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Enlightenment and extra-European cultures

## «Be sure to enter, Sir, into the style: you will become savage by reading this». News periodicals, short historical time, and shaping the Other\*

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**Abstract.** The February 1706 issue of the «*Mercure galant*» offered its readers the account of an agreement made between the Iroquois and the Ottawa in 1705. Given the context in which this negotiation was received, the «*Mercure*»'s journalist decides to render each party's remarks, as he writes, in «savage style». This style's characterization and the function it plays within the article's overarching narrative invite us to question received notions on the colonial imaginary of Ancien Régime news periodicals. Moreover, this article rethinks the essential role played by *mondain* fashions' short historical time and the present moment in the construction of the figure of the Other.

**Keywords.** New France, News periodicals, Native American nations, Rhetoric, Native eloquence.

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In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the periodical press' emergence, a major social phenomenon, established a novel relationship to news' circulation. New forms of media found their way to avid readers, be they gazettes – «a loose leaf that is given to the public on certain days of the week and that contains news from various countries» [«feuille volante qu'on donne au public à certains jours de la semaine et qui contient des nouvelles de divers pays»]<sup>1</sup> –, or more substantial monthly publications. France's most famous periodical was titled the «*Mercure galant*». Created in 1672 and published on a regular basis from

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\* This article originally appeared in French in the Summer-Fall 2022 issue of the «*Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*», 76: *Écrire l'Amérique au temps du Mercure galant*. Translated here into English by P. Sarrasin Robichaud, it is originally titled «“Entrez bien, Monsieur, dans le style, vous allez devenir sauvage en lisant ceci”: presse d'actualité et rôle du temps présent dans la construction de la figure de l'Autre». A note on the choice of the word «savage»: in the texts we analyze, «savage» is closer to the etymological sense of *salvaticus*, «inhabitants of the forest» [«peuples qui vivent ordinairement dans les bois»; *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, Veuve Brunet, Paris 1762, t. 2 L-Z, p. 499)], and farther from connoted acceptations such as «untamed, cruel» or «uncivilized, barbarous, untaught» that also appear in Johnson's *Dictionary* (1755) alongside «wild, uncultivated».

<sup>1</sup> *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, cit., t. 1 A-K, p. 810.

1678, the «Mercure» immediately put itself at the service of Louis XIV's politics. While it enjoyed a monopoly, its undeniable popularity and its wide distribution throughout Europe also showed that it was able to reflect the concerns of elegant European society in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The monthly «Mercure galant» covered a wide range of subjects likely to appeal to an eclectic public: social life, literature, science, and religion, but also politics and the wars led by the Sun King. It is therefore not surprising to find news and relations from or about the Americas. A meticulous review initiated in 2018 of more than 500 of its issues and supplements published between 1672 and 1715 (the death of Louis XIV) has so far uncovered a corpus of some 60 relations and more than 200 short stories about the New World<sup>2</sup>. These texts allow us to rediscover America as it was presented to the «Mercure's» readers: through its places, its daily events, its battles and, of course, its great diplomatic events.

Take, for instance, the February 1706 issue of the «Mercure galant», which offered its readers the account of an «Accommodation made between the Iroquois and the Ottawa in 1705» [«Accommodement fait entre les Iroquois et les Outaouais en 1705»]<sup>3</sup>. We first learn that this agreement was reached in Montreal in the presence of representatives of the Iroquois and Ottawa nations and the Governor General of New France, the Marquis de Vaudreuil. We then discover the details of a negotiation where the three speakers intervene, each pleading the cause of the parties they represent. The speakers' words are reported in direct style and typographically arranged as if they were tirades within a dramatic text. The interventions [«Paroles»] follow one another: first, those of the Iroquois spokesman, then those of the Ottawa spokesman and, finally, those of 'Onontio', alias the Marquis of Vaudreuil<sup>4</sup>. Such formatting is immediately familiar to European readers: it reproduces a layout typically associated with the rituals of judicial eloquence, where lawyers' arguments are recorded consecutively. However, the scene is preceded by a remark, cited in this article's title, to which we would like to draw attention from the outset. The negotiation account's anonymous author<sup>5</sup> challenges his correspondent and, by extension,

the readership of the «Mercure galant» in these terms: «Be sure to enter, Sir, into the style: you will become savage by reading this» [«Entrez bien, Monsieur, dans le style, vous allez devenir sauvage en lisant ceci»]<sup>6</sup>. Surely, given the rest of the article's tone, flippant humour was out of the question. What, then, might the remark mean? First, an invitation to 'enter into' the style of this story beckons the reader to sympathise with its idiosyncrasies, to make its particularities their own. Used with a moral object, the French 18<sup>th</sup>-century idiom 'entrer dans' even implies adopting a shared point of view shaped by affinities of taste, as when one says «figuratively, to enter into someone's feelings, meaning, to conform to someone's feelings» [«on dit encore figurément, entrer dans les sentiments de quelqu'un, pour dire, se conformer aux sentiments de quelqu'un»]<sup>7</sup>. Requesting someone 'enter' this style then has the effect of directing their reading of the whole account of the negotiation between the Marquis de Vaudreuil and the representatives of the Iroquois and Ottawa nation. The request also stanchly insists on the main interest of the account: oratory art, as illustrated in the brilliant diplomacy deployed by means of the indigenous spoken word.

