



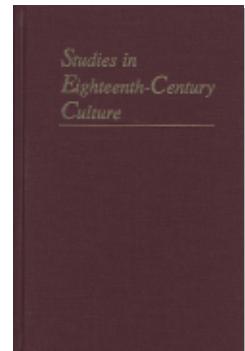
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# Marvelous Maples: Visions of Maple Sugar in New France, 1691–1761

NATHAN D. BROWN

This is the study of a breakfast topping. At first glance, this would seem far afield from eighteenth-century studies. Yet, the dark, thick, boiled down tree sap known as maple syrup, which twenty-first century North Americans frequently pour on top of their morning pancakes and waffles, has a surprising connection to the eighteenth-century colonial project in North America, particularly New France.<sup>1</sup> In this article I contend that this natural sweetener, which remains an important economic engine and cultural touchstone in modern day Québec, troubled eighteenth-century French beliefs about their own mastery of knowledge, the environment, technology, and the Indigenous Peoples of the Great Lakes.<sup>2</sup> Toward this end, I analyze and assess descriptions of maple sugar in both French texts, such as those by Sieur de Dièreville, Baron de Lahontan, Joseph-François de Lafitau, and Pierre-Xavier de Charlevoix, and in texts associated with different Native Peoples.

Recent scholarship on the French colonial project in North America has focused heavily on contact between the French and the Indigenous Peoples of the region. Apart from missionaries sent to evangelize, interactions between the communities in eighteenth-century Canada were predicated on material and commercial exchange, typically of manufactured goods for beaver skins and other pelts. In these exchanges, scholars have drawn out colonial discourses that had been neglected by traditional research methods.<sup>3</sup>

Likewise, the ecocritical turn in the humanities shows the importance of better understanding what Christopher M. Parsons has recently called “colonial political ecology.”<sup>4</sup> Together these two scholarly paradigms reveal the importance of taking seriously the discursive potentiality of a seemingly quotidian product like maple sugar. After all, it was through interaction with the Natives that the French learned about the sugar maples of New France and the sweet sap that flows from the trees in the spring. As such, maple sugar lies at the intersection of the ecocritical and cross-cultural discourses and economics that have become the focus of many scholars in contemporary eighteenth-century studies.

Although contemporary North Americans are most acquainted with maple sugar as a syrup or as maple candy, in the eighteenth century it took a variety of forms. As such, “maple sugar” is an admittedly vague term that stands in for a plurality of products from eighteenth-century New France. French writers from the period could be frustratingly imprecise about what they mean by “maple sugar.” For André Thevet, Diéreville, and Lahontan, maple was a beverage, compared favorably to a fine wine or lemonade. Pehr Kalm and Charlevoix at times describe a liquid with a cough-syrup-like viscosity (and similar medicinal properties). At other times, those writers compare it to a spread or even a loaf comprised of compressed grains of sugar. These various products all fell under the umbrella of “maple sugar,” although terms like “juice” (*suc*) and “maple water” (*eau d’érable*) were sometimes used as well. Despite this conflation, the prevalence of the term “sugar” in regards to maple in these texts underlines the material connection to its cane cousin in the minds of French writers. In short, they were building an epistemology of sweetness that foregrounded maple as a substitute for sugar cane. This imprecision also had economic implications as it reveals that maple sugar had no clear uniformity at the time. Throughout the period, maple products remained largely an artisanal, small-batch phenomenon that the French and Indigenous Peoples produced for their own private consumption. What is clear is that maple sugar was a multivalent product that captured both the philosophical and economic imagination of the writers of New France.

At the same time, maple sugar was a quotidian product in eighteenth-century Canada. By all accounts, it had already become a staple in the French colonial diet by the mid-eighteenth century. As the Swedish botanist Pehr Kalm writes in *En resa til Norra America* (1753–61): “practically every soldier in the French forts manufactures a year’s supply of this necessity for himself in the spring. If you visit the French you will see no other sugar used.”<sup>5</sup> Since cane sugar from the islands was expensive to import to Canada, maple sugar was a sweetener for the masses: “the common people eat sugar with the bread or spread it on the bread thick.”<sup>6</sup> But, maple sugar was no mere substitute and was considered by most to be superior to its cane counterpart.

Under Kalm's pen, maple sugar is practically a health food with medicinal properties by comparison: "it is more healthful than ordinary sugar and is unusually good for the chest and its diseases."<sup>7</sup> With such ubiquity and praise, maple sugar was a product that greatly affected the lived experience of French settlers, as well as the Native People from whom they learned the process. Yet, maple sugar has received little scholarly attention.

The reasons for this are rather straightforward. Outside of eighteenth-century Canada, maple sugar never achieved the same status as other products from the New World. Cane sugar from the islands, tobacco, and cotton were traded on an international scale; maple sugar was not. Why did maple sugar fail to enter international trade systems? Lack of proper storage methods left maple sugar prone to spoilage, and the short intensive season made sustained agricultural interest difficult. Maple trees are unpredictable and the weather's vagaries make forecasting maple sap output difficult. Efforts at large-scale maple production were, as eco-scholars have noted, "frequently met with forces of cultural and environmental resistance."<sup>8</sup> The abundance of maple trees also made the development of a market difficult. As Kalm's account suggests, supply met localized demand as the French colonists and Native Peoples in Canada produced and consumed their entire stock themselves.

Despite the tantalizing possibility of turning the fledgling colony along the Saint Lawrence into a veritable sugar colony, interest in maple sugar as a possible large-scale substitute for cane sugar was slow to take form.<sup>9</sup> It took the upheavals in the Caribbean sugar colonies of the 1790s, which disturbed the cane market and fueled abolitionist opposition to cane sugar among Europeans and settler communities, to spark a reassessment of maple sugar within the larger Atlantic world.<sup>10</sup> As a result, maple sugar remained a geographically limited product throughout the eighteenth century.

Nonetheless, maple sugar represented a natural marvel and an early cultural touchstone for French colonists. It also represented a potential source of profits. We will remember that New France, not having the mines of Spanish South America or a navigable Northwest passage to India, somewhat lacked a clear *raison d'être*. Accordingly, the search for viable raw goods was a perennial preoccupation for both colonial and metropolitan administrators. For writers like Charlevoix, maple sugar held the possibility of diversifying the colony's economy. Along with ginseng, Charlevoix saw in maple a possible commercial product that could reinforce the importance of the colony to a mercantilist metropole. Maple sugar must be contextualized within the logic of this system. While ginseng harvesting held promise and had some success as an export, New France largely remained a subsistence farming economy with an additional monoculture focused on buying and selling beaver and other animal pelts.<sup>11</sup>

Beyond the intriguing—but ultimately unrealized—economic possibilities, maple sugar also fueled utopian visions of New France and shaped colonial discourses about Native Americans in ways we have yet to fully appreciate. For example, what were French travelers to make of Indigenous women who crafted the various forms of this marvelous sugar? As a natural marvel tied to indigenous *savoir-faire*, and as a potential alternative to its cane cousin, maple sugar played an unexpectedly important role in the formation of early modern discourses of civilizational contact and the colonial project in the North American French empire, at least among certain writers of New France.

