

“Fertile with Fine Talk”: Ungoverned Tongues among Haudenosaunee Women and Their Neighbors

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Abstract. This article casts light on the gender of fur traders by tapping into new analysis of Albany and Canadian records from the colonial period. A surprising number of active, sometimes outspoken, female participants emerge. Exploring the underlying reasons for this phenomenon, the article discusses the unusual voice Haudenosaunee women had in governance. It then observes significant freedom of speech and action among their French and Dutch colonial neighbors. The article investigates the blending of those voices as colonial women colluded with the Haudenosaunee to seal bargains in the illicit fur trade. Each group benefited from its own traditions of trade and from officials’ reluctance to alienate aboriginal allies. The article thus sheds light on the authoritative female voices that receive fresh affirmation in the most recent Haudenosaunee scholarship, as well as those of certain colonial women that surfaced during dealings with indigenous neighbors. The findings are noteworthy for those interested in Iroquoia, the fur trade, and transnational approaches to gender history.

During the American Revolution two genteel women, Abigail Adams of Massachusetts and Konwatsi’tsiaenni of the Mohawk Valley, spoke about their own desired outcomes of the great struggle. Adams exhorted her husband to think about the rights of all and to “Remember the Ladies” as he and his countrymen debated questions of political representation in Philadelphia in 1776. As a wife under the laws of coverture, Mrs. Adams could not control property; nor could she vote or count on a supportive political network. It is not surprising then that her request was shunted aside as a joke.¹ At the same time Konwatsi’tsiaenni (also known as Molly Brant), who was both an Iroquois (or, to use their own name for themselves, Haudenosaunee) clan mother and the widow of a powerful Indian agent,

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Colonel William Johnson, exhorted warriors to support the British cause, speaking in council in the Mohawk Valley and later in exile north of the border. Indian agent Daniel Claus asserted “one word from her goes farther than a thousand from any white Man without Exception,” and British officer Alexander Fraser declared, “Molly Brant’s Influence over them . . . is far superior to all of their chiefs put together.”² Political prestige within her clan, enhanced by a strategic marriage, enabled Konwatsi’tsiaenni to influence public events in the colonial world.

Compared to Konwatsi’tsiaenni, even the most privileged women of the day in England and New England had little political influence. If in earlier times things had perhaps been otherwise, by the eighteenth century these women had received some effective schooling in how to hold their tongues. An early warning sign appeared in 1637 when preacher Anne Hutchinson was admonished by Puritan divines that preaching to crowds had made her “rather a Husband than a wife.” When she proceeded, in the manner of a lawyer, to defend herself, Cotton Mather told her that “we do not intend to discourse with a woman” and he urged New England women to “keep the Mouth with a Bridle . . . tis the Whore, that is clamorous.”³ The 1690 Salem witch trials were, according to one influential interpretation, a bid for attention by women whose economic and social position was eroding.⁴ Scholarship on courts, too, suggests that “skepticism over woman’s [*sic*] word became a central feature of rape prosecution in the eighteenth century,” and there was a tendency for county courts to evolve “from an inclusive forum representative of [the] community” to places that sheltered the middling classes, particularly their successful men, from public scrutiny.⁵ A study of women in colonial Philadelphia noted the diminishing importance of female Quaker leaders and the rise of more exclusively male community meetings, political gossip, and electioneering, and concluded that “women’s access to public and political arenas declined over the course of the eighteenth century.”⁶ Americans were in step with trends in England, where similar constraints also increased from the 1650s onward. The authors of a text on women in early modern England pose the question: “Why did certain women manage to assert formal civil and political rights . . . and why did these rights deteriorate or disappear over the course of the seventeenth century?”⁷ Susan Amussen argued that declining domestic production, together with a concern to restore order after England’s civil war, discredited families as key units of local government, meaning cases of family disorder were less often referred to courts, and insults uttered by females began to be ignored by authorities. Other English studies showed how women were increasingly supplanted in family businesses and civic life in a move toward all-male corporations and voluntary associations.⁸ Heir

to these traditions, Abigail Adams had difficulty influencing policy in a culture where to be ladylike rather than "whorish" required staying out of the public arena and guarding one's tongue.

Things were, of course, quite different among the Haudenosaunee. Konwatsi'tsiaenni was a member of a group anthropologists have long singled out for endowing its women, and above all its matrons or clan mothers, with unusually high status. Although the power of clan mothers to select and depose chiefs is well accepted, there has been less consensus over the centuries (among early observers and the ethnologists who came in their wake) about the degree to which they possessed an active voice in councils and other forms of political decision making. Some found evidence to support the claims of eighteenth-century Jesuit Father Joseph-François Lafitau that women held "all real authority" and were "the souls of the Councils, the arbiters of peace and war" and controllers of the "public treasury."⁹ Others tended toward the conservative views of his contemporary, Father Pierre F. X. de Charlevoix, who responded to such claims that "they have indeed assured me that the women deliberate first on what will be proposed to Council, and that they then give their conclusions to the Chiefs . . . but it certainly looks as though all that is for the sake of form and with restrictions."¹⁰ His view that there was little substance to claims about extraordinary powers was echoed in the widely reprinted views of ethnographer Elisabeth Tooker, who believed the longhouses and tools women controlled were of little value, and that "Council meetings were the work of men. . . . Women could, of course, and did attempt to influence the opinion of men. . . . Women have always and everywhere tried to defend their own interests in ways that they could."¹¹

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the authors of two new monographs weighed in on the side of Father Lafitau's rather astonishing claims about female social, political, and economic authority. Barbara Alice Mann's *Iroquoian Women: The Gantowisas*, which combines aboriginal sources and viewpoints with close analysis of conventional scholarship, argues that various European observers who saw women staying in the background made the incorrect assumption that they were politically passive.¹² They failed to understand that Haudenosaunee "etiquette" required a woman's council to delegate a male speaker to address men, just as men's councils would delegate a female speaker to address women. Since the European delegates were always male, matrons never addressed them directly but either advised Haudenosaunee negotiators behind the scenes or employed the more formal process of a male Woman's Speaker, who dressed in a skirt and carried a corn pounder, to convey the wishes of the Women's Council.¹³ In a similar vein, a second twenty-first-century monograph on

the subject, Université de Montréal anthropologist Roland Viau's *Femmes de personne: Sexes, genres et pouvoirs en Iroquoisie ancienne*, points out how the language of politics, and the language of faith, too, acknowledged the importance of Haudenosaunee women. Viau identifies some eleven terms used by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European observers to indicate female leaders, such as *femme considérable*, *matrone*, *captainesse*, *dame du conseil*, and *femme de qualité*. In the religious cycle, Grandmother Moon, Sky Woman, and the Three Sisters were luminaries, and females served on an equal basis with men as Keepers of the Faith. Viau asserts that the culture was "strongly feminine" and that males did not assume authority over women. He also gives new life to the notion that women's position in fact expanded in the period after 1650 and remained strong until about 1850. Male absences and fatalities relating to colonial warfare and trade concentrated governance increasingly in the hands of women.¹⁴ This would mean their voices were growing more influential in precisely the period that Anglo-American women's voices were becoming muted. Whatever the particular timing and extent of these feminine powers, the new monographs reconfirm long-standing views about Iroquoia as that rarest of entities: a well-documented society in history that was actually nonpatriarchal.

