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## A Translation of Letters by Louis-Antoine de Bougainville: The Seven Years War (1756-1759)

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A Translation of Letters by Louis-Antoine de Bougainville: The Seven Years War (1756-1759)

Senior Project submitted to  
The Division of Social Studies  
And  
The Division of Languages and Literature  
of Bard College

by  
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## **Acknowledgements**

For everyone who made me who I am today, but isn't around to know that: Grandpa Angelo,  
Aunt Tina, Uncle Henry & Great-Grandma Lucy



## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Translation.....	19
Conclusion.....	68
Timeline.....	72
Bibliography.....	76





Ville de Montréal. Gestion de documents et archives

Figure 1: Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, comte de Bougainville





Figure 2: Vries-Baaijens, Annelieke. *Eastern North America, c. 1748-1760.*

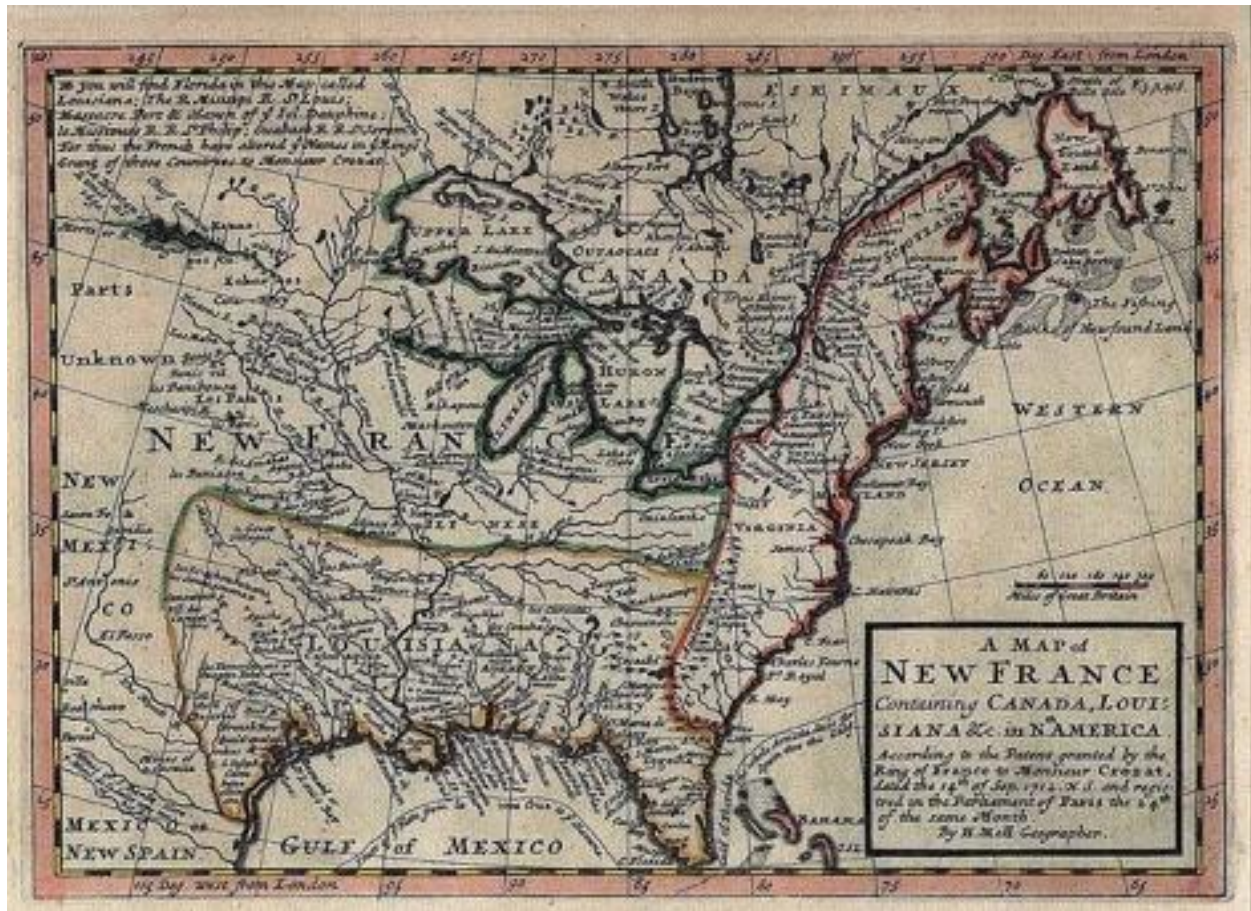


Figure 3: Moll, Herman. A map of new France containing Canada, Louisiana &c. in Nth.  
 America : according to the patent granted by the king of France to Monsieur  
 Crozat, dated the 14th of Sep. 1712 N.S. and registered in the Parliament  
 of Paris the 24th of the same month.



