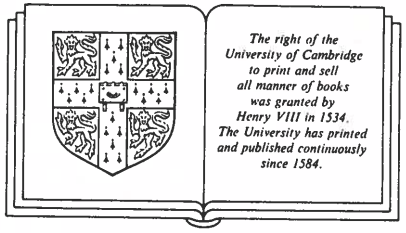
The middle ground

Indians, empires, and republics in the Great Lakes region, 1650–1815

RICHARD WHITE



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> For every time we make others part of a "reality" that we alone invent, denying their creativity by usurping the right to create, we use those people and their way of life and make them subservient to ourselves.
>
> Roy Wagner, *The Invention of Culture*

> In action, people put their concepts and categories into ostensive relations to the world. Such referential uses bring into play other determinations of the signs, besides their received sense, namely the actual world and the people concerned.
>
> Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of History*

I

Because the French and Algonquians were trading partners and allies, the boundaries of the Algonquian and French worlds melted at the edges and merged. Although identifiable Frenchmen and identifiable Indians obviously continued to exist, whether a particular practice or way of doing things was French or Indian was, after a time, not so clear. This was not because individual Indians became "Frenchified" or because individual Frenchmen went native, although both might occur. Rather, it was because Algonquians who were perfectly comfortable with their status and practices as Indians and Frenchmen, confident in the rightness of French ways, nonetheless had to deal with people who shared neither their values nor their assumptions about the appropriate way of accomplishing tasks. They had to arrive at some common conception of suitable ways of acting; they had to create what I have already referred to as a middle ground.[1]

The creation of the middle ground involved a process of mutual invention by both the French and the Algonquians. This process passed through various stages, of which the earliest is at once the most noticed and the least interesting. It was in this initial stage that the French, for example, simply

[1] The impossibility of considering any society in isolation is one of the major themes of Eric Wolf in *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 3–23, 385. It is also a position taken by Anthony Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 23–24.

assimilated Indians into their own conceptual order. Indians became *sauvages*, and the French reduced Indian religion to devil worship and witchcraft. Algonquians, for their part, thought of the first Europeans as manitous. On both sides, new people were crammed into existing categories in a mechanical way.[2]

Literacy gave this initial stage a potency and a durability for Europeans it might otherwise have lacked. Because the French were literate, knowledge of Indians was diffused far from the site of actual contact. Such knowledge, unchallenged by actual experience with Indians, survived as a potent cultural relict. Long after it ceased to govern the actions of those who actually lived among Indians, the idea of Indians as literally *sauvages*, or wild men embodying either natural virtue or ferocity, persisted among intellectuals and statesmen in France. Assimilated into European controversies, these imaginary Indians became the Indians of Chateaubriand and Rousseau. They took on importance, but it was one detached from the continuing processes of contact between real Algonquians and real Europeans. In the *pays d'en haut*, actual Indians and whites of widely different social class and status had, for a variety of reasons, to rely on each other in order to achieve quite specific ends. It was these Frenchmen (for Frenchwomen would not appear until much later) and Algonquian men and women who created a common ground – the middle ground – on which to proceed.[3]

This process of creation resulted quite naturally from attempts to follow normal conventions of behavior in a new situation. Each side sought different goals in a different manner. French officials and merchants sought to rationalize and order what they saw as the unpredictable world of the *sauvage*; Algonquians sought, in a sense, the opposite. They wanted to change or readjust the given order by appeals for personal favor or exemption. In much the same way that they sought special power to readjust the order of the world of plants, animals, and spirits by appealing to the

[2] For concentration on European images, see Bernard Sheehan, *Savagism and Civility: Indians and Englishmen in Colonial America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Olive P. Dickason, *The Myth of the Savage and the Beginnings of French Colonialism in the Americas* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1984); Cornelius Jaenen is correct when he points out that the French lacked the power to force American Indians to acculturate. Cornelius Jaenen, *Friend and Foe: Aspects of French-Amerindian Cultural Contact in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 195. James Axtell's work is an exception to the usual tendency to impose static categories on Indians and whites, and Karen Kupperman disputes the extent to which cultural concepts derived from early accounts actually governed relations, Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Settling with the Indians: The Meeting of English and Indian Cultures in America, 1580–1640* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1980).

[3] Cornelius J. Jaenen, "Les Sauvages Ameriquians: Persistence into the Eighteenth Century of Traditional French Concepts and Constructs for Comprehending AmerIndians," *Ethnohistory* 29 (1982): 43–56.

manitous, so they sought beneficial changes in the social world by appeals to the French. Often, in the examples that follow, when the French sought the imposition of hard-and-fast rules, the Algonquians sought the "power" that comes from knocking the order off balance, from asserting the personal, the human exception. The result of each side's attempts to apply its own cultural expectations in a new context was often change in culture itself. In trying to maintain the conventional order of its world, each group applied rules that gradually shifted to meet the exigencies of particular situations. The result of these efforts was a new set of common conventions, but these conventions served as a basis for further struggles to order or influence the world of action.[4]

The middle ground depended on the inability of both sides to gain their ends through force. The middle ground grew according to the need of people to find a means, other than force, to gain the cooperation or consent of foreigners. To succeed, those who operated on the middle ground had, of necessity, to attempt to understand the world and the reasoning of others and to assimilate enough of that reasoning to put it to their own purposes. Particularly in diplomatic councils, the middle ground was a realm of constant invention, which was just as constantly presented as convention. Under the new conventions, new purposes arose, and so the cycle continued.[5]

Perhaps the central and defining aspect of the middle ground was the willingness of those who created it to justify their own actions in terms of what they perceived to be their partner's cultural premises. Those operating in the middle ground acted for interests derived from their own culture, but they had to convince people of another culture that some mutual action was fair and legitimate. In attempting such persuasion people quite naturally sought out congruences, either perceived or actual, between the two cultures. The congruences arrived at often seemed – and, indeed, were – results of misunderstandings or accidents. Indeed, to later observers the interpretations offered by members of one society for the practices of another can appear ludicrous. This, however, does not matter. Any con-

[4] A useful discussion of these processes is found in Roy Wagner, *The Invention of Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 1–70, particularly 46–52, 87–88. Many Frenchmen of peasant backgrounds were probably closer to what Wagner calls the differentiating mode of tribal peoples than to the systematizing mode of French officials.

Attempts to get around the confining model of a basically static structure which is combined with an ephemeral history has been most thoroughly developed by Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979); *Critique of Historical Materialism*; and *The Constitution of Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). It has simultaneously emerged in anthropology, see Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

[5] For this, see Wagner, *Invention of Culture*, 52–55.

gruence, no matter how tenuous, can be put to work and can take on a life of its own if it is accepted by both sides. Cultural conventions do not have to be true to be effective any more than legal precedents do. They have only to be accepted.

The middle ground of the *pays d'en haut* existed on two distinct levels. It was both a product of everyday life and a product of formal diplomatic relations between distinct peoples. For historians, however, the middle ground is initially easiest to perceive as it was articulated in formal settings.[6]

In June 1695 the alliance of the Huron-Petuns, Ottawas, and French was in one of its recurrent crises. The Ottawas and Huron-Petuns, fearing that the French would make a separate peace with the Iroquois, had undertaken secret negotiations of their own with the Five Nations. These negotiations had received added impetus from English promises of trade at rates considerably below those of the French. The French commander at Michilimackinac, Antoine Laumet de La Mothe, Sieur de Cadillac, suspecting the existence of such talks but not knowing the details of them, attempted to halt the negotiations by soliciting war parties led by French partisans among the Ottawas. Though relatively few, the war parties threatened the Iroquois and thus disrupted plans for peace. The leaders of those who favored peace, particularly a Huron chief known as the Baron, sought to stop the war parties without mentioning the Huron-Petuns' negotiations with the Iroquois. To succeed, the Baron had to accomplish one of two things. He had to provide reasons acceptable both to the French and to their partisans as to why the war parties should not depart. Or, failing this, he had to alienate the pro-French Ottawas from Cadillac and the Jesuits. To achieve these ends, he convened a "grand and numerous" council of the nations of Michilimackinac to meet with one another as well as with Cadillac, the Jesuits, and "the most respectable Frenchmen of the post."[7]

The council convened to do little more than hear a story from the Baron. He told his listeners that recently there had been discovered in the country around Saginaw Bay an old man and his wife, each about a hundred years old. They had resided there ever since the expulsion of the Hurons from their own country. The old man knew and had related all that had passed in the western wars since the destruction of the Hurons and had paid particular attention to the embassies of the Iroquois to Onontio. He knew all these things because of his communications with the Master of Life who spoke directly to the old man and who sent him animals and made his fields abound with corn and pumpkins. The old man, too, knew of the present de facto

[6] The creation of the middle ground might serve as an example of what Anthony Giddens calls structuration. Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory*, 2–7, 69–73, 82.

[7] Callières au Ministre, 20 oct. 1696, AN, C11A, v. 14, ff. 216–17. Narrative of... Occurrences... 1694, 1695, *NYCD*, 9:604–9.

truce with the Iroquois and insinuated that the first side to break it would inevitably be destroyed.[8]

The old man exhorted the Indians to be attentive to the Black Gowns and to apply themselves to prayer because, if the Master of Life "who is one in three persons, who form but one Spirit and one Will" was not obeyed, he would kill the corn as he had last year. Finally the old man had told them the eighth day should be observed by abstinence from work and should be sanctified by prayer. The dead, he said, should be given scaffold burials instead of being buried in the ground, so that they could more easily take the road to Heaven. Finally, the old man had urged that they all hearken to the voice of Onontio and follow his will. On concluding his recitation of the old man's message, the Baron offered Cadillac a present of beaver from the old man himself. Cadillac, who thought that of the whole story only the beaver was not imaginary, refused the present, "this voice being unknown to him."[9]

The Baron's story was an attempt to use and expand the middle ground so that his own interest – peace with the Iroquois – could be secured. Peace could not be protected through normal Huron cultural forms. If the matter had depended only on non-Christian Ottawas and Huron-Petuns, the Baron would not have had to resort to the story of the old man, with all its Christian and prophetic elements. If he had been addressing Indians only, the council could have been convened to consider a dream that contained the same message. Dreams, however, as the Baron realized quite well, had no legitimacy for the French who were urging their partisans to action. What did have legitimacy for them was divine revelation, and so the Baron gave them one. Baron's attempt failed because, as the chronicler of his speech huffily observed, the French only attached "belief to certain revelations and visions . . . because they are authorized." The old man was unauthorized and so proved an unsuccessful device for conveying a message in a manner that had legitimacy for Europeans.[10]

Nonetheless, the Baron's tactics were both clever and revealing. He had consciously tried to buttress the legitimacy of the old man's message by filling it with fragments of Christian doctrine (the Trinity, exhortations to prayer, attentiveness to the missionaries) and with the commands to follow the will of Onontio, the French governor. These were all items the French could hardly quarrel with. Yet the Baron also gave the message a definite Huron tinge. The prophet was an Indian who changed the Sabbath from the seventh day to the eighth. It is unlikely this was accidental. As early as 1679, the Jesuits had praised the Huron-Petuns for their particularly scrupulous

[8] Narrative of . . . Occurrences . . . 1694, 1695, *NYCD* 9:607.
[9] *Ibid.*; it is interesting to note here that some Ottawas eventually did adopt scaffold burials, *HBNI* 15:777.
[10] Narrative of . . . Occurrences . . . 1694, 1695, *NYCD* 9:607.

observance of Sundays and feast days. The Huron-Petuns even had a special officer of the faith who gave notice of the meeting days. It would be surprising if the Baron had forgotten all this. It seems more likely that the Baron's movement of the Sabbath was intentional and that he meant it, along with the command for scaffold burials, to set the old man apart as an Indian prophet with an Indian message from the Christian God. It is unclear if the Baron seriously believed the French would accept the legitimacy of an Indian prophet, but by framing the story as he did, he created a situation in which even their rejection of the old man might serve his purposes. When Cadillac and the Jesuits rejected the old man, they rejected, too, exhortation to prayer and obedience to missionaries and Onontio. More than that, by rejecting the story, the French seemed to insinuate that God spoke directly only to whites, and not to Indians.[11]

Cadillac denounced the story as ridiculous, mocked the Baron's apparent confusion about the Sabbath, and demanded that the Indians strike the Iroquois. He left behind a troubled council. To the gathered Ottawa and Huron-Petun elders it now seemed that "the French were unwilling to listen to the voice of their pretended man of God, alleging that the Black Gowns were very desirous of being heard when they recounted stories about Paul and the anchorites of olden times; wherefore then, they asked, shall not our old man possess the same light?"[12]

The council was merely a skirmish within the larger diplomatic battle being waged over participation by the Michilimackinac Indians in the Iroquois war, but it reveals the process that formed the middle ground and made the boundaries between French and Algonquian societies so porous. To further its interests, each side had to attain cultural legitimacy in terms of the other. The Baron and Cadillac, as much as each might mangle the subtleties of the other's cultural view, had created a forum in which they could speak and understand each other. They did so by using, for their own purposes and according to their own understanding, the cultural forms of the other. The Baron appealed to a Christian tradition of prophecy and put it to Indian purposes. He sought to validate it, in Indian terms, by a gift of beaver. Cadillac, appearing in an Indian council, followed Algonquian forms and, knowing what acceptance of the gift signified, refused it. To accept the gift was to acknowledge the old man, whom the Baron would then make "talk on every occasion that he would judge favorable for his pernicious designs." He rejected an Indian adaptation of a Christian device through his own use of Algonquian-Iroquoian diplomatic forms. Both used the cultural

[11] For Huron-Petuns and Sabbath, see *JR* 61:105.
[12] Narrative of . . . Occurrences . . . 1694, 1695, *NYCD* 9:608. For a similar instance, see *JR* 59:223.

forms of the other cleverly, if crudely. The crudeness of the Baron's Christianity or Cadillac's mastery of Indian diplomacy mattered less than the need for each to employ these foreign elements at all. They merged them into something quite different from the Algonquian, Iroquoian, and French cultures that gave them birth.

