

21L007 After Columbus

Topics for the first essay

1. Montaigne's essay, although it claims otherwise, is based on written sources, of which Léry's text is an important one. Pick a topic in Montaigne's account of the Tupi – making war, religion, ethics, food customs, gender roles – and identify as many differences as you can between the essay and the first-hand account in Léry. Concentrating on those differences which seem to you most significant, lay out for your reader their net effects -- what is the total effect of these differences in each text? In your conclusion, you might speculate on why or to what end Montaigne might have altered his account in these ways; or you might consider how Léry evaluates/responds to the information Montaigne alters or excludes.

2. Léry stands out for his relative open-mindedness, and his willingness (at least in some areas) to meet the Tupi on equal terms. At the same time, he condemns other Frenchmen who “forget themselves” so far as to participate fully in Tupi culture, to abandon their different status as Frenchmen. Pick a few places in the text which seem important or interesting in this light, trace how and where, Léry moves along the axes of judgement (does he praise, condemn, or simply report?), differentiation (does he see the Tupi as alien or similar to himself and his kind?), and participation (does he enter the culture or stand outside it?). In your conclusion, you might pick *one* moment of Léry's response as either especially representative, or especially important to you as a reader – then argue for the first, or explain the second.

3. According to Paul Lejeune, the Montagnais avoid anger above all; according to Jean de Brébeuf, the Hurons also avoid showing anger or vengeance (*JR*, 33 51). These observations seem to contrast with Léry and Montaigne's emphasis on the centrality of vengeance and inveterate hatred in Tupi culture (Léry, 112). What can be learned by examining this apparent point of difference? This examination might proceed in several stages, considering the observation, the culture is being observed, and those who are

doing the observing. To begin with, fine-tune the observation (these avoid anger, these rely on it): how do the Tupi encourage or reward anger, for instance? How do the Hurons discourage it? Then, as you look more broadly at the culture is being observed, consider how much the hypothesis fits and how much you might want to qualify it: Is anger encouraged in all areas of Tupi life or only some? If the Hurons don't believe in vengeance, what motivates them to go to war? Are these cultures really different, and how much? Finally, you might ask yourself about the values of the observer and how these might affect their representation of the topic under discussion: do the Jesuits appear to value things that Lery does not care about, for instance, and vice versa? You may take on this topic (anger and vengeance) as it is, or use it as a template for thinking about some other observation or hypothesis.

Length: 5 pages, double-spaced (ca. 1500 words).

Due date (essay): Monday, Sept. 29

Due date (revision): 10/15

How to format your paper:

Typed/printed, double-spaced, 1" margins. Paragraphs indented 5 spaces at left; do not separate paragraphs by extra blank lines. Quotations of 10 words or less should be integrated into the text; longer quotations should be indented 5 spaces at left and right margins, single spaced, and set off from the text of the essay by a blank line before and after the quotation. (Please see examples below).

How to title your paper:

Your essay should have a fairly specific title – one which will suggest what you've concluded about the differences between Montaigne and Lery, for instance -- e.g., "Saintly Savages and Subhuman Cannibals" or "Truth-telling versus Total Fabrication". (Note: unlike these two, your titles will probably be more subtle and represent viable arguments). "Jean de Léry's Voyage to Brazil" would not be a good title. It's worth taking a little thought over the title, not only because it creates the first impression of your essay (that, too); coming up with a phrase which encapsulates your argument can help in focusing that argument.

How to quote:

Short Quotation (2 kinds)

1/ When Montaigne claims that his servant “had lived ten or twelve years in that other world” (115), he is referring to

[NOTE: when the quotation is integrated into your own sentence, as here -- your words “his servant” are the subject of Montaigne’s verb “had lived” -- make sure the grammar works. To check whether it does, remove the quotation marks and see if the sentence looks right.]

2/ Montaigne writes: “skill is a dead and physical possession” (115).

Long Quotation

Here I am, writing along in my essay, along and along and along. Here comes a quotation, beginning now.

They get up with the sun, and immediately after rising they eat for the whole day, for they have no other meal (111).

Okay, quotation’s over. Back to the essay now, with double-spacing and regular margins again.

One other thing: anytime you include a long chunk of text, be sure to talk about its details and what, specifically, we should understand from reading it. If there is not enough to say, the quotation should probably be shorter.