Figure 3: Gibson, John. *The British Governments in Nth. America Laid Down Agreeable to the Proclamation of Oct. 7. 1763.*

## Introduction

“What touches me the most is to be deserving. I work only to have some consideration, to be worthy of the respect of those whom I honor, to increase their friendship; in a word, to have this good reputation that is worth more than a golden belt. Content with the small inheritance that was left to us, I do not want a greater fortune. To be worth something, to make my soul capable of sustaining any hardship - that is the object of my ambition. My stay here has bound me even closer to all that I loved upon leaving France. My soul, from the depths of these woods, sometimes launches toward its homeland with emotions that I do not know how to depict. I imagine myself greeting you, talking to my dear mother, I enjoy your friendship, and hers; but soon the illusion is over, the charm disappears and I find myself back among the Indians or people who are hardly any kinder.”<sup>1</sup>

Louis-Antoine de Bougainville wrote these words to his brother on July 3, 1757 from Montreal, Quebec. He was stationed there between 1756 and 1759 during the Seven Years War (1756-1763), a global conflict for empire between England and France. Bougainville served as *aide-de-camp* under Lieutenant General Louis-Joseph de Montcalm, until 1759 when he was promoted to colonel. He participated in the captures of Fort Oswego in 1756, and Fort William Henry in 1757. Although the French were victorious in these battles, the war would result in New France being turned over to the control of the English. Bougainville and France would both spend the remaining years of the eighteenth-century making efforts to redeem themselves from this devastating loss.

Bougainville was born in 1729 to Yves-Pierre and Marie-Françoise de Bougainville. He was the youngest of three, with a brother, Jean-Pierre (b. 1722) and a sister, Marie Françoise (b.

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<sup>1</sup> Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, *Écrits Sur La Canada: Mémoires - Journal - Lettres* (Sillery: Pélican/Kincksieck, 1993), 402.

1727). Their father was a member of the *noblesse de robe* by virtue of being a lawyer in the French royal courts. However, his children would not inherit this status. After his mother passed away in 1734, when he was only five years old, a neighbor of the Bougainville family, Madame Marie-Hélène Hérault de Séchelles, provided him with motherly affection. Madame de Séchelles belonged to a noble and well-known family. She was the daughter of Controller General of Finances, Moreau de Séchelles, widow of Police Lieutenant René Hérault and sister of Secretary of State of the Navy, François Marie Peirenc de Moras. Although Bougainville lived comfortably as a member of the *haute bourgeoisie*, he had greater ambitions.

The young and ambitious Bougainville relied on his education, kinship and patronage to position himself favorably in Parisian society under the social structure of the *ancien régime*. The *ancien régime* divided society into three estates. The clergy composed the First Estate, the nobility composed the Second Estate and commoners -- the overwhelming majority of the population -- composed the Third estate. Upward mobility under this structure was seldom, but patronage and kinship made it possible for Bougainville to achieve his career goals without being a member of the aristocracy. The relationships that were most beneficial to Bougainville were those with his brother, who guided him in his studies, and Madame de Séchelles, who would become his patroness and use her social connections to his advantage.

Before arriving in Canada, Bougainville had an impressive academic career. He pursued studies in mathematics and science, as well as law, in which he interned, but never practiced himself. In 1756, he was recognized for his academic achievements in mathematics by the Royal Society in London. Jean-Pierre de Bougainville was a member of the *Académie des inscriptions et*

*belles-lettres*, as well as the *Académie française*.<sup>2</sup> As an aspiring member of the *Académie des sciences*, Bougainville's relationship with his brother granted him access to the social circle that would allow him to achieve this goal. In order to become a member of any of the French *Académies*, one would not only need to have an impressive career, but also popularity among its existing members, since new members are elected in by existing members. Bougainville certainly benefited from his connections, but not without first having to demonstrate that he was deserving of these advantages. Perhaps, his relationship with Madame de Séchelles illustrates the importance of personal merit more poignantly.

As Bougainville matured, Madame de Séchelles began to take an interest in his career and assumed the position of his patroness. The patron-client relationship was a reciprocal and mutually beneficial one, although the patron was superior to their client. The client would initiate the relationship by giving a gift to their prospective patron or patroness. Doing so would put the patron in a position where they were expected to reciprocate, and demonstrate that the client understands the nature of their relationship; he is expected to act respectfully, since his achievements would reflect on her as well. The patron would only accept the gift if they deemed the relationship as an enhancement to their own life. The patron-client relationship was different from a kinship because the ties could be severed at any moment if one side failed to reciprocate. Therefore, reciprocity was mandatory if the client wished to continue to benefit from the patron or patroness' social standing.<sup>3</sup> It is unclear, however, whether Madame de Séchelles formally accepted this role. Her relationship with Bougainville was more intimate than the typical patron-client relationship

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<sup>2</sup> Christian Ayne Crouch, *Nobility Lost: French and Canadian Martial Cultures, Indians, and the End of New France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), 156.

