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Cosmography and Topography: A Comparison of André Thevet's "Les Singularités de la France Antarctique" and Jean de Léry's "Histoire d'un Voyage Faict en la Terre du Brésil"

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Abstract

The works of Thevet and Léry reveal the emergence of ethnographic genres in the 16th century as debates about religion coincided with rediscovered Greek epistemological methods and principles. A spirit of contestation based on Catholic and Huguenot rivalries motivated the two authors to write down their own historicized accounts of their travels to Fort Coligny – a French colonial outpost in Brazil – during the 1550s. Both authors describe the Tupinamba “savages” in two distinct modes of writing: topography and cosmography. I argue that Léry writes a topography of the Tupi following the distinction made by Michel de Montaigne – i.e., he describes an inhabited place with fidelity, precision, and empirical rigour, albeit from a Calvinist moral position. Thevet, by contrast, writes a cosmography that uses analogy, and Catholic and Aristotelian perspectives to reduce Tupi cultural forms to singularities existing within a universal order.

Key Words

Renaissance, travel literature, cosmography, topography, Jean de Léry, André Thevet, savage, ethnography, anthropology, Brazil, cannibal

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Introduction

Expanding colonial ambitions in the New World throughout the 16th century resulted in an ever greater number of reports brought back by travellers. The sensational and strange details of these reports further interested European audiences. In France, two of the most notable accounts from the Americas were penned by Franciscan André Thevet and the Calvinist pastor, Jean de Léry. The two travellers are noteworthy not because their proselytizing missions were judged to be successful, but because they engage in a polemic regarding the representation of the Tupinamba (Tupi) “savages” inhabiting the area around Guanabara Bay (Lestringant, *Le Huguenot et le sauvage* 12). In *Les singularités de la France antarctique (Les singularités)*, Thevet picks out the most curious details about the Americas with a focus on Southeastern Brazil. Léry calls his first-person colonial adventure and ethnographic narrative the *Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre du Brésil (Histoire d'un voyage)*.

In the early 16th century, travel reports began to reach audiences outside of the European courts. Pamphlets, sketches and books such as Da Mosti's *Paesi nuovamente ritrovati et mondo novo* (1508) were circulated among literate classes, inciting curiosity and a desire to know more about the “*mundus novus*” of Vespucci's reports. Yet, for many of the writers and literate travelers after Vespucci, America was a *second* discovery; the first discovery was access to new ideas from Latin and Greek texts (De Waal Malefijt 47).

In addition to the reintroduction of ancient authors, the expanding use of the printing press and the Protestant Reformation were revolutionary developments during the period. Protestantism was a potent reform movement because of its schismatic ideology, however it was not the only philosophy that altered Europe in the 16th century.

Relying on the printing press, humanists and free-thinkers were able to disseminate new ideas with increasing speed. Alongside the theological revolution begun by Luther, the first truly “modern” conceptualizations of the structure of human societies are expressed in such works as More’s *Utopia* and Machiavelli’s *The Prince*. These humanist thinkers, and others, were concerned exclusively with this world and what human action can achieve in it (De Waal Malefijt 50-51). The idea that humans actively shape their own social and political organization further bolstered interest in the study of humankind and the diverse forms of political, social, and religious organizations around the world. An increasing historical and geographic consciousness was also changing the way Europeans understood alterity, especially the recently-contacted peoples of the New World.

Adding to the rapid intellectual developments of the 16th century, the discovery of human societies radically different from those of late-Renaissance European suggested that the world was less stable and predictable than even ancient geographers and historians had written. Cosmographers and topographers picked up the fragmented reports of their contemporaries while also reading about pre-Christian worlds described by authors such as Herodotus and Pliny. Furthermore, new methods of approaching geography were adapted from Ptolemy as well as the foundational *Tractatus de sphaera*, a scholarly treatise written by the 13th-century geographer Johannes de Sacrobosco (Holzer 15). Frank Lestringant describes the works of Thevet and Léry, as well as those of other 16th-century travel writers, as opening up a window to a New World, albeit a false one that relied heavily on borrowing the tropes of classical texts (*Le Brésil* 6).

The desire to understand human societies and the ideas and practices that distinguish one from the other is also an interest for the late-Renaissance philosopher, Michel de Montaigne. In *Des cannibales*, Montaigne famously refers to the anthropophagous Tupi by producing a uniquely modern, relativistic discussion of the customs and people called “savage”. Using the example of cannibalism, Montaigne compares the ways in which the Amerindians and the French butcher the members of their own societies. He concludes that the furious violence connected with the religious turmoil of late 16th-century France surpasses the cannibalism of the Tupi in its savagery. Montaigne arrives at this conclusion through his own assessment and indirect knowledge, that is, he had not seen the Tupi perform the anthropophagous feasts. Thus, the philosopher’s arguments rely on second-hand information compiled from those that had observed Tupi cannibalism directly. For Montaigne’s claims to be credible, he had to acquire accurate reports from trustworthy travellers. Lestringant notes the irony that Montaigne calls for a simple and sincere topographer so that he can play the role of “apprentice cosmographer” himself (*Le Huguenot* 210). The philosopher’s desire for accurate observation is necessary in order for Montaigne’s analysis to be pertinent to the point he is illustrating: “the savage” is not more violent or brutal than civilized, Christian Europeans. The philosopher seems to have had stringent standards for the quality of information brought to him by observers – he demanded in *Des cannibales* that reporters not embellish or change their observations by adding their own ideas – preferably the reporter should be “un homme tres fidelle, ou si simple” / “a very trustworthy man or else a man so simple” (trans. Screech 209). In the next paragraph of the essay, Montaigne also calls for direct first-hand experience as the only valid claim for knowledge. Lastly, for

those that have written down their observations, a *topographer* is called for by Montaigne, to relate only what he truly understands without formulating expansive theories and incorporating speculative causes.

Il nous faudroit des topographes, qui nous fissent narration particuliere des endroits où ils ont esté. Mais pour avoir cet avantage sur nous, d'avoir veu la Palestine, ils veulent jouir du privilege de nous conter nouvelles de tout le demeurant du monde. Je voudroye que chacun escrivist ce qu'il sçait, et autant qu'il en sçait: non en cela seulement, mais en tous autres subjects: Car tel peut avoir quelque particuliere science ou experience de la nature d'une riviere, ou d'une fontaine, qui ne sçait au reste, que ce que chacun sçait: Il entreprendra toutesfois, pour faire courir ce petit loppin, d'escrire toute la Physique. De ce vice sourdent plusieurs grandes incommoditez.

What we need is topographers who would make detailed accounts of the places which they had actually been to. But because they have the advantage of visiting Palestine, they want to enjoy the right of telling us tales about all the rest of the world! I wish everyone would write only about what he knows – not in this matter only but in all others. A man may well have detailed knowledge or experience of the nature of one particular river or stream, yet about all the others he knows only what everyone else does; but in order to trot out his little scrap of knowledge he will write a book on the whole of physics! From this vice many great inconveniences arise. [Trans. Screech 209]

The demand for topographic accounts expressed by Montaigne is a desire for reports which cover specific topics with fidelity and a rustic simplicity. Léry shows the same appreciation for writing just what he sees when he describes his direct, personal experience among the Tupi. While *Histoire d'un voyage* is an honest account, it is also written by a Calvinist pastor entrenched in his doctrine. Nevertheless, the topographic style of writing about different peoples stands apart from the broad perspective and general knowledge of the world presented in cosmography (Lestringant, *Le Huguenot* 209).

André Thevet writes a collage of observations on the entire American continent in *Les singularités*. The account is guided by a cosmographic paradigm and the authoritative voice of the “Cosmographe du Roy” – a title he had apparently chosen for himself which was recognized by the Valois kings. In comparison to Léry’s topo-historiographic composition (Lestringant, *Le Huguenot* 210), Thevet “had a more ambitious project: he wanted to survey the whole world” (Hollier 241). The cosmographic project that Thevet was embarking on with *Les singularités* was the search for meaning beyond a random collection of curious details about the peoples, plants and animals encountered in the Americas. Throughout *Les singularités* Thevet classifies his observations into new analogical categories (a project that culminates with the publication of the *Cosmographie universelle*). By contrast, Léry’s *Histoire d'un voyage* is a *particular* narrative, based solely on his travels to the Guanabara Bay area of Brazil. The traveling pastor recounts his voyage and his stay with the Tupi while describing their appearance, customs and beliefs. Léry’s account reads like a story of adventure in which he endures life-threatening difficulties before and after his entrance into the *topos*: a discrete physical and literary site

inhabited by the cannibalistic Tupi. The only “safe” place for the protagonist in *Histoire d'un voyage*, is ironically amongst the cannibals. Léry's narrative is intimately focused on his interactions with the cannibalistic tribe. Dennis Hollier argues that “Léry makes an effort to respect the uniqueness of things and to reveal their difference and specific quality” (242). Léry's eye for detail and his intimate involvement is a remarkable example of early ethnographic writing – what Claude-Lévi Strauss in *Tristes Tropiques* calls the “ethnographer's breviary”.

Thevet, unlike Léry, does not enter into a demarcated site (a village, a feast, a ceremony, etc.); his observations are drawn from a continuous movement away from the places and peoples described. The cosmographer aims to find meaning by directly comparing the Tupi to what he already knows: observations made elsewhere in his travels and Classical texts. Thus, the cosmographer searches for absolute axioms in the patterns of human behaviour observed in literary accounts, reports, and through direct observation (Strauss 99). Léry, on the other hand, focuses on the place and its people and attempts to find meaning within it – his experience, knowledge of the language, and access to various Tupi sites and events grant him particular knowledge of what he has seen. The topographer, while relying on his own worldviews to begin understanding the world of the Tupi, remains more perceptive to interpreting Tupi social and cultural forms in an internally relevant way.

Lestringant suggests that each title provides an entry into the differences between the two texts, “*singularités*” and “*histoire*” reflect two separate methods of description, the former is composed of a collage of collected observations and thoughts, and the latter is a more detailed, narrativized account (*Les singularités* 25). However, it would be

insufficient to characterize the differences between the two texts as being only stylistic. Both authors also diverge in their evaluations of Tupi customs and practices based on their own theological precepts. Thevet, for example, is more critical of what he perceives as a lack of reason and tendency for violence (i.e. as expressed through his emphasis on warfare and cannibalism), while Léry is generally more favourable in the portrayal of his cannibalistic hosts. The topographer also invites readers into the text to draw their own conclusions in a way that the cosmographer does not. Janet Whatley writes about *Histoire d'un voyage* that “the reflectiveness and intimacy of this account may be due in part to a kind of detachment [from the colonial venture] concomitant with the status of the refugee” (xxi-xxii). While Léry’s familiarity with the Tupi led to an appreciation of their customs, it would be misleading to suggest that he describes a utopia in Brazil. The ethnographically-oriented Léry frequently denounces customs and beliefs which are at odds with his Calvinist ethics. For example, Léry appears to be less comfortable with “idolatry” and with Tupi mythology as compared to Thevet (Whatley xxxi).

Les singularités and *Histoire d'un voyage* do not fall into separate ends of a dichotomy – critical collage of singularities and uncritical first-person ethnography. Thevet can be quite sympathetic, detailed and thorough; Léry sometimes constructs a series of disparate observations, with a neutral or critical tone. The difference between these two 16th-century works is thus one of emphasis – the overlapping and contrasting approaches for writing about the “cannibales” encountered in Brazil.

Readers of *Les singularités* and *Histoire d'un voyage* will notice that the main ethnographic sections which pertain directly to the Tupi – corresponding, roughly, to

chapters XXVII-LXI¹ in *Les singularités* and chapters VII-XX² in *Histoire d'un voyage* – are similar in both content and format. What differs, however, is that each writer constructs a distinct framework for adding meaning to his observations and, as a result, draws divergent conclusions. Thevet employs a global, *cosmographic* perspective that collects heteroclitite observations to describe and evaluate the Tupi (Lestringant, *Les singularités* 28-29). The cosmographic collage of descriptions is undoubtedly a work of considerable skill, but the work lacks an internal interrelatedness that would give it greater depth. Léry, on the other hand, writes a personal story in which he seeks to describe the cannibals. Léry arranges his detailed observations in such a way as to sketch a more complete representation of the subject. For Léry, the aim is not to record a collection of singularities ('out there'), but rather to reflect on the insight coming from the experience of a distinct event. Léry writes about a real place. It is the sustained description of a particular place and its people that Michel de Certeau would call a "révolution du croyable" (Lestringant, *Le Huguenot* 128, 209) / "revolution of the credible" [trans. mine].

The difference between cosmography and topography is not just the scope and accuracy of avowed knowledge, as suggested by Montaigne, but also the use of two distinct expositional, didactic, and hermeneutical approaches. Thus, the difference between cosmography and topography is not only one of literary style, but also of the organization of thoughts – representing two varying epistemological and representational paradigms. Montaigne's declared preference for topography leads one to ask what is

¹ All chapter numbers for *Les singularités* are cited from *Le Brésil d'André Thevet (1998)*; they correspond to the original 1557 publication, but not to Frank Lestringant's abridged compilation of *Les singularités* (1983).

² All chapter numbers for *Histoire d'un voyage* are from the Librairie Générale Française publication (1994) corresponding to those of the original 2nd edition published in 1580.

achieved by focusing on a faithful description of a place and its inhabitants rather than developing a broader and more analytic discussion of one's general observations across a greater region. Montaigne, as a skeptical thinker, perhaps recognized that the more distanced and rushed approach of cosmography meant that the discipline could not maintain its claims with the same authority as it did earlier in that turbulent century. Montaigne, having lived through the religious conflicts that divided France, would not be as sympathetic to an approach of writing about other people using a static, Aristotelian, *cosmographic paradigm* that subdues difference (Lestringant *Le Huguenot* 146).

Although the two texts are frequently juxtaposed as contemporary works, *Histoire d'un voyage* is first published in 1578 (with five subsequent editions), 21 years after André Thevet published *Les singularités* (Lestringant, *Le Huguenot* 129). Thevet integrated and reorganized large sections of his 1557 publication in his magnum opus, *La Cosmographie universelle* (1575)³— a more synthetic and encyclopedic account — to which Léry directs most of his criticism. In *Cosmographie universelle (Cosmographie)*, Thevet pushes his claims a step further by picking out the strangest details and the most “curious” customs seen throughout the regions he supposedly visited. In *Les singularités* Thevet focuses exclusively on the lands claimed by France in the New World, and more importantly for the purposes of this comparison, on the Tupi located adjacent to the Fort Coligny colony in Brazil. The section of *Les singularités* dedicated to the Tupi is the most pertinent for

³ Thevet also included large parts of *Les singularités* in his *Histoire de deux voyages*, based on his Brazilian journey. It was a manuscript discovered after his death in 1592. However, by the end of the 16th-century interest in Brazil was waning (France had lost its only colony) and Thevet's reports were being called into question (Lestringant, *Les singularités* 11-12).

comparison to L ry's *Histoire d'un voyage*; Thevet's ethnographic account is an influence on the Calvinist pastor's mission to correct the falsities he accuses Thevet of fabricating.

Thevet, and L ry both travelled to the ill-equipped, fledgling settlement of "Antarctic France", or Fort Coligny, in 1555-1556 and 1557-1558 respectively – contrary to Thevet's claims, the two could not have met. The colonial outpost was built on what would later be called Ilha Villegaignon by the Portuguese, located in Guanabara Bay (Lestringant, *Le Huguenot* 70). The isolation of the fort meant that securing supplies through ongoing trade with the locals was vitally important. Thus, contact with the Tupi (and neighbouring tribes) was ongoing during the inhabitation of Fort Coligny.

Each account describes in detail what its author claims to have personally seen in the Americas. An appeal to direct observation was not unique to the 16th century although it became somewhat of a rhetorical necessity for Renaissance travel literature:

The *r cit de voyage* [was the writing mode in which] visual experience in particular had established an especially strong rhetorical foothold. The rhetoric of sense experience is a commonplace in the whole range of medieval travel literature, from diplomatic reports to imaginary voyages to pilgrim narratives (Frisch, "Passing Knowledge" 62).

Lestringant argues that the degree to which these two travellers relied on eye-witness observation was not equal (*Le Huguenot* 129). Only L ry practiced "autopsy" – a 16th century neologism that signified writing with the eye, as well as the whole body (Lestringant, *Mapping the Renaissance World* 13). Despite having regained a reputation for composing works of ethnological importance, Thevet is also known for his awkward

mix of authentic observations and fantastical details (*Encyclopédie de la littérature* 1606). For this reason, Léry is frequently compelled to denounce Thevet for his reliance on others' reports (Lestringant, *Jean de Léry* 17; 38). Not only does Thevet rely on second-hand accounts, but he also rearranges some facts to suit his needs.

Nous avouons encore que Thevet n'est pas toujours d'une parfaite exactitude. Sans doute, tout ce qu'il a vu de ses propres yeux, tout ce qu'il a observé lui-même, il le décrit avec fidélité, et même avec minutie, mais encore a-t-il une fâcheuse tendance à l'exagération. Pour les phénomènes dont il n'a pas été le témoin, pour les événements auxquels il n'a pas pris part, il se contente trop aisément de ce qu'on veut bien lui raconter. (Gaffarel XIX-XX)

We admit once more that Thevet is not always of a perfect accuracy. Without doubt, everything that he saw with his own eyes, all that he observed himself, he describes with fidelity, even minutely, but he has a regrettable tendency towards exaggeration. For the phenomena which he has not witnessed, for the events in which he has not taken part, he contents himself too easily with what [stories] one wants to tell him. [Trans. mine]

Indeed, some of the things Thevet mentions were simply fabricated. One such example is the reference to Ville-Henry, an alleged settlement on the mainland for which there is no evidence. Léry uses this phantom village as proof of his rival's proclivity for invention (Lestringant, *Jean de Léry* 17). Léry is steadfast in his belief that direct experience is the only basis for knowledge – not the writings of cosmographers.

[S]i quelcun me vouloit arguer, me rapportant plustost de ce faict à ceux qui ont veu l'experience, qu'à ceux qui ont seulement leu les livres, tout ainsi que je n'en veux faire ici autre decision, aussi nul ne m'empeschera de croire ce que j'en ay veu (*Histoire d'un voyage* 133)⁴.

[L]est anyone would argue the point by citing to me those who have firsthand experience – rather than those who have only read books –, no one will meanwhile prevent my believing what I have seen. [Trans. Whatley 18]

This strict empiricism is noteworthy as it separates topography from the more philological and philosophical discussions in cosmography. An empirical, (pre-)scientific approach was also alleged by the cosmographic genre. However, in the case of cosmography, the empirical focus was on geographical and astronomical measurements instead of the description of people (Strauss 100).

The efforts made by the two writers to study the Tupi – through personal interaction, and in the case of Thevet, by relying on support from other sources – are a notable effort of proto-anthropology. The value of these works, then as now, is in the literary and ethnological contribution of two mid-16th-century travellers who experienced and interpreted a culture quite unlike their own. For the greater part of my analysis, I will focus on the main chapters that delve directly into ethnographic description. While each text should undoubtedly be studied in its entirety to gain an understanding of the historical and religious developments taking place at the time, modern readers will find that the

⁴ All further page references attributed to *Histoire d'un voyage* refer to the Librairie Générale Française publication (1994).

ethnographic sections represent the most substantial contribution made by each writer. Not only are the two attempts at describing New World peoples noteworthy on their own, but they reveal two 16th-century literary strategies for incorporating the unknown into the known.