Moreover, the interest – the fascination, even – that this art rouses for French travellers have nothing particularly original. In fact, the taste of the natives for the ceremonies of the word struck the spirit of the French very early on, and it is thus that, as early as 1616, Father Biard wrote: «These people, I believe, are the greatest

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Charles de Monseignat (1652-1718) penned the article. Between 1689 and 1698, Monseignat was the secretary of Governor Frontenac and, in 1705, he was controller of New France's navy and fortifications. More importantly, he was also councillor-secretary and chief clerk of the *Conseil supérieur*. In favour of this hypothesis, let us first point out, following Catherine Broué, that it was Frontenac who, under the title «Paroles», inaugurated the practice of sending minutes reporting the «diplomatic discussions between various native groups [...] and the governor of the colony» [«discussions diplomatiques entre divers groupes autochtones [...] et le gouverneur de la colonie»] to Versailles. See: C. Broué, *Paroles diplomatiques autochtones en Nouvelle-France: un artefact polyphonique éloquent*, in *Penser l'Amérique de l'observation à l'inscription*, éd. par N. Vuillemin et T. Wien, Oxford University Studies in the Enlightenment, Oxford 2017, pp. 105-120, and p. 111 for this quotation. Let us also recall, with Peter N. Moogk, that Monseignat also wrote «the celebrated "Account of the most remarkable occurrences in Canada" which credited the deliverance of New France from her enemies in 1689-90 to the governor [Frontenac]». Let us add finally that Monseignat was at ease when addressing a worldly public, since, as Moogk reports about the «Account», Monseignat had then «composed it in the form of a private letter» whose recipient, it was suggested, was «the Marquis de Maintenon». See: P.N. Moogk, s.v. «Monseignat (Monseignat), Charles de», in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, <[http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/monseignat\\_charles\\_de\\_2F.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/monseignat_charles_de_2F.html)> (11/2021).

<sup>6</sup> *Journal de ce qui s'est passé en Canada pendant la dernière année*, cit., p. 100.

<sup>7</sup> *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, Veuve Brunet, Paris 1762, t. 1 A-K, p. 642.

<sup>2</sup> See the Introduction of S. Côté *et al.*, in *Écrire l'Amérique au temps du Mercure galant*, cit.

<sup>3</sup> *Journal de ce qui s'est passé en Canada pendant la dernière année*, «Mercure galant», Chez Michel Brunet, Paris February 1706, pp. 75-128, and p. 101 for this quotation. We modernize the French spelling of all the passages taken from this text.

<sup>4</sup> «Onontio» is a title first given to Charles de Montmagny (1601-1657) and subsequently applied to all later French governors; it is a Mohawk literal translation of «Montmagny» («Mons Magnus», i.e. «Great Mountain»).

<sup>5</sup> Although we can only formulate limited hypotheses regarding the author's identity, it would not be amiss to consider the possibility that

haranguers in the entire world. There is nothing they undertake without it» [«Ces gens, je crois, sont les plus grands harangueurs de toute la terre. Ils ne feront rien sans cela»]<sup>8</sup>. It is therefore not surprising that since André Vachon's pioneering 1968 work on what he then called «Indian eloquence» [«l'éloquence indienne»]<sup>9</sup>, articles and commentaries on this subject have proliferated. As Normand Doiron has observed in 1998,

*[e]ven a cursory examination of travel literature in New France leads to the following observation: these accounts give great importance to the representation of Amerindian speech, they report, in translation, the numerous harangues of the native captains, to such an extent that they are sometimes on the verge of being oratory anthologies. [Un examen, même superficiel, de la littérature de voyage en Nouvelle-France permet de formuler l'observation suivante: ces récits accordent une grande importance à la représentation de la parole amérindienne, ils rapportent, en traduction, les très nombreuses harangues des capitaines sauvages, à tel point qu'ils versent parfois dans l'anthologie oratoire]<sup>10</sup>.*

This wealth of primary sources was naturally matched by an abundance of scholarly criticism to which we shall return. For now, let us recall the most recent book devoted to this question, *Voix autochtones dans les écrits de la Nouvelle-France* (2019). This collective work assembles the findings of the Research Chair on Native Speech at the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, held by Luc Vaillancourt. Its introduction announces the Chair's approach in no uncertain terms:

*This book [...] marks the launch of a multi-year research project of the Research Chair on Native Speech, whose objective is to examine the place given since New France to Native voices in the French-Canadian discursive space and imagination, paying particular attention to the linguistic and rhetorical processes that have [...] conditioned their staging. [Le présent ouvrage [...] marque le lancement d'un chantier de recherche de plusieurs années de la*

<sup>8</sup> Quoted by A.I. Valero Peña, *Le pouvoir de la parole dans les relations franco-amérindiennes en Nouvelle-France au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, «Globe», 6, 2003, 1, pp. 151-169, and p. 158 for this quotation. See also: M.-C. Gomez-Géraud, *L'entrée de l'Indien dans la littérature française. Genèse d'un stéréotype*, «Revue Europe», 70, 1992 (*L'invention de l'Amérique*), pp. 65-75, and p. 66 for this quotation: «The first travellers to reach New France seem to have been sensitive to a spectacular form of Indian eloquence» [«Les premiers voyageurs en Nouvelle-France semblent avoir été sensibles à une forme spectaculaire de l'éloquence indienne»].