<sup>3</sup> Sharon Kettering, *French Historical Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 17:845.

because she was an integral part of his upbringing. Nonetheless, she would only have taken up (and continued to pursue) the role of his patroness if she believed that his behavior would reflect favorably upon her. After all, Madame de Séchelles and other elite patronesses did not hold power themselves. Rather, they derived power from their relationships with powerful men.<sup>4</sup>

By the time Bougainville arrived in Canada on May 10, 1756, the English and the French had already been fighting in North America for several years. These disputes tended to take the form of skirmishes, rather than formal battles and did not only occur between the French and the English, but also Algonquin and Iroquois peoples. Both of the European powers occupied territories in North America, but their colonies looked very different from one another. The English were interested in populating their colonies with permanent settlers, while many of the French colonists moved to North America for the fur trade, and did not necessarily plan to stay there permanently. This caused tension between the French and the English, since the English did not recognize French colonies as such and desired to expand their territory to include these areas. This was the case in the Ohio Country, where France established a trade route that would connect Quebec and Louisiana. Moreover, this area was already populated by Native American peoples, both Iroquois and Algonquians, who had their own disputes over the land.<sup>5</sup> Some tribes, like the Shawnee, were forced out of their homes by English settlers and moved westward of the colonies. The Iroquois also had claims to land in the Ohio Country after conquering it from them.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Crouch, *Nobility Lost*, 73.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen Warren, "One Colour and as One Body:," in *The Worlds the Shawnees Made*, Migration and Violence in Early America (n.p.: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 182, [http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9781469611747\\_warren.14](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9781469611747_warren.14).

<sup>6</sup> Warren, "One Colour," 182.

Tensions between the French and the English heightened on May 28, 1754 following the murder of Ensign Joseph Coulon de Jumonville by the Iroquois “half king,” Tanaghrisson, who accompanied George Washington during a diplomatic mission that turned violent, despite the presence of a white flag of truce. Following this incident, Washington was coerced into signing a barely legible document, holding him accountable for Jumonville’s death.<sup>7</sup> England declared war on May 17, 1756, exactly a week after Bougainville arrived in the colony. Throughout the war, France would employ Canadian troops and ally with Native American groups, including the Shawnee, the Five Nations, the Pequot, the Illinois, the Miami, and the Ottawa, just to name a few.

The French were vastly outnumbered by the English in Canada, even with their allies, yet they led various successful sieges, in which Bougainville participated. In 1756, the French took the English Fort Oswego, which granted them control of Lake Ontario. This would ensure better access to provisions and safer passage of warships. The siege of Fort William Henry in August, 1757 was technically successful as well, but it damaged the reputation of the French and complicated relationships not only between the English and the French, but also the French with the Canadians and their Native allies from various tribes. The English and the French held a common idea of how to properly conduct themselves in war. After all, this was not the first time they had fought each other. While the Europeans organized themselves in lines, Algonquin and Iroquoian peoples, tended to perform ambush attacks. When over a thousand Native American participants attacked the English who had already capitulated days earlier, the English felt that the French violated their the rules of engagement and this bruised French’s honor.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Crouch, *Nobility Lost*, 47-48.

<sup>8</sup> Crouch, *Nobility Lost*, 65.



Today, we have access to twenty-one of Bougainville's letters, which are addressed to his brother and Madame de Séchelles. His academic accomplishments alone were not enough to establish himself in France, and his absence threatened his relevance in Parisian social life. He was certainly aware of this and his letters throughout the war did ensure that he had a continued social presence, despite being in Canada. The passage above is representative of Bougainville's letters from Canada as a whole. It vividly illustrates his desires, principles, prejudices and yearning for home. First, he reveals that self-worth, for him, stems from a good reputation from those whom he "honors," rather than from his material possessions. This is significant given his relationship with his brother and Madame de Séchelles; ambition in a young man like Bougainville could be seen as cunningness and untrustworthiness. In this context, Bougainville sharing these sentiments, while they may be genuine, also does the work of proving his loyalty to his patron and whoever else may help to further his career.<sup>9</sup> His desire for a "good reputation" reveals his expectations beyond his closest relationships, though. Jean-Pierre de Bougainville and Madame de Séchelles were the primary actors who kept his name alive in France during the war. Here, Bougainville reveals the inseparable nature of honor and duty; he was aware that he could not be honored if he did not perform his duties to his nation as a loyal subject.

Bougainville was most miserable in Canada, and even referred to his service there as an "exile" from France. Other than being away from his friends and family, and fearful of putting his career in jeopardy, Bougainville lacked the comfort and security that he enjoyed at home. In Canada, he went weeks without changing his clothes; he was poorly fed; suffered from asthma, extreme heat and cold; and spent time in the company of men with whom he would never have associated in France. Additionally, Bougainville feared that he would be corrupted by the Canadian

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<sup>9</sup> Kettering, *French Historical*, 17:844.

troops, who were uneducated and he considered to be vulgar, and Native American allies, whom he perceived to be excessively violent, especially after the incident at Fort William Henry. In moments of particular isolation, at least he could turn to his general and close friend, Montcalm, who like Bougainville was also trained in the classics, for conversation.

