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Massacre, Mardi Gras, and Torture in Early New Orleans

Sophie White

THE earliest known account of a Mardi Gras masquerade in New Orleans was produced by Marc-Antoine Caillot, a clerk for the Company of the Indies in Louisiana. The masquerade he described took place on Fat Monday in 1730, on the outskirts of the city at Bayou Saint Jean. But the placement of the masquerade within his narrative structure suggests that it should not be interpreted as a merely frivolous interlude. Rather, Caillot's description of hedonism, feasting, and cross-gender disguises was an unexpected narrative twist given the topic he discussed immediately before and after the masquerade: his account of Mardi Gras festivities was book-ended by events surrounding the 1729 uprising in which the Natchez Indians attacked French settlers at Fort Rosalie and neighboring settlements, killing, capturing, and torturing survivors. The Natchez uprising section of Caillot's narrative forms a coherent, self-contained segment in his manuscript. It begins with the arrival in New Orleans of ransomed colonists who had been stripped, their sartorial signs of Frenchness appropriated by Natchez attackers. The narrative then moves to the masquerade with its description of Mardi Gras disguises. It ends on the day after Easter with an account of the torture and killing in New Orleans of a captive Natchez woman. The Tunica, an allied Indian nation, had offered the woman as a gift to Louisiana governor Étienne de Périer, but he ostensibly left her to them. They proceeded to strip her to her bare body before attaching her to a square frame and ritually torturing her with fire.¹

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¹ Marc-Antoine Caillot, "Relation du Voyage de la Louisiane ou Nouvelle France fait par le Sr. Caillot en l'année 1730," MS 2005.11, Historic New Orleans Collection. Erin M. Greenwald has recently published a critical edition of Caillot's text: Greenwald, ed., *A Company Man: The Remarkable French-Atlantic Voyage of a Clerk for the Company of the Indies: A Memoir by Marc-Antoine Caillot*, trans. Teri F. Chalmers (New Orleans,

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Caillot did not reference any parallels between Tunica torture rituals and their precedents in the court-sanctioned torture of criminals in French judicial investigations or the burning at the stake of heretics. Instead, what was most galling for the author was the fact that the French (namely, some of the escapees from the uprising) had joined in, and even outdone, the Tunica methods of torture by fire. Caillot established this point through the comingling of descriptions of torture with food preparation metaphors, culminating in one transgressive—and gendered—act of feasting on the female victim's naked flesh. It was the participation of French men and women in what he depicted as Indian-style torture that perturbed him, for it raised questions about the risk of ostensibly civilized French colonists becoming *sauvage*.²

The Natchez uprising would permanently enter the political and literary imagination in France. But this event was especially traumatic for the French in Louisiana, and colonists as well as officials responded with written accounts of the events leading up to the attack, the attack itself, and its immediate aftermath. One leitmotif of these accounts, and one therefore that demands our attention, was their references to transformations, specifically sartorial ones. Whether describing massacre, captivity, plunder, or torture, these accounts alternated the passivity of being stripped with the agency of getting re-dressed (or dressed up). The ransomed captives of 1729 focused on being stripped by Natchez Indians, who in turn eagerly dressed in the captives' clothes. On arrival back in New Orleans, the captives willingly accepted the new French clothing provided to them by company officials, while a female Natchez captive was ritually stripped prior to being scalped and put to death. Interwoven with his descriptions of captives and captors stripped, dressed, and tortured, Caillot introduced a narrative device centered on masquerade disguises. These sartorial elements all evoked the theme of metamorphosis: the loss and transfer of power when stripped, tortured, and killed, or the renewal of power when colonists' bodies that had been temporarily divested of their conventional sartorial markers recovered their Frenchness through the material act of dressing.³

2013). See especially Greenwald's excellent introduction, which reveals her research to uncover the authorship and history of the manuscript, as well as Caillot's biography before and after his sojourn in Louisiana; *ibid.*, xiii–xvii, xxxiv–xxxviii, xvii–xxii, xxxii–xxxiii. The segment on the Natchez uprising, Mardi Gras masquerade, and torture is found on 143–71 of Caillot's original manuscript; it was followed on pages 172–81 by an account of the ensuing, and ultimately successful, military campaigns against the Natchez. Unless otherwise noted, all translations in this article, whether of the Caillot manuscript or of other sources, are mine.

² *Sauvage*, the French term for Indian, will be used in preference to the English *savage* to retain the original French definition of the word as wild or untamed.

³ Literary engagement with the Natchez Indians and the uprising would resonate in the French literary imagination into the nineteenth century, from François-Auguste-

Clothing is never simply the blandly functional or frivolously fashionable covering of the body.⁴ Rather, the act of dressing—of clothing, undressing, re-clothing—itself served another purpose, that of creating, affirming, and upholding identity on a daily basis, thereby providing a performance that can illustrate how colonists drew on nonverbal modes of expression to communicate their deepest anxieties. Those in the metropole might have framed creolization—“the process of cultural change in different geographic locations”—as progressive and permanent.⁵ Those transplanted to the colonies and those born there had a stake in demonstrating that their seasoning and acclimatization to the new environment could be temporary and reversible. This belief allowed them to manage their disquiet about the risks of becoming *sauvage* as a result of their presence in the New

René de Chateaubriand to Gustave Flaubert; see Gordon Sayre, “Plotting the Natchez Massacre: Le Page du Pratz, Dumont de Montigny, Chateaubriand,” *Early American Literature* 37, no. 3 (2002): 381–413; Arnaud Balvay, *La Révolte des Natchez* (Paris, 2008), 182–83. The most important written accounts of the attack were those produced by Jean-François-Benjamin Dumont de Montigny and Antoine-Simon Le Page du Pratz; see Sayre, *Early American Literature* 37: 381–413. Among the most valuable official accounts, see those available at the Archives nationales d’outre mer, Aix-en-Provence (microfilm available at the Library of Congress), hereafter ANOM: Périer, Mar. 18, 1730, C13A 12, 33r–36v, ANOM; Périer to Minister of Marine, Aug. 1, 1730, C13A 12, fol. 308v, ANOM; Sieur de Laye, “Relation du massacre des français aux Natchez, 1729,” 1730, 4DFC 38, fols. 1–41, ANOM; “Lettre du P. Le Petit, 1730, sur les Sauvages du Mississipi, Et en particulier les Natchez, et relation de leur Entreprise sur la Colonie française en 1729,” 4DFC 40, n.p., ANOM; Juzan, “Relation de ce qui s’est passé au fort français des Natchez,” 1731, 4DFC 41, fols. 1–33, ANOM; “Relation de la défaite des Natchez par M. Périer Commandant Général de la Louisiane,” 1731, 4DFC 43, n.p., ANOM. Le Petit’s letter is reproduced in Balvay, *La Révolte*, 187–210; see also Mathurin Le Petit, “Lettre du P. Le Petit, missionnaire de la Compagnie de Jesus. Au P. Davaugour de la même Compagnie, Procureur des Missions de l’Amérique Septentrionale. A la nouvelle Orleans le 12 Juillet 1730,” in *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses, écrites des missions étrangères, par quelques missionnaires de la Compagnie de Jesus* (Paris, 1731), 20: 100–216. On Frenchness and French national identity in this period, see Peter Sahlins, “Fictions of a Catholic France: The Naturalization of Foreigners, 1685–1787,” in “National Cultures before Nationalism,” special issue, *Representations* 47 (Summer 1994): 85–110; David Bell, “Recent Works on Early Modern French National Identity,” *Journal of Modern History* 68, no. 1 (March 1996): 84–113. See also Cécile Vidal, “Francité et situation colonial: Nation, empire, et race en Louisiane française (1699–1769),” *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 64, no. 5 (September–October 2009): 1019–50; and the papers presented at the colloquium “Être et se penser Français: Nation, sentiment national et identités dans le monde atlantique français du XVIIe au XIXe siècle,” Centre d’études nord-américaines, L’École des hautes études en sciences sociales, Paris, Oct. 16–18, 2008.

⁴ For my approach to dress history and to cross-cultural dress in the eighteenth century, see the Historiographical Note, <http://oieahc.wm.edu/wmq/July13/White.pdf>.

⁵ Ralph Bauer and José Antonio Mazzotti, “Introduction: Creole Subjects in the Colonial Americas,” in *Creole Subjects in the Colonial Americas: Empires, Texts, Identities*, ed. Bauer and Mazzotti (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2009), 1–57 (quotation, 1). Though the volume does not address the French Atlantic, the editors offer an excellent introduction to creolization.

World, a disquiet heightened by the horrors perpetrated on and by French colonists during and after the Natchez revolt.

The key to unraveling this conceit lies in questioning and interpreting the incongruity of Caillot's insertion of a topsy-turvy Mardi Gras masquerade, an event he credited himself with creating and organizing, in the very middle of his description of the horror of massacre, torture, and cannibalism. Masquerade allowed him to play with the implications, for colonists, of misrule rituals that created only temporary inversions of identity. When participants reverted to normative roles, as they inevitably did, the effect was to reaffirm, restore, and strengthen the status quo.⁶ Caillot's account of Mardi Gras festivities foregrounded dress as reversible, a means to reestablish the precarious Frenchness of colonists. And if overt religiosity was absent from his manuscript, by identifying the masquerade episode as stemming from Mardi Gras and the arrival of the victim as occurring on the day after Easter, he could implicitly invoke the Catholic framework for the carnival of self-indulgence and feasting on fat. Just as the period of Lent renewed the Catholic Church's authority over Mardi Gras revelers, so too did Caillot's masquerade hint at the parallel promise that the colonial disorder and the gendered disruption caused by the Natchez uprising, and by the transformation of Africans from slave to free and of colonists into captives, torturers, and cannibals, would also be righted. In other words, Caillot's narrative is significant not merely for providing the earliest known account of Mardi Gras in New Orleans or for expanding our body of knowledge about the Natchez uprising. Rather, in offering the perspective of one Frenchman recently arrived in New Orleans, it shows how colonists drew on European beliefs to reassure themselves about their continuing preservation, in the New World, of an identity as French. In playing with conventions of carnival and misrule, Caillot and his readers could imagine a way to control their seasoning, managing the risks implicit in colonizing a land that was an ocean away from the original source of their Frenchness.

⁶ The literature on masquerade and the carnivalesque in early modern Europe is vast; a useful introduction to the key theories is provided by James H. Johnson, *Venice Incognito: Masks in the Serene Republic* (Berkeley, Calif., 2011), chap. 18. Also particularly useful are Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women on Top," in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France: Eight Essays by Natalie Zemon Davis* (Stanford, Calif., 1975), 124–51; Davis, "The Reasons of Misrule: Youth Groups and Charivaris in Sixteenth-Century France," *ibid.*, 97–123; Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnavalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (Stanford, Calif., 1986); Cesare Poppi, "The Other Within: Masks and Masquerades in Europe," in *Masks and the Art of Expression*, ed. John Mack (New York, 1996), 190–215; Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2005), pt. 2; Davis, "Writing 'The Rites of Violence' and Afterward," *Past and Present*, no. 214 (February 2012): 8–29. See also David Waldstreicher, "Rites of Rebellion, Rites of Assent: Celebrations, Print Culture, and the Origins of American Nationalism," *Journal of American History* 82, no. 1 (June 1995): 37–61.

MARC-ANTOINE CAILLOT SERVED AS A CLERK for the Company of the Indies in Louisiana from July 13, 1729, until May 4, 1731, the year when the company handed control of the colony back to the French royal state. Caillot would stay in the service of the Company of the Indies until his 1758 death in India, where he served from 1733 onward, building up his career and wealth, from modest but well-connected origins as the son of a royal footman to councillor of the Pondicherry Superior Council. His “Relation du Voyage de la Louisiane ou Nouv.lle France” offered an account of his peripatetic experiences from the time of his departure from France through his two-year stay in Louisiana. Narrated in the first person, the illustrated manuscript was completed after Caillot’s departure from Louisiana. Never published, it was likely intended “for an intimate circle of friends, rather than for administrative or military officials”—in other words, both for peers based in France and for those who moved to, or made their careers in, the colonies.⁷ The text was interspersed with often humorous but occasionally cruel details of his romantic interludes with female colonists. Beyond his emphasis on extolling his virility, the narrative was also conventional in its descriptions of flora, fauna, and ethnography and its commentary on colonial culture (from food to architecture). Though Caillot formatted his relation to read as a chronological narrative in the tradition of colonial travel writing and memoirs, it was nonetheless a carefully crafted literary text.⁸ In offering dramatic passages on the Natchez uprising, Caillot borrowed stock tropes from European literary descriptions of Indian torture, knowledge of which most certainly colored his experience of the uprising. But his text did not merely channel conventional tropes and regurgitate theoretical sources of anxiety; it was potent because it succeeded in constructing a narrative that conveyed the mindset of colonists faced with very real danger to their lives. And as Caillot’s manuscript reveals, and as is confirmed by a range of other extant accounts, their mindset during such periods of acute terror

⁷ Greenwald, *A Company Man*, xiii–xvii (quotation, xiii). Caillot appealed to an unnamed “seigneur” once in the manuscript and directly addressed his reader at the beginning of the manuscript and a further four other places; see Caillot, “Relation du Voyage,” MS 2005.11, 163 (quotation); Greenwald, *A Company Man*, xvii. On Caillot’s rise in status, see Greenwald, *A Company Man*, xvii, xxxiii. At his death, his assets were worth seventy-four thousand livres; *ibid.*, xxxiv. Philippe Haudrère provides a lower figure of forty thousand livres in Haudrère, *La Compagnie française des Indes au xviiiè siècle (1719–1795)* (Paris, 2005), 2: 920, 1035.

⁸ On the Caillot manuscript as memoir and travel writing, see Greenwald, *A Company Man*, xiv–xvii. For an introduction to “écrits du for privé” (ego documents), see for example Madeleine Foisil, “L’écriture du for privé,” in *Histoire de la vie privée*, ed. Philippe Ariès and George Duby, rev. ed. (Paris, 1999), 3: 319–57. On French definitions of the genre of the “mémoire,” see Jean-François-Benjamin Dumont de Montigny, *The Memoir of Lieutenant Dumont, 1715–1747: A Sojourner in the French Atlantic*, trans. Gordon M. Sayre, ed. Sayre and Carla Zecher (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2012), 15–16.

was one of obsession with dress and nakedness—almost to the exclusion of other cultural mores.