<sup>9</sup> A. Vachon, *Éloquence indienne, textes choisis, présentés et annotés*, Fides, Montréal et Paris 1968.

<sup>10</sup> N. Doiron, *Genèse de l'éloquence sauvage: la renaissance française de Tacite, in La recherche littéraire: objets et méthodes*, éd. par C. Duchet et S. Vachon, XYZ, Montréal 1998, pp. 217-228, and p. 217 for this quotation.

*Chaire de recherche sur la parole autochtone, ayant pour objectif d'examiner la place faite depuis la Nouvelle-France aux voix autochtones dans l'espace discursif et l'imaginaire canadien-français, en portant une attention particulière aux procédés linguistiques et rhétoriques ayant [...] conditionné leur mise en scène]<sup>11</sup>.*

The pages that follow will largely adopt this linguistic turn in that they will be essentially focused on rhetoric. Indeed, only such a perspective seems able to shed light on an unavoidable question: why might the editor of a publication like the «*Mercurie galant*» choose to stage the narration of a diplomatic negotiation by casting French and indigenous voices in what he dubs «savage style» [«style sauvage»]<sup>12</sup>? All the same, as we shall see, perhaps a satisfying answer to this initial question can only be reached if we also answer a second, more delicate question: why, if they agreed to 'enter into' this style, would the exceptionally sophisticated readership of the «*Mercurie galant*» be likely to entertain the desire to become «savage»?

#### WHY CHOOSE TO WRITE IN «SAVAGE STYLE»?

To answer the first question, we must briefly recall the general context in which these negotiations took place and the nature of the agreement finally reached. As we know, in 1701, the Great Peace of Montreal put an end to the incessant wars that had been waged over the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> century between the Iroquois, on the one hand, and the French and their Aboriginal allies, on the other<sup>13</sup>. However, in 1705, an incident contravened the Great Peace's treaty. As a prelude to the main account, the «*Mercurie galant*»'s editor reported it in the following manner:

*The Iroquois were living peacefully on their mats [Editor's note: That is, to remain in peace.] at Kataracoui [Editor's note: That is, Fort Frontenac, about 80 leagues from the island of Montreal] with the Ottawa [...], when the Ottawa, having suddenly thrown themselves on the Iroquois, killed a few of them and took thirty prisoners. An unfortunate incident, embarrassing and all the more difficult because it happened in a place belonging to Onontio [Editor's note: Meaning in a place belonging to the Governor General of the French]. (Les Iroquois demeuraient paisiblement sur*

<sup>11</sup> *Voix autochtones dans les écrits de la Nouvelle-France*, éd. par L. Vaillancourt, S. Tailleur et É. Urbain, Hermann, Paris 2019, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> *Journal de ce qui s'est passé en Canada pendant la dernière année*, cit., p. 100.

<sup>13</sup> On that topic, see: G. Havard, *La grande paix de Montréal. Les voies de la diplomatie franco-amérindienne*, Recherches amérindiennes au Québec, Montréal 1991.

leurs nattes [NDA: C'est-à-dire demeuraient en paix] à Kataracoui [NDA: C'est le Fort de Frontenac, à environ 80 lieues de l'île de Montréal] avec les Outaouais [...], lorsque les Outaouais, s'étant jetés brusquement sur les Iroquois, en tuèrent quelques-uns et firent trente prisonniers. Incident fâcheux, embarrassant et d'autant plus difficile qu'il est arrivé chez Onontio [NDA: C'est-à-dire dans un lieu appartenant au Gouverneur général des Français]<sup>14</sup>.

The rest of the narrative returns to the strategies used by the different parties in the negotiation of an agreement over which Onontio presides. His terms finally provide that, by way of reparation, the Ottawa will have to «replace by slaves the Iroquois killed» [«remplacer les Iroquois tués par des esclaves»]<sup>15</sup>. That said, one will surely have observed that from its very start, this episode's narration takes part in a deliberate staging of indigenous speech. The profusion of exoticized transliterations of toponymic and onomastic referents – 'Kataracoui', 'Onontio' – and metaphors – 'to remain on one's mats' – characterize this prose which, as Kim Gladu has noted, indulges in a generalized taste for exoticism of which the readers of the «*Mercure galant*» were particularly fond. The immense vogue for the literary Orient, launched in 1704 by the French translation of Antoine Galland's *One Thousand and One Nights*, bears witness to this inclination<sup>16</sup>.

