed, a memorandum by Alexander Dalrymple "on the route for discoveries," unequivocally stated his belief that Hudson Bay presented a possible route the west.<sup>155</sup> It was to Joseph Banks, in 1781, that the Montreal trader, Alexander Henry, sent a handwritten manuscript, through the

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*Fur Trade on the Pacific, 1793-1843* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997), pp. xv; 4-10.

<sup>151</sup>John Long, *Voyages and Travels of an Indian Interpreter and Trader* (London: 1791).

<sup>152</sup>The author's credibility rightfully bothered a critic of *The Monthly Review* who warned that readers should "necessarily proportion their credit to information, by their knowledge of the informant," but finally judged that "a respectable list of subscribers (to the work) ... will certainly operate in some degree as a sanction to the fidelity of his pen." *The Monthly Review; or, Literary Journal* May to August, Vol. III (London 1792), pp. 129-130. I have searched "Account of Licenses to Trade with the Indians" from 1769 to 1786, issued in Quebec, for Montreal. "J. Long" does not appear in Carleton's Indian licenses issued in 1777, even though the narrative states that his first voyage left Montreal in May of that year. Alexander Shaw, whose rum trade is described on pp. 58-71 of the narrative. Trade Licenses files, RG4 B28, vol. 110 pt.1, Microfilm 4M00-2714A ANQ. See Michael Blamar, "Long's *Voyages and Travels*: Fact and Fiction," in *The Fur Trade Revisited*, pp. 447-463.

<sup>153</sup>See emphasis on the gifts given inland, and details of trading goods; pp. 48-50; see the plagiarized speech of the Indian chief that includes thanks that the "Great Master of Life has sent a trader to take pity on us Savages," p. 55; on portrayals of the necessary rum trade, pp. 56, 61-71, 111-112; on the threat of the Six Nations to Canada, p. 8; the value of the inland posts now in American hands, "the situation and utility of these barriers, in a commercial point of view," and the superiority of the Hudson over the St. Lawrence as a collection basin for furs, pp. 13; 61.

<sup>154</sup>See "Documents: Marbois on the Fur Trade, 1784," *The American Historical Review* 29 (4), July 1924, pp. 725-740.

<sup>155</sup>See, Captain Holland's Plan to Explore from Quebec. pp. 36-37; 1889 *Report on the Canadian Archives*, Dalrymple to Evan Nepean, 1 June 1790.



London Merchant, James Phyn.<sup>156</sup> The manuscript was prefaced by "A proper rout, by land, to Cross the Great Continent of America from Quebec to the Western most extremity by Alexander Henry founded on his observations and experience, during the space of sixteen years Travelling with the Natives, in least known, and before Unknown parts of that Extensive Country."<sup>157</sup>

Virtues in commercial capital were imagined in the promise of exploration, extending geographic knowledge with the traders' far-flung wanderings. Alexander Mackenzie had taken Pond's activities to their conclusion in what Gough has termed as a feat of modern business "research and development" when he finally reached the Pacific.<sup>158</sup> His own publishing coup, *Voyages from Montreal*,<sup>159</sup> soon reprinted and plagiarized, provides evidence of a gaining literary trope in which the author highlighted the "commercial landscapes" inland.<sup>160</sup> Possibly more important in the present inquiry is the ways that *Voyages* identifies the virtues in the *type* of commerce long applied in the fur trade, now triumphant in this exploration to the Pacific. This defense of commercial credit in the fur trade can be best discerned in the lengthy preface of the work, recounting the history of the fur trade. The history explicitly identifies the virtues apparent in commercial capital, and suggests a progress in the fur trade discernible in steps taken (akin to the four-stage theory of societal development) from barbarism, to competition, to amalgamation of concerns, and finally, to the "commercial establishment" in the far reaches of the Northwest, "on a more solid basis than hitherto known in the country." (xx) The apex of this development, the NWC, was, as the writer stated, "supported entirely upon credit." (p. xx) Thus, the French era was instructive in showing what occurs when trade is left in the hands of disreputable *coureur-de-bois*, where the man without property becomes indifferent to amassing it in his trade with Indians, resulting in the degeneration from civil to savage man. The author then shows the ways in which the French remedied this situation, when men of property rehabilitated the trade, (p. iii) and won the friendship of Indians (p. iv.) In the post-Conquest period, when "animated competition" set in

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<sup>156</sup>See Letter, to Joseph Banks, Oct 18, 1781, file 2. National Archives, MG 19 A4.

<sup>157</sup>File 1.

<sup>158</sup>Barry Gough, *First Across the Continent: Sir Alexander Mackenzie* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1995).

<sup>159</sup>Alexander, Mackenzie, *Voyages from Montreal on the River St. Laurence through the Continent of North America to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans in the Years 1789 and 1793* (1801) Edmonton: M.G. Hurtig.

<sup>160</sup>I.S. MacLaren, "Alexander Mackenzie and the Landscapes of Commerce," *Studies in Canadian Literature*, 7, 1982, pp. 141-50.

among British traders, and, in the opinion of the author, ruined it, the trade was carried to distant regions, where competitors exhausted their property and ruined their credit with Indians. In this pre-amalgamation period, traders lost commercial benefits for those involved in the adventure, and reduced the Indian's opinion of Europeans. Benjamin Frobisher then appeared, reforming the trade (p.xi), and ever since, the trade had been conducted on a "regular system," where, among the hundreds of individuals employed in its activity, "a degree of subordination can only be maintained by the good opinion these men entertain of their employers, which has been uniformly the case."<sup>161</sup>

The immediate purpose for the promotional aspect of the preface -- whoever wrote it<sup>162</sup> -- is likely to be found in Mackenzie's own disastrous finances and his debts to London merchant houses, many outstanding by 1801. He had carried many a trunk of blue and patterned strouds either for his own trade or for others (like the one he carried which included fabrics, "a good deep blue... the red as near as scarlet as possible").<sup>163</sup> Credited merchants had taken Montreal's first goods inland, as suggested in the licenses issued to English traders who carried powder, shot, fusels and "porcelain jewelry, and silver ornaments for the savages."<sup>164</sup> To over-extended traders, and the NWC itself, the distances achieved inland were consistently depicted as a triumph of British capital, a success of credit; the HBC, then, was criticized for neglecting to create markets among Indians. Its traders had not having excited industry inland by taking goods to individuals whose "natural indolence" precluded them from visiting the Bayside traders; as we have seen, Robert Rogers, the Montreal traders and representatives of their NWC all boasted the merits of such expansionism, and the common good to be derived by the trade's freedom inland that brought geographic knowledge and political power for the British empire. Such was well communicated in the excerpts of *Voyages* appearing in the *Monthly Review*, where the piece's political interests were highlighted for readers. Mackenzie told readers that "by its very nature" the Indian trade to such parts could only be carried on with "very large capital, or credit, or indeed both... consequently an association of men of wealth to direct, with men of enterprise to be in one common interest... Such was the equitable and successful means adopted by the merchants from

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<sup>161</sup>Mackenzie, p. xlvi.

<sup>162</sup>Roderick McKenzie is often cited as the author. See below.

<sup>163</sup>HBC. John Gregory to Simon McTavish, 24 October 1791, NWC Correspondence, F.3/1.

<sup>164</sup>NAC. See trade license, name illegible, for year 1769, RG 4 B28 Vol. 110.

Canada..."<sup>165</sup> The *Review* also reprinted Mackenzie's advice that such a commercial association should be struck with the HBC.

The Northwesters certainly promoted the virtues of commercial credit. The recommended tombstone for Benjamin Frobisher, running in the *Montreal Gazette*, eulogized his "merchant trade, of fairest dealing ... who serv'd his country free; and gratis...."<sup>166</sup> William McGillivray's 1809 report, "Some Account of the Trade Carried on by the Northwest Company," called the Indian trade "the most important branch of commerce carried on between British America and the Mother Country," citing an integral "political consequence" in its undertaking

since it links to the British empire a race of men (the Savage nations) whom no system of Government could preserve either subordinate or faithful; and whose fidelity and attachment are essential.... The influence of traders over those who depend on them for all the conveniences, which are the result of improvement and civilization; which impart to the Savages a facility of obtaining food and clothing in greater abundance than formerly; *must be great in proportion to the change which they find in their condition arising from the intercourse.*<sup>167</sup>

McGillivray's efforts to rehabilitate the reputation of this branch of commerce is discernible in his own history of the trade. He cited the French trade before the Conquest to prove the power of commerce, the long-standing connections established between the French traders and the Indians ("so obstinate was the attachment of the Indians to their former government that it was a late as the year 1771 before the British traders could safely traffic as far as the Shascatchiwan river, the most remote of the French posts.")<sup>168</sup> In other hands, the French era revealed the potential for Britain's more assiduous involvement. The 1788 Montreal pamphlet has been already noted, which contrasted the way the French and the British had operated the fur trade from Montreal. The pamphlet stated that it was "*left to the commercial spirit and enterprise of Britons, to find out and open these resources....*" and that nothing was "so desirable, so politic and so

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<sup>165</sup> *Monthly Review*, August, 1802, p.346; the entire review runs from the July issue, Vol. 37, pp. 225-237; 337-247.