The Baron's encounter with Cadillac took place in a diplomatic forum where representatives of each culture dealt with a well-formulated body of ideas and practices. This was one aspect of the middle ground and the one in which its methods are best documented and exhibited. The middle ground itself, however, did not originate in councils and official encounters; instead, it resulted from the daily encounters of individual Indians and Frenchmen with problems and controversies that needed immediate solution. Many of these problems revolved around basic issues of sex, violence, and material exchange. The need to resolve these problems, perhaps even more than the problems of alliance, forced the middle ground into existence. But even this misstates the issue, for the distinction between official dealings and personal dealings was a hazy and confusing one in Algonquian society, where coercive mechanisms and hierarchical structures were notoriously weak.

Although French officials spoke of their relationship with the Algonquians in economic, political, and, less often, religious terms, paradoxically economic and political institutions could not control the context of contact. In the day-to-day relations of the western country, the relationships of Algonquians and Frenchmen as trading partners and allies were abstractions, pertinent, perhaps, to Indians and French as aggregates, but having little to do with actual people in face-to-face relationships. In another society, with more coercive mechanisms at an elite's disposal, personal relations between intruders such as the French and the members of the host society might be kept to a minimum and matttered little. Traders might be isolated in special quarters and granted special privileges; they might be governed by separate rules and taxed at stated rates. Isolation, however, was impossible among the Algonquians, who lacked a state with coercive institutions and in whose society obedience to authority was usually neither a social fact nor a social virtue.[13]

This weakness of political authority and lack of subordination in Algonquian society struck both the Algonquians and the French as a major difference between the two peoples. For the French this lack of subordination, not the Algonquians' state of material or technological development, was at the heart of Algonquian "savagery." The northern Indians, according

[13] Narrative of . . . Occurrences . . . 1694, 1695, *NYCD* 9:608. For the development of trading enclaves, see Philip D. Curtin, *Cross-cultural Trade in World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 11–12, 38, 46–49, 111–15.

to the Sieur d'Aigremont, "possess no subordination among themselves . . . being opposed to all constraint. Moreover, these peoples [have] no idea of Royal grandeur nor Majesty, nor of the powers of Superiors over inferiors."[14]

Father Membre, traveling south along the Mississippi with La Salle in 1682, clearly regarded authority as being at the heart of not only society but humanity. The Natchez and the hierarchical societies of the Mississippi were technologically like the Algonquians. They were a Stone Age people, but they were "all different from our Canada Indians in their houses, dress, manners, inclinations and customs. . . . Their chiefs possess all the authority. . . . They have their valets and officers who follow them and serve them everywhere. They distribute their favors and presents at will. In a word we generally found men there."[15]

The French did not err in noting the absence of class divisions and state and religious institutions among northern Algonquians, but they were mistaken when they took this for an absence of social order. Tradition was the storehouse of a tribal people's knowledge of themselves as a people and a guide to how they should act. As war and disease reduced populations and forced the amalgamation of previously distinct peoples, the survivors seemed to cling to their traditions. But they were like infants sucking the breasts of their dead mothers; tradition could no longer sustain them.[16]

The weakness of coercive authority among the Algonquians would have mattered less if French authority had officially reached the West. With the decline of the trade fairs, however, official French supervision of exchange became a mirage. Indians no longer traveled long distances to fortified European towns or outposts to exchange furs. Some limited exchanges of this type took place at Fort Saint Louis, in the Illinois country, and at Michilimackinac and the posts Perrot erected among the Sioux, but most trade was the work of small groups of Frenchmen traveling to Indian villages and hunting camps. Once these traders had lost their status as manitous, they were strangers without social standing in Algonquian villages. They were also wealthy strangers, with goods far in excess of their own immediate needs, who stood virtually defenseless. If they were to succeed as traders, they had to find means to protect themselves either through force or by establishing personal ties within the communities in which they traded.[17]

[14] For Sieur d'Aigremont, see D'Aigremont to Pontchartrain, Nov. 14, 1708, *WHC* 16:250.

[15] Chrétien Le Clercq, *The First Establishment of the Faith in New France*, 2 vols. (New York: J. G. Shea, 1881), 192.

[16] See Giddens, *Critique of Historical Materialism*, 93–94, 160, for a general discussion of these issues.

[17] *JR* 65:239. W. J. Eccles, *The Canadian Frontier* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1974), 110; Champigny au Ministre, 4 nov. 1693, AN, C11A, v. 12; Memoire . . . Denonville, aoust 1688, AN, C11A, v. 10 (765–66); Callières au Ministre, 15 oct. 1694, AN, C11A, v. 15; Memoire sur le ferme . . . 10 fev. 1696, AN, C11A, v. 16; Commerce du

The French elite feared the consequences of such contact. French authorities thought that Frenchmen moving within Algonquian society would slip the net unless kept under tight control. What horrified French officials quite as much as the economic damage they believed the coureurs de bois did was the social threat they represented. According to officials, the coureurs de bois were metamorphosing into *sauvages*, that is, men beyond the control of legitimate authority. What was particularly horrifying about the "savagery" of the coureurs de bois was that they seemed to glory in it. They used their freedom to mock the men who never doubted that they were their betters. On his return to the Illinois in 1680, La Salle found that his men had not only deserted but had also demolished his fort, stolen his goods, and, in the hand of a man La Salle recognized as Le Parisien, had left scrawled on a board a parting epithet: *Nous sommes touts Sauvages* ("We are all savages").[18]

Le Parisien, of course, was no more a *sauvage* than La Salle. He merely shared with his superiors a common misunderstanding of Algonquian society as a place of license without order. It was this misperception that gave the word *sauvage* its power as a metaphor for what officials regarded as a danger and men like Le Parisien saw as an opportunity – the escape from subordination. That most coureurs de bois could fully escape the restraining hands of the state and the church was an exaggeration. Yet, in another sense, the fear of the authorities and the hope of Le Parisien were not fully misplaced. Frenchmen in the West could to a remarkable degree act independently, if only temporarily, in reaching accommodations with the Algonquians among whom they traveled and lived. They made contact a complex social process only partially under the control of church and state. In the West, this process centered on Frenchmen whom the authorities did not regard as legitimate representatives of their own society and who were actually seen as a danger to it. There was always a tension between these men and those other Frenchmen who possessed legitimate standing: men who like La Salle, came with grants from the Crown; or missionaries, like the Jesuits; or military commanders; or licensed traders. Frenchmen in the West often cooperated, but such cooperation could never be presumed. Indians thus had to establish appropriate social ties with a diverse and often quarreling group of Frenchmen.[19]

castor . . . 1696, AN, CIIA, v. 14; Milo Quaife (ed.),*The Western Country in the Seventeenth Century: The Memoirs of Lanothe Cadillac and Pierre Liette* (Chicago: Lakeside Press, 1917), 16–18. Unititled mémoire (Par tout ce qui . . .) AN, C11A, v. 17 (f. 193).

[18] Duchesneau to M. de Seignelay, 10 Nov. 1679, *NYCD* 9:133–34; Denonville à Seignelay, 13 nov. 1685, AN, C11A, v. 7; Champigny Memoir, 10 mai 1691, AN, C11A, v. 11; Denonville to Seignelay, Jan. 1690, *NYCD* 9:442–43. For quotation, see Relation du voyage de Cavelier de La Salle, du 22 Aout 1680 a l'automne de 1681, Margry, *Découvertes*, 2:133.

[19] On coureurs de bois, see Jaenen, *Friend and Foe*, 115; Eccles, *Canadian Frontier*, 90. Louise Dechene, in examining records of those going west between 1708 and 1717, found

Certain of these diverse Frenchmen, in turn, posed dangers to Algonquian social order because they struck at the heart of Algonquian identity by arguing that traditional practices were not innate, but transferable from one people to another. Missionaries and Christianity, in this sense, represented a potentially subversive force that, if not assimilated into Algonquian traditions, could destroy the very identity of those who accepted it. Only in the Illinois country was this threat soon realized, and there, where the dangers of Christianity were most fully faced, the arguments of the opponents of the missionaries are revealing. The adversaries of the church based their attack partially on the argument that prayer was ineffective and baptism brought death, but they also worked from the assumption that Christianity displaced traditions central to the identity of various Illinois groups and appropriate to them. In a style of argument that foreshadowed later appeals to an "Indian way," Illinois elders contended that since identity was innate, Christianity was proper for the French; Illinois beliefs were proper for the Illinois. As a leading Peoria chief, an opponent of Christianity's, phrased it:

> I shall hold a feast . . . and I shall invite all the old men and all the chiefs of bands. . . . After speaking of our medicines and of what our grandfathers and ancestors have taught us, has this man who has come from afar better medicines than we have, to make us adopt his customs? His fables are good only in his own country; we have ours, which do not make us die as his do.

Or, in the words of a Kaskaskia elder, "full of zeal for the ancient customs of the country and apprehending that his credit and that of his class [*son semblable*] would be diminished if their people embraced the faith":

> All ye who have hitherto hearkened to what the black gown has said to you come into my cabin. I shall likewise teach you what I learned from my grandfather, and what we should believe. Leave their myths to the people who come from afar, and let us cling to our own traditions.[20]

The operation of the middle ground must be understood within a dual context. First, there was the weakness of hierarchical controls within Algonquian villages and the frailty of any authority French officials exerted over Frenchmen in the West. Second, there was the cultural threat each society seemed to pose to the elite of the other. What this meant in practice was that both the extent and meaning of social relations between Frenchmen

that of a total of 373 different individuals, 179 made just one trip and 112 made three or more. These 112 formed "l'armature du commerce interieur." The others made such voyages "une activité temporaire ou occasionnelle"; De Chene, *Habitants et Marchands de Montréal au xvii siècle* (Paris: Libraire Plon, 1974), 219–220.

[20] *JR* 64:173, 183.

and Algonquians were often negotiated largely on a face-to-face level within the villages themselves, and that these relations were not what either French authorities or Algonquian elders might have preferred them to be. This does not mean that there was no official element involved, but rather that official decisions could not determine the course of actual relations.

II

The array of relations negotiated in the middle ground was quite large, but leaving aside for now the liquor trade, problems in two arenas of contact – sex and violence – seem to have been particularly acute. Sexual relations between Frenchmen and Indian women and violence between French and Indians, both men and women, accompanied trade throughout the West. One facilitated trade, and the other threatened to destroy it; both presented problems of cultural interaction that had to be negotiated. Sex and violence are thus important not only in their own right but also as avenues for understanding how cultural accommodation on the middle ground, in fact, worked.

What made sexual relations between Frenchmen and Indian women so central to contact in the West was that until the 1730s relatively few Frenchwomen ever came west. Frenchwomen were a curiosity in the upper country. The appearance of Madame Le Sueur at Fort Saint Louis in the 1690s created such an uproar that she, like Indians visiting Europe, had to consent to a public display so that the curious could see her. The absence of Frenchwomen meant that French males actively sought out Indian women as sexual partners. Not all French males did so, of course. The Jesuits and often their donnés were celibate. This was a condition which, if not unknown among the Algonquians, was regarded by them with the same combination of curiosity and revulsion with which the French regarded the berdaches of the Illinois and the acceptance of homosexual relations among many Algonquian peoples.[21]

Algonquians eventually accepted Jesuit celibacy, but the Jesuits never accepted Algonquian sexual mores, particularly when other Frenchmen proved so enthusiastic about them. Sex was hardly a personal affair; it was governed and regulated by the appropriate authorities. The supreme arbiters of sex among the French were precisely those who, theoretically, had the

[21] For Madame Le Sueur, see De Gannes (Deliette) Memoir, *IHC* 23:338. For berdaches and homosexuality, see De Gannes (Deliette) Memoir, *IHC* 23:329–30; Le Clercq, *First Establishment*, 135; Relations des découvertes, in Pierre Margry, *Découvertes et établissements des Français . . . de l'Amerique Septentrionale, 1614–1698*, 6 vols. (Paris: Maisonneuve et Cie, 1879, repr. New York, AMS, 1974), 1:488.

least practical experience, the priests. The Jesuits took a vocal and active interest in the sexual activities of both the French and the Indians.[22]

It was the interest of the Jesuits in other people's sexual conduct, along with the more immediate experience and observations of men like Perrot, Lahontan, and Deliette, that makes possible reconstruction of their contemporaries' sexual relations, but the very nature of these sources requires that they be used carefully. To understand sexual relations between Algonquians and Europeans, we must remove the combination of sexual fantasy, social criticism, and Jansenism with which the French often veiled their descriptions. A few relatively straightforward descriptions of sexual relations exist, but sources are often openly polemical. The Jesuits were interested in denouncing and restraining what they regarded as Algonquian and French sexual immorality – polygamy, adultery, and prostitution – whereas, at the other extreme, the Baron de Lahontan sometimes delighted in using Indians as weapons in assaulting European law, custom, and hypocrisy.[23]

Despite their differing purposes, nearly all French accounts were united, first, by their inability to understand the status of women vis-à-vis men except in terms of conjugal relations and, second, by their tendency to group actual sexual relations in terms of two opposite poles of conduct, with marriage at one extreme and prostitution and adultery at the other. In attempting to impose their own cultural categories on the actions of Algonquian women, the French tended to select material that made the women seem merely a disorderly and lewd set of Europeans, not people following an entirely different social logic. The immediate result was to define a woman in terms of a person – her actual or potential husband – who may not have been anywhere near being the most significant figure in the woman's life. Depending on her tribal identity, an Algonquian woman often had a more durable and significant relationship with her mother, father, brothers, sisters, or grandparents, or with other, unrelated women than with her husband or husbands. Nor was an Algonquian woman's status dependent solely on her husband. Her own membership in ritual organizations or, among some tribes such as the Shawnees, Huron-Petuns, and Miamis, her own political status in offices confined to women had more influence on her social position than the status of her husband did.[24]

[22] *JR* 54:179–83; *JR* 65:235–45; Cadillac, Account of Detroit, Sept. 25, 1702, *MPHC* 33:143. Ordonnance du M. le Comte de Frontenac pour la traite et commerce du outaouacs . . . 8 avril 1690 (avec remarques faites par l'intendant), AN, F3, v. 6, f. 366.

