Singing a New World:

Performing Colonialism Under Louis XIV and Louis XV

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Introduction

In 1725, Jean-Phillipe Rameau (1683-1764) attended a Native American dance performance at the Théâtre Italien. The performers' exact background is not known, but it is presumed they were from the Mississippi Valley and likely of the Natchez tribe. The periodical publication *Mercure de France* described this performance in detail, but if their article is anything to judge by, the perception of it through French eyes was confused. "That which they claim to depict is doubtlessly quite easy to understand in their country," the *Mercure* writes, "but here [in Paris], nothing is more difficult to penetrate."[1] In the early eighteenth-century, France's theater-going population could not decide if their fascination with the art of the "sauvage" native peoples of the Americas meant that they liked it. French composers frequently appropriated Native American culture for ballets and operas of their own production, however. Rameau did, and musicologists agree that his harpsichord solo "Les sauvages" bears the mark of the Natchez performance he attended in 1725—particularly on account of its use of the G minor mode, which Rameau is known to use in "exotic" contexts.[2]

The harpsichord solo "Les sauvages" would go on to become a central musical theme in the fourth entrée of Rameau's opéra-ballet *Les Indes Galantes* (also known as "Les sauvages" after its principal characters). In particular, the harpsichord solo became a dance/chorus number where Europeans and Native Americans came together to make peace after a war. The scene harkened to the calumet ceremony practiced by tribes such as the Natchez that the French were familiar with. Added in 1736 after a lukewarm premier of the opera a year prior, the fourth entrée (and especially that calumet scene based on the harpsichord solo) made *Les Indes*

[1] *Mercure de France* (Paris: Chez Guillaume Cavalier, septembre 1725): 274-5. "Ce qu'ils prétendent figurer est sans doute fort aisé à entendre dans leur pays, mais ici rien n'est plus difficile à penetrer."
[2] Olivia Bloechl, *Native Americans at the Frontiers of Early Modern Music,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 187-88; Roger Savage, "Rameau's American Dancers," *Early Music* 11, no.4 (October 1983), 444.

Galantes resoundingly popular and secured its place in the history of western music. Why is it that Native Americans turned Rameau's flop opera into a success? What do depictions of Native Americans in seventeenth and eighteenth-century opera tell us about the French nobility who consumed them? And did colonial cultures threaten metropolitan ones?

Rameau was far from the first composer to take inspiration from Native American culture and apply it explicitly to music. The narrative theming of *Les Indes Galantes* reads as uncharacteristic of its mid-eighteenth-century inception because the ballet des nations was not common in theatres by the 1730s, but it was mundane only a few decades earlier. The earlier composer Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632-1687) included indigenous characters in many of his operas and ballets,[3] most of which were written expressly for the entertainment of the court of Louis XIV. In her book *Native American Song at the Frontiers of Early Modern Music,* the musicologist Olivia Bloechl argues that the intention of Lully's depictions of Native Americans in his last ballet,[4] *Le Temple de la Paix,* was to convey a sense of absolute French dominance over all peoples of the world. Thus, claims Bloechl, the opera makes no effort to exoticize its Native American characters in any way—in short, it was pro-colonial propaganda. The Native Americans Lully depicted thus danced the same dances that French shepherds did, and they sang the same words as well. This is the prevailing interpretation of *Le Temple de la Paix*, mostly owing to the fact that few other scholars have written about it.[5]

This explanation for Lully's musical aesthetic is tempting, and within the context of *Le Temple de la Paix* alone, it seems minimally flawed. After almost one-hundred years of mostly

[3] For a table of such works: Bloechl, *Native American Music,* 156-9.
[4] Ballet and opera are almost interchangeable terms in early modern French music, since most ballets included singing and all operas necessarily included ballet.
[5] Bloechl, *Native American Music,* 163-8.

peaceable relationships with Native Americans in New France, trade flourished and numerous individuals were converted to Catholicism by Jesuit missionaries, France had good reason to espouse confidence in their American colonies by depicting them as already assimilated—as already fully colonized. Yet, Bloechl's analysis is insufficient because it fails to contextualize Lully's work in other opera-ballets that did not use exotic themes to explain how adhering to the status quo compositionally could have been a distinct choice. Bloechl also fails to contextualize *Le Temple de la Paix* in its metropolitan context, which is unfortunate, as most opéra-ballets were concerned directly with metropolitan issues. Her reader is thus left wondering if the normalcy of distinctly European dance forms with distinctly European compositional techniques in *Le Temple de la Paix* was deliberate at all, and they question if it was about colonization in the first place.

Nevertheless, Bloechl's identification of this Frenchified-Indian aesthetic in opéra-ballet raises interesting questions about the evolution of the genre after Louis XIV's reign. Colonial conditions deteriorated in the early eighteenth century—particularly in Louisiana, with events such as the Natchez Hostage Crisis and the Fox Wars but music seemingly still held on to an idealized pastoral image of the colonial world. Court operas and ballets had been used to comment subtly on current events from their very inception, as is demonstrated by works such as *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme,* which responded directly to a visit from Ottoman diplomats in 1669, if only superficially—Molière was more concerned with social climbers than he was with the Near East.[6] Why did their Native American characters not correlate with their contemporary contexts? Did they represent Native Americans in practice at all? The answer to this question differs between *Le Temple de la Paix* and *Les Indes Galantes,* but both operas throw into

[6] Ellen Welch, *A Theatre of Diplomacy: International Relations and the Performing Arts in Early Modern France,* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 166.

question the idea that the image of Native Americans in musical works always indicated an interaction with the colonial world.

Lully's Native Americans differed from Rameau's in numerous ways. Rameau and his librettist, Louis Fuzelier, made explicit efforts to paint Native American characters in *Les Indes Galantes* as "others," both musically and poetically in ways that Lully did not. This was not done maliciously because of the opera's clear ties to the Baron de Lahontan's *Dialogues,* which perpetuated the noble savage stereotype (rather than the savage one) to critique the French nobility.[7] The opera potentially forms a response to both Lahontan's work and general turmoil in Colonial Louisiana, which came in the form of John Law's disastrous economic experiments and increasingly frequent conflicts with the Mesquakie and Natchez (among others).[8] The John Law disaster was not exclusively a colonial problem, however, and Rameau was certainly responding to it from a metropolitan perspective—in particular, from the perspective of the elites who had lost money investing in the Compagnie des Indes.[9]

Les Indes Galantes forced French operagoers to confront the differences between themselves and Native Americans, all the while confronting their similarities—not the least of which being the idea that Native Americans could be noble too. Perhaps, for instance, *Les Indes Galantes* brought to the fore a shared obsession with dance, which was an art form memoirist Gabriel Sagard noted as important to the Huron people.[10] Thus, one must ask: was Rameau's

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[7] Nathalie Lecomte, "Les divertissements exotiques dans les operas de Rameau," in *Jean-Philippe Rameau,* edited by Jérôme de la Gorce (Paris: Champion-Slatkine, 1987), 557.
[8] John Shovlin, "Jealousy of Credit: John Law's 'System' and the Geopolitics of Financial Revolution," The Journal of Modern History 88, no.2 (June 2016): 275-305; David Edmunds and Joseph L. Peyser, *The Fox Wars: The Mesquakie Challenge to New France,* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993).
[9] Georges Cucuel, *La Pouplinière et la musique de chambe au XVIII siècle,* (Paris: Fischbacher, 1912), 10-12; Julia V. Douthwaite, "How Bad Economic Memories are Made: John Law's System, in *Les lettres persanes, Manon Lescaut,* and 'The Great Mirror of Folly,'" *L'Esprit Créateur* 55, no. 3 (Fall 2015), 43-58.
[10] Gabriel Sagard, *Le grand voyage du pays des Hurons, situé en l'Amerique vers la mer douce, es dernier confins de la nouvelle France dite Canada,* (Paris : 1632), 150. "Nos sauvages, & généralement tous les peuples des Indes

opera an ideological challenge? Did Rameau contribute to changing perceptions of the nobility that significantly altered the course of the eighteenth-century by placing more power in the hands of the colonized in the plot of *Les Indes Galantes*?

This thesis embarks upon an in-depth analysis of Native American appearances in French opera and ballet from 1685-1736 alongside their colonial and metropolitan historical contexts. It will argue that colonial debates did not exclusively affect the colonies, even if hundreds of miles of ocean separated them from their metropolitan government—in fact, it is questionable if they affected the colonies themselves. The literary cultures developed through colonization found their way into artistic works no matter how superfluous and apolitical they may have seemed, but they did not do so for their own sake. Rather, colonial happenings threw the ability of metropolitan power structures into question in novel ways—through operas and ballets, in our case—and they did their part in evolving ideas of nobility and French culture during the Enlightenment. The appropriation of Native American culture by Jean-Philippe Rameau and Jean-Baptiste Lully on France's most prestigious stages resulted in exoticism being used to critique the state of the nobility in France.

The brief first chapter of this thesis will focus on the ways that court ballet evolved in the seventeenth century, particularly in the ways it utilized the exotic and societal critique. The intention of laying out some basic features of court ballet is to establish what its conventions were so that one can measure how much both Lully and Rameau deviated from them, as well as how much ballet truly related to noble identity. It also briefly touches upon the idea of frame narrative in ballet, as both *Le Temple de la Paix* and *Les Indes Galantes* lean on this feature to an

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Occidentales, ont de tout temps l'usage des danses [Our *sauvages,* and all the peoples of the the New World in general, have always made use of dances]."

extent—albeit to different ends. Finally, this chapter begins the work of reconciling *Le Temple de la Paix* with the so-called "ballet des nation," which was a common trope in court entertainment of the seventeenth century.

Le Temple de la Paix was born at a time before race played a significant role in France's colonial policy (though this is up for debate), but also at a time where European diplomatic concerns figured heavily in courtly art. France was actively trying to do away with racial boundaries in her Canadian colonies through what was known as "Frenchification" for much of the 17th century. Intermarriage between Native Americans and French settlers was actively encouraged, and missionary efforts sought to culturally assimilate Native Americans with the French.[11] This practice furthermore existed amongst a colonial effort that was rooted in ideas of cultivation—the cultivation of the Canadian land and its peoples, and the image thereof back at home in France, as Christopher Parson's *A Not-So-New World* details.[12] Conversion memoirs and travel writings were especially important to maintaining a positive image of the colonies in France, as they allowed French nationals to see the potential of an as-of-yet "untamed" Canadian landscape, which some thought could someday come to resemble France itself, or at least grow economically useful. They often carried ulterior pedagogical motives too, as Oliva Bloechl

[11] Brazeau's *Writing a New France* makes a compelling argument that certain French authors (such as Lescarbot) conceptualized indigenous American peoples as sharing a common Gallic ancestor with the French. Sara Melzer's *Colonizer or Colonized* is similarly minded, but focuses specifically on French philosophy that tried to parse France's Gallic ancestry in the context of the power they held in the seventeenth century.

[12] Christopher M. Parsons, *A Not-So-New World: Empire and Environment in French Colonial North America,* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018). Parsons' book is an environmental history, but one sufficiently enough informed by travel writings to constitute a serviceable analysis of the metropolitan print culture around France's early Canadian settlements. Cultivation was as much a rhetorical concept as it was an agricultural one. Bronwen McShea's work, though focused much more strongly on Jesuit activities, demonstrates a similar awareness of metropolitan sensibilities in the act of colonization. See: "Presenting the 'Poor Miserable Savage' to French Urban Elites: Commentary on North American Living Conditions in Early Jesuit Relations." *Sixteenth Century Journal* XLIV, no.3 (2013): 683-711; *Apostles of Empire: The Jesuits and New France,* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019).

claims in her study of Gabriel Sagard's musical inclusions in his *Histoire du Canada*.[13] Perhaps most importantly, however, *Le Temple de la Paix* premiered mere days before the Edict of Fontainebleau was issued. It can thus be assumed that numerous individuals invested in the conversion of native Frenchmen witnessed the metaphorical conversion of supposedly uncivilized peoples on stage—which included, in Quinault's libretto, Basques and Bretons too, both of whom resided in regions with not insignificant protestant populations. If the "sauvage" could be formed in the image of the French, why not the Huguenots? Lully's Native Americans could be seen as cultivated rather than subjugated based on the seventeenth-century colonial context, or as *converted* metaphorically in the face of royal action against Protestantism.

In this second chapter, the idea of Frenchification is tested against the poetic content of *Le Temple de la Paix* to try to gauge its own endorsement (or refutation) of such polices. Ultimately, I argue that subjugation of "sauvage" peoples plays a rhetorical role in *Le Temple de la Paix,* but that it was more likely that Lully was using the New World to subjugate the old one. On the basis of two distinctly French entrées in the opera and the lack of any defining features for Native American character, the Edict of Fontainebleau and the state of religion in France correlates more directly to the rhetoric seen in *Le Temple de la Paix* than any American colonial events contemporary to 1685. There was furthermore no precedent for opéra-ballet commenting upon the East or West Indies in any meaningful way. Even Turkish themes were typically employed to comment upon the state of despotism (or the bourgeoise) in France rather than for their own sake.

[13] Olivia Bloechl, "The Pedagogy of Polyphony in Gabriel Sagard's *Histoire du Canada*," *The Journal of Musicology* 22, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 365-411. Bronwen McShea makes a similar argument about non-musical inclusions in *relations.* See: "Presenting the 'Poor Miserable Savage' to French Urban Elites: Commentary on North American Living Conditions in Early Jesuit Relations."

Complicated race relations—especially in colonial Louisiana—made for interesting ideas about Native Americans that did not uphold racial prejudice or Frenchification. Daniel Usner's *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves* argues convincingly that the economic realities of Louisiana prevented either system from triumphing over the other, instead creating racial friction. Sophie White's *Wild Frenchmen and Frenchified Indians* documents a material culture in which Native Americans and French colonists exchanged both places and goods in a remarkably deracialized fashion well after the failure of Frenchification policies.[14] This is hardly surprising, considering the fact that Frenchmen in Louisiana depended on trade with Native Americans to survive. Frenchmen furthermore often refused to work dockside jobs, which led to free black men being apprenticed into such positions, subsequently gaining economic leverage over poor whites.[15] Shannon Lee Dawdy's *Building the Devil's Empire* is an entertaining and comprehensive account of the complex nature of Louisiana in the eighteenth century as well, but one that emphasizes rebellions over the tensions that necessitated them. Dawdy argues that a diverse group of lower class or otherwise subjugated individuals had a stronger influence on the colony than metropolitan governing officials did. This diverse group included both Africans and Native Americans—individuals who routinely defied the monarchy's vision for the colony by exercising financial and personal freedoms, and possibly espoused progenitive revolutionary ideas that would rear their head in 1789. Thus, even the colonies refute the notion that works like *Le Temple de la Paix* and *Les Indes Galantes* spoke for them—how could metropolitan artists speak for the colonies if metropolitan governing figures could not?[16]

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[14] Sophie White, *Wild Frenchmen and Frenchified Indians,* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).
[15] Daniel Usner, *Indians, Settlers & Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy*, (Charlotte: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 55-6.
[16] Shannon Lee Dawdy, *Building the Devil's Empire, French Colonial New Orleans,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

Louisiana challenged indigenous-French diplomatic practices that had long been respected in Canada as well. This was mostly due to French missteps and a lack of practical knowledge of the differences between indigenous nations. It should be heeded that France had a serviceable *theoretical* knowledge of these differences. A 1726 dictionary of terms relating to the colonies proves this readily enough, with no less than 100 entries on various Native American peoples and their general cultural characteristics.[17] George Edward Milne's *Natchez Country* offers a unique approach to this issue through the subject of the Natchez Tribe, whom the French saw as bearing numerous similarities to themselves. This altered their approach to diplomacy with the Natchez in a negative way that, according to Milne, ultimately resulted in furthered racial tensions in colonial Louisiana that would not have existed otherwise.[18]

Les Indes Galantes does not necessarily fit into the historiographical landscape of colonial Louisiana in any meaningful way, but Louisiana almost certainly fits into the historiography of *Les Indes Galantes.* Rameau explicitly included his musicological sketch of Native American song and dance in "Les sauvages," and his librettist subtly hinted towards philosophical ideas of the noble savage formed in the lower Mississippi Valley by the Baron de Lahontan. It is easy to assume that Rameau was responding to the colonies in light of these facts.

