

failed to achieve his major ambitions either as a deputy in Paris in 1848 or as the leader of a utopian colony in Texas. The reader may feel, when beginning this book, that it contains more information than one ever wanted to know about a minor figure. However, the richness of detail about the lives of and contacts between persons of secondary importance provides a rewarding insight into utopian circles. Considérant published a book about life in Texas which would feed the French perceptions of the American South. Beecher's book also has information about aspects of the organization of French emigration to the United States. It is rewarding microhistory that makes a valuable contribution to the social history of French intellectuals in the nineteenth century.

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Carole Blackburn — *Harvest of Souls: The Jesuit Missions and Colonialism in North America, 1632–1650*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000. Pp. xvii, 173.

The book, despite its title, is not about the Jesuit missions *per se*. Rather it is a study of the Jesuits' annual *Relations*. These annual reports by missionaries describing their work in New France were published under the title *Relation de ce qui s'est passé...* from 1632 to 1673. (Blackburn relies on the version of the reports in the R. G. Thwaites edition of the *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*. Most scholars, myself included, use *Relations* indiscriminately to refer to these annual reports, regardless of which edition they have consulted.) Blackburn contends that the *Relations* — and here one assumes the reference is to the original works — were “colonizing” texts. They were filled with distortion, both deliberate and unintentional, because the Jesuits sought to justify converting the Indians (mostly Hurons and Montagnais in the period under study) to Christianity and acculturating them to European mores. The work thus aims to shed light on how the Jesuits' religious goals and world view shaped their annual reports and on the images of Natives in those works. It also seeks to make a contribution to “colonial discourse studies” by showing how the *Relations*, as written texts left by the colonizers, reflect efforts to promote French hegemony over the Natives of Canada.

The work, an expanded version of a master's thesis, is divided into five sections: the introduction, which sets out the author's goals and thesis; a highly derivative chapter that summarizes the nature and history of the Jesuit missions in New France to 1650; and three more chapters that outline the Jesuits' attitude toward the nature of Natives and their culture (uncivilized “pagans” without “law” and “order”) and explain how the Jesuits' interpretation of those people and their culture was constructed to justify changing how the Indians lived, worshipped, and regulated their lives.

For those not familiar with the Jesuits and their writings, Blackburn has provided a handy (if at times simplistic) summary of their world view, their thoughts about Natives, and the various sins of omission and commission with which the Jesuits

and their writings are usually charged. For example, the Jesuits equated the “wild” state of the country with the nature of Natives (p. 42). As well, they failed to see that they helped spread disease among the Hurons and took the devastation they witnessed “as either divine punishment resulting from people’s continued resistance to Christianity or as trials sent to test and strengthen the faith of new converts” (p. 20). This, of course, all leads to a distorted image of the reality which the Jesuit priests experienced and described in their writings. For those who have used the *Relations* in their various forms and editions, there is little new here. The notion that the *Relations* reflect the limitations and ambitions of men determined to change a culture and to justify their work is not novel. Few sources, including contemporary works, are exempt from biases, and those of the Jesuits are well known and have been discussed before.

The book’s contribution to “colonial discourse studies” is harder to gauge. According to the author, “colonial discourse studies” accept that “colonialism relied on the production and manipulation of forms of knowledge” (p. 9), through texts, to support domination. If this is the case, the decision to use the English translation, and a dated one at that, of works written in French and aimed at French readers is surprising. (References in the book, both for quoted material and to refer the reader to the source of evidence for a conclusion or fact, are invariably to the English pagination of Thwaites.) Translations, after all, reflect the additional biases of translators and editors from periods and cultures often different from those of the original writers and can seriously distort the intent of the original author. More importantly, Blackburn does not address the degree to which the *Relations* influenced overall French policy, nor what impact texts by other French writers, aimed at government officials and the literate public, had on the images presented in the *Relations*. Surely such questions need to be addressed to determine the impact of the *Relations* as texts aimed as promoting hegemony over Natives and their influence on French policy. Indeed, Blackburn is at pains to point out, quite correctly, that, despite the Jesuits’ frequent portrayal of their power and control over and success with Natives, the reality was far different. Neither they nor other French authorities had much control over Natives, who resisted efforts to change them quite ably. Blackburn’s argument, one readily acknowledged by most scholars, leads to the conclusion that the French had limited hegemony over Natives, and thus the Jesuit *Relations* could have played little role in any efforts to achieve such an end. Possibly, confirming this accepted notion is a contribution in itself.

In the end, one is left with a study of a portion of a very well-known set of documents and a lengthy caution: one should not believe everything one reads in the Jesuits’ *Relations* about the Hurons and Montagnais up to 1650 (whichever edition one uses) — they were written by men limited by the beliefs and conventions of their day and with a specific purpose in mind, and this affected what they wrote. It is hard to credit that historians of early North American cultural contact need such a caution, but, for those who do, this book fills the bill.

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