[23] *JR* 65:193–99, 229–43; Reuben Gold Thwaites (ed.), *New Voyage to North America by the Baron de Lahontan*, 2 vols. (Chicago: A. C. McClury, 1905), 2:455–56, 460–61, 605–18.

[24] For general difficulties with European observations on Indian women, see Katherine Weist, "Beasts of Burden and Menial Slaves: Nineteenth-Century Observations of Northern Plains Indian Women," and Alice Kehoe, "The Shackles of Tradition," both in Patricia Albers and

Even when the most careful and sensitive of the European observers talked about the status of women and sexual relations, therefore, they eliminated much of the actual social world that gave those relations their full meaning. Perrot and Father Lafitau, for example, wrote dispassionate accounts of Algonquian marriage customs. They recognized marriage as a social contract between families, as it was in Europe, even if gifts were given to the bride's family, in exchange for, as Perrot said, the bride's body, instead of to the groom as in Europe. In marriage coercive authority, elsewhere so weak in Algonquian society, stiffened. Once married, a woman was clearly subordinate to her husband. The French viewed the harsh punishments inflicted on women for adultery among the Illinois and the Miamis as the most graphic evidence of subordination. Deliette said that he had seen evidence that more than a hundred women had been executed for adultery during the seven years he had spent among the Illinois. Others emphasized the mutilation of adulterous women by husbands, who cut off a nose or an ear, and the gang rapes inflicted on unfaithful wives by men solicited for the purpose by the husband. There were no equivalent penalties for adultery by men. For Frenchmen, these property exchanges, the subordination of women, and the double sexual standard made this a harsh but recognizable and comprehensible world.[25]

The problem was that this portrait, as the French sources themselves make clear, was incomplete. A woman's subordination to her husband was not necessarily permanent. She could call on male relatives to protect and vindicate her. She could leave her husband and return to her own family whenever she chose. Among many groups adultery was not harshly punished. According to Cadillac, the sexual freedom of married Ottawa and Huron-Petun women was so great that it made adultery a meaningless category. And, indeed, it was the categories themselves that were the problem.

Beatrice Medicine, *The Hidden Half: Studies of Plains Indian Women* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1983), 29–52, 53–73. Women among the Illinois gained power from visions and could become shamans. The culturally very similar Miami had female chiefs whose duties paralleled the male chiefs'. They inherited their status from their fathers and did not obtain it through their husbands. See *HBNI* 15:675, 677, 684–85.

[25] For Perrot and Lafitau on marriage, see Nicolas Perrot, *Memoir on the Manners, Customs, and Religion of the Savages of North America*, in Emma Helen Blair (ed.), *The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley and Region of the Great Lakes*, 2 vols. (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark, 1912), 1:64–65; Joseph-François Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1924–77), 1:336–37, 339. For adultery among the Illinois, see De Gannes (Deliette) Memoir, *IHC* 23:327, 335–37; Reuben Gold Thwaites (ed.), *Father Louis Hennepin's A New Discovery of a Vast Country in America* (facsimile ed., Toronto: Coles, 1974, repr. ed. of 1903 ed.), 167–68; Jolliet and Marquette, in Louise P. Kellogg (ed.), *Early Narratives of the Northwest, 1634–1699* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917), 243.

European conceptions of marriage, adultery, and prostitution just could not encompass the actual variety of sexual relations in the *pays d'en haut*.[26]

Jesuits and other Europeans did not impose these cultural categories as an ethnographic exercise; they did so in an attempt to understand and regulate sexual activity. This was a task that missionaries saw as an essential part of their purpose in the West. Adultery, prostitution, and marriage obviously existed, but most sexual contact took place between Frenchmen and single Indian women, who enjoyed considerable sexual freedom but were not prostitutes. There was no appropriate French category for such free, unmarried Algonquian women.

Because of this lack of readily available parallels from French society, and because of differences between the hierarchical Miamis and Illinois, on the one hand, and the remaining Algonquians, on the other, French accounts of the sexual standards expected of unmarried young women among the Algonquians vary widely and are often internally contradictory. Deliette, for example, says the Illinois valued chastity highly, but he then goes on to say that virtually all women, even married women, took lovers.[27]

Lahontan credited unmarried Algonquian women with virtually complete sexual freedom.

> A Young Woman is allow'd to do what she pleases; let her Conduct be what it will, neither Father nor Mother, Brother nor Sister can pretend to controul her. A Young Woman, say they, is Master of her own Body, and by her Natural Right of Liberty is free to do what she pleases.

The only social barrier to premarital intercourse was fear of pregnancy, which would make it impossible to obtain a high-ranking husband, but Lahontan said women knew how to abort unwanted pregnancies. Among most groups such sexual freedom apparently ended with marriage. But some women never did marry. There was, according to Lahontan, a class of women called Ickoue ne Kioussa, or Hunting Women – "for they commonly accompany the Huntsmen in their Diversions." Such women argued that they could not endure "the conjugal yoak," that they were incapable of bringing up children and were "too impatient to spend winters in the village." Lahontan regarded all this as a "disguise for lewdness," but he noted that these women were not censured by their parents or other

[26] For Cadillac, see Quaife (ed.), *The Western Country*, 63. For references to prostitution, see *JR* 65:241; Memoire touchant l'yvrognerie des sauvages, 1693, AN. C11A, v. 12, f. 384.

[27] De Gannes (Deliette) Memoir, *IHC* 23:328–37; Thwaites (ed.), *Lahontan's Voyages*, 2:453. Joutel gives a contradictory account similar to Deliette's; see Joutel's Memoir, in Isaac J. Cox, *The Journeys of Robert Cavelier de La Salle*, 2 vols. (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1905), 2:222.

relatives, who asserted, for instance, "that their daughters have the command of their own Bodies and may dispose of their persons as they think fit." The children these women bore were raised by their families and "accounted a Lawful issue"; they were entitled to all privileges except that they could not marry into families of noted warriors or councillors.[28]

Such quotations from Lahontan must be read with caution, since Indians often served him as mere vehicles for his own critique of French society, and his analysis often differed from those of more experienced observers of the Algonquian nations. Lahontan, for example, made divorce among the Algonquians a far more trivial event than did Perrot, who spent much of his life among the western Indians. And certainly among the Illinois, women were not totally free before marriage; brothers greatly influenced their sisters' sexual lives. Nevertheless, despite Lahontan's tendency to overgeneralize and his notorious inventions, his assertions cannot be dismissed as simply romantic fabrication. Other accounts corroborate his descriptions of young Algonquian women. Joutel's memoir about the Illinois, although it confuses cohabitation with hunting women and marriage, substantiates Lahontan's description. According to Joutel, the marriages of the Illinois lasted no longer than the parties desired to remain together, for they "freely part after a hunting bout, each going which way they please without any ceremony," and he notes, "There are women who make no secret of having had to do with Frenchmen." Cadillac, too, noted that girls "are allowed to enjoy themselves and to experiment with marriage as long as they like and with as many boys as they wish without reproach."[29]

Younger women and hunting women thus enjoyed substantial freedom in engaging in sexual relations with Frenchmen and played a major part in establishing the customary terms of sexual relationships between the Algonquians and the French. Initially, many Frenchmen, like the Jesuits, may have viewed this sort of relationship as simple prostitution or, like Joutel, as a loose, easily dissolved marriage, but by the 1690s they recognized it as a separate, customary form for sexual relationships in the fur trade. Basically, women adapted the relationship of hunting women to hunters to the new conditions of the fur trade. Such women not only had sexual intercourse with their French companions, they also cooked and washed for

[28] For quotation, see Thwaites (ed.), *Lahontan's Voyages*, 2:453; *ibid.*, 454, 463. For pregnancy, see *ibid.*, 454, 463; for hunting women, see *ibid.*, 463–64.

[29] On divorce, compare Lahontan to Perrot and Cadillac; Thwaites (ed.), *Lahontan's Voyage*, 2:453; Perrot, *Memoir*, 64–65; Quaife (ed.), *The Western Country*, 38–39. For brothers' control over sisters, see De Gannes (Deliette) Memoir, *IHC* 23:332, 337, and Raudot, "Memoir," in W. Vernon Kinietz, *The Indians of the Western Great Lakes* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1965), 389. For Joutel, see Joutel Memoir, in Cox (ed.), *Journeys of La Salle*, 2:222. For Cadillac quotation, see Quaife (ed.), *The Western Country*, 45.

them, made their clothes, and cut their wood. In denouncing these women, the Jesuit Father Carheil described them in terms similar to Lahontan's:

> The traders have become so accustomed to have women for their use in the trading-places, and these have become so necessary to them, that they cannot do without them even on their journeys. . . . I refer to single women, women without husbands, women who are mistresses of their own Bodies, women who can dispose of them to these men, and whom the latter know to be willing to do so – in a word, They are all the prostitutes of Montreal who are alternately brought here and taken back; and They are all the prostitutes of this place, who are carried in the same way from here to Montreal, and from Montreal to here. . . . The pretext that they usually allege for taking women in preference to men on these journeys is, that women cost them less than men, and are satisfied with lower wages. They speak the truth; but the very Fact of their being Satisfied with less wages is a Manifest proof of their dissoluteness. . . . The women, Being depraved, want them as men; and they, on their part, want them as women, on all their journeys – after which . . . they quit one another. They separate from these only to Seek others.[30]

What Father Carheil misunderstood and denounced as *prostitution* had little to do with that term as commonly understood. These women did not solicit customers, and they did not sell discrete sexual acts. Sex accompanied a general agreement to do the work commonly expected of women in Algonquian society. Nor was the relationship a temporary marriage. In marriage a wife received no payment from her husband, nor was she as free as a hunting woman to dissolve one relationship and begin another. Finally, these relationships were not contracts between families. They were, instead, a bridge to the middle ground, an adjustment to interracial sex in the fur trade where the initial conceptions of sexual conduct held by each side were reconciled in a new customary relation. The appeal of unions that offered both temporary labor and sexual companionship to the coureurs de bois is obvious, but these relationships also may have flourished because of the badly skewed sex ratios within Algonquian societies, apparently the result of warfare.

Many late seventeenth-century accounts of western Algonquian population stress both sexual imbalance and the presence of soral polygamy – the practice of a husband marrying two or more sisters. Sexual relations with the coureur de bois offered an alternative to polygamy. Polygamy was also a particular target of Jesuit missionaries, who were not reluctant to assert a connection among the famines, the epidemics sweeping the villages, and

[30] For customary relation, see *JR* 65:233. For quotation, see *ibid.*, 241.

relatives, who asserted, for instance, "that their daughters have the command of their own Bodies and may dispose of their persons as they think fit." The children these women bore were raised by their families and "accounted a Lawful issue"; they were entitled to all privileges except that they could not marry into families of noted warriors or councillors.[28]

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[30] For customary relation, see *JR* 65:233. For quotation, see *ibid.*, 241.

plural marriages. Jesuit denunciations of polygamy appear to have achieved at least some temporary success in the Michilimackinac region. In 1670, in response to an epidemic, the men at Sault Sainte Marie took back their first wives and put away those wives they had taken since their first marriage. Subsequently, the Kiskakon Ottawas, the most Christianized of the Ottawas, were also the Ottawa group with the fewest polygamists, and, supposedly, the Kaskaskias abandoned polygamy entirely by the early eighteenth century. Elsewhere the Jesuits never succeeded in completely eradicating polygamy, but even partial success yielded ironic results. Given the population imbalance between men and women, any increase in the class of single women yielded more women who might be willing to attach themselves to the French.[31]

That Jesuit battles against polygamy may have increased the number of women who consorted with Frenchmen was only one of the ironies created by French and Algonquian attempts to arrive at mutually intelligible patterns of sexual conduct. Hunting women, as a group, carried and modified one Algonquian pattern of sexual relations into the fur trade in their liaisons with the coureurs de bois, but a smaller group of Christian Indian women were also influential in creating other patterns of sexual conduct through their own relationships with both Algonquian men and Frenchmen. The influence of these women was not felt everywhere; necessarily, it was confined to groups in which the Jesuits had succeeded in making a significant number of converts: the Huron-Petuns, the Kiskakon Ottawas, and above all the Kaskaskias of the Illinois confederation.[32]

The influence of Christian women emerged most clearly among the Illinois. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, there were signs of sexual crisis among the Illinois. They had a badly skewed sex ratio, which Deliette, probably exaggerating, extimated at four women to each man. The Illinois themselves thought that their traditional marriage pattern was in decay, and in French accounts, they combined draconian punishments for adultery with widespread sexual liaisons between Frenchman and Indian women. By 1692 the Illinois had largely abandoned Starved Rock and had built villages at the southern end of Lake Peoria, thus creating a new

[31] For references to sexual imbalance and soral polygamy, see Relation du voyage de Cavelier de la Salle, du 11 aout 1680 à l'automne de 1681. Margry, *Découvertes*, 2:157; *JR* 54:219, 229; La Salle on the Illinois Country, 1680, *IHC* 23:10. De Gannes (Deliette) Memoir, *IHC* 23:329. *JR* 54:219. For Jesuit attacks on polygamy and connections between polygamy and disease, etc., see *JR* 57:215–19; *JR* 57:231; *JR* 56:113. For renunciation of wives, see *JR* 55:129–31. For decline of polygamy, see *JR* 61:1312; *JR* 57:231, 81. Emily J. Blasingham, "The Depopulation of the Illinois Indians," *Ethnohistory* 3 (Summer 1986): 386–87.