To date, the few scholarly articles on maple sugar in the eighteenth-century world have focused almost exclusively on the United States. Mark Sturges's 2018 article, “‘Bleed on, Blest Tree!’: Maple Sugar Georgics in the Early American Republic,” exemplifies this approach. Sturges highlights the ways in which the American boosters of maple sugar blended abolitionist rhetoric with a georgic yearning for rustic, small-scale farm life in the new American republic of the 1790s.<sup>12</sup> As Sturges notes, the other extant scholarly works implicating maple sugar tend to focus on nationalist or proto-capitalist topics in the early United States, particularly the so-called maple bubble of the 1820s.<sup>13</sup> However, the Anglo-American leaders of the fledgling republic, such as Thomas Jefferson, William Cooper, and Benjamin Rush, seem to have only “discovered” maple’s potential late in the eighteenth century. Lucien Campeau, for example, notes in his 1990 essay, “Les origines du sucre d’érable,” that the word “maple” is nowhere to be found in the early archives of New York State, although it was one of the British colonies closest to New France.<sup>14</sup> As such, current research on maple, while provocative and insightful, does not fully attend to French and Native American contributions. This is unfortunate because the discourses around maple sugar, like those around cane sugar, transcended national and imperial boundaries and were instrumentalized for different ends in the Atlantic World.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, French visions of maple sugar were particularly well established and developed long before those in English.

Indeed, French colonists in Canada had an extensive history with maple sugar. For example, in his 1567 work, *Les Singularitez de la France antarctique*, André Thevet, who documented Jacques Cartier’s voyages, gives an account of maple consumption by the Cartier expedition:

[Canada] has several trees and fruits, which we don’t have any knowledge about. Among these is a tree the size and shape of a large walnut from one side to another, which remained useless for a long time, and unknown, until someone wanting to cut it down brought forth a juice, which was found to be as good tasting and delicate as a fine wine from Orleans or Beaune: our people who

were able to experience it judged it similarly: that is to say, the Captain, and other gentlemen in his entourage, and they gathered in an hour four or five large pots of this juice. I'll let you think, if from then on these Canadians attached to this liqueur did not keep this tree dearly for their drinks since it was so excellent. This tree, in their language, is called *Couton*.<sup>16</sup>

This short passage highlights many of the themes and rhetoric around maple in the French New World that will continue into the eighteenth century. The lexicographic field clearly depicts maple sugaring as a *native* knowledge, something “we don’t have any knowledge about.” It was also supposedly discovered serendipitously, and its products are compared favorably to ones from other colonies or the metropole—in this case, wine. Finally, maple sap is described as abundant, thereby rendering the tree itself valuable. Despite Thevet’s rather commendatory description of maple’s properties, the archives provide little indication that maple consumption was widespread in the decades following this initial discovery. In his review of the *Jesuit Relations*, for example, Campeau finds few references to maple sugar among the missionaries and not a single description of the sugaring process by the religious order.<sup>17</sup> We must wait for the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to find more consistent references to maple production and use. By 1691, Chrétien Le Clerq, a missionary to the Mi’kmaq nation of the Gaspesian peninsula, gives a brief, but thorough description of maple sugaring in his work, *Nouvelle relation de la Gaspésie*. He claims, “As for maple water … it is equally delicious for the French and the Savages.”<sup>18</sup> French use in the colony seems common, although the product was little known in the metropole: “little loaves are formed from it, which are rarely sent to France, and which in everyday use replaces French sugar.”<sup>19</sup> Despite the relative absence of a transatlantic trade in maple sugar, by the late eighteenth century, knowledge of it had crossed the Atlantic, and Denis Diderot and Jean Le Rond d’Alembert included an entry on it in the *Encyclopédie*.<sup>20</sup> At minimum, this suggests that cane’s maple cousin was known among the learned populations of Europe by 1780. The entry, which predates widespread consumption or familiarity with the maple products in the metropole, was drawn from travelers’ accounts. Therefore, the texts about and from New France in the late seventeenth and early to mid-eighteenth centuries are of significant value in understanding the rise of the discourses around maple in the French empire.

Visions of maple sugar did not arise in a vacuum and must be contextualized within a larger ecological and discursive framework that shaped visions of New France. Foremost among the contexts to consider is the role of the woods in the colonial imagination. European travelers to

Canada often commented on what they presumed were two interconnected aspects of the physical world of Canada: it was extremely wooded and extremely cold. The dense forests of New France supposedly represented both the cause of and the cure for its unfortunate climate. Charlevoix, a Catholic priest and traveler to New France, gives voice to this tension in *Histoire et description générale de la Nouvelle France* (1744). As he writes, “there is indeed no Want of Wood to provide against the Cold, which soon becomes excessive.”<sup>21</sup> Thus, the trees provide all the fuel needed to keep warm in the winter. Moreover, colonists were free to cut down the trees in New France, a privilege not afforded to French peasants in the metropole. At the same time, the trees were also (wrongly) supposed to be the source of the cold climate. As Charlevoix explains, “the greatest Part of the Authors, who have treated on this Matter, have satisfied themselves with saying, that this long and severe Cold proceeds from the Snow’s lying so long on the Ground, that it is impossible that the Ground should be well warmed again” (133–34). The sheer number of trees, it seems, were preventing the snow from melting, thereby keeping the weather cool. Charlevoix remains somewhat dubious of such simplistic links:

there is no Doubt but that, generally speaking, the Mountains, Woods, and Lakes, contribute much to it; but. . . [w]e cannot allow that we should attribute the Cold, of which we seek the Cause, to any of the Causes I have just mentioned . . . for there is nothing to answer against Experience, which makes us sensible of the Abatement of the Cold, in Proportion as the Country is cleared of the Woods, altho’ it is not in so great a Proportion as it ought to be, if the Thickness of the Woods was the principal Cause of it. (134)

Charlevoix presents an empirical and holistic vision of the possible causes of the cold weather of New France, which lies after all, at a similar latitude as France. In so doing, he gives voice to the ecological mystery that was the New World environment.<sup>22</sup> In order to solve such a befuddling environment, he suggests a sort of human-made global warming brought on by cutting down the trees, settling the land, and planting crops: “if Canada was as free from Woods, and as well peopled as France, the Winters would not be so long and so severe” (137). His belief in the power of humans to change the ecological conditions of their world is clear; the French have come to change nature itself to suit their needs.