We turn next to listen for any faint hint that the singular gender arrangements in Iroquoia touched colonists in any way. One would not, of course, expect centuries-old European patriarchal traditions to crumble merely through contact with a more egalitarian culture. But since the groups interacted daily at a time when the Haudenosaunee were quite powerful, was there any effect at all on the gender practices of their neighbors? We can turn to business and travel accounts, court records, and government correspondence for interchanges between Haudenosaunee from the Mohawk and St. Lawrence River valleys with their Dutch, English, and French neighbors. Because colonial authorities were unwilling or unable to enforce fur trade regulations on powerful First Nations, they focused on tracking down non-native malefactors among their own citizenry.¹⁵ Sometimes the trail ended at a woman's door, and it seems more than coincidental that the majority of nonnative women known to have been involved in illicit trade were either northern French or Dutch.

Women from these European cultures had more autonomy than was common in the Anglo-American tradition. When they arrived in the first half of the seventeenth century, the French and Dutch settlers bordering Iroquoia brought with them European legal codes that were relatively respectful of female property rights. In both cultures, daughters as well as sons were expected to inherit equal or significant shares of the family property.

Within marriages, although husbands had managerial powers, there existed a "community of goods" regarded as joint property of spouses rather than property of the husband; and a widow inherited half of these assets for use during her lifetime. A French wife could legally engage in business if she secured her husband's written permission; in the Dutch system, simple verbal permission sufficed. While scholars of Dutch New York view traditions there as refreshingly egalitarian, scholars of New France have not reached a consensus on the extent to which the formal protections created favorable conditions in practice.¹⁶ Still, no one questions that both of these continental systems compared favorably with Anglo-American common law, under which wives lost their legal personality and widows were "among the least protected anywhere in the world."¹⁷ The more equitable codes survived regime changes in both regions, persisting for a generation or more after the English takeovers of New Netherland in 1664 and New France in 1760.

Possessing significant claims to family assets helped a number of women in French Canada and Dutch New York take the helm as merchants, estate managers, and small manufacturers.¹⁸ Dutch businesswomen were typically married or widowed, figures such as ship owner Margaret Hardenbrook of New Amsterdam, who crossed the Atlantic a number of times on business, and Maria Van Rensselaer, who served as *patroonesse* of a vast rural estate for decades after her husband's death. Seventeenth-century missionary Jasper Danckaerts offered insight into another upcountry "tradress" whom he roundly condemned as "a truly worldly woman, proud and conceited, and sharp in trading [with Indians and others]. . . . She has a husband . . . who remains at home quietly, while she travels over the country to carry on the trading. In fine she is one of those Dutch female traders who understand business so well."¹⁹ She displayed two attributes that were typical of our subjects here: she moved around quite a bit, and she was evidently more the captain of her own fate than someone's "deputy husband."²⁰ She shipped wheat down the Hudson and, over the captain of the vessel's objections, mixed substandard wheat with a good load, then traveled down to the Catskills before returning to Albany. In New France, female traders included not only wives and widows but single women such as the aristocratic Louise de Ramezay, daughter of a Montreal governor, who traveled between Montreal and the Richelieu Valley supervising her tanning, milling, and export lumber operations.²¹ These entrepreneurs were accepted figures among the Dutch and French of North America—a minority to be sure, but not an insignificant one. In vastly larger numbers, ordinary women traded their produce and handiworks at local markets.

Voices from French Canada

Of particular interest is France's colony along the St. Lawrence River, where hundreds of Haudenosaunee had settled in mission villages, primarily at Sault St. Louis (also known as Caughnawaga/Kahnawake), near Montreal. While historians are aware of a remarkable range of women's voices during the revolution in France itself, little has been written about women's speech on the St. Lawrence.²² One analysis of the gendered nature of language reported that court-recorded insults to Canadian women assumed a narrow, sexualized nature, focusing on chastity. This was contrasted to honesty as the cardinal male virtue, since it was the one that slanderers typically assailed. However, the study's supposition that insults "can be taken as an inverse definition of the essential characteristics of man and women" or "an inverse expression of social ideals" is in itself questionable; it may be more a reflection of the lack of imagination of the often inebriated slanderers.²³ Were the concerns of women and men really so polarized? While another researcher found the same two everyday slanders (men as crooks and women as whores) in New Netherland, he explained that in a sense "there was little difference between the two terms" because they both suggested their victims were shiftless rabble, untrustworthy to do an honest day's work or to oversee a well-managed, steady, godly household.²⁴ In Canada particularly, where most men and women lived in one- or two-room cabins with dirt floors and did outdoor farmwork, one suspects that the ability to perform daily subsistence tasks was more important than either honesty *or* chastity.

When we branch out to a wider view of colonial life than defamation cases afford, it overturns the notion that colonial speech reflected highly polarized gender roles. After discussing a few general examples of public parlance by women, we will concentrate on cases from the fur trade. They indicate that many women spoke up forcefully on the same sort of topics that interested their husbands and brothers. Like their French sisters, Canadian women continued to engage in efficacious public speech on a whole variety of subjects. Theirs were not the "governed tongues" historians have detected along the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English Atlantic. The records suggest that throughout the French regime (1604–1760) women spoke up publicly, told plenty of lies, and had plenty of accusations hurled at them, which had little to do with chastity or a lack thereof.

Even eminently respectable colonists failed to govern their tongues. A number of officials and visitors from France were struck by the gossip and backbiting in elite circles in Quebec, attributing it to the long winter months when society was cut off from the outside world. At the top of society, the most famous case was Madame Louise-Elisabeth Joybert de Vaudreuil, "*la*

gouvernante," wife of an early-eighteenth-century governor-general who went to France in 1709 to defend the governor's interests at court and spent the next dozen years there. Madame Vaudreuil ingratiated herself with the minister of marine (who directed colonial affairs) and made "clever use of her influence by recommending various Canadians for appointment and advancement."²⁵ Several Quebec officials complained loudly of her influence, and the attorney-general noted the authority of her words: "She controls all the positions in Canada. . . . She writes magnificent letters from all sorts of places to the seaports about the power she can exert over [Minister Pontchartrain] . . . she offers her protection, she threatens to use her influence." He added that "she causes great fear and imposes silence on most of those who could speak against her husband."²⁶ "Witty but dangerous," Detroit commander Antoine Laumet de Lamothe de Cadillac declared her. Madame de Vaudreuil hastened the downfall of Intendant Jacques Raudot by writing satirical verses about him that were sung in the streets of Quebec.²⁷ Other noblewomen such as Madame LaForest (Charlotte-Francoise Juchereau de Saint-Denis) and Madame de Frontenac (Anne de La Grange) were articulate members of political factions who appeared at Versailles to speak for them in that most public of halls.