The Natchez uprising took place on the night of November 28, 1729, thirty years after the French first settled in Louisiana and just over a decade after the founding of New Orleans about ninety miles away (Figure 1). It was a strategically planned and well-executed surprise attack that left more than 200 dead (mostly male) out of a Natchez population of 400 colonists and 280 enslaved Africans; a further 80 women and 150 enslaved Africans were taken captive while about 20 Frenchmen escaped. The overall colonial population in Louisiana around this time consisted of just more than two thousand French and fifteen hundred Africans. With this attack, Louisiana's most fertile agricultural settlement was decimated, as the Natchez (or the Théoloëls—People of the Sun) re-exerted their authority over the land and their political and military dominance of the region.⁹

The exact timing of the uprising was linked to the shortsighted actions of the newly arrived local commandant. Lieutenant D'Etcheparre had embarked on an aggressive plan to seize control of increasing amounts of Natchez land with a view to turning these to the lucrative cultivation of tobacco. Though his own personal economic interests were important motivations, D'Etcheparre also blundered because he misunderstood the status of the Natchez among the Indian nations of Lower Louisiana. The Natchez culture was Mississippian, with burial mounds, temples, figurative art traditions, and powerful chiefs (or "Suns") with the authority to demand human sacrifice of their subjects. The French were simultaneously fascinated by and anxious about aspects of Natchez society and religion such as sacrifice and matrilineality. But they admired the Natchez above all other Indian nations in Louisiana because they saw reflected in the Natchez their own cultural, agricultural, and hierarchical values, as epitomized by the absolute protomonarchy of the Suns. D'Etcheparre seems to have been oblivious to these political and religious dynamics, and tensions simmered between the French and the Natchez over the exchange of land and merchandise, paving the way for a series of conflicts that culminated in

⁹ On the population of Natchez, see Marcel Giraud, *A History of French Louisiana*, vol. 5, *The Company of the Indies, 1723–1731*, trans. Brian Pearce (Baton Rouge, La., 1991), 390 n. 8; on disparities in the estimates of the dead, see *ibid.*, 5: 398; Balvay, *La Révolte*, 229. The census of 1726 (the most complete census in this period) identified a total of 2,228 French, 1,540 African slaves, and 229 Indian slaves in Louisiana; see "General Census of the Inhabitants of the Colony of Louisiana," Jan. 1, 1726, ser. G1, 464, ANOM; Charles R. Maduëll Jr., ed. and trans., *The Census Tables for the French Colony of Louisiana from 1699 through 1732* (Baltimore, 1972), 50. On the name Théoloëls, see Patricia Galloway and Jason Baird Jackson, "Natchez and Neighboring Groups," in *Southeast*, ed. Raymond D. Fogelson, vol. 14 of *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. William C. Sturtevant (Washington, D.C., 2004), 614.

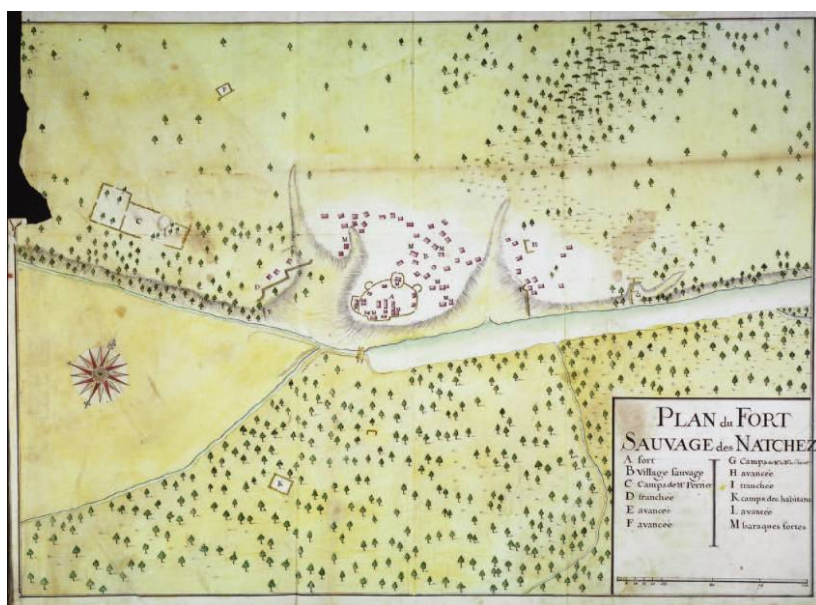


FIGURE I

Marc-Antoine Caillot, Map of Natchez War. From *Relation du Voyage de la Louisiane ou Nouv.lle France fait par le Sr. Caillot en l'année 1730*. Courtesy of the Historic New Orleans Collection. Acc. No. 2005.0011.

1729 in a violent retribution through which the Natchez intended to permanently remove the French. Instead, the French and their allies (chiefly the Choctaws) embarked on a series of military expeditions that resulted in the eventual destruction and dispersal of the Natchez nation, its remaining members shipped to the Caribbean to be sold as slaves.¹⁰

¹⁰ D'Etcheparre's first name is unknown, and there are numerous spellings of his last name; see Dumont de Montigny, *Memoir of Lieutenant Dumont*, 36. On the Natchez, see Giraud, *History of Louisiana*, 5: 388–439; Sayre, *Early American Literature* 37: 381–413; Gordon M. Sayre, *The Indian Chief as Tragic Hero: Native Resistance and the Literatures of America, from Moctezuma to Tecumseh* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2005), chap. 6; George Edward Milne, "Rising Suns, Fallen Forts, and Impudent Immigrants: Race, Power, and War in the Lower Mississippi Valley" (Ph.D. diss. University of Oklahoma, 2006), 2; Balvay, *La Révolte*; Milne, "Picking up the Pieces: Natchez Coalescence in the Shatter Zone," in *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone: The Colonial Indian Slave Trade and Regional Instability in the American South*, ed. Robbie Ethridge and Sheri M. Shuck-Hall (Lincoln, Neb., 2009), 388–417; Sayre, "Natchez Ethnohistory Revisited: New Manuscript Sources from Le Page du Pratz and Dumont de Montigny," *Louisiana History* 50, no. 4 (Fall 2009): 407–36. See also Christina Snyder's discussion of the Natchez Great Suns and Mississippian culture in Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country*:

Based as he was in New Orleans, Caillot began his account in the immediate aftermath of the uprising, providing a palpable sense of the trauma and anxieties felt by colonists as the survivors began to trickle in with tales of death and terror. A list of the 237 dead compiled shortly after the uprising reads as a sobering list. How much more unbearable, for both survivors and their audience in New Orleans, must have been the oral telling and retelling of these individuals' deaths.¹¹ And if these live stories matched the written record, then they were tales of horror anchored by topsy-turvy descriptions of naked or nearly naked captives first stripped of their cultural markers and then forced to suffer excruciating physical or psychological pain while their captors cavorted in French men and women's clothing.

Caillot began his 28-page section on the Natchez attack, Mardi Gras, and torture (in a manuscript totaling 186 pages) with a glimpse of a pirogue boat landing at New Orleans. It disgorged a group of escapees from the Natchez attack. Some of them were "totally naked, and others with drawers (*canneçons*)" following the plunder of their garments. Drawers were not yet universal for men in the eighteenth century. Instead, men's shirts had a longer panel at the back, which was looped between the legs to form a protective barrier between the skin and the breeches; an alternative was to have breeches lined. Only elites and some middling men were likely to wear separate drawers (a specialized garment made by tailors, not seamstresses), and we can expect that it is this group of male survivors who were wearing the *canneçon*, in contrast to nonelites or those described as "totally naked."¹² It is also possible that Caillot was signaling that some of the men were wearing the breechclout, a ubiquitous Indian garment that many Frenchmen adopted, especially during travels through the hinterlands. Seen in Alexandre de Batz's drawings of Indian males (Figure II), this was a hide or piece of wool "which passes between the legs, hides their nudities, and returns in front and back, with each end passing through a belt tied around

The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America (Cambridge, Mass., 2010). On landing at Saint Domingue in 1733 on his return to France, Governor Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne, sieur de Bienville, noted the presence there of one of these enslaved Natchez Indians, the Great Sun St. Cosme (the likely leader of the insurrection who was, ironically, the son of a French missionary with a female Sun). See Bienville to the Minister of Marine, Jan. 28, 1733, C13A 16, fol. 225v, ANOM; Balvay, *La Révolte*, 167–68. On the last Great Sun St. Cosme, see Sayre, *Indian Chief as Tragic Hero*, 206, 238–39, 316n; Milne, "Picking up the Pieces," 388–89, 396.

¹¹ P. Philbert to the Minister of Marine, June 9, 1730, C13A 12, fols. 57–58v, ANOM, also reproduced in Balvay, *La Révolte*, 227–29.

¹² Caillot, "Relation du Voyage," MS 2005.11, 143. My thanks to Susan North for her insights and for sharing her research on the tailoring and wearing of drawers in the eighteenth century; North, personal communication to author, Apr. 25, 2013. See also North, "Dress and Hygiene in Early Modern England: A Study of Advice and Practice" (Ph.D. diss., Queen Mary University of London, 2012), esp. 34–38.



FIGURE II

Alexandre de Batz, *Sauvages Tchaktas matachez en Guerriers qui portent des chevelures*. Courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, 41-72-10/19. 60741412. <http://www.peabody.harvard.edu>.

the waist, falling back in front and back.”¹³ The sight of the denuded group caused the onlookers “some emotion.” Their state of nudity anticipated that of female survivors who arrived in New Orleans on March 9 and 10 after escaping from their Natchez captors. Upon landing in New Orleans, when these women “caught sight of some of their friends, they could not help bursting into tears to find themselves in the state they were in, bare-foot and bare-headed, their hair tangled, wearing shifts shredded to pieces and as black [i.e., dirty] as ink.”¹⁴ These accounts presaged a recurring theme in this section of his manuscript, with Caillot continuing to hone in on aspects of dress, and especially disrobing and nakedness, as he related the escapees’ descriptions of the attack and how colonists living in New Orleans reacted to these events.

In common with accounts of captivity within and beyond Louisiana, other eyewitness descriptions of the Natchez revolt or its aftermath similarly

¹³ Jean-François-Benjamin Dumont de Montigny, “Mémoire de Lxx Dxx officier ingénieur, contenant les evenemens qui se sont passés à la Louisiane depuis 1715 jusqu’à present,” Ayer MS 257, Newberry Library, Chicago. On the wearing of the breechclout by colonists, see Sophie White, *Wild Frenchmen and Frenchified Indians: Material Culture and Race in Colonial Louisiana* (Philadelphia, 2012), 188–89, 208–18. See also Figure VIII.

¹⁴ Caillot, “Relation du Voyage,” MS 2005.11, 144 (“some emotion”), 164 (“caught sight”).

chronicled colonists' near obsession with stripped bodies.¹⁵ Caillot quoted the Frenchwomen as describing how, when they were freed, they were "as naked as when they were born." Likewise, he recounted how a French boy who was tortured was "stripped naked like the hand."¹⁶ Another colonist, Jean-François-Benjamin Dumont de Montigny, provided his own highly detailed account of the torture and death of two colonists, likely told him by one of the captives whom he would later marry: those selected for torture and death were ceremonially daubed with the black ointment that sealed their fate, but first they were stripped of their clothes and made "naked as the hand."¹⁷

The term *nakedness* was ambiguous. The common definition meant being stripped down to one's shift (in other words, to garb that only intimate family members or servants could see). For example, the phrases "en chemise" and "naked en chemise" actually meant "to have nothing on . . . but one's shirt."¹⁸

¹⁵ Ann M. Little, *Abraham in Arms: War and Gender in Colonial New England* (Philadelphia, 2007), 70–76, 81–87; Wendy Lucas Castro, "Stripped: Clothing and Identity in Colonial Captivity Narratives," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 6, no. 1 (June 2008): 104–36. On captivity, particularly torture rituals in the South, see esp. James F. Brooks, "This Evil Extends Especially . . . to the Feminine Sex': Negotiating Captivity in the New Mexico Borderlands," *Feminist Studies* 22, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 279–309, esp. 279; Gordon M. Sayre, *Les Sauvages Américains: Representations of Native Americans in French and English Colonial Literature* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1997), chap. 6; Brooks, *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2002); Juliana Barr, "From Captives to Slaves: Commodifying Indian Women in the Borderlands," *Journal of American History* 92, no. 1 (June 2005): 19–46; Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country*. On practices from New France that French colonists in Louisiana were likely aware of, see William A. Starna and Ralph Watkins, "Northern Iroquoian Slavery," *Ethnohistory* 38, no. 1 (Winter 1991): 34–57; Brett Rushforth, "'A Little Flesh We Offer You': The Origins of Indian Slavery in New France," *WMQ* 60, no. 4 (October 2003): 777–808; Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slavery in New France* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2012), chap. 1. On torture rituals in New France, see Daniel K. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1992), 66–74; Claude Charles Le Roy, Sieur de Bacqueville de la Potherie, "History of the Savage Peoples Who Are Allies of New France" (*Histoire de l'Amérique septentrionale*), in Emma Helen Blair, ed. and trans., *The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley and Region of the Great Lakes. . . .* (Lincoln, Neb., 1996), 2: 36–43; Roland Viau, *Enfants du néant et mangeurs d'âmes: Guerre, culture et société en Iroquoisie ancienne* (1997; repr., Montreal, 2000), 137–60. On stripping, see J. Franklin Jameson, trans., "Journal of Antoine Bonnefoy, 1741–1742," in Newton D. Mereness, ed., *Travels in the American Colonies* (New York, 1916), 241–55, esp. 246; Starna and Watkins, *Ethnohistory* 38: 45.

¹⁶ Caillot, "Relation du Voyage," MS 2005.11, 165 ("as naked as"), 148 ("stripped naked").