While Lahontan's philosophy is undeniably present in "Les sauvages," Rameau's actual motivation for fabricating a positive depiction of the colonies was likely more mundane. His patron, Alexandre le Riche de La Pouplinière, had invested in John Law's Compagnie des Indes, which proved immensely profitable for him.[19] It was likely that in 1736, he still had money in the colony, but interest and faith in the economic utility of Louisiana were waning because of the

[17] Claude-Marin Saugrain, *Dictionnaire de la Nouvelle France,* (Québec: Éditions l'Hêtrière, 1984).
[18] George Edward Milne. *Natchez Country: Indians, Colonists, and the Landscapes of Race in French Louisiana,* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015).
[19] Cucel, 10-12.

collapse of John Law's enterprise therein. Rameau may have undertaken a lighthearted depiction of the colonies to signal on behalf of his patron that despite catastrophic economic failure, Louisiana still had value. That La Pouplinière had any financial investment in *Les Indes Galantes* is unclear, but Rameau certainly held him as his patron when the opera premiered, both for the first and second times.[20] Furthermore, this motivation has no bearing on if Rameau did utilize Lahontan's philosophy to critique the nobility—in fact, it only makes it more likely that he did, as his monetary support was not coming from a sector where such a thing would have been of much concern. This does not mean that changes in the colonial landscape do not matter—but they matter in France for reasons that decidedly do not align directly with concerns in the colonies.

Rameau's motivations would have clashed with Lahontan's primitivist doctrine in many ways, however—most notably in their capitalistic undertones. La Pouplinière's interest in Louisiana (and the French Colonies as a whole) would have been economic, yet Lahontan spends hundreds of words arguing against personal property. Fuzelier's libretto in "Les sauvages" aligns with this philosophical idea by rejecting the commodification of love practiced by his European characters—granted, it is highly unlikely Lahontan would have enjoyed this perversion of his ideas. This abstract exploration of personal property was infinitely more likely to have passed muster with a wealthy French investor than a literal one.

The third chapter of this thesis argues that the changes in the depiction of Native Americans seen in *Les Indes Galantes* are a blurring of the line between the noble Frenchman and the noble savage. This takes Lully's rhetoric a step further: it specifies the gallant (the noble) as the losing party in "Les sauvages" and implies that Native Americans were indeed more

[20] Cucel, 75

"noble" in practice than their French counterparts. Rameau was able to do this not because French audiences had come to care about the colonies, but because he was financially supported in general by a patron who was likely more concerned with economic interests in Louisiana than he was with protecting the image of venal nobles whom many viewed as having lost virtuousness in recency.

The appropriation of Native American culture by Rameau and Lully on France's most prestigious (and diplomatically prominent) stages inadvertently turned an artistic trend of exoticism against the version of the French nobility which formed under Louis XIV. This contributed to disillusionment with the commodified second estate in the pre-revolutionary period. This thesis' interpretation of *Le Temple de la Paix* and *Les Indes Galantes* pushes against previous interpretations of the ballet des nations trope and its usage of Native Americans as directly concerned with the colonial world. This thesis will argue that numerous musical and poetic features of these works either exoticize or Frenchify Native Americans to ostracize Frenchmen, but not to make any point about the colonial world. These hitherto under-analyzed musical sources not only increase our understanding of changing ideas of nobility in eighteenth-century France, but they also demonstrate an extreme level of disconnect between the colonial world and the metropole that many cultural historians have failed to account for. Though the arts in early modern France assuredly *knew* of the New World, did they care about it in the same way as colonists did? Did they care about it at all?

Chapter 1: Staging the Rising Sun: Ballet in Louis XIV's Court

Les Indes Galantes and *Le Temple de la Paix*, before they are examples of artistic exoticism, are examples of distinctly French opera and ballet. A basic understanding of the genre itself is necessary before one can analyze the purpose of the Native American depictions contained therein. Thus, the first chapter of this thesis will summarize the important features of ballet during Louis XIV's reign, as well as certain formative elements thereof developed by his predecessor, Louis XIII. Defining what made music absolutist (especially regarding genre) will be key to parsing how both *Le Temple de la Paix* and *Les Indes Galantes* intended to interface with their primarily noble audiences as well.

While elaborate ballet performances are typically associated with Louis XIV, they truly began under Louis XIII. This particular genre of ballet differs from something familiar like Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker*, and perhaps is better referred to as "ballet de cour," as it was performed primarily in the setting of the royal court.[21] Ballet de cour could have been performed in many settings, almost none of which resemble the theaters ballet is performed in today. Nicolas Fouquet notably staged Molière's *Les Plaisirs de l'ile enchantée* in the gardens of Vaux, but that same work was performed indoors as well when it came to Versailles.[22] The two elements of ballet de cour that tend to be the most surprising to modern viewers are its use of singing (which was both prolific and expected) and the fact that nobles—even the king—danced in these ballets. This latter fact was what allowed, in part, ballet to become diplomatically functional in the seventeenth century. Rather than being purely artistic, ballet de cour was

[21] James R. Anthony, "Ballet de cour," *Grove Music Online*, (20 January 2001).
[22] Claire Goldstein, *Vaux and Versailles: The Appropriations, Erasures, and Accidents That Made Modern France*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 51-52.

expected to serve a social function for a group of people who were both audience members and performers.

The political purpose of ballet would be solidified during Louis XIII's reign, and the tropes that later composers such as Jean-Baptiste Lully would come to depend upon (such as the ballet des nations with which this thesis is concerned) formed in the very early seventeenth century as well. Court ballet was often performed for and by diplomats and foreigners, which meant that it often reflected contemporary tensions and relations between various European nation-states.[23] The seventeenth-century term "ballet des nations" (wherein various national groups are depicted in stereotype) was an especially "absolutist" trope in the sense that it originated in court entertainment explicitly to praise the French king and his culture through the degradation of others.[24] It was, however, not necessarily diplomatic in every case, and existed as a novelty too. Later ballets des nation needed elements of other subgenres to succeed amongst increasingly important "parterre" audiences (typically composed of bourgeois men who bought what would today be called standing-room tickets), who were more likely to appreciate the 1725 Natchez dances than a convoluted white imitation thereof—it simply would have required less privileged knowledge to understand.[25] *Les Indes Galantes*, for instance, is not technically a ballet des nations, even if the genre obviously influenced the work. Thus, while the ballet des nation started as a novelty, it took on political characteristics in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

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[23] Welch, *A Theatre of Diplomacy*, 135.
[24] Marie Canova-Green, "Dance and Ritual: the *ballet des nations* at the court of Louis XIII," *Renaissance Studies* 9, no. 4 (December 1995): 395.
[25] For more on "parterre" audiences, see: Jeffery S. Ravel, *The Contested Parterre: Public Theatre and French Political Culture, 1680-1791*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999). It is also possible to conceptualize the 1728 performance as an egalitarian one: noblemen and parterre spectators likely had similarly poor knowledge of Natchez culture.

During Louis XIII's reign, the French state also began numerous colonial endeavors that would prove influential both economically and culturally. The colonization of Canada was begun during this period, as well as the exploration of the Mississippi valley (though the settlement thereof would not pick up until the late seventeenth century). Jesuit missionary efforts also picked up significantly, both in colonial theatres and in other eastern and western lands. No imperial effort went without controversy, however. Beginning in 1630, the Chinese Rites affair threw the methods of Jesuit missionaries into question in religious circles for being excessively appropriative of foreign cultures—that is to say, for doing exactly what French nobles so enjoyed on court stages in pursuit of a "practical" goal.[26]

Politics were furthermore intricate within Europe in the seventeenth century, mostly owing to the complex geopolitical borders drawn in the aftermath of the Peace of Westphalia.[27] Political activity during this period was so complex that Louis XIV's reign has been called the birth of modern diplomacy. The complexity of Louis XIII's reign laid the groundwork for the intensely varied roles of envoys and ambassadors during Louis XIV. What is more, such individuals were often the better part of the audiences for court spectacles.[28] Ultimately, the people who were closest to ballet—its diplomatic audiences and noble performers—had more bearing on its contents than Jesuit missionaries in the colonies. The colonial motivations of Jesuits and nobles were not necessarily compatible with each other in the first place. *Le Temple de la Paix,* for instance, was not appropriative like Jesuit conversion methods often were—in fact, it was the direct opposite: it forced Native Americans into French cultural molds. If works

[26] See: James S. Cummins, "Palafox, China and the Chinese Rites Controversy," *Revista de Historia de América,* no. 52 (December 1961), 395-427.
[27] William James Roosen, *The Age of Louis XIV: The Rise of Modern Diplomacy,* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 16-31.
[28] Lully and Quinault, *Le Temple de la Paix,* 4. This is only one example of the cast list used in libretti, as there is the one at the beginning of each entrée.

like *Le Temple de la Paix* did not intend to depict the colonies for their own sake, what did they do?

Numerous scholars have acknowledged the intricate purposes of ballet in seventeenth-century court culture as a part of a new, distinctly *European* diplomacy. In her book *A Theatre of Diplomacy*, Ellen Welch argues that real-life diplomatic events were mimetically idealized in seventeenth-century ballets to resolve geopolitical tensions. Diplomacy is performative by nature, so it is no wonder that the highly ritualized and regimented artistic medium of ballet constituted the perfect vehicle for idealizing relations between various nation-states. Such depictions were rarely literal. They often veiled controversial marriages, alliances, and conflicts through stories from antiquity. Ballet intended to idealize, obscure, and simplify reality. Welch furthermore sees the subgenre of the "ballet des nations" as a device for projecting French cultural supremacy to diplomats from other nations—but not, it should be noted, as subjugating them. In the ballet des nations, European nations were caricatured and exaggerated to juxtapose with elegant and subtle (but not at all specific) depictions of Frenchmen. The methods used to achieve caricature were twofold: musical styles of different nations were emulated in the "ballet des nations," and the librettos utilized therein did not mince words in describing the least favorable traits of each featured nationality. The exoticization of European cultures in turn made the French the pinnacle of European-ness, but this could not occur in the first place if France subjugated all her fellow nations—a lower rung would still need to be established.[29]

Ballets des nations were written with the understanding that they could potentially be performed for foreign audiences as well, and it is also for this reason that they differentiate

[29] Ellen R. Welch, "Dancing the Nation: Performing France in the Seventeenth-Century 'Ballet des nations,'" *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 13, no.2 (Spring 2013): 3-23. For a general idea of balletic diplomacy, see: Ellen R. Welch, *A Theatre of Diplomacy: International Relations and the Performing Arts in Early Modern France*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017).

between national groups rather than perfecting them under the idea of Frenchness.[30] A ballet that satirized Italian culture could very well be consumed by Italians. Italy is a particularly good example of this, seeing that Marie de Medici survived well into Louis XIII's reign. Numerous ballet des nations from Louis XIII's reign included an Italian entrée, and it is almost impossible that the Queen Consort would have somehow missed all of them.[31] Thus, even in stereotypes, there necessarily was respect—Italians were not explicitly inferior (though they were implied to be so), but they were explicitly different. Performances were furthermore wont to resist their own frameworks for the benefit of their purveyors where necessary or desirable, meaning even stereotypes could defy expectations if they served the good of the audience, be that for amusement or to reflect contemporary conditions. Ellen Welch documents this in her article on framework narrative in *Le bourgeois gentilhomme,* which was written, in many ways, to display the underbelly of art to its audience—even the underbelly of exoticism—by featuring characters who were themselves artists: a composer and a painter, most notably. Molière also explicitly depicts Frenchmen impersonating an Ottoman delegation in *Le bourgeois gentilhomme,* which was exactly what French dancers did in a ballet des nations—the difference is that in *Le bourgeois gentilhomme,* the audience has to understand that they are actually French for the plot to work.[32]

The implication of these interpretations of ballet for an opera like Lully's *Le Temple de la Paix* is that its depictions of other cultures would be exaggerated in character, both musically and

[30] Welch, "Dancing the Nation," 3.
[31] Welch, "Dancing the Nation," 10. The ballet in question on this page is entitled, quite creatively, *Ballet des Nations.* It included an Italian entrée and was performed for the court of Louis XIII explicitly.
[32] See: Ellen Welch, "Going behind the Scenes with *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*: Staging Critical Spectatorship at Louis XIV's Court," *The French Review* 85, no.5 (April 2012), 848-860.

poetically. There is, after all, no evidence that non-white individuals witnessed its premiere, and it is an absolute certainty that no such individuals performed in it either. With no one to avoid offending, why would *Le Temple de la Paix* hold back?[33] Yet, *Le Temple de la Paix* does not rely on caricature at all. Lully's music does not explicitly "other" his Native American characters—and Quinault's libretto makes no distinctions between different peoples either. As Olivia Bloechl astutely points out, there is no negligible musical difference between Native Americans and (presumably) French shepherds in *Le Temple de La Paix*—and broadly speaking, there is no musical difference between this ballet and any other Lully was commissioned to produce in his lifetime. While certain elements of the music, such as "doubled continuo" texture and the use of exclusively bass voices could indicate a primitive character, Bloechl also makes sure to mention that such a texture was used for non-exotic characters throughout Lully's works as well, debunking prior assumptions that such a compositional technique was exotic in the first place. There is furthermore no parodic element at play in *Le Temple de la Paix*, as there was in *Le bourgeois gentilhomme.* It seems that caricature, at least in French court ballet of the seventeenth century, was a mark of respect, or at least of a more cerebral form of humor that France assumed other European nations would understand—and I posit that it is for this reason that it was not bestowed upon non-Western cultures.

The explanation Olivia Bloechl offers for the lack of exoticization evident in Lully's work is that of subjugation: Lully Frenchified Native Americans to demonstrate that France had total control over them. This was in line with the colonial policy of the period in which he was musically active, which emphasized conversion and intermingling with Native Americans—in a

[33] The premier of *Le Temple de la Paix* is documented in both the journals of the Marquis de Dangeau and the periodical *Mercure Galante.* Neither mention Native Americans witnessing the performance, which surely would have been of note—especially to Dangeau, who never went overseas to America, and by all indications, passed his entire life in Europe.

word, subjugating them. This could still be interpreted as diplomacy—but it would have been poor diplomacy indeed, lacking in the "consent" that the viewership of, say, Spanish diplomats perversely provided to the typical ballet des nations by watching them.[34] If *Le Temple de la Paix* did mean to depict a diplomatic act, as its name strongly suggests it did, it also hints towards two starkly different colonial visions at play. One, intended for colonists, promoted utmost respect for indigenous peoples—perhaps even intermingling with them, in the case of male French colonists. The other was much more racialized and understood indigenous people as inferior and ultimately unworthy of the complex diplomacy bestowed upon France's white neighbors. This latter vision makes some sense when contextualized in a French court that had become increasingly concerned with pedigree's role in determining rank—with matters of blood over valor (though the distinction between these two things was never as clear-cut in the seventeenth century as one might want them to be).[35] It might come as no surprise that Lully did not extend the honor of caricature to the indigenous people of America, even if one takes Olivia Bloechl's theory to be correct. He did not permit the nobility's image of French culture to compete with that of other, non-European nations because it was unclear if differing images of France should even be allowed to compete with each other.

The idea of any cohesive French culture in the 1700s at all is dubious to begin with, however—even in music, where a distinct national style can supposedly be identified.[36] Even

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[34] The idea of consent in performed diplomacy is discussed in relation to Marc Lescarbot's *Le théâtre de Nepture* in the following article: Ellen R. Welch, "Performing a New France, Making Colonial History in Marc Lescarbot's *Théâtre de Nepture* (1606)," *Modern Language Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (December 2011): 453-4.

[35] Ellery Schalk, *From Valor to Pedigree: Ideas of Nobility in France in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 115-144. Schalk identifies a separation of virtue and nobility into separate concepts in the seventeenth century, which he argues emerged circumstantially because nobles were becoming less and less attached to military valor. Virtue is thus attainable—but nobility is a matter of birth.