Back in the colony, other ungoverned tongues bragged shamelessly about (ungendered) accomplishments. Agathe de Saint-Père, who launched a textile manufactory, informed the king,

I would never finish, Monseigneur, were I to indulge myself in revealing all the knowledge I have of the advantages to be found in Canada . . . only my courage has prevented my ceding to difficulties and expenses that I had to make in these beginnings. . . . The country . . . would receive endless fruits from the use of these resources which until now have been enveloped in obscurity from which I have raised them. My imagination, Monsieur, has procured me the honour to enter into a little part of your intentions.²⁸

Unlike petitioners in other times and places, Saint-Père said nothing about being a "mere woman" and was so taken with her own accomplishments that she neglected to mention her husband's illustrious military career.²⁹ In a similar vein Madame de Thiersant (Marie-Joseph Fezeret) used her verbal skills as an informer on smuggling in the Richelieu Valley, immodestly informing the colonial minister in 1731 that it was she who had made a signal contribution to colonial commerce by paving the way to expel English contraband from Canada.³⁰ Further down the social scale, women threatened to kill and dump into the marsh a bailiff sent to enforce relocation of their parish church; another female mob chastised the governor himself for

permitting sale of horsemeat in Quebec markets.³¹ These were articulate women who spoke up in public on a variety of subjects. Their interventions probably affected government decisions only rarely, but they turned the wheels of public commerce day in and day out. One of the longest-serving intendants, Gilles Hoquart, looking around at all the wives who came to his palace to appeal for favors of various kinds and appointments for their men, wrote that “many wives of businessmen govern their husband’s business affairs.” He added that women of nearly all ranks displayed more wit than Canadian men did.³² The fur trade sources, which reveal a number of interactions between colonial and Haudenosaunee women, will show that many addressed their wits to profits, crossing over occasionally into politics.

Trafficking across Borders

Examining speech in the trade in peltries, the region’s leading export, befits a preindustrial society in which both sexes were economic producers. In the fur trade, the spoken word was especially important, since many bargains were made verbally rather than in writing. For one thing, people had no desire to leave a paper trail of what was often illicit activity, with illegal fur trade estimated to have comprised at times as much as two-thirds of the French total and four-fifths of New York exports of beaver.³³ Then too, many participants could not write. More so than in England and New England, the broad swath of the Canadian population lived in a predominantly oral culture. Not a single newspaper was published in the colony, and the few books found in prosperous homes were usually devotional ones. The rate of literacy (a bare 25 percent) lagged far behind that of New England. Even officers at the fur posts sometimes lacked “the first elements of history or geography” and wrote embarrassingly misspelled letters. Their Indian trading partners seldom wielded the pen either.³⁴

For the Haudenosaunee, smuggling furs out of Canada through northern New York and down to Albany was a lucrative operation. At Fort Orange/Albany, merchants paid better prices for peltries than did the monopoly French West Indies Company. They supplied goods cheaply, including luxuries such as oysters, white sugar, ribbons, lace, and colored stockings; and valuable trade supplies such as wampum and the prized English woolens known as strouds. Spiriting those goods between New York and Canada brought commissions to carriers, some of whom have been traced to the Sault St. Louis mission. At the southerly end of the route, Haudenosaunee traders of both sexes interacted with the Dutch from the 1630s onward.

As with most illicit activities, the records do not tell us all we wish

to know. Fortunately we now have three detailed sources to help us piece together the story. Decades ago Canadian scholar Jean Lunn used the mid-eighteenth-century account book of Albany merchant Robert Sanders to uncover some of the secrets of this trade.³⁵ Correspondence of Canadian officials to the French court has been another source of information. We can now piece together more of the story with the help of a newly translated and annotated version of a second, much earlier Albany account book kept by Evert Wendell and his family.³⁶ Some 325 Indians were recorded to have opened accounts with siblings Evert, Harmonius, and Hester Wendell during the period 1695–1726. About 70 percent of them were Haudenosaunee, usually Mohawk or Seneca, along with some Onondaga and Cayuga.

The transactions were questionable on several grounds. First of all, rum was the Wendells' second-largest item of trade (after cloth goods), and it violated Albany trade regulations to sell alcohol. In that context a trade item sold by the dozens almost exclusively to Canadians, on credit, is intriguing: *tonties* translate from Dutch as "small kegs or casks."³⁷ Though one might expect bigger containers for transnational shipments of rum, was it perhaps easier to whisk it undetected past authorities this way? In any case, English goods of any sort were not supposed to enter Canada except in small quantities sold for use of individual trappers, though over the years there were substantial shipments of trade items. Lastly, customers who took away goods on credit frequently failed to live up to their part of the bargain, leaving some two-thirds of the Wendell accounts unsettled. The Albany merchants took the losses in stride but must have factored them into their prices.

After the Wendells' day, transborder smuggling apparently grew more elaborate. Jean Lunn's scholarly detective work matched up events mentioned in Canadian officials' complaints about smuggling with events noted in the 1750s account book of Albany merchant Robert Sanders. The New Yorker protected his French Canadian trading partners by sending them parcels using coded symbols such as pipes and roosters. The French records revealed the way the aboriginal traders spirited the contraband past French forts in the St. Lawrence and Richelieu valleys. They would sometimes stop and divert officials with the paltry pack in their canoe while their friends hustled a much heavier pack through nearby woods. They were also known to send the same lightly loaded canoe past a fort many times, fooling the commander into thinking a big haul was just a series of small permissible bundles of fur trapped by individual Indians. At other times they got through by brandishing weapons or extracting a pass from the governor himself under threat of resettling in the English colonies.

Revisiting the account books of Albany merchants and the French colonial correspondence allows us to piece together information about women involved in this long-distance trade. In the Wendell records of 1695–1726 female traders were virtually as common as males (having an active role in 49.6 percent of accounts) and assumed similar responsibilities, such as bringing in comrades to meet the Wendells or standing as surety for such newcomers. About 10 percent of the aboriginal traders were from Canada, including the women Ohonsaioenthaa, Okaajthie, Anna, and Quanakaraaghto. Most commonly females were identified simply as wives, sisters, or mothers of a named male, or by some personal characteristic. For example, a pockmarked “female Mohawk . . . from Canada” arrived to trade just after Christmas in 1705, bearing “greetings from the priest.” She purchased red duffel stockings and nine bars of lead, promising to return later with five martens to pay for them. Her boy bought a coat. She reappeared to pawn an ax in March, then came again with beaver pelts to settle her account in May. She, her son, and various other family members traded with the Wendells for several years, exchanging their martens and beavers for items such as stockings, blue blankets and coats, and a red stroud blanket. She introduced another trader, an elderly Oneida woman, to the Wendells. The relationship continued on a happy note with Evert Wendell noting in 1706 “the boy and his mother have paid everything” and, perhaps in gratitude, he had “given for her son for free a piece of strouds.”³⁸

In another case, “a limping female savage” first came down from Canada in 1697. Over the years Evert Wendell sold her a kettle, shirts, and rum in exchange for hides of bear, deer, elk, and martens; at one point she served as a guarantor for another woman trader. Limp or no limp, in 1700 she pledged the merchant eight beavers “for a French canoe . . . with which she went to Canada.” She returned to Albany again, beavers in hand, in 1701.³⁹ She and her husband and daughter were still trading with the Wendells in 1709.