[32] *JR* 65:67, 79; De Gannes (Deliette) Memoir, *IHC* 23:361. For emphasis Jesuits placed on sexual conduct among Kiskakon Ottawas and Kaskaskias, see *JR* 54:179–83, and *JR* 65:67–69.

collection of villages at Pimitoui. The French who accompanied the Illinois had built the second Fort Saint Louis near these villages. Pimitoui also served as the headquarters for Jesuit mission activity among the Illinois and surrounding nations. Father Gravier, missionary to the Illinois since 1688 or 1689, established a permanent mission there in 1693. By 1696 the priest estimated that over the preceding six years he had baptized some two thousand persons. Even allowing for large numbers of deathbed baptisms and baptisms of infants who did not grow up to be practicing Catholics, this is a substantial figure. Much of Gravier's lasting success took place among the Illinois, particularly among the young women, who, according to Deliette, "often profit by their teaching and mock at the superstitions of their nation. This often greatly incenses the old men."[33]

By the 1690s the differential sexual appeal of Catholic teaching began to have significant repercussions among the Illinois. This, in turn, influenced the way the French and Illinois societies were linked. Jesuit teaching among the Illinois in the 1690s stressed the cult of the Virgin Mary, and with it came a heavy emphasis on chastity and virginity. This stress on a powerful female religious figure, whose power, like that of the Jesuits, was connected with sexual abstinence, attracted a congregation composed largely of women, particularly young women and older girls. How these young women understood Christianity and the cult of the Virgin is not entirely clear. They may have identified it in terms of women's ritual organizations, but given their tendency to mock Illinois traditions, they also clearly saw it in opposition to existing religious practices. During a period of warfare, direct cultural challenge by the Jesuits, population decline, and, if French accounts are correct, widespread violence of men against women, the actions of these women had direct social and cultural implications. Women took the common Algonquian dictum that unmarried women were "masters of their own body" and justified not sexual experimentation but sexual abstinence. They then assayed the religious powers they derived from prayer and Catholic doctrine against the powers the elders derived from visions and tradition.

[33] De Gannes (Deliette) Memoir, *IHC* 23:329–30, 335–37; Joutel Memoir, in Cox (ed.), *Journeys of La Salle*, 2:222. Emily Blasingham estimates the ratio of adult warriors to the rest of the population at 1:3.17 which obviously would not allow for Deliette's estimate, but her estimate is perhaps even more of a guess than his. Blasingham, "Depopulation of the Illinois," 364. For village sites, see J. Joe Bauxar, "The Historic Period," in Elaine Bluhm (ed.), *Illinois Archaeology Bulletin No. 1*, Illinois Archaeological Survey, Urbana (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1959), 49. For Gravier's mission, see Mary Borgian Palm, "The Jesuit Missions of the Illinois Country (1673–1763)," Ph.D. diss., St. Louis University, 1931 (Cleveland, privately printed, Sisters of Notre Dame, 1931), 22, 24–25. For Father Gravier's claim of baptism, see *JR* 65:33. For conflict, see *JR* 65:67, and Fr. Rale quoted in Mary Elizabeth Good, "The Guebert Site: An Eighteenth-Century Historic Kaskaskia Indian Village in Randolph County, Illinois," *Central States Archaeological Societies Memoir*, 2 (n.p., 1972), 14.

Their actions outraged both the young men, who found their own sexual opportunities diminished, and the elders and shamans who were directly challenged.[34]

In this dispute, Christianity and the Algonquians' social and cultural world were becoming part of a single field of action, and the outcome influenced not just Algonquian but also French society. Frenchmen in the West were no more enthusiastic about the new Christian influence among Illinois women than were Illinois men. Frenchmen, too, resented the new ability of Jesuits, through their influence over women, to control the sexual lives of the coureurs de bois and the voyageurs. Their resentment went beyond this.

Jesuit influence threatened not only sexual activity but also the ability of traders and coureurs de bois to create the ties to Algonquian society on which their trade, and perhaps their lives, depended. The critical issue here was not casual liaisons, but marriage. Formal marriages between Indian women and Frenchmen were quite rare during the seventeenth century. Marriage *à la façon du pays*, that is, according to local Algonquian custom, may have occurred, but there are few references to interracial marriage of any kind until the 1690s. In 1698 Father St. Cosme mentioned voyageurs with Illinois wives, and about the same time Father Carheil mentioned other voyageurs at Michilimackinac who had married among the Indians. In theory, the Jesuits and the colonial elite in general might have been expected to approve marriage between Frenchmen and Indian women as an alternative to the unregulated sexual relationships of the *pays d'en haut*. Along the same line, the French voyageurs, operating in a world of abundant sexual opportunities, might have been expected to be indifferent to formal conjugal ties. In fact, however, their positions were nearly the opposite during the 1690s. The seemingly sudden rise of interracial marriages in the 1690s may be connected with the increasingly serious attempts of the French to force the coureurs de bois out of the *pays d'en haut*. These culminated in the French abandonment of most western posts in the late 1690s. Through marriage, the coureurs de bois may have been attempting to establish the necessary kin connections with Indians that would be vital to the ability of any Frenchman to remain safely in the West.[35]

[34] For Virgin Mary, see *JR* 59:187; 193, 201, 207, *JR* 63:217–19. For opposition of young men, see *JR* 65:67.

[35] For marriages, see *JR* 65:241; *JR* 65:69; St. Cosme, in Kellogg (ed.), *Narratives*, 251. The best work on intermarriage on the Great Lakes is by Jacqueline Peterson, "Prelude to Red River: A Social Portrait of the Great Lakes Metis," *Ethnohistory* 25 (1978): 41–68. For intermarriage in the Northwest, see Olive Dickason, "From One Nation in the Northeast to New Nation in the Northwest: A Look at the Emergence of the Metis" in Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown, *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Metis in North America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985). Interracial marriage within the later fur trade has been the subject of two recent books, but both studies look at situations significantly different from those of the late seventeenth-century West, where many of the earliest Catholic marriages were solemnized by priests. See Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670–1870* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), and Jennifer S. Brown, *Strangers in the Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980).

Such attempts met with considerable sympathy from French commanders, usually with trading interests of their own, who were responsible not for larger policies but for day-to-day relations with the Indians. Both Henry de Tonti and the Sieur de la Forest at Fort Saint Louis supported attempts to fortify ties with the Illinois through intermarriage. Cadillac's plan for Detroit in the early eighteenth century included the promotion of marriages between soldiers and Indian women. He explained: "Marriages of this kind will strengthen the friendship of these tribes, as the alliances of the Romans perpetuated peace with the Sabines through the intervention of the women whom the former had taken from the others."[36]

Indians, like the commanders, saw marriage as an integral part of their alliance with the French. Male heads of families, at least, greeted marriages enthusiastically. Marriage, far more than the prevailing French liaisons with hunting women, put sex firmly in the political arena. As both sides recognized, marriage was an alliance between families that concerned many more people than the marital partners. Not only did property move into the hands of the bride's family, but kinship relations were established that enabled both families to call on their relatives for aid and protection. Because of the wider social implications of marriage, as compared to relations with hunting women, a woman found her family much more interested in her choice of a permanent French partner than in her casual liaisons.[37]

Jesuits and higher French officials, however, were unenthusiastic about marriage both because it gave voyageurs and coureurs de bois an independent hold in the *pays d'en haut* and also for racist reasons. The Jesuits did not favor interracial marriage in the seventeenth century. Their preferred solution to the problems of sexual morality was to banish most Frenchmen from the upper country and to place those who remained under strict Jesuit supervision. Gradually, however, the Jesuits and other priests in upper

[36] *JR* 64:201–03; Cadillac to Minister, 18 Oct. 1700, *MPHC1* 33:189. For Cadillac's later opposition, see Mariage des francais avec les sauvagesses, 1 sept. 1716, AN, C13A, v. 4, f. 255.

Who was commanding at Fort. St. Louis in the Illinois at the time is unclear. Tonti was there in April 1694, Declaration de Henri de Tonti, 11 avril 1694, AN, C13A, Louisiana, v. 1 (fol, 27), but in the fall of 1693 he was in Montreal. Engagement of Viau to La Forest and Tonti, Sept. 11, 1693, *IHC* 23:273–75. Given the absence of Tonti and La Forest, Deliette may have been in command.

[37] *JR* 64:195, 197, 207, 211. Quaife (ed.), *The Western Country*, 39, 45; Perrot, *Memoir*, 64–69; Lafitau, *Customs*, 1:336–37.

Louisiana came to condone interracial marriage if the wife was Catholic. Of twenty-one baptisms recorded at the French village of Kaskaskia between 1704 and 1713, the mother was Indian and the father was French in eighteen cases. In 1714, the Sieur de la Vente, the curé for Louisiana, praised intermarriage as a way to people the colony. He contended that the women of the Illinois and neighboring tribes were "whiter, more laborious, more adroit, better housekeepers, and more docile" than Indian women found elsewhere in the West and the South.[38]

Leading colonial officials were much more consistent in their opposition to intermarriage than the priests were. In Canada they preferred that Frenchmen marry and settle around Quebec or Montreal. As long as official policy involved the suppression of the coureurs de bois and their removal from the West, officials could not be openly enthusiastic about marriages there. They coupled such policy considerations with racist disgust at the results of French-Indian intermarriage. As Governor de Vaudreuil explained in opposing interracial marriage at Detroit in 1709: "Bad should never be mixed with good. Our experience of them in this country ought to prevent us from permitting marriages of this kind, for all the Frenchmen who have married savages have been licentious, lazy and intolerably independent; and their children have been characterized by as great a slothfulness as the savages themselves." By the time he was governor of Louisiana, Cadillac, who had once advocated intermarriage, and his intendant, Duclos, opposed intermarriage in the same terms. Indian women were, they said, licentious and would leave men who did not please them, and even if the marriage lasted, the result would be a population of "mulattos [*mulâtres*], idlers, libertines, and even more knaves than [there] are in the Spanish colonies."[39]

Given this range of social and cultural concerns, the divisions within each society, and the inevitability of members of both societies being integral figures in deciding outcomes, it is not surprising that the prospect of a marriage between a Christian Illinois woman and a Frenchman precipitated a crisis that was ultimately decided on the middle ground. In 1694 Michel Accault's attempt to wed Aramepinchieue brought to light both the full

[38] For official attitudes toward marriage, see Jaenen, *Friend and Foe*, 164. For Father de la Vente, see Mariage des francais avec les sauvagesses, 1 sept. 1716, AN, C13A, v. 4. For banishment and supervision, see *JR* 65:233–45. For baptism, see Palm, "Jesuit Missions," 43–45.

[39] For governor's opposition, see Vaudreuil and Raudot to Minister, Nov. 14, 1709, *MPHC* 33:454. For Duclos and Cadillac, see Mariage des francais avec les sauvagesses, 1 sept. 1716, AN, C13A, v. 4, f. 255. For renewed concern in 1730, see Bienville et Salmon au Ministre, 16 mai 1735, AN, C13A, v. 20, f. 85. Memoire concernant les Illinois, 1732 AN, F3, v. 24.

This sketch of about 1700 by Decard de Granville shows a tatooed Sioux chief with a calumet. (New York Public Library)

complexity of the relations between the two societies and the processes by which the middle ground was emerging.

The controversy over the marriage of Accault and Aramepinchieue did not pit the Illinois against the French. Rather, it divided each group in a way that can only be grasped by looking at the social positions of the bride and the groom. Aramepinchieue was the daughter of Rouensa, a leading

Kaskaskia chief. She was a fervent Christian and the pride of the Illinois mission. Michel Accault was a Frenchman who had first come west with La Salle. He had later accompanied Father Hennepin on his voyage to the Sioux. Afterward, he had traded widely in the West and had established a reputation among the Jesuits as a libertine and an enemy of the faith. Aramepinchieue thus had links both with the Kaskaskia elite and Father Gravier. Accault was leagued with Henry de Tonti and the Frenchmen around him at Fort Saint Louis and was an enemy of Gravier's. His marriage with Aramepinchieue would strengthen the connections of a prominent Kaskaskia family with the French to the benefit of both. Rouensa announced the marriage in precisely those terms. He was strengthening his alliance with the French.[40]

The problem was that this proposed union, while it might link French and Algonquians, also emphasized the internal divisions within each group. Aramepinchieue refused to marry Accault. Father Gravier supported her decision. His immediate target was Accault. He would not sanction the influence within Indian society of a Frenchman he regarded as dissolute. He might grudgingly permit the marriage of Catholic Frenchmen with Christian Indian women, but he would do so only in circumstances that would advance the cause of the true faith. He told Aramepinchieue's parents and her suitor that "God did not command her not to marry, but also that she could not be forced to do so; that she alone was mistress to do the one or the other." Gravier's statement demonstrates that no matter how repressive Catholic morality may appear in retrospect, it could be used to buttress women's influence over their lives and their families. Women like Aramepinchieue had always had some control over their choice of marriage partners, but Christianity presented them with a new mechanism of control. What made this unique was not the woman's ability to reject unwanted suitors but, rather, the allies who could be mustered to maintain her decision against family pressures.[41]

In one sense, Aramepinchieue's decision represents a clear rejection of Algonquian norms and an appeal to an alien set of standards, but in another sense Aramepinchieue was appealing to such standards only to strengthen a very Algonquian sense of a woman's autonomy. Gravier's assertion that she was "mistress to do either the one or the other" did, after all, echo the Algonquian tenet that unmarried women were "masters" of their own bodies. Gravier, who sought to subvert traditional Illinois sexual practices

[40] For Accault, see *JR* 64:213, 180. For Aramepinchieue and Rouensa, see *JR* 64:179–81, 193–237. Aramepinchieue took the Christian name Mary or Marie; see Palm, "Jesuit Missions," 38.

[41] *JR* 64:205–07, 213, 280. *JR* 64:211, 195. For Aramepinchieue, see *JR* 64:193–95, 205–07, 213–29.

because they contradicted Catholicism, and Aramepinchieue, who used Catholicism to maintain the values that supported those same practices, thus found themselves allies. By definition, then – the involvement of both French and Indians, the need for members of each group to get assistance from members of the other to fulfill desires arising within their own society, and the inability of either French or Indian norms to govern the situation – this was a conflict of the middle ground.