Clearing forests and trying to cultivate land when winter lasts six months is, of course, not the most attractive of options. Colonists had little interest in doing so, a fact that did not escape notice by both Charlevoix and colonial

administrators. Instead, settlers preferred to trade beaver skins and other pelts with the Indigenous Peoples of the region. While the metropole profited from this activity, they also viewed this type of commerce with suspicion. Interactions with Natives and the very environment of Canada supposedly made colonists lazy and independent. Charlevoix insists that “the Air which they breathe in this vast Continent contributes to” the “flaws” [“défauts”] of “Canadiens français”: “our Adventurers, whom they call here *Coureurs de Bois*, (*Forest Rangers*) … who taking a Liking to Independency, and a wandering Life … from whence it proceeds, that Arts have been a long Time neglected, that much good Land lies still uncultivated, and that the Country is not peopled” (47–48). In fact, the French became like the Indigenous Peoples, whom Charlevoix terms the “Sauvages.” Indeed, the “*Coureurs de Bois*” “remained among the Savages; from whom they could not be distinguished, but by their Vices” (47). The forest, and the lifestyle of Indigenous populations, supposedly promised a life of “vicious” independence, as opposed to the joys of settled agrarian life.

There is, in fact, an etymological link between “*sauvage*” and “*courieur des bois*.” Both terms refer to the forest: the Latin root of “savage” is, after all, *silvia* [wood] or *silvaticus* [of the woods]. The term “*courieur des bois*”—literally, “wood runner”—also references the woods, underlining the extent to which this subset of the French settler community was defined by its relationship with the forest. In short, a “*courieur de bois*” is a “savage” by another name. As this terminology reveals, writing about New France was a deeply ecocritical endeavor for Charlevoix, as he draws the link between nature and the culture of the French in North America. The French had come to reshape North America, but it was North America that reshaped them.<sup>23</sup>

Within this context, it would be easy enough to assume the woods were a *locus terribilis* —a horrible place of danger—to be avoided. Yet, even as Charlevoix associates the forests with the undesirable effects of French wandering and fraternizing with the Natives, he also views the trees favorably. Charlevoix calls the woods, “the Finest Forests in the World” (71). He is wonderstruck by their expansiveness: “nothing is more magnificent to the Sight; the Trees lose themselves in the Clouds” (71). The economic potential is clear: “as there is not perhaps a Country in the World that has more Variety of Wood, nor a better Sort: Judge what Riches this may one Day produce” (49). Moreover, for Charlevoix, the woods are gifts from God: “In all Appearance they are as old as the World itself, and were not planted by the Hands of Men” (125). Representations of forests as a godsend continue in Charlevoix’s treatment of the game in the forests and the abundant fish of Canada’s rivers. He draws on religious imagery to describe the forests and rivers that “furnish the Inhabitants with two Sorts

of Manna" (137). The use of the term "manna," of course, draws a clear comparison between the products of Canada's forests and the miraculous food given to the Jewish people by God in the book of Exodus. In contrast to the dangerous independence the forest provided for the "*coureurs de bois*," here the woods are a *locus amoenus*—a source of sustenance amid the bitter cold of New France.

It is within this tension around the forests of New France that maple sugar discourses emerge. Charlevoix describes maple sugar as a miraculous food for the people of New France. For example, in his passage on maple sugaring, Charlevoix concludes his otherwise dry description of the practice of maple sugar harvesting by asking Mme de Lesdiguières, his hypothetical reader, rhetorically: "Could you have believed, Madam, that we should find in *Canada*, what *Virgil* says in foretelling the Renewal of the golden Age, that Honey should flow from the Trees?" (84). Charlevoix here references Virgil's fourth eclogue in which the Roman poet predicts the arrival of a new age when "a golden race [will] spring up throughout the world!" and "the stubborn oak [will] distill dewy honey."<sup>24</sup> Seen in this context, Charlevoix's allusion to Virgil's Golden Age illustrates the potential he saw in New France and his hope for the settler community. The discovery of this sugar promises a "Renewal" and a return to the glory of antiquity. As the use of the past conditional ("Could you have believed ...") and subjunctive mood ("should find") suggest, this is quite contrary to expectations. Yet, these references to antiquity typify French colonial rhetoric that scholars have drawn out in other research.<sup>25</sup> By linking the French empire to the Romans, the French are employing a discourse of *translatio imperii* as they portray themselves as the rightful torchbearers of Western civilization. As Charlevoix brags, "the *French Empire* in America, [is] of greater Extent than was ever that of the Romans" (31). By depicting Canada as the land of honey and in favorable contrast to the Roman Empire, he recasts the French colonial project in Canada. Under his pen, it becomes a reflection of French grandeur and an example of heavenly favor bestowed upon the French empire. Maple sugar was the supposed physical manifestation of this favor.

Beyond the forest and ancient prophecies, maple sugar also fared well in contrast with cane sugar. Sieur de Dièreville's passage about maple sugar from his 1708 *Relation du voyage du Port Royal de l'Acadie, ou de la Nouvelle France*, is representative of the frequent comparisons made between the two sugars. In his passage about maple sugaring, Dièreville inserts a poem into his narrative in which he lauds maple sugar:

In place of cane whose pores  
Make white sugar that comes from afar,  
For the Acadians, nature took care  
To place some in the sycamores.  
At the beginning of spring,  
From their bark comes a sweet liqueur,  
Which the inhabitants with great care  
Gather in each land.  
This drink seemed good to me,  
I drank it in gulps;  
It only needed some lemon  
To make a lemonade.<sup>26</sup>

Dièreville's poem lends itself to several observations about the rhetorical strategies around maple at the time. First, he draws a clear link between the cane sugar of the islands and the maple sugar of New France. They become foils for one another, accentuated by the rhyme that couples cane sugar's "pores" and maple sugar's "sycamores." Second, he draws our attention to the ubiquity of the sugar maples. Third, their harvesting would appear to require little work. Although the Acadians may need to take "great care" to acquire the liquid sugar of the maples—by tapping the trees correctly, for example—they are relatively passive in the sugar's creation, simply "gathering" it. Unlike the intense production needed to render cane sugar consumable, this sweet beverage only lacks a bit of lemon to be perfect.

The advantages of maple sugar over cane sugar were frequently touted and made explicit by travel writers. On this point, the Baron de Lahontan and Charlevoix—who, at times, are antagonistic regarding other issues—are in agreement. Lahontan praises maple in superlative terms in his 1703 *Mémoire*: "there is no lemonade nor cherry water with such a nice taste, nor any drink in the world that is healthier."<sup>27</sup> Charlevoix echoes Lahontan, but contextualizes maple sugar within the larger colonial project and mercantilist impulses of France. Charlevoix writes: "this Sugar made with Care, and it requires much less than ours, is natural, pectoral, and does not burn the Stomach ... it is certain, that as it comes out of the Hands of the Savages, it is purer and much better than the Sugar of the Islands" (84). This Native technology, improved by the French, becomes better than cane sugar. While acknowledging, backhandedly, the debt owed to Native People, Charlevoix also subtly highlights maple sugar as a product borne of hybrid technology. If the Natives taught the French about the marvelous maples, it was French refinement and purification that made it a suitable potential substitute for cane sugar.