Bougainville's letters, therefore, are one way in which he could express and soothe his longing for home. When he shares that he dreams of returning to France, we must remember that the process of sending and receiving letters by ship was nerve-wracking. His brother would not receive this letter until three months later, on October 3, 1757. This goes to show just how important these letters were to Bougainville. As we can see, being "exiled" in Canada meant not only that he would be away from everything familiar to him, but it also meant that the course of his career was out of his own hands for the time being. He would agonize for months, waiting for a response and even wondering if his letter was ever received. Of course, there was the risk of shipwrecks, and during a time of war, he must have also considered that the ships that transported his letters could be captured by his English enemies. Under these conditions, it was incredibly easy for a man's name to completely disappear from French society. Bougainville made his best effort to ensure that he would not be one of them.

### **Review of Scholarship on Bougainville and His Writing from Canada**

Louis-Antoine de Bougainville's involvement in the Seven Years War is not particularly well-known. His Canadian journals were held by family members until 1896, when they were published in French; they were not translated into English until 1964. In 1993, a new edition of Bougainville's journals was published in French, and this time they were accompanied by his

letters to Madame de Séchelles and Jean-Pierre de Bougainville. Since then, scholars have considered the correspondence within the context of the already-published journals, which, unlike the letters, had been written for a mass audience. The earliest biographies on Bougainville appeared in the 1830s, just two decades after his death in 1811. To date, dozens of biographies on Bougainville have been published in total, yet only three focus primarily on his involvement in the Seven Years' War. This period of his life has therefore not been of particular interest to scholars. Rather, he is best known as the first Frenchman to circumnavigate the globe, in 1769; there are six biographies which focus on his circumnavigation. Though this is his most noted achievement today, his contemporaries nonetheless received it with criticism.

Following his circumnavigation, Bougainville published his travel journals under the title *Voyage autour du monde* (1771). Prior to the publication of Bougainville's journal, Jean-Jacques Rousseau condemned the circumnavigation itself, deeming Bougainville incapable of making adequate scientific and cultural observations:

“... there are mainly four kinds of men who make long-term voyages: sailors, merchants, soldiers and missionaries. One can hardly expect the first three to furnish good observers.”<sup>10</sup>

Bougainville was aware of such criticisms and included his retort in *Voyage autour du monde*:

“I am a voyager and a mariner, that is, a liar and an imbecile in the eyes of that group of haughty writers who, in the shade of their study, philosophize endlessly

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<sup>10</sup> Victor J. H. Suthren, *The Sea Has No End: The Life of Louis-Antoine de Bougainville* (Toronto, Ont.: Dundurn Group, 2004), 176.

about the world and its inhabitants, and majestically subjugate nature to their imagination.”<sup>11</sup>

Denis Diderot reserved his criticisms for Bougainville’s journals. He condemned Bougainville’s overuse of allusions to Greek and Roman mythological figures: “Virgil was in the head or the luggage of the navigator.”<sup>12</sup> Moreover, he wrote his *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville* in 1772, which was not released until 1776. In it, he criticizes Bougainville’s superiority complex toward Tahitian society, concluding that neither is superior, but that they are simply different from one another, with different histories and different cultures.

Today, Bougainville is still best known for his circumnavigation, but information on his participation in the Seven Years War is more accessible than it previously was. His emphasis on greek mythology is observed by scholars today, but tends not to be received with as much criticism. Instead, it is seen merely as a reflection of his training in the classics, rather than an obsession. Since Louis-Antoine de Bougainville’s Canadian letters and journals were published in the 1923 under the title, *Écrits sur le Canada*, scholars have considered their political, historical, scientific and literary contributions and shortcomings. Historian Nelson-Martin Dawson, critic Benoît Melançon, and theologian Jean-Olivier Richard have approached Bougainville’s work from different angles; Dawson highlights Bougainville’s frequent references of Greek mythology, the concentration of scientific observations in his journals, and their absence in his letters; meanwhile Melançon criticizes Bougainville for his apparent disinterest in Native American cultures; as for Richard, he analyzes Bougainville’s letters through a literary lens, paying particular attention to his references to the classics, like Dawson.

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<sup>11</sup> Victor J. H. Suthren, *The Sea Has No End*: 177.

<sup>12</sup> Crouch, *Nobility Lost*, 167.

Nelson-Martin Dawson's review from the *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* (1994) of Bougainville's Canadian letters and journals focuses heavily on his background as a well-educated Frenchman, his hopes to become a member of the Académie des sciences, and the ways in which these characteristics are revealed in his letters. Dawson claims that Roland Lamontagne's 1993 edition of *Écrits sur le Canada* successfully situates Bougainville in his environment as a metropolitan Frenchman temporarily in Canada to serve the colonial enterprise. While this is seldom done by historians, Dawson argues, it leads to a more complete understanding of the Seven Years' War.<sup>13</sup> His background as a Parisian is apparent in his prejudices against the French Canadians. Dawson provides the example of Bougainville's criticisms of Canadian officers, claiming that they were poor at maintaining order when their troops loot the post at Carillon.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, Dawson brings to light Bougainville's command of Latin and knowledge of the classics, which he finds particularly present in his observations of Native Americans. Dawson draws several examples from both the letters and journals in which Bougainville compares Native Americans to ancient figures, including comparing Native American dances to the Greek "arms dance" performed by Pyrrhus.<sup>15</sup> Thus, Bougainville's knowledge of the classics and his French origins are perceptible in both his letters and his journals.