<sup>166</sup> "An Epitaph, recommended for the Tome Stone of the late Benjamin Frobisher," *Montreal Gazette*, 26 April 1787.

<sup>167</sup> "Some Account of the Trade Carried on by the Northwest Company," *Report of the Public Archives, for the year 1928* (Ottawa: F. A. Acland, 1929), p.58.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

virtuous ... so well adapted as the promotion of public credit by the medium of free and public commerce...."<sup>169</sup>

But many of the virtues identified in commercial credit, particularly a free Indian trade, had less authority in the early nineteenth century, especially when they pursued, as Rich stated, "the flamboyant extravagance" so often associated with the North-Westerns.<sup>170</sup> To the Earl of Selkirk, the virtues of commercial credit cited by Montreal's merchants -- exploration, the opening of markets, etc. -- merely constituted self-serving propaganda. The Northwesters, he said, had long argued that they were the only ones capable of carrying on the trade, "that they have been the means of conferring essential benefits upon the native Indians; and that their efforts have materially contributed to promote the commercial prosperity of Great Britain."<sup>171</sup> Selkirk, who himself drew on the later eighteenth century school of political economy, saw problems in the fur trade as conducted by the Northwesters. He believed that the Indian Country demanded certain regulatory, particularly legislative measures. The free trading Northwester did not provide such regulation *because* of his self-interest. Rather than seeing virtues in trade in such wild regions of America, he pointed to the rise of the North West Company as a moment of "despotism" that naturally grew out of the degraded principles of commerce. He, too, turned to the French regime to strengthen his argument. The better run French trade was cited not because it suggested the potential for British commercial application, but rather because it showed the virtues of exclusive trade privileges overseen by disinterested individuals, who, "generally men of liberal education," promoted the interests of government among the Indians who traded in their designated regions; this, he said, was a "system" that "appears to have been wisely adopted to increase the comforts, and improve the character, of the natives."<sup>172</sup>

According to Selkirk, the Conquest brought in train a pernicious system of trade freedom that resulted in rampant competition that did not bring down prices of goods, but rather increased the use of liquor which ruined the trading Indians; the North West Company grew from these disreputable beginnings to protect the interests of merchants, not the state, who brought together stock of competing companies into one concern, eradicated competition, and placed incentives within the trade among the

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<sup>169</sup>Emphasis added, "A Review of the Government and Grievances of the Province of Quebec" (London: 1788) pp. 7-8; 14-15.

<sup>170</sup>E.E. Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870* Vol. I, p. 59.

<sup>171</sup>Lord Selkirk, *Sketch of the British Fur Trade*, p. 20.

<sup>172</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 3.

wintering bourgeois inland to work diligently in the hopes of becoming partners. Even this business direction, however, only protected the interests of the Montreal merchants and "this community of interest among all the partners"; it engendered an *esprit de corps* among the bourgeois, but the very nature of Indian Country allowed their self interest to run contrary to the good of the state:

In the common intercourse of civilized society the necessity of maintaining a fair character in the estimation of the public forms a continued check to that inordinate stimulus of self-interest which too often causes individuals to deviate from the principles of honour and honesty. But a wintering partners of the North-West Company is secluded from all society, except that of persons who have the same interest with himself...<sup>173</sup>

The result was flagrant abuse of weak persons, whether European competitors or Indians. Meanwhile, Selkirk drew attention to the problem of the company from its inception, drawing out of context from Mackenzie's narrative, that the first Montreal traders encroached upon HBC trading hinterlands, and interfered with Indians who were to bring their winter hunt to pay for HBC debts, "stimulating the natives to an act of fraud. Their reluctance to trade with Mr. Frobisher is to be ascribed to the scruple which they felt to break their engagement -- a feeling which does honour to their character before they had been corrupted."<sup>174</sup> Moving towards his specific grievances against the NWC, and the hopes he placed in his agricultural colonization plan, Selkirk expanded upon the principles that such lessons afforded, not only in the Montreal hinterlands, but the Athabasca and regions of Upper and Lower Canada, "The evils which now press so severely on the miserable natives .... are radically owing to the premature attempt to establish a system of free trade."<sup>175</sup>

Selkirk's pamphlet was situated in the context of enclosure and new principles of modern land improvement. Selkirk himself followed the enclosure movement with avid interest, and chronicled in his own locale the decline of outmoded Highlander traditions in the face of agricultural efficiency. His history of the fur trade was republished in excerpts in the thirty-first issue of *Quarterly Review*. Their appearance in turn prompted Edward Ellice and Simon McGillivray under the pseudonym of Samuel Hull Wilcocke, to publish in London and Montreal *A Narrative of Occurrences in the*

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<sup>173</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>174</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>175</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 126.

*Indian Countries of North America*.<sup>176</sup> The piece contributed little to what was amounting to a critical debate on the fur trade. It revived discussions of the merit of the original charter of Rupert's Land to the HBC, and established a prior French presence (and by implication a Montreal trading privilege) to regions now claimed by the HBC.<sup>177</sup> Casting Selkirk's colonization scheme at Red River in the same light as American-style, "land-jobbing speculators,"<sup>178</sup> the pamphleteer struck at straw-men and assassinated character, that the Red River colony was itself a trading venture, and Selkirk himself was merely a trader trying to monopolize the Montreal routes inland.

By the writing of the Wilcocke pamphlet, the tempo of the fur trade was changing perceptibly and possibly the "British-Quebec merchant ideology" identified by Milobar, was in ruins. Merchants on Britain's colonial periphery having adopted the "political vocabulary" of civic republicanism, defended their freedoms by contending with what they saw as rising power of the King in parliament in colonial affairs. These merchants who asserted the place of constitutional freedoms and checks and balances to the King's authority, often cited "free trade within the empire" as a right conferred to them in the British constitution, and the regulations, and sometimes prohibitions of aspects of their trade, were seen as the rise of tyranny.<sup>179</sup> Free trade within the Empire, was "part of the constitutional/economic framework that underpinned British strength and reflected the civil liberty enjoyed by all His Majesty's subjects."<sup>180</sup>

By the turn of the century, however, the capital investment in the Montreal routes inland had been stretched and competition between companies revealed the vices, not the virtues of commercial freedoms and particularly credit. Mackenzie's own XY Company, breaking with the North-westers, added another competitive force in the trade, and the increasingly daunting supply routes and finally the distances to the sub-arctic placed competitors in dire financial straits. Moreover, the very goods carried by traders inland showed fewer returns, when companies began pitting themselves against each other along the major canoe routes.

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<sup>176</sup>Samuel Hull Wilcoke, *A Narrative of Occurrences in the Indian Countries of North America, since the connection of the Right Hon. the Earl of Selkirk with the Hudson's Bay Company, and His Attempt to Establish a colony on the Red River* (Montreal: Nahum Mower, 1818).

<sup>177</sup>*Ibid.*, See footnote, p. 12.

<sup>178</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>179</sup>See David Milobar, "The Origins of British-Quebec Merchant Ideology: New France, the British Atlantic and the Constitutional Periphery, 1720-70," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 24 (3), September 1996, pp. 364-390.

<sup>180</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 375.

Montrealers who either represented the North West Company, or merely carried their goods and sold them independently, all cherished the independence implicit in commercial arrangements of the eighteenth century. But there were enough negative possibilities in their operation which disturbed observers. Sir Alexander Mackenzie and many of the bourgeois inland cultivated respect through liberality but also demagogy. The Northwester Wentzel could termed Alexander Mackenzie, the "Grand Cu," and the "Great Bonapart," a particularly negative comparison given the European circumstances of 1803.<sup>181</sup> HBC men, with little discretionary power over the goods they handled, but forced to extend credit to match Montreal practices, voiced the growing unacceptability of commercial arrangements inland. William Tomison chose his words carefully in 1779 when he told a competitor that "he must be a man of grater property and better principles before he can talk in that daring insulting manner against the Hudson's Bay Company's servants."<sup>182</sup> Robert Longmoore, at Hudson House, used the very system of the consignment fur trade to criticize his rivals inland in 1778 when he described Frenchmen armed and threatening (and thus imposing upon) Indians. The French traders had ten gallons of rum which they intended "to give away to the Indians." They were liberal (and thus irresponsible) in the presents they made, and after extending such lavish credit, they used force to take Indian's furs. Longmoore was using the very ethics of commercial capital against the traders, whom he believed were stealing HBC property when they traded furs from these Indians who owed his own traders.<sup>183</sup> William Tomison described the Canadians around Cumberland House similarly irresponsible when he spoke of the traders "striving against each other and a pity that such a body of natives should be destroyed by a parcel of wild fellows such as MacCormick going about Sword in hand, threatening the Natives to make them trade with him...."<sup>184</sup> HBC men looked with dismay at the "black custom" the Indians had learned from Canadians, to send to their posts representatives to get presents before the trading party visited.<sup>185</sup>

The huge advance of credit into the western forests during the height of competition had left most surviving concerns in Montreal and the London houses

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<sup>181</sup>NAC. Entries for 2 and 9 September 1804, W. Ferdinand Wentzel Journal at Grand River, 1804-1805, Masson Collection, MG 19 C1 Vol. 8.