Furthermore, its advantages reinforced the Virgilian prophecy discussed above. Joseph-François Lafitau, author of the proto-ethnographic *Moeurs des Sauvages américains* (1724), was arguably even more emphatic about maple sugar's superiority to cane than Dièreville, Lahontan, and Charlevoix. As he wrote in a particularly illustrative passage: "for the sugar we use today is an artificial sugar. The cane from which we draw it, is a knotty stalk, spongy, with a very thin peel, and full of a very sweet honey-like material. Canes are broken by Mills; where the juice is expressed by presses. ... It is a method of making sugar and refining it that the Ancients did not know."<sup>28</sup> The vocabulary is revelatory of his disdain of cane sugar; it is "factice": fake or imitation. It must be refined and purified, requiring mills, presses, and slave labor, which he elides. Cane sugar is a new product and thus innately inferior to maple, the "natural" sugar, according to the battle lines drawn in the longstanding quarrel between the ancients and the moderns. Moreover, Lafitau shares with Charlevoix a belief that maple sugar represents a regeneration of the world according to Virgilian prophecy. As he suggests: "The Poets in their descriptions of the Golden Age, or the Centuries that are compared to it, tell us that among other miracles, the hardest oaks distilled or will distill honey ... our Savages show that they know more than them, having learned to draw from maple ... a natural juice that is just as, or more, pleasing, than Bees' honey."<sup>29</sup> Canada, in this description, becomes the land of honey and its Native Peoples the new Romans. In fact, by suggesting that the Natives "know more than them," Lafitau implies that their maple technology places Indigenous People in some ways above the Romans. The discovery of maple sugar represents a return to a golden age, a replication of the glory of Rome. The passage also gestures toward New France as a new Eden, a persistent motif that scholars have noted elsewhere in the study of North American colonization.<sup>30</sup> While we cannot discount the propagandist nature of the accounts of Lafitau and Charlevoix, the internal logic of these passages challenges their facile notions of European supremacy and Indigenous backwardness or degeneration, judgments that they express elsewhere in their texts.

At the same time, French accounts gender Indigenous knowledge, placing maple sugaring squarely within the traditional feminine domain of Native women. In Lafitau's comments on the sugaring process, for example, we learn that "the French work it better than the Savage women from whom they learned to make it."<sup>31</sup> In this way, Lafitau creates what Louis Montrose calls "a powerful conjunction of the savage and the feminine."<sup>32</sup> If we put aside the Eurocentrism of Lafitau's comments, what remains clear is the debt that Europeans owed to Indigenous women for their knowledge of maple sugar. This is clearly a Native female technology; supposedly

perfected by the French, of course. This is important because while maple sugar has been appropriated by the Europeans, the Indigenous communities have not yet been erased from the narrative.<sup>33</sup> Thus, in his acknowledgment of the Indigenous roots and subsequent refinement of maple sugar by the French, Lafitau already points to a process of hybridization of cultures and technology.

This emphasis on hybridization helps explain the pictorial representation of maple sugaring in Lafitau's *Moeurs des Sauvages* (see Figure 1). At first glance, the image seems to be a straightforward depiction of the tapping of maples by Indigenous People. It shows various steps of maple production: drawing forth the sap, boiling it down, and creating maple loaves for consumption. Yet, in its depiction of Native People in various agricultural activities, the print actually offers an idyllic vision of colonial progress, as imagined by French officials. For example, copper pots and roaring fires, as depicted in the bottom left corner of the image, were not the traditional method of reducing maple sap.<sup>34</sup> Although European copper kettles were traded among the Mi'kmaq in the Arcadian peninsula from the late sixteenth century, these, as Laurier Turgeon points out, "were reserved for ceremonial and ritual use ... copper kettles did not replace traditional earthenware pots."<sup>35</sup> Moreover, Sue Denholm has noted that "no firm archeological evidence" suggests that flat bottom copper pots, like those shown in the engraving, were used by Native Peoples in eastern North America before the nineteenth century.<sup>36</sup> The depiction in *Moeurs des Sauvages*, therefore, is most likely anachronistic in its suggestion that Indigenous communities had incorporated European technology in the sugaring process. As the eye moves up the engraving beyond the maple sugaring, the viewer sees a more agrarian use of land. Natives clear the forest and till the soil using what appear to be European, rather than Native, hoes. The crop they are sowing is decidedly New World and Indigenous, according to Lafitau's description of the plate: "The fields, as they are at the end of winter; it shows women busy giving them their first toiling, and planting their maize in their fashion."<sup>37</sup> In this way, corn harvesting and maple sugaring become examples of Natives blending their practices with European technology. This is an idealized colonial vision of Indigenous People making their first steps towards acculturation and hybridization under the auspices of the imperial project.

Several aspects of the image drive home the notion that this is a piece of colonial imagination rather than an earnest depiction of the maple sugaring process. First, the image depicts the climate of the sugaring season quite improbably. We see little evidence of snow, for example. In addition, the Indigenous People are dressed only in skirts with their torsos exposed. Maple sugaring season, of course, takes place in the spring between February and

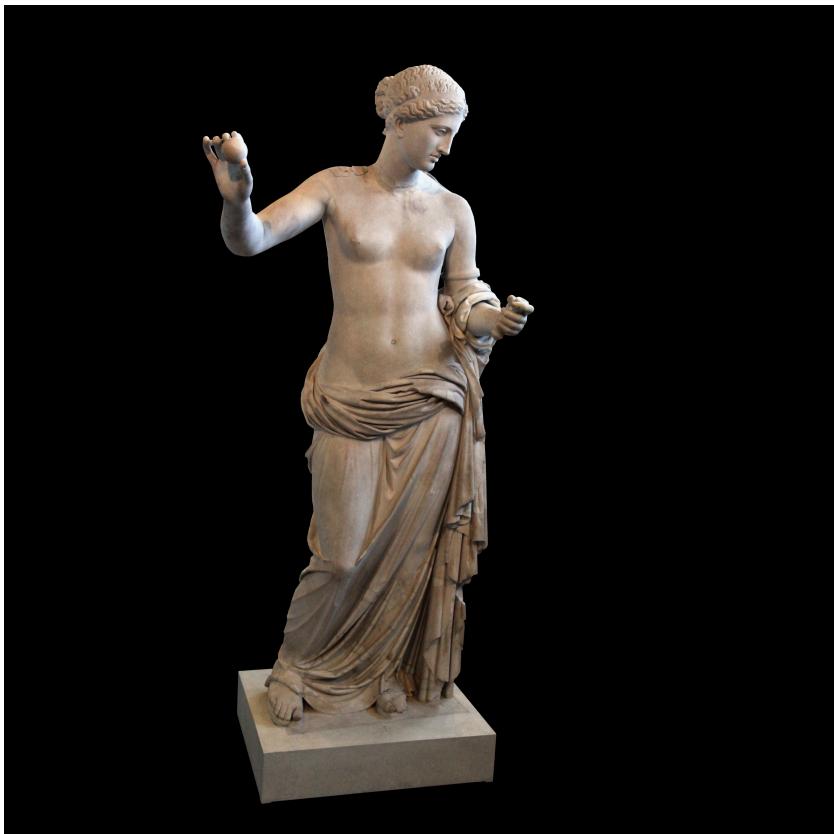


**Figure 1.** An idealized depiction of Indigenous agriculture from Joseph-François Lafitau, *Moeurs des sauvages américains, comparées aux moeurs des premiers temps* (Paris: Chez Saugrain l'aîné, 1724). Courtesy of The Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, The Ohio State University.