Dawson finds that almost exclusive to his journals, however, are his scientific observations, which the historian considers the greatest contribution of Bougainville's writings from Canada.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Dawson, N. (1994). *Review. Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, 48, (2), 246.  
<https://doi.org/10.7202/305328ar>

<sup>14</sup> Dawson, N. (1994). *Review*, 246.

<sup>15</sup> Dawson, N. (1994). *Review*, 247.

<sup>16</sup> Dawson, N. (1994). *Review*, 246.

This suggests that he reserved some of his observations for certain audiences, while sharing openly with others. His journals and his letters were both intended to be seen by more than one set of eyes. His letters were often copied before they were even sent. What's more, they were intended to be read first by the addressed recipient, either his brother or Madame de Séchelles, and then forwarded to others in Paris. The fact that he focused largely on social interactions in his personal letters, while his journals also share his scientific observations tells us that Bougainville was pragmatic in the formulation of his writing. Melançon's writing develops this idea further.

Melançon's article, *Académiciens et ministres: l'adresse dans les lettres canadiennes (1756-1759)* de Louis-Antoine de Bougainville (1996), centers around his perceived indifference, and sometimes disgust, toward the Native Americans he encounters, and seeks the source. Among his proposed explanations are Bougainville's youth and ignorance and perhaps arrogance about the importance Native American allies to the French.<sup>17</sup> Most intriguing, however, is Melançon's argument that Bougainville strategically wrote about Native Americans with different attitudes depending on his intended audience. Melançon suggests that Bougainville tended to exclude information about the Indians whom he encountered in Canada because the purpose of his letters was not informative, and he was certainly less concerned with Canadian and Indian cultures than he was with French culture. Through these letters, Bougainville sought to connect himself with French culture and to become increasingly important in French society. Thus, he had little motivation to include his observation of Indian cultures in these letters and every reason to use these letters as an opportunity to further his career and social standing in France.

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<sup>17</sup> Benoît Melançon, "Bougainville avant Tahiti: les Amérindiens dans la correspondance canadienne (1756-1759)," in *La lettre au XVIIIe siècle et ses avatars*, ed. Georges Bérubé and Marie-France Silver (Ontario, CA: York University, 1993), 202.

We must consider, then, the significance of evaluating these letters without their corresponding journals, since I only translated Bougainville's letters. There always exists the question of their integrity when two pieces were intended to be viewed by different sets of eyes, for example: is Bougainville sharing his genuine sentiments, or is he saying this to appeal to his audience? Generally, we must question the motive behind every piece of information that he shares. Bougainville's journals were intended for publication, but his letters were not. Thus, we must consider how Bougainville would like to present himself to the readers of his letters, as opposed to the readers of his journals, in order to gain a better idea of when his thoughts and sentiments are genuine and when they may be exaggerated or shared purely to serve his agenda. The audience for Bougainville's journals have been the minority of Europeans who educated, though this would not be limited to French people, since French was the diplomatic language in Europe during this period. His letters, meanwhile, were to be seen by his closest supporters, and then forwarded to others when his readers deemed it appropriate. It is significant that Bougainville hardly ever addresses the people to whom his letters may be forwarded, save for one which he requests be shared with the French banker Monsieur de Moras; rather, he trusted Madame de Séchelles and his brother to judge whether his letters should be shared, and if so with whom. Thus, this may have given him some leeway to be candid in his writing, since his confidants would be the ones to decide to whom among their connections Bougainville's letters would be appealing. This means that there is less responsibility on Bougainville himself to appeal to his writer and more on Madame de Séchelles and his brother to choose the readers of Bougainville's letters wisely.

Richard's article, *Bougainville à la lumière de ses lectures: les références classiques dans les Écrits sur le Canada* (2010), showcases Bougainville's allusions to the classics in his letters,

and suggests that Bougainville assumed the position of these heroes in his own writing. In this article, Richard considers only Bougainville's letters, unlike Dawson and Melançon. This is appropriate since his journals were written with a commercial audience in mind and his primary motivation to write letters was to secure his social standing, and sometimes to arouse pity from his closest confidants. Before presenting instances in which Bougainville assumes the role of Greek heroes, Richard first provides his readers with a background of the philosophical foundation on which Bougainville's comparisons are based. Bougainville believed that people have an inherent tendency to project their own characteristics onto their conception of the divine. Richard sees Bougainville's position as part of a collective effort among philosophers of his time to challenge religious superstitions.<sup>18</sup> This suggests that Bougainville's references to these heroes reflects his image of himself (not vice-versa), and is an manifestation of his training in the classics and an expression of his class status as a member of the *haute bourgeoisie*.

Richard, then, provides us several examples in which Bougainville references ancient Greek texts and mythology. In a letter to Madame Hérault de Séchelles of August 19, 1757, Bougainville denounced corruption in the colony, "Quel pays! Quelle guerre!" Here, he assumes the role of Cicero who exclaims "O tempora, O mores!" (What a time! What morals!) when Catiline goes unpunished after attempting to overthrow the Roman government and assassinate Cicero.<sup>19</sup> During his time in Canada, Bougainville was similarly critical of the Canadian officers' behavior, as seen in the example of the Canadians looting and English fort that Dawson provided. Here, Bougainville even paints himself as the hero.