<sup>182</sup>HBC Letter from Tomison in 26 November 1779 entry, Hudson House Journals 1779-1780 B.87/a/2.

<sup>183</sup>HBC Robert Longmoore entry 18 December 1778, Hudson House Journals 1778-1779 B.87/a/1.

<sup>184</sup>*Ibid.*, Letter, William Tomison to Robert Longmoore, 15 March 1779.

<sup>185</sup>*Ibid.*, Tomison entry 26 November 1779.

connected with them teetering near bankruptcy.<sup>186</sup> As he put it, Sir Alexander Mackenzie, "in consequence of losses sustained during the opposition in the North West," had been dogged by debts by 1808 when he began corresponding with Lord Selkirk about reorganizing the trade. Buying up HBC stock and taking part in a movement towards economizing the badly damaged London company and welcoming, as he liked to think of himself, "more active and intelligent members to come amongst them," Mackenzie would be only part of a larger group of fur traders actively intent upon establishing a "new system."<sup>187</sup> The more careful accounting practices emerged in such a context. Although early proposals to economize the trade through Hudson Bay were suggested along lines "without making any violent or dangerous innovation in the established plan of conducting the business," the same proposals were often rejected for adopting the Northwesters' model of independent profit-sharing, which HBC officials were afraid would either have a "pernicious competition" set in among their own employees, or untie the long-existing strong control metropolitan overseers exercised over their factors.<sup>188</sup>

By 1811, especially with war-time prices rising on manufactured goods, "retrenchment" was the order of the day in the fur trade. The ethic was shared not only among HBC directors, but also within the disparate concerns based in Montreal, who, in fact, first sought an amalgamation with the HBC. It is easy to dismiss the calls to factors of both London and Montreal firms to "alter the rate of barter with the Indians" as merely a strategy to meet rising inflation and flagging profits. But the fur trade itself was being fundamentally revisited in new models of economy. For the Montrealers, probably the most important change was the dismantling of the independent bourgeois system, where the metropolis extended goods and responsibilities to individuals who were left to their own devices to ensure profits for both supplier and seller, a technique long adopted by hawkers and petty chapmen, who bought on credit and sold on credit.<sup>189</sup> The same tradition held that an individual had a claim to credit based upon his own character and his ability to work hard and make independent decisions.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>186</sup>On this, see J.M. Bumsted, *Fur Trade Wars: The Founding of Western Canada* (Winnipeg: Great Plains Publications, 1999), pp. 15-30.

<sup>187</sup>NAC. Vol. I, Selkirk Papers, Microfilm Copy C-1.

<sup>188</sup>*Ibid.*, See Mr. Wollaston's "New System," proposed, ff. 12-15; and Response, pp. 16-28.

<sup>189</sup>Margaret Spufford, *The Great Reclothing of Rural England: Petty Chapmen and their Wares in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Hambledon Press, 1984), pp. 37; 50-51.

<sup>190</sup>An excellent overview of ethics of commercial capitalism is offered by David Burley, "'Good for all he would ask': Credit and Debt in the Transition to Industrial Capitalism - the Case of Mid-Nineteenth Century Brantford, Ontario," *Histoire sociale/ Social History* XX (39), May 1987, pp. 79-99.



The rejection of such an approach is manifest in the letters of Simon McGillivray, crediting agent of the NWC to one of the movers of union at the Hudson's Bay Company, Edward Ellice. Struggling to have their trade economized through a union of principal concerns, Montreal agents and London creditors grew increasingly alarmed that the very independence given bourgeois traders and factory traders inland threatened their personal fortunes. McGillivray stressed to the HBC man that "you have some of the idea of *partnerships* but not of the same nature to which *we* have been subjected - our name in the power of men in whom we had lost all confidence - whose extravagance had been indulged so far as to render it pretty certain be the result of the contest with other persons *they* at least had nothing to lose and who being thus desperate, might if treated according to their just merits have to a certain extent destroyed our credit and pulled us down with themselves."<sup>191</sup>

McGillivray was speaking after the union of 1821, a measure barely winning the endorsement of a majority of wintering partners inland.<sup>192</sup> McGillivray still lamented the fact that "since 1821, the habit of giving away money has not been cured" among the traders inland. Indeed, it is telling that it was the very independence once valued in the fur trade was now castigated as nearly ruining the fur trade. McGillivray himself had been given the job to sell the union proposal with the bourgeois at the Grand Portage at Fort William, where he lamented the "vaunted influence of these fellows," who arrived and sunk into disagreement at the annual meeting, "while any attention shown to one would wound the feelings and possibly lose the support of better men."<sup>193</sup>

Some understanding of the nature of the older bourgeois system can be discerned within the Ellice papers. Influential in driving the amalgamation of Northwest Company with Hudson's Bay Company by 1821, Ellice and the Montreal company of John Richardson (of Forsyth Richardson and Co.) had taken the steps towards union to save both their own fortunes and clamp down on traditions of the fur trade in which credit had become a dangerous policy to compete with other companies. It was only after the amalgamation and upon examining the books of concerns of the former companies when Ellice was aware of the staggering amounts of debt inland. He wrote to Richardson by 1825: "look at the precipice on which we stood and let us rather congratulate one another upon an escape.. You were *out of the scrape*, beyond the sacrifice of your interest in Sir

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<sup>191</sup>NAC, Simon McGillivray to Edward Ellice, 4 August 1821. Ellice Papers, Microfilm A-3.

<sup>192</sup>On his activities in settling the affairs of the wintering partners, see Rich, *History of the Hudson's Bay Company*, Vol. II, p. 409.

<sup>193</sup>NAC, Simon McGillivray to Edward Ellice, 21 July 1821. Ellice Papers, Microfilm A-3.

A. M[a]c[kenzie] and Co. I was *exposed to the hottest fire*, and that it has not carried me to the Gazette instead of the situation I now hold is owing (beyond the goodness of Providence) to my own nerves and management."<sup>194</sup> Having advanced some £ 30000 into HBC stock and about to "embark in the *same vessell with them if the result of our negotiation* had been different. Neither my means or those of my friends: *it now appears* could have saved all parties from ruin, if the contest had been continued for one 12 month longer."

In this case, Ellice was writing Richardson about an incident he learned of in 1825, after a visit in London by one of the previous partners of Mackenzie's XY Company, a Mr. Thain. The former bourgeois trader arrived nervous and inconsolable about business problems. At last taking a delirious fit, Thain was bedridden and pronounced close to insane by an attending physician. Upon investigating Thain's rantings, Ellice learned that the former partner had, in his capacity of maintaining the accounts in Montreal, advanced his company's goods to buy up land and maintain the competition in the Northwest and now, with amalgamations occurring and books being opened, was driven mad by his financial responsibilities. Each partner given freedom to draw "a certain allowance for his expenses," had drawn on Thain's "boundless liberality." Ellice, who now saw the possible ramifications of the XY joining with the united concerns of 1821 was horrified: "my hair stands on end while I write this and look back at the precipice from which we have been saved."<sup>195</sup>

But Ellice's letter also captured the essence of commercial capitalism in the fur trade. He believed that some reasonable outcome could be advanced for Thain, considering "all his toil and labour." He pledged his willingness to sell Thain's shares in the new HBC to offset the losses, while Ellice himself would waive interest; he asked Richardson to write Thain in such a manner "as to soothe his mind under the feelings of wretchedness and despair which have nearly overset it. When he is in a fit state of mind calmly and coolly to look at his whole situation and to hear the truth... I know it will annoy him exceedingly," but comparing himself to "an experienced physician in such matters," Ellice believed that Thain would first have to make "a candid statement and explanation of the extent of them to those whose friendship he must often rely for consideration and assistance." As for the outstanding accounts in Mackenzie's XY Company, Ellice said that they can settle the books quietly:

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<sup>194</sup>NAC, Ellice to Richardson, 20 September 1825, Ellice Papers, Microfilm A-5.

<sup>195</sup>See Simon McGillivray to E. Ellice, 4 August 1825, A-3.

There are a certain number of partners who have money, others are unable to pay their debts - but no person can have profit at their credit" in a bankrupt concern. As for the outstanding debt, "close the book -- no wintering partner will pay you a farthing of debt he is never inclined that way and as a partner he can give you amusement in Chancery here (where his means are now) for the lives of the longest livers of us, without there being much hope of any better result.