The initial result of the bride's refusal was a standoff, which both Rouensa and the French commander tried to break with the limited coercive means available to them. Rouensa drove Aramepinchieue from his house, but she was protected by Father Gravier, who secured her shelter with a neophyte family. Her rejection of her parents' wishes pained her deeply, but she justified her actions by appeals to Catholic doctrine. The chiefs in council retaliated by attempting to halt Catholic services at the chapel. At least fifty persons, virtually all of them women and girls, persisted in going to church. The council then (although they denied it) appears to have dispatched a warrior armed with a club to disrupt the services. The women defied him. Among the Illinois, the opposing sides had clearly formed along gender lines. Not all of the women abandoned the chiefs, but Christianity was, for the moment, a women's religious society acting in defiance of a male council. Among the French, the division was necessarily among males. The French commander, far from stopping this interference with the mission, gloated over it and denounced Gravier publicly before both the French and the Indians. When these tactics failed to sway the priest, neither the commander nor Rouensa felt confident enough to escalate the level of violence, although the Kaskaskias left the option of further coercion open.[42]

Such a face-off did not serve the interests of either side. Aramepinchieue was in turmoil over her alienation from her parents, to whom she was closely attached. Gravier found further missionary activities virtually impossible in the face of council opposition, which threatened to confine his promising mission to a besieged group of young women and girls. On the other hand, Gravier and the bride together blocked a marriage that both the Kaskaskias and the French deeply wanted.

The situation, in the end, was solved by a series of trade-offs. Aramepinchieue, in effect, negotiated a compromise with her father. She told Gravier, "I think that if I consent to the marriage, he will listen to you in earnest, and will induce all to do so," and she consented to the marriage on the terms that her parents, in turn, "grant me what I ask." They agreed. Rouensa disavowed his opposition to Christianity in full council and urged those present to "obey now the black gown." His agreement was sincere,

[42] *JR* 64:195–205.

and he and his wife began instruction for baptism. Accault, too, became a practicing Catholic once more and an ally of the Jesuits'. In return, the Kaskaskia chief, as he informed the other headmen of the confederation with considerable presents, was "about to be allied to a Frenchman."[43]

The marriage, therefore, was a great coup for Gravier. It brought into the church the most prominent Kaskaskia civil leader and his brother, an equally prominent war leader, and opened the way for making the Kaskaskias the most Catholic of the western Algonquians. The main agent in these events was a seventeen-year-old woman who appealed to alien standards both to control her condition and, eventually, to alter the condition of her nation. By 1711 the Kaskaskias were supposedly virtually all Catholic, and missionaries had made significant inroads among other Illinois groups. Aramepinchieue had maintained and strengthened the relationships that mattered most to her – those with her parents and the Christian congregation of women. The price was marriage to Accault, but this may very well have remained for her a subsidiary social arrangement. Christianity did not immediately transform marriage. French officials would later claim that Christian Illinois women less devout than Aramepinchieue still felt free to leave their French husbands whenever they chose.[44]

Women like Aramepinchieue are rarely visible in the documents, but their traces appear everywhere. Diplomatic negotiations and warfare, the large trading expeditions, these were the work of men, but the Frenchmen who appeared in Algonquian villages either traveled with Algonquian women or had liaisons with them there. Much of their petty trading was probably with women. The labor they purchased was usually that of women. On a day-to-day basis, women did more than men to weave the French into the fabric of a common Algonquian-French life. Both in and out of marriage, these women bore children with the French, some of whom in time would come to form a separate people, the *métis*, who themselves mediated between French and Algonquians and became of critical importance to the area.

Gravier himself would continue to make his greatest gains among the women of the Illinois, but in other tribes of the confederation he would not acquire allies of the status of Aramepinchieue. In 1706 Gravier returned to Pimitoui. The Kaskaskias had by now left to resettle on the Mississippi, the French had abandoned Fort Saint Louis, and the Peorias who remained at the site resented Gravier's aggressive tactics enough to attack him physically.

[43] For Aramepinchieue quotations, see *JR* 64:207–9; otherwise, *JR* 64:179, 213, 211.
[44] *JR* 64:79–81, 231–35; Palm, "Jesuit Missions," 38; André Penicault, *Fleur de Lys and Calumet: Being the Penicault Narrative of French Adventure in Louisiana*, ed. Richebourg Gaillard McWilliams (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1953), 139–40. For claims of success among other Illinois nations, see Callières et de Champigny au Ministre, 18 oct. 1700, AN, C11A, v. 18.

They wounded him and, revealingly, left him in the care of "some praying women" until Kaskaskias sent by Rouensa rescued the priest. Father Gravier never fully recovered from his wounds, and eventually he died of complications. His death, a reminder of how tentative and tenuous the middle ground could be, also serves as a transition to the second issue demanding French-Algonquian cooperation – violence and interracial murder.[45]

III

Although not all murders, as the killing of Father Gravier demonstrates, grew out of the trade, violence and interracial murder as a whole were inextricably bound up with commerce. In 1684 alone, the only year for which a summary is given, thirty-nine Frenchmen trading in the West died at the hands of their Algonquian allies. Indians murdered Frenchmen during robberies, killed them in disputes over debt or gift exchanges, attacked them in attempts to stop weapons from going to their enemies, killed them to avenge killings by the French, and, as the liquor trade expanded, killed them in drunken quarrels. The French, in turn, used force against thieves, which did not prevent theft from becoming as established a part of the exchange as gifts or bargaining.[46]

Commerce, in short, was not a peaceful process; violence was an option both for acquiring goods and for protecting them. In part, violence was so prevalent in the early trade because common agreement on the nature of the exchange itself developed only gradually. Frenchmen did not always meet Indian demands for gifts; they did not act as generously as friends and allies should; they, as the Indians soon discovered, asked more for their goods than the English asked; and finally, Frenchmen supplied arms to their allies' enemies. The Indians, in turn, stole. French traders readily classified Algonquian nations by their propensity to steal. The Fox were thieving; the Illinois carried off everything they could lay their hands on; the Chippewas on the north shore of Lake Superior would pillage any French canoe they

[45] *JR* 65:101–03; Palm, "Jesuit Missions," 36, 47; Blasingham, "Depopulation of the Illinois," 201; Bauxar, "Historic Period," 49. For Gravier, see *JR* 66:51–63.
[46] Some historians continue to divide Indian-white relations between peaceful commerce and violent conflict. For such a position, see Francis Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1984), 83. In fact, violence cannot be separated from the trade. The larger question of the role of violence in commerce has recently been raised by Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade*, 41–45. It is a question still illuminated by the work of Frederic Lane, *Venice and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966), 412–28; see, particularly, the "Economic Consequences of Organized Violence." For the number of murders, see Raisons qu'on a proposee a la Cour, 1687?, AN, C11A, v. 15, f. 271.

caught alone. The Sauks were also thieves, but they did not have the skill of the neighboring Fox. When the French were supplying the Sioux, small-scale theft gave way to organized plunder, so that Father Nouvel thought no Frenchman's life was safe journeying to or from the Sioux country. Eventually theft itself became institutionalized, as French traders learned to leave out small items to be pilfered, but a certain level of violence remained endemic to the trade.[47]

Perhaps the most perplexing intercultural concern of the French and the Algonquians was how to settle and limit the number of murders arising from the trade, when there was no authority in the West capable of creating a monopoly on violence and establishing order. Violence became one of the central concerns of the middle ground. When murders occurred between Algonquians and Frenchmen, each side brought quite different cultural formulas to bear on the situation. For northeastern Indians, both Algonquians and Iroquoians, those people killed by allies could be compensated for with gifts or by slaves or, failing these, by the killing of another member of the offending group. The decision about how to proceed was made by the dead person's kin, but extensive social pressure was usually exerted to accept compensation short of blood revenge, since killing a person of the offending group often only invited future retaliation. Among the French the matter was simpler. Society at large took the responsibility for punishing murder. Punishment was not left to the kin of the victim but rather to the state. The expected compensation for murder was the death of the murderer.[48]

Of the obvious differences here, two were particularly important. In the French scheme of things, exactly who committed the murder was of supreme importance, since the individual killer was held responsible for the crime. Only when a group refused to surrender a known murderer did collective responsibility arise. For the Indians, identifying the murderer was not as important as establishing the identity of the group to which the murderer

[47] For Fox, see *JR* 54:225; Illinois, see Joutel Memoir, in Cox (ed.), *Journeys of La Salle*, 2:212; Chippewas, see Raudot and De Gannes (Deliette) Memoir, *IHC* 23:328, Memoir in Kinietz, *Indians of the Western Great Lakes*, 374; Sauks, see *ibid.*, 381–82. For dangers of Sioux trade, see Pere Nouvel à M. de La Barre, 23 avril 1684, AN, C11A, v. 6, f. 523. For institutionalization of theft, see Gary C. Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind: Dakota-White Relations in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1680–1862* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 63.

[48] In the cases that follow both sides try to make these positions clear. See, e.g., extract from a letter by Dulhut, April 12, 1684, *WHC* 16:120, hereafter cited as Dulhut's letter. For Algonquian custom, see Jaenen, *Friend and Foe*, 123. For a discussion of murder, revenge, and compensation that stresses revenge rather than compensation among the Cherokee, see John Phillip Reid, *A Law of Blood: The Primitive Law of the Cherokee Nation* (New York: New York University Press, 1970), 73–112. Reid says that a retaliatory killing does not bring revenge (78). This does not appear to have been true among the Algonquians. Note how in the Dulhut case below Achiganaga is given presents to compensate for his son's death.

belonged, for it was the group – family, kin, village, or nation – that was held responsible for the act. Both sides established cultural measures of equivalence in compensating for the dead, but the French equivalence was invariably another death. As the French emphasized again and again in the cases that follow, death could only be compensated for by more death. Indians would, if necessary, also invoke a similar doctrine of revenge, but their preference was always either, in their words, "to raise up the dead," that is, to restore the dead person to life by providing a slave in the victim's place, or "to cover the dead," that is, present the relatives with goods that served as an equivalent.[49]

Most murders in the West left no trace in the documents, but an examination of those that are recorded can be rewarding. Three incidents in particular offer enough documentation for cultural analysis. The first occurred in 1682 or 1683, when two Frenchmen were waylaid on the Keweenaw Peninsula in Lake Superior and murdered by a Menominee and several Chippewas. These murders took place when the *pays d'en haut* was in a state of near chaos. Iroquois attacks, which had devastated the Illinois, had so far gone unavenged. Iroquois parties had recently struck the Illinois and the Mascoutens and were edging closer to Green Bay itself. Not only did the French seem unable to protect their allies, but an epidemic that the Potawatomis blamed on Jesuit witchcraft had recently ravaged the villages around the bay. The Potawatomis had murdered two French donnés in retaliation and had begun efforts to create a larger anti-French alliance. A recent alliance between the Saulteurs and the Sioux, which Daniel Greysolon Dulhut had helped orchestrate, had further inflamed the peoples of Green Bay against the French. They attempted to block French trade with the Sioux. The Fox had already fought and defeated a large Sioux-Chippewa force at a considerable loss to themselves, and a full-scale Chippewa-Fox war seemed imminent. But apparently not all the Chippewas relished the new alignment. Achiganaga, an important headman at Keweenaw, had attacked the Sioux and planned further attacks. His war parties, as well as those of the peoples at Green Bay, threatened the lives of French voyageurs.[50]

[49] Report of Boisbriant Diron Desursins Legardeur De L'isle Ste. Therese Langloisere, June 17, 1723, in J. H. Schlarman, *From Quebec to New Orleans: Fort De Chartres* (Belleville, Ill.: Beuchler, 1929), 226–31. See also Jaenen, *Friend and Foe*, 97. Jaenen makes the distinction between the French emphasis on punishment and the Indian emphasis on compensation.

[50] For conditions at Green Bay, see Enjalran à Lefevre de La Barre, 16 aoust 1683, Margry, *Découvertes*, 5:4–5. For Saulteur-Fox conflict, see *ibid.*, 5; Claude Charles Le Roy, Sieur de Bacqueville de la Potherie, *History of the Savage Peoples Who Are the Allies of New France*, in Emma Helen Blair (ed.), *The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley and Region of the Great Lakes*, 2 vols. (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark, 1912), 1:358–63; Dulhut letter, *WHC* 16:114. Durantaye à A. de la Barre, 11 avril 1684, AN, C11A, v. 6, 1.521–22. For activities

In the midst of this turmoil a party led by Achiganaga's sons and including at least one Menominee, a member of a Green Bay tribe, murdered two Frenchmen. Their motive may have been robbery. Or Achiganaga may have sought to disrupt the Sioux trade, break the new alliance of other proto-Ojibwa bands with the Sioux, and join with the peoples of the bay in a larger anti-French movement. In any case, his sons murdered two Frenchmen and stole their goods. Dulhut, despite the powerful kin connections of the accused murderers, seized the Menominee at Sault Sainte Marie and sent out a party that successfully captured Achiganaga and all his children at Keweenaw. The local Algonquian peoples reacted to Dulhut's acts by resorting to customary procedures. The Saulteurs offered the French the calumet – the standard ceremony for establishing peace and amity – and then they offered slaves to resurrect the dead Frenchmen and end the matter. Dulhut's emissary refused all such offers and denied the legitimacy of such cultural equivalence, telling them "that a hundred slaves and a hundred packages of beaver could not make him traffic in the blood of his brothers."[51]

Up to this point, all seems to be merely another example of something that appears in the literature many times: an ethnocentric European imposing by force proper cultural forms on a people he regards as savages. Savagism as a way of looking at Indians was, however, of limited utility in the woods. Dulhut was hardly in a position to act as if Indians were without culture. The French state did not command a monopoly of violence in the West and its authority was feeble. Dulhut did not have an established judicial system to appeal to, unless he wished to try to convey his prisoners to Quebec or Montreal. When the murderers had been disposed of, he and his men would remain to travel among the surrounding Indians who were not likely to forget whatever action he took. Their thoughts on the matter could not be safely ignored, and Dulhut having rejected Indian norms, relaxed his own considerably.

What followed at Michilimackinac was a series of rather extraordinary improvisations as Dulhut and various Ottawa, Huron-Petun, and Chippewa headmen and elders struggled to create a middle ground where the matter could be resolved. Dulhut's primary appeal throughout was to French law and custom, but he tried repeatedly, if necessarily somewhat ignorantly, to justify his recourse to law and custom by equating them with Indian practices. Having rejected the preferred means of settling killings among

of French traders and danger they were in, see Denonville au Ministre, aoust 1688, AN, C11A, v. 10, (f. 66); Nouvel à M. de la Barre, 23 avril 1684, AN, C11A, v. 6.