Familiarity in the Americas was often developed by considering universal truths – namely by appealing to theology and the knowledge of ancient authors. In *Les singularités*, for example, readers will find quotations of Classical sources in every chapter. Thevet, as the “Royal Cosmographer”, was writing within the convention of a Renaissance genre distinctly less concerned with biblical questions than the medieval encyclopedic accounts of the “races” (or “nations”) of the world (Hodgen, *Early Anthropology* 60-61). The move away from a biblically-oriented description of humanity in the Renaissance does not take place because authors were less religious, but because cosmography relied heavily on the methods and discourses of non-Christian authors from antiquity. Moreover, within both Léry’s and Thevet’s ethnographic narratives there are distinct patterns of classical, pre-Christian influences mixed with either Calvinist or Catholic doctrines. Thevet, for example, ends his last chapter concerning Brazil by quoting Ovid. Revealing the influence of philosophers such as Lucretius, he writes: “Conclusion que toutes choses humains sont sujettes à mutation, plus ou moins difficile, selon qu’elles sont plus grandes ou plus petites” (173)⁵. / “To conclude, all things human are subject to mutation, with more or less difficulty, according to whether they are bigger or smaller” [trans. mine]. It is striking that Thevet, a Franciscan, rationalizes the ongoing

⁵ All future page numbers relating to *Les singularités* refer to the 1983 La Découverte publication, unless otherwise stated.

conquest of the Americas and the dispossession of the natives by citing the history of the Romans, esp. the conquest of Gaul by Caesar (172). An epistemological and ethical shift towards (decontextualized) Greco-Roman values is evident throughout *Les singularités* and to a lesser extent in *Histoire d'un voyage*.

Léry, because of his firm adherence to the Reformed religion, is more likely to cite scriptural sources and, indeed, positions his *Histoire d'un voyage* as a personal struggle against religious persecution (the primary purpose of his voyage). The Calvinist's subsequent experience as a survivor of the Siege of Sancerre (fought by a French Catholic army) further consolidated his Huguenot identity. Léry interprets his survival as proof of his devotion to God and as evidence of the divine favour he had incurred by escaping a series of grave situations.

[J]'ay montré en la presente histoire, que non seulement en general, mais aussi en particulier j'ay esté delivré de tant de sortes de dangers, voire de tant de gouffres de morts, ne puis-je pas bien dire, avec ceste sainte femme mere de Samuel, que j'ay experimenté que l'Eternel est celuy qui fait mourir et fait vivre?
(550)

I have shown in the present history I have been delivered, not only with my fellows but also in my single person, from so many kinds of dangers, indeed from so many abysses of death, can I not say, with that holy woman the mother of Samuel, what I have myself experienced: that it is the Eternal who causes us to live and to die, to descend into the grave and to arise from it? [Trans. Whatley 219]

Readers will notice that the “history” Léry provides is thoroughly infused by a conviction of divine election for the task of bearing witness to certain events.

Léry often inserts the uncertainties of his thoughts into the text – personal admissions characterize his frank assessments of various situations, people and ideas. Nevertheless, Léry, like Thevet, cannot escape the influence of the authoritative sources that shaped the discourses of his period. For instance, he distinctly begins his description of the place of landing in Guanabara Bay by citing the knowledge of cosmographers and historians (105). Léry is equally at ease comparing his travails to Job as to Tantalus; Herodotus and Pliny are cited beside Genesis as a reference to his observations.

Despite Léry’s and Thevet’s appreciation for Classical authors – especially the works of geographers and historians – the rivals engage in religious and political discussions relevant to the period. Léry is a vocal critic of colonization (a position he makes clear by supporting Las Casas’ arguments) while Thevet rejects the anti-colonial position of Las Casas (Lestringant, *L’expérience* 24). Scott Juall considers *Histoire d’un voyage* to be an activist political text fundamentally subversive for imperial ambitions (24). While it may be the case that Léry shows concern for the well-being of his Tupi friends, it is also the case that Léry wanted to convert them to Calvinism. One such indication is the lengthy theological arguments that often interrupt the ethnographic sections, as when the author considers the possibility of an Apostle having visited Brazil (414-423). Thus, the study of the “savages” is not just a curious and accidental affair, but the result of a French colonial mission undertaken by two would-be missionaries. Thevet and Léry both claim that they would have converted their subjects if the situation had arisen and the circumstances had been in their favours. For Léry, the aim from the outset is to expand

“le regne de Jesus Christ, Roy des Roys et Seigneur des Seigneurs, et les limites de son Prince Souverain en pays si lointain” (48) / “the reign of Jesus Christ, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, and the limits of his Sovereign Prince in countries so distant” [trans. mine]. The Calvinist writes near the end of *Histoire d’un voyage*, that if he had had more time, he would have won more souls for Jesus Christ (413-414). As Lestringant has shown in *Le Huguenot et le sauvage* and other works, both Léry and Thevet, wrote in a historical context dominated by the French Catholic-Protestant tensions.

The separation of topography from cosmography, as suggested by Montaigne in the aforementioned passage, represents two 16th-century methods for describing alterity. What most readily distinguishes the two styles is the literary approach they rely on to construct meaning from their respective experiences. I will argue that Thevet relates his observations analogically to a compendium of the customs and values of various other nations amassed by his study of Classical texts and his own observations. The Catholic cosmographer builds these comparisons with a desire to show that the New World is much like the Old World. However, it is ultimately the deployment of an Aristotelian syllogistic structure that dominates the meaning of *Les singularités*. I will argue that Léry, by contrast, demonstrates his insight by reflecting on what separates and joins the Tupi to himself (and France). Through a rich, expository narrative Léry overlays his many observations of the Tupi to reveal the internal relevance of customs. I will demonstrate that Léry achieves his goal of accurate, eye-witness description by sketching multiple “portraits” of the Tupi. *Histoire d’un voyage* is an attempt to understand the Tupi via the author’s return to the *topos* of his original experience. In the following chapters I will elucidate the distinction made by Montaigne between topography and cosmography to

show that in the two texts authored by Léry and Thevet, the result is two divergent understandings of the Tupi.

In the first chapter I will further analyze the differences between cosmography and topography, arguing that the former, as demonstrated in *Les singularités*, aims for a general, global understanding by rationalizing unique observations, and the latter, viewed through *Histoire d'un voyage*, tends to envision the topic of study as a specific and local phenomenon best understood through a retelling of the narrator's personal experience. I will demonstrate that Jean de Léry writes with attention to detail, while reflecting on his relationship with the Tupi, and interpreting their customs with a high degree of relativism which reflects Montaigne's position in *Des cannibales*. André Thevet, on the other hand, uses imprecise analogies to minimize difference, while seeing Tupi belief through a Catholic lens, and distancing his observations from the local context as microcosmic illustrations of universal laws.

In the second chapter, I will argue that the two modes of ethnographic description reflect two distinct strategies for interpreting difference. I will closely analyze Léry's technique of constructing portraits out of multiple descriptions to attempt to show how these descriptions allow for difference to emerge from the comparison of each "portrait" to another. The text's reflection on the positionality of the narrator(s), protagonist, and readers will be explored by looking at movement from distinct chronological and geographic frames. I will argue that the cosmographer, by contrast, constructs an Aristotelian logical structure that take his singularities out of a specific time and place, thereby relying on symbolism to interpret the Tupi. I will also discuss how nostalgia and a sense of "passage" affect *Histoire d'un voyage* and *Les singularités* respectively. Lastly,

the influence of Thevet's Catholic, Aristotelian biases and Léry's Calvinist ethical stance will be explored.

Chapter 1: Two Emergent 16th-Century Genres for Describing the "Savage" Tupi

In the following chapter I will analyze some of the developments in 16th-century geographic literary genres that led to the eventual distinction between *cosmography* and *topography* as it was articulated by Michel de Montaigne in *Des cannibales*. I will argue that Thevet's *Les Singularités* and Léry's *Histoire d'un voyage* are distinct genres with a similar interest (i.e., describing New World peoples), but divergent methods of understanding and representing otherness. The clash of methods leads each author to affirm the veracity of his account based on a claim of direct experience. I will further argue that Thevet writes with categories of comparison which seek to connect the appearance, beliefs and customs of the Tupi to remote geographic and historical examples using analogous resemblances. By contrast, Léry uses metaphor and detailed comparison to illustrate his observations. The topographer compares the Tupi to himself (and the French) to reflect on the differences separating the two, one such example is illustrated through his deep reflection on the role literacy and writing.

Differentiating Topography and Cosmography

Peter Apian's *Cosmographia* (1524) proposed a rational, scientific basis for the study of the cosmos. For Apian, cosmography, begins and ends with a rational understanding of the whole known universe (i.e. geometric, astronomical, and elemental).

“To Peter Apian, for example, the distinctions were as clear-cut as Ptolemy's⁶: cosmography is the consideration of the universe in its four elements, earth, water, air, fire” (Strauss 98). The influence of ancient (Greek) scholarship is unmistakable. In comparison to previous descriptions of the word, cosmography demonstrated “an uncommonly attenuated presence of religious material” (Conley, *An Errant Eye* 56). The result is a discipline which attempts to represent and translate the forms and laws of the universe by relying minimally (and often superficially) on appeals to the Bible.

The scientific approach to cosmography was bolstered by the scientific and technical developments of navigation. Moreover, the rapid dissemination of travel reports printed in pamphlets and letters after the discovery of the New World was integrated into 16th-century cosmographic literature; Waldseemueller's *Cosmographiae introductio* in 1507 was one of the first attempts to combine the geographic and ethnographic knowledge of the day (Strauss 89). Waldseemueller relied on Ptolemy's geographical models as well as the ethnographic material emerging from Vespucci's letters. Waldseemueller is also credited with producing the first cartographic representation of America (Conley 56). By undertaking a comprehensive mapping and descriptive project, Waldseemueller claimed the New World as the domain of cosmographic knowledge. Thus geographic and ethnographic interests were simultaneously shaping the focus of cosmographic writers.

⁶ The Ptolemaic system, especially as it pertains to the geometric ratios needed to calculate distance, was not new to the 16th century; the same cosmographic model was advanced by Johannes Sacrobosco's 13th-century *Tractatus de sphaera* and taught throughout the High and Late Middle Ages. However, Ptolemy's *Geographia* became increasingly popular in the 16th century and many copies were heavily annotated (Holzer 15-16).

Johann Boemus' *Omnium gentium mores* (1520), for instance, had summarized Classical ethno-historical sources and reintroduced them as one integrated work which could be referenced by interested cosmographers (Hodgen, "Sebastian Muenster" 505-506). The increased availability of Greek and Roman knowledge and contemporary accounts emerging from travellers coincided with increasingly empirical methods for collecting information (Jones 67). The fantastical and formulaic descriptions inherited from the literary tradition of the Middle Ages fell out of fashion and were being replaced by increasingly more empirical accounts (Wolfzettel 36-37). The letters of Columbus and Vespucci provided the highly sought-after first-contact accounts to European audiences; the reports were integrated into *Quattuor Navigationes* (1507) and became extremely popular with the publication of *Novus Orbis* (1532) (Wolfzettel 37).

Cosmography was an evolving and experimental genre that synthesized and adapted Classical historians and geographers with reports of newly discovered lands (Jones 67-69). Lestringant writes that geographic, historical and literary knowledge from antiquity was harmonized within a theist paradigm by the use of the principle of *varietas*, or the sacred diversity on Earth in which God's signature is omnipresent (*Le Brésil* 8). Anthony Parr adds that cosmographic travel accounts, because of their mixture of ideas and methods of inquiry were a "vigorous, confused, and fluid project" (4). Thus, cosmography was not just a *result* of the combination of Greek and Latin sciences with Renaissance travel accounts, but a much more ambitious and rapidly evolving scientific and literary project. The desire to fuse all available knowledge under "cosmography" is at times evident in *Les singularités*. In Chapter I, for instance, Thevet writes about nature, navigation, the Greek terms for 'ocean' and 'harbour', French dynastic history, etc. Further

in Chapter III, Thevet begins to describe nations of people while showing his acknowledgement of earlier cosmographers – he lists: Pliny, Mela, Strabo, and Apian, and Herodotus (*Le Brésil* 64). The Catholic cosmographer states that his mission is to travel in order to describe the lands that have been recently discovered (*Le Brésil* 64). The friar-turned-cosmographer writes in *Les singularités* that his desire is to write about the fourth and recently discovered part of the world (America) which Ptolemy had not described, but that had been reported in his own lifetime:

[S]elon les modernes géographes, qui ont écrit depuis que par navigation plusieurs pays anciennement inconnus ont été découverts, comme l'Inde Amérique, dont nous prétendons écrire [...] (*Le Brésil* 63)

According to the modern geographers who have written, many more nations formerly unknown have since been discovered by navigation such as American India which we intend to write about [...] [Trans. mine]

Thevet makes it clear that his mission is to write about this new continent. The inclusion of the New World in a cosmography becomes an imperative for Thevet (*Le Brésil* 56). Thevet's recognition that the American continent was only recently discovered shows his understanding that Latin and Greek geographers were unaware of its existence. The impact of such a recognition cannot be underestimated – Ptolemy's map, the true representation of the inhabited world for nearly 1400 years was overturned. A 1482 print of Pomponius Mela's world map (figure 1), shows a contained, symmetrical, curved surface on which the world rests in a harmonic and stable setting. The 15th-century *mappa*

mundi was an ordered and symmetrical world that reflected an understanding of geography unaltered since antiquity (Suarez 25-26). The Hellenistic temple which acts as a frame for the map further suggests an ordered and confident domain that contains the Earth. By contrast, the 1555 map made by Hans Holbein (Fig. 2) reveals the upheaval caused by the discovery of a new continent. The harmonious setting of Mela's map is replaced by the convoluted and wild sketches of savage people (esp. cannibals in the lower left, beside South America) – the result of a century “de doute et de déchirement, époque d'un univers décentré, déséquilibré” (Wolfzettel 35) / “of doubt and violence, a period of an off-center and unbalanced universe” [trans. mine].

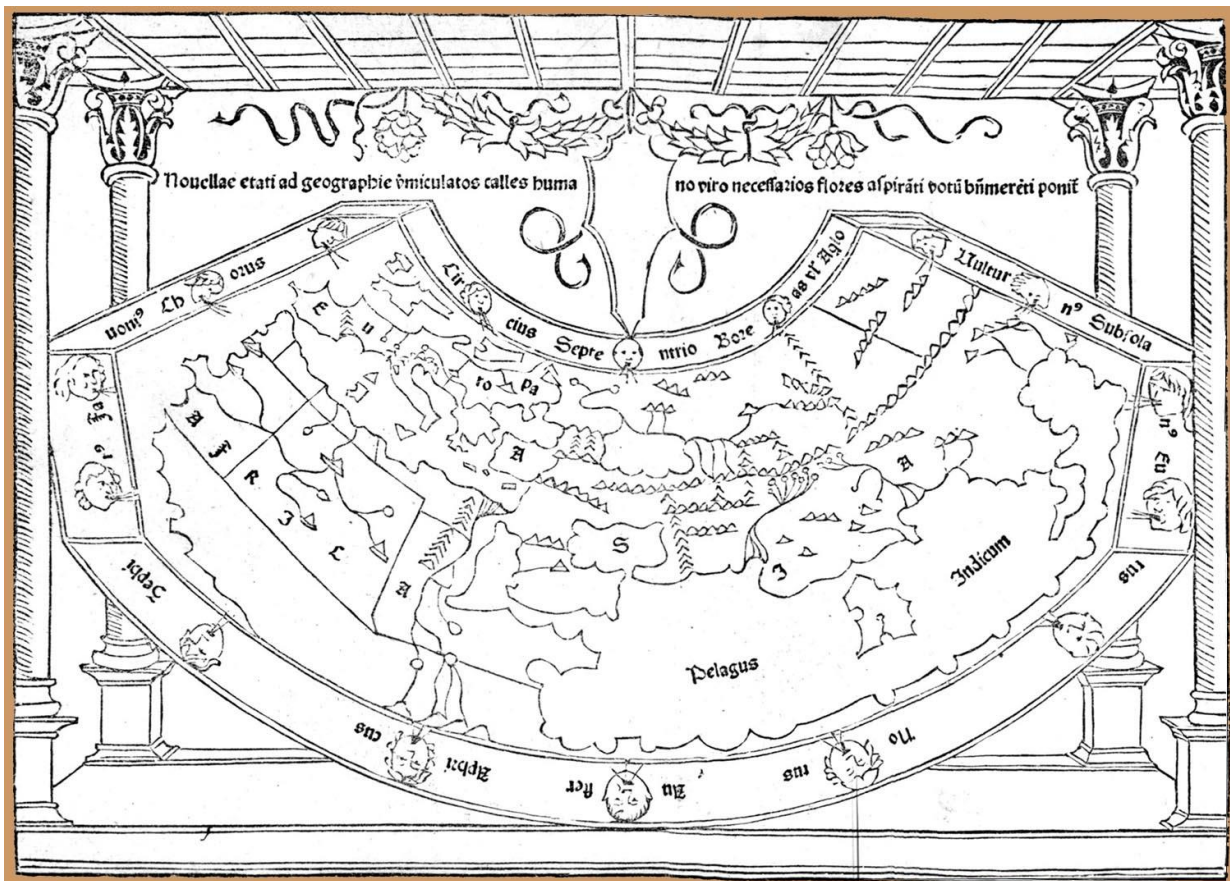


Figure 1. 1482 Ptolemaic World Map

Pomponius Mela. *Cosmographi geographia*. Venice: Erhardus Ratdolt, 1482. Source: James Ford Bell Library; University of Minnesota. Online. Retrieved November 3rd, 2015.

Apian, writing in the early 16th-century, first mentions topography as a study focused within a limited (small) geographical space⁷. Moreover, topography was presented by Apian as a geographical inquiry based on a “positive attitude toward observation and experience” (Strauss 99). Although direct observation was an essential part of a topographic account, a strict empirical methodology had not yet been defined in the 16th-century (Jones 67-68). Nevertheless, early topographers like Jacques Cartier and Jean de Léry stand apart from their contemporaries by writing with greater focus and specificity the things they observed (Wolfzettel 36-37). The preference for experience and direct observation was introduced by Ptolemy’s *Geographia*, a text which was widely distributed in the first three decades of the 1500s (Strauss 89). It was by reading Ptolemy, for example, that 16th-century writers are first instructed: “seeing is better than reading [;] the great store of knowledge is obtained from the reports of those who have diligently explored certain regions” (Strauss 93-94).