Ellice's final comment well summarized the way that freedom and dependency, extensive credit relations and paternalism came together in the older fur trade, and its tarnished reputation now in the nineteenth century. There is some significance that such a site of irresponsibility, this region where credit extended too far, was, in fact, Indian Country -- the British American northwest. Thain, Ellice said, would be thankful that Ellice and Richardson had removed "some of the films from his eyes which the old N [orth] W[est] Consequence and Vanity so completely bound those of all parties connected with it...."<sup>196</sup>

Despite the virtues of the older system, it was Ellice who looked forward to increased returns and greater efficiency in a reformed trade. "we know what a part of the NW trade produced before Lord S[elkirk]'s attack, and if it now falls short of that, when the relative differences of expense for transport [via Hudson Bay rather than Montreal] is so great it can only arise from gross mismanagement. There must be a head in the interior to direct, who has local experience and capable of judging if the practical capacities and characters of factors and traders or all will go wrong." In this respect he mentioned the possible candidacy of a young George Simpson, who "has acquired a good deal of information in so short a standing but a man cannot become an Indian trader by intuition -- he is well spoken of...."<sup>197</sup>

#### IV.

If the virtues of the commercial credit once supporting the fur trade's original expansion were being overturned among agents and creditors, a significant revisionism occurs in fur trade histories being written in the early nineteenth century. Similar to the ways that expansionists used the fur trade for certain political purposes, the first fur trade histories were similarly didactic in casting criticism upon the older, commercial irresponsibility of

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<sup>196</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>197</sup>NAC, John Richardson to Edward Ellice, 25 October 1821, A5 Bundle 7, Ellice Papers, Microfilm A-5.

fur traders.<sup>198</sup> Washington Irving's *Astoria* (1836) became arguably the most important literary vehicle for this message, and his fur trade history became a model for many others written in the century. Irving wrote the history of John Jacob Astor's company and his efforts to divert the wealth of the fur trade to New York. In its telling, the history became a romantic homage to what was already considered a lost way of life. The piece attempted to capture on paper the relics fast disappearing in an age of "mechanical invention," whether the Canadian voyageur (now becoming "a forgotten race") the Indian, the now defunct meeting place at Michilimackinac, or the soon disappearing Mississippi boatsmen in the age of steam.<sup>199</sup> Its romanticism also prompted the author of *Astoria* to imagine a "master spirit" guiding the story of the North American fur trade, despite the "rambling and somewhat disjointed nature" of this commercial pursuit.

At the time, the narrative was caught up with the dual purpose of celebrating John Jacob Astor's efforts to supersede British commerce, whether the monopolized concerns of the Hudson's Bay Company or the traders of the NWC, and of identifying at the time of its writing the passing of American nature. In doing so, Irving innovated by juxtaposing the passing of nature with the passage of older commercial arrangements. His narrative provides an ongoing contrast between the older ways of the Montreal traders, with their associations with irresponsible commercial credit, and the new ways of efficiency and pragmatic planning associated with Astor, a symbol of nineteenth century business. Thus, Irving's historic relics, the romanticized "Sinbads of the Wilderness"<sup>200</sup> from Montreal, carried the bravado, impetuosity and irresponsibility of the the North-Westerns, who were now more efficiently employed in the management of the prudent Astor.<sup>201</sup>

The ways that Irving most effectively communicated outmoded commercial capital in the fur trade was his identification of feudalism, particularly the Scottish clan system, in such arrangements. The feudal comparison proved to be immensely popular among Irving's contemporaries who saw in its romantic passage some proof of progress, and as Irving had said of Michilimackinac, the traders, trappers and Indian "dandies" "have vapoured out their brief hour and disappeared – such changes

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<sup>198</sup>See Owsam, particularly Chapter 9: the West as History, particularly pp. 193; and 55.

<sup>199</sup> pp. 30; 88; 92. On the romantic movement's portrayal of the fur trader see ... Tourism in Ontario

<sup>200</sup> Prefacing comments in *Astoria*, p. XV.

<sup>201</sup> pp. 30; 309; see, particularly, his summary of the older practices of the North-West Company pp. 9-11 and the foresight and planning of Astor in the chartering of the American Fur Company and finally the Southwest Company, p. 17.

does the lapse of a handful of years make in this ever changing country."<sup>202</sup> Irving's clan comparison became, in turn, popular in subsequent nineteenth century histories of the fur trade carried in magazines (and, curiously, has continued to be used in modern histories of the North-West Company).<sup>203</sup> *Astoria's* clan comparison was plagiarized by the anonymous writer in *Cornhill Magazine*,<sup>204</sup> or was credited in other narratives that described the annual meeting of Montreal and Wintering bourgeois.<sup>205</sup>

The clan comparison was significantly used by Montreal's Roderick McKenzie, who set about writing his own history of the Montreal trade in the unpublished "Some Account of the North West Company containing analogy of nations ancient and modern," (c.a. 1840). Having canvassed numerous former traders and bourgeois with letters and received their own recollections of the trade, McKenzie nevertheless used Irving's clan comparison to celebrate the now ended commercial relations of the eighteenth century: the independence the trade had fostered, and dependency (in his rendering, fealty) established between creditors and debtors. McKenzie, then, wrote his largely reminiscent account upon Irving's model. He used the outrageous comparison of the NWC with the East Indian Company: its "lordly sway" over the northern lakes and forests of Canada being "almost equal to that of the East Indian Company over the voluptuous climes and magnificent realms of the Orient."<sup>206</sup> The Montreal merchants and leading partners of the NWC, then, led opulent lives, enjoyed wealth as "hyperborean nabobs,"<sup>207</sup> while bourgeois, wintering partners, lived accordingly. On furlough, they ventured to New York: "On these occasions there was always a degree of magnificence of the purse about them, and a peculiar propensity to expenditure at the goldsmiths and jewellers for rings, chains, broches, necklaces, jewelled watches and other rich trinkets partly for their own wear partly for presents to their female acquaintances, a gorgeous prodigality."<sup>208</sup> His use of terms is quite important: the

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<sup>202</sup> p. 88.

<sup>203</sup>Hence, it frames Bumstead's descriptions of the NWC, in *Fur Trade Wars*.

<sup>204</sup>"The Story of a Dead Monopoly," *Cornhill Magazine*, Vol. 22 July to December 1870, pp. 166-167.

<sup>205</sup>See the lengthy excerpt from *Astoria*, the description of Fort William, in Graeme Mercer Adam, *From Savagery to Civilization: The Canadian North-West and its History and Its Troubles, From the Early Days of the Fur-Trade to the era of the Railway and the Settler* (Toronto: Rose Publishing, 1885), pp. 36-37.

<sup>206</sup>Roderick Mackenzie "Some Account of the North West Company Containing Analogy of Nations Ancient and Modern," Masson Collection, Miscellaneous Papers, MG 19, C1 vol. 44, p. 3.

<sup>207</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>208</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 11.

bourgeois' liberality purchased gifts to be given to his "female acquaintances," and hence, to effect the personal relations commercial credit had once fostered.

In order to witness the NWC, he went on to write, "in all its state and grandeur," one had to view the annual meetings of wintering and Montreal partners at Grand Portage, where once the "unceremonious times of the old French traders" was replaced when "the aristocratical character of the Briton shone forth magnificently, or rather the feudal spires of the highlander. Every articular who had charge of an interior post, and a score of retainers at his command, felt like the chiefton of a highland clan, and was almost as important in the eyes of his dependents as of himself..." (p. 13); The Montreal partners most rich of all, arrived as royalty to their forest meeting place, "wrapped in rich furs, their huge canoes freighted with every convenience and luxury, and manned by Canadian voyageurs, as obedient as highland clansmen. When there, they dined luxuriously, while outside, "voyageurs, halfbreeds, Indian hunters and vagabond hangers-on, who feasted sumptuously without on the crumbs that fell from their table."<sup>209</sup> McKenzie drew on *Astoria* to summarize: "Such was the North-West Company in its powerful and prosperous days, when it held a kind of feudal sway over a vast domain of lake and forest."<sup>210</sup>

There were elements of the fur trade that lent themselves to feudal comparisons. However, the point to be made here is that in the early nineteenth century, any allusion to the Scottish clansman was a blatant reference to a passing way of life, and therefore spoke of an outmoded way that wealth was accrued among shareholders, independence cultivated among bourgeois, and dependency engendered between Montreal crediting houses to those inland, including the Indian.<sup>211</sup> The passing of traditional commercial arrangements was likely perceptible to contemporaries. By 1811, Alexander Henry was feeling like an ancient man in Montreal, when he wrote John Askin at Michilimackinac and stated that "I find myself in a strange country, hundreds who I do not know or ever heard of, I meet in church and other places, both male and female. On inquiry they are all merchants settled here, who keep large stores, mostly Americans... there is but little French spoke here at present." By 1815, he saw the NWC as a passing entity, where "All the new Northwesters are a parcel of Boys and upstarts, who were not

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<sup>209</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>210</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>211</sup> See, for instance, *Astoria*, where Irving describes traders "in those primitive days of Canada, was a kind of commercial patriarch... He had a little world of self-indulgence and misrule around him ... clerks, canoemen and retainers of all kinds," p. 8.

born in our time, and supposes they know much more of the Indian trade than any before them ... Montreal is much changed...."<sup>212</sup>

## V.

It has been shown that in the early nineteenth century, the commercial relations of the fur trade were being changed. With less confidence between creditor and debtor, and accounting reforms changing the ways that trade was reported, Indians appeared in a significantly different light in trading narratives. Advances to Indians seemed to be made without return, and, true to Malthusian dicta, fostered Indian indolence and sloth. In the early nineteenth century, a shadow fell over the fur trade and the Indian who participated in it. Regions appeared scarce in food, expensive to provision, and credit, once extended in trust to Indians in trade, appeared as onerous and unredeemable debt. Thus, a subarctic trader could characterize Indians arriving to his post as "a motley crew they are and overstocked with families and vermin, they are incessantly begging for the few fishes we take."<sup>213</sup> A northwester like John Peter Pruden, in the Carleton district in 1815, could remark to a fellow trader that there were a "good many Indians since you was here but are very little the richer for them."<sup>214</sup>

The widespread feature of nineteenth century text shows Indians not as credited individuals, but as wards of Europeans. Goods which Indians had grown dependent upon were now advanced by the European trader in fits of humanitarian concern. Credit enslaved as much as excited Indian labour. H.M. Robertson devoted considerable attention to Indians debts in the *Great Fur Land* (1879). Like "the Mexican or Brazilian peon, the Indian trapper is so constantly, and for him, largely in debt to the fur-trade, as to be practically its servant. Twice during the year, perhaps, he is free from debt and his own master; but such freedom is only of momentary duration, continuing but for such time as he can get into debt again."<sup>215</sup> Reports of the government-funded trade factories to the south suggested a new wardship of Indians. Originally created by George

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<sup>212</sup>Quotations provided in L.G. Thomas' introduction to Alexander Henry, *Travels and Adventures in Canada and the Indian Territories between the Years 1760-1776* (Edmonton: M.G. Hurtig, 1969), pp. x-xi; xii.