¹⁷ Dumont, "Mémoire," Ayer MS 257, 235 (quotation), 233. On black paint as a prequel to being put to death, see Dumont, "Mémoire," Ayer MS 257, 376; also Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country*, 93; on his future wife, Marie Baron Roussin, see Dumont de Montigny, *Memoir of Lieutenant Dumont*, 36–37.

¹⁸ Antoine de Furetière, *Dictionnaire universel, contenant generalement tous les mots françois tans vieux que modernes et les termes des sciences et des arts* (Rotterdam-La Haye,

In contrast, a rarer use of the term *naked* was to signal total nakedness, but in such cases the word had to be qualified, as it was in the description of victims who were “totally naked,” “as naked as when they were born,” and “stripped naked like the hand.” Here then, in Caillot’s description of the victims of the Natchez, were examples of the literal and metaphorical loss of cultural markers of French identity and morality.¹⁹

Conversely, colonists provided a counterpoint to stripping by describing a surfeit of French dress on the bodies of Natchez plunderers, even down to the religious robes plundered from missionaries (which created a carnivalesque play on popular religious-themed masquerade disguises).²⁰ French eyewitnesses underlined this reading of Indians as desirous of French dress by noting repeatedly that of the two French males whom the Natchez had made sure to keep alive, one was a tailor, responsible for “making new suits from the cloth they had seized from the warehouse and boat. He repaired the suits of Frenchmen who had been killed, adjusting them to the size of those [Natchez] who had taken them.”²¹ French female captives who had the requisite skills were also assigned the forced labor of sewing, repairing, and altering outfits such as the fine linen shirt worn by the Natchez chief, captured by the Choctaws and slated for death, in an image drawn by de Batz (see Figure II, upper right corner).²²

1690), s.v. “chemise” (quotations); Nicole Pellegrin, “Chemises et chiffons: Le vieux et le neuf en Poitou et Limousin XVIIIe–XIXe siècles,” *Ethnologie Française* 16, no. 3 (July–September 1986): 283–94.

¹⁹ Though the term *identity* can be critiqued for being too protean as a category of analysis (see for example Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity,’” *Theory and Society* 29, no. 1 [February 2000]: 1–47; Christopher Hodson, “Weird Science: Identity in the Atlantic World,” *WMQ* 68, no. 2 [April 2011]: 227–32), it is the very flexibility of this analytic term that I value.

²⁰ 4DFC 40, fols. 121–84, ANOM; “Lettre du P Le Petit,” in *Lettres édifiantes*, 20: 180. On the popularity of religious disguises, see Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization*, 82.

²¹ M. [Antoine-Simon] Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire de la Louisiane. . .* (Paris, 1758), 3: 260–61 (quotation). See also, for references to the tailor, “Relation de la Louisiane,” Ayer MS 530, 54; Dumont, “Mémoire,” Ayer MS 257, 240; “Lettre du P Le Petit,” in *Lettres édifiantes*, 20: 153. The boat was loaded with trade goods worth approximately 300,000 livres; see Caillot, “Relation du Voyage,” MS 2005.11, 145.

²² As a point of comparison, see Ann M. Little’s discussion of needlework (and gender) in English captivity narratives: Little, *Abraham in Arms*, 122–25. For the identification of the seated man with headdress and linen shirt in the upper right corner of Figure II as a captured Natchez chief slated for death, see Ian W. Brown, “The Eighteenth-Century Natchez Chiefdom,” in Vincas P. Steponaitis, ed., *The Natchez District in the Old, Old South, Southern Research Report* 11 (Winter 1998): 49–65; my thanks to George Milne for bringing this source to my attention. Christina Snyder concurs with this identification based on the man’s age, gender, and accomplishments, as well as the presence of the black face paint that marked him for death; Snyder, personal communication to author, Nov. 29, 2010; and, on the black paint, Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country*, 93; Dumont, “Mémoire,” Ayer MS 257, 376.

But the French did not stop at blaming their Natchez enemies for stripping them. They also obsessed about the way that their own Indian allies took advantage of the French need for military support against the Natchez by demanding payment up front in the form of manufactured goods imported from France. The French were particularly resentful that their Choctaw allies negotiated, in return “for each scalp that the Choctaw *sauvages* had made,” ammunition, hatchets, and vermilion but mostly articles of adornment including a blanket, a hat, a shirt, and a *capot* (a hooded wool or blanket coat of simple construction adapted from French Canadian dress).²³

Topping off this account of material gain at French expense, military officials itemized numerous other disbursements made to individual Choctaw warriors and chiefs. The bulk of the goods consisted of French textiles and clothing that the officials dwelled on in detail: for the warriors, a plain capot, a blanket, a shirt, and a breechclout; for the chiefs, a shirt and cravat, a capot fully trimmed with military-style galloon lace, a laced tricorne hat, a feather, a handkerchief, a pair of stockings, a pair of shoes and buckles, and fabric for making breechclouts.²⁴ Further fueling French anger at the transfer of imported goods from Frenchmen to Indians was the fact that the Choctaws also demanded a ransom for each French or African captive that they freed, as if these redeemed captives had in fact been “enemies that they had killed” rather than allies.²⁵ The Choctaws capped off their contravention of French codes of behavior by seizing luxury household goods such as silverware that the Natchez had plundered from the French and inciting officers to lose sight of their own moral code by buying these.²⁶ In other words, far from distinguishing between Natchez enemies and Choctaw allies, extant accounts of the uprising and ensuing battles conflated all Indians as plunderers of French material goods and usually characterized allies and enemies interchangeably as “barbarians.”²⁷

French men, women, and children were denuded—or its equivalent in French consciousness, underdressed or dressed in Indian-style breechclouts—while Indians, whether enemies or allies, were dressed in the

²³ “Relation de la Louisianne,” Ayer MS 530, 62–63 (quotation, 62). On the capot in Louisiana, see White, *Wild Frenchmen*, 217–19.

²⁴ Only breeches and waistcoat were missing from what were the key elements of formal French dress. Instead of breeches, and consistent with Indians’ general disinclination toward this garment, the chiefs were provided with one and one-half ells of cheap *limbourg* wool (and scissors) for making breechclouts, plus a piece of decorative red galloon lace for trimming. See “Relation de la Louisianne,” Ayer MS 530, 62–63; on breeches, see also Dumont, “Mémoire,” Ayer MS 257, 361; on gift-giving costs, see Catherine M. Desbarats, “The Cost of Early Canada’s Native Alliances: Reality and Scarcity’s Rhetoric,” *WMQ* 52, no. 4 (October 1995): 609–30.

²⁵ “Relation de la Louisianne,” Ayer MS 530, 62–63 (quotation, 62).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 62–63; on the silverware, see Balvay, *La Révolte*, 140.

²⁷ “Relation de la Louisianne,” Ayer MS 530, 58, Dumont, “Mémoire,” 225; “Lettre du P Le Petit,” in *Lettres édifiantes*, 20: 161–62, 168; on the Choctaws as “Barbares,” see *ibid.*, 20: 185 (quotation), 188.

French manner. Caillot underlined this confusion with his tale of escapees who had come close to approaching “a man dressed in the French style coming towards them. . . . It was only when they saw him from up close that they recognized him to be a *sauvage* dressed in the clothing of the Governor [commandant] and knew to keep quiet.” Caillot’s narrative expressed the terrible consequences that might arise from such examples of swapped sartorial identities, and he later redirected readers back to the Natchez revolt with one more story of stripping, power, and metamorphosis, this time involving the torture of the captive Natchez woman. But first, in the very midst of “whatever sadness one feels” from the events of the Natchez revolt, Caillot made an extraordinary—and at first glance superficial—literary move.²⁸ He inserted an episode of Mardi Gras masquerade.

THE ACCOUNT OF MARDI GRAS MASQUERADE was in fact Marc-Antoine Caillot’s second reference in the manuscript to a topsy-turvy ritual, the first being a mock baptism at sea on the ship *La Durance*, an episode that underlined the implicit importance of religion and the explicit theme of metamorphosis in his “Relation” (Figure III). In accordance with social misrule traditions that regulated “baptism” at sea, on crossing the Tropic of Cancer in this instance, a mock Master of the Tropic of Cancer (“bonhomme Tropicque”), on his mock horse and accompanied by his mock retinue, was greeted with food and wine, the consumption of which was followed by a cleansing ritual of hand and mouth washing. The Master’s authority thus established through these rituals, he proceeded with mock baptisms that served to counter anxieties about crossing new thresholds in the open sea.²⁹

Consistent with his predilection for erotic allusions, Caillot foregrounded the subjection of female travelers to a ritual mediated by an act of disrobing. After having gone “to dress themselves in *corcets*” (meaning quilted, padded bodices, not boned stays; Figure IV) and white petticoats—in other words, in undergarments not ordinarily meant to be seen in public—the first woman

²⁸ Caillot, “Relation du Voyage,” MS 2005.11, 149 (“man dressed”), 154 (“whatever sadness”). Other examples of the confusion of French and Indian identity are described by Zénobe Membré, cited in Gilles Havard, *Empire et métissages: Indiens et Français dans le pays d’en haut, 1660–1715* (Sillery, Quebec, 2003), 602; Jameson, “Journal of Antoine Bonnefoy,” 253; P[ierre-François-Xavier de Charlevoix], *Histoire et description generale de la Nouvelle-France. . . .*, vol. 3, *Journal d’un Voyage Fait par Ordre du Roi dans L’Amerique Septentrionale. . . .* (Paris, 1744), 416–17; Morris S. Arnold, *Colonial Arkansas, 1686–1804: A Social and Cultural History* (Fayetteville, Ark., 1991), 112–13.

²⁹ The section on the mock baptisms is found in Caillot, “Relation du Voyage,” MS 2005.11, 42–43 (“baptism,” 42), 38–39 (“bonhomme Tropicque”). Jean-François-Benjamin Dumont de Montigny included a virtually identical ceremony in his memoirs; see Dumont, “Mémoire,” Ayer MS 257, 6–7, 41–44. New France voyageurs also conducted mock baptisms along fur trade routes of the Great Lakes; see Carolyn Podruchny, “Baptizing Novices: Ritual Moments among French Canadian Voyageurs in the Montreal Fur Trade, 1780–1821,” *Canadian Historical Review* 83, no. 2 (June 2002): 165–95.

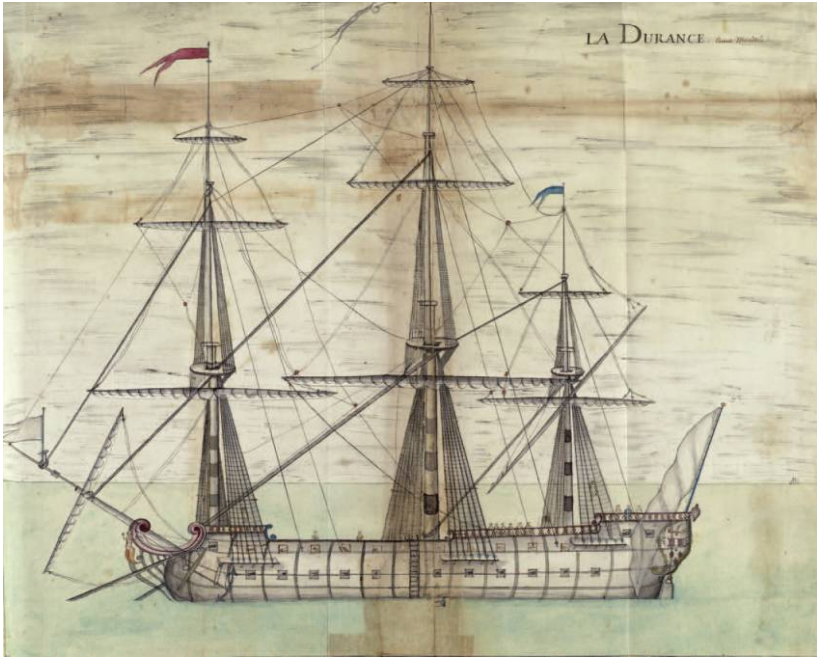


FIGURE III

Marc-Antoine Caillot, *La Durance at anchor*. From *Relation du Voyage de la Louisiane ou Nouv.le France fait par le Sr. Caillot en l'année 1730*. Ms. 2005.II. Courtesy of the Historic New Orleans Collection.

was forced to submit to answering sundry questions and made to swear her allegiance on a pretend Bible. Then, after she had tipped the master and his retinue, one of the “angels” poured water “in the shape of a Cross on her forehead and the other angel poured three drops of water between her shift and her skin along her arm.” The other women and the men then followed in being “baptized.”³⁰ For the duration of the ceremony and its forced intimacy, highborn French men and women subjected themselves to the authority of the master and his retinue (just as the real captives of the Natchez had been forced to submit to their authority). But once the ritual was concluded, order was restored. The captain was no longer subjugated

³⁰ Caillot, “Relation du Voyage,” MS 2005.II, 42 (“to dress themselves”), 43 (“angels”). On the definition of the *corcet* or *corset* in the early eighteenth century, as distinct from the *corps* (or boned stays), see Corinne Thépaud-Cabasset, *L'esprit des modes au grand siècle* (Paris, 2010), 170 n. 137.



FIGURE IV

Quilted and padded bodice or jumps (French "corcet"), yellow silk, ca. 1745. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, acc. T.87-1978. Photo © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

to the crew, and the passengers marked their resumption of the privileges of their rank by re-dressing themselves in their usual class-coded garb. As described below, the passages outlining the sartorial actions of former French captives and escapees, once they had recovered their authority, would follow this organizational structure. So would the Mardi Gras masquerade, though there it was colonists who had the agency in controlling (rather than being forcibly subjected to) role reversals.

Caillot claimed sole credit for initiating the 1730 New Orleans Mardi Gras celebration that followed so closely on the heels of the Natchez uprising, for concocting ad hoc costumes (since none were available for hire or purchase in New Orleans), and for improvising the masks for himself and his companions (Figure V). The idea had come to him, he suggested, because by then “we were already very far into the Fat days, without having had the least entertainment, which made me infinitely regret France.” He was not alone in feeling the urge for lighter spirits and the need to rekindle his connection with France, and he spent the night of Fat Sunday singing and dancing at a private dinner, for, “whatever sadness one feels, it seemed that those [Fat] days should be dedicated to pleasure and entertainments.” The next day, on Fat Monday (February 20, 1730), his desire for pleasure and entertainment still not sated, Caillot ambled over to the offices of the Company of the Indies, where he worked, and, seeing his friends “dying of boredom,” proposed that they all mask on the occasion of a wedding celebration at Bayou Saint Jean on the outskirts of the city. They demurred because of the inherent difficulties of finding costumes in 1730 New Orleans, but Caillot persevered, driven by an increasingly urgent need for the promised release of masquerade. Eventually, a married couple stepped in to assist with his costume and apparently joined him in masking. His original group of friends did not recognize Caillot until he had removed his mask, an exercise that gave them in turn “the desire to also mask.”³¹ The masquerade was set.