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<sup>18</sup> Richard, J. (2010). Bougainville à la lumière de ses lectures : les références classiques dans les *Écrits sur le Canada*. *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, 64, (2), 16. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1017837ar>

<sup>19</sup> Richard, J. (2010). *Bougainville à la lumière de ses lectures*, 25.



These scholars successfully situate Bougainville in his environment, in which he felt out of place, as a well-educated Frenchman. They also emphasize his tendency to portray himself and Native American individuals as Greek and Roman figures, yet contemporary scholars criticize his lack of scientific observations as his own contemporaries had.

### **Translating Bougainville's 1756-1759 Letters**

I was drawn to take on the task of translating Louis-Antoine de Bougainville's letters for several reasons. On a personal note, I write letters to and collect letters from friends and family. Additionally, professor Christian Crouch brought to my attention that most of the classes I have taken at Bard focused on women and on war, both of which are themes that this project allows me to delve into. When I took on this project, I had some expectations that were not met, and I found myself interested in aspects of the text that I had not initially considered. When I first read the text, I was surprised by how little Bougainville writes about the events of the war, although the theme of war has a lingering presence in his letters. I began to realize that there is significance in the absence of war in his letters: in writing them, he intended to connect himself with his family and friends in France, and not necessarily to record the events of the war. This also highlights the fact that his aspirations were not put on hold because he was too busy or could not maintain his relationships in France during his absence. Rather, it became clear to me that his anxiety of disappearing from his social scene in France actually drove his ambitions even further. In a larger historical context, however, I was drawn to work with the Seven Years War because it is one that I never studied in depth until I began to study at Bard College. When I learned how crucial this war was for North American history, it felt important to me that more people have access to

documents from this period in history. While Bougainville's documents from Canada have been well-circulated in French, they were not available in English at all until recently.

Bougainville's 1756-1759 journals became available in English less than a century ago and only short excerpts of his letters have been published in English-language secondary historical sources. I was unable to translate these letters in full due to time restraints. I was able, however, to translate the first nine letters in full and then translate select passages from the remaining twelve letters. I decided on which passages to include by committing to certain themes, including Parisian social-life, the conditions that Bougainville lived under in Canada, and his records of the war, including the battles and the French's relationship with their Native American and Canadian allies.

The Seven Years War was significant to North American history -- not just that of Quebec, although it tends not to be studied (or referenced in daily life) nearly as much in Anglophone America. Had the English lost the Seven Years War, anywhere west of the thirteen colonies could be francophone today. The Seven Years War resulted in a loss that is still felt by Quebecois today, but is seldom acknowledged by Anglophone Canadians and Americans. Meanwhile, the war is very much a part of Quebecois school curriculum. However, the war is not only kept alive through academics, but it is remembered in daily Quebecois life as well. The official motto of Quebec is "Je me souviens," which is even printed on license plates today. "Je me souviens" refers not only to the French defeat, but also the 1755-1764 expulsion of the French from Acadia.

In Canada, Francophones are five times more likely to speak English than Anglophones are to speak French.<sup>20</sup> Thus, even though the Seven Years War played a tremendous part in

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<sup>20</sup> Marmen, Louise and Corbeil, Jean-Pierre, "New Canadian Perspectives, Languages in Canada 2001 Census," Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication, Statistics Canada Cat. No. Ch3-2/8-2004, (Canadian Heritage, 2004), pg. 60.

Canadian history, and Bougainville played a significant part in the war, his letters from this period remain inaccessible to most English-speaking Canadians.

Bougainville's letters seem to follow the same general structure. He begins and ends by expressing frantic concern over whether or not his letters were received, and requests for the reader to pass his messages along to others in France. For example, the first letter begins, "I do not understand, my dear brother, why there are complaints of my silence. Since arriving in Brest, I have sent three letters. I am certain that my letters have arrived." As this structure is common to many of his letters, I did not include these portions beyond the first nine letters.

Additionally, he often includes one or more paragraphs in which he lists members of the French elite class to whom he wished his brother to mention his name to those back home, if only to remind them that Bougainville was still alive and still committed to his studies and his career to which he would return. The frequency and length of these paragraphs shows us how urgent he felt it was to reach out to friends, family and acquaintances back home, but since they tend to be repetitive, I did not include these moments past the first nine letters either.

Translating Bougainville's letters has been a difficult, yet enriching experience. I never expected to complete, or even take on a project that is roughly eighty pages long. Of course, there have been moments throughout the process when I was faced with the difficulties of translating a text from eighteenth-century French. It was difficult getting accustomed to the old imparfait -ois ending, especially since the ending is used in the present tense of some verbs today, as with *concevoir*. For example, Bougainville's first letter opens, "je ne conçois pas..." ("I do not understand..."). Throughout the translation process, I would need to be careful to translate this conjugation in the correct tense.