Among six regular carriers Robert Sanders employed were four men—Togaira, Caingoton, Joseph Harris, and Conaquasse—and two women, Agnesse and Marie-Magdeleine (whom Sanders described as having an impediment in one eye).⁴⁰ Clearly not confined to the village clearings, these women, like those in the earlier Wendell account, made a business of traveling the 210-mile route between Montreal and Albany. Agnesse did it at least three times between May and July of 1753. Canoes loaded with barrels of oysters or 130-pound shipments of beaver were typical. Marie-Magdeleine’s remarks to Sanders that she knew one Montreal merchant whom she was supplying “perfectly well” and another one “well” suggest these women were integrated into the French network, too.⁴¹ The carriers

had some control over their terms, helping themselves to a commission from the goods. Colonial women were also part of the network. Sanders explained to one of his French clients that he was sending her cloth in exchange for her furs and would have included some beautiful lace, but because the carrier siphoned lace off for sale to friends Sanders dared send no more.⁴²

Smuggling Sisters

The most spectacular smuggling operation linking such carriers with colonists that has yet come to light revolves around the Haudenosaunee mission near Montreal and three local spinsters. Hiding furs in the baskets that shoppers carried to markets were Haudenosaunee women from Sault St. Louis. The colony's highest officials sent a series of letters to the French minister of marine in the 1740s as they pieced together the particulars. Intendant Gilles Hocquart wrote on 11 October 1743, "My suspicions would fall on the Demoiselles Desauniers, although I have not been able to ascertain proof or catch them in *flagrante delicto*." That same year his co-ruler, Governor-General Beauharnois, asked the minister of marine himself for permission to remove those individuals if suspicions were confirmed. Marguerite, Marie-Anne, and Mageleine Desauniers, the correspondence revealed, had begun modestly enough, merely supplying clothing (*hardes*) to the Indians. Though they came from a fur-trading family, they were not under the authority of father or husband but operated on their own as "filles majeures, non-mariées." Comfortable members of the bourgeoisie, they owned what authorities described as a "beautiful big house" in Montreal, though they chose not to live there. Instead they amassed a wide variety of merchandise at their store across the river at the mission. Later, this establishment was found to contain stockpiles of supplies used for the western fur trade. A functionary of the French West Indies Company alerted government officials that the sisters should naturally have received some furs from the Indians in payment for all those goods. Why did they never bring any into the company's office, through which all peltries were required to pass? The sisters protested they had nothing to do with clandestine furs. Incredible, the officials ordered them to close shop. But why did they nonetheless opt to stay at the mission without any visible means of support, instead of returning to the comforts of Montreal? Officials registered suspicions that they were trading still.

Some fur trade cultural intermediaries, as Richard White has demonstrated, "went native" in the fashion of the buckskinned frontiersman; but our female "Middle Ground" figures kept a foot in the worlds of the council

fire *and* the drawing room. Their sex may have been an advantage. At the mission, according to Father Lafitau, Haudenosaunee women were largely in charge, the men usually away on war parties or in pursuit of furs. The Desauniers were said to be charitable to the sick and poor, a practice that dovetailed with native custom and may have further ingratiated them with the women there. Another important advantage was their ability to speak Haudenosaunee fluently.

They communicated well with fellow colonists too. Their French network included their many relatives among Montreal merchants. They could claim credit with the French military for feeding war parties.⁴³ When the governor and intendant finally mustered the resolve to eject the Desauniers from the mission, army officers, clergymen, and prominent traders all sent petitions on their behalf. Fellow traders attested that the sisters had done business in Montreal and the village of Sault St. Louis for about twenty-four years "with all the rectitude and probity suitable to merchants, and they have always conducted themselves with honor and distinction in their business."⁴⁴ Upon receiving this petition at Versailles, how could the minister of marine know that one of the signatories, Alexis Lemoine Monière, had the same name that appeared in Albany merchant Robert Sanders's letterbook as one of the leading Montreal smugglers? Merchant, commander, and priest leapt to exonerate those distinguished sisters who had obviously been saying the right things to all those men who rushed to their defense. Perhaps such fine-talking ladies also made the genteel governor reluctant to strike.

While rumors swirled around them, Marguerite, Marie-Anne, and Magdeleine Desauniers and the Haudenosaunee women with their fur-filled baskets continued to pursue the business at hand. The ever-inventive Desauniers came up with an explanation for the rumors: they had discovered the secret for curing the valuable ginseng the Indians found in the woods, and the people maligning them must be doing it out of sheer envy. The authorities, however, continued to see the principal issue as pelts, not plants. In 1750, some native informants admitted to the governor that besides trading with the enemy via Orange (Albany) and Chouaguen (Oswego) posts, members of the ring proceeded with canoe-loads of ill-gotten goods to the upper country posts.⁴⁵ Having heard enough, Governor-General Jacques-Pierre Taffanel de La Jonquière ordered eight soldiers to physically eject the Desauniers from the mission. When La Jonquière died, though, the sisters took advantage of the naïveté of his interim successor to secure permission to go to the mission one last time, for twenty-four hours, to collect debts the Indians purportedly owed them. Months later, a newly arrived governor-general found them still there. Yet another order went out for

their removal. Intendant Hocquart, who had already informed the court what shrewd dealers colonial women were, declared the Desauniers had outdone them all. He explained to his superior at Versailles in 1751 that the sisters were "very adroit, very fertile with fine talk, unparalleled in presenting lies and truth with equal conviction."⁴⁶ When he at last forced them out of business, they took sail for France to make their case at the French court. They arrived back in the colony with the glad tidings that the king himself had given them permission to resume business. But why, when asked, could they produce no document to prove it?

Not until 1752 did the Desauniers and their Haudenosaunee suppliers finally wind down their operation. Or did they? The following year, the Sanders letterbook mentions sending contraband to a Madame Desmurseaux/de Mousseaux, evidently the wife of Monsieur de Merceau/Desmurseaux, the commander at Fort Sault St. Louis, who lived just a stone's throw away from the Desauniers' now-shuttered storehouse.⁴⁷ Had Madame simply taken over the sisters' traffic without—or perhaps *with*—their blessing?

The Desauniers thus eluded the grasp of the highest officials in New France for many years, largely because they were trading partners of the formidable "praying Iroquois" who had moved north to settle at the Jesuit mission at Sault St. Louis. This group was deemed "the most warlike in North America" in 1735.⁴⁸ They were worrisome allies because they tended to put solidarity with other Haudenosaunee ahead of any European alliances. There was concern that they might even turn on the French colonists and attack them. The colonial powers dared not alienate them by clamping down too hard on smuggling; yet for the sake of their own trading companies and national interests, they had to keep it within limits.