Ten friends in total joined Caillot in masking, mostly bachelors (echoing the centrality of unmarried male youth to European carnival and masquerade). Some, like Caillot, masked as women (one as an amazon). In an earlier passage, Caillot had bragged about his intimate knowledge of women’s fashion, discussing new Parisian styles such as hooped petticoats during his stopover in Saint Domingue and even claiming to have counseled two female acquaintances on the island on how to concoct this newer and controversial fashion for a foundation undergarment.³² Given his interest in

³¹ The section on masquerade is found in Caillot, “Relation du Voyage,” MS 2005.11, 154–63 (“we were already,” 154, “desire to also mask,” 155).

³² *Ibid.*, 81. On the centrality of bachelors to masquerade, see Poppi, “The Other Within,” 190–215; Davis, “Reasons of Misrule.” On hoops and their sexual connotations, see Aileen Ribeiro, *Dress and Morality* (New York, 2003), 97; Kimberly Chrisman,



FIGURE V

Masquerade mask, from Lady Clapham Doll. 1690–1700. Cardboard with silk, vel- lum, thread, and beads. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, acc. T.846T-1974. Photo © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

fashion, Caillot unsurprisingly lingered on the description of his own cross- dress disguise as a female shepherdess, a favorite “picturesquely proletarian” masquerade costume for women in this period.³³ It consisted of a white muslin gown worn over a woman’s shift, its fashionable outline provided by a wide hooped petticoat and an unboned, padded *corcet* (see Figure

“Unhoop the Fair Sex: The Campaign against the Hoop Petticoat in Eighteenth-Century England,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 30, no. 1 (Fall 1996): 5–23.

³³ Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization*, 62 (quotation). See also Aileen Ribeiro, *The Dress Worn at Masquerades in England, 1730–1790, and Its Relation to Fancy Dress in Portraiture* (London, 1984); Betsy Rosasco, “Masquerade and Enigma at the Court of Louis XIV,” *Art Journal* 48, no. 2 (Summer 1989): 144–49; Julia Landweber, “Celebrating Identity: Charting the History of Turkish Masquerade in Early Modern France,” *Romance Studies* 23, no. 3 (November 2005): 175–89.

IV) that his unacclimated male body could more easily adjust to than boned stays. Caillot had also accented his face and nipples with fashionable patches (small round pieces of black fabric usually affixed to the face in imitation of beauty spots). He paired up with his “spouse, who was the marquis of Carnival” (a role similar to the Master of the Tropic of Cancer) in his suit trimmed with gold lace.³⁴ The tableau was completed with an escort of French soldiers hired on the spot to play music, and protected by eight enslaved Africans who were made to (or paid to) hold torches as the procession made its way from New Orleans through the wilderness to the settlement of Bayou Saint Jean. The first known Mardi Gras carnival procession in New Orleans was thus located on a route that led from the offices of the Company of the Indies around the Place d’armes (present-day Jackson Square) to Bayou Saint Jean, approximately one and one-half miles inland (Figure VI).

Unlike with present-day Mardi Gras Indians and Zulu parades, the participation of African men in the carnival procession was coerced and did not involve costuming. Rather, they appeared as themselves—as enslaved Africans—though they were required to play torchbearers, a role that resonates eerily with the nineteenth-century New Orleans carnival tradition of flambeau carriers (just as Bayou Saint Jean now represents an important meeting place for modern-day Mardi Gras Indians). Flambeau carriers were African American men hired to walk alongside (white) masked horsemen during night parades, the heavy torches causing them to bend over in the subservient manner required of this popular mock performance of servitude. Caillot’s torchbearers, born in West Africa, must have been struck by the parallels between French masking and the masking and procession rituals familiar from their own cultures.³⁵ Caillot of course was oblivious

³⁴ Caillot, “Relation du Voyage,” MS 2005.11, 155.

³⁵ On African American carnival traditions in New Orleans, see George Lipsitz, “Mardi Gras Indians: Carnival and Counter-Narrative in Black New Orleans,” *Cultural Critique*, no. 10 (Autumn 1988): 99–121; Samuel Kinser, *Carnival, American Style: Mardi Gras at New Orleans and Mobile* (Chicago, 1990), esp. chaps. 6–8; Michael P. Smith, “Behind the Lines: The Black Mardi Gras Indians and the New Orleans Second Line,” *Black Music Research Journal* 14, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 43–73; Smith, *Mardi Gras Indians* (1994; repr., Gretna, La., 2007); Reid Mitchell, *All on a Mardi Gras Day: Episodes in the History of New Orleans Carnival* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995); Frank de Caro and Tom Ireland, “Every Man a King: Worldview, Social Tension, and Carnival in New Orleans,” in *Mardi Gras, Gumbo, and Zydeco: Readings in Louisiana Culture*, ed. Marcia Gaudet and James C. McDonald (Jackson, Miss., 2003), 26–41, esp. 34–36; J. Mark Souther, *New Orleans on Parade: Tourism and the Transformation of the Crescent City* (Baton Rouge, La., 2006). The earliest known reference to enslaved Africans in Louisiana masking and wearing feathers dates to Jan. 19, 1781 (Records of the Spanish Cabildo, Louisiana Historical Center, Louisiana State Museum, New Orleans, Louisiana); see Rosita M. Sands, “Carnival Celebrations in Africa and the New World: Junkanoo and the Black Indians of Mardi Gras,” *Black Music Research Journal* 11, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 75–91, esp. 83. On the flambeau carriers, see Mitchell, *All on a Mardi Gras Day*, 175–76; de Caro and

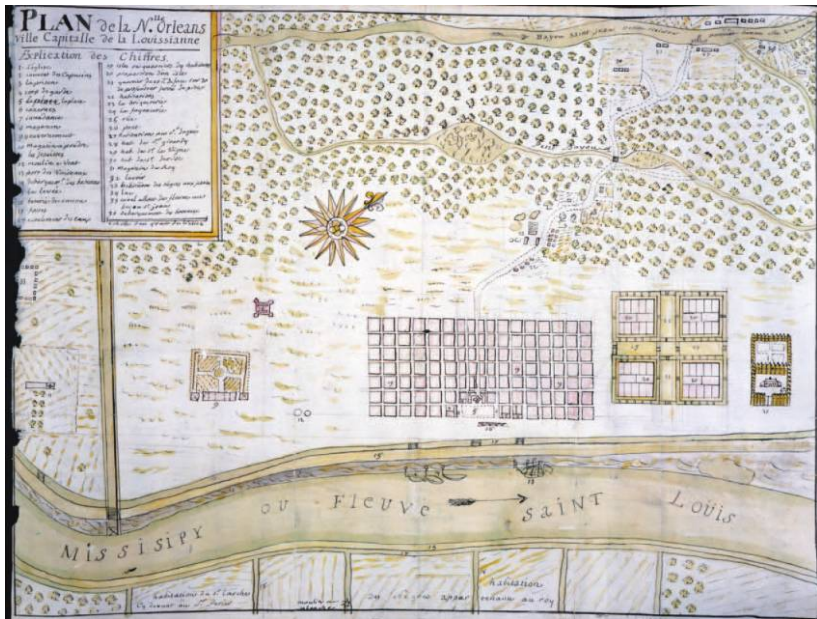


FIGURE VI

Jean-François-Benjamin Dumont de Montigny, *Plan de la Nlle Orleans ville capitale de la Louisianne*. VAULT oversized Ayer MS 257, map no. 7. Photo courtesy of the Newberry Library, Chicago.

to such similarities. Instead, in incorporating African slaves in the procession, he wished to signal the reestablishment of their subjugated place within colonial society. Indeed, accounts from Natchez suggested that, following the uprising, the Natchez Indians had for the most part treated African slaves as free. Jean-François-Benjamin Dumont de Montigny had carefully bemoaned this contrast between freed Africans and the captive Frenchwomen who had been placed under the authority of “Natchez empresses” for whom they were forced to labor, “reduced to the last extremities of slavery.”³⁶ The masquerade procession, which forced African males to enact their roles as slaves, without disguise, offered a way for Caillot to rebalance the disturbing reversal of African and French identities engendered by the Natchez revolt.

Ireland, “Every Man a King,” 30–31, 34–36; Souther, *New Orleans on Parade*, 137–38, 141–42. On West African masking, see for example Pascal James Imperato, “Bambara and Malinke Ton Masquerades,” *African Arts* 13, no. 4 (August 1980): 47–55, 82, 85, 87; Kinser, *Carnival American Style*, chap. 7; John Mack, “African Masking,” in Mack, *Masks and the Art of Expression*, 32–55.

³⁶ Dumont, “Mémoire,” Ayer MS 257, 231.

Many false rumors about impending attacks on New Orleans and massacres at other French settlements (including at Bayou Saint Jean) were spread by nervous colonists in the aftermath of the Natchez uprising.³⁷ Caillot dramatized these fears with his narrative of the maskers' sudden encounter with four bears "of a terrifying size" as the procession made its way to the wedding. Startled by the Africans' torches, the bears fled, leaving the group nervously "laughing about the minor comedy that we had witnessed and that had really frightened us." The escort of actual French soldiers and "real [that is, genuine] African slaves" ("veritables esclaves negres," none of them in disguise) protecting French revelers as they made their way to Bayou Saint Jean helped to project the narrative of a stable and hierarchical colonial order even in the midst of this dangerous environment.³⁸ It was important for Caillot to reassure his reader on his point. Although enslaved Africans had been formally enlisted into fighting the Natchez (resulting in a number of manumissions), this did not soothe the anxieties among colonists that their slaves might join Indians in a mass revolt against the French. Governor Étienne de Périer acted on this fear when he put to death a group of enslaved Africans suspected of conspiracy. He also abandoned those Africans who had joined the Natchez to a new fate as captives of the Choctaws, though the easygoing deportment of the African child in Figure II (which contrasts with that of the prostrate Natchez captive in the upper right corner) suggests that at least some of these former slaves were integrated.³⁹

On arriving at the wedding party as the guests were getting up from dinner, the group made a theatrical entrance choreographed to the sounds of the soldiers playing music and of a whip cracking in the air. They stayed in character until, after many flirtatious entreaties, they finally agreed to unmask. Caillot, who had arrived in the colony just six months earlier and was less familiar to the guests than some of his companions, claimed that they were most challenged by having to guess who he was. But lack of familiarity with his features was merely one reason why previously flirtatious guests now found it difficult to accept that he was a man: "in addition to the fact that I had had my beard shaved very closely that night, I had a quantity of [beauty] patches on my face and also on my breasts, which I had padded. I was the most coquettishly dressed of all my band hence I had the pleasure of claiming victory over my comrades, and though I was unmasked, my adoring audience could not resolve itself to extinguish its

³⁷ Caillot, "Relation du Voyage," MS 2005.11, 150, 167–69; Balvay, *La Révolte*, 134.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 155–56 ("terrifying," African slaves," 155, "laughing," 155–56).

³⁹ Dumont, "Mémoire," Ayer MS 257, 244; Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire*, vol. 3, chap. 17; Balvay, *La Révolte*, 134–35; Sayre, *Indian Chief as Tragic Hero*, 230–31; "Lettre du P Le Petit," in *Lettres édifiantes*, 20: 188. See RSCL 1737062806, Records of the Superior Council of Louisiana, The Louisiana Historical Center, Louisiana State Museum, New Orleans, for a reference to the emancipation of the slave Diocou as a result of his service in the Natchez war.

passion which had become ardent in such a short time; indeed, unless one looked at me from close-up, one could not imagine I was a boy.”⁴⁰ As he proudly detailed, it was his temporary sartorial performance of femininity that helped him deceive his suitors about his identity.

Once unmasked, Caillot could compete with his friends for the affections of Miss Carrière, a boarder at the Ursuline convent who elicited in him an inner “fire,” binding her to him “with her fine figure, her complexion that was as white as the snow, her beautiful rosy cheeks, her unrivaled blue eyes.” Earlier in the manuscript, Caillot had written off the easy virtue of female colonists, comparing them to Natchez women and their sexual pursuit of Frenchmen “whom they did not leave to rest until their own ardent passions had been satisfied.” Drawing on such stereotypes then allowed Caillot to declare that “the frequent upsets and wars in this colony stem from the bad life that is led there, and the punishments that God has sent us are only just, as you will see later.” Whereas Caillot framed other women, whether Natchez or French, as having easy virtue, his romantic encounters at the wedding were framed as highly pleasurable but chaste, thanks to the “naïveté and modesty” of Miss Carrière and her companions.⁴¹

The flirtations and eroticism, the game of guessing at a masquerader’s identity: these were fashionable elements of masquerade festivities as practiced in France in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Likewise, the torchlit procession echoed the court masques, ballets, ceremonial entries, and choreographed public spectacles (and iterations of these performances in visual culture) that had influenced the development of masquerade festivities and costumes. Many of these events incorporated allusions to and stereotypical costumes of exotic nations, including France’s colonial subjects. Costumed Africans and Indians appeared in Jean-Baptiste Lully’s ballets and opera ballets from the 1680s. They would remain perennial figures at masquerade balls and fictional representations of masquerade balls in the eighteenth century, especially popular following encounters with foreign dignitaries, such as the Indian delegation from Louisiana whose costumes and mores fascinated the public during their visit to Paris in 1725.⁴²

⁴⁰ Caillot, “Relation du Voyage,” MS 2005.11, 156.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 156–57 (“fire,” 156, “fine figure,” “naïveté,” 157), 117–18 (“whom they did not,” 117, “frequent upsets,” 118).