At other times, I was challenged by the peculiarities of eighteenth-century French spelling and I found reading aloud to be the best way of navigating around these obstacles. I did not encounter many instances in which I was stumped by eighteenth-century spelling, but I was clueless to the meaning of *boète* even after searching for it on wordreference. It was not until I read the word aloud that I realized that it may be the old spelling of *boîte* (bottle). I turned to the ARTFL Project's *Dictionnaires d'autrefois* for confirmation. This was eye opening, especially after professor Christian Crouch told me that, although Bougainville's texts may not look very different from modern French, that his pronunciation would have been very different. The pronunciation of *boète* is more similar to the modern Quebecois accent than that of *boîte*.

In other instances, translating the original French to English was difficult because I never encountered some of the words in Bougainville's vocabulary (even in English). I found translating sailing terms particularly difficult and, as these appear often in the earliest letters, it felt intimidating to move on with the project. It took me several weeks to decode the meaning of "gaillard d'arrière" which translates to "aftercastle" in English. Even after finding the translation, I was not any closer to understanding the meaning of the term, since I have very limited knowledge of boats to begin with, but this was solved with a simple google image search. Instances in which I never found the answers that I was looking for have proven to be equally enlightening. In the first letter, Bougainville writes to his brother, "A thousand compliments on my part to our divine Esculape. I have not determined whether or not he has received my Olembu." The fact that I am still not certain of the meaning of "Olembu," goes to show just how personal these letters are, as only the intended reader(s) of Bougainville's letters can understand every detail included in them.

The struggles that I discuss above were not common ones, though they were the most difficult to decipher when I did encounter them. The most consistent challenge that I faced

throughout my translation was Bougainville's syntax and peculiar use of punctuation, which can be somewhat confusing when combined and sometimes left me wondering if it was an error on the copyist's part. For example, in letter #3, Bougainville states, "chargez-vous de mes excuses auprès de Mr de Marville, de Mme de Guippeville, de l'ami, de d'Alembert..." As I was unsure whether this comma was intentional, I just left it as is and translated this passage, "...Monsieur de Marville, Madame de Guippeville, [friend], d'Alembert ..."

Lastly, choosing the most appropriate words was a challenge that required me to do linguistic and historical research. Many scholars today translate the French *sauvage* to English as "savage." Although this may be the intended meaning in some cases, I choose to translate it as "Indian" in most cases. The word "Indian" does not have the same derogatory meaning as "savage" does, although it is still vague and does not dedicate particular attention to the histories and cultures of Native American peoples. In instances when French (or other Europeans) are referring to their allies, I find "Indian" to significantly more appropriate than "savage." "Sauvage" literally means "wildman," which implies that they can be "tamed." This is interesting, especially when we consider that Bougainville frequently compares his Native Americans allies to ancient Greek and Roman figures. Thus, "Indian" suggests that they are capable of becoming "civilized" like the French, whereas referring to them as "savages" would not.

I hope my readers find the letters that follow to be as valuable to their understanding of the Seven Years War, and more generally the history North America, as I did.

**A Translation of Letters by Louis-Antoine de Bougainville: The Seven Years War (1756-1759)**

*Letter #1*

Bougainville to His Brother

Brest Harbor, March 29, 1756

I do not understand, my dear brother, why there are complaints of my silence. Since arriving in Brest, I have sent three letters. I am certain that my letters have arrived, and I believe myself to be fully justified in the eyes of the world. The news you shared about Madame Hérault's health is of great concern to me; I fear that she will catch another fever and fall helplessly ill. It is indeed distressing to carry such a cruel worry as I am about to be at least five months without receiving any news. I beg you to speak to her occasionally, my dear brother, thank you, and maintain the friendship that she has been kind to bestow upon this unfortunate son who would not have left her had he foreseen these events. I also beg you not to worry about me at all; truthfully, there is no reason to. It seems that a charitable God came to my rescue. I am in good health. I have not had even the slightest suffocation. Neither the cold, nor rain and the wind affect me whatsoever, and this is most fortunate as nothing is comparable to the dreadful weather here.

Life is most uncomfortable, by my reckoning, in Our Lady Licorne. So, we suffer, and when we have suffered for some time we become accustomed to suffering. Indeed, I expect any contingency; I am resigned to it. I am prepared for the worst. Believe me, my dear brother, the present and future hardships will soon pass, and of the past hardships, only a pleasant memory will remain, we say. Alas! If some grave concern followed me beyond the sea, I would only look

favorably upon it. I am thrilled with my general; he is kind, full of spirit, frank and open. I have every reason to believe that he considers me a friend. He does not hide anything from me, he even does me the honor of asking my advice, an honor that I acknowledge by not advising him. He has a strong desire to employ me and to praise my modest services, if I am fortunate enough to deliver them satisfactorily. What more could I desire? We are currently in the harbor, awaiting favorable winds. The captain of *la Licorne*, Monsieur le Chevalier de la Rigaudière, is very kind and an officer of the greatest distinction. He is a friend of Chevalier Turgot -- speak to him about it, please. He promised to teach me as much about sailing as one could learn during the journey. The wind today is unfavorable, and I do not believe that we will leave sooner than two days from now. Do not forget, my dear brother, to collect my books from Prault,<sup>21</sup> and make him wait for his payment as long as it takes for him to deliver them to me. I would be most grateful, if you send a copy of my second part to the S.R., and send one with a letter to the president Mylord Maulesfield along with a letter to said Mylord with eight lines that will say what you will know how to write well, and you will have it translated into English by Vivant, if he is still in Paris, or by Clairault. Anyway, continue to be well. I do not like that you have a headache, but I would like it even less if you were suffocating. A thousand compliments on my part to our divine Esculape.<sup>22</sup> I have not determined whether or not he has received my Olembu.<sup>23</sup> Send my father and my aunt a thousand