Officials thought the Desauniers sisters themselves were stirring up the most dangerous kind of trouble: "I am only too certain," Governor-General La Jonquière wrote, "of the sway they have gained over the Iroquois of the Sault, the sentiments of independence, even rebellion, they hasten to suggest to them."⁴⁹ It seems they knew how to play on French fear of the settlement in the heart of their colony which was, one official wrote, practically "an independent republic." As war approached in the 1750s, another allegation of the sisters' power came from military engineer Louis Franquet, who said they had dissuaded the Indians from letting the government build fortifications around the mission.⁵⁰

If the allegations had any degree of truth, then the Desauniers' influence went well beyond matters of profit and loss. Is it possible one or more of them gained a voice of authority in any way resembling that of clan mothers or women councillors? Adopted Europeans occasionally did so. Longtime New York trader Sarah McGinnis, for example, worked as a Tory agent

during the American Revolution just as Molly Brant did. Based within the Mohawk encampment, McGinnis used her position to prevent a wampum belt bearing demoralizing news of a British defeat from going farther than her village.⁵¹ At Sault St. Louis, too, it may have helped that outsider-insider distinctions were blurred in a village that included a number of different First Nations, people of mixed blood, European adoptees, and friends. We are unlikely to ever know precisely what position the Desautiers held among the Haudenosaunee; we know only that colonial commanders were alarmed. Clearly the sisters made use of their fluency in the Haudenosaunee tongue, just as they made use of their “unparalleled” persuasiveness in French. These were womanly words with economic implications; and, according to French officials, military implications as well.

Other Malefactors

For more run-of-the-mill activity, there is plenty of evidence that the woods and posts resounded with commercial bargaining by women of all sorts. Madeleine Bouat, wife of the commander at Fort St. Frédéric (Crown Point, NY) ran a store there in the 1750s with varied merchandise, including contraband smuggled in from Haudenosaunee country in exchange for her brandy.⁵² Smuggling had plagued the authorities for more than a century, from the time that Trois-Rivières widow Jeanne Enard (*Veuve Crevier*) had expanded trading brandy into a long-distance operation, organizing trade expeditions to Cap-de-la Madeleine that were the despair of the Jesuit missionaries there. In the 1670s unmarried noblewoman Madeleine d'Allone was selling liquor at Fort Cataraqui on Lake Ontario, and she made her voice heard in petitions on behalf of herself and other traders. Madame Couagne, ensconced in luxury in her elegant Montreal estate, was a receiver of Albany contraband. Mary Anne La Marque (*Madame Pipardière*), caught red-handed with forbidden English trade cloth, bribed an Indian to say it was his. When prosecuted for a stash of English blankets found hidden under a family bed, she fought back with a lurid tale accusing Montreal governor de Ramezay and his son and sister-in-law of corruption and attempted murder.⁵³ Twenty-six packets of beavers were seized from Dame Vinet at Longue-Pointe. How many other enterprising women who never attracted notice were scattered around the posts, missions, and backwoods, doing some dealing with the Indians? By combing through the prosecutions and warnings, any researcher can multiply the examples.

We will note in passing that the verbal chill of Anglo-America was likewise slow to reach the villages of Dutch New York. Work by New York historians has uncovered women in the last quarter of the seventeenth century

who defied local authorities to trade furs with their Iroquoian neighbors around Albany and Schenectady, evading both the restrictions on alcohol and the taxes levied to house natives during summer trading visits. One pleaded dire poverty, trading liquor for beaver because she needed the meat to feed the children.⁵⁴ Others such as Grietje Borsboom took a less madonna-like approach. In 1680 Albany sheriff Richard Pretty searched her home in Schenectady, discovered hidden beaver pelts, and tried to seize them. Grietje, the *materfamilias*, "threatened to pull his hair" and also tried to bribe him into silence by offering him pelts. Sheriff Pretty later spotted her and her son traveling into Albany. Suspecting they were concealing illegal furs under their clothing, he undertook to search them. Court records indicate that "they"—apparently mother and son together—"refused to let them make a search and . . . resisted . . . grabbing him by the throat and collar and calling him a rascal, etc." Boorsboom and her son were fined twenty-five guilders. In the same era, when another Albany sheriff went to arrest Temperance Loverage for illegal trading, she screamed at him, "Run, get out of the house, you interfere with my bargaining. If I must give you money, let me make enough to do so."⁵⁵ Though Loverage was apparently English, most such arrests centered on the Dutch community. Frequent offenders were Ariaentje and Geertruy Hoogeboom of Albany and their mother, convicted on numerous occasions selling such goods as trinkets, knives, and paints. In 1676 the court fined "five defendants, four of whom were women . . . charged with sending children to the Indian houses for the purpose of trade." Two years later, four of five charged on similar grounds were women, the sheriff complaining that they "incessantly, contrary to ordinance, venture again and again either to go themselves or to send their children to the Indian houses on the hill and to trade."⁵⁶ As in French Canada, some of the Dutch malefactors came from respectable circles; in a 1677 case, five of the nine defendants were daughters of Albany burghers. The repeated dealing by these women and the verbal and physical abuse some meted out to sheriffs indicate that they, like the Canadians, engaged in plenty of criminal conversation that had no apparent relation to sexual reputation. Dutch New York, like French Canada, resisted generalizations about the stigmatizing and silencing of female speech. The actors in these commercial dramas included not just hardscrabble settlers but "ladies" drawn from families of commanders, burghers, and merchants, driving bargains with no apparent concern for loss of status.

If women of all these cultures traded as often as all this evidence suggests, how could anything so commonplace escape notice? One of the most interesting findings Kees-Jan Waterman made in his analysis of the Wendell records is that although nearly 50 percent of the accounts they opened

involved women, these were typically identified only as the sister, wife, or mother of their male relatives, while men were almost always named. Indeed, 93 percent of the native traders who could not be identified by name were women. Waterman's newly translated, richly annotated edition of a New York Dutch account book allows us to see, for the first time, how aboriginal women were written out of the record at the trade counter itself. Also written out was trade known to have been conducted by one or more female members of the Wendell family, accounts either unsigned or subsequently lost. It is no wonder historians have subsequently failed to perceive their presence. White or indigenous, the fur trader entered the cultural imagination as a masculine figure: the trapper in buckskins, the muscular voyageur, or the managerial gentleman in a top hat. Their female relatives carrying furs, commissioning canoes, settling accounts, hoodwinking officials, and escorting other women to meet the dealer, fell into oblivion.⁵⁷

Conclusion

As Waterman observed, "In general, participation by women in the fur trade in the Northeast has not been described in the literature," even though his scholarship suggests they were just about as active as males.⁵⁸ Discovering the public activities of Haudenosaunee and colonial women along the New York–Canada borderlands requires a close, often oblique reading of records that were written by male officials and later analyzed by scholars who assumed women were mainly confined to private places. Abandoning that trope, new scholarship on the New York fur trade by Waterman and on Iroquoia by Barbara Alice Mann and Roland Viau confirms the very active public presence not only of Haudenosaunee matrons but of many ordinary women of that nation. They provide new support for long-standing claims that there flourished in the Mohawk Valley and the mission near Montreal that rarest of entities: a nonpatriarchal people. Situated at a crossroads of economic, military, and missionary activity, its attributes can be found in the historical record.

We know less about that culture's interaction with colonial women. Although we will never recapture the entire context and meaning of centuries-old encounters around council fires or inside cabins, scholars from different standpoints might agree on the value of considering more carefully female dealers from several cultures who make shadowy appearances in the records of lawmen and merchants in Canada and New York. Colonial neighbors of the New York Haudenosaunee, living long amid "barbarism," forgot to ask nicely for somebody in charge to "remember the ladies." They rather hoped the lawmakers would not notice them at all. Their stories war-

rant incorporation in the ethnographic record, in the canons of fur trade, perhaps even in "national" history, if we are to transcend timeworn biases that have, of late, become less tenable than ever.