⁴² See Rosasco, *Art Journal* 48: 144–49; Sarah R. Cohen, “Body as ‘Character’ in Early Eighteenth-Century French Art and Performance,” *Art Bulletin* 78, no. 3 (September 1996): 454–66; Rebecca Harris-Warrick, “Ballroom Dancing at the Court of Louis XIV,” *Early Music* 14, no. 1 (February 1986): 40–49; Landweber, *Romance Studies* 23: 175–89; *400 Years of French Presence in Louisiana: Treasures from the Bibliothèque Nationale de France* (New Orleans, 2007), exhibition catalog, 4, http://www.hnoc.org/exhibitions/pdf/400_years_cata.pdf. On foreign delegations’ influence on the popularity of exotic costumes, see Ribeiro, *Dress Worn at Masquerades*, 445–52; Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization*, 59–60, 62. A lengthy account of the Indians’ 1725 visit was published as “Relation de l’arrivée en France de quatre Sauvages de Missicipi, de leur séjour, & des audiences qu’ils ont eues

Yet, notwithstanding the popularity in France of cross-cultural costumes, the Indian and African references in French masquerade, masking, and costuming were utterly absent from Caillot's portrayal of the New Orleans event. Violent and traumatic events from contemporary life were often acted out in carnival, but usually only if and once the threat was contained. In fact, what is especially notable about Caillot's presentation of the 1730 masquerade is that the majority of the costumes, like his, were centered on gender cross-dressing (shepherdesses and amazons). And following the unmasking and in the ensuing days of festivities as the wedding group gorged on imported Frontignac wine and other delicacies, all romantic encounters were emphatically heterosexual. Any Africans involved with the masquerade were "real," and Indians were altogether absent. Transgressions of class were present in Caillot's costume of a lowly if coquettish shepherdess worn at an elite wedding banquet. And even though in Europe transvestite costumes were among the most scandalous, in this colonial masquerade, at this moment in time, temporary transgressions of gender seemed conceivable—and manageable. But in a heightened atmosphere of fear and anxiety spurred by the Natchez attack and slave uprisings, an Indian- or African-inspired disguise (or even a costume as a corpse) was at that moment simply too close to reality to be viable as a costume for a French man or woman.⁴³ These absences bring into sharp focus the disquieting events to which Caillot next directed his readers. The chronological order of Caillot's section on the Natchez uprising begins with massacre, makes a seemingly incongruous detour to Mardi Gras, then ends with torture as a prelude to the return to order once all the Natchez are conquered or annihilated. But the deeper meaning and literary purpose of the masquerade episode—and in fact of the section as a whole—can only be unlocked by analyzing the themes that are central to Caillot's account of torture: power, feasting, pleasure, and metamorphosis, carried out collectively by French and Indians on a body stripped of its apparel.

MARC-ANTOINE CAILLOT PREFACED HIS ACCOUNT of the torture by inserting a drawing of a totally naked woman attached to two squared poles

du Roi, des Princes du Sang, de la Compagnie des Indes, avec les compliments qu'ils ont faits, les honneurs & les presens qu'ils ont reçus, &c.," *Mercur de France* 1 (December 1725): 2827–59 (facsim. ed., Geneva, 1968); see also Richard N. Ellis and Charlie R. Steen, eds., "An Indian Delegation in France, 1725," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 67, no. 4 (September 1974): 385–405.

⁴³ For examples of "real life" embedded in carnivals, see Davis, "Reasons of Misrule," 99–100 (quotation, 100). Both Davis and Johnson, *Venice Incognito*, 188, emphasize the need to seek the specific conditions of upheaval that occasioned a particular masquerade or carnival. On transvestite disguises, see Davis, "Women on Top," 149–50; Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization*, 63. On costumes depicting corpses or other supernatural types, see Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization*, 64–66.

(Figure VII). It is the only in-text image within the manuscript (with the exception of one small floral motif), magnifying the importance of this scene; all of the other images in Caillot's account appear as full-page illustrations at the start and end of the manuscript. France's Tunica allies, led by their great chief Cahura-Joligo (whom Caillot identified as having "been baptized and is almost frenchified"), had captured the Natchez woman.⁴⁴ Intending to deploy her as a tool in diplomatic relations with the French, rather than kill her or adopt her into their nation, the Tunica brought her (together with two other captive Natchez women and three children) to New Orleans on April 10, 1730, the day after Easter. Caillot's chronology went straight from Mardi Gras to Easter (with no interlude), forming a link between the masquerade and the torture, which thus took place right after the end of the privations and Lenten reflections on another ritual killing of a stripped body on a frame, that of Christ on the cross.⁴⁵

According to an official report from 1730 titled "Woman burnt on the Frame," the French female escapees immediately recognized the woman as the wife of Chief La Farine (the chief of the Flour village). Before the uprising, the Flour village had been considered pro-French and Chief La Farine had helped negotiate the end of the Second Natchez War of October 1722; in accordance with Natchez diplomatic protocols, his wife could well have been a part of the peace delegations. But now, nearly a decade later, the wife of the Flour Chief was "known for being an enemy of the French."⁴⁶ Recognizing that in the South Indian women decided on the life or death of captives, the escapees in 1730 specifically identified her as the person who had had it in her power to prevent the death of three Frenchmen but had instead given the order for them to be tortured and killed.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Caillot, "Relation du Voyage," MS 2005.II, 167. Juzan, "Relation de ce qui s'est passé au fort français des Natchez," 1731, 4DFC 41, ANOM, described Cahura-Joligo as "the bravest and the most Christianized of our sauvages" (ibid., fol. 9). But though he was observed to dress in the French manner and owned a complete suit of French clothes, at least one chronicler described him as preferring to carry his breeches rather than wear them; see Jean Bernard Bossu, *New Travels in North America*, ed. and trans. Samuel Dorris Dickinson (Natchitoches, La., 1982), 99 n. 13. On the Tunica, see Jeffrey P. Brain, *Tunica Treasure* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979); Brain, *Tunica Archaeology* (Cambridge, Mass., 1988).

⁴⁵ It also echoed the rise in violence that often accompanied religious periods in early modern France; see Davis, *Past and Present*, no. 214, 26.

⁴⁶ "Femme Bruslée au Poteau à la Nouvelle Orleans, 1730," F3 24, fol. 187r-87v (quotation, fol. 187r), ANOM.

⁴⁷ Ibid.; a duplicate version, "Femme brulé au Poteau en 1730 à la Nouvelle Orleans," MSS fr. n.a. 2551, fol. 53, Bibliothèque nationale de France, is discussed in Milne, "Rising Suns," 223-25. On the authority of Native women in the South in making decisions about the life or death of captives, see Thomas S. Abler, "Scalping, Torture, Cannibalism and Rape: An Ethnohistorical Analysis of Conflicting Cultural Values in War," *Anthropologica* 34, no. 1 (1992): 3-20, esp. 7; Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country*, 92-95. On the "power of life and death" wielded by the Natchez female chiefs

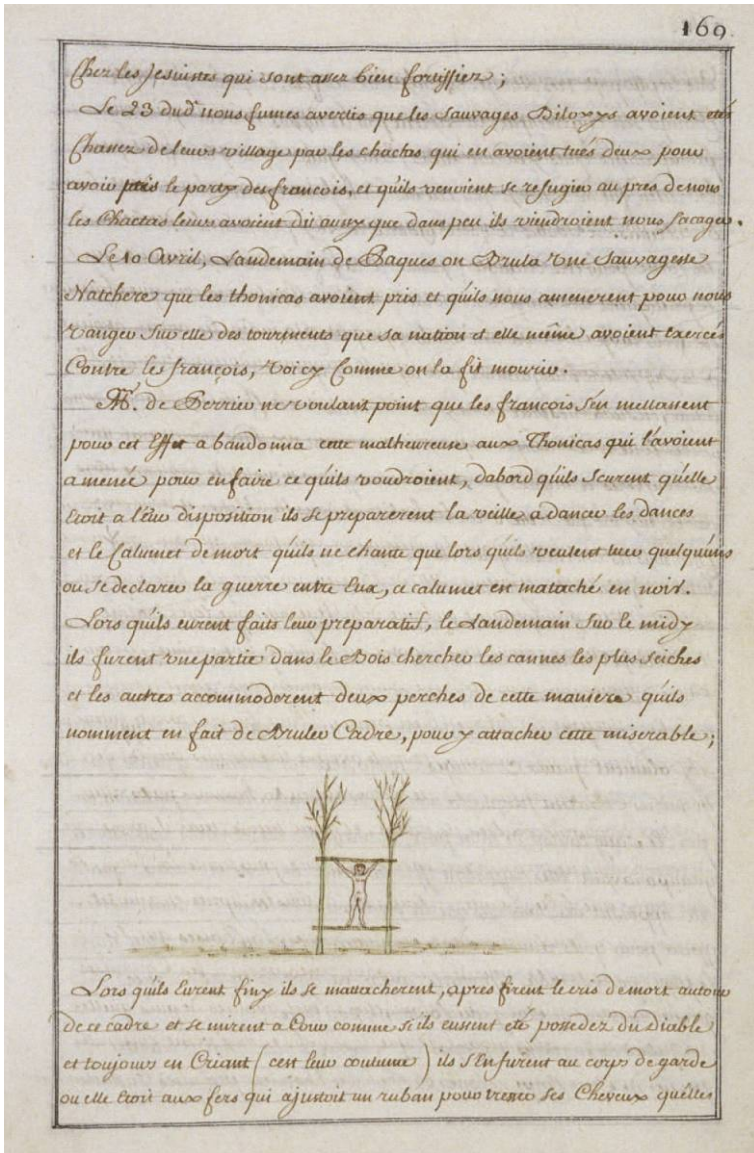


FIGURE VII

Marc-Antoine Caillot, *Relation du Voyage de la Louisiane ou Nouv.lle France fait par le Sr. Caillot en l'année 1730*, p. 169. Courtesy of the Historic New Orleans Collection, MSS 596. Acc. No. 2005.0011.

According to Caillot, and corroborated by a number of other contemporary accounts of this episode, Governor Étienne de Périer had not wanted the French to accept the captive. But to reject this gift from an ally nation contravened the rules of symbolic diplomacy that valued the offering of a human body above all others, a rejection that was all the more delicate during wartime when relations with allies were especially critical. Périer could have accepted her as a prisoner of war, but protocol would have required the Superior Council to rule on the case. And Louis Congo, the freed African who was the public executioner, would have carried out her sentence in accordance with French judicial practice, as he would have done against the slave conspirators of 1731. Instead, by rejecting the gift and leaving the woman to the Tunica, Périer knew that revenge would be immediate and that the colonists' gratification would be instant. And it would be fitting. The anonymous author of the 1730 report suggested as much when he interpreted the rejection as a conscious decision by Périer, who had "determined to make her die with the same torments that she had wanted to make others suffer."⁴⁸ Périer would deliberately use this diplomatic strategy again; on July 9 Bayagoulas and Colapissas allies brought a gift of three Natchez and four Yazoo men and one Yazoo woman, and the governor had some of them "burned by those who had brought them in."⁴⁹ In any case, it is unclear that the Tunica cared to recognize the artificial distinction that Périer was attempting to enact. Both Périer and the Tunica knew that the latter would ritually torture and kill her, and he was undoubtedly complicit in suggesting (or acquiescing to) a location within reach of French onlookers.

By Caillot's account, the torture and ritual killing took place just outside New Orleans. But in fact the act seems to have been carefully located in the liminal space between the core of the city and its margins (beyond which were the encampments to which Indian delegations were segregated on visits to New Orleans). Jean-François-Benjamin Dumont de Montigny located this event

("Femme-Chef"), see Charlevoix, *Histoire et description generale*, 3: 420. On the ambiguity of the "femme-chef" title (and whether or not it was restricted to the wife of the Great Sun or applied also to the wives of other Natchez leaders such as the Sun of the Flour village), as well as the role of female chiefs as negotiators, see Milne, "Rising Suns," 125, 224. On the Flour village's pre-1729 pro-French sympathies, see *ibid.*, 132.

⁴⁸ "Femme Bruslée au Poteau à la Nouvelle Orleans, 1730," F3 24, fol. 187v, ANOM; Caillot, "Relation du Voyage," MS 2005.11, 169. On the diplomatic significance of gifts of human bodies, see Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance*, 202. On Louis Congo, see Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge, La., 1995), 131–32 (esp. 132 for his rates); Shannon Lee Dawdy, "The Burden of Louis Congo and the Evolution of Savagery in Colonial Louisiana," in *Discipline and the Other Body: Correction, Corporeality, Colonialism*, ed. Steven Pierce and Anupama Rao (Durham, N.C., 2006), 61–89; Dawdy, *Building the Devil's Empire: French Colonial New Orleans* (Chicago, 2008), 189–91.

⁴⁹ Caillot, "Relation du Voyage," MS 2005.11, 174.

on an elevated spot near the river, between the city and the government house, and here the poor wretch was tied and burnt with their ceremonies, before the whole city, who flocked to witness the spectacle. She was burnt first on one side, then on the other, all down the body, but during that long and cruel torture never shed a tear. On the contrary, she seemed to deride the unskilfulness of her tormentors, insulting them, and threatening that her death would soon be avenged by her tribe.

Her prophecy was soon accomplished.⁵⁰

The woman's prophecy did indeed come to pass. The year after she was tortured and killed, a band of Natchez tricked the Tunica by purporting to come in peace and then attacking them, killing and wounding many. Among the dead was Chief Cahura-Joligo, whose widow, son Jacob, and successor were drawn from life by Alexandre de Batz in June 1733 (Figure VIII).⁵¹

That it was a Natchez *woman* who was subjected to torture was cause for comment by the French. The author of "Woman burnt on the Frame" incorrectly claimed that this ritual torturing of a woman was a first "on the continent" but it was contrary to Indians' "usual discourse about it being the destiny of [male] warriors to perish by fire."⁵² Extant depictions of victims burning on the square frame seem to confirm this assumption of torture as exclusively male. Caillot's in-text drawing of the Natchez woman, stripped naked and attached to the frame awaiting torture, would seem to be the only visual illustration of the torture of the Natchez woman, and indeed of any female victim in Louisiana. This is why it is intriguing to find that one other drawing of torture in Louisiana, by Dumont, who provided a detailed description of the torture of the Natchez woman in his "Mémoire," is in fact a depiction of a female victim rather than a male. One of his extant drawings shows a male, recognizable as such from his

⁵⁰ [Jean-François-Benjamin] Dumont [de Montigny], "History of Louisiana: Translated from the Historical Memoirs of M. Dumont," in B. F. French, *Historical Memoirs of Louisiana, From the First Settlement of the Colony to the Departure of Governor O'Reilly in 1770*. . . (New York, 1853), 96 (this passage is not in the manuscript version). The section on the torture is in Caillot, "Relation du Voyage," MS 2005.11, 169–71. The "Woman burnt on the Frame" account placed "the scene" in front of the house of Sr. Bonnet, the former storekeeper of the Company of the Indies. "Femme Bruslée au Poteau à la Nouvelle Orleans, 1730," F3 24, fol. 187v, ANOM.