[36] Musicologists consider "French" opera to be characterized by clear text declamation and indistinguishability between arias and recitative. This only applies to musical analysis, however—the textual content of French baroque opera is harder to conceptualize as culturally distinct, excepting the fact that it was sung in French.

Lully, who defined what ballet de cour was in the seventeenth century, was born in Italy and received his musical training there. Indeed, upon close inspection, ballet de cour seems to include few "French" features outside of its music. The neoclassical theming of many court ballets during the period used the aesthetics of Ancient Greece. Though France claimed ownership of these cultures, they were separate from their present selves all the same. French intellectuals understood their relationship to Ancient Greece and Rome sometimes not as direct lineage, but as a product of the colonization of the Gauls. Sara Melzer claims that colonization was itself an action that could be framed as a way to bring them closer particularly to the Romans because it reversed the roles, with the former Gauls becoming the colonized.[37] This all begs the question: how can one Frenchify something if it is not so clear what it means to be French to begin with?

Perhaps, then, it is unwise to consider ballets like *Le Temple de la Paix* as acts of "Frenchification" at all. What neither Melzer nor Bloechl succeeds in doing is proving that the consumers of metropolitan art and literature seriously cared about colonization unless they were directly concerned with its administration or with monetary endeavors therein—if anything, it was a novelty. Thus, what seems more likely is that French artists and intellectuals who bent the New World to fit their own ends did so to cater to metropolitan concerns rather than colonial ones, which would disqualify subjugation as a satisfactory explanation for its treatment in opera. This finds precedent in France's treatment of the Near East, which was often considered a mirror for the perceived despotism of Louis XIV's court.[38] If the French did indeed define themselves by their refinement (which they certainly did in ballet), one way to measure such an attribute

[37] Sara Melzer, *Colonizer or Colonized: The Hidden Stories of Early Modern French Culture,* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).
[38] See Susan Mokhberi, *The Persian Mirror: Reflections of the Safavid Empire in Early Modern France,* (New York: Oxford Academic Online, 2020).

would be to juxtapose it with the unrefined—with the Native American "sauvage." France could not have used a Near Eastern example to this end because of diplomatic contact and outright alliances between the Ottomans and themselves. France often found itself obliged to bend to foreign demands in such situations for complex reasons. On one hand, France could use diplomatic visits from the Ottomans as a spectacle to entertain courtiers (which had important domestic implications)—on the other hand, they needed to maintain their own cultural superiority while doing so, which could prove difficult because the Ottomans viewed themselves as being at least as powerful as the French.[39] Thus, metropolitan nobles were interested in the colonies for reasons besides economic ones—they were in search of an example of the unrefined that was uncomplicated by diplomatic concerns.

Finally, it could be argued that Lully's Native Americans were Frenchified simply because he did not know how to make them culturally distinct owing to a lack of information on the peoples of the Americas. We cannot prove, after all, what sources on the Americas (if any) Lully and his librettist had read. However, what we do know is that Lully and his librettist both theoretically had access to empirical information on the Huron, Montagnais, and various Algonquin-speaking peoples that Frenchmen had encountered during the colonization of Canada. Jesuit *relations* produced before 1685 were immensely popular and likely remained widely available in such a year. While there are obvious ulterior motives to Jesuit accounts of the peoples of North America, the men who wrote such memoirs did so in the context of a print culture that promoted meticulous descriptions and maximal exactitude.[40] Thus, it would seem that Lully and Quinault ignored what they knew of Native Americans deliberately to shape them in their own artistic image. It could also be argued that Lully and Quinault ignored information

[39] Mokhberi, "The Persian Embassy to France in 1715: Conflict and Understanding," in *The Persian Mirror.*
[40] Brian Brazeau, *Writing a New France, 1604-1632,* (London: Routledge, 2016).

on Native Americans because their *audience* did not know enough about the colonies to appreciate a "realistic" depiction thereof. Yet, the sheer volume of Native American appearances in Lully's work refutes this. Something about these depictions must have proven popular enough for the composer to repeat them.[41] French spectators appreciated Spanish and Italian entrées in the ballet des nations explicitly because they understood something of such cultures, and there is little indication that Native American portrayals should have behaved any differently. If this proves any investment in the colonial sphere amongst French nobles is dubious at best. If these individuals did have any investment in the colonies, it would have been economic, as is more readily demonstrated later on by men like Alexandre de La Pouplinière.

Diplomacy defined ballet in the seventeenth century, and ballet was defined in turn by nobility on account of the social order that was central to its performance at court.[42] Ballets and operas moralized about what real nobles looked like by caricaturing other nations and other social classes, but depictions of Native Americans behaved differently from European ones because there was no expectation that these stereotypes would need to be understood by diplomats of American origin. Thus, vague depictions such as those in *Le Temple de la Paix* featured no distinctly Native American features in the music in the libretto, and likely relied upon aesthetic choices (such as costumes) to communicate national identity. This lack of clarity would later be exploited by Rameau to critique metropolitan perceptions of France's American colonies, as well as the nobility—but earlier composers like Lully were not concerned with the colonial world for any reason besides the fact that it was a supposedly good example of an unrefined people and perhaps an outlet for France to overcome its colonized, Gallic ancestry.

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[41] Bloechl, 156-159.
[42] Jean Balsamo, "Le prince et les arts en France au XIVe siècle," *Seizème Siècle* 7, (2011): 307-332.

Chapter 2: *Le Temple de la Paix* and Frenchified Savages

"His name was revered in the savage nations.
From the remotest of rivers,
All resounded news of his exploits.
Ah! It is sweet to live under your law."
-Philippe Quinault, *Le Temple de la Paix* (1685)[43]

Le Temple de la Paix begins where its name implies: in the temple of peace, which has been built for the heroes of the world. This initial scene utilizes no distinct national groups—instead, it depicts shepherds, shepherdesses, and nymphs. All sing the praises of an ambiguous hero meant to represent the King of France, who is the bringer of peace and the benevolent ruler of the world. Court spectacles—this one being no exception—often took place seemingly after France had come to dominate the globe. The following acts each depict different national groups coming to pay their respects to a thinly veiled stand-in for Louis XIV. All of these groups admit to having been conquered by France, graciously accepting their place in her empire. The Basque and Breton people begin the procession, singing the praises of the "peace" and "happy days" that the French empire promises to bring them. They are followed by "les sauvages de l'Amerique," who have "traveled the vast bosom of the ocean to pay homage to the most powerful of kings [Louis XIV]." Finally, Africans praise France for providing them respite from a long war.[44] Most of the national presentations in *Le Temple de la Paix* involve some insubstantial romantic plot between shepherds of presumably French origin. All of these subplots end in a reconciliation

[43] Jean-Baptiste Lully and Philippe Quinault, *Le Temple de la Paix*."Son nom est revere des Nations Sauvages./Jusqu'aux plus reculez Rivages/Tout retentit du bruit de ses exploits./Ah! qu'il est doux de vivre sous ses lois."
[44] Jean-Baptiste Lully and Philippe Quinault, *Le Temple de la Paix,* (Paris: C. Balliard, 1685). "Nous avons traversé le vaste sein de l'Onde,/pour venir hommage au plus puissant des Roys."

between lovers—the making of peace—and are lauded by the exoticized chorus and dance troupes at their conclusion.

Le Temple de la Paix fantasized about a world post-colonization to promote investment not only in the colonies themselves, but in the absolutist system that Louis XIII had worked so hard to establish (and that Louis XIV depended upon to maintain his power). Personal bonds and rhetorical constructions aimed to keep the loyalty of powerful nobles known as grandees, who the King depended upon to run France's sprawling administration, which developed over the course of the sixteenth century and reached its peak in the seventeenth.[45] *Le Temple de la Paix,* with its Basque and Breton depictions, is likely aimed more so at France itself and not its colonies. It is strange that there is no clear diplomatic purpose to the ballet if we assume that it was a Eurocentric construction. As we already know, it was not intended to make peace with Native American tribes, who did not know of its existence, nor was it intended to make peace with any European power because the only Europeans it depicts are French. In 1685, non-European embassies had just gained access to the court at Versailles, but not those representing Africans or Native Americans.[46] Though lacking in particulars, the abstract nature of *Le Temple de la Paix* points towards a higher meaning and distinct purpose, which this chapter will endeavor to find.

Further explanation for *Le Temple de la Paix*'s unique premise may be found in its intended audience. Operas like *Le Temple de la Paix* used stereotypes with the knowledge that those being depicted might be present. Marie de Medici is perhaps the best example of how this tension was resolved in court entertainments, as Italians were frequently among the subjects of

[45] James B. Collins, *The State in Early Modern France,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 6-27.
[46] Welch, *A Theatre of Diplomacy,* 159. Welch names "Algeria, Morocco, Siam, and Persia," which points towards preferential treatment of the near-east in diplomatic relations.

ballets des nations. The Queen Consort herself was involved in the arts as well, both as a dancer and a patroness. What she made of depictions of her homeland in the "ballets des nations" genre is unknown. She would likely have found herself conflicted by the stereotypes of Italians that dominated the royal stage, as there is evidence that she subtly resisted popular archetypes in her own artistic endeavors. The 1605 work *Ballet de la reine* was performed by the queen and notably included virtuosic Italian singers. Melinda J. Gough recommends that the intention behind using the famed Caccini singers in the little-known court spectacle was to subtly uphold the supremacy of Italian musical art whilst maintaining the stance that France was culturally superior.[47] Without any Native Americans to view and respond to *Le Temple de la Paix*, perhaps there was no need to do extra research and depict them "faithfully" or give them due deference. However, given the quality of knowledge production coming from Jesuit missionaries in the colonies, this explanation seems unsatisfactory on its own, as those documents too were produced with no expectation that they would be read by their subjects—yet they could yield vivid (but not accurate) descriptions of them nonetheless.[48]

It should also be noted that *Le Temple de la Paix* is not Lully's only work that utilizes an "American" divertissement, but it is his most significant usage thereof. Bloechl identifies no less than twelve of Lully's works as including ambiguous Native American characters, but explicitly Native American characters only seem to sing in two of them (*Le triomphe d'Amour,* and of course, *Le Temple de la Paix*).[49] The significance of *Le Temple de la Paix* lies in its prolific usage of Native Americans compared to other works in Lully's oeuvre and its unique premise,

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[47] Melinda J. Gough, "Marie de Medici's 1605 *ballet de la reine* and the Virtuosic Female Voice," *Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 7, (2012): 142-4; Melinda J. Gough, "Marie de Medici's 1605 *ballet de la reine*: New Evidence and Analysis," *Early Theatre* 15, no.1 (2012): 109-43.
[48] See: Brazeau, *Writing a New France.*
[49] Bloechl, *Native American Song,* 156-159. The wording "seem to sing" is used because without access to obcure scores, it cannot be determined for sure who sings in these operas and who does not.

which depicts the ending of a story of conquering rather than the act of conquering itself. The company these Native Americans are depicted in is significant too. The Frenchmen (besides the ambiguous shepherds) are *specifically* from Navarre and Brittany. In the context of travel narratives and conversion memoirs that used a great degree of specificity, it is thus strange that ambiguous terms like "les sauvages de l'Amerique" are used as opposed to a more specific label, like "Huron." It also becomes more unlikely that Lully depicted Native Americans so nondescriptly out of carelessness, as he would not have continued putting Native Americans in his operas if there was not some sort of demand for them—and in that demand lies the assumption that they would have had to serve a clear purpose. Thus, while it is impossible to determine *what* Native American tribe Lully meant to depict, it is possible to define *why* he depicted them.

Key Historical Context

Le Temple de la Paix, being an opéra-ballet, is structured around dancing. These dances were performed by nobles, who are listed alongside their roles in print copies of the libretto—but it is unknown who sang in both the chorus and as soloists. The French court often used professional musicians for such roles, and the lack of specification implies that they did so in *Le Temple de la Paix*.[50] Louis XIV himself rarely performed in ballets by 1685 and did not perform in *Le Temple de la Paix.* However, the journal of Dangeau indicates that the king's brother likely attended rehearsals thereof, so his proximity to the work was exceptionally close.[51] Based on Dangeau's account, we can assume the *Le Temple de la Paix* made a significant impression on

[50] This is demonstrated in the libretto to *Le Temple de la Paix,* which lists all the solo characters under "personnages," but not specifically who they are played by.
[51] Marquis de Dangeau, *Journal* 1, 229. "Monseigneur alla à la repetition de l'opéra qu'il fait faire pour Fontainebleau; c'est Quinault qui e nest l'auteur, Lully fait la musique; le sujet est le *Temple de la Paix.*"

the court at Fontainebleau. The Marquis mentions no other 1685 opera by name in his journal, though many were undoubtedly performed. What is more, Dangeau keeps a detailed account of who the king saw around the premiere of *Le Temple de la Paix*—mostly powerful grandees, but also foreign ambassadors from places like Poland and Holland. Dangeau also details the extensive religious work being done by the Crown in October and November of 1685:

> *Tuesday* 16, at Fontainebleau: It was known that the King has resolved to send missionaries to all newly converted towns. Father Bourdaloue, who should have preached at Advent to the court, is going to Montpellier, and the King said to him: "the courtesans will perhaps hear mediocre sermons, but the *Languedociens* will learn a good doctrine and a beautiful moral." All the religious orders will supply missionaries, and the Jesuits more than the others.[52]

Louis XIV would have had good reason to do significant religious outreach in this period—especially in Languedoc, which had the largest protestant population in all of France in 1670.[53] The Edict of Fontainebleau would be issued on October 22nd of 1685, a mere two days after the premiere of *Le Temple de la Paix.* Rural Frenchmen occupy half of the opera's acts, and both of the regional groups depicted had significant Huguenot populations (or resided extremely close to a region that did, in the Bretons' case).[54] Many of the nobles who performed in *Le Temple de la Paix* as dancers actually came from regions with strong protestant populations—from provinces like Dauphine and Languedoc—but they did not perform in the Basque and Breton entrées.[55]

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[52] Dangeau, *Journal* 1, 233. "On sut que le roi avoit résolu d'envoyer des missionnaires dans toutes les villes nouvellement converties. Le P. Bourdaloue, qui devoit prêcher l'avent à la cour, va à Montpellier, et le roi lui dit: 'Les courtisans entendront peut-être des sermons médiocres, mais les Languedociens apprendront une bonne doctrine et une belle morale.' Tous les ordres religieux fourniront des missionnaires, et les jésuites plus que les autres."

[53] Philip Benedict, "The Huguenot Population of France: 1600-1685: The Demographic Fate and Customs of a Religious Minority," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 81, no. 5 (1991), 8.

[54] Benedict, 8. Brittany and Normandy are, of course, very close to each other, and Normandy was the largest of the six northern synods in the 1660s.

[55] Lully and Quinault, *Le Temple de la Paix,* 14; 19.

These dances were performed by northerners from loyal, Catholic provinces; for instance, by the Comte de Guise and the Princesse de Conti. Instead, these nobles from Bearn and Languedoc were costumed as Native Americans and Africans, even if they were Catholic already.[56]

The year 1685 also falls conspicuously close to the outbreak of King William's War (1688-1697), and just barely a decade after the close of King Philip's War (1675-1676). The unwillingness of English colonists to respect treaty agreements made in the aftermath of King Philip's War resulted in diametrically opposed Native-European alliances that would be put to the test in King William's War. Many of these same alliances would remain in place in some form until the close of the 7 Years' War (1756-1763).[57] There are numerous key differences between King Philip's War and King William's War, not the least of which being the fact that King Philip's War was between English colonists and Native Americans—the French were not involved in any way. King William's War was, by contrast, a neglected colonial theatre for the 9 Years' War, in which the French were heavily involved. Though King William's War depended upon indigenous fighting power, it was viewed as tertiary to the 9 Years' War by European powers. Retrospectively speaking, King William's War hinted towards future clashes between European powers in the Atlantic world, as well as towards Native Americans' role therein—but this was not acknowledged at the time. It is tenuous to associate *Le Temple de la Paix* with King William's War in a diplomatic sense because there is no proof that English ambassadors were at the French court when the opera premiered. However, if they were, it is likely we would know, given the meticulous records kept by Dangeau and other court regulars.[58]

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[56] Quinault, *Le Temple de la Paix*, 19.
[57] Jenny Hale Pulsipher, "'Dark Cloud Rising in the East': Indian Sovereignty and the Coming of King William's War in New England," *The New England Quarterly* 80, no. 4 (December 2007): 589.
[58] Dangeau mentions a Polish ambassador paying his respects to Louis XIV in October 17th of 1685, as well as an Italian count on the 15th (233-234).