Acknowledging this widespread penchant for exoticism, which was certainly decisive in resorting to «savage style», makes headway into understanding the peculiar way in which the pleas are reported by the editor of the «*Mercure galant*». Consider this first speech that an Iroquois chief pronounces before the Ottawa and the Marquis de Vaudreuil:

*The Iroquois were the first to enter the Audience Hall, and cried, singing: «An Hi, An Hi, O Souls of my grandmother! O Spirit of the Chiefs, come and cry...An Hi, my uncle the Sun...you are all red... and you are all black... An Hi, An Hi. My throat is clogged with pain, my eyes are closed with tears, bitter bile is in my stomach, my arms are stained with blood... An Hi An Hi...» This chief of the Iroquois, after thus weeping, saluted Onontio and said, «Father, you are wounded to death. I was in your heart, and we have stabbed me in your heart. You are therefore wounded*

*to death». Here the Iroquois suddenly fell silent, and his words were translated and written down [Les Iroquois sont entrés les premiers dans la salle de l'audience, et ont pleuré en chantant : «An Hi, An Hi, O Mânes de ma grand-mère! Ô Esprit des Chefs, venez pleurer...An Hi, mon oncle le Soleil... tu es tout rouge... et tu es tout noir... An Hi, An Hi. J'ai le gosier bouché de douleur, les yeux fermés de larmes, de la bile amère dans l'estomac, les bras salis de sang... An Hi An Hi...» Ce chef des Iroquois, après avoir ainsi pleuré, salua Onontio et dit: «Mon Père, tu es blessé à mort. J'étais dans ton cœur, et on m'a percé dans ton cœur. Tu es donc blessé à mort.» Ici l'Iroquois se tut tout à coup, on interpréta sa parole et on l'écrivit]<sup>17</sup>.*

What should we think of this style or, rather, what intellectual resources and notions might a French observer in 1705 have at their disposal to describe this style? First off, they might have turned to the imposing historiographical tradition instigated by French travelers and missionaries of the Grand Siècle, who had very often lingered «the characteristics of "savage eloquence"» [«les caractéristiques de l'«éloquence sauvage»»]<sup>18</sup>, as Luc Vaillancourt has recently reminded us. At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Marc Lescarbot, for example, describes it in these terms: «They speak very calmly, as to ensure they are well heard, and can stop at once to think for a long time, after which they then resume their speech» [«Ils parlent fort posément, comme voulant bien se faire entendre, et s'arrêtent aussitôt en songeant une grande espace de temps, puis reprennent leur parole»]<sup>19</sup>. In other words, «savage eloquence» is an art of speaking based on speaking calmly and often leaving tense, opaque silences, characteristics that do reappear in the speech reported by the «*Mercure galant*». Similarly, the writings of the Jesuit Jean de Brébeuf observe that, in the Councils, «the savages [...] raise and lower their voices as if in the tone of an ancient preacher, but slowly, calmly, distinctly» [«les sauvages [...] haussent et fléchissent la voix comme d'un ton de prédicateur à l'antique, mais lentement, posément, distinctement»]; Brébeuf also adds that «it is true their speeches are at first difficult to understand, because of an infinity of metaphors» [«Il est vrai que leurs discours sont d'abord difficiles à entendre, à cause d'une infinité de métaphores»]<sup>20</sup>. In this light, «wild eloquence» evokes the gravitas of ancient orators,

<sup>14</sup> *Journal de ce qui s'est passé en Canada pendant la dernière année*, cit., pp. 97-98.

<sup>15</sup> *Ivi*, p. 121.

<sup>16</sup> See K. Gladu, *Présence du «sauvage» dans le Mercure galant (1702-1713)*, in *Voix autochtones*, cit., pp. 309-323, and p. 310 for this quotation: «In fact, according to all the authors, "the savage style is figurative", which makes it the counterpart of the oriental style as conceived at the dawn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century» [«De fait, selon tous les auteurs, "le style sauvage est figuré", ce qui en fait le pendant du style oriental tel que conçu à l'aube du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle»].

<sup>17</sup> *Journal de ce qui s'est passé en Canada pendant la dernière année*, cit., p. 105-106.

<sup>18</sup> L. Vaillancourt, «Quand je sçauray parler Huron»: l'ambition linguistique des Jésuites, «Tangence», 123, «Huronie représentée: mythologies et appropriations», 2020, pp. 13-23, and p. 19 for this quotation.

<sup>19</sup> M. Lescarbot, *Histoire de la Nouvelle-France*, Paris 1865, t. 1, p. 282; quoted by Valero Peña, *Le pouvoir de la parole*, cit., p. 162.

<sup>20</sup> *Jesuits Relations*, 1636, vol. 10, p. 256; quoted by Valero Peña, *Le pouvoir de la parole*, cit., p. 163.



but also an excessive taste for metaphors typical of a classically Asianist (as opposed to Attic) oratory style<sup>21</sup>. In stark contrast, however, another Jesuit, Paul Le Jeune, wrote in a famous and oft-quoted passage: «There is no place in the world where rhetoric is more powerful than in Canada, and yet it has no other garb than that which nature has given it: it is entirely naked and simple» [«Il n'y a lieu au monde où la rhétorique soit plus puissante qu'en Canada: et néanmoins elle n'a point d'autre habit que celui que la nature lui a baillé: elle est toute nue et toute simple»]<sup>22</sup>.