⁵¹ Caillot, "Relation du Voyage," MS 2005.11, 167; Diron d'Artaguiette to Minister of Marine, June 24, 1731, C13A 13, 145–46v, ANOM; Périer to Minister of Marine, Dec. 10, 1731, C13A, 61–62, ANOM.

⁵² "Femme Bruslée au Poteau à la Nouvelle Orleans," F3 24, fol. 187v, ANOM. See Dumont de Montigny, *Memoir of Lieutenant Dumont*, 354, for Dumont's anecdote about witnessing a young girl of fifteen or sixteen enduring torture "without shedding a tear nor even complaining of the pain of the fire."



FIGURE VIII

Alexandre de Batz, *Sauvage matachez en Guerrier, ayant fait trois Chevelures*.
 Courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard
 University, 41-72-10/18. 99020018. <http://www.peabody.harvard.edu>.

genitalia and the masculine haircut of his scalp affixed to a pole beside the frame. But another drawing is of a woman, recognizable most unambiguously by the distinctive length and fullness of her hairstyle (as Dumont always depicted women), which has been scalped from her still-bleeding head (Figure IX). The accompanying text does not specify the gender of the victim nor does it name her, but the image was inserted within a passage on the anomalous torture of a female, and it was likely that particular episode, or the torture of the Natchez woman, that Dumont had in mind in composing the drawing.⁵³

Officially, Governor Périer could claim that he had maintained French notions of justice by rejecting the Tunica offer of the prisoner of war (even though at a later date he would openly write of another four male and two female Natchez having “been burnt here”).⁵⁴ Yet he allotted a space for the Tunica to torture her and arranged for her to be kept in jail overnight while the Tunica danced the black “calumet of death” in preparation for her execution. In the morning, after gathering firewood, erecting a frame, and painting their faces and bodies, the Tunica “began to run as if possessed by the devil and, while yelling (it is their custom), they ran to the jail where she was in chains”; she was engaged in a final assertion of sartorial self-presentation, “fixing a ribbon to her braided hair,” hair that she knew would soon be scalped.⁵⁵

Like Périer, the colonial populace also became involved in exacting revenge on this member of the Natchez nation. Not only were “all the Sauvages who were in New Orleans” present at the torture ritual but colonists also attended the performance as spectators, as they might in France attend a public execution.⁵⁶ They watched as the Tunica tied her to a frame and as a Natchez man who had abandoned his kin and been adopted by the Tunica stepped forward to burn her, starting with “the hair [*poil*, or body hair] of her . . . , then one breast, then the buttocks, then the left breast” (the ellipses represent a deliberate authorial omission on the part of Caillot).⁵⁷ Commentators described the methodical burning of torture victims as a form of slow-cooking (“à petit feu”).⁵⁸ For Caillot, the ritual

⁵³ See also the discussion of Dumont’s artistic output in Dumont de Montigny, *Memoir of Lieutenant Dumont*, 9–11, 38–44. The image of the man on the square frame is in Jean-François-Benjamin Dumont de Montigny, “Poème en vers touchant l’établissement de la province de la Louisianne connue sous le nom du Missisipy avec tout ce qui sy est passé de depuis 1716 jusqu’à 1741,” Arsenal MS 3459, p. 162, Bibliothèque nationale de France. The image of the woman was originally placed between pp. 376 and 377 of the manuscript; Dumont, “Mémoire,” Ayer MS 257, 352–54.

⁵⁴ Périer to Minister of Marine, Aug. 1, 1730, C13A 12, fol. 308v, ANOM.

⁵⁵ Caillot, “Relation du Voyage,” MS 2005.11, 169–70 (“calumet of death,” 169, “fixing a ribbon,” 169–70).

⁵⁶ “Femme Bruslée au Poteau à la Nouvelle Orleans, 1730,” F3 24, fol. 187r, ANOM.

⁵⁷ Caillot, “Relation du Voyage,” MS 2005.11, 170 (quotation).

⁵⁸ “Relation de la Louisianne,” Ayer MS 530, 58; Dumont, “Mémoire,” Ayer MS 257, 235.

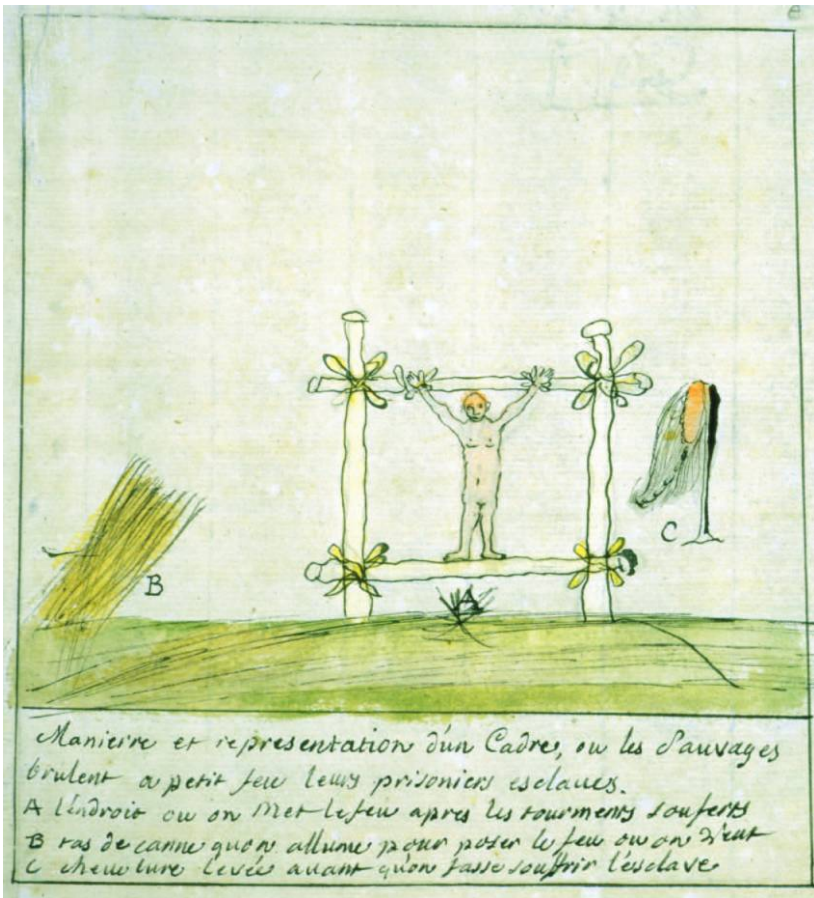


FIGURE IX

Jean-François-Benjamin Dumont de Montigny, *Maniere et representation d'un Cadre, ou les Sauvages brulent a petit feu leurs prisonniers esclaves*. VAULT oversize Ayer MS 257, drawing no. 5. Photo courtesy of the Newberry Library, Chicago.

burning of the victim's genitals, breasts, and buttocks was marked by the carefully observed but gruesome sight of "the abundance of grease mixed with blood that ran onto the ground." His description evoked the cooking of meat basted in fat, with the frame simulating a spit on which the victim was roasted; if this frame/spit did not physically turn its meat, the torturers made sure that she was evenly roasted on all sides by their methodical movement across her body. This food preparation imagery was followed by other cooking analogies. As they were about to kill her (in contrast to the procedure

in France, where spectators waited for the execution to be complete before grabbing souvenir pieces of the criminal's body), "the French women who had suffered at her hands at the Natchez [settlement] each took a sharpened cane and larded her," just as French culinary techniques called for piercing meat with a sharp knife prior to the insertion of thin strips of lard.⁵⁹

In torturing the Natchez woman, these French did not follow the public torture conventions mandated by judicial courts. Some of the techniques used in French executions were similar to those practiced by Indian nations in Louisiana, including the use of a public scaffold, the hot branding irons and burning at the stake, and the mutilation of body parts—whether the cutting off of the hand, the piercing of facial features, or the quartering of the body (the latter seems to have originated with Europeans). These practices were waning in Europe, possibly because torture and narratives of torture were now associated with the otherness of Indians. Such actions were also preceded by ritual disrobing. Where Indians' victims were stripped bare, in Europe victims were disrobed down to the shift (the equivalent of nakedness), in a gesture intended to strip them of their identity as members of society. Likewise, at both Indian and French executions, crowds were present. But where the Tunica torture of the Natchez woman shows that the lines between audience and executioner or torturer were blurred, in France the acts of inflicting pain were reserved for court-appointed executioners and tormentors alone. Those who were tortured prior to execution in the French judicial system were deemed to have undergone social death and their potency was considered neutralized. For Indians, captivity and mutilation or torture rituals also resulted in the victim's symbolic death. But where Indian torturers believed they (and their village) benefited from the transfer of power realized through a collective act of torturing that "quieted the crying blood" of deceased kin, French judicial practices restricted the act of torture to official executioners and tormentors and turned them into social pariahs.⁶⁰

Caillot included a few passages on the nature of the suffering that the Frenchwomen had endured at the hands of the Natchez. He traced some of this violence directly to the wife of the Flour Chief, placing her "with

⁵⁹ Caillot, "Relation du Voyage," MS 2005.11, 170 ("abundance"), 171 ("suffered at her hands"). Pascal Bastien, "Le droit d'être cruel: L'exercice de la cruauté dans l'ancien droit français (l'exemple de Paris au xviii^e siècle)," in *Corps sanglants, souffrants et macabres: XVI^e-XVII^e siècle*, ed. Kjerstin Aukrust and Charlotte Bouteille-Meister (Paris, 2010), 177–88, esp. 178.

⁶⁰ Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country*, 94 (quotation). On French judicial torture, see André Lachance, *Crimes et criminels en Nouvelle-France* (Montreal, 1984), 83–87; Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York, 1995), chaps. 1–2; Benoît Garnot, *Crime et justice aux xvii^e et xviii^e siècles* (Paris, 2000), 121–30. See also Dawdy, "The Burden of Louis Congo," 69–70, 71. On Indian torture and execution, see Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country*, chap. 3; Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance*, 19, 44.

the *savages* who were throwing the children in the air and receiving them [upon their fall] with pointed canes.” Inserting a further cooking metaphor, he narrated how “she then put these innocents on the roasting spit and made their mothers turn the spit.”⁶¹ Caillot described the purported drunken gang-rape of French women, and other commentators added to such accounts—or, rather, embroidered the facts by resorting to literary tropes rather than torture techniques identified with the Natchez—telling how their captors had perpetrated on Frenchwomen “the greatest cruelties one can imagine. They raped some of them, killed, massacred and impaled the others.”⁶² They also described the specific acts of torture on the frame that the Natchez had inflicted on Frenchmen in the immediate aftermath of the revolt. Spaced over days, they had included scalping and the roasting of fingers or other body parts while the victim was made to sing and shake a *chiciquoña* (a musical instrument made from a gourd).

These purported acts also combined mutilation and auto-anthropophagy when the French victims’ genitals were cut off and placed in their own mouths. As for the French female victims, it was the desecration of their maternal identities that eyewitnesses emphasized. Caillot told the tale of a heavily pregnant young German colonist whose nose, lips, and ears were cut off and placed in her mouth, followed by a parallel rearrangement of body parts when her stomach was slit and the child she was carrying removed and beheaded before being sewn back in her stomach, whereupon her torturers urinated in her mouth and buried her alive.⁶³ Father Mathurin Le Petit was one of the many survivors who also included an account of how the Natchez “slit the stomachs of all the pregnant women and slit the throats of all the nursing mothers because they were annoyed by their cries and their tears,” a topos from European narratives of Indian captivity and torture that was as familiar as that of cannibalism.⁶⁴

The anonymous author of the circa-1735 “Relation de la Louisiane” perceived a psychological component to the torture of women, the purpose of which was to weaken the resolve of French troops stationed nearby as they laid siege to Natchez strongholds:

⁶¹ Caillot, “Relation du Voyage,” MS 2005.II, 164.

⁶² De Laye, “Relation du massacre des français aux Natches 1729,” June 1, 1730, 4DFC 38, fol. 5, ANOM (quotation); Caillot, “Relation du Voyage,” MS 2005.II, 145. On the high degree of regulation of sexual violence and rape against captives, see Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country*, 88–90.

⁶³ Caillot, “Relation du Voyage,” MS 2005.II, 164.

⁶⁴ “Lettre du P Le Petit,” in *Lettres édifiantes*, 20: 153–54; “Relation de la Louisiane,” Ayer MS 530, 54–56. Gilles Havard suggests that the timing of the Natchez slitting of the pregnant women’s stomachs is significant; see Havard, review of *La Révolte des Natches*, by Arnaud Balvay, in “Reseñas y ensayos historiográficos,” May 18, 2009, *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos* (2009), <http://nuevomundo.revues.org/56102>. On the trope of pregnant women’s stomachs being slit by Indian captors, see Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York, 2008), 83–84.

In order to incite the compassion of the French, every day these barbarians burnt one French woman from those whom they had enslaved in their fort and who numbered fifty six in total. They burnt her in front of the door of the fort and threw the quarters from her [body] before the French. One must admit that it was the most touching spectacle that one can imagine. The cries of these poor miserable women who were burned by slow fire [*petit feu*] made the heart bleed, of all of the French who were spectators at such a sad tragedy; and caused great fear to those women who were [captives] within the fort. And it made each of them tremble, that the next day they might become the principal actress in a similar play.⁶⁵

Dumont and Caillot had de-emphasized the Natchez woman chief's suffering by describing their amazement at how she had maintained the correct Indian decorum throughout her torture, clinging to her Natchez identity by singing, taunting her executioners, and crying out insults.⁶⁶ So too did eyewitnesses describe Frenchwomen adhering to their own cultural standards of femininity and performing these to perfection as an "actress" might: instead of crying out insults, they cried out in fear.