51 The only detailed account of this murder is Dulhut's own, but since he was in a position to justify his actions, he provided considerable detail. See Dulhut letter, April 12, 1684, *WHC* 16:114–15, 123.

allies – the covering or raising up of the dead – he insisted on the penalty exacted from enemies: blood revenge. The Indians, for their part, paid little attention to what mattered most to the French, the proper way of establishing guilt and punishing the perpetrator. They only sought to offer suitable compensation to the living and reestablish social peace.[52]

The result was a series of bizarre cultural hybrids. The various Ottawa, Chippewa, and Huron-Petun bands convened in council with Dulhut only to find themselves transformed into a jury by the French for the trial of the Menominee, Achiganaga, and two of his sons. Kinsmen of the accused were drafted as lawyers, testimony was given and written down, and the murderers, with the exception of Achiganaga, freely admitted the crime. The elders cooperated with this French ritual, apparently believing that after it was performed the French would accept appropriate compensation. Instead, Dulhut demanded that the Indians themselves execute the murderers. To the Indians, Achiganaga's failure to confess constituted acquittal, and he was no longer part of the proceedings, but execution of the remaining three men, after compensation had been refused, would have been the equivalent of a declaration of war on the Saulteurs and Menominees by the executioners. The elders were so shocked and confused by this demand that they did not even make an answer.[53]

Dulhut, at this point, decided unilaterally to execute the Menominee and the two sons of Achiganaga as the admittedly guilty parties. This decision not only upset the Indians at Michilimackinac, it also appalled the French wintering at Keweenaw, who sent Dulhut a message warning that if he executed the murderers, the Indians' relatives would take revenge on the French. They begged him to act with restraint. French standards simply could not be imposed with impunity. Dulhut, after consulting with the Sieur de La Tour, the man longest among the lake tribes and most familiar with their customs, sought once more to appeal to Indian custom and return the matter to the middle ground. He again tried to find some connection between French law and what he regarded as Indian custom. Since two Frenchmen had died, Dulhut would execute only two Indians – the Menominee and the eldest of the two sons of Achiganaga – for "by killing man for man, the savages would have nothing to say, since that is their own practice." He announced this decision in the cabin of an Ottawa headman the French called Le Brochet, adding that although French law and custom demanded the execution of all the men involved in the robbery, he would be content with a life for a life.[54]

52 Dulhut letter, April 12, 1684, *WHC* 16:119.

53 *Ibid.*, 118–20.

54 *Ibid.*, 119–21.

By his decision, Dulhut established a tenuous connection between Algonquian and French customs – a life for a life – but he also revealed the very different meanings such a dictum had in each culture. Only now, according to Dulhut, did the Ottawas believe that the French would actually execute two of the men. The headmen of the Sable Ottawas and the Sinago Ottawas, themselves uninvolved in the murder, begged Dulhut to spare the murderers. They, too, sought a middle ground and appealed to French precedent. At the request of Onontio, the Ottawas had spared an Iroquois prisoner. The French should now do the same for them. Dulhut denied the situations were equivalent. The Iroquois was a prisoner of war; these men were murderers. Here the glaring differences between Ottawa and French cultural categories emerged in action.[55]

Blood revenge was appropriate in each society but for different categories of killing. For the Algonquians there were two kinds of killings – deaths at the hands of enemies and deaths at the hands of allies. The appropriate response depended on the identity of the group to whom the killer belonged. If the killer belonged to an allied group, then the dead were raised or covered. If the murderers refused to do this, then the group became enemies and the price appropriate to enemies, blood revenge, was exacted. For the French also there were two kinds of killings – killings in war and murders. Killing enemies in war theoretically brought no retribution once the battle ended. For them, the battlefield was a cultural arena separate from the rest of life. Releasing the Iroquois was thus only appropriate; he was a soldier, not a murderer. Algonquians in practice recognized no such cultural arena as a battlefield; they killed their enemies when and where they found them unless they were ritually protected. For the French it was murder that demanded blood revenge; for the Algonquians, it was killings by enemies, killings which the French saw as warfare. The French insistence on blood revenge in an inappropriate category, therefore, created great confusion. To the Ottawas the logic of such a response – that enemies should be spared but that allies should be killed – was incomprehensible.[56]

The way out of this deadlock was created by a man named Oumamens, a headman of the Amikwas (a proto-Ojibwa group). He spoke for the Saulteurs in council and resorted to the kind of cultural fiction that often disguises the beginnings of cultural change. He got up and praised, of all things, Dulhut's mercy, because he had released Achiganaga and all but one of his children. In effect, Oumamens chose to emphasize those of Dulhut's actions which conformed to Algonquian custom. He announced that the Saulteurs were

[55] *Ibid.*, 120–21.
[56] *Ibid.*. See also Jaenen, *Friend and Foe*, 132–34. It should be noted that by 1690 the French had begun imitating the Iroquois and were torturing and killing prisoners of war, Narrative of . . . Occurrences 1690, 1691, *NYCD* 9:518.

satisfied. Dulhut, for his part, stressed not mercy but deterrence. If the elders "had from the beginning made known to the young men that in case they committed any evil deed the tribe would abandon them, they would have been better advised, and the Frenchmen would still be alive." Both sides thus tended to stress the aspect of the affair that made cultural sense to them. An hour later, at the head of forty-eight Frenchmen with four hundred warriors watching, Dulhut had the two Indians executed.[57]

The executions did not establish the legitimacy of French justice. Indeed, in the days that followed the executions, the Indians treated them as two more murders to be resolved, and Dulhut consented to their proceedings. Because Achiganaga's son and the Menominee had been executed in the territory of the Huron-Petuns and the Ottawas, these groups were implicated, and they took steps to settle the whole affair.[58]

Three Ottawa tribes – the Sables, Sinagos, and Kiskakons – gave two wampum belts to the French to cover their dead and two other belts to Achiganaga and to the Menominee's relatives. The next day the Huron-Petuns did the same. Dulhut, for his part, held a feast for Le Brochet, the Sable headman, to "take away the pain that I had caused him by pronouncing the death sentence of the two savages in his cabin, without speaking to him of it." Dulhut then loaded Achiganaga with presents, and the Saulteurs gave the French at Keweenaw additional belts "to take good care that no trouble be made over the death of their brother; and in order, should any have evil designs, to restrain them by these collars, of which they are bearers."[59]

The incident is revealing precisely because it was so indecisive, so improvised, precisely because neither French nor Algonquian cultural rules fully governed the situation. Both French and Algonquian customs were challenged, consciously explained, and modified in practice. Dulhut did not establish the primacy of French law, and he did not prevent further killings. What he did do was to shake, but not eliminate, the ability of Algonquian norms to govern murders of Frenchmen by Indians. Both sides now had to justify their own rules in terms of what they perceived to be the practices of the other. What happened in 1683 was, in the end, fully in accordance with neither French nor Indian conceptions of crime and punishment. Instead, it involved considerable improvisation and the creation of a middle ground at a point where the cultures seemed to intersect, so that the expectations of each side could find at least some satisfaction. At Green Bay the next spring, Father Nouvel thought that Dulhut's executions had produced a good effect,

[57] *Ibid.*, 120–21.
[58] *Ibid.*, 124.
[59] *Ibid.*, 124–25.

but at the same time he attributed the Potawatomi and Sauk desire for reconciliation with the French to their growing fear of the Iroquois, not their fear of French reprisals. Nouvel, for his part, demanded no further executions; he was willing to accept the Potawatomi and Sauk offer to cover the deaths of the two French donnés they had murdered.[60]

At Michilimackinac in 1683, Dulhut had operated without specific authority from the French government for his actions. He had improvised his solutions. The killings at Detroit, some twenty years later, in 1706, led to negotiations with the highest colonial officials, at a time when the French-Algonquian alliance had created a considerably more elaborate middle ground on which Indians and Frenchmen might work. Indeed, it was the alliance itself that both created the conditions that caused the murders and provided the ceremonial forms that compensated for them.

IV

In 1706, as Ottawa warriors departed to attack the Sioux, a Potawatomi warned them that in their absence the Huron-Petuns and the Miamis would fall on the Ottawa village and kill those who remained. The Ottawa war leaders consulted with the civil leaders and, although some wavered, the old and powerful Sable chief whom the French called Le Pesant convinced them to strike first. The Ottawas ambushed a party of Miami chiefs, killing five of them, and then attacked the Miami village, driving the inhabitants into the French fort. The French fired on the attacking Ottawas and killed a young Ottawa who had just been recognized as a war leader. Although the Ottawa leaders tried to prevent any attacks on the French, angry warriors killed a French Recollect priest outside the fort and a soldier who came out to rescue him.[61]

The Ottawas tried all the ceremonial means at their disposal to effect a reconciliation with the French, but they were rebuffed by the man com-

[60] Fr. Nouvel à M. de la Barre, 23 avril 1684, AN, C11A, v. 6, f. 523. Reconciliation was also forwarded by Governor de la Barre who approved of Dulhut's actions, but the French court, which often had only a shaky grasp of what was going on in the upper country, confused Dulhut's executions with the killing of an Iroquois at Michilimackinac and denounced Dulhut and his presence in the backcountry, De la Barre au Ministre, 5 juin 1684, AN, C11A, v. 6. Louis XIV to De La Barre, July 21, 1684, *DHNY*, 1:108–9.

[61] For the Ottawa version of these events, see Speech of Miscouaky, Sept. 26, 1706, *MPHC* 33:288–92. For the French investigation, see Report of D'Aigremont, *MPHC* 33:435. For Cadillac's account, see Cadillac to de Vaudreuil, Aug. 27, 1706; E. M. Sheldon, *The Early History of Michigan from the First Settlement to 1815* (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1956), 219. For mention of a second French soldier killed later, see Instructions to D'Aigremont, June 30, 1707, *WHC* 16:243.

manding in Cadillac's absence. In subsequent fighting, the French sided with the Miamis, as did the Huron-Petuns (the nation the Ottawas claimed had actually organized the plot against them). Before the Ottawas withdrew to Michilimackinac, three Frenchmen, about thirty Ottawas, fifty Miamis, and an unknown number of Huron-Petuns were dead. The critical issue between the French and Ottawas, however, was the men killed during the first exchange: the young Ottawa leader, another Ottawa man with powerful kin connections at Michilimackinac, the Recollect, and the first French soldier killed.[62]

The fighting at Detroit in 1706 sprang from some basic breaches in the alliance the French had constructed and threatened to dissolve the alliance completely. In his zeal to promote Detroit, a post he had founded in 1701, Cadillac had recruited French allies to settle there without much thought for the outstanding disputes among them. In 1706, the residents included, among others, members of three Ottawa tribes – Sinagos, Kiskakons, and Sables – Huron-Petuns, and Miamis. Basic to the alliance and critical to such multitribal settlements was mediation. The French had to make sure that killings between the tribes were settled and the dead covered. Cadillac had promised to do this, but uncovered and unrevenged dead continued to poison the relations between the Miamis and the Huron-Petuns, on the one hand, and the Ottawas on the other. Le Pesant himself had presented a list of the dead left uncovered and unavenged before the departure of the fateful war party. The result of the French refusal to act was the fighting of 1706 and a threat to the entire alliance.[63]

The killings at Detroit produced a situation neither the French nor the Ottawa leaders desired. As Vaudreuil lamented in his report of the affair to

[62] For Ottawa attempts to negotiate, see Speech of Miscouaky, 26 Sept. 1706, *MPHC* 133:290–92; Report of D'Aigremont, *MPHC* 33:435–36. For various casualty figures in the fight, see "Council with Ottawas, June 18, 1707," in Sheldon, *Early History of Michigan*, 228, where Jean le Blanc puts the Ottawa dead at 30; Speech of Miscouaky, Sept. 26, 1706, *MPHC* 33:294, where the figure is 26 for the Ottawas and 50 dead and wounded for the Miamis. For the significant Ottawa dead, see Speech of Miscouaky, Sept. 26, 1706, *MPHC* 33:290, and Fr. Marest to Vaudreuil, Aug. 14, 1706, *MPHC* 33:262–69. For the French emphasis on the priest and the first soldier killed, see Council with the Ottawas, June 20, 1707, Speech of Vaudreuil, Sheldon, *Early History of Michigan*, 242; Speech of Vaudreuil, June 21, 1707, *ibid.*, 245.

[63] "Account of Detroit," Sept. 25, 1702, *MPHC* 33:137–38, 147; Cadillac to Pontchartrain, Aug. 31, 1703, in Sheldon, *Early History of Michigan*, 105–6. For mention of quarrels and unsettled killings, see Cadillac to Vaudreuil, Aug. 27, 1706, in Sheldon, *Early History of Michigan*, 218–19. For earlier attack, see Memorandum of . . . Cadillac, 19 Nov. 1704, *MPHC* 33:234; Report of D'Aigremont, Nov. 14, 1708, *MPHC* 33:432–37. For a Miami–Huron-Petun rapprochement as early as 1703, see Speeches of Ottawas . . . 24 Sept. 1703, *MPHC* 33:223–25. For Vaudreuil's orders to keep the peace, see Vaudreuil au Cadillac, 10 juin 1706, AN, Moreau St. Mery, F3, v. 7, f. 308. For Huron-Petun resentment, see Vaudreuil to Minister, May 5, 1705, *MPHC* 33:242.