<sup>213</sup>McCord. W. Dease, at Great Bear Lake, letter to McVicar, 19 July 1825, M2761.

<sup>214</sup>McCord. John Peter Purdin letter, 21 May 1815, M2792.

<sup>215</sup>H.M. Robertson, *The Great Fur Land: Or Sketches of Life in Hudson's Bay Territory* (1879 ed. Republished, Toronto: Coles Publishing Company, 1972), pp. 335.

Washington, such factories were established on the premise that low-priced wares and equitable trade relations would keep Indians in the American interest.<sup>216</sup> Goods to factories which proliferated in the Iowa and Missouri territories, were shipped at first cost, the government paying transportation fees and paying factors wages. By 1822, the Rev. Jedediah Morse was commissioned to review the Indian trade and report to the U.S. secretary of war. The Morse Report would be influential in the government decision to close factories for economizing purposes in 1823. Morse identified numerous problems with the factory trade, notably the incursions of British traders on American soil and their success in engrossing the Indian trade. These competitors, the report read, offered whiskey, but, more consequential in Morse's mind was the "custom, universal among the Traders, of giving a credit to the Indians [which] in its operation, is injurious both to their interests and morals."

Morse went on to say that

A considerable number of those who are credited never pay. This loss, the Traders take care of to make up, by an increased charge on the goods sold to those who do pay. The consequence is, injustice to the honest Indian, and temptation to him to become dishonest in return. Finding that his neighbor is benefitted by not paying his debts, he refuses to pay. The evil proceeds farther. One trader, who knows that an Indian has already obtained credit to the full amount of his means of paying, will yet trust him still farther, on his promising, that he will *not pay his* first creditor but *will pay him*. When this debtor, the next season comes to pay his debts, his *second* creditor invites him to his house, makes him drunk, and takes possession of his furs, in payment of his debt. The first creditor, in such a case, has no remedy.<sup>217</sup>

The Morse report was significant in many respects, for it sought in its conclusions to abolish "the system of credit, so pernicious to the Indians"<sup>218</sup> It also addressed a key dilemma for government planners. With trade abuses occurring, and the factory system failing, some remedy was in order. The government could take one of two steps: remove itself from the factory system altogether and its attendant expenses, license

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<sup>216</sup>George F. Robeson, "Fur Trade in Early Iowa," *The Palimpsest*, Vol. 6, 1925, pp. 20-25. For an overview of the factory system, see Jacob Van der Zee, "The Fur Trade in the Early Development of the Northwest," *Iowa Journal of History and Politics* Vol. 12, 1914 (479-567), pp. 489-502.

<sup>217</sup> Jedediah Morse, *A Report to the Secretary of War of the United States on Indian Affairs* (1822, reprinted New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1970), p. 41.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.



traders and allow them to regulate their own behavior (which Morse approved), or increase its capital investment, increase the numbers of government paid factors and place them at “stations” among Indian nations. This course of action would squeeze out the British competition altogether. Morse quoted from proponents of this approach who believed that by removing costs of transportation and paying factors, Indians could receive goods at 200 per cent cheaper rates than they did from the British traders. Also, with prices fixed at such “stations” Indians would be attracted there, and “these stations would be adapted to the establishment of schools for the instruction of the Indian youth. Some of these situations might be centres, around which the Indians might be induced to settle, and cultivate the earth...”<sup>219</sup>

This latter option constituted a significantly different approach, showing, in fact, the origins of the nineteenth century Indian agency,<sup>220</sup> one that effectively removed the Indian from the free market in trade, subsidized prices on goods, and changed the Indian from being a commercial negotiator, to being a ward. Elsewhere in the report, Morse pointed to the contempt that Indians brought to the notion that the American president, their “Great Father,” should be a trader, when he was sending goods to be given as presents while his agents “endeavor to cheat us, by selling them for our peltries.”<sup>221</sup> Morse, indeed, went on to recommend that instead of the government factory, that an “agent of each nation to reside at, or near, one of their principal villages, there to have a comfortable habitation... to employ a blacksmith and a carpenter, and of course, have shops and suitable tools for them.” This was the Indian agency and model farm, where the instructor cultivated the earth and the Indians would have the advantage of learning by example, “and thus get on the road which leads to civilization, before they are aware of it.”<sup>222</sup>

It was not a coincidence that the Morse Report diverted a great deal of attention to the case of Drummond’s Island in present-day Ontario, where the British Indian agency was developing as a clear alternative to the trading post. George Simpson himself in 1828 had envisioned placing trading Indians in specific areas, to reduce their mobility, “an ultimate benefit thereof to themselves and families.”<sup>223</sup> At new Indian

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<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>220</sup> See Laurence F. Schmeckebier, *The Office of Indian Affairs: Its History, Activities and Organization* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1927), pp. 18-23.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 58-59.

<sup>223</sup> Quoted in Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, p. 203.

agencies, an almost complete replacement of the trader and functions of the trading post was simultaneously undertaken: the fur traders who once exchanged goods now acted as Indian agents, giving goods as presents, and the Indians themselves economically maintained at the least expense to the colony. The fur trader, William McKay, who had entered the NWC service in 1790 and retired from the trade in 1807 was among the many who now found employment in such new agencies. Duncan Cameron, in a similar duty, oversaw accounts that no longer had Indians returning furs, but getting their allotments of "provisions and presents." No longer were the Indians expected to be excited to industry through a trade of goods, then, but discouraged from visiting Canadian depots except at certain dates of the calendar year, and then to receive allotments of food stuffs, "sugar, corn, furs and other things."<sup>224</sup> Here the shift from trade to presents was arranged to stop starvation. The creation of the Indian Department of Upper and Lower Canada is quite impressive in this respect, where former fur traders now were employed in disbursement of presents, not collection of furs, where the Fort George Post, once fur trade depot, now figured as a place where one-sided exchange took place. Now, the same goods were stocked, administered in many cases by the same fur traders -- James Finlay acted as Storekeeper General, Robert Brydie acted as Finlay's clerk, surgeons and missionaries were on hand, and interpreters and smiths continued their jobs -- but a different characterization of relations arose. Trade was now precluded in a general disbursement of goods, a one-sided payment, not an exchange.<sup>225</sup>

So it was that William McKay was to discourage Indians from frequenting the Indian affairs posts and military depots, and to point out to Indians through interpreters that "by fixing the delivery of presents at stated periods, they must see the interest he (His Majesty) takes in their happiness. The constant resort to his Military Posts only destroys them for when they come to these places where there are so many shops that liquor is sold at they receive no benefit from the clothing their father gives them. They are made drunk and all they receive taken from them and they return to their homes worse than when they left them."<sup>226</sup> The former fur trader no longer accounted for the furs he traded, but, as McKay noted in the margins of his own ledgers, the numbers of men,

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<sup>224</sup>McCord. Extract of Instructions for the Government of the Indian Department of Upper Canada," 5 August 1807, William McKay Fonds, M7114. Also, Duncan Cameron, "Instructions to Indian Superintendants, f. 9.

<sup>225</sup>*Ibid.*, f. 14.