Like Caillot, whose account juxtaposed the performative character of the acts of masquerade and of torture, the anonymous author of the "Relation de la Louisianne" also sought to interject a degree of emotional intensity in the description of "such a sad tragedy" by emphasizing the act of torture as a wrenching public performance in a dramatic if nonfictional play.⁶⁷ But more was to come in Caillot's narrative of the torture of the Natchez woman than the image of revenge on Indian terms by French female former captives larding a human body. "I assure you that one must have a firm heart to be able to watch such spectacles," wrote Caillot. Then, switching to a different register that once more fused torture and eating

⁶⁵ "Relation de la Louisianne," Ayer MS 530, 58. See also Henri Joutel's description of Cenis (Hasinai) women torturing a female prisoner of war, then cutting her into pieces that the victors carried away and forced captives to eat: *Relation de Henri Joutel*, in Pierre Margry, ed., *Découvertes et établissements des français dans l'ouest et dans le sud de l'Amérique Septentrionale. . . .*, vol. 3, *Recherche des bouches du Mississipi et voyage a travers le continent depuis les côtes du Texas jusqu'à Québec (1669–1698)* (Paris, 1878), 377–78. On the cries of French women and children held within the Natchez fort and their effect on French soldiers' resolve, see Governor Périer, "Relation de la défaite," 1731, 4DFC 43, fol. 8, ANOM. On the disfigurement, evisceration, pulling apart, and parading of the head and genitals of the executed in seventeenth-century Paris, see Bastien, "Le droit d'être cruel," 178.

⁶⁶ On the victim's performance during torture, including insulting torturers and challenging them to ratchet up the pain, as a means to obtaining honor in death, see Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country*, 95–96.

⁶⁷ "Relation de la Louisianne," Ayer MS 530, 61. On public executions as theater, see Bastien, "Le droit d'être cruel," 179–80.

metaphors, he added that “what I found odious and execrable was a soldier who, while she was dying, cut a piece of her . . . [Caillot’s ellipses] and ate it; as punishment he was put in irons and made to run through the gauntlet.”⁶⁸

With his choice of vocabulary, Caillot neatly tied this cannibalistic act of consuming roasted flesh to his earlier food analogies of blood mingling with melted fat during the victim’s slow spit-roast cooking, when she had been skewered like a piece of meat being larded with fat as if to render her more flavorful and tender to the soldier’s bite. In hewing so closely (and uniquely among surviving accounts of this particular act of torture) to this food imagery, Caillot succeeded in drawing attention away from the infliction of pain usually associated with the act of torture. Instead torture became a grotesque but also sensual act that held the promise, and the release, of gustatory pleasure.

In Caillot’s telling, the Frenchwomen who had larded the Natchez woman were performing a familiar torture ritual experienced when French captives of the Natchez were themselves pierced with hot metal wires and flaming canes. So too did the French soldier’s cannibalistic act echo Dumont’s account of Natchez torturers who “sometimes aren’t content to burn [their victims], they cut off some of their flesh and bite into it with relish. . . . But this only happens in the fury of rage or anger.”⁶⁹ Caillot purposefully left blank the body part consumed by the soldier, but in doing so he was signaling that it was a sexual organ (as he had when he wrote of the torturers burning her on her body beginning with the “hair of her . . .”). As such, the soldier’s act echoed the description provided in the circa-1735 “Relation de la Louisianne,” which described the Natchez completing their torture of the French by cutting off their victims’ genitals and placing these in the captives’ own mouths. For some Indian nations, the metaphor of consuming human flesh served as a symbol for the very act of enslavement.⁷⁰ But in voluntarily placing a piece of the woman’s sexual organ in his *own* mouth, and then chewing and swallowing it, the soldier did not so much mirror the 1735 account of the Natchez torturers’ act as invert and exceed it.

The soldier has been identified as Sergeant La Joye, a manager of the important Le Blanc–Belle Isle concession at Natchez who likely witnessed the uprising firsthand. As a soldier, he may also have been among those drafted for the siege and therefore present at Natchez as one of the “French

⁶⁸ Caillot, “Relation du Voyage,” MS 2005.11, 171.

⁶⁹ Dumont, “Mémoire,” Ayer MS 257, 377. On cannibalism as largely exclusive to Indian public torture practices (and rape as a feature of European warfare, though Indians’ captives might be subjected to sexual violence after a period of time), see Ablor, *Anthropologica* 34: 3–20; Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country*, 88–90.

⁷⁰ “Relation de la Louisianne,” Ayer MS 530, 54. See Brett Rushforth’s analysis of Algonquian associations between enslavement and the consumption of human flesh (or inverse metaphors of vomiting to signal the freeing of a captive) in Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance*, 38–39, 51, 69.

spectators of such a sad tragedy.”⁷¹ La Joye was named in a 1730 report for the Ministry of Marine on the torture of the Natchez woman as “disfiguring her with his sabre when she was half burnt.”⁷² Where the official report left vague the exact nature of the soldier’s act of disfigurement, the tone of Caillot’s entire manuscript was that of a carefree tale in which he recounted various romantic interludes and lewdly gossiped about the sexual peccadilloes of (female) acquaintances. He seldom chose to “pull a curtain” over delicate matters that others left to the imagination. It was a pattern that indicates that, unlike some other chroniclers, he chose to relate what he had witnessed. That he did so with mock obtuseness (“the hair of her . . . ,” “a piece of her . . .”) had the effect of eroticizing his text and linking the sexual imagery of the torture scene back to the amatory and gustatory pleasures of masquerade.⁷³ Caillot thereby invited his readers to revisit that misrule episode.

THE CONVENTIONS OF CARNIVAL would have been familiar to colonists, as they were to Marc-Antoine Caillot’s readers. This knowledge would have colored their interpretation of the massacre, masquerade, and torture, especially in light of the ribaldry of masquerade and carnival and their symbolic associations with the grotesque (including dismemberment) and with themes of consumption, death, and rebirth.⁷⁴ And it provided them with a framework for understanding Caillot’s narrative, which hinged on a series of metamorphoses and identity reversals within a colonial context. For example, it was certainly conceivable that the masking party encountered bears during its procession to Bayou Saint Jean. But bears also had connotations linked to carnival. This animal was a common disguise in carnivals and masquerades in early modern Europe, events that might also incorporate a real bear. In either case, as seen in the figure of Ourson (bear cub), represented by a wild man, the presence of bears traced its origins to “wild man” hunts and resulted in the killing of the animal or the symbolic sacrifice of a carnival scapegoat (Figure X).⁷⁵ The purpose of such ritual deaths was perhaps

⁷¹ “Relation de la Louisianne,” Ayer MS 530, 61. It is in “Femme Bruslée au Poteau à la Nouvelle Orleans,” F3 24, fol. 187r–87v, ANOM, that La Joye is named. My thanks to George Milne for generously pointing out the link between the Le Blanc and Belle Isle concession; Milne, personal communication to author, August 2012.

⁷² “Femme Bruslée au Poteau à la Nouvelle Orleans,” F3 24, fol. 187r–87v (quotation, 187v), ANOM.

⁷³ Caillot, “Relation du Voyage,” MS 2005.11, 46–53. The phrase “pull a curtain” is Le Page du Pratz’s; see Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire*, 3: 258.

⁷⁴ Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization*, 64–66; Poppi, “The Other Within,” 202–14; Johnson, *Venice Incognito*, chap. 17.

⁷⁵ On bear and wild man costumes as well as the deployment of actual bears in carnival and masquerade, see for example Davis, “Women on Top,” 137; Daniel Fabre, “Le monde du carnaval,” *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 31, no. 2 (March–April 1976): 389–406, esp. 390; Johnson, *Venice Incognito*, 17, 275 n. 9; Poppi, “The Other Within,” 210–15.



FIGURE X

After Pieter Bruegel the Elder. *The Masquerade of Ourson and Valentin*, 1566 woodcut. Prints and Drawings # 1875,0710.1529. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

not unrelated to that which governed Indian torture rituals in which “when a captive finally expired, the clan gained access to the spiritual power he had managed to accumulate.”⁷⁶ And in the case of the captive Natchez woman who was tortured in New Orleans, that power was gendered, with implications for the way that colonists responded to the incident.

The wife of the Flour Chief did not flinch with pain but instead goaded her torturers into more violence and accused the former Natchez who was first to torture her of “deserving worse than she was getting, since she at least had never killed any of her kin, and that he was a dog to make her die.”⁷⁷ If for the Natchez the meaning of the insult “dog” was comparable to its meaning for the Algonquian, then she was calling him a slave; and to be a slave was a gendered subjugation that might be equated with the sexual violation inherent in the soldier’s act.⁷⁸ Through her demeanor, she fulfilled Natchez prescriptions about mastering physical suffering during torture,

⁷⁶ Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country*, 96.

⁷⁷ Caillot, “Relation du Voyage,” MS 2005.II, 170.

⁷⁸ Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance*, chap. 1. Where “niki8inakiha” meant to enslave a man in war prior to killing him, “niki8inakiha arena” meant “I remove her breechclout, treat her like a slave”; Jacques Gravier and Jacques Largillier, “Dictionnaire Illinois-français,” MS, ca. 1690s, Watkinson Library Special Collections, Trinity College, Hartford, Conn., 209.

but this was a trait ostensibly restricted to men, specifically warriors. As Caillot underlined, “they are recognized as great warriors when they sing until the death,” while the author of “Woman burnt on the Frame” underscored that the highest form of insult to a man was to emasculate him by denying him the torments of being burnt to death on the frame.⁷⁹ In effect, she had usurped the prerogative of male warriors to die honorably by torture.

As seen in these extant texts, colonists were cognizant of her contravention of indigenous gender norms. But their responses were informed by their own anxieties concerning the threat to social order brought about by gender transgressions. Caillot alluded to this disquiet through a cannibalistic act centered on the female genitalia of a powerful woman who, like Caillot in his shepherdess costume, had inverted normative gender roles. The transvestite disguises worn during the Mardi Gras masquerade in New Orleans belonged to one of the most widely practiced topsy-turvy masking and carnival traditions, that of the unruly and dangerous woman.⁸⁰ This topos was explicitly evoked in the amazon costume worn by Caillot’s cross-dressed companion, seeming to reference the real “Natchez empresses” who held the power to strip, enslave, adopt, or kill even male captives.⁸¹ And it previewed the disquieting warrior-like behavior of the wife of the Flour Chief. Through cross-dressing Caillot could temporarily play with gender fluidity at a time when Frenchwomen’s sexuality, fertility, and maternity were seen as threatened. Doing so in the coded context of misrule served as a reminder that order (including gender norms) would be restored after the event. And just as masquerade deployed dress as a means to reverse gender transgressions, so too could clothing, including cross-cultural dressing, fulfill a similar role in managing colonists’ anxieties about another threat exposed by the torture-cannibalism episode: Frenchmen’s fears about becoming *sauvage*.

With his sensationalizing of the anthropophagy incident, Caillot did not try to mask his acute unease that the most “odious and execrable” spectacle was one provided not by a *sauvage* but by a Frenchman. The French military superiors who made the soldier run the gauntlet (a common military punishment, also applied to prostitutes in Louisiana) were blind to parallels with the ways that Indians’ prisoners of war were corporally assaulted on arrival in the villages of their captors.⁸² Instead, in ensur-

⁷⁹ Caillot, “Relation du Voyage,” MS 2005.11, 170; “Femme Brulée au Poteau à la Nouvelle Orleans, 1730,” F3 24, fol. 187v, ANOM.

⁸⁰ Davis, “Women on Top.”

⁸¹ Dumont, “Mémoire,” Ayer MS 257, 231.

⁸² On this common form of corporal punishment for minor offenses in the French military, see De Briquet, “Ordonnance du roi. . . .” (Louis XIV), July 25, 1707, in *Code militaire ou compilation des ordonnances des rois de France, concernant les gens de guerres* (Paris, 1741), 2: 78–96. On prostitutes in New Orleans being made to run the equivalent

ing that the soldier was publicly punished, colonial authorities on site in Louisiana revealed the depths of their anxieties about the implications of this transgression of French norms of behavior. Likewise, Caillot's account of French male and female colonists engaging in acts of torture, and doing so collectively in what he narrated as Indian-style torments, was a signal that these colonists had violently rejected the social and moral standards of France. His description thus served as a pointed and frightening reminder of fears that Frenchness was not permanent and stable and that the colonial environment could erode this identity.

Caillot's relation threw into relief the themes of transformation and transgression at the core of rituals of torture and execution. But by prefacing the torture episode with Mardi Gras, he evoked carnival and masquerade's premise of bodies, and identities, in transition.⁸³ He also emphasized that French men and women's loss of control and of Frenchness was transient. This potential for losing an identity as French was a threat that hung over Frenchmen as they colonized North America. It was one that Caillot articulated vividly in his account of colonists stripped of their apparel (and of their ostensible supremacy over the land) and then becoming torturers and cannibals. The risk was especially salient for elites and aspirational elites grappling with metropolitan formulations of colonization as rife with potential for degeneration. Conversely, and implicit in the French term for Indians, was the potential for the *sauvages* of French America to be cultivated and tamed, just as wild animals and plants might be.

This vision of metamorphosis was the basis for a series of official Frenchification policies promulgated for New France over the course of the seventeenth century, aimed at quite literally turning *sauvages* into French subjects of the king: not only Catholic but also linguistically, culturally, and legally French. La francisation was mapped onto a concept of identity that was not exclusive to the French, since the theory of monogenesis—that all mankind shared a common origin—framed all Europeans' first encounters with Indians, with its premise that identity, like skin color, was not fixed but malleable.⁸⁴ Frenchification was a mandate exclusively reserved for

of the gauntlet by being put "on a wooden horse and whipped by all the soldiers of the regiment that guards our city," see Emily Clark, ed., *Voices from an Early American Convent: Marie Madeleine Hachard and the New Orleans Ursulines, 1727–1760* (Baton Rouge, La., 2007), 82. See also Brett Rushforth's discussion of the Indian gauntlet to which Algonquian Indians subjected their captives (accounts that were familiar to colonists in Lower Louisiana) in Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance*, 40–46.