Scholarship does evolve with the times, and our own times make womanly "words with power" more conceivable than they used to be, as we see in the twenty-first-century works we have discussed. They clear the way for reconceiving the fur trade in the colonial Northeast. Years ago, Richard White's *The Middle Ground* showed how European and native cultures met and melded in highly creative ways in the Upper Great Lakes country, though it told us little about women's economic agency. Sylvia Van Kirk, Susan Sleeper-Smith, Bruce White, and others have labored to uncover that agency in the fur trade, but their work dealt mainly with later periods in the West.⁵⁹ The cases we have reviewed here suggest that looking at the Mohawk corridor between Montreal and Albany in colonial times will yield new findings about the essential role of women in transnational trade. When women from other cultures operated in Haudenosaunee villages, did they ever assume any of the authority that matrons possessed? A closer look at the mores governing these situations will be fascinating. The autonomy and unconventionality of some of the colonists reviewed here may reveal a degree of "going native" sufficient to justify what Natalie Davis called "an enquiry about the history of European women that . . . [makes] use of Iroquois tropes and frames."⁶⁰

The history of fur traders on those eastern frontiers is full of mysteries, including smokescreens they themselves created. Forgotten pre-Victorian realities beckon us to search more carefully for a range of female activities that tended to escape the purview of historians, even though they clearly exercised colonial governors, commanders, and sheriffs, and were even discussed at the French court. Whether we consider prevaricating Dutch wives and French spinsters, or their Haudenosaunee accomplices who paddled long distances to barter contraband, they all drew strength from laws or customs that allowed women to control assets and to engage in trade and unchaperoned travel (all the safer since among the Haudenosaunee rape was extremely rare).⁶¹ As female voices lost authority on both sides of the early modern Atlantic, the New York–Canada borderlands were home to three cultures in which women continued to speak up. Verbal exchanges are the very essence of commerce, especially in the oral cultures that still enveloped the Haudenosaunee and many of their neighbors. Some three centuries after the deals were made, their exuberant speech—salty, rebellious, dripping with lies—unsettles the narrative of domestic angels with well-governed tongues.

Notes

The phrases translated from French are all my own except where noted and *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (hereafter *DCB*) entries, which were often published in both languages.

- 1 For an interpretation of Adams's lack of success, see Elaine Forman Crane, "Political Dialogue and the Spring of Abigail's Discontent," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 56 (1999): 744–60.
- 2 On Brant and the testimonials to her influence, see also "Konwatsi'tsiaenni," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 4 (Toronto and Quebec: University of Toronto Press and Presses de l'Université Laval, 1966–); and Lois Feister and Bonnie Pulis, "Molly Brant: Her Domestic and Political Roles in Eighteenth-Century New York," in *Northeastern Indian Lives, 1632–1816*, ed. Robert Steven Grumet (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 295–320.
- 3 Cited in Jane Kamensky, *Governing the Tongue: The Politics of Speech in Early New England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 70, 150.
- 4 Carol Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (New York: Norton, 1987). For a compilation of various interpretations of Salem, see the special issue "Forum: Salem Repossessed," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 55 (2008): 391–534.
- 5 Cornelia Hughes Drayton, *Women before the Bar: Gender, Law, and Society in Connecticut, 1639–1789* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 11–13, 60. See also Sharon Block, *Rape and Sexual Power in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).
- 6 Karin Wulf, *Not All Wives: Women of Colonial Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 192–95, 208. Quaker women's influence declined as the sect's proportion of the population declined.
- 7 Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England, 1550–1720* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 4.
- 8 Susan Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 180–87; John Smail, *The Origins of Middle-Class Culture: Halifax, Yorkshire, 1660–1780* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994); Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).
- 9 Joseph-François Lafitau, *Moeurs des sauvages Américains comparées aux mœurs des premiers temps* (Paris: Saugrain, 1724), 1, 66–67. The richest single collection of writings, most of which support the idea of women having exceptional powers, is found in William Guy Spittal, ed., *Iroquois Women: An Anthology* (Ohsweken, ON: Iroqrafts, 1990).
- 10 Cited in Roland Viau, *Femmes de personne: Sexes, genres et pouvoirs en Iroquoisie ancienne* (Montreal: Boréal, 2000), 95. Viau describes the derivative nature of this source. In the paragraph that precedes the one on women as councillors, Charlevoix cited, as a general indicator that women did not rule, the case of a female leader who wanted a missionary to preach to her people but was not supported by the people in this. However, neither a male nor a female chief or other leader would typically make such a decision without a consensus of the people; and the example does not directly address the question of female councillors.

- 11 Elisabeth Tooker, “Women in Iroquois Society,” in Spittal, *Iroquois Women*, 199–216.
- 12 Barbara Alice Mann, *Iroquoian Women: The Gantowisas* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), esp. chap. 3.
- 13 In that context it makes sense that Marie de l’Incarnation in her convent and individual missionaries who dwelt in villages where women predominated were the ones most likely to become aware of Seneca “chieftainesses” who spoke publicly to their own people (including warriors) and to other women but were never heard by groups of European men. For women chiefs, see *Word from New France: The Selected Letters of Marie de l’Incarnation*, ed. Joyce Marshall (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1967), 216–17, 222–23. A seventeenth-century account apparently written by veteran missionary Pierre Millet reveals the great secrecy that surrounded Councils of Elders, councils in which he said women and men exercised the same powers, is discussed in Viau, *Femmes de personne*, 93–94. For another version of the argument about European ignorance of feminine political powers and the way it fostered decline of such powers, see Gretchen Green, “Gender and the Longhouse: Iroquois Women in a Changing Culture” in *Women and Freedom in Early America*, ed. Larry Eldridge (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 16–17.
- 14 Viau, *Femmes de personne*. See esp. chaps. 4 and 5. The culture was known as one that featured extensive consultation of villagers on political questions. Along with the female chiefs who initiated peace talks with the French in the 1650s were other figures such as Susanna, wife of a leader named Thanyuchta. She made frequent trips to Albany from the Haudenosaunee village at Sault St. Louis and parlayed New York commissioners about release of English captives held by her people. See Green, “Gender and the Longhouse,” 12, and the primary account of Susanna appearing in *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, ed. Edmund B. O’Callaghan and Berthod Fernow (Albany, NY: Weed and Parsons, 1853–87), vol. 6, 795.
- 15 On the immunity of the Sault St. Louis inhabitants to French laws, see Jan Grabowski, “French Criminal Justice and Indians in Montreal, 1670–1860,” *Ethnohistory* 43(1996): 405–29.
- 16 David Narrett, *Inheritance and Family Life in Colonial New York* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), esp. 48, 103, 207; see also Linda Biemer, “Criminal Law and Women in New Amsterdam and Early New York,” in *A Beautiful and Fruitful Place: Selected Rensselaerswijck Seminar Papers*, ed. Nancy Anne McClure Zeller (Albany, NY: New Netherlands Publishing, 1991), 73–76. On continental Dutch practices, see Danielle van den Heuvel, *Women and Entrepreneurship: Female Traders in the Northern Netherlands c. 1580–1815* (Amsterdam: Askant, 2007), and for legal context see Jan Bosch, “Le statut de la femme dans les anciens Pays-Bas septentrionaux,” in *Recueils de la société Jean Bodin: La Femme*, part 2 (Bruxelles: Librairie Encyclopédique, 1962), 323–50. For information about verbal permissions entitling Dutch wives to trade, I am indebted to Kim Todt’s “Maria van Rensselaer and the Trading Women of New Netherlands” (paper presented at the “Femmes, culture et pouvoir: relectures de l’histoire au féminin” conference, Université de Sherbrooke and Laurentian University, Sherbrooke, Quebec, 20–22 May 2009). Biemer, “Criminal Law,” 76, notes that the forty-six female traders seen in Albany during the last decade of Dutch rule declined in number under English rule, there being only six dur-