<sup>226</sup>W. Claus to Wm. McKay, ff. 15-16.

women and children who had been "clothed."<sup>227</sup> Indeed, the other inversion of former fur trade duties was the way that presents, once hoped to excite Indians to further industry in trapping and therefore possible improvement, were now used to excite Indians to agriculture.<sup>228</sup>

The development of Indian agencies certainly brought a new view of Indians to the fore: no longer viewed as individuals with commercial affinities, they were perceived as an early nineteenth century legal judgment in the United States, as individuals in a "primitive state," and therefore knowing nothing "of a monetary system, or private property" (1823). The government, then, acted on behalf of Indians who "unless protected he is likely to be defrauded by his white neighbor."<sup>229</sup> Certainly this was the view adopted by long-time U.S. Indian agent, Thomas L. McKenney, whose work in Indian administration for the U.S. government between 1816 to 1830, saw the final, declining years of the government factory, and whose eulogy for this establishment was given over to this new view of Indians. McKenney viewed the government factory as a means to introduce civilization, but began with the assumption that Indians could not hold their own in a bargain. He saw two systems competing with the government factory, individual free trade and company trade. The government factory was grounded upon "protection and justice, based upon humanity, where "not a drop of brandy" changed hands, "not a cent of profit was contemplated;" the free and company trader, on the other hand, "operated to place them [the Indians] amidst the unobstructed, full and unmitigated blaze of a consuming avarice!"<sup>230</sup>

In a period when the Indian's commercial affinities were discounted, the fur trade paternalism identified by Ray as long established in the fur trade, can be more narrowly confined to the period after 1821.<sup>231</sup> The more frequent characterization of debt, rather than credit, the assumption that Indians did not have an ability to trade in their own

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<sup>227</sup>"4086 Indians (men) women & chil(dren) have been clothd by (Wm?) (Henry?) at Drummond's Island of which 1291 have been supplied since Colonel McKay arrived..." *Ibid.*

<sup>228</sup>See T. G. Anderson, the post store keeper to Claus, 23 February 1817, recommendations to "materially reduce" the provisions given to Indians. Since Indians were turning a "deaf ear" to suggestions for them to plant on their land near Drummond's Island, and instead "idle their time away in the summer season slothfully in drinking," to instead give presents only to the Indian families whose lands had been placed under cultivation. f. 31.

<sup>229</sup>See Schmeckebier, p. 9.

<sup>230</sup>He said "nothing but gains were contemplated by the trader." Thomas L. McKenney, *Memoirs, Official and Personal*, ed. by Herman J. Viola (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1973), p. 19.

<sup>231</sup>Arthur J. Ray, "Periodic Shortages," 1-19; see, also Arthur J. Ray, "The Decline of Paternalism in the Hudson's Bay Company Fur Trade, 1870-1945," in Rosemary E. Ommer, *Merchant Credit and Labour Strategies in Historical Perspective* (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1990), pp. 188-202.

interest, and traders being seen as playing a role in the very survival of Indians, came together forcibly by the mid- nineteenth century. Roderick MacFarlane, a nineteenth century fur trader who worked at both Forts Edmonton and Chipewyan articulated the paternalism of the nineteenth century, when he claimed to new Canadian government administrators, who did not agree, that 'from time to time' Indians had to be assisted.<sup>232</sup> He said that such had been "the custom in the North West Territories" in the fur trade era.<sup>233</sup> The Canadian government inherited this approach to Indian affairs in both its treaty process and the administration of the Indian Affairs department in the newly created Department of Interior.<sup>234</sup> The HBC, however, continued to have responsibilities to provide credit and "gratuities" to Indians at posts before hunting seasons began, and traders continued to be responsible for carefully scrutinizing the able hunters, the slothful ones, the widows and the "pensioners," in account ledgers.<sup>235</sup>

The Indian appears as a ward in the work of Isaac Cowie, whose HBC service between 1867 and 1874 included a great deal of work in advancing credit. In a section on "Indian Debts," Cowie pointed out the role the trader had to assume in carefully advancing credits at the beginning of an Indian's trapping season. He said that book-keeping was critical at such a time, when an Indian first arrived with a catch of furs: "these were reckoned up and placed to his credit." Credit balances were paid accordingly, first to outstanding debts from the year before. Credit was then extended "in accordance with their needs and abilities." The trader then appraised the Indian's hunting prospects in the area from which he came. He acquired "a sympathetic knowledge of the Indian, his character and capabilities." If he did not, he "was no good as an Indian trader."

The overall passivity of the Indian in this trade was apparent in Cowie's comparison of an Indian to "the field of a farmer." As "a skillful farmer had to cultivate and take the risk of seeding his land in anticipation of remunerative returns, so had a well trained fur trader to cultivate a knowledge of each Indian and take the risk, after duly

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<sup>232</sup>Correspondence between Davis, MacFarlane and Dewdney, RG 10, Vol. 3808, file 53,556. NAC.

<sup>233</sup>*Ibid.*, The letter's reference to the "custom of the North West" has an exclamation mark written in the margin by the reader, with the note: "No such authority is given to the HBC or any other Coy." Moffat to Superintendent, 14 February 1889.

<sup>234</sup>Ray discusses the end of paternalism and the new relationship between Indians and the federal government after the treaty missions. Arthur J. Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age* (University of Toronto Press, 1990), pp. 37-46.

<sup>235</sup>HBC. Visible in account margin which describe Indians who often arrived collectively as 'good hunter,' or 'first rate hunter,' or 'no hunter but good worker.' Receiving as many gratuities were Indians described as 'lazy and useless,' or 'miserable hunter;' also receiving were 'men of consequence,' and, more interesting still, a large number of 'widows,' and 'old' Indians described as 'Pensioners.' HBC microfilm reel 1M499; "Gratuities to Indians" Ile-a-la Cross Account Book, 1869-1872, B.89/d/159.

weighing his capabilities and prospects, of advancing to the hunter an outfit adequate to his needs and ability."<sup>236</sup> Thus, Indians were "jealous of each other, and strove to have similar favors, in the shape of debt and gratuities, bestowed upon each as had been given to those more deserving in the opinion of the master."<sup>237</sup>

## VI.

Burley has argued that following the mid-nineteenth century economic depressions, ethics which once supported commercial capitalism, were severely tested. Now, banks and financing companies deciding whether or not to advance credit looked not as much to the character of an individual and his proven record of hard work, as much as to his fixed assets that could serve as collateral. This change in the way creditors looked at investment, at least in what was to become the heartland of manufacturing in Canada, would shift advances from commercial to industrial ventures.<sup>238</sup> A similar crisis in commercial credit occurred in the fur trade, but much sooner, perhaps as early as the late 1770s, when the North West Company was formed by Montreal merchants; certainly after 1821, the commercial traditions which had underlain the fur trade were almost completely replaced by new practices. In the era of economy, traders would act with more regard to immediate considerations of profit and loss. The nineteenth century, then, saw a new relationship established between the European manufacturer, fur trader and the American Indian. As has been pointed out, goods described as "credit," with a view to their future repayment, were now advanced as "debt." Pessimism over their return overwhelmed reports.

It is difficult to say how much transactions themselves had fundamentally changed. Indians seemed to have seen little difference in the way goods were advanced throughout the eighteenth century. The French believed their gift-giving exacted obligations, the English believed their credit exacted responsibilities -- both were

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<sup>236</sup>Isaac Cowie, *The Company of Adventurers: A Narrative of Seven Years in the Service of the Hudson's Bay Company During 1867-1874 on the Great Buffalo Plains* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1913), pp. 271-273.

<sup>237</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 273.

<sup>238</sup>"Good for all he would ask,': Credit and Debt in the Transition to Industrial Capitalism - the Case of Mid-Nineteenth Century Brantford, Ontario," *Histoire sociale/ Social History* XX (39), May 1987, pp. 79-99.

frustrated that advanced goods did little to influence Amerindian behavior. The French were disappointed by the Indian's ability to change allegiances; the English were dismayed by the massive credits left "unpaid." In the nineteenth century, it likely meant little to the sub-arctic Chipewyan that the fur trader characterized the goods advanced before winter as "credit" or "debt." The point to be made, though, is that to the European, such differences mattered. The European trader formerly imagined himself as party to a civilizing venture in the American forests, where goods acted to join together Amerindian and European. His "trust" in Amerindians was signified by credit. By the nineteenth century, the trader's goods advanced in credit were characterized as irredeemable debt. He profited in spite, not because, of such relations struck with Indians. In this redrawing of fur trade relations, commercial ethnology changed significantly, too. The Indian in the nineteenth century was believed to have few affinities with commercial society. His abilities to negotiate and strike up *bon commerce* were dismissed as a sociological impossibility. The ideal encounter between him and European was not to be played out at a trading post, where Europeans saw Indians little profiting from exchange, but at the Indian agency, where goods were advanced according to treaty stipulations and to meet need. Dependency was a hopeless relationship maintained between a civil state and the remnant peoples of *barbary*. Much of this transformation, then, followed the rationalization of the trades not only taking place in the united concerns in the northwest, but also to the south in the United States. The gaining effort of "economy" can be visibly chronicled in the rising literary development of fur trade history which celebrated the passage of older commercial arrangements. If credit had been the central feature of the eighteenth-century Indian trade, it was now seen as overextended, imprudent and irresponsible. The Indian who had been commercialized in trade promotion now appeared as outmoded as the fur trade itself.

## Conclusion

We have argued that beyond movements in American economic and social history between the late seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, were changes in Indian Trade description. The beginning of this period saw the Indian trade described as "exchange," rather than "extraction." Now to barter, truck, or trade with Indians was an activity that could benefit not only the European speculator, but also the Amerindian. New trade narratives carried a vivid picture of the trading Indian never seen before. But they also identified commercial affinities shared between parties in exchange, and established new ethnographic assumptions of the "Other" in America. By "commercializing" the North American Indian, trade writers did more than encourage a vent of manufactures to a new market; the needs they imagined among all humans, and the instinct of "self-interest" posited as guiding Amerindian nature, likely contributed to an eighteenth century understanding of Indians themselves.