⁸³ On the themes of transformation and transgression in carnival, see for example Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington, Ind., 1984), esp. 317–18.

⁸⁴ On Frenchification in Louisiana, see Guillaume Aubert, "'The Blood of France': Race and Purity of Blood in the French Atlantic World," *WMQ* 61, no. 3 (July 2004): 439–78; Jennifer M. Spear, *Race, Sex, and Social Order in Early New Orleans* (Baltimore,

New France's Indian population, and Caillot reiterated this distinction when he took such pains to underline that his African torchbearers were "real African slaves," leaving no room for any instability or malleability in the identification that was imposed on them. By the time Louisiana was founded in 1682 and settled in 1699, the project of Frenchifying Indians in New France had largely failed. Yet it was at this precise point that colonists in one part of Louisiana finally claimed some success with turning certain Indians into French, namely the legitimate Indian wives and children of Frenchmen in the Illinois country, whom colonists in the area classified as French on the basis of their conversion to Catholicism and their Frenchified appearance and manner of living.⁸⁵ In other words, belief in the potential for metamorphosis was still in contention in early New Orleans, and colonists deployed culture, notably dress, as a way to preempt seasoning and prevent the loss of their Frenchness.

MARC-ANTOINE CAILLOT'S "RELATION DU VOYAGE" allows us to perceive the symbolic purpose of the act of dressing (and of stripping). His text suggests that colonists in New Orleans felt impelled to reassert their Frenchness when that identification was challenged by events such as the Natchez uprising. His foray into a colonial-pastoral masquerade offered a means for traumatized colonists in New Orleans to safely play with role reversals and metamorphoses that they hoped were temporary and therefore reversible. His account introduced other instances of sartorial control that

2009), chap. 1; White, *Wild Frenchmen*. On Frenchification in North America, see Cornelius J. Jaenen, "The Frenchification and Evangelization of the Amerindians in the Seventeenth Century New France," *Study Sessions—Canadian Catholic Historical Association* 35 (1968): 57–71; Sara E. Melzer, "L'histoire oubliée de la colonisation française: Universaliser la 'francité,'" *Dalhousie French Studies* 65 (2003): 36–44; Saliha Belmessous, "Être français en Nouvelle-France: Identité française et identité coloniale aux dix-septième et dix-huitième siècles," *French Historical Studies* 27, no. 3 (Summer 2004): 507–40; Belmessous, "Assimilation and Racialism in Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century French Colonial Policy," *American Historical Review* 110, no. 2 (April 2005): 322–49; Gilles Havard, "'Les forcer à devenir Cytoyens': État, Sauvages et citoyenneté en Nouvelle-France (XVIIe–XVIIIe siècle)," *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 64, no. 5 (September–October 2009): 985–1018. On the expression "franciser" (to Frenchify), see Belmessous, *American Historical Review* 110: 323 n. 7. Beyond French America, see Karen Ordahl Kupperman, "Fear of Hot Climates in the Anglo-American Colonial Experience," *WMQ* 41, no. 2 (April 1984): 213–40; Kupperman, "Presentment of Civility: English Reading of American Self-Presentation in the Early Years of Colonization," *WMQ* 54, no. 1 (January 1997): 193–228; Kupperman, *Indians and English: Facing Off in Early America* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2000), 41–76. On the idea that "racisms gain their strategic force, not from the fixity of their essentialisms, but from the internal malleability assigned to the changing features of racial essence," see Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley, Calif., 2002), 144; Stoler, "On Degrees of Imperial Sovereignty," *Public Culture* 18, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 125–46.

⁸⁵ White, *Wild Frenchmen*, pt. 1.

provided the context for the Mardi Gras anecdote, such as the manifold ways that New Orleans inhabitants reacted to the sight of stripped captives, by reimposing the social distinctions inherent in French dress.

Caillot and other company employees were placed in militias to protect the town from attack. Clinging to their conviction that social hierarchy mattered most of all during times of stress, Caillot and his companions convinced Governor Étienne de Périer that company employees simply could not mount a guard with common inhabitants and that they deserved to have a militia company of their own. They selected a “captain” from their ranks to uphold the necessary hierarchy and then wasted no time (but possibly much energy) in devising an elaborate dress uniform.⁸⁶ Costing each of the men the lofty sum of forty-six livres, it consisted of an outer coat of red camlet wool, a hat with silver braid, and a white cotton waistcoat and breeches, worn with white silk stockings. Their captain presented the men with marks of honor commensurate with their new quasi-military status: white cockades for their hats and gloves that served to further distinguish this group from mere inhabitants.⁸⁷

In the meantime, officials ensured that on their reentry into New Orleans, French former captives of the Natchez received assistance as they reversed the erosion of Frenchness caused by captivity. According to Father Mathurin Le Petit in 1730, those thirty or so orphan girls whom none of the inhabitants wanted to adopt were placed with the Ursuline nuns, who worked to “maintain the innocence of these children” but also to “provide a more polite [civilized] and Christian education to these young French girls who were at risk of being no better bred than slaves.”⁸⁸ As Emily Clark has suggested, the Ursuline convent was to extend its role in the rebuilding of the religious and moral order in the colony in the aftermath of the Natchez uprising with the formation of a new laywomen’s confraternity. The constitution of this religious confraternity, among them survivors of the Natchez uprising, held that its members would honor the Virgin through prayer but also by their morals, by their conduct, and by removing themselves “from gatherings that were dangerous or incompatible with the decorum of a good Christian.”⁸⁹ It seems no accident that a new laywomen’s confraternity was

⁸⁶ Caillot, “Relation du Voyage,” MS 2005.11, 151.

⁸⁷ Giraud, *History of French Louisiana*, 5: 406; Caillot, “Relation du Voyage,” MS 2005.11, 151. On the importance to elites in Louisiana of other elaborate overcoats that signaled their adhesion to French metropolitan fashions, see White, *Wild Frenchmen*, 218–20.

⁸⁸ “Lettre du P Le Petit,” in *Lettres édifiantes*, 20: 189 (quotations); Emily Clark, *Masterless Mistresses: The New Orleans Ursulines and the Development of a New World Society, 1727–1834* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2007), 75.

⁸⁹ Emily Clark, “‘By All the Conduct of Their Lives’: A Laywomen’s Confraternity in New Orleans, 1730–1744,” *WMQ* 54, no. 4 (October 1997): 769–94 (quotation, 787); Clark, *Masterless Mistresses*, 76. Among the known survivors who belonged to the confraternity were Marie Baron, wife of Dumont de Montigny, and Marie Françoise Hero, who owned a farm at Natchez with her husband Louis Drouillon; see Clark, *WMQ* 54: 782–83, 784.

formed only six weeks following the torture of the Natchez woman on the day after Easter, especially since some of the same women who joined in founding the confraternity were also those who had witnessed, and even participated in, the torture. Such an entity, with its emphasis on moral rectitude and piety, offered a formal religious framework for expiating sins and reversing the slippage into “savagery.”

Having been stripped by the Natchez, former female captives, child and adult alike, were now also promptly reintegrated into French society as officials provided them with food and medications but also with new clothing. “These poor women had lost almost everything from being pillaged by the Natchez; and the Choctaw had taken the little that [the Natchez] had left them and that the female Sun had given them out of compassion; thus, they were in other words, all naked; [*Ordonnateur* La Chaise] had them clothed and advanced them all that was necessary.”⁹⁰ Jean-François-Benjamin Dumont de Montigny pointedly noted that the women were charged ten ecus for this privilege of being reclothed in French dress by the company.⁹¹ Recovering sartorial Frenchness was not free.

Caillot’s narrative of the Natchez uprising, reliant as it was on metaphors of dress and nakedness and hinging on Mardi Gras masquerade, was reassuring. Clothing provided colonists with a means to uphold moral and social order in the colony, thereby allowing them to exert control over the hinterlands—a potentially dangerous and alien environment not yet subsumed under colonial rule. So too did travelers, especially those concerned with rank, rely on cultural practices to temper other threats to their retention of Frenchness. For example, they willingly adopted cross-cultural dress while traveling through the hinterlands, since it posed no long-term threat to their identity as French. Instead, wearing Indian dress allowed colonists to temporarily belong to liminal spaces (just as masquerade provided a space for transgressions of social and gender roles), thus defusing anxieties about venturing into this geographic and ideological space rife with the perceived risk of massacre, captivity, and torture at the hands of its original inhabitants, and ensuring the fiction of French supremacy over colonized territory. But this Indian-style garb did not present a problem (as it would for French captives forcibly stripped of their French apparel, whose seminudity the French associated with Indian-style dress). Even the permanency of tattoo markings, a practice that some Frenchmen adopted (or simply alleged that they had), was contested; tattooing too was presented as reversible. As with masquerade conventions, colonists knew that sartorial and cultural rituals would inevitably follow and reestablish their Frenchness. These rituals took place in colonial spaces, whether movable ones such as temporary encamp-

⁹⁰ Le Page du Pratz, *Histoire*, 3: 296.

⁹¹ Dumont, “Mémoire,” Ayer MS 257, 240.

ments or urbanized settlements such as New Orleans. In such spaces, colonists also reinforced social cohesion through leisure activities and consumption. French foods, wines, and dancing anchored the pleasure and entertainments that solidified colonial elites' performance of Frenchness, providing a foil for Caillot's characterization in French gastronomic terms of the torture and cannibalism of the Natchez woman. Likewise, elites also reestablished their belonging to French social structures and practices by echoing the material culture of their peers and kin in France, by asserting their privileged status through etiquette practices taught to the few, and by advertising their rank visually and materially through their food, posture, deportment, cleanliness, and dress. Yet Frenchness itself was a construct, and one that colonists such as Caillot (most of whom still identified more strongly with their region than their nation) may have experienced more acutely once transplanted to the colonies, where they were confronted with the otherness of Indians.⁹²

By inserting a masquerade episode, Caillot underscored the importance of dress for reclaiming Frenchness and reasserting the colonial order. Those in European metropolises obsessed about the progressive seasoning and degeneracy that might result from the presence of Europeans in the New World. Caillot's narrative allows us to perceive how colonists themselves elaborated a more nuanced understanding of the difference between permanent and temporary transformations. This distinction was vital to the lived experience of colonists on site in the New World who sought to elude even the slightest risk of becoming Indianized. His manuscript forces us

⁹² See White, *Wild Frenchmen*, chap. 6, for a detailed analysis of cross-cultural dressing in colonial Louisiana. On tattoos, see Dumont de Montigny and Jean Bernard Bossu, who claimed to have been tattooed respectively with the cross of St. Louis and a deer. But both also boasted of having discovered the secret to removing the indelible markings, assertions that put into question their claims of having been tattooed in the first place. Above all, this purported knowledge of how to reverse tattooing underscores that it was vital for French cultural cross-dressers to find a way to resume their Frenchness; see Dumont, "Mémoire," Ayer MS 257, 36; Bossu, *Travels in North America*, 95–97; also "Journal du Voyage que le Sr Roussel natif de Versailles a fait dudit Versailles à La Louisiane, et de son retour de la Louisiane à Versailles," [1718–19], Ayer MS 293, 513. See also Arnaud Balvay, "Tattooing and Its Role in French–Native American Relations in the Eighteenth Century," *French Colonial History* 9 (2008): 1–14; and esp. Sayre, *Les Sauvages Américains*, 145–214; Havard, *Empire et métissages*, 603–4. See also Jane Caplan, ed., *Written on the Body: The Tattoo in European and American History* (Princeton, N.J., 2000). On food, see Shannon Lee Dawdy, "'A Wild Taste': Food and Colonialism in Eighteenth-Century Louisiana," *Ethnohistory* 57, no. 3 (Summer 2010): 389–414. On dress, deportment, and etiquette, see Sophie White, "'This Gown . . . Was Much Admired and Made Many Ladies Jealous': Fashion and the Forging of Elite Identities in French Colonial New Orleans," in *George Washington's South*, ed. Tamara Harvey and Greg O'Brien (Gainesville, Fla., 2004), 86–118; White, *Wild Frenchmen*, chaps. 5–6, esp. 226–27; White, "'To Ensure that He Not Give Himself Over to the Indians': Cleanliness, Frenchification, and Whiteness," *Journal of Early American History* 2, no. 2 (2012). For Frenchness, see 498–99 n. 3.

to recognize this process through his account of a masquerade that hinged on a sequential process of undressing, dressing up, masking, unmasking, undressing again, and re-dressing back into their “everyday clothing” (the “habits ordinaires” worn by Caillot and his companions the day after the masquerade).⁹³ In inserting masquerade, with its implicit social and religious framework, between massacre and torture/anthropophagy, Caillot was not attempting, rather superficially, to lighten the mood. He was offering a resolution to the colonial and gender disorder caused by the horror of the revolt, and a solution to the threat that Frenchmen might become *savage*, like those survivors who had forsaken French codes of justice and notions of morality to engage in torture and cannibalism. French men and women might become temporarily Indian, but they could rely on cultural practices to help prevent their permanent transformation, tempering the risk that a performance of Indianness or “savagery” might become fixed—just as masquerade disguises and behaviors allowed maskers to assume a provisional identity that was inevitably reversed at the end of the event. Colonists feared that their presence in Louisiana exposed them to “a thousand dangers for both their Bodies and their souls.”⁹⁴ Caillot’s relation of the Natchez uprising directly engaged with this fear through a tripartite account of massacre, torture, and cannibalism. But as he also understood, and as he communicated through his insertion of a Mardi Gras masquerade, culture, especially material culture practices centered on dress, served to defuse such risks.

⁹³ Caillot, “Relation du Voyage,” MS 2005.11, 160.

⁹⁴ Étienne de Carheil to Louis Hector de Callières, Aug. 30, 1702, in Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610–1791*. . . . (Cleveland 1900), 65: 219–21 (quotation, 65: 219).