We could cite many more examples. However, this would only show us the depth, the richness, and the diversity of a historiographic tradition from which the editor of the «*Mercuré galant*» essentially turns away when he defines native eloquence. Rather, he writes that it is characterized by a «figurative, concise, clear-cut style that also makes one guess a little» [«figuré, concis, coupé, style qui laisse un peu à deviner»]<sup>23</sup>. The adjectives he uses are quite cogent for the cultivated public of the budding Enlightenment: they are used to describe ideal pleasures and charms of genteel conversation, the form *par excellence* of French eloquence. During the same years, they pointed to qualities that Moderns' supporters valued more than anything else in their quarrel against the supporters of the Ancients<sup>24</sup>. A *figurative*,

*concise, clear-cut* style that nevertheless left one ever so slightly puzzled: this was the style that had brought to fame fashionable writers such as Fontenelle or Houdar de La Motte. It was favoured by a socialite public keen on wit produced by gallant metaphorical play that, precisely, «vaguely perplexed to exercise the sagacity of the interlocutor» [«laisser un peu à deviner afin d'exercer la sagacité de l'interlocuteur»]<sup>25</sup>. As early as the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and throughout the first decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, this stylistic ideal based on a succinct art of allusion led to numerous critical reflections on the relationship between the pleasures of language and the virtualities of implicit meaning. This is evidenced, among others, by *La manière de bien penser dans les ouvrages d'esprit* (1687) by Dominique Bouhours (1628-1702). The popular and influential critic celebrated a prose «enclosed in few words» [«renfermée en peu de paroles»] and whose meaning is «partly hidden, so that we may look for it and guess at it [...] thus giving us the pleasure of discovering it completely when we are struck by wit» [«cache en partie, afin qu'on le cherche et qu'on le devine [...] pour nous donner le plaisir de le découvrir tout à fait quand nous avons de l'esprit»]<sup>26</sup>. In fact, this art of allusion and feigned supposition was commonplace in literary criticism at the time – so much so that even college-level rhetorical tutors of the time liked to teach techniques for «cutting» one's style. Charles Porée (1675-1741), among the most famous of these educators, bears witness to this trend: «The cut style seems to me [...] to be the most appropriate way of sharpening young people's minds and exercising their imagination» [«Le style coupé me paraît [...] le plus propre à aiguïser l'esprit des jeunes gens et à exercer leur imagination»]<sup>27</sup>. This 'modern' style is also embraced in the journalism of Charles Dufresny (1648-1724), future director of the «*Mercuré galant*» and close member of «the coterie formed around La Motte and Fontenelle» [«la coterie formée autour de La Motte et de Fontenelle»]<sup>28</sup>. As François Moureau has

<sup>21</sup> See Valero Peña, *Le pouvoir de la parole*, cit., pp. 163-164: «The presence of metaphors in Amerindian discourse is an aspect that is repeatedly noted in travel accounts. For some Westerners, the use of metaphors contributes to a negative view of indigenous languages: they are said to be languages of passion, rich in metaphors, and not like reasonable (European) languages, rich in abstractions» [«La présence de métaphores dans les discours amérindiens est un aspect remarqué à plusieurs reprises dans les récits de voyage. Chez certains Occidentaux, l'usage de métaphores contribue à la vision négative des langues indigènes: elles seraient langues de la passion, riches en métaphores, et non comme les langues raisonnables (européennes), riches en abstractions»].

<sup>22</sup> *Jesuits Relations*, 1636, t. 10, p. 256; quoted by Valero Peña, *Le pouvoir de la parole*, cit., p. 163.

<sup>23</sup> *Journal de ce qui s'est passé en Canada pendant la dernière année*, cit., p. 101. To be compared with this other description of the «wild style» provided, in an earlier issue, by the «*Mercuré galant*»: «It will be noticed that Pitresculle is a shrewd and skillful man in his trade, possessing savage style which is figurative, a style that says a lot, because it leaves a lot to think about» [«On remarquera que Pitresculle est un rusé et un homme habile dans son métier, possédant le style sauvage qui est figuré, style qui dit beaucoup, parce qu'il laisse beaucoup à penser»] (*Relation des négociations qui se sont faites dans l'Amérique Septentrionale, entre les Français, les Sauvages Iroquois et les Anglais, en 1704*, «*Mercuré galant*», «Nouvelles de l'Amérique Septentrionale», Michel Brunet, Paris avril 1705, pp. 29-41, and p. 37 for this quotation).

<sup>24</sup> On the Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes, which corresponds to the main episode of French intellectual life on the borders of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, see, among others, *La Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes, XVII<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, éd. par A.-M. Lecoq, précédé par un essai de M. Fumaroli et avec une postface de J.-R. Armogathe, Gallimard, Paris 2001.

<sup>25</sup> On this parallel between «savage style» and gallant eloquence, see Gladu, *Présence du «sauvage» dans le Mercuré galant (1702-1713)*, cit., pp. 320-321.

<sup>26</sup> D. Bouhours, *La manière de bien penser dans les ouvrages d'esprit*, F. Delaulne, Paris 1687; facsimile of the 1705 edition, with introduction and notes by S. Guellouz, Université de Toulouse-Le-Mirail, Toulouse 1988, p. 160.