To analyze *Le Temple de la Paix* for rhetorical meaning, we must analyze what it lacks rather than what it features, as it deviates relatively little from normal court entertainment: it uses normative dance forms and harmonic structures, and its text is nothing to write home about.[59] Through conversion memoirs and travel writing, we can establish what information Lully and Quinault would have had access to in developing a depiction of America, then determine what (if any) of that information made it into the libretto and music. We can also contrast the depiction they developed in *Le Temple de la Paix* with other court entertainment that featured exotic locales (such as earlier "ballet des nations") to see what degree of accuracy would typically have been expected of such works, as well as what rhetorical constructions were typical of the genre.

Le Temple de la Paix can be interpreted from three different angles: one that emphasizes the importance of conquering Native Americans, another that emphasizes the importance of "civilizing" Native Americans through religious conversion, and a final one that considers *Le Temple de la Paix* in the context of the Edict of Fontainebleau, which was signed mere days after its premiere. Because there is no clear international diplomatic purpose to *Le Temple de la Paix*, it was likely intended as a generalized piece of entertainment—but this does not take away its rhetorical value. Instead, it distinguishes it as a work that could have been read differently by any number of individuals with any number of different agendas. *Le Temple de la Paix* allowed French courtiers to see what they wanted to see in the New World and to believe what they wanted to believe about its contemporary state. Perhaps most importantly, by placing Native Americans in French cultural molds, *Le Temple de la Paix* allowed Frenchmen to see what they wanted to see of themselves as well through juxtaposition. *Le Temple de la Paix* certainly did not

[59] Bloechl, *Native American*, 164-169.

seek to critique the nobility via this angle, but it might have sought to make a point about the condition of the French peasantry by comparing them to "sauvage" Native Americans—a practice that finds its precedent in Jesuit conversion memoirs of the seventeenth century.[60] Ultimately, this chapter proposes that the subjugation of Native Americans was not the main point of *Le Temple de la Paix.* Native Americans (and, for that matter, Africans) were instead used as a comparison point for rural French people in the general areas of Brittany and Basque, and perhaps particularly for the significant protestant populations in and around those regions.

Subjugation of Peoples

Olivia Bloechl's analysis of *Le Temple de la Paix* uses musical analysis to draw a comparison between the dance music Lully assigns his Native American characters and the dance music that would have been considered "typical" in the seventeenth century. She finds no significant evidence that Lully tried to exoticize or other these Native American characters in any way and thus argues that the composer's goal was to subjugate them by forcing them to fit within the specificities of French court culture.[61] This is consistent with scholarship on both French colonial policy and intellectual trends of the seventeenth century. A policy of "Frenchification" posited that French Christians "had the moral duty to bring [Native Americans] to faith and reason," which resulted in the encouragement of both intermarriage and cultural/religious conversion.[62] The French were furthermore concerned with reconciling their position as a great European power with their past as colonized people themselves. Some view the colonization of

[60] See: McShea, "Presenting the 'Poor Miserable Savage,'" 683-711.
[61] Bloechl, 163.
[62] Belmessous, 328-332.

the Americas—and intermarriage with Native Americans—as a replication of what the Romans did to the Gauls in antiquity.[63]

The analysis of *Le Temple de la Paix* in this thesis is more concerned with the libretto than it is with the music, but admittedly, if one pays attention only to the music, Bloechl's analysis seems sound. Furthermore, it is harder to blame Bloechl for paying so little attention to the libretto because of its abstract and frankly disorganized nature. Nevertheless, it is an important aspect of the work, and one that adds extra layers to, and perhaps even challenges Bloechl's analysis. Subjugate Native Americans Lully's music may, but Quinault's libretto denies them equalization, which was an end goal of the colonial policy of Frenchification as implied by the Gallic-Roman rhetoric that often surrounded it.[64] There would have been good reasons to maintain social stratification in *Le Temple de la Paix* because there were likely people in the opera's original audience who had begun to see the disadvantages of Frenchification policies—or perhaps did not trust it in the first place. *Le Temple de la Paix* concedes a certain validity to their concerns whilst standing behind Frenchification. It seeks to make peace between two competing viewpoints by representing elements of both in one cohesive work. Saliha Belmessous argues in her article that French officials blamed the failure of their Frenchification policy on the "visceral" savagery of Native Americans, not on the settlers and missionaries who carried out conversion and intermarriage.[65] The subjugation of these people on stage supports this idea by showing its intended result. Yet, the tertiary role of Native Americans in the plot simultaneously implies that they have somehow failed to earn their place alongside Europeans, which is an allusion to the realities of colonial policy and French opinion thereof.

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[63] See: Melzer, *Colonizer or Colonized.*
[64] Melzer, 114.
[65] Belmessous, 346.

In the Native American entrée of *Le Temple de la Paix,* named characters witness Native Americans paying respect to the king but fail to interact with them in any meaningful way, thus denying them a role in progressing the drama. The procession of "les sauvages d'Amerique" is interrupted by the amorous troubles of Lycidas and Amaryllis. Lycidas sings the following melancholy words to his friend Alcippe:

> Sweet Peace, who in these retreats
> Has comes to rest,
> Ah! Your sweetnesses are not made
> For the hearts troubled by love!
> As charming as you are,
> You do not know how to calm through your happy return
> My secret distress.[66]

His lament is in vain—at least initially. Amaryllis goes on to describe love as "cruel torment." She then asks him why he "searches for her hatred.[67] In the end, the pair are united despite their differing ideas about love, and the chorus (at this time presumably costumed as Native Americans, as the scene has not changed) sing the praises of "the peace" once more: "O joyful peace/Make my heart calm/O joyful peace/Never leave us."[68] These lyrics do not allude to the people on stage who hear them, thus denying them even the ability to comprehend the pastoral drama they have witnessed—they are only allowed to comment upon it.

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[66] Quinault, *Le Temple de la Paix,* 29. "Douce paix qui dans ces Retraites/Establissez vostre séjour,/Ah! vos douceurs ne sont pas faites/Pour les cœurs troublez par l'Amour!/Toute charmante que vous estes,/Vous ne saurez calmer par votre heureux retour/Mes inquiétudes secrètes."
[67] Quinault, *Le Temple de la Paix,* 30. "Délivrerez-vous d'une chaine/Qui ne peut vous causer que de cruels tourmens./Je vous ay dit cent fois que je hay les Amans,/Pourquoi cherchez-vous ma haine?"
[68] Quinault, *Le Temple de la Paix,* 33. "O bien-heureuse Paix/Rendez mon cœur tranquille/O bien-heureuse Paix/Ne nous quittez jamais."

In the traditional ballet des nations (even those scaled down to be a smaller part of a larger work), each nation would have its own contained plot—or at the very least, they would not be interrupted by an unrelated group of characters in the middle of their exoticist display. This general trend is visible in a work such as *L'Europe Galante,* wherein each entrée has named characters who typically are involved in individual romantic dramas.[69] The dichotomy between these two works (which premiered in a similar timeframe in front of a similar audience) perhaps identifies a "more acceptable" exotic of the Near East. *L'Europe Galante* even considers Turkey as *a part of* Europe, as the name implies. Indeed, the French saw many similarities between themselves and Persia—but they also altered the information they had on Persia to suit their own needs and reflect upon their own governing systems. Works such as *1001 Nights* and *The Rose Garden* were often obscured by translators who were more concerned with "[speaking] to contemporary French concerns… such as decadent court and religious intolerance."[70] *Le Temple de la Paix* presents us with the opposite: Lully and Quinault avoid altering Native American culture as much as they avoid depicting it realistically or distinctly. Their opening dance uses a dotted, compound rhythm that could represent any lower-class group—even a French one—and the use of bass voices for the Native American's solo lines finds its basis in another operatic tradition: that of the tragédie lyrique.[71] Though Bloechl concedes that this voice type could indicate a lowly, savage character in such a genre, *Le Temple de la Paix* was an opéra-ballet, not a tragédie lyrique—this renders the comparison tangential.[72] Lully's music, when combined with Quinault's libretto, places Native Americans in a "neither nor" position: they are obviously not

[69] Antoine Houdar de la Motte, *L'Europe Galante,* (Paris: 1724), iii-iv.
[70] Susan Mokhberi, "Persia: A Courtly East in the French Imaginaire," in *The Persian Mirror: Reflections of the Safavid Empire in Early Modern France,* (New York: Oxford Academic Online, 2020).
[71] Lully, *Le Temple de la Paix,* 143-144.
[72] Bloechl, 163-166.

French, as the novelty of their presence in the opera depends on them being "sauvage;" yet their music more or less equalizes them with the Basque and Breton peoples that precede them on the stage. It does not equalize them with the vocal soloists, however, who are French shepherds (implied stand-ins for nobles). In this context, one is inclined to ask if the intention of using Native American characters was actually to form an unflattering reflection of provincial French people.

Thus, a strange incongruence between musical and textual content occurs when we assume that *Le Temple de la Paix* depicts the European subjugation of indigenous people. The Native American entrée of the opera necessarily must have been visually "sauvage," as there are no features of either the libretto or musical score that could have identified it as such. Yet, Native Americans are made to bear witness to the height of the opera's romantic drama as if inferiors. They are more an aesthetic embellishment to a distinctly European drama than their own distinct group and are objectified and othered in this sense. Just as the French created their art against a backdrop of a culture that they inherited through colonization, Lully's Native Americans must themselves become background to main characters, who are at least European, if not explicitly French. The opera almost posits this as a stage of colonization, but the fact that it does not progress to a phase where Frenchman and Native Americans are equal could indicate that opinions of Frenchification were changing. It is possible that *Le Temple de la Paix* had a confusing and contradictory meaning, but there are simply other explanations that seem more complete, which will be discussed in due time.

It may be limitedly argued that the usage of Native Americans in ballet had its diplomatic equivalent in the Canadian Colonies, which would support Oliva Bloechl's notion that Lully's opera referred to the colonies without muddying the waters with perceptions of Frenchification.

A rudimentary sign language was used by early French explorers such as Samuel Champlain to communicate with Native Americans, and it is believed that such communications were immensely successful.[73] Champlain was able to obtain relatively detailed accounts of typical Canadian weather: ballpark estimates of snowfall and timeframes in which planting certain crops might be most effective. These instances of mimed communication would have been diplomatic indeed: chances for both indigenous and settler parties to size each other up. What is more, non-verbal communication must have been extremely performative, and even dance-like according to contemporary descriptions.[74] So-called "sonic cultures" were a locus of exchange and communication between France and East Asia as well, as is demonstrated by compositions like Michel-Richard de Lalande's "Siamese airs." Gabriel Sagard, while in Canada, transcribed Native American chants in western musical notation, presumably so that his French readers might sing them.[75] France *was* interested in documenting and navigating the cultures they interacted with abroad, but what is less clear is to what extent this interest extended to courtiers and the artists employed to entertain them. Indeed, the extent to which Lully and Quinault would have been aware of cross-cultural communication and artistic production is unknown and depends entirely on their exposure to the travelogues and conversion memoirs that discussed it—and there is no documentation of them interacting with it at all. If there was, that documentation likely would be musical works like *Le Temple de la Paix.*

The rhetorical significance of Native American characters taking on French movements to portray French meaning without alluding to their own culture would be congruent with Olivia Bloechl's analysis of *Le Temple de la Paix* as well, especially seeing that she concerned her

[73] Céline Carayon, *Eloquence Embodied: Nonverbal Communication among French and Indigenous Peoples in the Americas,* (Williamsburg and Chapel Hill: Omohundro Institute, 2019), 1-4.
[74] Carayon, 119.
[75] Bloechl, "The Polyphony," 373.

work on the opera mostly with dance music. In the sixteenth century, French manners (many of which had gestural features) were considered the most universal and civilized in all of Europe: one who was civilized in France was thus civilized everywhere.[76] Thus, giving distinctly French dance and song forms to Native American characters made them civilized. The real explanation for the use of familiar dance music and familiar music was unfortunately much more mundane. French gestures would have been a good way to make *Le Temple de la Paix* more entertaining for a courtly audience, who were familiar with them. Furthermore, if it was courtiers who performed in *Le Temple de la Paix,* they would have needed dances they were familiar with to perform in the first place.

By using distinctly French movements and music for its Native American entrée, *Le Temple de la Paix* may have intended to depict a subjugation of indigenous peoples in their Canadian colony, as Oliva Bloechl argues. This is supported by the distinctly French dance forms utilized in their entrée, as well as the fact that their very role in the plot is subdued and subjugated. This does explain why Lully and Quinault's Native Americans are not exoticized, but it does not explain what role they play in the overall image of the opera—which, it should be recalled, feature rural Frenchmen more prominently than any other race. If the Native Americans were subjugated, the peoples of Basque and Brittany necessarily would have to be too—yet these people were white French nationals. Subjugation could still be at play in *Le Temple de la Paix*, but it does alter Bloechl's thesis: "sauvage" would have to become a much more general term that could encompass anyone who did conform to absolutist designs.

[76] Carayon, 125

Conversion

Olivia Bloechl's analysis of *Le Temple de la Paix* would hold that it was the indigenous peoples of the Americas that Lully and Quinault were trying to subjugate, but given the imminency of King William's War, could it be that they sought to subjugate France's colonial rivals as well? This interpretation of *Le Temple de la Paix* is supported by certain nuances of language (or rather, the lack thereof) used in the libretto. When Quinault refers to his Native American characters, he refers to them as "the savages of the American provinces" rather than specifying either a geographical location from whence they hail or a specific tribe. This differs considerably from other literature on Native Americans from the late seventeenth century, as well as by its effect on similar literature of the eighteenth century. For instance, a 1727 dictionary of terms relating to New France defined over 100 separate tribes in the Americas.[77] Such a large amount of information was surely the result not only of recent knowledge production, but knowledge production that was occurring during Lully's time.

Furthermore, much of France's success in the Americas had been measured by its ability to convert indigenous peoples to Christianity. Instances of conversions were documented in Jesuit *Relations*, most of which (regardless of publication date) specify what tribe the missionaries converted, alongside detailed descriptions of their native culture. One major exception to this meticulous specificity does exist, however: those Native Americans who had not yet been baptized or otherwise showed signs of refusing conversion were generalized under terms like "barbarians" and "savages."[78] There are many fine examples of the rhetorical conventions of *Relations* spanning almost two centuries of Jesuit activity in the Americas. The

[77] Saugrain, *Dictionnaire de la Nouvelle France.*
[78] Francois Le Mercier, *Relation de ce qui est passé de plus remarquable aux missions des Pères de la Compagnie de Jesus en la Nouvelle France, les annèes 1670 & 1671,* (Paris: Chez Sebastien Mabre-Cramoisy, 1672).

style of these documents changed little between 1600 and 1700. For the purposes of this thesis, however, it would be best to look towards something that would have been relatively recent in 1685. *Relation de ce qui s'est passé de plus remarquable aux missions des Peres de la compagnie de Jésus en la Nouvelle France, les années 1670 et 1671* falls close enough to such a date. Furthermore, according to a handwritten note on the title page of the Bibliothèque National copy of this book, it may have been acquired by Melchisédech Thévenot, who was librarian to King Louis XIV between the years 1684 and 1691. Thus, it is possible that King Louis XIV (and the two kings who followed him) read this memoir and would have been familiar with its depiction of Nouvelle France.[79]

The 1670 *relation* refers to the Iroquois and Huron by name, as well as the "nation of fire," which though improper, is more specific than the term "sauvage." The memoir opens with a lengthy description of Iroquois war practices—particularly the taking and keeping of captives, and the brutality perceived to be involved therein. Based on the more recent findings of anthropological studies, the 1670 *relation* accurately (though vaguely) reports Northern Iroquoian captive practices.[80] This information, though unflattering, was intended to be educational—in some cases, it was meant to highlight the plight of poor Frenchmen, who many Jesuit missionaries argued lived in similar conditions to "les sauvages d'Amerique."[81] It proves that even the Iroquois, who the French rarely got along with, could be worthy of detailed description if they eventually converted to Christianity. Perhaps for some, they were equal with

[79] Mathilde Morinet, "'Publier les curieuses découvertes': l'entreprise éditoriale de Melchisédech Thévenot dans ses *Relations de divers voyages curieux* (1663-1672)," *Pratiques et formes littéraires* 17, (December 2020); Le Mercier, *Relation de ce qui est passé de plus remarquable aux missions des Pères de la Compagnie de Jesus en la Nouvelle France, les annèes 1670 & 1671*.
[80] See: William A. Starna and Ralph Watkins, "Northern Iroquoian Slavery," *Ethnohistory* 38, no.1 (Winter, 1991), 34-57.
[81] Bronwen McShea, "Presenting the 'Poor Miserable Savage' to French Urban Elites: Commentary on North American Living Conditions in Early Jesuit Relations," *Sixteenth Century Journal* XLIV, no.3 (2013), 692.

lower-class Frenchmen even before that—especially lower-class protestants, one might imagine. Furthermore, even if the French had historically not gotten along with the Iroquois, King Phillip's War had proven to them that Native American alliances were essential to success in the colonial theatre.[82] Thus, cultivating such alliances (even with groups they typically would not have associated with) may have driven the kind of outreach and attentivity that the 1670 *Relation* details.