April when temperatures remain chilly and the ground is still too hard to till in eastern Canada. Native women would not be planting corn at the same time as others tapped the maple trees. Lafitau was aware of this and admitted as much, since he indicates that March was the sugaring season and explains that in order for the maple to produce sap, “it is necessary for there to be a certain quantity of snow at the foot” of the tree.<sup>38</sup> Rather than verisimilitude, the juxtaposition of the two moments in the agricultural year suggests a certain “settledness,” which, in turn, gestures toward a use of the land that aligns with colonial desires. In this way, both maple sugaring and corn harvesting represent an imagined ideal of agrarian “progress,” in which Indigenous Peoples demonstrated that they were willing participants in the imperial ambitions of France by settling and clearing the land.

The apparent clemency of the climate depicted in the illustration from *Moeurs des Sauvages*, more akin to a vision of the tropics, helps create an amalgam of various French colonial projects. The image blends North and South and attempts to tie into a cohesive whole the colonial projects of the French Caribbean sugar islands with the frigid terrain of Canada. This juxtaposition, or rather confusion, in the image under consideration is an example of what Michel de Certeau refers to in his analysis of Lafitau as “the comparatist technique of the ‘connection.’”<sup>39</sup> In other words, the image suggests an erroneous temporal link between maple sugaring and corn harvesting. As such, it invites the viewer to locate what Certeau calls a “‘space between’ ... where we are to situate the springboard that lets the work function as a ‘system.’ A ruse is the condition of possibility of this science. This ruse is an art of *playing on two places*.<sup>40</sup> In the print we are considering, the artist has created “a ruse” of space and time. He is playing on two temporal moments and two climates from different colonial endeavors, uniting them in the same physical space for propagandist ends.

The illustration also plays on erotic tropes of non-European women, common in eighteenth-century Europe.<sup>41</sup> In the image’s figures, we can see what Certeau refers to as “an *eroticism of the origin*. They offer *that which one can still see* of the ‘first times.’”<sup>42</sup> Not only is Lafitau depicting “primitive” times, but he is also endowing the central figure in the image with a certain nobility, as her pose recalls statues from classical antiquity. This blending of Native eroticism, suggested by the central figure’s nudity, with certain elements of Greco-Roman artistic positioning presents the figure as an Indigenous Venus. With her knees slightly bent and a tunic-like dress covering her lower torso, she recalls the Venus d’Arles, to cite just one possible example, a statue displayed in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles from 1681 until the French Revolution (see Figure 2). Similarly, her outstretched arms and distant gaze share many of the hallmarks of classical



**Figure 2.** The Venus d'Arles. First century BCE. Marble, 194 cm, Musée du Louvre. Courtesy of Rama, Cc-by-sa-2.0-fr.

depictions of goddesses. Given the comparative thesis announced in the title of Lafitau's work, which the Champlain Society renders as *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times* in its 1974 translation, it is unsurprising that the artist draws this comparison between the Native Peoples of the Great Lakes and the ancient Greeks and Romans. Lafitau puts forward, after all, a vision of history that scholars have summarized as "universal," "unitary[.] and progressive."<sup>43</sup> Lafitau understands Indigenous Peoples as progressing along the same singular historical trajectory as Europeans. Yet his discussion of maple sugar presents a seeming contradiction to this vision of European cultural and technological superiority. The Natives taught the Europeans how to produce this miraculous sugar, not the other way around. Although Lafitau claims the French had

improved on the process, in this image the Indigenous People are the ones who have married European tools and Native *savoir faire*.

We can also notice in the image the tension inherent in depictions of the woods as both a *locus amoenus* and a *locus terribilis*. In the foreground, we see Indigenous People busy tapping the trees and cooking down the sap. The figures are mostly upright and posed in positions reminiscent of neoclassical art. In the background we see quite the opposite as Native People are hunched over their tools as they work the land, clearing away the forest, removing this element (*silvia*) that was considered by the Europeans as the essential element of their “savageness” (*silvestre*, or wood-dwelling). This juxtaposition gestures to a related question: do depictions of maple sugar belong to the pastoral or georgic mode? If, as Timothy Sweet has suggested, the pastoral “understands the natural world primarily as a site of leisure” and the georgic “primarily as a site of labor,” then here we have both.<sup>44</sup> While not quite free of labor, and therefore wholly pastoral, the figures boiling down the sap in the foreground are certainly going about their work more leisurely than those in the background. This tension, in turn, heightens the discursive contradictions surrounding forests. The forest is both a natural good, providing the miracle of maple sugar, and a hindrance to the spread of “civilization,” as defined by Europeans, who saw clearing and settling the land as integral to the civilizing process. The image seems to gesture toward an impossibility: a desire both to clear the forest and to keep on getting maple sugar from the destroyed forest.

French accounts of maple sugar harvesting elide the friction created by the European co-option of maple sugar and Native-derived knowledge. Unfortunately, vanishingly few Native accounts of the European adoption of maple sugar remain from the period. It is difficult to know with much specificity, for example, what different Indigenous Peoples knew about the maple sugaring process, beyond broad generalities. Indeed, Denholm suggests that forced migration, brought on by the expansion of English (and French) colonists into the Great Lakes region clouds the archeological record.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, French travel narratives often collapse the differences between disparate Native Peoples, depriving us of specific details about what the French thought the Indigenous Peoples knew. Therefore, a methodical recovery of Indigenous knowledge about maple sugaring is beyond the reach of this current project. However, in the few Native texts from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century that remain, it is clear that European appropriation of the sugar maple caused consternation among certain Indigenous nations. The Native Peoples of the St. Lawrence river valley and the Great Lakes had developed a deep connection to the maple that was not easily relinquished to the French.