A method of close observation rather than a compilation of second-hand reports became increasingly relevant to critical thinkers who wanted to learn about the Earth and its people. Thus “topography” moved towards describing what was seen and experienced in a single place (*topos*), with attention to minor details guided by an inquisitive and close enquiry. Travel, direct observation and an accurate sense of geography were a prerequisite of topography (Strauss 90). The importance of observation is also

⁷ Apian further distinguishes between “topography and “chorography”. The latter term is borrowed directly from the title and method used by Pomponius Mela’s *De Chorographia* (ca. 43 CE). The Latin words of Greek origin refer to geographical works covering a region (*choros*), and those covering one particular place (*topos* - *topographia*); both are limited in scope and smaller than the study of the whole earth (*ge – geographia*) (Romer 4-5).

fundamental to L ry's *Histoire d'un voyage*; the author is more emphatic than Thevet in the importance of sensory experience. "Mon intention et mon sujet sera en ceste histoire, de seulement declarer ce que j'ay pratiqu , veu, ouy et observ " (105). / "My intention and my subject in this history will be to declare only what I have experienced, seen, heard and observed" [trans. mine]. The avowed commitment to empirical observation for L ry is a personal decision as opposed to a demand made by a recognized topographic *method*. Thus, by writing in a mode that emphasizes sensory experience L ry was moving away from the conventions of earlier travel writers and cosmographers. Wes Williams argues that L ry (and to a lesser extent Thevet) writes in a "poetics of extreme witness", highlighting the adventures and risks undertaken by the voyager (34). It is this claim of personal endangerment that gives the writer his authority and the prerogative to contradict others. Within the text, the appearance of danger simultaneously appeal to a sense of pathos and the credibility of the narrator. Yet, for L ry, the witness claim is not just a rhetorical trope (as it often is for Thevet), but a consistent narrative theme that portrays his *Histoire d'un voyage* as a testament to a personal mission sanctioned by God. The recollection and retelling of adventures makes *Histoire d'un voyage* an autobiographical work. Lestringant states that "L ry's *Histoire d'un voyage* combines the *Bildungsroman* with the adventure novel, provided we do not forget that it is a testimony whose truth is affirmed at each point" (*The Philosopher's Breviary* 129). The Calvinist's discourse is that of a witness who survives many tests in order to pen his account to commemorate his divine election while simultaneously correcting the false claims of the papist Thevet. Moreover, L ry's Calvinist beliefs augmented his sense that he had been granted inordinate grace by God to act on "the responsibility placed upon him, to bear witness to

the truth” (Williams 35). Thus, the topographic mission is always guided by a Calvinist theology.

Léry views his topographic oeuvre as one privileged by direct observation and the oath of a righteous witness. The claim must have attracted readers to the topographic text because in later works Thevet also exaggerates his dedication to first-hand experience.

It is true that the ancients have written about this place, but for the most part their words were based on their own imaginations, or mere reports; whereas I call on only the evidence of what I have myself ocularly seen [*ce qu’oculairement i’ay veu*], or heard from those who are in the place itself. (*Cosmographie*, cited in Williams 30)

Attempting to safeguard his reputation after Léry’s assaults on *Les singularités*, Thevet noticeably fortifies his assertion of first-hand knowledge as a way of defending the authority of his text. The rivals were facing challenges not only from each other but also from other travel writers as well as from skeptical readers such as Michel de Montaigne.

Léry is ‘not unaware’ of the common saying which accords to old men and travellers the ‘license to lie’, but he assures his readers that his text is as truthful concerning Brazil as was his earlier account of the siege and famine of Sancerre. (Williams 37)

Honest, direct reportage was as important to the individual author’s reputation as it was for the success of the written work. Michel de Montaigne’s preference for topography can also be understood as an indictment of the cosmographic urge to describe such a large

geographic expanse as one could not have possibly “witnessed”. The meaning of “witness” is therefore stretched by cosmography – to pass by a place does not make one a witness in the same way as the traveler who resides in a place for a year or more.

Cosmography and topography were proposed (by Apian) as predominantly geographic approaches. The pronounced ethnographic emphasis that is evident in Thevet’s *Les singularités* (and subsequently in *Cosmographie*), was not only innovative, but also contributed to the enduring appeal of the author’s work (Lestringant, *Le Brésil* 7). Cosmography, for Thevet, was much more than “geography” – it was a scientific pursuit for collecting the sacred diversity of life (Lestringant *Le Brésil* 8-9). The discovery of a previously unknown, and populated continent sparked an interest in ethnography in Europe. The earliest evidence of widely published proto-ethnographic information – based on direct observation – comes in 1505. Reports were published as broadsheets with illustrations and a brief description; the subject of the prints is none other than the Tupinamba described in Vespucci’s *Mondus Novus* (Leitch 134). Engravings and illustrations often accompanied the publications of travel writers, as was the case for both Thevet and Léry (Lestringant, *Le Huguenot* 145). Although images of cannibals had a history dating to the 11th century, the 16th century saw a great proliferation of visual depictions of cannibalistic tribes in the New World – the Tupi being a preferred choice (Zika 87-88). Even when cannibalism was not depicted explicitly, maps and other New World illustrations were often decorated with racks of human limbs and random body parts hanging from hooks to suggest the presence of cannibals. The illustrated borders of mid-16th-century maps, for instance, contain visualizations of the dismemberment of human bodies and cannibalistic feasts associated with America. Figure 2, below, shows

a map of the world after the discovery of America. In the lower left corner, a gruesome assortment of hanging limbs announces the presence of the cannibals.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 2. 1555 Universal Cosmographic Map

Hans Holbein. "Weltkarte". *Novis Orbis*. Basel: Grynaeus, S. & J. Huttich., 1555. Source: Gallica; Bibliothèque nationale de France. Web. 23 Nov. 2015.

Bridging the New with the Old: Thevet's Analogies; Léry's Metaphors

At first glance, Thevet's *Les singularites* often reads as a collection of digressive anecdotes rather than a comprehensive analysis. The style of the work is also the result of a method of comparison used by the cosmographer: bridging observation with an analogical ordering paradigm that relies heavily on pre-existing concepts of human

societies. Lestringant calls this a “montage” of new observations onto existing knowledge (*Le Brésil* 6). Typological and analogical connections bridge current and past knowledge in order to illustrate a topic. This manner of comparison was frequently used by other cosmographers. For example, one reads in Muenster’s *Cosmographia* that the Turks abstain from wine just like Roman women (Hodgen, “Sebastian Muenster” 520). Thevet uses the same strategy to append his observations to similar cases cited in cosmographic works. For instance, Thevet tells readers that, like the Romans, Tupi men incite their young to be belligerent (97-98). Thus, analogy is the act of an a priori principle that seizes two distinct things, rejects their differences and declares them to be alike according to some common perceived quality. Michel Foucault is highly skeptical of the epistemological validity of cosmography and other contemporary disciplines.

By positing resemblance as the link between signs and what they indicate (thus making resemblance both a third force and a sole power, since it resides in both the mark and the content in identical fashion), sixteenth-century knowledge condemned itself to never knowing anything but the same thing, and to knowing that thing only at the unattainable end of an endless journey (61).

Whereas cultural and chronological relevance may be called into question by modern readers accustomed to a historicist hermeneutical approach, the cosmographic paradigm appears to reveal that certain human traits (and, often, monstrous forms) bridge the past and the present through a continuity of analogical resemblance. Montaigne’s call for a rustic, simple reporter is, perhaps, the philosopher’s desire to avoid the cosmographic ordering paradigm that finds analogies for what it describes.

Cosmographic writing as well as the cartographic projections of the 16th century sought to cover the entire world (Conley, *An Errant Eye* 25). In order to define the resemblance between the known and the unknown, analogies establish relations between various particulars (i.e. “singularités”, “singularities”) under a general paradigm that appears to be universally valid. The cosmographic writer sought to see the world as a whole, unified structure from above:

The bird's-eye view was not something that one could have experienced, even by chance, in the sixteenth century, but could only dream of: an ancient dream, dating from Greek culture. In his [Geographia/Cosmographia], Ptolemy teaches the geographer how to accomplish his task, to draw a picture of the inhabited part of the earth, the "oikoumene." Such a picture is intended to be a "schema kat'analogon," an abstract shape linked with the real world through measurement analogy. (Nutti 126)

Cosmographers followed Ptolemy's method of viewing the world as a space with various recurring patterns that could be seen from above. The model of the chain of being and divine creation as outlined in Thevet's *Cosmographie* (Preface) provides a system of ordering in which the newly discovered world is rationalized by analogical comparison to the knowledge (and Thevet's experience) of the Old World. I will argue in the next chapter that the cosmographer further systematizes his observations in *Les singularités* through an Aristotelian epistemic model.

Les singularités is a collection of curiosities in which analogy creates the basis for subsequent categorization. Thevet embarks upon *Les singularités* by relating the remarkable things he sees and hears as a collage of topics, but he proceeds to

systematize and evaluate his observations. Thevet's methods, esp. his tendency to amass examples of strange things – a gathering of “singularités” – represents a conventional cosmographic style of description that amassed strange customs and things (Hodgen, *Early Anthropology* 161-163). However, Thevet also introduces his own novel categories, clearly based on his own his analogically-reduced understanding of the essential similarities linking things. In *Cosmographie*, for example, he places the sloth which he first describes in *Les singularités* under a category entitled “things which live on air” because these animals live high in the trees and do not appear to eat (Lestringant, *Les singularités* 122). Despite recognizing the ‘newness’ of the American continent, Thevet uses an “outdated analogic system (‘reseau analogique’) to position new discoveries in a pre-established, stable, hierarchic system” (Reeser 220). So fond is the cosmographer of this paradigm, that he sometimes devises his own families of analogical resemblance in order to demonstrate his findings.

Foucault writes in *Les mots et les choses* that analogy is adapted in the 16th century from its earlier Greek variant by the development of two overlapping models of association: convenience (*convenientia*) and emulation (*aemulatio*) (24). “Through it, all the figures in the whole universe can be drawn together” (Foucault 24). The first, convenience, is based on proximity, or things that naturally affect each other due to some measure of nearness. The connection is a dual physical and metaphysical one that is best demonstrated by the Chain of Being (20-21). Emulation, by contrast is the ability for things to reflect one another across expanses of time and space. It is especially valid for pairs and twins, in which a connection is not dependent on space. Foucault provides the example of a vivid reflection, in which the less alterable form is dominant (i.e. the face is

dominant while the reflection in the mirror is alterable) (22-23). In Chapter XXXIV of *Les singularités*, for instance, Thevet constructs analogies based on zonal divisions of the Earth. He responds to debates of past cosmographers with regards to the significance of latitudinal divisions and whether the earth should be considered as a united whole or bipartite entity because of its equally divided halves by the equator (142-143). Thevet considers whether the relationship is best characterized as one of convenience – i.e. the two parts touch – or of emulation – i.e. the hemispheres reflect one another. Thevet settles these questions by a complex analogical model applied to the inhabitants of each zone. The cosmographer postulates that the people of the “Antipodes” are opposite one another (across hemispheres), with “Antèques” being those on opposite hemispheres but the same range of latitudes, and “Périèques” are people that inhabit the same latitudes on the same hemisphere (144-145). Thevet concludes that both convenience and resemblance define these categories. “Il y a même raison et analogie de l’ un à l’autre. Mais notez bien que ces deux hémisphères ont un seul et même centre dans la terre” (146). / “There is both reason and analogy from one to the other. Consider carefully that these two hemispheres have one and the same centre in the world [trans. mine]. This model for pairing similar and dissimilar resemblances and conveniences (analogies) is based on a midpoint which is both a centre common to both and an axis of reflection – as a point of contact it establishes nearness (*convenientia*); as an axis of reflection, one hemisphere resembles the other (*aemulatio*). Thevet’s claim that the hemispheres have a common dividing line provides the “reason and analogy” for the conceptual distinctions that the cosmographer proposes (145). Difference and sameness are both satisfied by these three concepts. The pre-existing concept of “antipodean” that suggested a complete

inversion of human forms (Hodgen, *Early Anthropology* 52) is redefined by Thevet as an analogical basis of comparison. The cosmographers also introduces the terms “antèques” and “perièques” as ways in which conditions of sameness within and across the two hemispheres. The division of the world into zones of resemblance reflects Thevet’s cosmographic program: to find recurring patterns that unite the world instead of considering difference as complete disjunction or reversal.

In comparison, Léry uses analogical models of signification less frequently. Metaphors which specify the precise juxtaposed quality are preferred by the Calvinist topographer. When describing the geological mechanism which connects islands and continents underneath the sea, Léry writes: “comme liées par racines, si ainsi faut parler, au profond et en l’interieur des gouffres” (515) / “as though linked by roots, so to speak, in the depths and insides of cavities” [trans. mine]. “Roots” in this metaphor is a quality of being anchored in earth; it is used with a precision and impermanence that makes comparisons more figurative without establishing an enduring analogical link that subordinates difference. In this example, there is no implied ordering principle; metaphor, unlike analogy is never meant to be taken literally. Léry’s metaphors are markedly less methodical and sustained – he describes the back and forth movement of tides as a ‘seesaw’, for instance (515). As with the “roots” of islands, the transfer or meaning occurs at a specific locus where these two terms ‘touch’, in this case, the ‘cyclical movement of something that moves while staying fixed’ captures the essence of the metaphor.

Entering the World of the Tupi: Seeing Sameness and Difference

Thevet begins his description of the people he encounters in Brazil in the 28th chapter of the *Les singularités* by describing the religion of the “savages”. After confirming their ignorance of God, Thevet assumes an ironic tone as if to mock: “Les uns ont reconnu le Soleil comme souverain, les autres la Lune, et quelques autres les étoiles; les autres autrement ainsi que nous recitent les histoires” (39-40). / “Some recognized the Sun as their lord, others the Moon, yet others the stars; the others worshiped differently, as the histories tell us” [trans. mine]. The statement conveys a lack of surprise which plays with the audience's expectation. It confirms that the Tupi are polytheistic and immediately superimposes on them the typologies of “savage” developed by earlier writers. Thevet suggests that his readers already know what to expect. This is partly a rhetorical effect, but also a reflection on Thevet's propensity for finding sameness. As soon as the cosmographer enters into the region inhabited by the Tupi, he already sees that they are ‘like’ the others. Thevet is among the first French travellers to write about the lands around the short-lived colony in Brazil, thus most of his readers could not have known what to expect (other than what information was generally associated with “cannibales”). Nevertheless, Thevet adopts a dismissive and distant tone because other accounts attest to similar beliefs. Thus, novelty is at once attenuated by the cosmographic genre that predicts the qualities of the “savage”. A direct analogy to other pantheistic peoples removes the need to consider polytheism as something new. The cosmographer is therefore prepared to observe new forms of belief, but they are predicted and controlled by a literary tradition that can immediately find a place for these singularities by analogical

connections. The application of the cosmographic paradigm creates the impression that new things are quite alike the old.

Léry first mentions the "savages" in his fifth chapter. In his brief preview of the Brazilians he describes four tribes that cooperate with difficulty with one another, by living in proximity and trading together (154). Léry appears to begin his ethnography in a similar fashion to Thevet's: he compares one tribe of fast runners, the "Ouetaca", to the Basques because they both speak strange languages and run quickly (155). This familiarization of a strange group with something closer to France bridges the distance of the Atlantic, it is a gloss that suggests that perhaps things are not as strange across the ocean as one expects. It mimics the generalizations developed by previous travel writers, but this is where the similarities end. As one reads further into *Histoire*, readers realize that Léry knows almost nothing of the Ouetaca he first mentioned because they do not interact with the Tupi and their allies (the French). When he begins describing the Tupinamba directly (Ch. VIII), Léry no longer relies on simple analogies to equate the Tupi to another nation. Instead, things become "non moins estrange que difficile à croire a ceux qui ne l'ont veu" (212-214) / "no less strange than difficult to believe for those who have not seen it" [trans. Whatley 57]. This rapid change in tone, and the change in style it sparks, is clearly a result of direct experience overturning established modes of writing about alterity. The topographer risks going down the path of cosmography if it weren't for his confrontation with a reality that could no longer be described by the kind of glosses deplored by Montaigne: analogies that create a semblance of similarity where very little exists. The eyes lead the topographer in a different direction. Thus, topography, unlike cosmography,

goes from a familiar terrain to an unfamiliar one that changes the way the writer describes his experience.

Detailed, narrativized descriptions become Léry's main technique of writing about the Tupi. In one example, Léry attempts to explain to readers something quite foreign to them: the making and mounting of the penis sheath used by older Tupi men. Léry considers the possibility that they wear the implement for modesty or to hide deformity but the author is cautiously inconclusive.

Combien que je ne m'en sois point autrement enquis, j'ay plustot opinion que c'est pour cacher quelque infirmité qu'ils peuvent avoir en leur vieillesse en ceste partie-là". (216)

Although I have not made closer inquiry, I am still of the opinion that it is rather to hide infirmity that their old age may cause in that member". [Trans. Whatley 58]

His descriptions are often guided by a functionalist logic that seeks to uncover the purpose of certain customs. In the absence of analogy, new details search for new explanations. Léry's reasoning appears uncannily modern at times, especially when he refuses to render judgement. The topographer allows for doubt to emerge in his own evaluations on matters of custom and interpretation. One such case is the description of the lower lip piercing that Tupi men keep to wear a decorative jade piece:

Que si au reste quelques fois quand ces pierres sont ostées, nos Toüoupinambaoults pour leur plaisir font passer leurs langues par ceste fente de la levre, estans lors advis à ceux qui les regardent qu'ils ayent deux bouches: je

vous laisse à penser, s'il fait bon voir de ceste façon, et si cela les difforme ou non. (217)

Sometimes when these stones are removed, our Tupinamba amuse themselves by sticking their tongues through that slit in the lip, giving the impression to the onlooker that that they have two mouths; I leave to you to judge whether it is pleasant to see them do that, and whether that deforms them or not. [Trans. Whatley 58]

By taking such a relativistic position early into the portrayal of the Tupi, Léry sets the tone for reading *Histoire d'un voyage*. The topographer shows that the customs that shape aesthetics have no reason in themselves, but are, on the contrary, quite arbitrary. Moreover, Léry's descriptions of the Tupi are devoid of analogies and cosmographic generalizations in order to defer categorical judgement on. A particular custom, the piercing of the lower lip, is not placed within a hierarchical (universal) system of values. Thus, the deferment or suspension of evaluation (relativism) opens a window for positive description of otherness. Moreover, by making appearance a relative matter there arises a possibility that strangeness of appearance is merely superficial and unworthy of being considered as the basis for true 'difference'. This position is a departure from medieval ethnological accounts and early cosmographies which depended heavily on appearance, especially on fantastical (and monstrous) bodily features (Hodgen 128-130). Comparatively, Thevet is more likely to render judgement on the qualities he describes, be they negative (the vast majority), or positive. The Franciscan almost never defers judgement to his readers, leaving less room for the reader to participate in an active

understanding of the subject. Léry's *Histoire* is, for the most part, less argumentative and more reflective than *Les singularités*— the ethnographic descriptions are freer of comparison to other historical and geographical contexts. However, the adventure into the land of the Tupi is framed by a narrative of Calvinist righteousness appealing to a Protestant ethos that requires no further justification. Léry's *Histoire d'un voyage* is a text that bears witness to a time and place where the author was an active observer. The topographer teaches himself to write in a new way in order to record his observations while also providing interpretative freedom to readers.