- ing the 1685–94 period. The increasing eighteenth-century exclusion of female English New Yorkers from commercial life has been documented by Deborah Rosen, *Courts and Commerce: Gender, Law, and the Market Economy in Colonial New York* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1997). We know there were some female English traders who operated even without the benefit of the more liberal laws of the other two cultures. For an instructive cross-cultural overview, see Carole Shammas, “Anglo-American Household Government in Comparative Perspective,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 48 (1995): 104–44.
- 17 Amy Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1993), 233. Common law also bestowed lesser, and less secure, dower rights than did the other codes. For New France, scholars France Parent and Geneviève Postelec, “Quand Thémis rencontre Clio: les femmes et le droit en Nouvelle-France” *Cahiers de droit* (Quebec) 36 (1995): 293–318, stress the extent of women’s legal and commercial participation while Josette Brun, *Vie et mort du couple en Nouvelle-France: Québec et Louisbourg au XVIIIe siècle* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2006), tends to stress the opposite.
 - 18 On female merchants of New France, see Kathryn Young, “. . . ‘sauf les perils et fortunes de la mer’: Merchant Women in New France and the French Transatlantic Trade, 1713–1746,” in *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women’s History*, ed. Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2002), 32–46.
 - 19 Jasper Danckaerts, “Journal of a Voyage to New York and a Tour in Several of the American Colonies in 1679–1680” in *In Mohawk Country: Early Narratives about a Native People*, ed. Dean Snow, Charles T. Gehring, and William A. Starna (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 203–7. In-depth study of the papers of Maria van Rensselaer has been undertaken by Kim Todt, beginning with “‘Braggarts and Pompous Men I Can Not Stand’: Maria van Rensselaer’s Resolution to Prevail in Seventeenth-Century Trade and Commerce” (paper delivered at Omohundro Conference, Boston, MA, June 2008).
 - 20 This term is drawn from Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650–1750* (New York: Vintage, 1991), 36 and 240–41. It applies to women who assumed what Ulrich defined as “male duties,” such as estate management or running a business, and various skilled trades such as shipwrighting and printing. Ulrich considered these to be anomalies in a female culture that was “basically domestic.” In her view, women acted only as “deputies” in such capacities if the husband was away or for some other reason delegated the duties to the wife.
 - 21 “Ramezay, Louise de,” *DCB* IV.
 - 22 For women’s voices in France, see Dominique Godineau, *The Women of Paris and Their French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).
 - 23 Peter Moogk, “Thieving Buggers and Stupid Sluts: Insults and Popular Culture in New France,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 36 (1979): 524–47. See also Peter Moogk, *La Nouvelle France: The Making of French Canada—A Cultural History* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2000), 140, which repeats the themes of the article, though it omits a finding in the article that is congruent with my and Dennis Sullivan’s contention that gender was not rigidly polarized: the fact that there was frequent use of sexually interchangeable insults such as *gueux/gueuse*, *coquin/coquine*, *maquereau/maquerelle*, *vilain/vilaine*, and even *bougre/bougresse* (“Thieving Buggers,” 534). For a wider discus-

- sion of colonial epithets, see Robert-Lionel Séguin, *L'Injure en Nouvelle France* (Ottawa, Leméac, 1976), and Jean-Pierre Pichette, *Le guide raisonné des jurons* (Montreal: Quinze, 1980).
- 24 Dennis Sullivan, *The Punishment of Crime in Colonial New York: The Dutch Experience in Albany during the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), 120–27.
 - 25 Her arrival at the French Court "paid rich dividends," since Madame de Vaudreuil "won the favour of Pontchartrain and used her influence to consolidate her husband's position in Canada," "Joybert de Soulanges et de Marson, Louise-Élisabeth," *DCB* II. See also Yves Zoltvany, *Philippe de Rigaud de Vaudreuil* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), 110, 215. See also Library and Archives of Canada (LAC) New France series C11A: 1710, volume (hereafter v.) 31, folio (hereafter f.) 230–31; 1716, v.36, f. 308–9, 315–16; and 1717, v.37, f. 34.
 - 26 For contemporaries' criticisms of Madame Vaudreuil, see "Mémoire sur l'état présent du Canada," *Rapport de l'archiviste de la Province de Québec*, 1922–23, 50; also LAC, series C11A, 1712, v.33, f.265–81; and "Joybert de Soulanges," *DCB* II.
 - 27 The *badinage* is discussed in Guy Frégault, "Un cadet de Gascogne: Philippe de Vaudreuil," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, vol. 5, (1951–52), 15–44, 31. The maneuvering is well described in "Raudot, Jacques," *DCB* II.
 - 28 For the series of letters describing Saint-Père's work, see LAC, series C11A: 1705, v.22, f.343–46; 1705, v.23, f.193; 1706, v.24, f.167–68; 1707, v.27, f.142–43; and 1708, v.29, f.251–52. The letter quoted here is dated 13 October 1705.
 - 29 On petitions of Loyalist women that invoked their husband's heroism rather than their own, see Janice Potter-McKinnon, *While the Women Only Wept: Loyalist Refugee Women in Eastern Ontario* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 149–51. In a mid-seventeenth-century Boston petition for release from prison of midwife Alice Tilly, identified by historian Mary Beth Norton as the largest recorded gathering of female petitioners before the American Revolution, the women bowed to the prejudices of the lawmakers in admitting Tilly showed "ouer-much selfe conceitdness [*sic*]," calling themselves "poore and trembling petitioners" speaking with "humility and childlike boldness," a far cry from the tone of Saint Père's communiqué. See Mary Beth Norton, "'The Ablest Midwife that Wee Know in the Land': Alice Tilly and the Women of Boston and Dorchester, 1649–1650," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 55 (1998): 105–34.
 - 30 LAC, series C11A: 1731, v.55, f.377; and 1733, v.60, f.410–13.
 - 31 The marsh incident is recounted in Louise Dechene, *Habitants and Merchants in Seventeenth Century Montreal* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's, 1992), 269. For the rioting of women over horsemeat rations during the Seven Years' War, see *Journal des Campagnes du Chevalier de Lévis en Canada 1756–1760* (Montreal: Beauchemin, 1889), 117–119.
 - 32 For Intendant Hocquart's remarks, see LAC, series C11A 1737, v.67, note inserted between f.80–95.
 - 33 On the French illegal trade, see Jean Lunn, "The Illegal Fur Trade out of New France, 1713–60," in *Canadian Historical Association Historical Papers* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1939), 61–76. While it is obviously impossible to know the extent of the illegal trade out of New France, it was estimated by Lunn, whose doctoral work on the economy of New France is still in use, to con-