<sup>27</sup> P.-F. Guyot, abbé Desfontaines, *L'esprit de l'abbé Desfontaines, ou Réflexions sur les différents genres de science et de littérature*, Clement, Londres 1757, t. 2, pp. 89-90 («Le père Porée»). Compare this with the remark of another authority on rhetoric, B. Gibert, who associates the brilliance of style with all forms of expression «that give more to conceive than they actually say» [«qui donnent plus à concevoir qu'elles ne disent»]; *La rhétorique ou les règles de l'éloquence*, Thiboust, Paris 1730, pp. 317-318).

<sup>28</sup> F. Moureau, *Dufresny, auteur dramatique (1657-1724)*, Klincksieck, Paris 1979, 4<sup>th</sup> cover.

observed, his aesthetics even willingly combine «modernism» and «primitivism»<sup>29</sup>. Astoundingly enough, according to our editor's description, it is such a style that the natives of New France adopt in oratory contexts. In this sense, «savage style» not only adopts the charms of the times' trendy exoticism, but also seems bound to seduce the readership of the «*Mercuré galant*», a public in tune with the latest aesthetic ideas. In a nutshell, this seems to provide an answer to why the «*Mercuré*»'s editor might choose to write in «savage style», the first of our questions.

#### WHY WOULD YOU WANT TO BECOME «SAVAGE»?

Let us now turn to the second question: «Why, by agreeing to 'enter into' this style, would the readers of the '*Mercuré galant*' likely wish to become savages themselves?» The Marquis de Vaudreuil, it is true, seems to lead by example in diplomatically adopting this style during the negotiations he had the responsibility of steering towards an agreement. For instance, it is stated that he addressed the representatives of the Iroquois and Ottawa nations in terms very close to their own:

*Onontio, turning to the side of the Ottawa, said to him: «You were drunk [Editor's note: that is to say, insane, among the Indians, according to the genius of their language], you had no spirit when you did that to Katara-coui. The Tree of Peace having been touched and supported by the hand, having seen it planted, having seen the Axe buried... The Iroquois should have ravaged your cabin» [Editor's note: Onontio uses the savage style, this is prudent. Cabin is taken for nation or village] (Onontio après cela, se tournant du côté de l'Outaouais, lui dit: «Tu étais ivre [NDA: c'est-à-dire, insensé, chez les Sauvages, selon le génie de leur langue], tu n'avais pas d'esprit quand tu as fait cela à Kataracoui. L'Arbre de la paix ayant été touché et appuyé par la main, l'ayant vu planter, ayant vu enter-*

*rer la Hache... L'Iroquois devrait avoir ravagé ta Cabane» [NDA: Onontio se sert du style sauvage, cela est prudent. Cabane est pris pour nation ou village)]<sup>30</sup>.*

As a note by the editor indicates, the Marquis de Vaudreuil resorts to this style out of political calculation based on precise ethnological knowledge which, as recent historiography has already noted, ensures that the French colonial administration conforms with scrupulous attention to the protocols and «indigenous diplomatic uses» [«usages diplomatiques autochtones»]<sup>31</sup>. The «*Mercuré galant*» echoes this stance in observing that «it is necessary to conform to the genius of their language to win them over» [«il faut se conformer au génie de leur langue, pour les [les Sauvages] gagner»]<sup>32</sup>. However, Vaudreuil's political prudence is rooted in more than mere placatory measures. The «axe» or the «cabin» are in fact tropes transferred from indigenous languages and relayed by the French interpreter, an act by means of which they are afforded a much larger semantic extension. In other words, as Catherine Broué astutely observes, «the metaphors' reconduction through translation is not insignificant in terms of diplomatic dynamics: it gives the parties involved the impression that they understand each other, all while allowing for radically different interpretations» [«la reconduction des métaphores par la traduction n'est pas anodine en regard de la dynamique diplomatique: elle donne aux parties en présence l'impression qu'elles se comprennent, tout en permettant des interprétations radicalement différentes»]<sup>33</sup>.

Be that as it may, one can easily imagine that it is not this diplomatic concern that was likely to have determined the «*Mercuré*»'s French readers to want to 'enter into' the account's style to the point of becoming «savages» themselves. In fact, the function that «savage style» plays in this story is not reduced to its role within a scenography intended to celebrate the political prudence of the governor of New France. As we have seen, the edi-

<sup>29</sup> See F. Moureau, *La plume et le plomb. Espaces de l'imprimé et du manuscrit au siècle des Lumières*, PUPS, Paris 2006, p. 363: «The «modernism» of Dufresny expresses itself in singular, «bizarre» ideas: operas of silence, papers collaged in a surrealist manner, and, in literature, in the conviction that the modern art must be total, recapturing a universal form that preceded a supposed division of the arts. This «primitivism» that justifies «modernity» is not the least curious part of his aesthetics» [«Le «modernisme» de Dufresny s'exprime dans des idées singulières, «bizarres»: des opéras de silence, des papiers collés à la manière surréaliste, et, en littérature, dans la conviction que l'art moderne doit être total et retrouver la forme universelle antérieure à la division des arts. Ce «primitivisme» qui justifie la «modernité» n'est pas le moins curieux de son esthétique»]. On this curious aesthetics, see also: M.A. Bernier and C. La Charité, *Analyse morale et invention d'une esthétique du sublime comique dans le Parallèle burlesque (1711) de Dufresny, in Fiction et morale au siècle des Lumières*, éd. par C. Deharbe et N. Dion, Hermann, Paris (to be published in 2022).