Thevet writes with a certain detachment that makes his knowledge less corporeal and more transcendental (Lestringant, *Jean de Léry* 67). His preference for belief over custom results in the inclusion of mythological and legendary stories that are attributed to Tupi cosmology. The Catholic friar translates Tupi mythological narratives into stories familiar to a Christian audience (Whatley, *History of a Voyage* xxxi). One such case is found in Ch. XXIV, the first chapter dedicated to the Tupi. Thevet begins with the myth of the arrival of the sweet potato (*hetich*). By starting with a creation story, the cosmographer appears to retell what he directly heard from the Tupi. According to Thevet, the cannibals claim that the *hetich* was brought by a deified ancestor. Before the arrival of the *hetich*-bearing ancestor, writes Thevet, the Tupi ate grass “like wild beasts” (50-51). The first details of the savages are therefore that they believe in many gods, yet honour one deified ancestor above others for bringing *hetich* (51). Thevet begins not by describing the people – esp. their physical appearance – like Léry, but rather addresses their mythology and the food that nourishes them. Although the cosmographer seems to have avoided analogical reasoning, he has, in fact, already chosen it for the purpose. The

cosmographer *collects* the creation story, but not without altering it. The details are structured in a way which reflects a Renaissance hierarchy of beings: a divine power grants humans the life forms that sustain them. It shows that Thevet can be very skilled in introducing new stories using familiar narratives and recognizable Christian motifs. Thevet does not begin his introduction by citing Genesis directly, as was common with the medieval ethno-historical writers following a formula laid out by Isidore of Seville (Lestringant, *Jean de Léry* 176-177; Hodgen, *Early Anthropology* 61). Instead, the friar begins his description of the Tupi with something resembling a creation myth. Jeanneret writes that Thevet borrows the syncretistic forms of Renaissance humanists when writing about religion (230). The cosmographer takes the role of a translator that introduces new content by utilizing the motifs familiar to his audience while shaping the expectations of the reader. Thevet's entry into the world of the cannibals is organized by a structure of *convenientia* borrowed from Renaissance ontotheology – the existence of a staple food (which Thevet compares to wheat and bread) is part of an allegorical hierarchy of Being connected to people and the Creator. Christian metaphysical assumptions are central to Thevet's translation and recording of Tupi myths despite the incongruence of Catholic theology with Tupi cosmology (Viveiros de Castro, *The Inconsistency of the Indian Soul* 13-15, 47). Lacking other methods of inquiry with which to explore Tupi mythology, Thevet relies on his analogical reasoning – syncretism. While analogies usually illustrate a resemblance or an essential quality linking the pairs, sometimes Thevet's analogies seem to serve no purpose other than to indicate that there is a precedent for the singularity or to emphasize its perceived importance. In one such case, Thevet states that the Tupi worship a deity he names "Grand Caraiibe" in the same way as the Turks worship

Mohammed (40). The analogical connection in this case is dubious – Thevet could be speaking about the frequency of prayer, the degree of piety, the movements of the body during prayer, or any other quality of “worship”. His lack of precision fails to explain the nature of resemblance.

The Renaissance hermeneutical approach of finding resemblances through *aemulatio* allows Thevet to present similitudes that reflect one another’s essential qualities. Emulation is the sole basis for creating analogical pairs – one in the New World and the other in the Old. These analogies are linguistic tools for introducing the unfamiliar by reference to the familiar. Thevet, for instance, compares a Tupi canoe to a North African light boat called an “*alamadie*” (84). Thevet thereby allows for the two different boats to be brought together in the reader’s mind in order for meaning to be transferred from one to the other. At the same time, the author reveals his extensive experience by using an analogy with which 16th-century French readers may be unfamiliar. The only quality that appears to validate this analogy is the size and elongated shape of the two watercrafts. Only the cosmographer understands what makes this analogy salient. Moreover, the differences between the two boats are too great to make the analogy sufficient – the Tupi canoe is made of bark (according to Thevet) whereas the *alamadie* is a very narrow boat carved out of a single tree trunk (Lestringant, *Les singularités* 84). Despite the imprecision of the analogy and the possibility that some readers are not familiar with the *alamadie*, the comparison of a Brazilian boat to one in North Africa appears to make the unfamiliar familiar. Thevet’s collections of singularities are moulded by his affinity for trapping these observations in (ill-fitting) analogies.

Aemulatio is the primary logical basis for Thevet's analogical comparisons. The Tupi belief in a mythical flood is quickly recognized by Thevet as an emulation of the biblical flood. The Franciscan links a Tupi belief to Christian doctrine by showing how the former mirrors the latter, albeit imperfectly. *Aemulatio* is a flexible tool of comparison because one manifestation need only reflect the other vaguely. Thevet uses the flood myth to suggest that durability and truth are on the side of the Bible (and written culture) whereas the corrupt and twisted reflection of the myth is the oral version told by the Tupi:

Or l'eau fut si excessivement grande en ce déluge, qu'elle surpassait les plus hautes montagnes de ce pays: et ainsi tout le peuple fut submergé et perdu. Ce qu'ils tiennent pour assuré, ainsi que nous tenons celui que nous propose la sainte escriture. Toutefois il leur est trop aisé de faillir, attendu qu'ils n'ont aucun moyen d'escriture, pour garder la mémoire des choses, sinon comme ils ont ouï dire à leurs pères. (126)

The water was so overwhelming in the flood that it surpassed the highest mountains of that country, thus all the people were submerged and lost. This [account] they believe with certainty, just as we believe [with certainty], what is proposed to us by Holy Scripture. However, it is quite easy for them to be wrong since they have no writing with which to keep the memory of things, other than what they have heard from their fathers. [Trans. mine]

It is noteworthy that the didactic purpose attached to the translated story has nothing to do with the Tupi, but is rather an affirmation of the veracity of the Bible. The imperfect

accord between the Tupi myth and Genesis is attributed to the absence of writing. Thevet sees writing not just as a vehicle for transmitting memory, but also a system of ensuring the accuracy of facts and events. Truth is both expressed and safeguarded against loss by inscription. A literate and learned cosmographer would have had considerable regard for his own ability to read and write which, after all, he relies on to cite ancient writers and the word of God. Moreover, as readers are frequently reminded, the Catholic friar considers the Bible to be the ultimate revelation of truth. Unlike the historians who “raconte” (tell), “la Sainte Ecriture” (Holy Scripture) “témoigne” (attests) (60-61).

Writing in 1557, Thevet would have been influenced by the cosmographic treatises of the early 16th-century which placed great importance on letters and writing. Apian, for instance, used the same geometric grid that was also used to sketch the Vitruvian man and the alphabet (Conley, *The Self-Made Map* 85-86). In addition, Thevet’s argument that illiteracy is responsible for the corruption of truth and, consequently, lack of belief in God, suggests that “letters were seen as part of a Christian, civilizing program” among the literate (missionaries) going to New World (De Looze 9). For Thevet, therefore, the inability of the Tupi to write is simultaneously their inability to access and retain knowledge – they lack the mirror which reflects the truth of the universe, consequently they are deprived of the truth of revelation.

Like Thevet, Léry holds writing in high esteem. The topographer reflects on writing to compare himself and his literate civilization to the Tupi. For the Calvinist, writing is a divine gift that can never be severed from its giver. Instead of serving as a means of gaining worldly (cosmographic) knowledge, writing is proof of mankind’s state of depravity and fall from grace. A feeling of despair seems to come over Léry during his reflection on

the people who appeared trapped by their state of illiteracy. The Calvinist sees how the Tupi struggle to comprehend the process by which writing conveys meaning and how much it encumbers their understanding of God's work.

Semblablement ignorans la creation du monde, ils ne distinguent point les jour par noms, n'y n'ont acception de l'un plus que de l'autre: comme aussi ils ne content sepmaines, mois, ni années, ains seulement nombrent et retiennent les temps par les Lunes. Quant à l'escriture, soit sainte ou prophane, non seulement aussi ils ne savent que c'est, mais qui plus est, n'ayans nuls caracteres pour signifier quelque chose: quand du commencement que je fus en leur pays pour apprendre leur langage, j'escrivois quelques sentences leur lisant puis apres devant eux, en estimans que cela fut une sorcelerie ils disoyent l'un à l'autre: N'est ce pas merveille que cestuy-cy qui n'eust sceu dire hier un mot en nostre langue, en vertu de ce papier qu'il tient, et qui le fait ainsi parler, soit maintenant entendu de nous? (379-380)

Likewise being ignorant of the creation of the world, they do not distinguish the days by name, nor do they give one day preference over another, any more than they count weeks, months, or years; they only number and retain time by moons. They know nothing of writing, either sacred or secular; indeed they have no kind of characters that signify anything at all. When I was first in their country, in order to learn their language I wrote a number of sentences which I read aloud to them. Thinking that this was some kind of witchcraft, they said to each other, "Is it not a marvel that this fellow, who yesterday could not have said a single word in our

language, can now be understood by us, by virtue of that paper that he is holding and which makes him speak thus? [Trans. Whatley 134-135]

Readers of *Histoire d'un voyage* are made aware of the large disparity between their own literacy and the condition of the Tupi. Léry views writing as the ability of language to keep records of time. Thus the Tupi only measure moons because they do not have the written accounts necessary for greater divisions of time. Writing and history are closely associated for Léry. Not only is writing important for the long-term, chronological organization of events, but it is the continuous link between the beginning of the world (creation) and his own history. The power of written letters is such that the Tupi express awe when their newly-arrived guest is able to orally reproduce their language in a comprehensible form by reading a transcription. Léry suggests that writing and reading are imbued with a power that seems to surpass human capacities of simpler, oral communication. The ethnographer takes on the role of an honest reporter who passes on the views of the people he meets. It is in the following paragraph in *Histoire d'un voyage* that the author speaks to the ultimate importance of writing:

Parquoy, je di que, qui voudroit icy amplifier ceste matiere, il se presente un beau sujet, tant pour louer et exalter l'art d'escriture, que pour monstres combien les nations qui habitent ces trois parties du monde, Europe, Asie, et Afrique, ont de quoy louer Dieu par dessus les sauvages de ceste quatriesme partie dite Amerique: car au lieu qu'eux ne se peuvent rien communiquer sinon verbalement: nous au contraire avons cest avantage que sans bouger d'un lieu, par le moyen de l'escriture et des lettres que nous envoyons, nous pouvons declarer nos secrets à ceux qu'il nous plaist, et fussent-ils esloignez jusques au

bout du monde. Ainsi outre les sciences que nous apprenons par les livres dont ces sauvages sont semblablement du tout destituez, encore ceste invention d'escrire que nous avons, dont ils sont aussi entierement privez, doit estre mise au rang des dons singuliers que les hommes de par deçà ont receu de Dieu.

Here is a fine subject for anyone to who would like to enlarge upon it: both to praise and to exalt the art of writing, and to show how the nations that inhabit these three parts of the world – Europe, Asia, and Africa – have reason to praise God more than do the savages of that fourth part, called “America.” For while they can communicate nothing except by the spoken word, we, on the other hand have this advantage, that without budging from our place, by means of writing and the letters that we send, we can declare our secrets to whomever we choose, even to the ends of the earth. So even aside from the learning that we acquire from books, of which the savages seem likewise completely destitute, this invention of writing, which we possess and of which they are just as utterly deprived, must be ranked among the singular gifts which men over here have received from God. [Trans. Whatley 135]

Léry begins to exalt writing without entirely leaving his main subject. The topographer’s conscious understanding that writing comprises one of the principal differences between the Old World and the New seems to follow from his realization that the Tupi attributed magical qualities to his written sentences. Thus, the “savages” are teaching Léry a lesson about his own society and the significance of written communication. Although, Léry’s praise of writing appears to depart from the main subject, it is actually a conclusion of his

comparative observations. The importance of written letters also demonstrates an awareness of the very system of signification which makes the *Histoire d'un voyage* possible. The immense privilege that writing bestows upon literate people becomes a way of uniting the narrator and the reader by inviting them to reflect on the world of the Tupi.

Léry borrows the words (and views) of the Tupi to make a pro-literary argument in a tone that is simultaneously proud and melancholic. The Calvinist author has the power to write about the savages and to praise God (who has granted the gift of letters to the author and his readers). The implication is that the Tupi cannot praise God, nor can they write about themselves. It is Léry's account which, like the letters used to spread influence to the ends of the earth, will speak for the Tupi. The ability to remove speech from its immediate surroundings also allows writers to decontextualize their works, to escape the bounds of the moment. The author's impressions, thoughts, and memories are safeguarded against time and allowed to be carried to different places by being written down. Moreover, time itself can be extended by writing – one can write about specific months, years and centuries past in a way that one cannot by relying on oral narrative. Instead of ending with the last breath of a spoken word, the written word endures and may be reproduced indefinitely. These qualities of writing point to its divine origin for Léry; he realizes that the absence of letters may absolve the Tupi from their ignorance of God. A Calvinist would perhaps conclude that to be deprived of the gift that is necessary to know God means to be cut off from eternal life. The young pastor must have been saddened by the predicament of “ces pauvres gens” (384) / “these poor people” [trans. mine]. Lestringant affirms the critical moral and theological importance of writing for Léry:

Il y a en définitive chez Léry un privilège exorbitant de l'écriture, qui réunit en elle la puissance conservatrice et dominatrice de la trace écrite, et l'efficacité, la promptitude toujours présentes du verbe. Au lieu que Socrate considère l'écriture comme simulacre ou comme illusion, un cadavre de mémoire en quelque sorte, chez le calviniste Léry elle est pleine de la parole qu'elle renferme et qu'elle reproduit à volonté, non point de façon mécanique, mais par une fécondité inépuisable, en une improvisation incessante et des variations toujours actualisées. (*Jean de Léry* 114-115)

There is definitively in Léry an exorbitant privilege placed on writing, which brings with it the power of conservation and domination of the written record, and the efficiency and promptness of language. Unlike Socrates who considers writing as a simulacrum or as an illusion, a 'corpse of memory' of sorts, for the Calvinist Léry writing is full of the power of the language that it contains and it reproduces whenever it wants, not mechanically, but by an inexhaustible fecundity: in a ceaseless improvisation and variations always realized. [Trans. mine]

Therefore, lack of writing appears for Léry, as the deprivation of a most beneficent and divine grace. The act of writing the *Histoire d'un voyage* demonstrates the author's appreciation for the written word. However, it is by reflecting on the response of his Tupi associates that Léry is inspired to praise writing. The lengthy comparison of his own literacy to the illiteracy of the Tupi further demonstrates that Léry enters into a closer relationship with the people he describes as compared to Thevet.

The Local and the Cosmic

The Calvinist begins his report on Brazil by focusing on the place (the land around Guanabara Bay) and proceeds to describe the Tupi people in detail. The topographer describes their bodily appearance, corporeal decorations as well as how they make flour and *caouin* (sweet potato beer). The observations are not randomly ordered, instead they indicate the first things that Léry finds noteworthy as a traveller entering a Tupi village. Moreover, they are not a collection of individual “singularities”, but rather show a distinct literary organization that reflects the observations made by an outsider when he first seeks to know the Tupi. By focusing on processes of alteration and cultivation (of body, and of food) the topographer displays his interest in cultural phenomena.

It is noteworthy that the topographer does not begin by describing beliefs and material objects, but rather customs. The topographer, instead of introducing the *hetich* of the Tupi through a mythological narrative, invites the reader into a Tupi village to see people altering their cherished root staple. The reader is told of the abundance provided by the prolific growth of the many root vegetables (241). After a detailed descriptions of the growth, harvesting and grinding of the root, Léry creates a literary portrait of the making of *caouin*. As if to demonstrate the unfamiliarity of readers with the fermented beverage, Léry describes how naked girls prepare a pulp by chewing the ground root. The discussion includes a comparison that invites readers into more familiar territory: the contemplation of similarities between wine and *caouin*. Indeed, it is through the same process of purification, argues Léry, that one can understand how the mastication of root vegetables by young women does not pollute the final drink. Léry responds to the disgust his compatriots and fellow travellers felt at first seeing the brew produced from the

partially-chewed pulp of roots spat into containers to ferment. The topographer reminds readers that grapes are also crushed by the bare feet of French farmers, yet wine is drunk without worry of contamination. Comparing the two fermentation methods, L ry writes, “je respons que nostre *Caou-in* se purge aussi, et partant, quant   ce point, qu’il y a mesme raison de l’un   l’autre” (256) / “I reply that our *caouin* is purged the same way, and that therefore on this point the one custom is as good as the other” [trans. Whatley 77]. The purpose of this relativistic statement is to displace the reader’s positionality – to invite the reader to see things from the Tupi’s point of view (through L ry). The topographer writes of “our” *caouin* for the purposes of this comparison. Asking the reader to imagine *caouin* as their own drink may bring about a temporary estrangement to wine – a distance needed to analyze both customs objectively. The idea that both fermentation methods are equally valid is an indication of L ry’s movement towards a relativistic perspective. The topographer pursues this comparative and relativistic approach throughout the text. For instance, L ry compares cannibalism to the violence of France in the midst of violent religious strife.

Parquoy qu'on n'haborre plus tant la Barbarie des Sauvages Anthropophages, cest   dire mangeurs d'hommes: car puis qu'il y en a de tels, voire d'autant plus detestables et pires au milieu de nous qu'eux, comme il a est  veu, ne se ruent que sur les autres nations qui leur sont ennemies, et ceux-ci se sont plongez au sang de leurs parens, voisins, et compatriotes, il ne faut pas aller si loin qu'en l'Amerique ni qu'en leur pays pour voir choses si monstrueuses et prodigieuses.

(377)

So let us henceforth no longer abhor so very greatly the cruelty of the anthropophagous – that is, man-eating – savages. For since there are some here in our midst even worse and more detestable than those who, as we have seen, attack only enemy nations, while the ones over here have plunged into the blood of their kinsmen, neighbors, and compatriots, one need not go beyond one's own country, nor as far as America, to see such monstrous and prodigious things.

[Trans. Whatley 133]

Léry's experience, bolstered by a relativistic perspective that compares his own customs to those of the Tupi, leads him to conclude that the nature of ritual cannibalism among the Tupi and their rivals is both different and the same from the religious wars in France. To conclude that the Tupi are brutally violent, as does Thevet, would show a lack of reflexivity for the Calvinist topographer who is aware of both the ceremonial nature of cannibalism among the Tupi and the vehement hatred that his fellow compatriots had shown to one another. The relativistic position employed by Léry is a testament to his understanding of Tupi ritual practice as well as his ability to penetrate into the mindset of a victim of cannibalism (i.e., to be proud of being slaughtered, considering it the best way to die). By contrast, his Huguenot compatriots were slayed with unimaginable brutality in horrific, bloodthirsty acts. Michel de Montaigne employs a similar relativistic position in *Des cannibales*, arguing that the "savages" should not be considered more barbarous than other nations.

Or je trouve, pour revenir à mon propos, qu'il n'y a rien de barbare et de sauvage en cette nation, à ce qu'on m'en a rapporté: sinon que chacun appelle barbarie, ce qui n'est pas de son usage. (99)

I find (from what has been told me) that there is nothing savage or barbarous about those peoples, but that every man calls barbarous anything he is not accustomed to. [Trans. Screech 209]

Montaigne suggests that the root cause of labeling something (or someone) “savage” or “barbarous” is lack of familiarity. The relativism of Michel de Montaigne is inspired by an emergent historical consciousness which rejected existing modes of thought on the essential qualities of the “savage” (Yerxa 18). Léry’s experience among the Tupi could have provided Montaigne with an insider’s perspective – a way of becoming accustomed to strange customs through an imaginative relocation to the place of the Tupi. Despite the fact that Léry finds cannibalism abhorrent, the topographer is able to think like a cannibal. Léry familiarizes himself with the practice of cannibalism and is able to exchange positions with the Tupi in order to understand the act as they do. By comparing cannibalism to the violence in France, he deduces that anthropophagy is not as violent or rapacious as some of the Catholic-Huguenot skirmishes in France. Reflecting on anthropophagy in another instance, Léry concludes that cannibalism is preferable to usury (375). In other cases (esp. matters of faith) the Tupi are compared unfavourably to the French, despite the equation of Tupi idolatry to “popish” worship. Yet, it is Léry’s ability to use his understanding of Tupi practices to reflect on French ones that makes the *Histoire d’un voyage* a particularly gripping account for his contemporaries and modern readers alike. By exploring the particularities of the Tupi culture, Léry is able to see that all customs “have reason” within their cultural contexts. Moreover, all customs have the *same* reason – they work to achieve something of intrinsic value within the society in which they are

found. The outsider will often see these same customs as “savage” and “barbarous”, but one who is familiar with them will understand that this is not the case (at least for Léry and Montaigne).