The most enduring conversion memoirs of this time, however, were those of Champlain, Sagard, and Lescarbot. Champlain's *Des Sauvages* was particularly formative to later knowledge production concerning Nouvelle France because of his own proximity to the establishment of the colony. Lescarbot himself produced dramatic works depicting and/or for the colonies, which may have made his work interesting to artists like Lully and Quinault.[83] Of these three men, Lully shows the closest connection to Sagard and Lescarbot. Lescarbot utilized neoclassical theming and the theatrical to "sell" the new world in *Muses de la Nouvelle France*,[84] and Sagard's Frenchification of Native American song certainly connects to *Le Temple de la Paix* and its use of a similar practice. Sagard, besides transcribing his aforementioned Native American chants, also documented Native American dance practices that may have been of interest to Lully as a composer of dance music,[85] though there is no indication in *Le Temple de la Paix*—or any of his other works involving Native Americans, for that matter—that he ever tried to emulate their

[82] Jenny Hale Pulsipher, "'Dark Cloud Rising in the East': Indian Sovereignty and the Coming of King William's War in New England," *The New England Quarterly* 80, no.4 (December 2007), 589-582.
[83] Ellen Welch, "Performing a New France, Making Colonial History in Marc Lescarbot's *Théâtre de Neptune*," *Modern Language Quarterly,* (December 2011), 439-460.
[84] Lescarbot also uses a similar tactic in his dramatic work, *Le Théâtre de Neptune.* Both of these works invoke Neptune, in fact, emphasizing his own focus on, to use his own words, "verses proper to resonate the glory of the greatest king" throughout the universe. For more, see: Welch, "Performing a New France, Making Colonial History in Marc Lescarbot's *Théâtre de Neptune*."
[85] Gabriel Sagard, *Le grand voyage du pays des Hurons, situé en l'Amerique vers la mer douce, es dernier confins de la nouvelle France dite Canada,* (Paris : 1632), 150.

dances. Indeed, it is unwise to link Lully and Quinault to the same school of travel writing that Brian Brazeau claims, "transformed notions of the self"[86] simply because *Le Temple de la Paix* bestows no special treatment towards the colonial sphere. The only aspect of Jesuit *relations* that Lully and Quinault seem to take is the idea that there was something of the savage in French peasants, and perhaps something of French peasants in the savage—and of course, it remains tenuous that they would have taken this stance for colonial reasons.

Le Temple de la Paix is not a description of unconquered or unconverted peoples, as its explicit praises to the king imply that these people are being reigned over. Yet, the conversion of Native Americans to Catholicism is not implied in any way either—and because Lully and Quinault treat all their nationalities the same in *Le Temple de la Paix,* it is not implied that the Basque or Breton peoples have converted either. It is thus unwise to assume that Lully and Quinault would have played by the same rhetorical rules as Jesuit missionaries in producing *Le Temple de la Paix*, but if they did, they did so to posit Native Americans as a mirror for rural Frenchmen. The main purpose of court opéra-ballet was to praise the king and entertain his court, both of whom likely had more interaction with Basque and Breton people than they did with Hurons and Iroquois. Furthermore, it is known that nobles appreciated (and even appropriated) certain elements of Native American culture, such as featherwork, which became fashionable in the sixteenth century in Europe and remained so into the seventeenth. The historian Ulinka Rublack tracks the appropriation of feathers by European nobles as a sign of nobility, as well as a reclamation of military valor that once had defined aristocracy.[87] This

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[86] Brian Brazeau, *Writing a New France, 1604-1632: Empire and Early Modern French Identity,* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 4. An alternate view of this literary culture can be found in Christopher Parson's *A Not-So-New-World.* Parsons' thesis is more in line with Olivia Bloechl's view of *Le Temple de la Paix,* as it emphasizes France's goal to make Canada France rather than the ways their subverted expectations of the new colony affected their own concept of colonization.

[87] Ulinka Rublack, "Befeathering the European: The Matter of Feathers in the Material Renaissance," *American Historical Review,* (March 2021), 19-53.

means that cultural transmission was more of a two-way street than a narrative of conversion in *Le temple de la Paix* would permit.

The Edict of Fontainebleau

The Edict of Fontainebleau was signed two days after *Le Temple de la Paix* premiered. The Edict revoked the rights granted to Huguenots by the Edict of Nantes, thus affirming France's already clear anti-protestant stance legally. The Edict of Nantes itself was never a profession of tolerance, but instead a poor attempt to mask widespread intolerance. Indeed, throughout the seventeenth century, the Edict of Nantes was repeatedly reinterpreted in an attempt to fix a problem that it never solved: an outright dislike of Protestants by a majority-Catholic population. Thus, the Edict of Fontainebleau was not so much a declaration of war on Huguenots as it was a political necessity.[88] While there is no apparent musical or textual connection between *Le Temple de la Paix* and the Edict of Fontainebleau, the Edict of Fontainebleau connects to the ideas of peace and order that undoubtedly crossed Louis XIV's mind frequently. It was those values he was likely approaching in 1685 when he signed the Edict of Fontainebleau, even if religious prejudice underlined his actions—and it is those values too that play so large a role in *Le Temple de la Paix*'s abstract narrative. This interpretation is supported by Dangeau's journals, which report *peaceful* outreach to both newly converted and Huguenot communities in 1685. Indeed, in her analysis of the Edict of Fontainebleau, Elisabeth Labrousse states that "it seems… to a certain extent, the revocation might also be considered a measure destined to make a tangle of decrees and declarations—promulgated against the Huguenots over a period of twenty years—fall automatically into disuse." Though Louis XIV

[88] Richard M. Golden, "Introduction" in *The Edict of Nantes, Its Revocation, and Early French Migration to South Carolina,* ed. R. M. Golden, (Norwell: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988), 20.

was undoubtedly exercising his power to perpetrate an act of religious intolerance, he was also cleaning up a long-standing legal nightmare that was preventing him from achieving both peace of mind and peace throughout his country.[89]

Le Temple de la Paix featured more Frenchmen than it did any other nationality. The Native American and African entrées come last as well, almost as if to imply a sliding scale of expectations: France could convert their own peasants, and then Native Americans (who they viewed as primitive versions of themselves), and then Africans (who were by most accounts considered completely foreign from the French). Perhaps it is the other way around: the Basque and Breton peoples had made themselves so uncivilized that they were not much better than Native Americans and Africans. The idea that these national groups were equalized in Lully's work is plainly evident in the utter lack of any meaningful textual differences between "chanson des basques" and the words sung by "une sauvage." Both songs mention having been saved from war by France and proceed to praise their newfound peace. "Une sauvage" mentions rivers in his small aria, which might be the beginnings of a nationally specific depiction, but the underlying message is the same.[90] The disparaging tone of this choice is clear. Would a man of Breton origin have been happy to see himself depicted beside a Native American if his Parisian counterpart were not there as well? Likely, he would not have been pleased.

Quinault's choice of Frenchmen is at least partially, if not entirely strategic. The Basque region of France had a Huguenot population of 50,000 in the seventeenth century, which although not the largest in the country, was not insignificant. Some sources dispute this number

[89] Elisabeth Labrousse, "Revocation of the Edict of Nantes from the Perspective of the French Court," in *The Huguenot Connection: The Edict of Nantes, Its Revocation, and Early French Migration to South Carolina,* ed. R. M. Golden, (Norwell: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988), 59.
[90] Quinault, *Le Temple de la Paix,* 15; 27-28.

to be as high as 88,000.[91] This forms a clear link between the opera and the Edict of Fontainebleau and *Le Temple de la Paix,* which has a Basque entrée. Unlike Languedoc, the Basque region (particularly Bearn) did not easily capitulate to the pressures to accept the Catholic faith, even in light of the 1685 Edict. They were slow to dismantle protestant places of worship and resisted conversion, which must have been anticipated before the Edict of Fontainebleau was signed.[92] In this light, *Le Temple de la Paix* becomes a projection of yet another desirable outcome—the desire for *protestants* to convert to Catholicism. By implying that Native Americans and Africans might do so willingly, Lully and Quinault admonished Frenchmen for resisting conversion. It is, of course, a bold idealization to claim that Native Americans converted to Catholicism willingly, for this was not universally true. Among the Natchez, for instance, French missionaries struggled to convert anyone, and even found themselves intellectually bested by Natchez leaders in the process. The French thought themselves especially similar to the Natchez tribe and accounted for this in their conversion methods, but this train of thought ultimately resulted in extended conflict between the two groups that would have been familiar to Rameau in his time two decades after the premiere of *Le Temple de la Paix*.[93]

Instead of raising the Native American to the same level as the Frenchman, *Le Temple de la Paix* lowered the Frenchman to the level of the savage. As plausible as Oliva Bloechl's explanation of the opera may seem—that all these national groups are depicted similarly because

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[91] Bertrand Van Ruymbeke, "The Huguenots in America," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of American History,* (November 19, 2020). The larger number is Philip Benedict citing Samuel Mours. His regional divisions are by synod in 1660-70, making it difficult to decide what regions count as "Basque." For my purpose, I looked to the "Bas-Languedoc" number, as the Basque region is likely covered by this synod, especially when compared with other options. See: Philip Benedict, "The Huguenot Population of France," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 81, no. 5 (1991), 8.
[92] Phillipe Chareyre, "Le Béarn, terre d'expérimentation de la Révocation," *Lengas* 70, (2011), 19; 21.
[93] For more on the perceived similarities between the Natchez and the French, see: George Edward Milne, *Natchez Country: Indians, Colonists, and the Landscapes of France in French Louisiana*.

they have all been Frenchified and uplifted thusly—a depiction of Native Americans and the Basque coming together to serve the same rhetorical purpose would have undoubtedly been at the latter's expense. "Punching down," so to speak, was not unexpected in court entertainment. One need not look further than Lully and Molière's own *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* to know that making fun of inferiors made for good court farse.[94] To imply that native Frenchmen required subjugation in the same way that the Huron and Natchez did was to imply that both groups were equally "sauvage." Thus, *Le Temple de la Paix* demonstrates that courtiers may have thought of their unruly fellow countrymen in the same terms that they thought of the indigenous peoples of America.

Le Temple de la Paix is indicative of three sentiments present in metropolitan French culture in the late eighteenth century. On one hand, French colonial policy still promoted the intermarriage, cultural assimilation, and religious conversion of Native Americans, which *Le Temple de la Paix* emulates through the use of French music and poetics in their entrée. The textual content of the opera denies Native Americans equalization, however, which creates loose ends that cannot be tied up, as this is contrary to such colonial policies as they were conceived in the colonies themselves. The presence of Native Americans alongside French people from Bearn and Basque regions, however, implies that *Le Temple de la Paix* was more a commentary of the state of France than it was upon her colonies, which leaves fewer questions unanswered and provides a strong precedent for Rameau's more pointed critique of the French nobility in *Les Indes Galantes.*

[94] See: Molière, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme.*

Chapter 3: *Les Indes Galantes* and Savage Frenchmen

Les Indes Galantes is an opera that has persistently defied categorizations that otherwise might make its meaning clearer. On the one hand, the frontispiece of the printed libretto claims that it is a ballet héroïque; on the other hand, the opera best resembles the ballet des nations. *Les Indes Galantes* also resembles an earlier opera *L'Europe Galante,* which is not defined in any sources as a ballet des nations—but *L'Europe Galante* also features typically ballet des nations traits insofar as that it depicts different areas of Europe through the use of stereotypes. The defining factor of the ballet héroïque was a narrative concern with Greek and Roman gods, which *L'Europe Galante* and *Les Indes Galantes* both have, but *Les Indes Galantes* is more national stereotype than it is high classical drama quantitatively. It is perhaps unduly positivist to assume that the French understood the categorizations they applied to their arts as unbending. *Les Indes Galantes* is remembered precisely because of its creative premise, which broke away from the musical establishment it was built upon.[95]

The ballet des nation was not simply defined by the exhibition of stereotypes to begin with, however. On the contrary, the genre contained complex rhetorical constructions and employed a great diversity of methods to produce distinctly exotic spectacles. Ellen Welch argues that stereotype was deployed explicitly to highlight the sophistication of French culture, which would be depicted in ballet as far more subtle than their German and English counterparts.[96] In *Le Temple de la Paix,* a logical continuation of this trend from its origins in Louis XIII's reign is demonstrated. Because France conquered and brought peace to all of the world, all the national groups featured in the opera perform with equal subtlety—with equal Frenchness. A similar rhetorical configuration may be observed in writings on manners in the

[95] Graham Sadler, "Les Indes Galantes," (Grove Music Online, 2002).
[96] Welch, "Dancing the Nation," 6.

early modern period. Antoine de Courtin notoriously asserted that one is "civil in all countries if they are civil *à la mode de France*."[97] It is not necessarily clear in art what Frenchness is to begin with, however—even manners could likely be traced back to a point where they were no longer French. In most cases, it is defined by the lack of distinct national features. In *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme,* for example, the fake Turkish entourage says "Allah" over and over again after entering, deftly proclaiming their nationality through the religion associated with it—but what makes Monsieur Jourdain French is at no point clear.[98]

Subtlety in these works obscured a distinctly French culture. This phenomenon would have been quite topical in the late seventeenth century. While France began to colonize the Americas, they also entertained debates about their own past as colonized people in Roman times. Did France have a culture if the Gauls assimilated fully with Rome and adopted their ways? Should France, now a great international power, claim their colonized Gallic ancestry in the first place? With these debates also came debates over what constituted a distinctly French culture. At the end of the day, anything that could be traced back to antiquity revealed the story of the Gauls being colonized by Rome—thus anything that was French was Roman, but because many nations claimed lineage to Rome, it could not be patently French. Opera's answer to this question, of course, was that French culture was not English, not German, not Spanish, etc. French culture was a series of absences, and this issue was not resolved by Rameau's time as an opera composer in the mid-eighteenth century.[99] While this trope may have still been favorable at court, it would have been less so in theatres that were becoming more and more accessible to the public. The lack of Frenchness (and spotting definition thereof) in the ballet des nations was

[97] Carayon, *Eloquence Embodied,* 125. The translation used in Carayon's, as is the emphasis.
[98] This features in Lully's score, but not Molière's text. See: Lully, *Le Bourgeoise Gentilhomme,* (Paris: Richault, 1892), 47-48.
[99] See: Melzer, *Colonizer or Colonized*; Bloechl, *Native American Song.*

a court trope that reflected an intellectual, upper-class conceptualization of what it meant to be French. Further clarity would be needed going into the eighteenth century because audiences were changing.