<sup>30</sup> *Journal de ce qui s'est passé en Canada pendant la dernière année*, cit., pp. 120-121.

<sup>31</sup> Broué, *Paroles diplomatiques autochtones en Nouvelle-France: un artéfact polyphonique éloquent*, cit., p. 112; voir aussi Havard, *La grande paix de Montréal*, cit., p. 145: «The 1701 conference was in many ways exceptional, and [...] the representatives of the Sun King [...] were careful to respect to the letter the thousand and one facets of Amerindian diplomatic protocol» [«La conférence de 1701 était à bien des égards exceptionnelle, et [...] les représentants du Roi-Soleil [...] se montrèrent soucieux de respecter à la lettre les mille et une facettes du protocole diplomatique amérindien»].

<sup>32</sup> *Suite touchant les négociations entre les Français et les Iroquois*, «*Mercuré galant*», «Nouvelles de l'Amérique Septentrionale», Michel Brunet, Paris avril 1705, pp. 41-50, and p. 46 for this quotation.

<sup>33</sup> Broué, *Paroles diplomatiques autochtones en Nouvelle-France: un artéfact polyphonique éloquent*, cit., p. 113.

tor's style is also to be understood through the lens of a notional apparatus of extreme topicality whose primary vocation was to seduce the public. Best considered as a prism of fashionable categories, this style piques the curiosity of its readers not only with its exoticism, but also by the vivacity of its figures, by its concision, and by an artful cutting short of its sentences, so as to imply without positing. The «axe that one buries», the «tree of peace that one plants» or the «cabin that one ravages», contribute to a dense and allusive style that intersperses «savage figures» [«figures sauvages»]<sup>34</sup> throughout. Yet, these tropes are but a variation of what one calls, in the language of 18<sup>th</sup>-century rhetoric and literary criticism, «piquant figures» [«figures piquantes»]<sup>35</sup>, or figures defined by the aim to produce «a sharp and pleasant impression on the spirit» [«une impression vive et agréable sur l'esprit»]<sup>36</sup>, to surprise, and to seduce their audience.

At the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, this art of pleasantly startling the senses and the spirit asserts itself as a set of preeminent aesthetic qualities, one that the supporters of the Moderns celebrate, one that becomes chiefly characteristic of rococo style and that jaunty writers, philosophers and artists actively seek out<sup>37</sup>. In poetry, Houdar de La Motte calls for «the freedom of naturalness and the 'piquancy' of naivety» [«la liberté du naturel et le 'piquant' de la naïveté»]<sup>38</sup>. On stage, in *La seconde surprise de l'amour*, Marivaux's Lisette exclaims: «A month! I know a lady who only kept her husband for two days; now that's 'piquant'» [«Un mois! Je connais une dame qui n'a gardé son mari que deux jours; c'est cela qui est 'piquant'»]<sup>39</sup>. The examples abound and all point to an aesthetics that, under the banner of 'piquantness', defends «notions such as 'bigarrure', bizarrerie, caprice, digression, all types of surprising singularities [...] and the refusal of the prejudices of habit – [in short,] what art history will eventually name the rococo

style» [«des notions telles que la bigarrure, le bizarre, le caprice, la digression, les singularités surprenantes [...] et le refus des préjugés de l'habitude, [bref,] ce que l'histoire des arts nommera le style rocaille»]<sup>40</sup>.

For these reasons, the style of the New World orators conveys a truly 'piquant' appeal in the eyes of the French public. The delight it stirs is analogous to that of the visual splendour offered by the orators' vibrant dress. The Iroquois and the Ottawa donned pigments of the «most beautiful» [«plus beau»]<sup>41</sup> colours which the editor of the «*Mercure galant*» describes thusly:

*The body of these savage gentlemen was almost naked, and marked with a hundred different hieroglyphs of snakes, bears, pigs, rats, crows, lice, etc. Deer horns on top, each one a necklace, made of teeth and nails of a wolf-hound... Such a a sight would have been very pretty during carnival in Versailles [Le corps de messieurs les Sauvages était presque nu, et marqué de cent hiéroglyphes différents de serpents, d'ours, de cochons, de rats, de corbeaux, de poux, etc. Des cornes de chevreuil en tête, chacun un collier, fait de dents et d'ongles de loup-cervier... Cela aurait été fort joli à voir en carnaval à Versailles]*<sup>42</sup>.

Just like the «savage style», the negotiators' necklaces' captivating iridescence and their bodies' shimmering hieroglyphs, thought of as freely offered to their onlookers' gaze, entail a taste for exoticism and surprise intimately tied to the short timeframe of their era's contemporary fashions. At the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the European pursuit for 'piquant' carnival dress or masked ball disguises whetted an appetite that verged on frenzy. One of the best known and most emblematic examples of this taste for the eccentric is undoubtedly the cross-dressing in the *Memoirs of the Abbé de Choisy dressed as a woman*. In a cheerful and playful tone, Choisy recounts how he «gradually forges for himself, with the approval of his entourage, a factitious female identity» [«se forge progressivement, avec l'approbation de son entourage, une identité féminine factice»]<sup>43</sup>, taking advantage of a wide array of what was then recognized as theatrical resources like wigs, court clothes and make-up procedures. The French public's acceptance and

<sup>34</sup> *Journal de ce qui s'est passé en Canada pendant la dernière année*, cit., p. 111, n. 8.