As opposed to the local focus and relativistic viewpoint preferred by Léry, Thevet makes repeated comparisons between the Tupi and other nations to display his cosmographic expertise. The Franciscan relies on these comparisons to show that singularities reappear throughout the world and are always connected by general patterns or laws that give them meaning. The singularities collected from observing the Tupi are connected analogically to other such singularities thereby annulling their distinct occurrence. Thevet charts his observations into categories that make up the entire known world (Lestringant, *Jean de Léry* 66). By comparing one nation to another, the Catholic author creates spatial (and temporal) links that project a unity and predictability of the world. This “rounding” by analogy, allows singularities to be arranged in a map-like projection operating in conjunction with the desire to map the surface of the world (Conley, *The Self-Made Map* 192). When discussing the nakedness of the Tupinamba, for example, Thevet mentions other nations of people who go about naked but also cover their “shameful” parts...

[...] ce qui est sans comparaison plus tolérable que chez nos Amériques, qui vivent tout nus ainsi qu'ils sortent du ventre de la mère, tant hommes que femmes, sans aucune honte ou vergogne. (52)

[...] a thing which is without comparison more acceptable than that of the Americans, who live naked, just as they came out of their mother's bellies, men and women alike, with no shame or embarrassment. [Trans. mine]

The shock for Thevet is that there is “no comparison” to total nudity. A complete absence of clothing fails to resemble other civilized nations and contravenes Christian morality. It is ironic that the strict judgement “without comparison” – even as a rhetorical phrasing – is entirely dependent on (analogical) comparison. In fact, Thevet uses a variety of comparisons in order to contemplate a hierarchy (of dress) in which being totally nude is the lowest (and most bestial). The image of the “wild man” continues to be used as a model for Thevet, where nudity here resembles the savage wildness of Yvain (Lestringant, *Going native in America* 325). As soon as an aspect of Tupi appearance or custom is compared to its analogical resemblance there is an arrangement that assigns degrees of a quality, and the hierarchical valuation that are inseparable from any ranked order. Thus, appearing on the lowest rung of dress makes the Brazilian cannibals particularly monstrous even if they show glimpses of civilization elsewhere in *Les singularités*. By using an analogical model of comparison, Thevet *reads* the Tupi through a pretext which has already prejudged them. The Tupi, for the most part, reflect undeveloped, bestial qualities in Thevet's imagined teleological ontologies.

The “singularity” of nudity remains singular only for a brief instant, as it is summarily integrated into a cosmographic paradigm to illustrate a point. In this particular case, Thevet uses nudity to move into a general discussion of degrees of undress among past and contemporary peoples. By moving further away from the Tupi (and the topic of nudity), Thevet tries to use the example as proof of an ideal (covered body). At this point

the Tupi are barely relevant to the analysis because the cosmographer is simply discussing the merits of nakedness and clothing. This movement from the particular to the general, or from the concrete to the abstract is a frequent and recurring strategy and central to Thevet's cosmographic paradigm. The tendency to make connections that are far removed from the place he purports to study is thus a principal method for doing cosmography. Thevet, in his extensive analogies on nudity, uses geographic and historical variances to illustrate "nudity": Canadian natives cover themselves in pelts, while early Europeans were completely nude. The friar does not forget to mention that Adam and Eve's expulsion from Eden, having changed the significance of nudity, makes it a serious heresy to advocate undress. Thevet continues his analysis of nudity by referencing the nude statuary of Roman temples and the Roman's avoidance of hats and wigs. The cosmographer even mentions the comb-over practiced by Caesar as an attempt to cover his baldness (and, natural shame of nudity) (53-54). This extreme digression, while entertaining for readers, is ultimately an attempt to illustrate the concept of nudity through historical and biblical citations. However, Thevet's discussion of nudity is not a description of *Tupi nudity*, but rather an argument against nudity. Thevet shows that the purpose of *Les singularités* is not just to describe "Antarctic France", but also to attempt to describe the entire world – how it is, and how it should be. In this respect Thevet follows the model set out in Muenster's *Cosmographia* – to collect strange customs and arrange them according to certain principles (Hodgen, *Early Anthropology* 163-165). Thevet provides an analogy on the basis of emulation; it seeks to locate this instance of nudity in a temporal, and spatial map. Thevet is not just writing about the nude Tupi body, he is also drawing a historical-spatial atlas of nudity (Lestringant, *Jean de Léry*

67). It is this method of linking a particular observation to other instances that creates the genre of “cosmography”. The term “singularity”, can be misleading by suggesting something is unique unto to itself, but this is not the case in *Les singularités*. The singularities of Tupi customs as well as the strange plants and animals in the same region are merely singular examples of universal genera of other such singularities.

Thevet views the Guanabara Bay region inhabited by the Tupi as a microcosm. This microcosm is always related to and defined by the macrocosm - the region, Antarctic France, and the greater world. Focus on the global occurrence of nudity is more significant than its topographic manifestation for Thevet. The nudity of the Tupi acquires meaning only as it emulates other cases of nudity, and the general concept of ‘nudity’. Lestringant calls this mode of comparison “synecdoche”: the specific speaks for the general (*Le Huguenot* 209). Thevet’s observations, his “singularities”, are not freely existing; they are curiosities or aberrations within the microcosmic level – i.e., not capable of overturning the logic of the (macro)cosmos. Foucault writes of the synecdochal relationship in 16th century epistemic models as a binding of local diversity to a (presumed) universal whole.

[H]owever immense the distance from microcosm to macrocosm may be, it cannot be infinite; the beings that reside within it may be extremely numerous, but in the end they can be counted; and, consequently, the similitudes that, through the action of the signs they require, always rest one upon another, can cease their endless flight. They have a perfectly closed domain to support and buttress them. Nature, like the interplay of signs and resemblances, is closed in upon itself in conformity with the duplicated form of the cosmos. (35)

Thus, by using analogy to compare across time and space, and by following a teleological understanding of the cosmos (via synecdoche), Thevet ultimately finds significance in universal categories of being. The cosmographer relies on literary authorities that define a single universal order – especially Aristotle – to interpret a “singularity” as part of a hierarchy of universal values.

Unlike the cosmographic method used by Thevet, Léry very rarely relies on analogies to illustrate particular cases. Léry is also less likely to narrowly define particular Tupi words. For example, the role of the medicine men (*pagés*) and shamans (*caraiibes*) is never as definite with Léry as it is with Thevet (Lestringant, *Les singularités* 71, note 2). This is a consequence of the topographer’s reliance on understanding particular events instead of placing people in unambiguous categories. While the cosmographer creates resilient categories of comparison that view Tupi customs as a single manifestation of all global possibilities, the topographer looks within his *topos* to find relevance. When describing the appearance of the Tupi, Léry is straightforward and to the point. He acts as a reporter or storyteller instead of as a “philosopher” whose aim is to explain the phenomenon. Where the cosmographer looks to analogies to explain the singularity, the topographer looks within the occurrence for its meaning. This is demonstrated by each author’s treatment of the myth that Amerindians are hairy. Léry writes:

Et cependant tant s’en faut, comme aucuns pensent, et d’autres le veulent faire accroire, qu’ils soyent velus ny couvers de leurs poils, qu’au contraire, n’estant point naturellement plus pelus que nous sommes en ce pays par deçà. (214)

And yet, contrary to what some people think, and what others would have one believe, they are by no means covered with hair; in fact they are not by nature any hairier than we are over here in this country. [Trans. Whatley 57]

Thus, Léry writes to simply contradict the (unfounded) claim. Thevet, by contrast, devotes all of Chapter XXXI to write “[c]ontre l’opinion de ceux qui estiment les sauvages sont pelus”/ “[a]gainst the opinion of those people that believe the savages are hairy” [trans. mine]. The cosmographer shows a greater interest in responding to anyone who would entertain such an idea. He begins by urging readers to not believe the portraits of painters and the stories of poets who exaggerated and caricatured various other “races”:

[L]es escrits des poètes [sont pleins] de ces satyres, faunes, nymphes, dryades, hamadryades, orcades, et autres manières de monstres, lesquels ne se trouvent aujourd’hui comme au temps passé. (59)

The writings of the poets are full of satyrs, nymphs, dryads, hamadryads, orcs, and other kinds of monsters, which one does not find today as [one did] in times past. [Trans. mine]

The cosmographer dispels the myth of monsters and denies the possibility of fantastical creatures in the present as was the case in the past. His aim is not only to dispel a wrong assumption about hairiness but to also establish a theory that will preclude unsubstantiated claims from being made in the first place. Thevet proposes a rational and theological reason for the lack of monsters and hairy Amerindians alike. Fantastical

beings are replaced with various kinds of teratologies and deformities which the cosmographer argues arise as a matter of “accidents of nature”:

[S]’il advient une fois entre les autres qu’un enfant sorte ainsi velu du vêtre de la mère, et que le poil se nourrisse et augmète par tout son corps, comme l’on en a vu quelque-uns en France, cela est un accident de la nature, tout ni plus ne moins que si l’un naissait avec deux têtes, ou autre chose semblable. (59)

If there comes a time that a child is born from the belly of the mother covered in hair throughout its body, as has been observed in France, this is an accident of nature; no more or less than if a child is born with two heads or any other similar thing. [Trans. mine]

Thevet’s argument against hairiness is also an argument in favour of a mechanism that causes natural deformities. Moreover, the Catholic author sees ancient monsters as false figures produced by the devil in order to deceive humanity, but which God has put an end to through his compassion:

Lorsque l’esprit malin s’efforçait par tous les moyens de décevoir l’homme, se Transformant pour cela en mille figures. Mais aujourd’hui que Notre Seigneur par compassion s’est communiqué à nous, ces esprits malins on été chassés, nous donnant puissance contre eux, ainsi que temoigne la Sainte Ecriture. (59-60)

The evil spirit strove by all means to deceive humankind, Transforming for that reason into thousands of figures. But now that Our Lord by his compassion has made himself known to us, these evil spirits have been chased away, giving us power against them, as it is written in Holy Scripture. [Trans. mine]

The Catholic cosmographer is not merely interested in describing the Tupi as they appear to him; his intent is to bind their singularities to the laws of nature (ascertained through reason) and to the rule of God. The appeal to reason and to scripture is important for Thevet's positivist position as a rational scientist. For Thevet, not only is the true likeness of the Tupi (i.e, their lack of hair) known to him, but it can be no other way – reason and God have decreed that there are no monsters, only deformities resulting from “accidents of nature”. All ontological possibilities are thus occupied by what can be ascertained through human reason and divine revelation.

Just as Léry uses writing to compare himself to the Tupi, Thevet contrasts his own rational analysis to the irrationality of the Tupi. The cosmographer repeatedly, and quite bluntly, calls attention to the superstitious “savages” who are incapable of relying on science and the bible for their reasoning. Léry, contrastingly, considers the tragedy of the Tupi to be their lack of access to the gospel and thus to be in a state of deprivation of grace. For Thevet, the minds of the Tupi and other Amerindians are occluded permanently by their inability to demonstrate reason. Thevet finds in the Tupi an ignorance of divine law, human law and science. While Léry's relativism finds reason within Tupi customs, for Thevet their customs serve as negative examples of what is to be valued and praised. The cosmographer implores his countrymen to avoid falling into the errors he finds among the Tupi.

Que nous sert l'Écriture sainte, que nous servent les lois, et autres bonnes sciences, dont notre Seigneur nous a donné connaissance, si nous vivons en erreur et ignorance, comme ces pauvres Sauvages, et plus brutalement que bêtes brutes? (75)

Of what value and utility are Holy Scripture, laws, and other good sciences of which our Lord has given us knowledge, if we live in error and ignorance, like these poor Savages, and more brutally than brutal beasts? [Trans. mine]

Thevet appeals to his readers to grasp the importance of a cosmographic paradigm reliant on reason to, in turn, explain the virtues of reason. Thus, the mission of cosmography is to reflect on the utility of Holy Scripture and worldly laws, while advancing the role of reason as one of “the good sciences”. Thevet displays his affinity for cosmography as the science that reflects on the role of the enlightened, Renaissance Man – one who has access to divine revelation as well as human science.

By contrast, the topographer’s mission is more modest: to describe things as they were observed with minimal distortion. In Léry’s writing “there are no extrapolations, analogies, or learned quotations; instead there is a kind of reporting that claims to be based exclusively on the author’s experience” (Hollier 242). The way this reporting takes place is through sustained narrative that is rarely interrupted to bring in “singularities” and the theories that explain them. The topographic aim is to provide a fuller representation of particular manifestations; Léry is aware of the need to explain what he observes in minute detail. By returning to the claim that the savages are hairy later in the chapter,

Léry recognizes that fanciful stories (based on superficial observation) can be discredited by his own truthful descriptions rather than through theoretical injunctions.

Davantage nos Ameriquains ayant quantité de poules communes, dont les Portugais leur ont baillé l'engeance, plumans souvent les blanches et avec quelques ferremetes, depuis qu'ils en ont, et auparavant avec des pieces trenchantes decoupans plus menu que chair de pasté les duvetz et petites plumes, apres qu'ils les ont fait bouillir et teindre en reouge avec du Bresil, s'estans frottez d'un certaine gomme, qu'ils ont propre à cela, ils s'en couvren, emplumassent, et chararrent le corps, les bras et les jambes: tellement qu'en cest estat ils semblent avoir du poil folet, comme les pigeons, et autres oyseaux nouvellement esclos. Il est vraysemblable que quelques uns de ces pays par deçà, les ayant veu du commencement qu'ils arriverent en leur terre accoustrez en ceste façon, s'en estans revenus sans avoir plus grande cognoissance d'eux, divulguerent et firent courir le bruit que les sauvages estoyent velus. (220)

Our Americans have a great deal of ordinary hens, which the Portuguese introduced among them and for which they have a use that I will now describe. They pluck the white ones, and after they have boiled the feathers and the down and dyed them red with brazilwood, they cut them up finer than mincemeat (with iron tools since they have acquired them – before that with sharpened stones). Having first rubbed themselves with a certain gum that they keep for this purpose, they cover themselves with these, so that they are feathered all over: their bodies, arms, and legs all bedecked; in this condition they seem to be all

downy, like pigeons or other birds newly hatched. It is likely that some observers who upon their arrivals saw these people thus adorned, went back home without any further acquaintance with them, and proceeds to spread the rumour that the savages were covered with hair. [Trans. Whatley 59]

Léry uses his careful investigation of Tupi corporeal feathering as a way of correcting the rumours that arise from insufficiently close observation. By explaining how it might appear that the Tupi are hairy, Léry, like Thevet, offers readers a possible cause for the prevalent stories of the hairy Amerindian “savage” circulating in Europe. The direct observation of the topographer gives him the authority to contradict the hearsay that others mistake for a true report. Both the cosmographer and the topographer retort the myth of the wild, hairy man (*salvagens*) that had been engrained in medieval European ethno-historical writings (Dickason 63). The cosmographer argues that extreme hairiness is a rare deformity and not a normal appearance. The topographer states that through closer observation he can demonstrate that by covering themselves in feathers, the Tupi only *appear* to be covered in hair. The topographic method of close observation not only provides proof of a positive quality, but it also negates alternate explanations by seeking to contradict their premises. Moreover, it is noteworthy that Léry conducts a thorough observation of Tupi customs and also provides a history of Tupi contact with Europeans and how those same customs were shaped by the exchange: the chickens and tools that the Tupi acquired from the Portuguese and French allow them to dress themselves in feathers. Readers are shown that appearance is constructed through deliberate, manufactured corporeal decorations. The sequential descriptions of the feathering process elicit a series of images in the reader’s mind as if one were observing another

put on a costume. The composite images simultaneously make it possible to deconstruct the opposing (fantastical) explanation that the Tupi are naturally covered in fine, red hair. Topography and history combine in *Histoire d'un voyage* to provide an account of close observation that reveals the processes (customs and genealogies) that produce final outcomes (appearances). The only tropological device used by Léry to buttress the strangeness of the feathered appearance is a simile that compares the texture of the feathered Tupi body to that of a newly hatched pigeon. No analogies are used to tie the uniqueness of the appearance to a timeless form or essence of the hairy body. Moreover, with Léry there is no theory that describes universal categories of natural appearance or the emergence of deformities. The way to understand a strange appearance for the topographer is close observation. Appearances are deceiving not because other travellers do not understand the rational basis for deformities, but because they are superficial observers. The topographer also positions himself as a skeptical writer who uncovers the rumors of others. The suspicion of false reports and the investigation of false appearances is part of the Calvinist's personal, religious ethos. John Farrel argues that the development of 17th-century science is influenced by the 16th-century Protestant suspicion of false appearances:

Luther and his followers, having brought historical consciousness to the center of Christian concern, transformed its character. History became a parade of innovation, falsity, delusion, rupture, disintegration, and fall. The goal of Christians living in this historical nightmare must therefore be to awaken from it, free themselves from corrupt institutions and false idols, and return to God. (91-92)

Léry's astuteness as an observer of customs (and his desire to debunk various tales) is a reflection of his historical consciousness – i.e. seeing history as the process of innovation by which people and societies alter themselves through changing customs.

Both authors are interested in expounding the causes of misconceptions and false reports. Léry and Thevet demonstrate a critical stance towards stories not supported by empirical observation. Whereas Thevet relies on resemblances – as determined by literary sources and his own observations – to illustrate a genus of similar forms, Léry explains that most of what travellers know is based on appearances which are constructed from historical circumstances and a cultural process that changes true appearance beyond recognition. The cosmographer brings the singularity in line with the universal, whereas the topographer finds in his subject a false appearance that can only be overcome by close observation and detailed description. The Catholic writer allows for the possibility that a true category of resemblances can be drawn together under the guise of cosmography – the absolute rejection of monsters, but the universal occurrences of teratogenic singularities. By contrast, *Histoire d'un voyage* reveals the historical (and cultural) processes that create false images that trick unwitting travellers. These modes of writing about the “savages” indicate parallel attempts at understanding difference. Cosmography finds cosmic patterns of resemblance that allow for differences to be seen as similarities. By contrast, topography, through the peering gaze of the observer, seeks the specific, local truth. Whereas cosmography uses ideal, universal forms to subordinate difference, topography relies on relativistic comparisons to show that difference and sameness are interchangeable depending on one's point of view.

Chapter 2: Finding Meaning in Brazil: Comparing Léry's Multiple Descriptions, Nostalgia and Calvinist Interests to Thevet's Aristotelian Paradigm, and Writing "In Passing"

Histoire d'un voyage and *Les singularités* are similar in the many details they provide about the Tupi. The similarity of the content is in stark contrast to the dissimilarity of each style. Despite Thevet's accusation that Léry is a plagiarist (Lestringant, *Le Huguenot* 90), the two works differ substantially in the way the Catholic and Calvinist authors structure their respective narratives. In this chapter, I will analyze how each author draws meaningful conclusions from various observations. The perspectives taken by each writer, and the ideologies that guide them will be discussed below.

Léry's *Histoire d'un voyage* provides readers with rich descriptions that, when read together, produce multiple (textual) portraits. These portraits are held together by the temporal and chronological context of particular events described in detail. The contextual framing – itself a product of earlier descriptions – is used by the topographer to allow for an interpretation of Tupi customs and beliefs. Léry demonstrates his skill as an ethnographer, as well as his profound experience with the Tupi by describing their multiple appearances and varied customs. Léry's nostalgic tone and his Calvinist ideological bias will be further explored as significant influences in his style and the author's search for meaning.