For certain Native populations, maple sugar was more than a natural product with certain economic implications; it was tied to religious beliefs and seasonal traditions. The Anishinaabe, Ojibwe, and Algonquin, for example, all celebrated the maple sugaring season with festivals of the “maple moon” or the “time of melting snow.”<sup>46</sup> The Cree used the word *Sisbaskwat* (“maple sugar”); the Ojibwe referred to *Ninutik* (“our own tree”); and the Algonquin used the term *Sinzibuckwud* (“drawn from wood”) to speak of maple sugaring.<sup>47</sup> Accordingly, Native alarm about the European co-option of maple is best contextualized within a socio-religious framework. The Odawa nation, for example, tell the story of the trickster god Nanabozho who made sugar production more difficult in order to help his people appreciate the natural gift:

The most remarkable, wonderful, and supernatural being that ever trod upon the earth. . . . [t]his mischievous Ne-naw-bo-zhoo spoiled the sugar trees by diluting their sap with water. The legends say, that once upon a time the sugar trees did produce sap at [a] certain season of the year which was almost like a pure syrup; but when this mischievous Ne-naw-bo-zhoo had tasted it, he said to himself, “Ah, that is too cheap. It will not do. My nephews will obtain this sugar too easily in the future time and the sugar will be worthless.” And therefore he diluted the sap until he could not taste any sweetness therein. Then he said, “Now my nephews will have to labor hard to make the sugar out of this sap, and the sugar will be much more valuable to them in the future time.”<sup>48</sup>

The legend thus highlights labor as an essential element in the production of maple sugar for Native People. Through the effort they put into the process, the community returns the sap to its “natural” state—before it was “spoiled” by the trickster god. It is a process that connects the tribe to the land and links effort, value, and the metaphysical. The trees are not only a divine gift; the labor associated with their sugaring is a quasi-religious duty.

Economics and religion often overlapped in Native Peoples’ understanding of maple sugaring. While the French writers imagined maple sugar to be essentially “free” and boundless, the Shawnee nation, for example, had a clear sense of the limits of maple exploitation. Consequently, they feared the loss to their community that would come from increased settler consumption. In 1807, a Captain Dunham recorded an admonishment given by the prophet Tenskwatawa of the Shawnee to the Native Peoples of the Great Lakes regarding selling maple sugar to newly arrived Anglo-American settlers, whose expansion threatened Native sovereignty. Although the context differs from the earlier French colonial project, the admonition reveals a

late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century conception of maple's stakes on the part of the Shawnee and may hint at the perceptions of other nations and earlier periods. In fact, the implied audience of the speech suggests a large-scale inter-nation apprehension concerning European maple sugar consumption. Referring to European exploitation of sugar maples, Tenskwatawa called for his people to protect the trees from the settlers. Tenskwatawa is recorded by Dunham to have said: "The Great Spirit bids me address you in his own words, which are these. ... My Children ... I made all the Trees of the forest for your use, but the maple I love best, because it yields sugar for your little ones. You must make it only for them; but sell none to the *whites*. They have another sugar, which was made expressly for them."<sup>49</sup> As we see in this passage, Tenskwatawa considered the maples a godsend, a sentiment shared, moreover, by the more religiously minded writers of New France, such as Charlevoix. The reference to Native children plays on the auditors' emotional sensibilities—the White settlers are stealing candy from babes! The passage also casts maple as a heritage to be passed from generation to generation; sale of its sugar to White settlers jeopardizes this legacy. At the same time, this passage also sets up maple sugar as "Native sugar" and depicts cane sugar as the "White man's" sugar. Like their European counterparts, the Indigenous communities of the Great Lakes clearly recognize the competition between sugars in the early modern Atlantic world. But, while the French view maple sugar as a universal product available to all who are willing to tap the trees, Natives are being instructed to claim it as uniquely theirs. Although Tenskwatawa's admonition comes after the large-scale adoption of maple sugaring by French settlers, these reflections on the stakes of sugaring by Europeans highlight the ecocritical and zero-sum terms of the debate. If Europeans are allowed access to maple sugar, Native children will suffer.

In this way, maple sugar can be added to the long list of Native cultural material appropriated by Europeans and exploited for their own ends. While we have only scratched the surface of Indigenous Peoples' relationship to maple, what I have sketched out should suffice to demonstrate that maple sugar was not an innocent sugar, as later English-speaking abolitionists would claim. Indigenous People appear to have viewed maple sugaring by Europeans as a theft and an affront to their culture and religious mores.

In the immediate aftermath of the Seven Years War and the loss of New France in the Treaty of Paris, more pressing concerns occupied the remaining settler population of Canada than the question of maple sugar exploitation. Yet, maple sugar's potential would again awake the fantasies of future-anticipating capitalists before the end of the century. In 1792, Samuel Nielson, a Scottish-born transplant to Lower Canada and publisher

of the influential bilingual newspaper, *The Quebec Gazette / La Gazette de Québec*, saw the chance to make Canada a (maple) sugar colony. In an editorial from 1 March 1792 he wrote,

Notice to maple owners. Whereas the troubles that rule currently in the sugar colonies will make this product expensive in the future, it is fortunate that Canada produces one that can supplement it. What a shame that the maples are notched, instead of being pierced, to withdraw the sap ... it is hoped that all who become interested by the New Concessions will be convinced of the extraordinary value of the sugar-producing trees, and of the almost certain growth in their value by the discontinuation of the African Slave Trade.<sup>50</sup>

Nearly fifty years after Charlevoix mused about the economic potential of maple sugar and more than 200 years after André Thevet first directed European attention to the marvelous maple, Nielson calls for the development of a maple sugar industry in Canada. Despite his observation that drilling, or piercing, the tree might be a more efficient way to extract the sap, his remarks are largely theoretical. The growth of the maple sugar market would remain limited in the period by the economic and social realities of maple production.

Nielson's rhetoric parts company with that employed by the previous Francophone boosters of maple sugar and instead closely mirrors that of Benjamin Rush and Thomas Jefferson to the south. Specifically, he links the fortunes of the North Atlantic with those of the sugar islands of the Caribbean. He positions maple sugar as an alternative to cane and links its future to the end of the slave trade, if not slavery itself. Nielson marks, then, the end of the earlier French colonial understanding of maples, marked by Virgilian fantasies and illusions of imperial grandeur. Here his comments align more with Anglophone abolitionist thought emanating from the United States.

Beyond the sense of wonder and the references to antiquity in earlier French texts, one of the major differences between the maple discourses of the Anglo tradition and those of the French tradition lies in their respective elisions. The evils of slavery in the Caribbean are always a subtext in, or impetus for, U.S. propaganda in favor of maple sugar as a cane substitute. Native Peoples' contribution to maple sugaring, conversely, is largely absent in English texts. In *An Account of the Sugar Maple*, for example, Benjamin Rush makes a single passing reference to Native consumption of maple sugar: "it is preferred by the Indians in their excursions from home."<sup>51</sup> But, how did the Natives acquire this sugar? Where did their knowledge of these marvels of nature come from? These are questions Rush shows little interest in exploring.<sup>52</sup>

On the French side of things, the writers almost uniformly point to the importance of Native technology, combined with French *savoir-faire*, as a means of creating a viable maple alternative to cane sugar. The various writers, however, make no explicit reference to the enslavement of Black people in the Caribbean as a reason to prefer maple to cane sugar; they are not abolitionists. While the English set the “innocent maple” as a foil to the “immoral” cane, French writers speak of maple simply as one more missed opportunity in New France. As Charlevoix writes wistfully, “It will be objected, that if it was of such a good Quality, it would have become an Object of Trade, but there is not enough made for this Purpose; but perhaps they are in the wrong in not trying what may be done. There are many other Things besides this, that are neglected in this Country” (84). Charlevoix seems acutely aware of the challenges of creating a market for maple sugar and places it within the context of a mercantilist search for exploitable North American products beyond the beaver pelt. In short, for Charlevoix, a (maple) sugar colony in Canada to rival the Caribbean sugar islands was just an unrealized dream.