<sup>35</sup> On this notion, see, notably: C. Batteux, *Principes de la littérature*, Desaint et Saillant, Paris 1754, t. 4, p. 108: «Within figures of thought, we must distinguish between those that excite attention and those that mostly touch the heart» [«Parmi les figures de pensées, on distingue celles qui piquent l'attention, et celles qui touchent principalement le cœur»].

<sup>36</sup> *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, Firmin Didot Frères, Paris 1835, t. 2 I-Z, p. 420.

<sup>37</sup> On this aesthetic of «piquant seduction», see the classic pages of J. Starobinski, *L'invention de la liberté, 1700-1789*, Skira, Genève 1964, p. 9, as well as the important work of K. Gladu, *La grandeur des petits genres: l'esthétique rococo à l'âge de la galanterie (1670-1760)*, Hermann, Paris 2019.

<sup>38</sup> Houdar de La Motte, *Fables nouvelles ... avec un discours sur la fable*, Grégoire Dupuis, Paris 1719, pp. LIV-LV; emphasis added.

<sup>39</sup> Marivaux, *La seconde surprise de l'amour* I 1, dans *Théâtre complet*, t. 1, éd. par F. Deloffre, Bordas, Paris 1989, p. 676; emphasis added.

<sup>40</sup> M. Fumaroli, M. Huchon et F. Moureau, *Rabelais, l'Homère français?*, «Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France», 4, 2018, pp. 771-782, and p. 776 for this quotation.

<sup>41</sup> *Journal de ce qui s'est passé en Canada pendant la dernière année*, cit., février 1706, p. 102.

<sup>42</sup> Ivi, p. 103.

<sup>43</sup> On the question of fashionable cross-dressing and Choisy, see, among others: C. Francès, *Vérité et fiction travesties: les Mémoires de l'abbé de Choisy habillé en femme*, in *Mémoires et roman: les rapports de Vérité et de Fiction au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, éd. par M.A. Bernier et Z. Hakim, Hermann, Paris (to be published in 2022).

even enjoyment of sexual or cultural differences then rests on the notion of these outward appearances' interchangeability, be it that of masks, garments, or cosmetics. In the same way, if the «Mercure galant» description of the «body of these savage gentlemen» or their oratory style – to which the article's author resorts – can give the desire to become «savage» himself, it is mainly to the extent that it is an invitation to imagine and savour the joyful 'folie' of transvestism that is both amusing and 'piquant'.

In essence, one might conclude that trying to answer the two questions we raised at the beginning of this article merely amounts to providing yet another proof of what historians and ethnologists have time and again stated about American colonialism, where encounters between native and European cultures nearly always entails «the incapacity of each to apprehend the Other outside the categories of the Same» [«l'incapacité de chacun à appréhender l'Autre en dehors des catégories du Même»]<sup>44</sup>. Nonetheless, as our study suggests, a survey of the «Mercure galant»'s colonial imagination also invites us to rethink the often neglected but essential role played by the circulation of opinions in current affairs – fashion's short historical timeframe – in the construction of the figure of the Other. The account outlined by the editor of the «Mercure galant» implies a nuanced, doubly articulated narrative device. On one hand, its representation of «savage» otherness takes part in a taste for exoticism, i.e. a category inscribed in the long timeframe of European cultural history. On the other hand, the exotic figures that populate the narrative of the «Mercure galant» can only be grasped through fashionable rhetorical and aesthetic categories, whether it be their «clear cut style» or their «piquant figures». These modish categories set indigenous characters within a scenography of the frivolous and the playful that rests on a taste for worldly, festive, and 'piquant' semblances. In other words, their relation to the Other relies on modalities that are quite characteristic of the incipient French rococo. Moreover, this investigation into the way representations of indigenous otherness proceed from categories closely associated with a short historical period likely deserves to be extended beyond the Enlightenment. For instance, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when André Vachon evokes the defining qualities of what he calls «Indian eloquence», does he not consider that the merit and the strength of indigenous discourse is owed to having «brought together all

the elements of ancient drama» [«réunissait tous les éléments du drame antique»], and that often, «it possessed, in addition, its majestic nobility and imperishable beauties» [«il en possédait de surcroît la majestueuse noblesse et les impérissables beautés»]<sup>45</sup>? This description doesn't only offer a striking contrast with the one given by the «Mercure galant» at the threshold of the Enlightenment: it also mobilizes a set of references from 1960s aesthetics associated with poetic excellence. As such, it illustrates once again the determining role of thought categories inseparable from short historical time in shaping one's reception of the Other.

<sup>44</sup> L. Vaillancourt et M.-O. Laflamme, *Fonction rhétorique de la parole autochtone dans les récits de voyage de la Nouvelle-France*, in *Voix autochtones*, cit., pp. 125-138, and p. 125 for this quotation.

<sup>45</sup> Vachon, *Éloquence indienne*, cit., p. 11.