Influence of Parterre Audiences

Enlightenment principles are often cited in explaining why French music began to simplify (and clarify) musically in the early eighteenth century,[100] but opera likely changed, in part, because of class pressures. In the 1680s, so-called "parterre" audiences became increasingly influential. "Parterre" audiences were comprised of men of typically non-noble birth[101] who purchased what might be called standing-room tickets today. Notoriously disruptive when unsatisfied, actors and playwrights alike often found themselves responding to the whims of the parterre whereas they had not needed to in the seventeenth century. For instance, when Voltaire's *Mariamne* was poorly received by the parterre in 1724, the playwright withdrew the play from the Comédie-Italienne's repertoire. The parterre's cry of "la reine boite [the queen drinks]" as the heroine drank her fatal cup of poison demonstrated a class awareness among these newer theatergoers that Voltaire was decidedly uncomfortable with. These men felt comfortable enough in the theatre to interrupt the performance of Voltaire's play, but also to disparage the royal family in the same breath.[102]

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[100] This comment refers to the "galant" musical style, which used simpler and shorter themes and slower harmonic rhythms, making music easier to listen to.

[101] It was, however, possible that these men held venal titles in many cases.

[102] Jeffery S. Ravel, *The Contested Parterre: Public Theatre and French Political Culture,* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 126-131. Voltaire's tragedy *Mariamne* tells the story of Mariamne, a Hasomonean woman who unhappily marries the warrior Herod after he defeats her people and kills her grandfather. Herod, assuming Mariamne is unfaithful, sentences her to death (in Voltaire's version, by drinking poision)—but he finds himself unable to overcome his own guilt. "La reine boite" was a paraphrase of "le roi boit," which was associated with Chiavari style Epiphany celebrations in France. *Mariamne* premiered around the time such celebrations would have been taking place.

Parterre audiences did not attend opera performances as much as they did plays.[103] While Ravel raises no reasons as to why this might have been so in *The Contested Parterre,* it may have been due in part to the fact that the opera only performed three nights a week, which undoubtedly made it considerably more difficult to attend for certain professions who worked at those times. Almost all parterre tickets were prohibitively expensive for the vast majority of Parisians anyways, so these time constraints could not have helped their viewership amongst the parterre. Exaggerated Royal control over the operatic arts may have rendered such performances inaccessible too. As analysis of *Le Temple de la Paix* has demonstrated, the role of opera in court affected the content of librettos and the structure of narratives, such that many works resembled a string of loosely related anecdotes rather than a single coherent story—such works inevitably made the most sense to the people who traditionally had access to them. Simply put, operas were not the most entertaining performance that parterre spectators had access to, which likely influenced their decisions when purchasing tickets.

Nevertheless, the effect of unruly crowds of operas during the reign of Louis XV is well known and can be neatly encapsulated in one anecdote: the reception of Jean-Jacque Rousseau's *Le Devin de Village.* Though *Devin* premiered decades after *Les Indes Galantes,* it did so in a musical landscape broadly unchanged since the 1730s, when Rameau first began to compose operatic works. Just as Rameau was chastised in his hay-day for defying musical conventions established by Lully, such as [specifics], Rousseau found himself at once loved and hated by the public for composing what was essentially an Italian opera sung in French.[104] He was offered a

[103] Ravel, 17.

[104] *Le Devin de Village* has many features that are distinctly French. For instance, the usage of its chorus and dance interludes is deeply French both in its quantity and narrative purpose (the dancing had no import on the plot and the chorus seems to exist outside of the story itself, even if its actors are dressed like villagers). The arioso, however, was a deeply Italian construction—and both Colin and Colette sing multiple pieces that could be categorized as such. See: "Avec l'objet de mes amors."

pension by Louis XV, who adored his work—but he was also burnt in effigy for opposing the canon of Rameau and Lully, who no longer stood in opposition to each other, but instead represented the same outdated musical system.[105]

A national character for France in the ballet des nations would have become more important as parterre audiences increased in size, as even exotic stereotypes were liable to fall flat amongst non-noble audiences. Molière and Lully's *Le bourgeois gentilhomme* is perhaps the best indication that the tropes seen in the ballet des nations (and French opera as a whole) were not understood by parterre audiences—who, to be sure, had the financial means to attend performances, but not the social know-how to fully appreciate them. In the quatrième intermède of *Le bourgeois gentilhomme,* Monsieur Jourdain (the bourgeois in question) is presented with a Turkish ceremony in which he is to be ennobled. This Turkish ceremony, however, is performed by a French nobleman in disguise (which would have been common fare in the ballet des nations). Jourdain is unaware that the ceremony is fake until the end of the play because he is unfamiliar with court entertainment in general. One thus must ask: if someone like Jourdain could not recognize, how would he ever recognize the lack thereof? Jourdain indeed finds himself confused by other elements of court entertainment too, such as the pastoral, about which he asks, "why always the shepherds?"[106] Molière's text is intended to mock those who endeavor to be nobles by gatekeeping niches of court culture from them, but it also tells us in turn exactly why French opera had to change to find success on more accessible stages.

Finally, the tastes of the nobility themselves were changing rapidly outside of the arts too. In his book *Nobility Reimagined,* Jay Smith identifies two reformist interpretations of "virtue"

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[105] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Lettre sur la musique Françoise,* (1753), 27-28. This passage in particular groups the two composers together, but the sentiment of the pamphlet itself does so more generally.
[106] Molière, *Le bourgeois gentilhomme,* (Paris: 1671). "Pourquoi toujours des bergers?" See also: Welch, "Going Behind the Scenes with *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*: Staging Critical Spectatorship at Louis XIV's Court."

(the trait that many believed to define nobility) developing alongside each other in late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century France:

> The growing preoccupation with virtue… gave birth to two powerful impulses of reform that projected different futures for the French nobility… One of these impulses associated virtue's absence with the degradation of the second estate and its values… The other impulse, which emphasized the nobility's moral responsibility for the historical failure of virtue, brought into question honor's continuing relevance to the requirements of a changing society, and it therefore challenged the nobility's viability both as an institution and as an ideal.[107]

Les Indes Galantes responds to this debate directly. It even espouses the second of Smith's conceptualizations of virtue—that is to say, the most radical one, wherein virtue becomes disembodied from the nobility—but it does not go so far as to question the nobility's place in French society. Even if Rameau was free to critique the nobility, he would have been a prisoner to the fact that they still made up the better part of his audience. Thus, the work is a valuable source on exactly how self-aware nobles were of their current condition vis-a-vis their condition in the sixteenth century, when military valor was still heavily intertwined with nobility. It also reveals how more radical philosophy (which "Les sauvages" depends heavily upon, even if it does not endorse it) made its way into art: because the role of the nobility had been destabilized therein.

It should also be noted that Rameau had a good personal reason to depict the colonies positively. Rameau depended on the patronage of the wealthy tax farmer Alexandre le Riche de La Pouplinière for much of his career. Many of his works were given test runs at La Pouplinière's salon. Besides being a tax farmer, La Pouplinière was also a prolific investor. It

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[107] Jay M. Smith, *Nobility Reimagined: The Patriotic Nation in Eighteenth-Century France,* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 36.

thus should come as no surprise that he made millions off of John Law's Compagnie des Indes in 1717 before the collapse of the Mississippi System. *Les Indes Galantes* premiered in a far less optimistic time for colonial economic production, but La Pouplinière would have wanted to signal that there was still money in Louisiana, even if John Law's endeavors there had been unequivocally catastrophic, for he still had some skin in the game.[108]

Les Indes Galantes premiered at a time when the theatre was becoming progressively more democratized. This meant that Rameau would have been motivated to appeal not only to a court audience, but to a popular one as well. This may have led him to bend court tropes such as the ballet des nations to make more sense to people who did not have the knowledge to understand them in their original forms while keeping their frameworks to satisfy those who did. The idea of nobility itself, which had dominated the image of ballet for a long time, was also changing, and *Les Indes Galantes* partakes in debates relevant to this topic. Rameau's motivations for writing *Les Indes Galantes* thus did not lie in the West Indies, as the opera's name implies. He instead was focused on metropolitan concerns (and potentially personal ones).

General Themes and Issues in *Les Indes Galantes*

Seeing that *Les Indes Galantes* opens with its neoclassical content, it is fitting to analyze its prologue first. The prologue is also a particularly apt point of comparison between *Les Indes Galantes* and *Le Temple de la Paix*, as both operas' opening scenes seem to lay out a similar premise. In *Les Indes Galantes*, Hébé and Amour try in vain to prevent young European men from going to war with the Roman god, Bellona. Disappointed with their behavior, Hébé and Amour decide to go to the "Indies," where love still triumphs over war. This neoclassical

[108] Cucuel, 10-12.

element does not return at any point in the opera henceforth. Neither Amour nor Hébé make an appearance in any of the four entrées, giving the impression that the opera offers not a fictionalization of the real world, but a faithful depiction thereof. The clear abandonment of fantastical and otherworldly themes demonstrates a willingness on Rameau's part to get closer to the real world that simply does not exist in much of Lully's oeuvre, let alone in *Le Temple de la Paix*.

All but one entrée of *Les Indes Galantes* include what musicologist Graham Sadler calls "believable modern characters:" individuals with clear national identities that even a bourgeoise audience unfamiliar with the ballet des nations would recognize.[109] Furthermore, Frenchmen and Spaniards participate in much of Rameau's drama, but not always in the ways older court ballet would lead us to expect, and I would argue that their unique motivations and actions make them more human as well. "Le turc généreux" depicts a French woman being enslaved by the pasha Oman, who mercifully releases her when he is confronted by her exceedingly passionate lover.[110] "Les fleurs" depicts no white people at all, instead showing a complicated romantic farse at a Persian flower festival.[111] And in "Les sauvages," the drama is undeniably at the expense of Fuzelier's European characters, who fail to woo a Native American woman named Zima. Having conquered American lands through a war with indigenous peoples, the Europeans find themselves unable to win in the field of love. In this last entrée, the audience is reminded most poignantly of the premise of *Les Indes* Galantes: the failure of the nations of Europe to privilege love over war which results in their abandonment by the gods.[112] Only one entrée behaves as expected. "Les Incas" sees its Incan hero, Huscar, killed by his own hubris when he tries to stop

[109] Sadler, "Les Indes Galantes."
[110] Fuzelier, *Les Indes Galantes*, 9-19.
[111] Fuzelier, *Les Indes Galantes*, 35-46.
[112] Fuzelier, *Les Indes Galantes*, 47-60.

a Spaniard from stealing his lover. The plot thus highlights his impulsivity and flighty temper, which is reflective particularly of European depictions of Turkish society. When placed beside other characters who behave in unique ways, however, Huscar seems less like a stereotype and more like another individualized character in a drama with a well-rounded cast.[113]

Through all of these unexpected depictions of the West Indies, the biggest question *Les Indes Galantes* posed to its 1736 audience was: what does the word "galant" mean anyways and is it a distinctly French trait? The 1718 Académie Francaise dictionary defined the word as follows:

> "Honest, one who has integrity; is civil, sociable, of good company, of agreeable conversation… a man of integrity and intelligence, who no matter what, has the approval of all. To say that one 'is a gallant man' is to that that one is a man in whom one can trust."[114]

The word "galant" also had a romantic connotation: "signifies also a man who seeks to please women."[115] Today, musicologists use the term "galant" to refer to the style of music that developed in Italy in the mid-eighteenth century which sought to be agreeable and light in character—far distanced from the more intellectually stimulating, contrapuntal style of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[116] *Les Indes Galantes* is not in the "galant" musical style, but certain elements of its composition certainly forecast the development thereof in the coming

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[113] *Les Indes Galantes,* 20-34. See *L'Europe Galante* for an example of a Turkish entrée.
[114] *Nouveau Dictionnaire de l'Académie françoise dédié au Roy,* (Paris: chez Jean-Baptiste Coignard, 1718), 709. "Honneste, qui a de la probité, civil, sociable, de bonne compagnie, de conversation agréable… On dit aussi d'Un homme qui a de la probité & de l'intelligence, quoiqu'il n'ait pas tous les autres agréments; que *C'est un galant homme,* pour dire, Que c'est un homme à qui on peut se fier."
[115] *Nouveau Dictionnaire de l'Académie françoise dédié au Roy,* 709. "Signifie aussi, Un homme qui cherche à plaire aux Dames."
[116] Peter Lynan, "Galant," in *The Oxford Companion to Music,* ed. Alison Latham, (Oxford University Press, 2011). "A term used to describe the elegant style popular in the 18th century, not only in music but also in literature and the visual arts… The *style galant*… served the Enlightenment ideals of clarity and naturalness. In music it resulted in an emphasis on melody with light accompaniment." It should also be noted that the "galant" style originated in Italy, not France.

decades—especially in "Les sauvages," which favored an especially simple and gratifying harmonic structure for its chorus numbers (see: "Forêt paisible).[117] In any case, gallantry denoted respectability and agreeableness, and perhaps a degree of superficiality—but did it denote nobility?

"Galant" was typically a word reserved for Europeans and their artistic creations, even if its definition makes no such distinction. *Les Indes Galantes* concedes this much in two of its four entrées. In "Les Incas," Huscar is obviously meant to be interpreted as an *ignoble* savage because he lets his emotions get the best of him at the expense of those around him—there is nothing agreeable or self-respecting about spinning natural disaster to fit one's own romantic ends. In a European culture concerned with nobility as defined by virtue (that is to say, as defined by one's sacrifices for the betterment of others, usually their fellow countrymen), Huscar looks quite "sauvage" indeed. A similar assessment can be applied to "Le turc généreux," whose "generosity" conspicuously applies to a Frenchman and his lover, implying that non-western people should capitulate to the whims of Europeans. "Le turc généreux" is more complex nevertheless. Oman is initially depicted as cruel, but he does the "galant" thing in the end and lets his European prisoner go, which is not what stereotypes would posit as the logical ending to his story. Nevertheless, both of these entrées of *Les Indes Galantes* better reflect the attitudes germane to the ballet des nations genre, and even the earlier opéra-ballet *L'Europe Galante,* which happened to include a Turkish entrée that is consistent with the stereotypes of "Le Turc généreux."[118]

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[117] Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Les Indes Galantes,* (New York: Broude Brothers Limited, 1971), 280-285.

[118] In *L'Europe Galante'*s Turkish entrée, two sultanas compete for the love of the sultan, Zuliman. After one of the women tries to kill the other, Zuliman professes his love to the less violent of the two. His authoritative position stops the violence, just as it does in *Les Indes Galantes*. The biggest difference between the two operas is that *L'Europe Galante* clearly means to emphasize the stereotypically passionate nature of Turkish women, whiles *Les Indes Galantes* was more concerned with the temper of Turkish men.

"Les sauvages"

"Les sauvages" opens with Adario, a Native American man, alone on stage. He tells the audience that a war has recently ended and that his people are due to celebrate the making of peace soon. Adario, however, finds himself ill-at-ease over two newcomers threatening to steal his lover, Zima. "Rivals of my exploits, rivals of my loves," he sings. "Alas! Must I always cede victory to you?"[119] He thus implies that amorous victory is of more value to him than any political one could ever be, and that for him, the war is far from over.

Meanwhile, the Frenchmen Damon and the Spaniard Alvar try in vain to win Zima's heart, demonstrating that Adario has little to worry about after all. She tells her European friends that her people "we only love with a love that lacks art."[120] Damon and Alvar both try to embrace Zima's differing views of love, but the competition between the two is what she claims prevents her from capitulating to either of them. "I do not want a jealous or fickle spouse," she deftly explains.[121]

A brief confrontation erupts between Adario and his European rivals, but it is ended just in time by the sound of trumpets, which signal the start of peace celebrations. The Europeans thus leave Adario and Zima alone to profess their love to each other. They sing together of love: "on our coast, love soars and knows our desires."[122] Having been reassured of Zima's fidelity, Adario then goes to inform his people that they can "banish their sad alarms," for "our conquerors have made peace."[123] This allows for a calumet ceremony to commence, which ends

[119] Fuzelier, *Les Indes Galantes.* "Rivaux de mes exploits, rivaux de mes amours/Hélas! Dois-je toujours/Vous céder la Victoire?"
[120] Fuzelier, *Les Indes Galantes.* "Et nous n'aimons que d'un amour sans art. Notre bouche et nos yeux ignore l'imposture."
[121] Fuzelier, *Les Indes Galantes.* "Je ne veux d'un époux ni jaloux ni volage."
[122] Fuzelier, *Les Indes Galantes.* "Sur nos bords l'amour vole et prévient nos désirs."
[123] Fuzelier, *Les Indes Galantes.* "Bannissons les tristes alarmes,/Nos vainqueurs nous rendent la paix."

both the entrée and the opera. The audience is thus left with an image of a brief period where a French colonial victory has not given way to the hardships of governance. The happiness of French victory from *Le Temple de la Paix* is invoked, but the explicit setting in a colonial theatre very recently at war sparks a sort of anxiety about what will come next.