This turn in description allowed Europeans to measure trading profits according to generous standards. Commerce raised the morale and *civilité* of the savage; it bonded Indian with European; it linked metropolitan capital with colonial correspondents; and it subjugated in a new, material, dependency all peoples on the fringes of the European's known world. The Indian's commercialization was, of course, largely conceived in the imagination of Europeans, who were themselves experiencing a commercial revolution at home. But the inspiration for such an intellectual change was itself facilitated by the requirements and expansionary pressures of Europe's rising consumer markets. The Indian trade was significantly vitalized with increasing supplies of commodities and, most importantly, generous credit. Many new understandings of the American "Other" were facilitated in trading ventures that benefited from both. The merchant who advanced goods to traders not only lost sight of them in the canoe routes leaving their colonial bases. The very accounting practices of the Indian trade helped reconcile a metropolitan commercial system with Amerindian exchange traditions. The sometimes cursory, often non-existent, accounting practices of the trader himself allowed for numerous expenditures to find little account throughout the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Except for an annual remittance, and failing that, long periods given him to repay his debts, the trader enjoyed freedom to pursue profit for himself and his creditor by whatever means.

Iguarta, explaining the different fortunes of Old and New Subjects after the Conquest, suggested that the English applied more sophisticated accounting

techniques and efficient business practices than did the French.<sup>1</sup> But this study identifies few differences between Montreal merchants such as Lawrence Ermatinger and his predecessors, such as Alexis Moniere. The ways and means of Carolina, Virginian, New York and Montreal crediting merchants were, indeed, strikingly similar throughout much of the eighteenth century. The establishment of the North West Company -- itself not renowned for careful business practices -- suggests more rigorous accounting practices were being adopted in the trade with Indians. Meanwhile, the brittle branches of credit identified by Miquelon, and the characteristic "forest" accounting practices described by Dechêne,<sup>2</sup> allowed traders the means to meet Amerindian demands for reciprocity, gift-exchanges, and liberal credit. As the recipient of trade goods, the Indian appeared as trade promoters intended him to be, as the faithful remitter, tied by obligation to traders and merchants. Indian nations, then, were tethered by credit and their love of merchandize to the European metropolis.

We have seen some of the ways that the Indian was "commercialized" in this period. He was viewed ideally as a commercial correspondent, but more. Europeans imagined American Indians according to changing economic assumptions of the day. They identified elastic consumer demand among Indians, trade sharing the wealth of one nation with another, and "self-interest" leading Indians to either improve their condition or strive for greater wealth in order to obtain "imaginary" wants.

It is suggested that the nineteenth century Indian trade descriptions changed again, when the virtues of commercial capital, particularly those associated with credit, were challenged. With confidence declining in colonial credit arrangements and metropolitan investors forcing accounting reforms, the fur trade, and the Amerindian correspondent, became discredited in business practice. Credit was now characterized as debt among Indians. The nineteenth century trader turned more critical attention to his Amerindian counterpart in trade. Not only were Indian debt books and sharper expenditure accounts more commonplace inland. Book and magazine literature at home no longer viewed the Indian trade, itself, as a place of redemption. As much as he was

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<sup>1</sup>Therefore, Etienne Augé "did not possess the accounting methods necessary to make his business decisions on the most rational basis possible..." José Eduardo Igartua, "The Merchants and *Negociants* of Montreal, 1750-1775: A Study in Socio-Economic History," Ph.D. Thesis, Michigan State University, 1974, p. 128.

<sup>2</sup>Louise Dechêne, *Habitants and Merchants in Seventeenth Century Montreal*, trans. Liana Vardi (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), pp. 100-107; Dale Miquelon, *Dugard of Rouen: French Trade to Canada and the West Indies, 1729-1770* (Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978), pp. 77-79.



ruined morally and physically, the Amerindian trader was believed cheated in his exchange with Europeans.

This observation of change in Indian trade descriptions has numerous implications for historical and ethnohistorical research. Probably most evident are the challenges presented in reading documents drawn from differing commercial contexts. Many of the early notions of trade, particularly in periods of New France history, were linked to pressing priorities of the time, particularly to the Indian's evangelization. J.F. Boshier has suggested the need for such considerations when analyzing New France's seventeenth century "mercantile system," that "separating trade and religion in the history of New France is artificial because they were virtually inseparable at that time."<sup>3</sup> This observation should extend to the analysis of trading text and descriptions. We have seen that, in the seventeenth century, text that described Indians in trade was organized according to religious, rather than commercial, imperatives. The earliest colonists judged the integrity of trade according to how much it was subsumed below a larger religious good. In so far as trade was by definition a gain of one trader over another, or, more simply imagined in America, an "extraction," the vice of trade before the eighteenth century had to be offset by a larger virtue: evangelism. Thus, the Dutch instructions to its officers in New Amsterdam ordered them to maintain good relations with Indians "without however forcing them thereto in the least or taking possession by craft or fraud lest we call down the wrath of God upon our uprighteous beginnings...."<sup>4</sup> Just as the Montreal voyageurs who accompanied de Troye's invasion of HBC posts had prayed for the intervention of Ste. Anne, and promised support of the church at Beaupré for the capture of the lucrative Albany trade, the Hudson's Bay Company committee searched for Divine approval for their own commerce; they perceived Design in the rise and fall of trade profits they experienced in a greater struggle against French Catholic traders.<sup>5</sup> Early letters to factors and captains included the stern instruction for them to treat Indians with justice, and trade with them "upon an Equal Foundation"<sup>6</sup> for fear that God's judgment

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<sup>3</sup>J.F. Boshier, "What was 'mercantilism' in the Age of New France?" in Hubert Watelet, ed., *De France en Nouvelle-France: Société fondatrice et société nouvelle* (Ottawa: Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1994), p. 262.

<sup>4</sup>C.A. Weslager, *Dutch Explorers, Traders and Settlers in the Delaware Valley: 1609-1664* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1961) specifically, p. 115; Weslager's use of such sources is interesting, see pp.114-115.

<sup>5</sup>The religious issue is discussed by E.E. Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1958), Vol. I, pp. 217; 256; 274.

<sup>6</sup>HBC. As instructed to factors of the Hudson's Bay Company in the early eighteenth century. Governor and Committee to Richard Staunton, 17 May 1739, A.6/6.

would fall upon a commercial adventure that afforded no view to the evangelism of the Other. Whatever the real inspiration guiding these authors, their trade descriptions were penned under a vigilant God, who blessed or cursed an adventure according to the ways it did not inhibit a much more valuable Divine dispensation.

Many eighteenth century descriptions suggest that contemporary mindsets were shaped according to different priorities. Scholars of this period therefore contend with numerous new challenges in the reading of text. Trade humanism pervades their sources. As a result, whether they describe eighteenth century Indians as "consumers" or as "entrepreneurs," historians nevertheless face the difficulty of placing contemporary ethnography in the commercial metropolis for which it was written.<sup>7</sup> It is evident in this period that the virtues of trade were judged not according to how its profits were subordinated to a greater good in evangelism. Rather, Europeans now evaluated profit according to the degree to which trade facilitated evangelism in its own right, or, more commonly in the century, became the means of civilizing Indians. In a related phenomenon of the text in question, historians confront very different contemporary criteria of right or wrong, many finding meaning in a commercial context. A trader, commercial promoter or interested colonial administrator was anxious to show trade, not advancing the Kingdom as much as advancing the interests of an adventure's creditors, and, implicitly, the Indian's relationship with commercial society at home. To cite only one side to the matter, probably *the* vice of the eighteenth century was for a trader to abuse the confidence of a creditor, acting with impropriety with goods not his own. The eighteenth century trader competing with his peers vied for the highest moral ground according to this criteria of right and wrong. Trading liquor therefore was not a sin, since it excited industry among trading Indians; but stealing furs was (as was stealing them from inebriated Indians) either because it discouraged more trade, or, more often the case, profited the trader but not his creditor. The imposition in trade, then, imperiled a great chain of confidence, linking one with all.

Accordingly, the trader gravely sinned by hiking up the prices of consigned goods to engross furs while venting few of the manufacturer's wares. The villainy of eighteenth century traders, whether Montreal "Pedlars," Astor's traders, or

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<sup>7</sup>Arthur J. Ray, "Indians as Consumers in the Eighteenth Century," Carol M. Judd and Arthur J. Ray, *Old Trails and New Directions: Papers of the Third North America Fur Trade Conference* (University of Toronto Press, 1980), pp. 255-271; Susan A. Kaplan, "European Goods and Socio-Economic Change in Early Labrador Inuit Society," (pp. 45-69) in William W. Fitzhugh, ed., *Cultures in Contact: The European Impact on Native Cultural Institutions in Eastern North America, AD 1000-1800* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1985), p. 62.