By comparison, Thevet provides his readers with a collection of singularities that builds the text as a cabinet of curiosities. While the descriptions of the cosmographer are detailed, they are also part of a paradigm based on Aristotelian modes of thought. Thevet permits fewer freedoms for the reader to interpret his descriptions because of the authoritative nature of his own interpretations. The cosmographer is further influenced by

a wandering style indicated by the recurring phrase “en passant” (“in passing”). Thevet’s Aristotelian ethics leads to his harsh evaluation of the Tupi and other Amerindians.

Léry’s Multiple Portraits

Léry begins describing the Tupi by declaring his desire to create many images to represent them accurately – “il faudroit plusieurs figures pour les bien représenter” (228) / “multiple pictures would be needed to represent them well” [trans. mine]. Léry’s narrative (and visual) sketches of the Brazilian natives show a series of possible appearances, occurrences and events that together create a multi-layered ethnographic narrative. *Histoire d’un voyage* portrays the Tupi in various poses as if to prepare readers for the possibility that they may, one day, encounter the Tupi themselves. These narrative sketches are organized sequentially. After the first description is made, the topographer continues to provide alternate variants of the same figure assuming various poses:

Pour la seconde contemplation d’un sauvage, luy ayant osté toutes les susdites fanfares de dessus [...]

En troisieme lieu, soit qu’il demeure en sa couleur naturelle, qu’il soit peinturé, ou emplumassé [...]

Que si pour le quatrieme, à la façon que je vous ay tantost dit qu’ils font, le laissant moitié nud et moitié vestu [...]

Finalement, adjoustant aux choses susdites l’instrument nommé Maraca en sa main, et pennache de plume appellent Arraroye sur les reins, et ses sonnettes composees de fruicts à l’entour de ses jambes, vous le verrez lors, ainsi que je le

representeray encores en un autre lieu, équipé en la façon qu'il est quand il danse, saute, boit, et gambade. (227-228)

For the second contemplation of a savage, remove all the flourishes described above [...]

In the third place, whether he remains in his natural color, or whether he is painted or covered with feathers [...]

For the fourth description, leave him half-naked and half-dressed [...]

Finally, if you add to these the instrument called the maraca in his hand, the plumed harness that they call *araroye* on his hips, and his rattles made of fruits around his legs, you will then see him (as I will show him again later) equipped as he is when he dances, leaps, drinks, and capers about. [Trans. Whatley 64]

The topographer cites a series of possible appearances for the Tupi – each valid on its own, but more descriptive if read in conjunction with the rest. Each one of these descriptions is an important demonstration of Léry's familiarity with the people he describes. The purpose of description in this case and throughout *Histoire d'un voyage* is to show how the Tupi appear, and how they change in appearance with each movement. Léry's descriptive vignettes show a combination of gestures, adornments, and other material objects that coalesce into portraits. The illustration of two dancing figures (fig. 3, below), combines a series of observations to form a single composite image. While each portrait is valid on its own, it is also a partial representation that loses its pertinence unless followed by another portrait to show how the bodies move. Thus, a single description, like

a single portrait is not able to confer sufficient “vraysamblance” for Léry. The author’s interest in capturing the movements of the Tupi body within its spatial and temporal context suggests that Léry is acutely aware of the fleeting nature of a single description (and the broader limitations of writing) to accurately represent his subjects.

Léry’s vignettes reveal the appearances of Tupi figures while they are framed by familiar objects that are also described in the text. The text thus flows into these illustrations in multiple places (the monkey, maracas, rattles, parrot, and feathered corporeal adornments complete the scene in fig. 3). The text and image are both topographically connected because they refer to a specific event (a solemn dance). Although the image is staged – i.e., the monkey and parrot are artificially brought into proximity of the dancing figures, just as the rest of the figures are frozen in peculiar positions – the aim is clearly to reflect a real event instead of an idealized or mythical scene. Léry’s descriptions within the text and his illustrations show his empirical approach of close observation and rich description – a process of inquiry Léry rightfully calls “autopsy”, or the reporting of things one has observed himself (Lestringant, *Jean de Léry* 38-39).

Léry’s realism is in stark contrast to the symbolic and iconographic function of lithographic prints made by contemporaneous illustrators such as Theodor de Bry (Bucher 16-23). Moreover, Léry’s images are not meant to stand alone (i.e. to be distributed without the text). Léry’s illustrations are entirely dependent on the text so that they can be ‘read’ in context. The Calvinist writer is aware that his personal *history* is, above all, a written enterprise: its success depends on a rhetorically-effective narrative. Lestringant writes that the text for Léry subsumes the image by appealing to “*enargeia*” in a way that

a static image cannot (*Le Huguenot* 185-186). However, Léry's distrust of images is not only driven by an aesthetic concern, but also by a deeply moral (Calvinist) iconoclasm. This movement away from static, iconic depictions of people makes Léry one of the first ethnographer to launch the "revolution of the believable" (Lestringant, *Le Huguenot* 128).

Multiple portraits provide a method for the topographer to move away from (cosmographic) singularities. Instead, Léry's descriptions are always multiple, thereby allowing for an internal self-comparison of the narrative from which meaning is derived. The many portraits reveal the movements and changes of the Tupi from one scene to another – like the steps and leaps of a dance that places figures in new poses at any one instant. Writing can only capture the subject in stasis, yet Léry's *Histoire d'un voyage* leaves traces of the motion (to be filled by the reader's imagination). His description of a dance, for instance, is supplemented with a portrait of two Tupi men holding various poses (fig. 3). The reader is able to mobilize both the text and the image in order to contemplate the movements of the dancing figures.

Relying on language to communicate the culture of unfamiliar peoples is a monumental task; the burden is even greater when one wishes to depict them vividly and accurately. At times, Léry recognizes that no matter how many sketches he produces, his tools are limited by language as well as his own literary abilities.

Finalemēt combien que durant environ un an que j'ay esté en ce pays là, j'aye esté si curieux de contempler et les grands et les petits, que m'estant advis que je les voye tousjours devant mes yeux j'en auray toute ma vie l'idée et l'image en mon entendement: tant y a neantmoins, parce que leurs gestes et contéances sont du tout dissemblables des nostres, que je confesse estre malaisé de les

bien représenter ni par écrit, ni mesmes par peintures. Ainsi pour en avoir le plaisir, il les faut voir et visiter en leur pays. Mais, me direz vous, la planche est bien longue. Il est vray et partant si vous n'avez bon pied, bon oeil, craignans que vous ne trespuchiez, ne vous jouez pas de vous mettre en chemin. Nous verrons encore plus amplement ci apres, selon que les matieres que je traiteray se presenteront, qu'elles sont leurs maisons, utenciles de mesnage, façon de se coucher et autres manieres de faire. (233-234)

During the year or so when I lived in that country, I took such great care in observing all of them, great and small, that even now it seems to me that I have them before my eyes, and I will forever have the idea and image of them in my mind. But their gestures and expressions are so completely different from ours, that it is difficult, I confess to represent them well by writing or by pictures. To have the pleasure of it, then, you will have to go see and visit them in their own country. "Yes," you will say, "but the plank is very long." That is true, and so if you do not have a sure foot and a steady eye, and are afraid of stumbling, do not venture down that path. [Trans. Whatley 67]

The reflection on the challenges of describing the Tupi through writing reveals Léry's awareness. The author admits his limitations as a writer and illustrator of the very people he is describing. To be true to his promise to tell of things only as he has seen them, through multiple narrative portraits, Léry acknowledges that his recollection of the experience is not sufficient for writing a vivid and accurate description. The recognition of the limited ability of the human being to capture the true appearance of something would

have appealed to Montaigne, a thinker acutely aware of the limitations of the eye and the mind (Conley, *An Errant Eye* 24). Topography is an acknowledgement of epistemological limits. These limits are revealed by the writer explicitly in order to suggest that things are not always as they seem, despite the writer's desire to reproduce his insights faithfully.

Léry shows an awareness of literary techniques for capturing the likeness of the unfamiliar. He has "a quite unusual capacity for putting himself in the mind of a European who has never crossed the Atlantic and is forced to envisage the New World from travellers' accounts" (Elliott 22). Andrea Frisch argues that the problem of representing the Tupi comes "not from a sense that language and painting are inherently estranged from reality, but from a sense that 'they' are intractably different from 'us'" (91). However, in *Histoire d'un voyage*, Léry is explicitly concerned with his own memory and the capacity of language and drawing to capture difference. Although Léry regards the Tupi as different in many ways, he does not express "difference" as a barrier to comprehension. The topographer specifically refers to certain gestures and expressions which are difficult to describe through language and pictures. Moreover, the problem of explaining and differentiating between 'us' and 'them' is the same as the problem of representation (these two concerns are too intimately linked to isolate in Léry's text). Like the ineffable, the inexpressibility of an idea or feeling is also the failure of language to express it adequately.

Léry's reflection on the failure of representation also leads to the creation of spatial and temporal frames which are important to the structure of *Histoire d'un voyage*. Whereas as a noble adventurer, the author seeks to close the distance between himself and the narrator (to make himself the only subject of his experience), as an historian, ethnographer, and storyteller, the author admits he is no longer the protagonist of his

story. Thus, to have knowledge of the Tupi and to reflect on the difficulty of expressing that knowledge reveals the passage of time between the experience and the act of writing. The true likeness of the Tupi is accessible only to the protagonist; the writer has to overcome the stumbling block of language in order to reproduce it. These dual positions are highlighted by a change in the narratorial voice as it indicates active observation or (passive) description through the act of writing. When addressing the reader, the narrator has a didactic voice which speaks about the Tupi. However, when retelling certain events or citing dialogue, the narrator assumes the voice of the traveller speaking to or with his collocutors.

Léry's passage from the text to the experience suggests that he inhabits two temporally distinct frames that are linked by a mnemonic relationship. The Calvinist confessor is also a storyteller who transmits his memory – as if listening to the story of his own internal narrator – while writing it down for the reader. Moreover, Léry's reflection acts as a framing device which shows his perceptiveness to the temporal and spatial differences that separate the traveller's experience from that of the writer – i.e., the traveler and the writer inhabit different chronotopes⁸. The two chronotopes are not just literary devices that make the narrative rhetorically effective, they are quite real for the author (i.e., the faraway place is not *imaginary* even though it is *imagined* for the sake of the dialogue within the narrative). To move from one chronotope to the other, the author descends into memory. Léry uses the metaphor of a plank to describe the distance between the (imagined) reader in late-16th century France and the trans-Atlantic traveller

⁸ The “intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships” described by Mikhail Bakhtin (Bemong 3-4). The chronotope denotes a meaningful deployment of space and time in the narrative as the structure that determines the positionality of the reader, narrator, and characters as they enter distinct “historical, social, and cultural settings” (Lorino and Tricard 6).

in Brazil. The topographer encourages his readers to contemplate the two frames of reference (one inhabited by the author addressing the reader and the other by his own protagonist, face-to-face with the cannibals). The reader is invited to also consider how one could physically move from one to the other. Léry offers a subtle warning that seeking direct (unmediated) contact with the world of the Tupi is a possibility, but only through a radically different, and much more dangerous, process of inquiry. Therefore, the topographer's role is to provide an alternate (and less threatening) plank for the reader who seeks knowledge about a distant place. The narrator moves between two chronotopes as he gathers and presents the desired information. By conjuring the possibility of direct experience, Léry demonstrates an awareness of the task laid out before him: to offer a literary voyage to a time and place fraught with peril.

Treating the same topic several times, Léry writes a history that constructs meaningful depictions of the Tupi through thick description. This apparent excess of description, a constant deferment of related and relevant information, provides both depth and difference for readers. The richness of description is too great for a superficial or straightforward reading of the text. As a result, readers are encouraged to approach it in their own imaginative ways: "le lecteur, par ceste narration les contemple comme il luy plaira" (233) / "let the reader, by this narration, contemplate them as he will" [trans. Whatley 66]. The plenitude of description is thus not meant to narrow the range of possible meanings, but rather to allow for a range of interpretations.

Léry writes with the reader in mind by using words such as "contemplation" to refer to the imaginative thought process by which readers interact with the text (and its subject). The writer is not only concerned with speaking to the accuracy of details and events but

also to highlight the defined spatial and temporal (chronotopic) frames that add depth to the *Histoire d'un voyage*. The present voice – i.e., the writer's production of the text – is contrasted to the past (Léry's experience in Brazil). The topographer is, therefore, also an historian and a skilled storyteller, able to manipulate two narratorial positions in order to tell his story. Moreover, Léry's descriptions of the Tupi are not contained by rigid chapter divisions; they are revisited in later chapters. The topographer's experience embroiders the chapters with motifs that escape narrow definitions. The rapidly changing nature of the Tupi, for example, is a motif that can be located in almost all of the ethnographic chapters. These motifs do not arise from direct comparison and causal linkage, i.e. they emerge through the narrative, showing Léry's *Histoire d'un voyage* is connected to his thoughts and experiences as he begins to understand the Tupi as both a visiting traveler and as a writer. Conley writes that the topographic method is like the sensation and movement of a snail going through a dark maze, simultaneously exploring the surface and moving along it (Conley, *An Errant Eye* 3).

A thorough reading of both *Histoire d'un voyage* and *Les singularités* requires the reader to retain earlier details so that information can be seen in a different light in later chapters. Of the two texts, *Histoire d'un voyage* is more contingent upon the reader actively recalling earlier details. For instance, Léry returns to a previously covered topic to remind his readers that he is fulfilling his promise to continue to develop it:

[S]uivant ce que j'ay promis ci-dessus, quand j'ay parlé de leurs danses en leur beuveries et *caouinages*, que je dirois aussi l'autre façon qu'ils ont de danser: à fin de les mieux représenter, voici les morgues, gestes et contenance qu'ils tenoyent. (401)

Now since I promised earlier, when I spoke of the dancing at their drinking bouts and *caouinages*, that I would also tell of their way of dancing, *the more fully to represent them* (emphasis mine). I will describe the solemn poses and gestures that they used here. [Trans. Whatley 142]

By returning to the topic of dancing, Léry encourages readers to compare the new variant – a solemn dance (fig. 3) – to the jovial dance performed during drinking bouts. The comparison suggests both similarity and difference between the two dancing scenes. If Léry had said everything about dancing in one uninterrupted description, that description would rupture the coherency of each distinct performance (one is jovial, while the other is solemn). Meaning is developed not just by presenting two different descriptions, but from the way in which these distinct images are juxtaposed. Léry explicitly differentiates one performance from the other to indicate they are linked to separate events – the result of careful topographic observation. By maintaining a separation between the two descriptions, the topographer shows that the two instances of dancing are thematically related, but temporally and contextually distinct. Thus, Léry highlights the importance of a recurring movement between two chronologically distinct events in order to show that Tupi dancing can be either ceremonial or recreational. Léry avoids drawing analogical parallels to other kinds of dancing, nor does he provide a gloss of the performance. The solemn dance is a literary rendition (aided by a sketch). The deferment of each image allows the reader to reimagine the Tupi in a different position, setting or context. Each portrait has its own place in the narrative, but its overall meaning is drawn from the development of the narrative.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 3. Two Indians with a Parrot and Monkey.

Jean de Léry. *Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre du Brésil autrement dite Amérique*. 1580. P.246. Source: Gallica; Bibliothèque nationale de France. Web. 8 December 2015.

Léry describes some of the events which give his portraits meaning in order to retell his intimate experiences. The spontaneity of these events is often affirmed by laughter as well as other forms of affect – as in the case of the locals finding themselves in common admiration when Léry changes his name to “Léry-oussou” (big oyster) to make it easier for the Tupi to pronounce.

“[I]l me falloit accomoder de leur nommer quelque chose qui leur fust cogneue: cela (comme il me dit) estant si bien venu à propos que mon surnom Léry, signifie une huitre en leur language, je leur dis que je m’appellois Léry-oussou: c’est à dire une grosse huitre. Dequoy eux se tenans bien satisfaits avec leur admiration Teh! se prenans à rire. (450-451)

I had to accommodate by naming something that was known to them. Since by a lucky chance my surname “Léry,” means “oyster” in their language, I told them my name was “*Léry-oussou*,” that is, big oyster. This pleased them greatly; with their “*Teh!*” of admiration they began to laugh. [Trans. Whatley 162]

In this vignette, as in many others, meaning emerges from a distinct event tied contextually to others in the narrative. The name is not only relevant because readers are told of the difficulty the Tupi have with pronouncing *Jean* (which was pronounced “*Nian*”), but also because Léry had previously written that the Tupi give the names of animals to one another, often followed by *oussou* (big). Léry simultaneously shows his understanding of convention and his desire to accept it. By acquiring a “familiar” name for the Tupi, the author (briefly) becomes *Léryoussou*, i.e., a new character in his own story.

This seemingly minor anecdote does not just present information, but it displays Léry's intimate interactions with the Tupi – the source of his insight. The anecdote is distinctly meaningful as it relates to the narrative as whole (i.e. one episode in relation to other episodes that preceded it). Léry reports the laugh of his Tupi associates, while also including their *Teh!* (an exclamation of surprise, wonder and amazement according to his own interpretation in chapter XX). The episode speaks to Léry's ethnographic ability as well as his skill as a storyteller.

Thus, for Léry, the mechanism that creates meaning is not a single, symbolically laden image, but rather an excess of details coming from seemingly minor anecdotes that often become polysemic as they converge. The richness of meaning resembles the proliferation of the *maniot* and *aypi* roots that Léry admires (241). Meaning requires the reader to actively follow the narrative as a collaborator that can recall and relate Léry's descriptions. Léry's layered and imagistic text urges the reader to approach *Histoire d'un voyage* as a complex work which must be read in its entirety. The narrative folds into itself in order to allow for both repetition and progression (as certain themes continue throughout the narrative while being altered by particular episodes).

Thevet's Aristotelian Singularities

Thevet's descriptions are divided into topics which culminate in analogical parallels to extrinsic, related examples (as described in chapter 1). Most contemporary scholars argue that Thevet's observations are controlled by an epistemic structure that anticipates them (esp. Frank Lestringant in *Jean de Léry, Le Huguenot*, and elsewhere; Michel Jeanneret in *Léry et Thevet*). However, Andrea Frisch (in *Passing Knowledge*) argues

that Thevet's cosmographic style is not necessarily programmatic because it also contains loosely-connected observations written 'in passing'. I will argue that Thevet seeks to show the unity of his knowledge (and singularity of meaning) despite the apparent haphazard collection of "singularities". Thevet, as Jeanneret argues, is a normative thinker who traps his examples in premade categories while he undertakes an enterprise of "annexation and simplification" (229). Although many rich details are revealed when the cosmographer enters into description, Thevet's exploration of the Tupi (and others) is limited by his desire to classify social and cultural traits. Unlike L ry's focused and recursive descriptions, Thevet's observations are a collection or collage of singularities mounted on a cosmological structure. These singularities are retained and evaluated by an Aristotelian epistemology that thoroughly shapes Thevet's narrative and its central message.

For the Franciscan cosmographer, the Tupi are but one of many nations ranked by their values and political power; the goal of the cosmographer is to provide the whole image that disciplines each particular by keeping it bound within its category. This process of integrating the 'curiosities' of the New World into the knowledge of the Old World became a standard way of writing about new discoveries. "[T]he strangeness of the New World was integrated without upsets into the system of traditional knowledge" (Hollier 241-242). Thus one can easily find in Thevet, a curiosity to discover new things curbed by an equally powerful urge to systematize those discoveries.