The nobility that Adario displays lies in his unwillingness to provoke violence even though he feels wronged by his European counterparts—and although they try to drive him to violence themselves. The Europeans in "Les sauvages" are furthermore distracted from their duties as colonial officials by love. They thus shirk their primary duty to their people to run a fool's errand.

Who and Where Are "Les sauvages"?

Les Indes Galantes is not any more specific than *Le Temple de la Paix* with its depiction of America, specifying neither tribe nor the region they might have come from in reference to its Native American characters. However, we know that "Foret Paisible" is an almost direct copy of Rameau's harpsichord piece that was inspired by Natchez dancers.[124] The Native Americans in "Les sauvages" could thus be Natchez. This is further supported by the identity of Rameau's European characters in "Les sauvages," who are French and Spanish—both of whom were active in the Mississippi Valley in the early eighteenth century. However, the philosophy of the Baron de Lahontan is consistently evident throughout the entrée, recommending that they are Huron, as it is implied in *Dialogues* that Adario is Huron. It is most likely that Fuzelier invoked both of these tribes in his libretto, creating an ambiguous combination of both. It is also perfectly possible that he invoked no specific tribe at all. In fact, just like in *Le Temple de la Paix,* the lack

[124] Bloechl, *Native Americans,* 187-188.

of specificity indicates that *Les Indes Galantes* should not be viewed exclusively as a colonial work, but as a metropolitan social critique. The specific identities of characters like Adario and Zima were less important than the role they played in the greater message of the opera: that the "other" in the occident had become nobler than the esteemed French nobleman.

While it will presently be argued that *Les Indes Galantes* sought to level some sort of critique towards ideas of nobility germane to its time, certain events in the colonial world may have played a role in the construction of "Les sauvages" as well. Both the collapse of John Law's system in Louisiana and the Fox Wars happened before the premiere of *Les Indes Galantes,* but close enough to it to retain relevance to its audience. John Law's system is likely the most important consideration for "Les sauvages" because of Le Pouplinère's stock in the Compagnie des Indes, but any colonial turmoil could have potentially hurt his financial interests—even the Fox Wars. All of these events will be explored as potential inspiration for "Les sauvages," even if only briefly

Outside of the colonial world, Louis XV's reign sparked anxiety about the state of the French monarchy. Louis XV inherited a court culture that both the public and elites were growing tired of. As James Collins state in *The State in Early Modern France,* "Louis XV preserved the forms of Louis XIV's but not its spirit."[125] He went through the motions of Louis XIV but lacked the Sun King's intentionality. Frustrations with venality in the second estate ran high because the culture surrounding it had become meaningless, but also more exclusive: Louis XV prohibited venal nobles from seeking his audience in 1732, instead conferring such a privilege upon only those who could prove their nobility genealogically.[126]

[125] Collins, 207.
[126] Smith, 105.

Fatigue with court culture can be seen in the art of the later portion of Louis XIV's later reign, and even in *Le Temple de la Paix.* While this thesis has intended to imbue the subtleties of Lully's last work with meaning, it cannot be denied that the lack of musical and literary character in the opera indicates a certain mechanical aspect to the royal court. Repeating the same musical style for every featured nationality was likely intentional, but it could easily be interpreted as lazy—as a composer producing the same thing over and over again because he knew it worked. *Le Temple de la Paix* is, in some ways, more of a product than it is a piece of art. The need for this sort of art was extremely evident by 1736, as it had done wonders in keeping Louis XIV's power secure. Louis XV's monarchy was so distrusted, in fact, that the Parlement of Paris issued a decree stating that his power was not absolute in the early 1730s.[127] Rameau was not interested in making this sort of antiquated art, however, and his ties with La Pouplinère would have made it easier for him to avoid doing so. All of these metropolitan factors are worth considering in this context because a waning interest in court culture and an increasing popularization of opera (and, for that matter, exclusive entertainment writ-large) amongst parterre audiences could have driven Rameau and Fuzelier to be more direct about current events in their work.

The Fox Wars were a series of early eighteenth-century conflicts between French colonists and the Meskwaki people who inhabited the area around the Great Lakes. The French and the Meskwaki shared a precarious relationship, as France repeatedly crossed cultural and geographical boundaries with the tribe whilst also sharing their animosity towards the Iroquois. They thus often found themselves in a tenuous alliance with each other in the late seventeenth century, but diplomatic blunders ultimately resulted in a violent break between the two nations. The Meskwaki and the French both wanted protection from each other's enemies, but France

[127] Collins, 205-210.

refused to balance their own agenda with the terms necessary to maintain an alliance. The First Fox War (which occurred between 1712-1717) ended in the establishment of a slave trade between the two parties—and the Second Fox War broke out because France refused to return said slaves. The Second Fox War resulted in an indisputable French victory and the near extinction of the Meskwaki people.[128]

Because of France's success in the Second Fox War, it is possible that Fuzelier's plot in "Les sauvages" celebrates a French victory, but this is tempered by the sweetness of the peace it depicts. "Les sauvages" is less of an annihilation of a people and more of a joining of two groups. If the Second Fox War factored into the creation of *Les Indes Galantes,* it did so in a critical manner rather than a celebratory one. The romantic victory of Adario and Zima, as well as the simple presence of a robust choir of Native Americans, bears little resemblance to the end of the Fox Wars. Furthermore, the historian Brett Rushford claims that the Fox Wars "limited French commercial and imperial expansion."[129] Perhaps Rameau and Fuzelier's work implies that a little more understanding between the Meskwaki and the French—a little more love between them—could have resulted in greater colonial success in the long run. Thus, to a certain degree, "Les sauvages" could blame the French for the instability of their colonial holdings—particularly in Louisiana, where John Law's Mississippi System had just failed fantastically.[130]

John Law was a Scottish economist who devised an innovative economic system that France tested in its lower American colonies at the opening of the eighteenth century. This system consisted of a bank that issued paper money and a monopolized trading company that

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[128] Brett Rushforth, "Slavery, the Fox Wars, and the Limits of Alliance," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (Jan. 2006): 53-80. Also see: Joseph L. Peyser and David Edmunds, *The Fox Wars: The Mesquakie Challenge to New France*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993).
[129] Rushforth, 76.
[130] The Fox Wars occurred in the Great Lakes region, but Louisiana was France's newest and most controversial colonial endeavor in the 1730s.

dealt primarily with the colonial world. Shares of this company sold successfully for a time, and Law's system seemed to improve France's financial situation briefly. However, the overissuing of bank notes resulted in inflation and the devaluation of Compagnie des Indes stock. John Law was disgraced, and many people living in Louisiana (as well as those with monetary stakes therein) were financially ruined.[131]

Thereafter, Louisiana came to be associated with ruin and vice. This viewpoint is demonstrated well by the popular novel *Manon Lescaut,* wherein the titular character dies a destitute prostitute in New Orleans after her lover comes to financial ruin in France. The novel's romantic male lead bears some resemblance to John Law, in fact. The Chevalier Des Grieux is a skilled but dishonest gambler, much like Law—and like Law, he gets himself into trouble dueling, which is what ultimately results in the death of his lover Manon, who succumbs to the elements when the pair tries to escape the law by trekking through the Louisiana wilderness.

Most of John Law's investors were noblemen, which was a logical consequence of his station as Controller General of Finances under Louis XV. The failure of the Mississippi System thus fostered distrust in colonial endeavors amongst their most likely (and most valuable) investors. The bursting of the bubble also fostered distrust in paper money—a fairly recent innovation that may have alleviated, if only slightly, France's increasingly pressing debts if it succeeded for just a little longer. The negative financial effects of the collapse of the Mississippi impacted the literature on the colonies. Montesquieu alludes to its failure in *Les lettres persanes,* and the dreary ending of *Manon* seems an allusion to the ruin of Louisiana's economy as well.[132]

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[131] For more on John Law's system, see: John W. Adams, "The Medals Concerning John Law and the Mississippi System," *Numismatic Notes and Monographs,* no. 167 (2005): iii, v, vii-viii, 1-19, 21-75; Francois R. Velde, "John Law's System," *The American Economic Review* 97, no. 2 (May 2007): 276-297.

[132] Julia V. Douthwaite, "How Bad Economic Memories are Made: John Law's System, in *Les lettres persanes, Manon Lescaut,* and 'The Great Mirror of Folly,'" *L'Esprit Créateur* 55, no. 3 (Fall 2015), 43-58.

Louisiana was already coming to be seen as a lawless and disorderly land by French officials in the early eighteenth century, even before John Law's system failed. In the Regency before Louis XV's reign, the French government began to send prisoners to Louisiana to bolster the population, saddling the colony with an almost penitentiary reputation whereas it was intended as a transplantation of the French metropole initially.[133] In *Building the Devil's Empire,* Shannon Lee Dawdy identifies many of the ways that France's colonial plans in New Orleans went awry. As a port town, New Orleans was a place of great mobility. The sheer number and diversity of people who passed through made ancient régime social categories almost impossible to maintain. The increasingly racialized view of Native Americans and Africans also had a tendency to loosen in New Orleans, where many mixed-race individuals came to relative prosperity in the city.[134] Daniel Usner explains how many Africans purchased their freedom and found economic prosperity in *Indians, Settlers & Slaves* by documenting how white people refused to take apprenticeships in Louisiana, thus forcing artisans to give such positions to slaves.[135] Even the layout of the city failed to satisfy its initial designs, instead developing in a chaotic, grid-less fashion. This only furthered the idea that Louisiana was a land of ruin: the ruin of dreams of colonial prosperity, and the also ruin of the idea that France could successfully shape the New World in its own image.[136]

"Les sauvages" cannot be read as a direct critique of the Mississippi System, but it can potentially be read as an artistic attempt to renew faith in the colonies amongst metropolitan investors. Rameau's work assuredly ignores the very real economic turmoil caused by John Law's system, but it simultaneously recommends that the real beauty of the colonies lies not in

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[133] Collins, 189.
[134] Shannon Lee Dawdy, *Building the Devils Empire: French Colonial New Orleans.*
[135] Usner, *Indians Settlers, & Slaves,* 55-56.
[136] Shannon Lee Dawdy, *Building the Devils Empire: French Colonial New Orleans.*

the potential for European dominance therein (be it economic, political, or amorous), but in the freedom and simplicity they offer in their unadulterated form. The story of "Les sauvages" also demonstrates that Europeans could still be happy in the colonial world after making mistakes therein, though of course, the scale of Damon and Alvar's romantic misadventures do not match the scale of the Mississippi Bubble. In a period where the second most popular interpretation of the colonial world was Prévost's *Manon Lescaut,* "Les sauvages" painted a much prettier picture. *Manon Lescaut* depicts Louisiana as the death of wealth, love, and honor—two of these three values, by contrast, reign supreme in "Les sauvages."

"Most honest men of the world": Specters of Lahontan in Rameau

By the end of Louis XIV's reign, many had begun to express their discontent towards the increasing venality of nobility. What was once a status earned in war had become something that could be bought. The excesses of court culture also contributed to a commodification of nobility as visible displays of wealth came to represent noble status more than personal merits. These excesses were twofold: they existed in the form of extravagance on the part of blood nobles, who found themselves in a position of having to display their wealth to occupy their station; and they existed in the form of venal offices, which quite literally tied noble titles to one's ability to buy them. Both of these factors contributed to debates over what virtue was and what the nobleman was at the start of the eighteenth century.[137]

Opera and ballet, which both played a prominent role in Louis XIV's court culture, actually changed relatively little as the popularity of court began to wane—perhaps this is another reason so few parterre tickets to operas were sold. Though many found Rameau's style

[137] See: Smith, *Nobility Reimagined*; Collins, *The State in Early Modern France.*

too stark a departure from Lully's,[138] such ideas would quickly be put to rest in the 1750s by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose opera *Le Devin de Village* made Lully and Rameau look nearly identical with its radically simplistic textures. Nevertheless, *Les Indes Galantes* was exceptional on account of both its unclear genre and its unprecedentedly noble Native Americans, though both of these elements can be attributed more to Louis Fuzelier, the librettist, than they can be to Rameau, though he did choose to set the text himself.

Still, Rameau favored a more demonstrative compositional style than was expected in French opera whilst depicting the various indies featured in the opera. For instance, in "Les Incas" percussion is used in "Le tremblement de terre" to quite literally mimic an earthquake—a modern musicologist might call this compositional technique "text painting."[139] "Foret paisible" in "Les sauvages" also utilizes percussive elements meant to mimic those which Rameau observed at the actual Natchez dance performance he attended in 1725, though this technique is more subtle on account of percussion's regular usage in French ballet writ large. Nevertheless, both the textual and musical peculiarities of *Les Indes Galantes* strongly recommend that it was interpreted as, at the very least, a challenge to the operatic conventions of the time. What is much harder to determine is to what extent both Rameau and Fuzelier intended *Les Indes Galantes* as a critique of its audience: the French nobility on the verge of a great identity crisis. However, the possibility that it was intended as such is made much more plausible by Fuzelier's source material.

The Baron Lahontan's *Dialogues* in his *Suite du Voyage de l'Amèrique* were immensely popular in the eighteenth century and are now central to our understanding of the noble savage

[138] Herbert Schneider, "Rameau et le tradition Lulliste" in *Jean-Philippe Rameau* (eds. Jerome De La Gorce), 288.
[139] Rameau, *Les Indes Galantes*, (New York: Broude Brothers Limited, 1971), 126-135.

myth.[140] Numerous scholars, such as David Allen Harvey, agree that Lahontan's *Dialogues* idealized and simplified Native American culture to level a critique at French culture, which was controversial in its own time. In his introduction, Lahontan tells his critics that by calling him "sauvage," they "give him the character of a most honest man of the world." Thus, the Baron's own view of Native American culture is made clear.[141] Lahontan's *Dialogues* are most often viewed as an anti-Christian text, but the work discusses many points of difference between Huron and French culture, not all of them stemming from faith. What is more, it was published in 1704—that is to say, near the end of Louis XIV's reign, and amongst a nobility that was growing more and more unsure of what exactly made them noble in the first place. Thus, much of Lahontan's *Dialogues* deal with what constitutes a good, moral life—and it should come as no surprise that Lahontan posits the Native American as the most virtuous.

What Lahontan's work tells us about perceptions of nobility in Louis XV's France is infinitely more important in this context than what it tells us about the Huron. French depictions of Native Americans were not new in the eighteenth century, but the attribution of noble characteristics (such as virtue) to them was. This new phenomenon developed in parallel to an increasingly racialized view of the colonial world, where seventeenth-century policies of "Frenchification" were giving way to starker divisions between Native Americans and Frenchmen in colonial theatres such as Louisiana.[142] Thus, the association of nobility with Native Americans was an association with an "other," with an inferior being. This demonstrates growing discontentment with the state of the second estate.[143] Rameau's operatic farce is more

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[140] David Allen Harvey, "The Noble Savage and the Savage Noble: Philosophy and Ethnography in the 'Voyages' of the Baron Lahontan," *French Colonial History* 11, (2010): 162-163.
[141] Baron de Lahontan, *Suite du Voyage de l'Amérique,* (Paris: Chez la Veuve de Boeteman, 1704). "Car en disant simplement que je suis ce que les Sauvages sont, ils me donnent, sans y penser, le caractère du plus honnête homme du monde."
[142] See: Belmessous, "Assimilationism and Racialism."
[143] Harvey, 164.

subtle. It should be noted that neither Lahontan nor Rameau likely intended to critique the *existence* of the nobility as a whole because this impulse was not popular yet in the 1730s. Rather, they critiqued what it had become over the course of the seventeenth century and called for a return to a time when virtue made one noble.