The importance of studying texts about maple sugar, then, is not for insight into the economic or strategic importance of the sugar itself. Only in the nineteenth century, with the advent of new technology, would maple producers be able to ramp up production to an exportable quantity. Rather, these texts shed light on French colonial discourses around grandeur, Native Peoples, and technology. French accounts of maple sugar depict it as a miraculous, Indigenous product and a godsend. The various descriptions of maple sugar help recast New France as a Virgilian land of honey. In turn, these texts challenge some received historiographical ideas about the early French colonial project in North America. In the passages about maple sugar, New France becomes a place of wondrous possibilities, rather than a frozen wasteland—“several acres of snow,” as Voltaire famously put it in *Candide*.<sup>53</sup> As we have seen, the snow and the trees could represent wealth and opportunity, rather than poverty and desolation.

As an underexplored part of sugar foodways, maple sugar serves as a missing link in the story of sweetness. Each group—French visitors and settlers, Indigenous Peoples, and boosters of the new United States—employed different rhetorical strategies around maple sugar and articulated their own relationship to this natural product. By neglecting the French colonial period’s impact on the development of this discourse, scholars have failed to understand some of the texture of this story. The rise of the abolitionist discourses of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries have eclipsed these earlier French visions of maple. By bringing these earlier discourses to the fore, this article points to the complex story of sugar

beyond the cane plantations. While we have only just begun to draw out the rhetorical differences around maple sugar among the various actors in the New World, what is clear is that all the inhabitants of the North Atlantic would come to see in sugar maples the stuff of sweet dreams.

## Notes

1. Although today we are most familiar with maple sugar as a viscous syrup, in the eighteenth century maple sap was boiled down to varying degrees. From here on, I will be referring to “maple sugar” as a general term, regardless of the specific liquid or solid form it took.
2. The economics of maple syrup are considerable. According to statistics from the Federation of Québec Maple Syrup Producers, in 2019 Québec produced 71 percent of the worldwide supply of maple syrup, which represented 91 percent of all Canadian production, with \$465 million (CAN) dollars in sales. See Fédération des producteurs acéricoles du Québec. *Statistiques acéricoles, 2019*, [https://ppaq.ca/app/uploads/2020/10/Dossier\\_economique-Statistiques\\_2019.pdf](https://ppaq.ca/app/uploads/2020/10/Dossier_economique-Statistiques_2019.pdf).
3. See, for example, Gordon M. Sayre, *Les Sauvages Américains: Representations of Native Americans in French and English Colonial Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Gilles Havard and Cécile Vidal, *Histoire de l’Amérique française* (Paris: Flammarion, 2003); and Sophie White, *Wild Frenchmen and Frenchified Indians: Material Culture and Race in Colonial Louisiana* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).
4. Parsons, *A Not-So-New World: Empire and Environment in French Colonial North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 10.
5. Kalm, *The America of 1750: Peter Kalm’s Travels in North America. The English Version of 1770*, ed. Adolph B. Benson (New York: Dover Publications, 1966), 154.
6. Kalm, *America of 1750*, 155.
7. Kalm, *America of 1750*, 154.
8. Mark Sturges, “‘Bleed on, Blest Tree!’: Maple Sugar Georgics in the Early American Republic,” *Early American Studies* 16, no. 2 (2018): 379.
9. For more on the possibility of the Saint Lawrence river valley as a sugar colony, see Mathieu Peron, “Visions d’avenir, sucre d’érable et progress,” *Histoire d’utopie* no. 136 (Winter 2019): 12.
10. Sturges, “‘Bleed on, Blest Tree!,’” 354.
11. For more on ginseng in New France, see Parsons, *A Not-So-New World*, 178.
12. Sturges, “‘Bleed on Blest Tree!,’” 355.
13. Sturges, “‘Bleed on Blest Tree!,’” 354.
14. Campeau, “Les Origines du sucre d’érable,” *Les Cahiers des dix* 45 (1990): 53.

15. Unlike maple sugar, cane sugar has been the subject of several full-length studies. See, for example, Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Viking, 1985), and Marc Aronson and Marina Tamar Budhos, *Sugar Changed the World: A Story of Magic, Spice, Slavery, Freedom, and Science* (Boston: Clarion Books, 2010).

16. “[Canada] porte plusieurs arbres et fruits, dont nous n’avons la connoissance par deça. Entre lesquels y a un arbre de la grosseur et forme d’un gros noyer de deça, lequel a demeuré long temps inutile, et sans estre congnu, iusques à tant que quelcun le voulant coupper en saillit un suc, lequel fut trouvé d’autant bon goust, et delicat, que le bon vin d’Orleans, ou de Beaune: mesmes fut ainsi iugé par noz gens, qui lors en firent l’experience: c’est à sçavoir le Capitaine, et autres gentilshommes de sa compagnie, et recueillirent de ce ius sur l’heure de quatre à cinq grand pots. Le vous laisse à penser, si depuis ces Canadiens afriandez à ceste liqueur, ne gardent pas cest arbre cherement, pour leur bruvages, puis qu’il est ainsi excellent. Cest arbre, en leur langue, est appellé *Couton*. ” André Thevet, *Singylaritez de la France Antarctique* (Paris: Chez les héritiers de Maurice de la Porte, 1558), 158. Translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

17. Campeau, “Les Origines du sucre d’érable,” 55.

18. “Quant à l’eau d’érable … elle est également délicieuse pour les Français et les Sauvages.” Le Clercq, *Nouvelle Relation de la Gaspésie*, ed. Réal Ouellet (Montréal: Presses de l’Université de Montréal, 1999), 125.

19. “On en forme des petits pains, qu’on envoie en France par rareté, et qui dans l’usage sert bien souvent au défaut du sucre François.” Le Clercq, *Nouvelle Relation*, 125.

20. See Paul Thiry, Baron d’Holbach, “Sucre d’érable,” in *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, etc.*, ARTFL Encyclopédie Project, ed. Robert Morrissey and Glenn Roe, <https://artflsrv03.uchicago.edu/philo/encyclopedie1117/navigate/15/3003/>.

21. Charlevoix, *A Voyage to North-America* (Dublin, 1766), 131. Subsequent citations will be made parenthetically.

22. Karen Ordahl Kupperman, “The Puzzle of the American Climate in the Early Colonial Period, *American Historical Review* 87, no. 5 (1982): 1262–89.

23. See also Leslie Choquette, *Frenchmen into Peasants: Modernity and Tradition in the Peopling of French Canada* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

24. Virgil. *Eclogue* 4, v. 9, v. 30.

25. I am thinking specifically of colonial discourses of “la plus grande France,” which we associate with the later colonial projects in Africa and Asia. See, for example, Raoul Girardet, *L'idée coloniale en France de 1871 à 1962* (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1972).