HBC factors, was often defined according to this standard. If not appreciated in their context, these commercial transgressions can, and have been, misconstrued by modern historians. The reason why traders discussed the sins of their rivals – and why the fur trade became the “black art” in published narratives– was the assumption that abuse of commercial transactions led to the breaking of social bonds. A wider conviction held that such transactions could ideally link the Indian to the European, and negotiations could constitute a positive step in the Indian’s societal improvement. Historians have, however, used moral judgements not really suitable for these descriptions to argue that the Indian trade cheated or abused Indians. There is a long list of fur trade histories bearing such evocative titles as the *Fist in the Wilderness*,<sup>8</sup> or *A Majority of Scoundrels*,<sup>9</sup> which use trader text to demonstrate chronic and debilitating misfortune occurring among Indians in trade. Canadian fur trade historiography has digressed along similar moral lines. E.E. Rich, then, saw the “mild and benevolent approach to the Indians” undertaken by HBC men in opposition to the activities of Montrealers.<sup>10</sup> E.E. Rich and A.M. Johnson, elsewhere, lauded William Tomison (who factored goods) and established “impeccable” relations with trading Indians, while Tryell, quoting Hearne (who credited them), believed Tomison was “universally hated” by the Indians at the end of his career.<sup>11</sup> Lewis G. Thomas used NWC sources to defend Alexander Henry as having “a warm and affectionate disposition” towards Indians. Yet, A.S. Morton referred to Robert Longmoore’s HBC trade journals to prove the exact opposite, that Henry bullied HBC men, plied Indians with rum and gave them “nothing else in return for their fur.”<sup>12</sup>

The eighteenth century correspondent often believed trade could and should be made to lead the Indian to his civility. Part of that hope included an understanding of dependency which challenges historians in other ways. For instance,

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<sup>8</sup>To Lavender, the Indian “yielded more readily to vice than to virtue. Ruthlessly, therefore, an entire race was debased by a commerce which in its beginnings had promised a more tolerable plane of existence.” David Lavender, *The Fist in the Wilderness* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1964), pp. 3; 10-13.

<sup>9</sup>Don Berry, *A Majority of Scoundrels: An Informal History of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961).

<sup>10</sup>E.E. Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870* Vol. I (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1958) p. 59; see also the dichotomies drawn between French and English trading in E.G.R. Taylor's introduction to *Copy-Book of Letters Outward, 1680-1687* (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1948).

<sup>11</sup>Paul C. Thistle, *Indian-European Trade Relations in the Lower Saskatchewan River Region to 1840* (University of Manitoba Press, 1986), pp. 27-28.

<sup>12</sup>See Lewis G. Thomas' introduction to the 1969 re-edition of Alexander Henry, *Travels and Adventures in Canada and the Indian Territories, between the years 1760-1776* (Edmonton: M.G. Hertig, 1969), p. ix.

Jérémie's account of the Hudson Bay trade between 1694-1714 saw Indians, likely Cree, as "these barbarians, hungry for goods." In 1713, the trader recounted his happiness that merchants had sent a ship of goods, "which the natives greatly needed, for they had been in a bad way for four years, as I had no more goods to trade. As a result, many of them died of hunger, for they had lost their skills with the bow since Europeans had supplied them with firearms...."<sup>13</sup> In making such statements now discounted by ethnohistorians, Jérémie might have fallen prey to the Indian's own "discourse" of starvation.<sup>14</sup> Or, he might have merely been disadvantaged by his narrow vantage point as a bayside trader, not sharing Anthony Henday's experience of seeing the same Indians switch to bows and arrows on the plains when they hunted buffalo.<sup>15</sup> However, Jérémie's ethnology is more likely attributable to his generation's new, optimistic, view of material goods. The dependency he suggested was commercial; he was not drawing contempt towards trading Indians or suggesting that they became hopeless hangers-on around his fort. Rather, he attempted to display the degree to which Indians could be won over to the French nation through manufactures. Without coincidence, the publication was written in the context of the Treaty of Utrecht and the on-going Anglo-French contest for trading rights to Hudson Bay. And unlike the dependency cited in nineteenth century trade descriptions, where Indians were "pauperized," carried as debt in trade accounts, and unproductive according to new means of economic analysis, the eighteenth century description showed dependency as an ideal extension of commercial relations from Europe to America. Europeans imagined credited Indians retaining a degree of independence and free will to find their own salvation, working, of course, to pay remittances.

Dependency and other issues have captivated the scholar's interest. But it is evident that such complex matters are explored with difficulty in sources left by commercializing Europeans. Indeed, if the Jesuit writer of the seventeenth century included numerous biases in his *Relations* and other published documents, so also did the trade writer of the eighteenth century. It has been suggested that new understandings of material need, the demoralization of luxury, and understandings of self-interest appeared in trade narratives and helped facilitate new understandings of Indians at the same time as the consumer revolution at home. Such issues as dependency, then, become extremely difficult to study in text. Historians have attempted to chart the movement of European

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<sup>13</sup>R. Douglas and J.N. Wallace, eds. and trans. *Jérémie's Account of Hudson Strait and Bay*. (Ottawa: 1926), p. 40.

<sup>14</sup>Mary Black-Rogers, "Varieties of 'Starving,': Semantics and Survival in the Subarctic Fur Trade, 1750-1850," *Ethnohistory* 33(4) 1986: 353-83.

<sup>15</sup>HBC. I am using Hendey's journal as it appears in Andrew Graham's *Journal of 1767*, E.2/6.

goods into Amerindian cultures and understand processes of assimilation. Some have developed models to do so, such as one formulated by A.J. Ray and Charles Bishop, who identified stages leading towards an Indian's "dependency" on trade goods.<sup>16</sup> Their model posited "prehistoric", "proto-historical" and "trade" eras through which Indians pass as they gained greater access to European goods, first indirectly and through middle-men, later directly from traders. Each step was accompanied by further loss of independence. The last stage inaugurated the "Trade Post Dependence Era."<sup>17</sup> This and other models have been applied in numerous studies.<sup>18</sup>

While they have validity, such models present their own limitations – as their own authors would likely admit. It is often argued that proto- and historical periods fell in the eighteenth century when, in fact, trade humanism shaped documents. "Dependency" is often recognized setting in among Indians in the nineteenth. But we have seen that the sources historians use to chronicle such change were themselves different by the early nineteenth century. Traders reported expenses more faithfully; they assumed more responsibility for credits and increasingly described need among Indians -- and irredeemable advances given to Amerindian traders as debt. No wonder that a "truism" of recent fur trade historiography holds that the fur trade constituted a "golden age" of Indian-European relations. This era is usually identified in the early eighteenth century, when Indians used trade competition to their advantage and imposed their own culture upon traders. "Dependency" is suggested to have occurred within the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; i.e., a period when trade become dominated by alcohol as a trading commodity and Indians were impoverished through dependency.<sup>19</sup> This study suggests that the chronology of successive periods of "independence", "assimilation" and "dependency" might be influenced, not by changes in Indian society, but by changes in the way Indians in trade were described.

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<sup>16</sup>*Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology* 7 (1976): 116-44.

<sup>17</sup>Bishop also offered three categories of response among Indians to trade goods: *augmentation*, *replacement*, or *reinterpretation*, cited in Cornelius Jaenen, "French Attitudes towards Native Society," Carol M. Judd and Arthur J. Ray, eds., *Old Trails and New Directions: Papers of the Third North America Fur Trade Conference*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), pp. 59-72.

<sup>18</sup>See Ray and Bishop's model used by John Colin Yerbury, *The Subarctic Indians and the Fur Trade, 1680-1860* (Toronto: 1986); and Thistle's introductory statements regarding this model that shapes his own approach, see Paul C. Thistle, *Indian-European Trade Relations in the Lower Saskatchewan River Region to 1840*, (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1986).

<sup>19</sup>See Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992).

There are numerous implications in such a conclusion, one of them related to the legacies of such changing text in Canadian history. The nineteenth century writer described profit in the Indian trade differently and looked with pessimism at the outcome of exchange. Indians were no longer viewed as capable of negotiation. The European profited while Indians faced inevitable impoverishment in exchange. New standards of profit and loss, meanwhile, became fundamental to relations. Whether such pessimism grew with, or was inspired by, new ethnological understandings of the early nineteenth century is not clear. But trade descriptions suggest that the European's profits were by then achieved, not through the negotiation of equal parties in exchange, but through the imaginative wardship of one transactor to another. In the case of the Indian trade, profits accrued despite, not because, of the trading relationship. Moreover, this analysis of description does not suggest that Europeans taking part in trade or treaties brought bad faith, as much as a loss of faith, to the table. They discounted both the capabilities of their Indian negotiators and dismissed the outcome of exchange itself.<sup>20</sup>

As Indian trade sources undergo further textual analysis and historians address the complex nature of documentary context, many of these issues will likely find greater clarity.<sup>21</sup> In the meanwhile, it seems certain that the Indian trade description, as narrative, has a history of its own for discovery. This study has highlighted some of the hopes Europeans placed in commerce in the eighteenth century and the ways that Indians, at least briefly, were "commercialized" by English and French narrators.

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<sup>20</sup>Thus, the need to search for the "spirit" of European treaty-making. The other side of the question is raised in such works as Richard Price, ed., *The Spirit of the Alberta Indian Treaties* (Edmonton: Pica Pica Press, 1987).

<sup>21</sup>Green's observation that most historians still approach text as "spontaneous, literal, and unmediated" seems to be less the case as time passes. See Roland Green, "Patriarchism among the Discourses of Imperialism," in Karen Ordahl Kupperman, ed., *America in European Consciousness, 1493-1750*, (University of North Carolina Press, 1995), pp. 130-165.

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