The New World becomes at once the source for novel written material (*singularities*) as well for the physical materials (*curiosities*). The cabinet of curiosities and cosmography share a common desire to collect material evidence of different and strange

cultural and natural environments. The late-Renaissance collections of curiosities blurred the lines between natural and artificial in the pursuit of acquiring unseen, singular objects (Evans 13). Similarly, Thevet's *Les singularités*, seeks to acquire the novelties of the Americas and to bring them back to France. This process culminated in the transportation of several Tupi men to the court of Henry II as physical living proof of the singularities of the Americas. Evans and Marr, citing Pomian, consider Renaissance curiosity – a new “desire to know” demonstrated, at least in part, by an interest in collection as well as in the “types of enquiry” taking place (13). The aim of the private cabinets of curiosities taking hold in Europe in the 16th century, like the aim of cosmography, was to be “a veritable ‘microcosm’, a ‘compendium of the universe’ [...] to take in the entire universe at a single glance, as this universe had been reduced to the scale of the human eye” (Pomian 49). Yet, the collage-like assortment of singularities is not meant to be kept unsystematized and open to various interpretations, but rather to be prepared for integration into previous knowledge. Frisch states that for the cosmographer “experience serves to confirm previous knowledge (or belief) and thus minimize ‘singularity’” (64). It is useful to trace Thevet's development from *Les singularités* to the *Cosmographie universelle* (and later publications) to see the cosmographer's progression towards a wholly systematic presentation of his earlier singularities by relying on Aristotelian models of thought.

One of Thevet's most renowned literary and pictorial sketches is “Quoniambec”, a chief first mentioned in *Les singularités* (Ch. LIV). The chief is described as a great ruler, and strong man in Thevet's first publication. After a series of embellishments Thevet has Quoniambec firing cannons mounted on his shoulders and appearing beside other kings

and emperors⁹. In Thevet's *Vrais Pourtraits*, Quoniambec is restyled as a European Monarch (Lestringant, *The Myth of the Indian Monarchy* 45). The portrait also contains symbolic allusions to monarchy, in order to 'dress' the naked Quoniambec in the accoutrements of European monarchs. Thus, where Léry's sparse portraits function as descriptive convergences that summarize the text, Thevet's portraits acquire an iconic quality; they rely on extra-textual symbolism for their meaning. Robert Stam and Ella Shohat write that Thevet makes Quoniambec the incarnation "of a divinely sanctioned society" (491). The aim for Thevet is not to explore the meaning of his earlier singularities or to keep them arranged as a collage of observations, but to find in them new analogical and allegorical resemblances. Thevet's later works (*Vrais Pourtraits* and *Cosmographie universelle*) solidify the analogical paradigm operating in *Les singularités*. Thevet's portraits of esteemed people, whom he invests with the "knowledge of cosmography", depict exalted or fearsome qualities that the cosmographer attempts to illustrate by a human face (Hajovsky 331). Thus, the qualities that Thevet wishes to depict take over the person that embodies them. The cosmographer, unlike the topographer, is not interested in a visiting traveller's view of daily life – a perspective maintained throughout *Histoire d'un voyage* – rather, he seeks to conduct a spatial survey of the globe in order to analyze and rank its many nations. Lestringant writes that powerful figures are, for Thevet, a sign of political and social organization without which civilization could not exist:

⁹ Léry mercilessly ridicules this portrayal (Lestringant, *The Myth of the Indian Monarchy* 46).

Lack of government is synonymous with lack of humanity – and in this case Thevet places himself in the school of Aristotle for whom man is, of course, above all a political animal. (*The Myth of the Indian Monarchy* 37)

Through the invention of a universal political order, in which every nation has a figurehead (a king), Thevet shows that his Aristotelian interpretation misunderstands Brazilian (and other Amerindian) cultures in order to make them ‘understandable’.

The cosmographer’s heavy reliance on Aristotelian modes of thought is also exhibited by his praise of certain virtues and his condemnation of immoderacy. Todd Reeser argues that Thevet’s *Les singularités* and his other works are problematic because they use Aristotle as a basis for evaluating and ordering the New World (218-219). Montaigne’s skepticism to cosmography could, therefore, have also been a rejection of the Aristotelian models of social/political organization preferred by Thevet. Reeser argues this point when he cites Montaigne, by saying “that the Americans live ‘sans les precepts d’Aristote’ (‘without the precepts of Aristotle’)” (“Apologie de Raimond Sebond”, II, 12, cited in Reeser 218).

Thevet’s mission is as much to reveal and describe the people of Brazil as to assign to them certain essential, indexical qualities which place them in a natural order in relation to their neighbours and the various nations named by prior cosmographers. In *Les singularités*, readers are told, for instance, that beyond Guanabara Bay lives another nation of even more bestial cannibals:

Cette canaille mange ordinairement de la chair humaine comme nous ferions du mouton, et ils y prennent encoure plus grands plaisir. Et vous pouvez êtres

assurez qu'ils est malaisé de leur ôter un homme d'entre les mains quands ils le tiennent, pour l'appétit qu'ils ont de le manger comme les lions voraces. Il n'y a de bête aux déserts d'Afrique ou d'Arabie si cruelle et qui appète si ardemment le sang humain que ce peuple sauvage plus que brutal. (156-157)

These rogues usually eat human flesh as we would sheep, and they take even greater pleasure in the act. And you can be sure that it is not easy to free one of their captives, for they have the appetite of ravenous lions. There is no beast in the deserts of Africa and Arabia so cruel that would feast so ardently on human blood than these more-than-brutal savages. [Trans. mine]

This description not only serves a new singularity, but also as an evaluation of the social order of these people. The adjacent nation of cannibals thus descends to a lower rung of human sociability and civility as soon as they are mentioned. Interestingly, Thevet parallels Léry's note of caution that seeking first-hand experience is dangerous. Thevet writes, perhaps sarcastically, that those that want to trade, might do well to bring them human captives (157).

Frisch writes that Thevet aims to write from "the point of view of the sailor" (53). Although in *Les singularités*, it can be argued that Thevet provides a chorographic perspective (that of a traveller passing through a large region), his perspective remains removed and more distant than that of Léry. Thevet's perspective is that of a sailor turned cosmographer – the singularities observed by the sailor are ordered and increasingly marginalized by the authority of the cosmographer. Conley summarizes Thevet's double-

natured text as “a narrative mass that is at once unified and scattered” (*The Self-Made Map* 192). The scattered singularities are the product of the sailor’s gaze, in which newness is always beyond the horizon; the unified narrative is the project of a cosmographer. Moreover, as I will argue further in this chapter, Thevet’s evaluative principles are those of a theologian and moralist – it is from this position that the Catholic cosmographer displays the severity of a paradigm which subordinates difference even as it claims to document it (Reeser 221).

Writing with Nostalgia; Writing “en passant”

Topography, unlike cosmography requires a retracing, and a revisiting of the subject. Despite the chapter divisions, which are attempts to cut the *Histoire d’un voyage* into digestible portions composed of single core topics, Léry frequently elaborates his prior observations with new details. One of the factors affecting Léry’s desire to include anecdotes without categorizing them is to keep distinct chronotopes in the narrative. This method of returning to the same topic to cover it in greater detail is reaffirmed by Léry’s longing for a return to the site of experience. “Je regrette souvent que je ne suis parmi les sauvages” (508) / “I often regret that I am not amongst the savages” [trans. mine], writes Léry when recounting his return to France. Lestringant writes that “toute l’*Histoire d’un voyage* est [...] empreinte de cette nostalgie” (*Le Huguenot* 80) / “the entire *Histoire d’un voyage* is marked by this nostalgia” [trans. mine]. The desire for a return to the land of the Tupi speaks to the misery the author would find upon his return to France. Yet, what is more remarkable is that Léry’s wish to be among the Tupi has no comparison in *Les singularités*. Susan Silver argues that nostalgia is fundamental to the development of Léry’s narrative (124). A desire to return to the *topos* makes Léry’s account both a

“history” – the description of a time in the past – and an intimate topography. The motif of ‘return’, stated explicitly, and implied by nostalgia, suggests that Léry found a homely place amongst the cannibals. The literary process of returning to the inception of a memory is necessary for the topographer to make himself (as author) the protagonist of his own story.

[D]epuis mon retour par-deça m’estant trouvé en un lieu où on en faisoit, ce flair me fit ressouvenir de l’odeur qu’on sent ordinairement és maisons des sauvages, quand on y fait de la farine de racine. (238)

After I came back over here, whenever I happened to be in a place where starch was being made, the scent of it made me remember the odor one usually picks up in the savages’ houses when they are making root flour. [Trans. Whatley 69]

The topographer who used his senses to investigate the Tupi through “autopsy” also describes how his senses retain an affinity for their root flour. He continues to remember the smell of their houses despite the passage of some 20 years. Léry’s nostalgia points to an action from a distance: the resurgence of a chronotope via a memory rekindled by a sensation. Moreover, the desire to reunite the sense organ and stimulus reveals the intimate method of observation in topography and its aim for direct experience. The expression of memory through sensory stimuli – especially taste and smell – is a motif also used by Marcel Proust. Memorialization is always connected to the place where that memory was first created. “Proust presents such topoanalysis as an exploration of our own selves as well as an exploration [...] of place – in Proust we find topophilia writ large”

(Malpas 6). Involuntary memory guided by the senses serves as a bridge that unites temporalities and locales, if only for a brief instant. Léry's recollection of the starchy smell of Tupi houses leads the author – by the nose – to a place which he once knew. Nostalgia sparks the return of happy memories that lead the author from his writing desk to the Tupi hearth. Despite the fondness that Léry shows for the land of the Tupi, his nostalgic tone is also a product of the upheavals in France which he experienced firsthand after his return (Lestringant, *Le Huguenot* 80).

Like Léry, modern ethnographers express nostalgia for their first sites of study. Levi-Strauss, for example, was acutely aware that he, like Léry, also felt a longing to revisit the place he was writing about in *Tristes Tropiques* after a 15-year hiatus (Silver 125). The nostalgic return of the author is a keystone of the topographic (and ethnographic) mode because it reveals a sincere appreciation for a formative experience (i.e., the author's literary return reflects the desire for a corporeal return). Conley argues that as the writer 'reunites' with the people and places that once formed an experience, there arises a "consciousness vital to the sensation of an event a 'nexus of prehensions'" (*An Errant Eye* 68). The recollection of sensory experience, and the nostalgic tone that it sets, is not just an effective rhetorical device, but also the topographic method of closing the distance between the time and place of the author and that of the protagonist.

In sharp contrast to Léry's desire to return to Brazil, Thevet writes in a style that conveys passage, and a recounting from a distance which gets continuously larger. The cosmographer does not return to the topic through nostalgia and sensation, but through a rational analysis which reorders his observations into previously-defined categories.

Thevet frequently describes peculiar things by starting with the phrase “en passant...” (“in passing...”). “En passant” appears to reflect Thevet’s experience and claim to knowledge as a traveller to the New World. Whereas Léry stays in one place for a duration of time and thus becomes intimately acquainted with his environment, Thevet passes through, collecting “singularities” and moving on to other lands. The collection of singularities, like a collection of curiosities, is the action of a 16th-century European traveler “passing by” a place to take note or acquire something “curious”. The singularity described “in passing”, is also a rhetorical announcement that Thevet directly observed what he describes in the text. The linear movement implied by the phrase further suggests that while *Les singularités* covers many places, it does not have a particular place to return to (other than France). Frisch argues that this linear movement indicated by textual “passage” is an indication that a significant number of Thevet’s singularities are of a fleeting nature (63).

“En passant” is a cosmographic method for adjoining curiosities which are circumstantial to the main topic of a chapter but still related by some measure of *convenientia*. Observations made within the bounds of a roughly-defined locality are connected “in passing” to show that they exist in physical proximity to one another. Thus, what is not related analogically to universal examples is adjoined “en passant”. By indicating his willingness to tack on observations “en passant”, Thevet also demonstrates his lack of focus on a distinct place. Thevet writes as if to suggest that “[t]he description of Brazil is an extra, a word tacked on in passing” (Frisch 61). Thus, the phrase “en passant”, reveals the style of *Les singularités* – Thevet’s main topics are evaluated through analogies by following an Aristotelian ordering model, while lesser observations

are marginalized by the author even though he cannot escape their geographic co-presence. Thus, “en passant” responds to the perceived *convenientia* of the things the cosmographer observes throughout his travels.

The introduction of something “in passing” gives the impression of an authentic “passage” – a chronological or geographic movement. However, the phrase is mostly a way of appending the descriptions of things linked by proximity. By writing “en passant”, Thevet appears to balance the perspectives of the Aristotelian thinker and theologian with that of the itinerant traveler. However, the distinguishing phrase of the cosmographer does not allow readers to mobilize his observations with the *enargeia* of *Histoire d'un voyage*. “En passant” is a rhetorical phrase for creating longer lists, rather than a reflection of physical and temporal movement. *Les singularités* does not provide readers with moments of reflection because even lengthier descriptions are abruptly cut by a conclusion introduced “en passant”. The addition of fleeting observations adjoined to main topics does not help elaborate on an earlier description. The cosmographer, unlike the topographer, does not discuss how observations are related to one another. Unlike L ry’s multiple descriptions and textual portraits, Thevet’s observations are not grounded by a context and thus are difficult to imagine as coherent events. “En passant” (and other frequently-used adverbial clauses that indicate passage and digression) are an integral part of the poetics of *Les singularit s*.

Thevet’s authority as a cosmographer comes from a paradigm of comparison in which curious phenomena are part of a larger macrocosm; passage is necessary to move from the singularity to the universal. The cosmographer demonstrates that he is the first to bring knowledge of a custom, a tree, or a bird by virtue of their “singular natures”. The

tone set by Thevet's indirect and displaced mode of description is in stark contrast to Léry's nostalgic tone. The ever-growing list of singularities, like Thevet's passage through Antarctic France, prevents the articulation of a central *topos*. Thevet's passive treatment of a particular location leads to a dissonance in the text. For instance, Thevet writes: "[e]t pour le surplus, nous avons délibéré d'écrire en passant un mot de la terre du Brésil" (150) / "[a]s for the rest, we have deliberated to write, in passing, a word about the land of Brazil" [trans mine]. The "word" that Thevet claims to write "in passing" takes up roughly one third of *Les singularités*. The understatement on the part of the author is not modesty, but rather a desire to keep moving, to distance himself from one place as he moves on to the next one. The linear progression away from the 'current' topic suggests that the place Thevet seeks is always beyond the horizon. Unlike Léry's longing for reentry into a Tupi home to smell the starchy root flour for a second time, Thevet concludes his description of Brazil dispassionately. The cosmographer is not attached to a place; his concern is the description of space: the region, the world, and its universal forms. Therefore, the use of the adverbial phrase "in passing" allows for the collection of deracinated curiosities encountered in the Americas. The itinerant cosmographer seem to describe strange things that belong to a cosmic order. Yet, it is precisely by not becoming acquainted with any place in particular that the cosmographer's ordering gaze is given leave to "gradually convert the Brazil of the cannibals into another Europe" (Lestringant, *The Myth off the Indian Monarchy* 41).

In contrast to Thevet, Léry does not write "in passing" to adjoin his observations, nor does he abandon a description hastily in order to move forward. Léry returns to previously treated subjects to give them a second look, and to introduce new information

that casts a new light on previous descriptions. For instance, the topographer returns to a description of religion after expressing his own theological arguments. “Ainsi pour retourner à mon principal sujet, qui est de poursuivre à déclarer ce qu'on peut appeler Religion entre les Sauvages de l'Amerique” (393). / “Let me return to my principal subject, and pursue the consideration of what might be called religion among the savages of America” [trans. Whatley 139]. Léry does not cease describing the Tupi even after he has brought his own views into the discussion. Therefore, *Histoire d'un voyage* is a recursive text – the author always seeks to return to the *topos* that first formed his experience. By contrast, Thevet mostly employs the rhetorical phrase “en passant” to expedite the conclusion of a description relating to the Tupi; “en passant” appears to reveal a desire to cut short a description that could have continued. Ultimately, Thevet uses “en passant” after he has exhausted his most salient points. “En passant” frequently indicates that the cosmographer is wrapping up his chapter. Thevet also uses “voilà” to express the same sentiment – for instance, he writes near the end of his text:

Or voilà, en ce qui concerne notre Amérique, ce que nous avons voulu narrer assez sommairement après avoir observé les choses les plus singulières que nous avons connues là-bas. (150)

Now, there you have it, as to that which concerns our America, that which we wanted to narrate fairly succinctly, after having observed the most singular things that we have seen down there. [Trans. mine]

The Sins of the Tupi: Thevet's and Léry's Biases

The Catholic and Calvinist authors frequently put their respective personal ethical leanings on display when they evaluate the Tupi. Léry often praises the Tupi while chastising the values of his compatriots. Michel Jeanneret calls Léry's approach 'writing in a utopian mode' (223). However, Léry is not interested in creating a utopia by writing *Histoire d'un voyage* (Lestringant, *Jean de Léry* 68). It is difficult to argue that Léry is utopian considering that he often writes of the 'poor people' who, despite their proclivity for cheerful song and dance, live far from the light of God. Léry's firm adherence to Calvinist tenets forms the basis of his position. Léry does not attempt to locate a utopia in Brazil, nor does he attempt to rank the Tupi relative to France (Stam et al. 491). Lestringant argues that Léry does not see the New World as a world in its infancy (i.e., in its golden age) – a motif that was becoming popular in late 16th-century Europe (*Jean de Léry* 184). It is worth noting that Léry is not alone among his contemporaries in finding laudable moral qualities in the people with whom he lived for over a year. A participant in the 1564 Laudonnière expedition to Florida, Jacques Le Moyne, writes of the natives he encountered: "we might easily learn sobriety and wisdom from these men whom we consider only as savages and beasts" (White and Le Moyne 91).

In comparison to Léry, Thevet is more likely to dismiss and chastise Tupi customs and beliefs. While *Les singularités* and *Histoire d'un voyage* often describe the same customs, the Catholic's knee-jerk dismissal of the explanations that the Tupi provide for their actions makes for a more critical text. For instance, Thevet rebukes the reasons provided to him for the ritual fast observed by the executioner (prior to a cannibalistic feast): "[Il a] cette folle opinion que s'il ne faisait ainsi, il lui arriverait quelque désastre ou

même la mort” (89) / “He has this crazy opinion that if he did not do so, something disastrous or fatal would befall him” [trans. mine]. Thevet’s condemnation of ritual cannibalism is so absolute and pervasive that almost all descriptions related to Tupi customs end with a condemnation of their violent natures. In a succinct and particularly dismissive statement, the Catholic cosmographer writes: “[v]oilà de quelle discrétion se gouverne ce pauvre peuple brutal” (89) / “and there you have it, this is the kind of [in]discretion with which these poor and brutal people govern themselves” [trans. mine]. Later in the same chapter, recognizing his partial and unfair portrayal of the people he purports to describe accurately, Thevet concedes that there is some good in them. “Voilà un mot de leur fidélité et façon de faire en passant, après avoir parlé de leur obstination et appétit de vengeance.” (92) / “Here is a [good] word of their loyalty and behaviour, in passing, after having spoken of their obstinacy and appetite for vengeance” [trans. mine]. Ironically, Thevet’s unending condemnation of Tupi vengeance and violence is based on an Aristotelian ethic which denounce excess and praises moderation (Reeser 218-220).