- stitute one-half or even two-thirds of Canadian beaver production in the early eighteenth century (65). The figure for New York is found in Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 125.
- 34 Intendant Gilles Hocquart made this observation to the minister of marine in 1737.
- 35 Lunn, "Illegal Fur Trade," 61-76.
- 36 The information in this paragraph is drawn from Kees-Jan Waterman, ed. and trans., *"To Do Justice to Him and Myself": Evert Wendell's Fur Trade with Indians in Albany, New York, 1695-1726*, (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2008). The editor notes on page 10 that another, unknown hand in the books may have been that of their mother, Ariaantje.
- 37 Waterman discusses this item in *"To Do Justice to Him and Myself"*, 258.
- 38 Waterman, *"To Do Justice to Him and Myself"*, 164-65, 180, and attendant notes. For associations of this family with Canada, most likely the Montreal area, see 51, 164, and translation notes, 169, 280, and 569. One of the Jesuits working there was later sent back to France by officials due to purported involvement in illicit fur trading. For the proportion of female traders, see p. 48.
- 39 Waterman, *"To Do Justice to Him and Myself"*, 133 and attendant notes.
- 40 Sanders, whose French was sketchy, used the feminine article *la* to precede *porteur* for Conaquasse as well as for Agnesse and Marie-Magdeleine, using *le porteur* for Joseph and the other men. Still, one wonders if this person, whose name was spelled variously, might have been Canaqueese, a métis man who traveled on diplomatic missions between Albany and New France. On Canaqueese, see Thomas Burke, *Mohawk Frontier: The Dutch County of Schenectady New York 1661-1710* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 89. See also Waterman, *"To Do Justice to Him and Myself"*, 203 and 206, for male identification of two phonetically similar names, Conossaasse and Cannasquaskje.
- 41 LAC, photocopy of Robert Sanders's Letterbook, Sanders to Monier (Monière), 19 8ber (*sic*) 1752 and 5 July 1753.
- 42 Sanders's Letterbook, 11 7ber (*sic*) 1753.
- 43 LAC, series C11A 1750, V.95, f.384.
- 44 LAC, series C11A, v.97, 10 October 1751.
- 45 LAC, series C11A 1750, v.95, f.174-75. The two Sault St. Louis war chiefs gave particulars (three canoe-loads of English goods shipped west in the previous five days under the command of Agouirache).
- 46 LAC, series C11A v.97, La Jonquière to the Minister, 1 November 1751.
- 47 Sanders's Letterbook, 11 7ber 1753. Commentators (even within the same source) spelled this name in a variety of ways.
- 48 1735 Lettre du Père Nau au Père Bonin, *Rapport de l'archiviste de la Province de Québec*, 1926-27, 284.
- 49 LAC, series C11A v.97, La Jonquière to the Minister, 1 November 1751.
- 50 Louis Franquet, *Voyages et mémoires sur le Canada en 1752 et 1753* (Montreal: Éditions Élysée, 1974), 120. Given the independence of this group of Haudenosaunee, the French officials may have had an exaggerated notion of the Desau-niers' influence. See Jon Parmenter, "After the Mourning Wars: The Iroquois as Allies in Colonial North American Campaigns, 1676-1760," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 69 (2007): 38-76, for ways that Haudenosaunee solidarity transcended (and subverted) the goals of European allies. Still, the

- Desauniers' names were apparently invoked when the French officers discussed military planning with the Haudenosaunee; if not the instigators of resistance, they may have served as the excuse for it. On the question of illegal trade to the Haudenosaunee, see Jon Parmenter's "The Significance of the 'Illegal Fur Trade' to the Eighteenth-Century Iroquois" in *Aboriginal People and the Fur Trade: Proceedings of the 8th North American Fur Trade Conference*, ed. Louise Johnston (Roosevelt, NY: Akwesasne Notes Publishing, 2001), 40–47.
- 51 Barbara Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1972), 13. McGinnis appeared in Robert Sanders's Albany trade book in the 1750s as a trader of porcelain beads, or wampum.
 - 52 This caused outcries at the fort, where her officer husband upheld her monopoly. Madeleine Bouat (Madame Lusignan) was experienced in business; Montreal notarial records indicate her service as financial *procuratrice* for the couple and later for her son. Her trade at the fort was noted by Franquet, *Voyages et mémoires*, 67.
 - 53 On Marie-Anne Lamarque (also known as Veuve La Pipardière and Veuve Tonty), see LAC, series C11A: 1707, v.26, f.176–219; 1717, v.38, f.101–16; 1729, v.120, f.243–46; 1731, v.54, f.282–85; and 1753, v.99, f.25–90. There are numerous other references to La Pipardière in this series for the years 1715–17. On Madame Couagne, see William Eccles, *Canadian Society during the French Regime* (Montreal: Harvest House, 1968), 61. My article “‘Nagging Wife’ Revisited: Women and the Fur Trade in New France,” in *French Colonial History* 7 (2006): 45–60, documents large numbers of women from various classes who participated in the fur trade.
 - 54 See Jaap Jacobs, *New Netherland: A Dutch Colony in Seventeenth-Century America* (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2005), 208–9, for the mid-seventeenth-century case of the impoverished Susanna Jans, who claimed she traded alcohol for a beaver that she intended for her children to eat. Pages 191–214 provide a useful overview of the New Netherland fur trade.
 - 55 Sullivan, *Punishment of Crime in Colonial New York*, 161. See also 72, 98–99.
 - 56 *Ibid.*, 167–68.
 - 57 Even Thomas Norton, who examined the Wendell accounts, misled by the failure to name the women traders, undercounted them as 20 percent of traders. Waterman, “*To Do Justice to Him and Myself*,” 18, 40–43, 212. See also Thomas E. Norton, *The Fur Trade in Colonial New York, 1686–1776* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), 28n. On the certain participation of sister Hester Wendell and the possible participation of mother Ariaantje Wendell, see Waterman “*To Do Justice to Him and Myself*,” 1, 10.
 - 58 Waterman, “*To Do Justice to Him and Myself*,” 43.
 - 59 Bruce White, “The Woman Who Married a Beaver: Trade Patterns and Gender Roles in the Ojibwa Fur Trade,” *Ethnohistory* 46 (1999): 109–47; Sylvia Van Kirk, “*Many Tender Ties*”: *Women in Fur Trade Society, 1670–1870* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Watson and Dwyer, 1980); and Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001).
 - 60 Natalie Zemon Davis, “Iroquois Women, European Women,” in *Women, “Race,” and Writing in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker (New York: Routledge, 1994), 244.
 - 61 On the rarity of rape, see Viau, *Femmes de personne*, 209.