What defines "virtue" for Lahontan, then? And was it virtue that made Adario so appealing in the first place? Lahontan's depiction of Adario actually espouses numerous negative stereotypes regarding Native Americans, but the Baron's view of them is positive. Adario is anti-Christian (though respectful of the religion), pro-polyamory, and anti-capitalist. All of Adario's beliefs align with a growing primitivist movement, which would posit that the excessive complexities of European society rendered men needlessly unequal. However, Adario is not allowed to express complete discontentment with French culture, though his belief in the superiority of his own is clear. "Do the French think to call their people savage?" he asks. "Well, I do not believe that word signifies there a conclusive and wise man."[144] Though Lahontan "appears to have become his own straw man"[145] throughout *Dialogues,* the key to the philosophical work is its insistence on mutual respect between colonizer and colonized. This conversation supposedly happens over dinner, which implies a certain sobriety to their interactions. Adario, having apparently traveled in France,[146] cannot be accused of attacking European culture from a place of ignorance. Thus, the dialogic is central to Lahontan, and it cannot be soundly argued that his work proves his own earnest belief in primitivism—only his fascination with it.[147] If one were to simplify Lahontan's philosophy and force it to take a stance,

[144] Lahontan, *Dialogues.* "Ho ho, mon cher Frère, les François ont-ils bien l'esprit d'appeller ces gens-là sauvages? Ma foy, je ne croyois pas que ce mot-là signifiât parmi vous un homme sage et conclusif."
[145] Harvey, 167.
[146] Harvey, 171.
[147] Harvey, 173-174.

it would be that the absolute equality of the Huron people is what made them noble (and perhaps civilized), and the convoluted inequality of the French that made them savage.

"Sur nos bord"

Nathalie Lecomte identifies Lahontan's philosophy in "Les sauvages" in her analysis of exoticism in Rameau's work, but her claim lacks the specificity that is quite evident in the libretto itself.[148] While the character Adario forms a straightforward connection between the opera and *Dialogues,* the finer details of the text show support for the Huron chief's belief in freedom of choice in love, disdain for personal property, and spiritual fulfillment without Christianity. Rameau's music is also uncharacteristically simplistic for his oeuvre, subtly hinting towards Lahontan's near-endorsement of primitivism, albeit in an essentialized manner. The utility of reframing Lahontan's ideas for *Les Indes Galantes* may have come from the fact that the opera had a much more explicitly noble audience than Lahontan's work ever did—parterre audiences were small in opera, and the performance schedule prohibitive. Thus, the use of his philosophy may be viewed as a more targeted realization of the "mirror in which European readers might rediscover fading aspects of their own selves."[149] Another alternative (but still philosophical view) of "Les sauvages" is that it reflected more broadly utopian ideas,[150] but in the context of the rest of the opera, it seems that utopia is still far away. The otherworldly framework of the narrative (and the disappointment of otherworldly characters with the mortal plane) indicates that Rameau did not see *Les Indes Galantes* as a utopian work. If the world

[148] Nathalie Lecomte, "Les divertissements exotiques dans les operas de Rameau," in *Jean-Philippe Rameau,* ed. Jérome De La Gorce (Paris: Champion-Slatkine, 1987), 557. In fact, this identification occurs in a footnote.
[149] Harvey, 166.
[150] Reinhard Strohm, "*Les Sauvages,* Music in Utopia, and the Decline of the Courtly Pastoral," *Il Saggiatore musicale* 11, no.1 (2004), 21-50. While Strohm's case for utopianism is not strong, his case for *Les Indes Galantes* representing the death knell of the pastoral is worthwhile.

depicted in *Les Indes Galantes* was utopia, utopia still had fatal earthquakes, kidnapping, and romantic disappointment—utopia would have to resemble Voltaire's *Candide* to exist in *Les Indes Galantes.*

Damon and Alvar's view of Zima's role in society as a woman contributes heavily to their failure to woo her. Lahontan's *Dialogue* speaks extensively of the disadvantages of the European custom of arranged marriage and does so most poignantly through the voice of Adario's daughter. "How can I suffer a spouse who buys my body from my father?" she asks, "and how can I esteem a father who sells his daughter to a brute?"[151] The commodification of the female body degrades Adario because it violates the freedom from personal property that he so esteems amongst his people. It is for this reason that he allows his daughter to marry who she pleases. In *Les Indes Galantes,* Adario is not Zima's father, but her lover—yet he nevertheless emphasizes her choice in loving him by refusing to engage his rivals violently.

In "Les sauvages," Zima is similarly presented with a choice between three men—between the two Europeans and Adario. Both Damon and Alvar believe that they possess some trait that obliges Zima to choose them over one another—and for that matter, over Adario. Damon implores her to "fear such a sad enslavement."[152] and Alvar cites his attentiveness to her culture (which, of course, only he perceives to exist at all).[153] They thus reify and commodify their emotions in the context of a philosophy that places little value on commodities to begin with. Adario, by contrast, feels no need to impress Zima with lengthy (yet strangely evasive) descriptions of his emotions. "I shall not at all paint for you the movements of my heart," he says

[151] Lahontan, *Dialogues,* 89. "Comment pourray-je soufrir un époux qui achete mon corps à mon Père, et comment pourray-je estimer un Père qui vend sa fille à un brutal?"
[152] "Belle Zima, craignez un si triste esclavage." In the 1736 libretto, Gallica.

instead. “Beautiful Zima, judge them by your own.”[154] Fuzelier’s version of Adario thus exactly echoes the sentiments of Lahontan’s rejection of courtly love and arranged marriage. He emphasizes Zima’s choice and eschews a transactional view of romance. The love affair of Zima and Adario is both a rejection of a European model of marriage and the way it depended upon conceptualizing women as men’s personal property. This seems to conflict with Rameau’s connections to La Pouplinière, who had grown wealthy in large part due to capitalistic interests in Louisiana—but this is would have been a good reason for Rameau to explore this concept abstractly through love rather than through material possessions. The hypocrisy is thus mild enough to be tolerated.

Religious critique is central to Lahontan’s work, but it is tangential at best to Rameau’s. Christianity is not invoked at any point in *Les Indes Galantes,* but by virtue of the very premise of the opera, Greek and Roman gods make an appearance in the lines of Europeans and Native Americans alike. For instance, Zima and Adario invoke Hymen once left alone by Damon and Alvar:

> “Hymen, come unite us with an eternal chain;
> Come again to furnish our beautiful days with peace;
> I promise to be faithful to you;
> You know how always to captivate and please us.”[155]

Lahontan does not invoke any Greek gods, but there is a tangible link between primitivism and neoclassicism—a link that exists precisely because primitivism and the pastoral had become

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[154] “Je ne vous peindrez point les transports de mon coeur/Belle Zima, jugez-en par le votre.” Emphasis is my own. In the 1736 libretto, Gallica.

[155] “Hymen, viens nous unir d’une chaine éternelle;/Viens encore de la paix embellir les beaux jours;/Je te promets d’etre fidele;/Tu sais nous captiver & nous plaire toujours.” In the 1736 libretto, Gallic. Hymen is also featured in the Incan entrée in Phani’s air. Phani, incidentally, is another non-European character, but it is more likely that Hymen is being associated with the idea of romantic union than it is with the idea of exoticism because she generally comes up in a romantic context.

intertwined. Especially in a European context, primitivism did not abandon the concept of virtue entirely, nor did it abandon the concept of nobility. Rather, primitivism as expressed by Frenchmen like the Baron de Lahontan argued that virtue came from freedom: freedom from property, social hierarchy, and Christianity. While it seems contradictory from a modern standpoint that nobles consumed these ideas without seriously reflecting on the idea of nobility itself, in the eighteenth century, most intellectuals were working diligently to let them coexist. The involvement of Lahontan in an opera with deeply noble origins is an extension of that phenomenon.

In *Nobility Reimagined,* Jay Smith compares the work of Mirabeau, Rousseau, and Duclos to discern the impact of Montesquieu's *The Spirit of Laws* on debates over what nobility ideally looked like in France.[156] Smith rightfully presents Rousseau as the most radical of the trio, for it was Rousseau who sought to detach the idea of virtue from the nobility entirely. He argued (in far more words) that anyone could be virtuous and therefore nobility was not inherently virtuous, nor necessary. Mirabeau exists on the opposite end of the scale from Rousseau, arguing instead that the regeneration of the nobility would require falling back on social stratification. Yet, between these two extremes, Charles-Pinot Duclos found a middle ground wherein anyone could achieve respectability, but nobility still conferred some kind of special status. His moral commentary sought "to solidify and purify, rather than to undermine, the traditional social hierarchy." Smith furthermore recommends that this sentiment was the most popular of the three, recommending that the impulse to overthrow the system of nobility was not necessarily relevant in the time of Louis XV.[157]

[156] Smith, 68-69,
[157] Smith, 99-102.

In “Les sauvages,” Rameau did critique the nobility—but he was trying to bolster their position in the same breath, just like Duclos. *Les Indes Galantes* is more of a call to action than it is a condemnation. This would make more sense in the broader context of both Rameau’s oeuvre and his life. Rameau worked mostly with theatres endorsed by the monarchy and patronized by noblemen. He likely understood intimately the concerns of men like Duclos and Mirabeau because he himself made his living in service to the nobility. The extravagances of a work like *Les surprises de l’Amour* directly catered to nobles who, as Louis XV preferred, could genealogically prove their nobility. It featured prominent nobles not only as dancers, but as lead singers portraying Greek and Roman gods—names so well known as Madame de Pompadour and the Viscount of Rohan. Who might understand the superficial and mechanical nature of nobility better than someone like Rameau, who helped to maintain the culture of Louis XIV’s reign without himself having the social status to live it?

“Les sauvages” uses the philosophy of Lahontan to instruct nobles morally so that they might keep the “honored” status that Duclos confers upon them, even if the opera takes place in a world where virtue can be possessed by anyone. The arias of Damon and Alvar thus firmly align them with the aesthetics of court culture: they sing the most embellishments and the highest notes, and in general demonstrate the highest level of *virtuosity*. Their actions, however, align them with unfavorable traits of the eighteenth-century nobility expressed by intellectuals like Duclos, Mirabeau, and Rousseau because they persistently commodify honor and affection to win Zima’s love.

"Les sauvages" is equal parts colonial propaganda and moral instruction—but in neither case does the work target colonists. With close ties to a patron with significant colonial investments, Rameau had good reason to produce a positive image of the colonies for metropolitan investors. A lack of connection to courtiers in the process, however, allowed him to explore metropolitan social commentary as well, which is done primarily through Fuzelier's libretto, which itself takes many cues from the primitivist philosophy of the Baron de Lahontan. Though not explicitly primitivist, "Les sauvages" is still obviously critical of the convoluted and corrupt nature of the nobility, such that it aligns with the views of Charles Pinot-Duclos, who still believed in keeping a noble class—but it still conceded that the nobility needed to undergo significant self-improvement. In *Les Indes Galantes,* the colonial image was used to bolster faith in the colonial endeavors in metropolitan investors, but these people obviously were not colonists, nor did they share their concerns. Rameau's social critique reflects this fact and concerns itself with debates about the nobility instead.

Conclusion

Sometime between 1761 and 1774, the philosopher Denis Diderot wrote a short novel titled *Le neveu de Rameau.* In this work, Diderot explores ideas of genius and materialism, but underlying all such conversations is the theme of blood. Rameau's nephew laments that he lives in the shadow of his uncle. He blames his bloodline—his breeding—for his problems in life and detests his place in a society that decides worth and determines expectations based on issues of birth. Defeated by a world that expects him to be like his uncle but scorns their class as musicians all the same, the nephew states the following:

> HIM. -- It is apparent that there is, for some, a sense that I do not have; a fiber that was not given to me, a loose fiber that you can pinch well and still it does not vibrate… And then there was something of race. The blood of my father and the blood of my uncle is the same blood. My blood is the same as that of my father. The paternal molecule was hard and obtuse; and that accursed first one fell in with all the rest.[158]

Thus, Diderot's own thoughts on the merit of bloodlines is made clear. If breeding could do nothing to rescue the nephew of Rameau from mediocrity, it certainly could do no good for the nobles of France—many of whom, it should be added, lacked even the paltry talent of the nephew of Rameau. Yet the bare humanity of the nephew of Rameau (who was more likely a rhetorical construction than a real man) is still allowed to shine though. When asked by Diderot if he loved his own child in spite of the "accursed paternal molecule" he likely imparted to him, the nephew responds: "yes, I love him, the little *savage.* I'm crazy for him."[159] Though the

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[158] Denis Diderot, *Le neveu de Rameau,* (Paris: Flammarion, 2013), 122. "LUI. -- C'est apparemment qu'il y a pour les unes un sens que je n'ai pas; une fibre qui ne m'a point été donnée, une fibre lâche qu'on a beau pincer et qui ne vibre pas… Et puis c'est qu'il y avait quelque chose de race. Le sang de mon père et le sang de mon oncle est le meme sang. Mon sang est le meme que celui de mon père. La molecule paternelle était dure et obtuse; et cette maudite premiere s'est assimile tout le reste."

[159] Diderot, 122. "LUI. — Si je l'aime, le petit sauvage. J'en suis fou." Emphasis is my own.

choice of the word "sauvage" was likely meaningless, one cannot help but recall the gallantry the elder Rameau allowed the people of the Indies to possess in *Les Indes Galantes*: were they really that different from the French after all? And what, if not perceived genius, allowed Rameau to level such a critique in the first place?

"I cannot easily stand anymore my mediocrity," the nephew complains. "I have never heard the overture of *Les Indes Galantes* played, or heard sung *Profond Abimes du ténare, nuit, eternelle nuit*, but I tell myself without sadness that: this here is what you will never create."[160] Like the narrative of *Les Indes Galantes* recommends France's nobility do, the nephew strives for a past version of himself, yet what Diderot implies thirty years after the premiere of the opera is that the past is no longer attainable—at least not for the French.

French opera began using depictions of Native Americans in the seventeenth century as part of a broader trend of exoticism amongst the elite, and *not* out of any true interest (be it empirical or economic) in the colonies. Jean-Baptiste Lully's opéra-ballet *Le Temple de la Paix* was, in many ways, a standard exotic court entertainment for its time—but it is unique insofar as that it coopted colonization as a part of noble identity, as nobles symbolically imparted their virtuousness to not only Native Americans, but rural Frenchmen too. This also began a trend of associating Native Americans with Frenchmen to chastise their morals and "civility," as it is likely that the Edict of Fontainebleau and the state of religious unity in France played a large role in the opera's meaning in 1685. *Le Temple de la Paix* is thus a work that was explicitly intended to boost Louis XIV's image and promote his absolutist policies.

[160] Diderot, 58. "…Je n'ai jamais entendu jouer l'ouverture des Indes Galantes; jamais entendu chanter, *Profond Abime du Ténare, Nuit, eternelle nuit;* sans me dire avec doleur: voilà ce que tu ne feras jamais"

Rameau's work represents both a shift away from opera's acute concern with absolutist projects and a continued use of Native Americans for metropolitan social critique. He continued Lully's usage of Native Americans in opera in *Les Indes Galantes,* but his idea of colonization is much more egalitarian, inspired by the philosophy of Lahontan. By invoking the philosophy of Lahontan, Rameau recommended that Native Americans did not need Europeans to be noble and that they had virtuous traits inherently—perhaps it was the *Europeans* who were failing to behave nobly, even. Lahontan's philosophy was, at the end of the day, a metropolitan one, even if it started with a stint in America—and Rameau's own ties to a patron with money in Louisiana further distances him from an interest in colonization for the sake of the Native American. It also allows *Les Indes Galantes* to use Native Americans as a critique for nobility in a way that Lully could not, as Rameau's patron likely would have cared more for the opera's optimistic depiction of the colonies than any political commentary contained therein. *Les Indes Galantes* demonstrates that opéra-ballet was never inextricably tied to the monarchy, even though it was initially a genre produced by court nobles for their own exclusive consumption—which of course begs the question: what did the monarchy ever really control at all?

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