Thevet’s castigation of the people he describes is not reserved for the Tupi – the cosmographer finds failings in all the Amerindian peoples he describes. In his last chapter on the “Amazonians”, Thevet provides a brief portrayal of the Amazons that he claims have given their name to the river. The cosmographer admits that his knowledge of Amazons comes from the accounts of Spanish sailors, but that he believes them to be true (163-164). Not only does Thevet report these stories as if he had seen them, but he also traces the development of Amazon society as well as explaining their temperaments and customs. Etymological reasoning appears to provide the impetus for Thevet’s analysis of the Amazons. The cosmographer’s avowed empiricism is doubly hampered

as he reports second-hand stories and also depends on Classical etymology to conclude that Amazons must reside in proximity to the Amazon River (163). “[C]es bonnes dammes” / “these fine ladies”, writes Thevet sarcastically, “se prostituèrent volontairement à leurs voisins sans autre espèce de mariage” (166) / “prostitute themselves voluntarily to their neighbours, lacking other kinds of marriage” [trans. mine]. Further in the same passage, Thevet writes that Amazons suffer from “incontinence”, i.e. they are unable to contain their lust for war (167). By writing about the Amazons, Thevet shows that his lack of first-hand experience and his reliance on stories that facilitate his moralistic perspective. For the cosmographer, the Amazons are just another “savage race” whose intemperance makes them as they are.

The Catholic cosmographer places himself in two positions: to both describe what he sees (and hears) and to ascribe purposes to those things. When describing customs, Thevet appeals to Aristotelian ethics to diagnose the causes of those customs. This diagnostic method is anti-topographical because it searches for causes from without the *topos*. Thevet’s reasoning is dissimilar to L ry’s (who begins his moral musings with the assumption that sin is shared by all). Thus, while Thevet writes from the perspective of a divinely-ordered universe governed by Aristotelian epistemology (Reeser 218-220), L ry defends the Calvinist position of divine grace as a precursor to an ethical life.

The topographer often directly cites the reasons the Tupi provide for their customs and rituals (even when he can’t help but evaluate them according to his Calvinist ethics). For instance, L ry describes how Tupi women do not paint themselves (like the men) and that they also refuse to wear any clothing. L ry acknowledges that he does not understand what motivates this behaviour, but he appears to have asked them. The

author writes that Tupi women “excuse” themselves because they want to be able to swim in rivers freely (231-232). Léry accepts the offered reason with a degree of skepticism; the ambiguity of his response signals to the reader that she may make up her own mind on the issue (the topographer expressly encourages readers to do so in various passages). The Calvinist’s ability to provide multiple narrative sketches and the author’s openness to divergent interpretations of customs grant readers more opportunities to invest themselves in the text. By providing both a description of a custom and the reason the Tupi attribute to it, Léry makes it possible for readers to attempt to think like the Tupi. By contrast, to attempt to rescue a fragment of the Tupi perspective from Thevet’s *Les singularités* is to risk being shunned by the cosmographer’s dismissive tone.

Léry maneuvers around the concept of “grace” to find a way to (abstractly) plan the conversion and redemption of the Tupi. Although Léry has a negative opinion of cannibalism, the Calvinist finds in the practice a state of being estranged from divinity (as opposed to an essential brutality). By viewing cannibalism as a condition of living without grace, Léry retains a certain composure that Thevet does not have when discussing the same topic. For instance, Léry describes his conversation with the Tupi regarding the inadmissibility of cannibalism in Christianity.

[...] de façon leur disoi je que s'ils se vouloyent convertir des erreurs ou leurs *Caraïbes* menteurs les detenoyent: ensemble delaisser leur barbarie pour ne plus manger la chair de leurs ennemis que ils auroyent les mesmes graces qu'ils conoissoyent par effect que nous avions. Bref afin que leur ayant fait entendre la perdition de l'homme nous les preparissions à recevoir Jesus Christ. (*Histoire* 238; 1578 ed.)

[...] in this way I told them that if they wanted to convert from the errors in which their *Caraïbes* liars keep them: to abandon their barbarity together – to no longer eat the flesh of their enemies – they would have the same grace that they know, by consequence, that we have. Briefly, by having heard of the perdition of mankind we prepared them to receive Jesus Christ. [Trans. mine]

Firstly, the pastor suggests that the abolition of cannibalism is a precursor to receiving grace. Further into the conversation, Léry shares a story allegedly recounted by his Tupi collocutors. The essence of the story is that a *Maïr* (European) had visited them “many moons ago” to bring the gospel, but their ancestors had rejected Christ. This story suggests to Léry that the Tupi are living without grace because they had already rejected the word of God. The consequence for this transgression was, according to Léry, that the Tupi received the sword with which they butchered each other thereafter (471). Léry responds to his Tupi associates by telling them that they can still choose to change their ways. While they immediately agree to become Christian, that same night Léry can hear his friends dancing and singing songs of revenge and cannibalism. Léry’s condemnation, unlike that of Thevet, is to lament “l’inconstance de ce pauvre peuple, bel exemple de la nature corrompue de l’homme” (413) / “the inconstancy of this poor people, a fine example of the corrupt nature of man” [trans. Whatley 147]. Thus, Léry identifies ‘inconstancy’ as the primary sin of the Tupi. The pious Calvinist deplores the corrupt nature of *all* mankind, without isolating “these brutal people”, like the Catholic. Léry’s understanding of sin as a universal condition – the total corruption of humankind – is clearly that of a Calvinist. Interestingly, the sentiment that humankind is far removed from divinity is also expressed

by Michel de Montaigne when he states humankind is “le plus esloigné de la voute celeste” / “the furthest from the vault of heaven” (Apologie de Raimond Sebond; cited in Conley, *An Errant Eye* 24).

Another way in which the rival authors display their differences is through the characterization of Tupi myth and the simultaneous reinforcement of their personal doctrinal positions. As religious men, Thevet and Léry show a peculiar curiosity for the practices and beliefs of the Tupi. Both agree that the Tupi are ignorant of scripture and that they are prone to superstitious behaviours. However, just as they diverge in their descriptions of Tupi customs, the rival authors provide readers with a different understanding of Tupi beliefs and ceremonial practices. One striking difference is that the Calvinist author does not define a “religion” of the Tupi, but rather describes an anti-religion with all the necessary disapproval of a minister. The title of chapter XVI reads:

Ce qu'on peut appeler religion entre les sauvages Ameriquains: des erreurs, où certains abuseurs qu'ils ont entr'eux, nommez *Caraiibes* les detiennent: et de la grande ignorance de Dieu où ils sont plongez. (377)

What one might call religion among the savage Americans: of the errors in which certain charlatans called *Caraiibes* hold them in thrall; and of the great ignorance of god in which they are plunged. [Trans. Whatley 134]

The pastor regards the Tupi as living in error because of their idolatry but he also denounces the influence of the neighbouring *Caraiibes* whom he compares to “[l]es prestres de Baal, [qui prennent] les offrandes” (409) / “popish indulgence-bearers” [trans.

Whatley 140] – a snide, formulaic Huguenot reference to Catholic priests (Lestringant, *Histoire d'un voyage* 409, note 1). Léry's descriptions and arguments within the chapter demonstrate the problem with calling Tupi beliefs and ceremonies "religion". The realization that Tupi beliefs do not constitute something equivalent to Christianity could have only come from a missionary who re-evaluated his prior understanding of the meaning of "religion". The Calvinist topographer also shows significant skill – as a writer and ethnographer – by situating his chapter on religion after the chapter on cannibalism. The decision to describe a 'so-called' religion after writing about warfare and cannibalism suggests that Léry is aware cannibalism is more important to the Tupi than "worship", and that the "religious" ceremonies he observes are often only meaningful as part of the multi-day cannibalistic feasts in which they take place. Warfare (the first chapter describing rituals) leads to the capture of prisoners (and cannibalism – the second chapter). Lastly, religious rites are performed alongside the feasts. By organizing these chapters sequentially, Léry displays an ethnographic logic. The narrative of the topographer shows that religion among the Tupi cannot be interpreted outside of its broader cultural context. While Léry disapproves of both cannibalism and idolatrous worship, curiosity often gets the better of the topographer as he describes the pagan rites which he observed with glee even as he chastises them. The Calvinist writer ventures into descriptions of practices with which he must have felt a degree of discomfort.

After describing his attempts at converting the Tupi through syncretism, the Calvinist reveals his insight into the nature of "inconstant" belief. In order to successfully introduce knowledge of Christ, the Calvinist understands that his potential converts need to have constant fear of the Devil and constant belief in God. Léry's concern with religion,

both as an ethnographer and as a missionary are expressed in a noteworthy anecdote: Léry discovers that the Tupi are not concerned with *Toupan* (the thunder god) before and after the thunderstorm. Having lost track of the fear instilled in them by *Toupan* or *Aygnan* (a maleficent spirit that Léry equates to the Devil), the Tupi are no longer worried with appeasing these spirits. This realization leads Léry to conclude that their “religion” is not of the same kind as his own. Léry decries the inability of the Tupi to have the kind of “belief” needed to retain his Christian teachings – their belief is manifest only during an event thought to be controlled by a supernatural force, but “[...] tout cela puis apres s’esvanouissoit de leur cerveau” (389) / “[...] afterwards, it all vanished from their brain” [trans. Whatley 138].

The attentiveness with which Léry treats religious beliefs among the Tupi contrasts sharply with Thevet’s rather general “De la religion des Amériques” (50). Further in *Les singularités*, Thevet also describes Tupi beliefs in more detail as “visions, dreams and illusions” (Ch. 35) and the rituals associated with the *Caraiibes* shamans (Ch. 36). In both cases, Thevet describes aspects of Tupi belief and ceremonies, but there is little indication that Thevet delves into deeper questions of faith and the nature of Tupi belief. The descriptions of Tupi religion are often interrupted by drawing comparisons – such as with the religions that the cosmographer attributes to Canada, Guinea, Ethiopia, etc., – and by referencing Classical sources. Thevet takes the discussion into an invective on Macrobius’ commentary of the *Dream of Scipio* (70-71). The overall theme that emerges is the ‘ignorance’, ‘error’ and ‘falsity’ of the Tupi religion. Moreover, the Catholic argues against idolatry, divination and superstition of any kind; he urges readers to respect and adhere to the Bible, law, and science (75).

Whenever Thevet describes shamanic practices and other ceremonies imbued with strange, symbolic gestures, there is a dismissal of their truth and validity. However, Thevet's distaste for superstition is not reserved for Americans. For instance, he states that the Americans "sont vraiment idolâtres, ni plus ni moins que les anciens gentils" (71) / "are truly idolatrous, neither more nor less than the ancient gentiles" [trans. mine]. Moreover, Thevet is consistent in his dislike of anything less than orthodox Catholicism. The focus of the friar moves away from the cosmographic urge to analogize and categorize at times, as the tone becomes acutely moralistic. He reminds readers that belief in auspicious omens, such as the interpretation of a deer as a sign of good fortune, is universally ridiculous: "aussi est cette opinion folle, superstitieuse et répugnante à notre religion" (116) / "this foolish, superstitious and repugnant opinion is also [found] in our religion" [trans. mine]. Nevertheless, Thevet's derision is more broadly applied to Tupi beliefs and the "plusieurs rêveries dont leur cerveau est parfumé" (116) / "many daydreams that adorn their brains" [trans. mine]. Thevet is more morose about the prospects of conversion. The Catholic shows how even baptising the Brazilians is an ordeal because of superstitions that they have about entering bodies of water. Moreover, Tupi funerary and burial rites are clearly at odds with Catholic practices (78). The incongruence of practices and ceremonies is considered a problem for conversion by Thevet in the same way that the incongruence of modes of belief concerns Léry.

While the Calvinist, like Thevet, bemoans the idolatry and superstitions of the Tupi, he also hopes that they could, one day, join his faith. Léry attentively considers the thoughts and motivations of the Tupi.

Toutefois, à fin qu'en entrant en matiere, je commence de declarer ce que j'ai
cognou leur rester encore de lumiere, au milieu des espesses tenebres
d'ignorance où ils sont detenus. (385)

Still, let me begin by declaring what light I have perceived that they do,
nevertheless, possess in the midst of the dense shadows of ignorance where
they lie in bondage" [trans. Whatley 136].

It is these illuminated parts of the Tupi brain that appear to Léry to hold promise (for conversion). The Calvinist is relieved to hear that they believe in the immortality of souls and considers this a primary means of conversion. Despite Léry's less scathing tone when evaluating the beliefs of the Tupi, it is clear that for the Calvinist, the objective is to find in their beliefs a seed for the propagation of Christianity.

Léry's faith in God allows for the use of a theological framework which serves as the shared genealogy and continuity between all of humanity. Responding to the concerns of his contemporaries, he ties the Tupi to the descendants of Ham: "il semble qu'il y a plus d'apparence de conclure qu'il soyent descendus de Cham" (421) / "It seems, therefore, more likely that we should conclude that they are descended from Ham" [trans. Whatley 150]. By being descendants of Noah's son, Léry suggests, the Tupi have partaken in the sin of Adam. Léry, like Thevet, uses Christian doctrine to relate the peoples he encounters to a unified human destiny. Nevertheless, the two authors differ in the way they apply their respective ethical frameworks to interpret the moral implications of Tupi beliefs and customs.

While “Léry’s topographic style resists assimilating the Tupi to previously known cultures” (Frisch 91), the Calvinist pastor also assimilates the Tupi to the supreme authority of his own God. The result is that some customs are, for Léry, just as good as those of the French, while others are better or worse. Comparing the production and consumption of *caouin* and wine, the Calvinist writes: “il y a mesme raison de l’un à l’autre” (256) / “one custom is as good as the other” [trans. Whatley 77]. In other cases, the Tupi are clearly in a better position than the French for Léry – for instance, in appearance, and strength of body (e.g. Tupi women lie down for only a day or two after birth as opposed to spending weeks in bed and they are more willing to keep their children close to breastfeed them) (377). However, when the Brazilian natives contravene Christian morality, they show their blindness (“aveuglissement”) (393). Despite the fondness that the pastor often shows for the Tupi, he has no doubt that they are abandoned by God. “[N]onobstant les rayons et le sentiment que j’ay dit, qu’ils en ont: c’est un peuple maudit et delaissé de Dieu” (420). / “[I]n spite of the glimpse and intimation of it that I have said they have, this is a people accursed and abandoned by God” [trans. Whatley 150].

Conclusion

Two distinct modes of writing about the cannibals of Brazil were penned by Jean de Léry and André Thevet in the latter half of the 16th-century. Readers of the *Histoire d'un voyage* and *Les singularités* will notice that the topics covered by the two authors are, in fact, largely similar: appearance and dress, foods and medicines, beliefs and ceremonies, arms and warfare, family life, laws and political structure, and, finally, cannibalism. Yet, this apparent congruence in substance does not indicate two synoptic accounts. On the contrary, two varying regimes of representation – a topographic paradigm and a cosmographic one – account for the different visions and meanings of the two texts.

A topographic style of describing the “savage” is evident in *Histoire d'un voyage*. As Michel de Montaigne writes in *Des cannibales*, the focus of topography is on describing a place and its people with close attention to particular details. Topography should, for Montaigne, avoid glosses, generalizations, and philosophical musings that are the hallmarks of cosmography. Léry manages to provide his readers with just such an account. By writing his story of a voyage to Brazil, Léry attempts to describe only that which he has seen and lived. Léry’s rough treatment at the hands of Admiral Villegagnon forced him to relocate to the Brazilian mainland on the shore of Guanabara Bay. The Tupi cannibals become his new hosts and Léry takes on the name *Léry-oussou* (“Big Oyster”). During his year-long stay among the Tupi, Léry observes them in great detail and partakes in their mundane activities. The topographer’s approach is complicated by his strong adherence to the Reformed religion. As a pastor, Léry attempts to convert the Tupi, but often runs into challenges. He discovers that the way in which they “believe” is not at all like his own. The Calvinist traveler is struck by their “inconstant” minds as he notes the

spontaneity of their thoughts. He laments how removed the Tupi are from the light of God. Lacking writing, the Tupi are further distanced from the gospel from Léry's point of view.

Despite the scandals of bloody warfare and ritual cannibalism among the Tupi, Léry is not fazed. The hospitality and good-natured manners that Léry observes among the Tupi changes his opinion of what it means to be a "savage". *Histoire d'un voyage* is a text in which relativism allows for a dual perspective: the topographer observes Tupi customs and those of his own culture side by side. At times, the Calvinist assumes a utopian mode as he finds more evil and violence in France than among the cannibals. However, Léry is not a utopian writer; he is a writer firmly connected to a sense of place. The author is fully aware of the problem of writing about his experience twenty years after the fact. His nostalgic tone reveals his fondness for the Tupi, the smell of starch in France immediately brings him inside a Tupi home. Topography introduces a sense of physical and chronological boundedness that allows the author to recall his position as protagonist and to desire to return to it. The author's memory and his skill as a storyteller creates detailed descriptions and multiple portraits which reveal the Tupi to his readers. The reader of *Histoire d'un voyage* is encouraged to be active by contemplating the differing portrayals of the Tupi. Moreover, readers are invited to draw their own conclusions about the significance or value of Tupi customs and practices. The development of a focused and empirical mode of ethnographic description of is the advent of what Michel de Certeau calls "the revolution of the credible".

André Thevet, the "Cosmographe du Roy", begins his literary project by taking a trip to the Americas in order to describe strange and novel things (*Les singularités*). In Brazil, the Catholic cosmographer describes the Tupi in detail and arranges his

observations in short chapters dedicated to central topics of interest. The most curious and strange details that the cosmographer observes provide the material for his text. However, it is through a cosmographic paradigm that the author of *Les singularités* interprets his findings. The cosmographer uses Classical texts and contemporary works of cosmography to arrange singularities by analogical resemblance. This is mainly achieved by his application of the Renaissance concept of *aemulatio*. However, Thevet discovers little that is new in the Americas because of the application of his Aristotelian propositions. The strangeness of the New World is neutered by a sense of familiarity and universal truth. An Aristotelian epistemological paradigm is the principal mechanism for interpreting cosmographic novelties. In his later works, almost everything that Thevet found in the Americas has been taken out of context – “King” Quoniambec is the prime suspect of Thevet’s cosmographic glosses and exaggerations. By writing “en passant”, the cosmographer moves from one singularity to the next in a haphazard fashion, much unlike Léry’s carefully juxtaposed descriptive portraits. The Catholic writer has no difficulty in seeing the world through his own doctrinal perspective. As an Aristotelian thinker, Thevet sees lack of reason and unjustified violence everywhere. As a friar, Thevet assumes a moralistic tone which universally denounces superstitions and idolatry. The move towards a universal order of being is constantly drawing Thevet’s writing away from the place he describes.

Léry lives up to his family motto – “plus voir qu’avoir” (Lestringant, *Jean de Léry* 38-39) – by writing only the particular and avoiding sweeping generalizations that attempt to collect or usurp things in the guise of genuine understanding. “The New World of Léry’s text escapes European control” (Whatley 22). The same could not be said for Thevet’s

Les singularités. The cosmographer finds in the New World a barbaric version of the Old World. His skewed understanding of different cultures makes the text as much an invective against the pagan “savages” as what one could confidently call “ethnography”. Thus, the curiosities collected by Thevet are transported across the Atlantic Ocean to become “knowledge”. However, skeptical thinkers like Montaigne saw through the ruse of cosmography. When the philosopher wrote of one who “in order to trot out his little scrap of knowledge [...] will write a book on the whole of physics” (trans. Screech 209), he may well have been speaking of Thevet.

Writing about the New World was as much about exploring geography and people as it was about developing new territories of the mind. At the dawn of the 17th century a modern consciousness was emerging out of the upheaval of the 16th century. “‘The novelties of ancient truths,’ Campanella wrote to Galileo, ‘of new worlds, new systems, new nations, are the beginning of a new era’” (Mumford and Anshen 95). The struggle between knowledge emerging from direct experience and the categorical thinking that always sees semblances of the old in the new represents two epistemological paradigms that emerged in the 16th century and continue to this day.

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