Count de Pontchartrain, the fiasco at Detroit threatened to "begin a war which can cause us only considerable expense, the loss of a nation that has served us faithfully, and, in addition to that, a considerable trade, every year." For the Ottawas the outcome looked no more favorable. Cut off from trade goods, impoverished, and driven from their fields, they found that "all the land was stupefied, and want had taken possession of our bones." Settling such a conflict was, however, far from simple. The prominence of the dead on both sides intensified the difficulties of settling the killings. The dead Ottawas had powerful kinspeople; the French stressed the particular horror of killing a priest; and Cadillac promised the Miamis and Huron-Petuns the destruction of the Ottawas as revenge for their own dead. The negotiations to resolve these killings would be, according to Governor de Vaudreuil, one of the most important affairs in the history of the upper country.[64]

The ceremonial forms of the Ottawa-French alliance shaped the negotiations from the beginning. The alliance was centered on Quebec, the home of Onontio, and it was formulated in the language of kinship to which both the French and the Algonquians attached great significance. Leaders of both the French and the Algonquians negotiated according to ritual forms which placed the French governor, Onontio, in the position of father to the Indians, of whom the Ottawas were his eldest sons. The French were quite at home with such patriarchal formulations and attached quite specific meanings to them. For them all authority was patriarchal, from God the Father, to the king (the father of his people), to the father in his home. Fathers commanded; sons obeyed. The Ottawas understood the relationship somewhat differently. A father was kind, generous, and protecting. A child owed a father respect, but a father could not compel obedience. In establishing a middle ground, one took such congruences as one could find and sorted out their meanings later.[65]

[64] For Vaudreuil quote, see Vaudreuil to de Pontchartrain, Nov. 4, 1706, *WHC* 16:242. For Ottawas, see Words of Ottawas to Cadillac, Sept. 24, 1707, *MPHC* 33:349. For difficulties, see Father Marest to Vaudreuil, Aug. 14, 1706, *MPHC* 33:262–69; Council with the Ottawas, Speech of Vaudreuil, June 20, 1707, Sheldon, *Early History of Michigan*, 242. Cadillac to Vaudreuil, Aug. 27, 1706, *ibid.*, 228–29. For importance of negotiations, see Vaudreuil to Father Marest, n.d. (1707), Sheldon, *Early History of Michigan*, 273.

[65] Many examples of the French councils survive. For examples for the period under consideration here, see Parolles des sauvages . . . , Archives Nationales, Archives Coloniales, F3, v. 8, f. 136–41; Talk between Marquis de Vaudreuil and Onaskin . . . , Aug. 1, 1707, *MPHC* 33:258–62; Speech of Miscouaky . . . to Marquis de Vaudreuil, Sept. 26, 1706, *MPHC* 33:288–96; Conference with Ottawas, June 18, 1707, in Sheldon, *Early History of Michigan*, 232–50. For the differences in how the Great Lakes Indians and the French perceived the relationship between parents and children, see Father Gabriel Sagard, *The Long Journey to the Country of the Hurons* (Toronto: Champlain Society 1939, facsimile ed., Greenwood Press), 130–31; Pierre de Charlevoix, *Journal of a Voyage to North America* (London: R. & J. Dodsley, 1761, Readex microprint facsimile ed., 1966), 2:55, 89–90, 109, 114–15; Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indian* 1:362; Perrot, *Memoir* 1:67; Thwaites (ed.), *Lahontan's Voyages* 2:458. See also Jaenen, *Friend and Foe*, 94–97.

Within the alliance, these ritual forms for father and son thus had a built-in ambiguity that would influence the course of the negotiations that followed the fighting at Detroit. Negotiations in the West (at Sault Sainte Marie and Michilimackinac) covered the Ottawa dead to that nation's satisfaction, but covering the French dead proved more difficult. Many of the matters at issue here revolved around questions of the proper way for a father to act toward his errant sons. At Quebec, Vaudreuil, in his negotiations with the Ottawas in the fall of 1706 and the spring of 1707, insisted on phrasing the alliance and Ottawa obligations in terms of Christian patriarchy. The governor demanded that the Ottawas appear before him as penitent sinners appear before the Christian God. The customary Ottawa compensation for the dead was inadequate and inappropriate.

> I am a good father and as long as my children listen to my voice, no evil ever befalls them. . . . It is not belts that I require, Miscouaky, nor presents when my children have disobeyed me and committed such a fault as yours; the blood of Frenchmen is not to be paid for by beaverskins. It is a great trust in my kindness that I demand; a real repentance for the fault that has been committed, and complete resignation to my will. When your people entertain those feelings, I will arrange everything.[66]

The Ottawa response to these demands, in the usual manner of the middle ground, was to seek cultural congruence. They, too, focused on patriarchy, but of a different kind. Otontagan (or Jean le Blanc), the Sable chief second in influence to Le Pesant, spoke for the Ottawas when they came to Quebec the next summer. He admitted his guilt (even though he had, in fact, tried to save the Recollect) but attempted to place the primary responsibility for the affair with Le Pesant. Otontagan's major concern, however, was to get Vaudreuil to act like an Ottawa, not a French, father. He stressed Vaudreuil's beneficence. Vaudreuil certainly had the power to kill him, but "I have nothing to fear because I have a good father." Since

[66] Kischkouch, the young Sinago chief killed at Detroit, had a brother, Merasilla, who had actually gone among the Saulteurs and Amikwas to raise a party to avenge his brother "and restore the name of Kischkouch." In the end, Merasilla excused himself from the war party, despite reproaches that he showed "no love for his brother," and helped negotiate a peace. The war party went to Detroit, accompanied by other Ottawas, but did not attack. Another Ottawa killed at Detroit had as relatives two of the principal women at Michilimackinac, and they went from cabin to cabin, weeping and demanding the deaths of Frenchmen there until negotiations covered their loss. Marest to Vaudreuil, Aug. 14, 1706, *WHC* 16:232–34; Marest to Vaudreuil, Aug. 16, 1706, and Aug. 27, 1706, *MPHC* 33:262–71; Cadillac to Vaudreuil, Aug. 27, 1706, Sheldon, *Early History of Michigan*, 226–27. For quote, see Reply of Vaudreuil to Miscouaky, Nov. 4, 1706, *MPHC* 33:295.

Vaudreuil had specifically rejected covering the dead, Otontagan concluded that he must want the dead raised up. The delegation accordingly brought two adopted captives to give to Vaudreuil "to bring the gray coat again to life." Vaudreuil held out for a stricter patriarchy. He demanded vengeance; he demanded the head of Le Pesant because "the blood of French is usually repaid among us only by blood." But such a demand, Otontagan told Vaudreuil, was impossible. Le Pesant was allied to all the nations of the Great Lakes. They would prevent his delivery and execution.[67]

On the surface, the negotiations at Quebec appear to be another example of a stubborn French refusal to compromise. The situation was, in fact, much more complex. Vaudreuil knew that no Ottawa leader possessed sufficient authority to hand over anyone, let alone someone of Le Pesant's stature. His intention was not to secure Le Pesant's death, rather it was to cut him off from the French alliance, destroy his influence, and demonstrate that any chief held responsible for the death of a Frenchman would suffer the same fate. Since Vaudreuil did not expect Le Pesant to be surrendered, the actual restoration of the Ottawas to the alliance would involve a compromise of some sort. Since patriarchs do not compromise, he sent the Ottawas back to Detroit, telling them to negotiate a peace with Cadillac. He would approve such a peace as long as Le Pesant was not included in any pardon Cadillac granted. By this maneuver Vaudreuil could make an impossible demand, while leaving the responsibility of negotiating what might be an embarrassing compromise to his rival and subordinate, Cadillac.[68]

At Detroit the larger issue remained – how the alliance could be restored within the cultural parameters of the parties involved. Le Pesant was called "that great bear, that malicious bear," and Vaudreuil's demand for his execution loomed over the proceedings. The people struggling with this problem were themselves political actors who were not necessarily wedded to the welfare of either Le Pesant or Vaudreuil. The chief Ottawa negotiators, Otontagan and Onaske from Michilimackinac, were Le Pesant's political rivals. They protected him not out of love but because they had no means at their disposal to deliver him, and they feared the repercussions if they tried. Cadillac, for his part, was a long-standing opponent of Vaudreuil and only too glad to use the affair to benefit himself and embarrass the

[67] For Otontagan, see Vaudreuil to Minster, July 24, 1707; *MPHC* 33:328–29, Council with Ottawas, June 18, 1707, Speech of Jean le Blanc, Sheldon, *Early History of Michigan*, 233–39. For Vaudreuil's position, see Council with Ottawas, June 20, 1707, Reply of Vaudreuil, Sheldon, *Early History of Michigan*, 242; Reply of Jean le Blanc, June 21, 1707, *ibid.*, 243–44.

[68] See the speech of Vaudreuil to Jean le Blanc, June 22, 1707, Sheldon, *Early History of Michigan*, 245–47; Vaudreuil to Minster, July 24, 1707, *MPHC* 33:328–30. For the rivalry of Vaudreuil and Cadillac, see Vaudreuil to Minister, Nov. 12, 1707, *MPHC* 33:371–72.

governor. Both Cadillac and the Ottawa chiefs could conceivably use the cultural demands of outsiders to advance their interests within their own society while simultaneously renewing the alliance.[69]

The willingness of both Cadillac and the Ottawa negotiators to move from their initial positions reflects this sense of their own political advantage. They could also violate the usual norms of their own cultures because the alliance, itself the middle ground, created cultural demands of its own. Cadillac shifted his position first. He indicated that the surrender of Le Pesant was more important than his death. "I wish him to be in my power, either to grant him his life or put him to death," he told Otontagan. Cadillac was, in effect, putting Le Pesant in the place of the slaves or captives usually given to raise the dead. Such cultural logic was more comprehensible to the Ottawas than a demand for execution, even if the surrender of a chief was without precedent. These were unusual conditions; the alliance itself was at stake. Otontagan agreed to deliver Le Pesant: "He is my brother, my own brother, but what can we do?" Since Otontagan and Kinouge, another headman, were, like Le Pesant, Sable Ottawas, they agreed to take responsibility for his surrender, thus making the matter an internal Sable matter and limiting the repercussions. In effect, a cultural fiction was agreed on. Cadillac and the Ottawas agreed to act as if Le Pesant were a slave being offered to the French in compensation for their dead. Cadillac would then determine if he lived or died. This made cultural sense in a way that Le Pesant's execution did not; it preserved the alliance, and it served the personal interests of both French and Ottawa negotiators.[70]

[69] Otontagan (Jean le Blanc), Kinouge, Meatinan, and Menukoueak were joined partway through the proceedings by Kataolauibois (Koutaouileone) and Onaske, who was headman of the Kiskakon Ottawas at Michilimackinac. Council held at Detroit, Aug. 6, 1707, Aug. 8, 1707, *MPHC* 33:331, 334; Speeches of Three Indians from Michilmackina (*sic*) Oct. 7, 1707, *MPHC* 33:362–64.

From the beginning of these negotiations, Otontagan and his brother, Miscouaky, had tried to lay the blame for the incident on Le Pesant. Speech of Miscouaky, Sept. 26, 1706, *MPHC* 33:288–89; Council with Ottawas, Speech of Jean le Blanc, June 18, 1707, Sheldon, *Early History of Michigan*, 234–35. Onaske and Le Pesant were engaged in a rivalry over whether the Ottawas should concentrate their settlements at Michilimackinac or Detroit. Onaske accused Le Pesant of giving the Iroquois gifts to come and attack the Ottawas of Michilimackinac. Father Marest to Vaudreuil, Aug. 14, 1706, *WHC* 16:238. Cadillac had earlier accused the Michilimackinac Ottawas of soliciting other nations to attack Detroit to force the Ottawas there to withdraw to Michilimackinac, Sheldon, *Early History of Michigan*, 196–97. Koutaouileone was also involved in the attempt to reunite the Ottawas at Michilimackinac. Marest to Vaudreuil, Aug. 27, 1706, *MPHC* 33:271. Cadillac's maneuverings will be discussed below. The French, of course, tried to use Ottawa divisions to their advantage, see Vaudreuil's comments on Cadillac's letter of Aug. 27, 1706, *MPHC* 33:282.

[70] Council Held at Detroit, Aug. 6, 1707, Speech of Cadillac *MPHC* 33:332. Council Held at Detroit, Replies of Otontagan, Aug. 6, 1707, Seventh Council, Speech of Onaske, *MPHC* 33:332–33, 335–36. Speeches of Three Indians from Michilimakina (*sic*), Oct. 7, 1707, *MPHC* 33:363–64.

There were two formidable obstacles to this solution. The first was the Miamis and the Huron-Petuns, whom Cadillac had made simple observers of the whole affair. For their benefit, Cadillac treated the Ottawa delegation imperiously. He gave the Huron-Petuns – and tried to give the Miamis – the Ottawa captives intended for Vaudreuil in order "to revive your dead a little – I do not say altogether." He even, in council, made the Huron-Petuns the elder brothers of the French alliance in place of the Ottawas. But he denied them revenge. He warned both nations that with the delivery of Le Pesant, he would consider the matter closed. "There shall be no blood left to be seen."[71]

The second obstacle was a practical one: Who exactly would persuade or force Le Pesant to consent to serve as a slave to the French? Who provided the solution to this problem is not known, but how it was solved is clear enough. A proceeding that had been half theater and half negotiation now became fully theater. After considerable negotiations at Michilimackinac, Le Pesant agreed to come to Detroit and surrender himself as a slave to the French. According to Vaudreuil, all that followed was prearranged between Le Pesant and an emissary of Cadillac. How much the other Ottawas or other Frenchmen knew of these arrangements is not clear.[72]

Cadillac compared the astonishment provoked by the appearance of Le Pesant at Detroit to that produced by the arrival of the Doge of Genoa in France. To evoke such a response, to make the Indians marvel at the culturally unimaginable things Cadillac and the French could achieve, was, in fact, the sole point of the drama now enacted at Detroit. Cadillac's production of "The Surrender of Le Pesant," however, had to play to a suspicious and critical audience of Miamis, Huron-Petuns, and those French officials who watched from afar. All of them were concerned not so

[71] The Huron-Petuns and Miamis wondered out loud why Cadillac should bother to demand Le Pesant when there were so many Ottawa chiefs in Detroit upon whom they could take revenge. Council Held at Detroit, Aug. 7, 1707, Aug. 9, 1707, *MPHC* 33:333–35; Speeches of Three Indians from Michilimakina (*sic*), Oct. 7, 1707, *MPHC* 33:363–64.