26. Au lieu des cannes dont les pores

Rendent le sucre blanc qui nous vient de plus loin,  
Pour les Acadiens, la nature a pris soin  
D’en mettre dans les sycomores.  
Au commencement du printemps,  
De leur écorce il sort une liqueur sucrée,

Qu'avec grand soin les habitants  
 Recueillent dans chaque contrée.  
 Ce breuvage me semblait bon,  
 Et je le buvais en rasade;  
 Il ne fallait que du citron  
 Pour faire de la limonade.

—Sieur de Dierville, *Voyage du Sieur de Dierville en Acadie* (Québec: Imprimerie A. Côté et Cie, 1885), 61.

27. “Il n'y a point de limonade, ni d'eau de cerise qui ait si bon goût, ni de breuvage au monde qui soit plus salutaire.” Louis Armand de Lom d'Arce Lahontan, *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed Réal Ouellet, 2 vols. (Les Presses de l’Université de Montréal, 1990), 1:599.

28. “Or le sucre dont on use aujourd’hui, est un sucre factice. La canne dont on le tire, est une tige noëuse, spongieuse, d'une écorce fort mince, et pleine d'une matiere miellée d'une très-grande douceur. On brise les cannes dans des Moulins; ou en exprime tout le suc dans des pressoirs. … C'est cette maniere de faire le sucre et de le raffiner que les Anciens n'ont pas connuë.” Lafitau, *Moeurs des sauvages ameriquains, comparées aux moeurs des premiers temps* (Paris: Chez Saugrain l'aîné, 1724), 146.

29. “Les Poëtes, dans les descriptions qu'ils font de l'Age d'or, ou des Siècles qui lui être compares, nous dissent entr'autres merveilles, que les chênes les plus durs distilloient du miel ou qu'ils en distilleront … nos Sauvages font voir qu'ils en sçavent plus qu'eux, ayant sçu tirer des érables … un suc naturel, lequel a autant, ou plus d'agrément, que le miel que font les Abeilles.” Lafitau, *Moeurs des sauvages ameriquains*, 155.

30. Zachary McLeod Hutchins, *Inventing Eden: Primitivism, Millennialism, and the Making of New England* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 3.

31. “Les François le travaillent mieux que les Sauvagesses de qui ils ont appris à le faire.” Lafitau, *Moeurs des sauvages ameriquains*, 150.

32. Montrose, “The Work of Gender in the Discourse of Discovery,” *Representations* no. 33 (1991): 5.

33. This is in contrast to the contemporary discourse around maple syrup that has largely erased Indigenous knowledge and recast syrup as a Québécois national product. See *Gout d'un pays*, dir. Francis Legault (2016; Montréal: Zone 3).

34. One traditional method was to heat up stones and place them in hollowed out logs filled with maple sap. For a more detailed description of Native maple sugaring techniques and tools, see Alan Corbiere and Kate Higginson, “Ninaatigwaaboo (Maple Tree Water): An Anishinaabe History of Maple Sugaring,” <https://grasac.artsci.utoronto.ca/?p=136>.

35. Turgeon, “The Tale of the Kettle: Odyssey of an Intercultural Object.” *Ethnohistory* 44, no. 1 (1997): 10.

36. Denholm, “The History of Maple Syruping in Wisconsin,” *University Place*. PBS-WI, 18 September 2018, <https://www.pbs.org/video/the-history-of-maple-syruping-in-wisconsin-8baw7u/>, 14:40–15:05.

37. “Les champs, tels qu’ils sont à l’issuë de l’hyver; on y voit les femmes occupées à leur donner la premiere façon, et à y semer leur bled d’inde de [leur] maniere.” Lafitau, *Moeurs des sauvages americains*, sig. a4r.
38. “Il faut qu’il y ait au pied une certaine quantité de neige.” Lafitau, *Moeurs des sauvages americains*, 254.
39. Certeau, “Writing vs. Time: History and Anthropology in the Works of Lafitau,” trans. James Hovde, *Yale French Studies* no. 59 (1980): 60.
40. Certeau, “Writing vs. Time,” 60.
41. Scholars have noted a link between sugar in the Caribbean and the erotic gaze. See Omise’oke Natasha Tinsley, *Thiefing Sugar: Eroticism Between Women in Caribbean Literature* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010). Maple sugar also appears to have been associated with femininity and sexual objectification of Indigenous women.
42. Certeau, “Writing vs. Time,” 42.
43. David Allen Harvey, “Living Antiquity: Lafitau’s *Moeurs des sauvages americains* and the Religious Roots of the Enlightenment Science of Man,” *Journal of the Western Society for French History* 36 (2008): 91.
44. Sweet, *American Georgics: Economy and Environment in American Literature, 1580–1864* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 3.
45. “Here I see the influence of trade starting. So you start talking about the 1800s … [it’s] very confusing because which group of people was here making sugar or making sap into sugar in the 1400s, 1500s, 1600s … changed as Native Americans were being pushed farther and farther west, so the mixing of tribes that would have been here when early Europeans came here would not have been the same as if you’d come, say, a hundred years earlier” (Denholm, “History of Maple Syruping in Wisconsin,” 19:10–19:54).
46. Denholm, “History of Maple Syruping in Wisconsin,” 15:15–15:30.
47. Rosemary Chambers, “‘Sugaring-off’: A Brief History of Maple Syrup,” *The Voice of Pelham*, 8 March 2017: 3.
48. Andrew J. Blackbird, *History of the Ottawa and Chippewa Indians of Michigan: A Grammar of their Language, and Personal and Family History of the Author* (Ypsilanti: The Ypsilantian Job Printing House, 1887), 62.
49. Letter from Dunham to William Hull, May 1807, quoted in R. E. Banta, *The Ohio* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 210–11.
50. “Avis aux propriétaire d’érablières. Comme les troubles qui règnent actuellement dans les Colonies à sucre doivent rendre cet article cher à l’avenir, il est heureux que le Canada en produise un qui peut y suppléer. Quel dommage que l’on entaille des érables au lieu de les percer pour en tirer la sève … il est à souhaiter que tous ceux qui deviennent intéressés dans les Nouvelles Concessions fussent convaincus de la valeur inappréciable des arbres qui produisent le sucre, et de l’accroissement presque certain de cette valeur par la discontinuation du Trafic d’Esclaves d’Afrique.” Cited in Peron, “Visions d’avenir,” 15.
51. Rush, *An Account of the Sugar Maple* (Philadelphia, 1792), 12.
52. For Jefferson’s maple ambitions, see Lucia C. Stanton, “Sugar Maple,” *Thomas Jefferson Encyclopedia*, <https://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/sugar-maple>.
53. “Quelques arpents de neige.” Voltaire, *Candide: ou L’optimisme, traduit de l’allemand de Mr. le docteur Ralph* (Netherlands: Lambert, 1759), 170.