[72] How Le Pesant was persuaded, or forced, to come was not clear. Kataolauibois told Vaudreuil that it was Onaske, Sakima, Meyavila, and himself, all of them Kiskakons and Sinago Ottawas from Michilimackinac, who compelled Le Pesant to embark. He minimized the role of Otontagan, even though Onaske had stressed at Detroit that the surrender of Le Pesant was Otontagan's responsibility. Kataolauibois's account of negotiations is, however, sketchy and he told Vaudreuil that he would leave it to the Sieur de St. Pierre, who had been present, to give a full account. It appears clear, however, that Le Pesant in reaching his decision to come had to deal with strong pressure from leading men that he go. The pressure was strong enough so that Kataloauibois feared Le Pesant's revenge if Cadillac did not execute him. Speeches of Three Indians from Michilimakina (*sic*), Oct. 7, 1707, *MPHC* 33:365. Vaudreuil, deriving his account from the Sieur de St. Pierre, says that Le Pesant made private arrangements with the Sieur d'Argenteuil, Cadillac's emissary, to come to Detroit. Vaudreuil to Minister, Oct. 1, 1707, *MPHC* 33:354.

much with the plot as with the culturally symbolic details that gave the drama its meaning. Vaudreuil delivered the most extended review of the performance, although, as shall be seen, the Miamis were the most critical.[73]

Le Pesant, until now the Godot of this drama, put in his appearance at Detroit on September 24, 1707. He delivered his only recorded lines while looking to shore from the canoe that brought him. He trembled, either from malaria or fear, and said, "I see I am a dead man." Yet what Vaudreuil noted was his escort. He came with ten warriors who were not Kiskakon or Sinago Ottawas, but Sable Ottawas from his own village. They were sent, Vaudreuil said, not to deliver him but to protect him from angry Huron-Petuns and Miamis. Cadillac verbally abused Le Pesant, referring to him as his slave, but Cadillac spoke to Le Pesant on a wampum belt. One did not speak to slaves on wampum. One spoke to representatives of nations in that manner. The Ottawas then asked for Le Pesant's life and, offering a young slave, asked that they be allowed to return to Detroit.[74]

With Le Pesant's ritual submission, the first act ended. Le Pesant, Vaudreuil pointed out, had served his purpose. His continued presence now became a problem for Cadillac. Vaudreuil had ordered his death and Cadillac had earlier promised the Miamis and Huron-Petuns that he would kill him. But if Cadillac actually killed Le Pesant, he risked conflict with the Sable Ottawas and their allies on the Great Lakes. Le Pesant's surrender was useful; his continued presence was not.[75]

Cadillac and the Ottawas solved the problem by writing Le Pesant out of the script. That night, leaving behind his shoes, his knife, and his shabby hat, Le Pesant escaped from the fort at Detroit. Cadillac, in retaliation, locked up his escorts for a day and then released them, contending that Le Pesant would perish in the woods, and, in any case, his influence was now gone. Vaudreuil was skeptical. Le Pesant – whose name translates from the French as the heavy one, or the fat one – was notoriously obese and nearly seventy years old. That a seventy-year-old fat man whose surrender had been the object of French policy in the upper country for more than a year could escape past sentinels from a French fort on the first night of his captivity strained credibility. Cadillac's only explanation was that Le Pesant had lost a lot of weight lately. With Le Pesant gone, Cadillac assured the Ottawas that

[73] Cadillac to Vaudreuil (copy made), Oct. 1, 1707, *MPHC* 33:352–52. Words of the Ottawas to Cadillac, Sept. 24, 1707, *MPHC* 33:346–50. Vaudreuil to Minister, Oct. 1, 1707, *MPHC* 33:350–53.

[74] Cadillac to Vaudreuil (copy made), Oct. 1, 1707, *MPHC* 33:351–52; Words of the Ottawas to Cadillac, Sept. 24, 1707, *MPHC* 33:346–48; Vaudreuil to Minister, Oct. 1, 1707, *MPHC* 33:354–57.

[75] Vaudreuil to Minister, Oct. 1, 1707, *MPHC* 33:355–58.

he had intended to pardon him anyway, thus freeing himself from complicity in his death if the Huron-Petuns or Miamis should catch him.[76]

Vaudreuil, skeptical and critical as he was, appreciated good acting and clever staging, even as he deciphered the drama and explained away the illusions it sought to create. With both the Ottawas and the French acting according to script, the cultural demands of each had been met by creating an artificial and controlled stage, a special kind of middle ground. Vaudreuil appreciated this.[77]

The Miamis and Huron-Petuns were less enthusiastic. Their response to the drama was so harsh that Cadillac did not choose to fully report it. Instead, he reported only the closing part of the council that followed Le Pesant's escape and was attended by the Miamis, the Huron-Petuns, the French, and the Ottawas. In council, following the usual ritual forms, he calmed the waters, removed the fallen trees, smoothed the land, and opened the way for peace and the return of the Ottawas to Detroit.[78]

Unfortunately for Cadillac, the audience in historical dramas of this sort must consent to the script, for they always have the option of adding a final act. Le Pesant returned to Michilimackinac in the same canoe and with the same warriors who had escorted him down to Detroit, but this did not close the play. Cadillac had gained the Ottawas but lost the Miamis, who soon killed not only Ottawas but also Frenchmen, and so began yet another round of negotiations. The resolution of the killings at Detroit was thus only partially successful, but the negotiations are, nevertheless, illuminating. They reveal the substantial and expanding middle ground the French-Algonquian alliance had created. Here common problems could be worked out and mutually comprehensible solutions arrived at. The negotiations also reveal the extent to which solutions could be elaborately scripted cultural fictions, political theater. Such fictions deeply influenced events in both societies.[79]

V

Once established, the middle ground was extended in surprising directions. Killings the French once considered solely their own concern became

[76] Cadillac to Vaudreuil (copy made), Oct. 1, 1707, *MPHC* 33:351; Vaudreuil to Minister, Oct. 1, 1707, *MPHC* 33:355; Words of Ottawas to Cadillac Sept. 25, 1707, *MPHC* 33:348–50.

[77] Vaudreuil to Minister, Oct. 1, 1707, *MPHC* 33:355.

[78] Words of Ottawas to Cadillac, Sept. 25, 1707, *MPHC* 33:348–50.

[79] For the retaliation of the Miamis and the events which followed, see Vaudreuil and Raudot to Minister, Nov. 14, 1708, *MPHC* 33:403–5, 408; Father Marest to De Vaudreuil, June 4, 1708, *MPHC* 33:383–87; De Vaudreuil to Minister, Nov. 5, 1708, *MPHC* 33:395–99;

issues to be settled on the middle ground. On April 25, 1723, a French soldier spoke "impertinently" to a warehouse keeper, a man named Perillaut, who responded by running his sword through the soldier's body. The French tried Perillaut and condemned him to death, but Perillaut, as warehouse keeper (or *maître de la marchandise*, as the Indians called him), had had many dealings with the Illinois, and his death sentence disturbed them deeply. On April 29 three chiefs of the Kaskaskias, accompanied by thirty warriors, appeared to plead for his life. They were followed in early May by a Cahokia delegation that included Marie Rompiechoue (or Rokipiekoue). This woman, who was "greatly respected in her village and among the French," was the wife of a Cahokia, Joseph Ouissakatchakoue. In all likelihood, Marie Rompiechoue was Aramepinchieue, the daughter of Rouensa who had married Michel Accault thirty years earlier. The actions and speeches of these delegations, particularly those of the Kaskaskia chiefs Kiraoueria and Michel, present a clear picture of eighteenth-century Algonquian views on murder and revenge, and of how such views could influence French actions.[80]

Kiraoueria, a Kaskasia chief who was "of the Prayer" (a Christian), held a particularly advantageous position for articulating Indian logic and extending it to French affairs. The Kaskaskias opened matters by presenting the calumet, a symbol of friendship and alliance. The French knew from a half century of experience that to accept the calumet was to grant the giver's request. Kiraoueria then tried to bring the French to their senses. "Would you," he asked, "spill the blood of a Frenchman to blot out the blood of another and would you add to the loss of one man the loss of another?" This was folly. If the French insisted on killing someone to cover the body of the soldier, then they should strike the Fox and Chickasaws, their enemies. These people would be full of joy when they heard that the French had, in

Report of D'Aigremont, Nov. 14, 1708, *MPHC* 33:937–40. For the reaction of the Ottawas to Le Pesant's surrender, see Speeches of Three Indians from Michilimakina (*sic*), Oct. 7, 1707, *MPHC* 33:365.

[80] This account is partially drawn from the report of Boisbriant Diron Desurins Legardeur De L'isle Ste. Therese Langloisere of June 17, 1723, in Schlarman, *From Quebec to New Orleans*, 225–31. For original, see Chefs du villages . . . , 17 juin 1793, AN, F3, v. 24, f. 157 Moreau St. Mery. The account of the Cahokia delegation and Marie Rompiechoue is from a document of May 11, 1723, entitled Remis par M. Diron, AN, C13A, v. 7, f. 322. That Marie Rompiechoue was Aramepinchieue is made likely by (1) the similarity of their names, (2) the fact that Aramepinchieue's baptismal name was Marie (see Palm, "Jesuit Missions," p. 38), and (3) the high standing of both women among the Illinois and the French. Aramepinchieue was still alive in 1723 because four years later the French ransomed "the Illinois woman who passed as the wife of michelako" from the Fox who were about to burn her. Accault was by now presumably dead. Deliette to Lignery, Oct. 15, 1726, *WHC* 17:18. For an additional, briefer account of the murder, see "Journal of Diron D'Artaguiette . . . ," in Newton D. Mereness, *Travels in the American Colonies* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1916), 75–77.

effect, avenged the Chickasaws and Fox's dead by killing one another.[81]

Kiraoueria then went on to explain the Algonquian view of murder. Murderers were madmen, and no nation could glory in being free of them. But they were not permanently mad. They could be redeemed, and rather than their being killed, the relatives of their victims should be compensated and the blood of the victim covered. More blood should not be spilled on top of it. But Kiraoueria did not expect the French simply to accept Algonquian logic. In the usual manner of creating the middle ground, he connected what he was saying with French culture. He joined it with Christianity:

> I know that the Great Spirit, the Spirit Creator, God, forbids us, my father, to kill our children. . . . But does not God, who is Master of all, raise his eyes above our follies when we ask him to be no longer angry? He forgives; pardon as He does, my fathers, and for the love of Him.[82]

Finally, Kiraoueria and Michel, a war chief, appealed to the underlying basis of the middle ground, the alliance, and the symbol of peace and alliance, the calumet. Kiraoueria begged the French not to humiliate him and his chiefs by refusing their request. Michel cited times when Kaskaskias had lost their lives to avenge the French and how those warriors remained unavenged at the request of the French. Those men, warriors for whom revenge should be taken, lay uncovered, and now the Kaskaskias were being asked to watch the French take inappropriate vengeance on one another.[83]

The affair, so phrased, was, as the French commander Boisbriant realized, "a delicate matter." To send the Illinois away without a concession was dangerous, particularly when Michel had obliquely raised the matter of the uncovered Kaskaskia dead. Boisbriant, in delivering his response, insisted that the affair set no precedent, but he agreed to petition the king for Perillaut's pardon and release. Those Kaskaskias who "have died to avenge the Frenchman, cover the body of the one who has now been killed." So ended the first recorded criminal case tried by the French in Illinois. Perillaut was free that May. He owed his freedom, just as fifty years before the son of Achiganaga owed his death, to an evolving cultural logic that sprang from the convergences, some accidental, some quite close, of two different cultural systems faced with a common set of problems.[84]

Separately, the stories of Dulhut and Achiganaga's sons, of Le Pesant and Cadillac, and of Perillaut and Kiraoueria are incidents widely scattered over

[81] *Ibid.*, 226–27. Kiraoueria's position was not unusual; Joachim, a Michigame chief, was also of the prayer. He had married three of his daughters to Frenchmen. St. Ange au Ministre, n.d., (1733) AN, C13A, v. 17, f. 248. For an Illinois interpretation of patriarchal relations, see Parolles de Chachagouesse . . . chez Illinois du 20 aoust 1712, AN, C11A, v. 33.

[82] *Ibid.*, 227.

[83] *Ibid.*, 227–30.

[84] *Ibid.*, 228–31.

time and space, but together they form an evolving ritual of surrender and redemption that would be central to the French-Algonquian alliance. This ritual of the middle ground clearly drew elements from both cultures but fully corresponded to neither. The ritual operated by analogy. The murderer was to the governor as a sinner was to God. The governor was to the murderer as a stern but forgiving father was to an erring son. Such analogies were hooks, both attaching the new ritual to the purely Algonquian or French way of settling murders and pulling elements of the older process into the middle ground. As under the French system, Indian murderers would be imprisoned while their crimes were investigated; as under the Algonquian system, Indian and French dead would be covered or raised up.

Once formulated, this ritual of surrender and redemption became a centerpiece of the middle ground. Orders from Governor Duquesne to the Sieur de Pean in 1754 expressed its basic elements well: "He must manage to see that he obtains the murderers, to whom he will grant pardon in the customary manner." The ritual, however, was under constant pressure from Frenchmen who, having seen to it that murderers were surrendered, wished to see these murderers executed, and from Algonquians who hesitated to surrender kinspeople for even temporary imprisonment before their pardon "in the customary manner." Each murder, each surrender, and each pardon thus became a test of the health of the alliance. Onontio's failure to pardon and his children's failure to surrender signaled crises that only a renewal of the ritual could resolve. Like all structural elements of culture, the ritual remained meaningful only insofar as it was constantly replicated in action.[85]

What was being created in social action was a world very different from the one historians would expect to find if they relied on the older ethnographies. Nor does the evolution of this world conform to much acculturation literature with the gradual adoption by Indians of certain European values. Instead, members of two cultures established an alliance that they both thought furthered interests generated within their own societies. They maintained this alliance through rituals and ceremonials based on cultural parallels and congruences, inexact and artificial as they originally may have been. These rituals and ceremonials were not the decorative covering of the alliance; they were its sinews. They helped bind together a common world to solve problems, even killings, that threatened the alliance itself. These solutions might have been, as at Detroit, elaborate cultural fictions, but through them change occurred. Such changes, worked out on the middle ground, could be remarkably influential, bringing important modifications in each society and blurring the boundaries between them.

[85] Instruction de Duquesne à Pean, 9 may 1754, in Fernand Grenier (ed.), *Papiers Contrecoeur, et autres documents concernant le conflit anglo-français sur l'Ohio de 1745 à 1756* (Quebec: Les presses universitaires, Laval, 1952), 122.