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<sup>21</sup> Gallica. "Pierre Prault (1685-1768)." <https://www.bnf.fr/fr>. Last modified March 28, 2019. Accessed April 30, 2019. [https://data.bnf.fr/12257757/pierre\\_prault/](https://data.bnf.fr/12257757/pierre_prault/). Pierre Prault was a printer-bookseller.

<sup>22</sup> Bougainville may be referring to the doctor who is treating his brother as "Esculape," the god of healing.

<sup>23</sup> There are hardly any references to the word "Olembu" online, that are not associated with Bougainville's use here. Based on his use here, it seems that he is referring to a medication.

warm wishes for me, and tell them that I pray that they be well and not to worry about me at all. I would like to know for whom my aunt is taking la Providence.

\_\_\_\_\_If we do not leave the harbor by Wednesday, I will write to my uncle. Meanwhile, give him my greetings and send them also to Maître Portail. Tell Madame de la Fortelle if you see her, or write her if you do not see her, that I am wearing her colors which give me great courage; it is apparently the virtue of that which she touched!

My compliments especially to Monsieur l'abbé Touchet and to Messieurs de Ste Palaya.<sup>24</sup>  
I send my kindest thoughts to Monsieur Dupré with all my heart...

*Letter #2*

Bougainville to His Brother

Montreal, June 4, 1756

If you put yourself in my place from time to time, my dear brother, you would have compassion for the cruel uncertainty with which I live. What were the circumstances under which I left? Leaving Madame Hérault in miserable health, the wellbeing of her father in uncertain and critical condition: a thousand possible opportunities for all kinds of grief for the people whom I love the most in the world: that is the crisis during which I left. I languish in a terrible state of worry and I tell myself each day that I still have at least a year to remain here. This thought drives me almost mad; I will never accustom myself to it. Pity me, my dear brother, and at the very least do not miss any opportunities to write me that may present themselves; there would be cruelty in

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<sup>24</sup> "Jean-Baptiste de La Curne de Sainte-Palaye (1697-1781)." <https://data.bnf.fr>. Last modified March 28, 2019. Accessed April 30, 2019. <https://data.bnf.fr/12519>



letting a single one escape. Though I believe you might be seeing Madame Hérault, to whom I sent a very detailed account of our navigation and this land, as it might be that you will not be seeing her, I will convey to you more or less the same details, though slightly abridged, so that you may communicate them to my father and my aunt. You know that we began to sail on April 3rd, at five in the evening, at the same time as *le Héros*. The first days of our navigation were admirable: clear skies, a beautiful sea, and favorable winds that, without being too strong, gave us great speed. We encountered very few English war ships, and none that we did encounter chased us. We determined that we were in the Azores on Holy Wednesday, judging by the great sandbank, and you will see that these seas, along with those of Cape Horn, pass for the roughest that exist in the world, mostly during the times that precede and follow the equinox. There, we were confronted by a strong gale, against which we fought until Easter Day. We were separated from *le Héros*. Being much larger than we are, *le Héros* consequently sustained herself much better against the high waves and the strong winds, as she was also aided by a strong tailwind while barrelling toward Martinique, leaving only one sail, with which we sailed 87 leagues ahead in twenty-four hours while overcoming waves higher than our ship. During this period of strong winds, it was impossible to eat or sleep, the rolling was unbearable, again and again these waves would fill the ship with saltwater, and twice the aftercastle was submerged under the water. Finally, Easter Day came, and along with it a beautiful sun, the weather and the sea both calm, a summer heat. We were positioned in the 38th degree of latitude. All of these hardships were forgotten and joy returned to all of the crew. Almost every day since then, we had favorable winds. We had nothing to fight against but the ice banks of which we counted sixteen surrounding us, and the fog of the great bank as cold as the ice itself. We landed in Quebec on the thirty-eighth day after our departure; our crossing was almost incredibly brief, if we take into account the nearly 400 leagues that we travelled in the

wrong direction, and a halt of six days and nine leagues away from Quebec, close to a point of the river that is named *La Traverse*. Monsieur de Rigaud, brother of le Marquis de Vaudreuil, who was aboard *le Héros* and who travelled from the bottom of *La Traverse* by land, finally arrived in Quebec thirty days after having left Brest. We remained for fifteen days in this capital and there I stayed at de Vienne's home. De Vienne made us feel very welcome: he, his wife and his mother-in-law spoiled me by making me so comfortable. It is very pleasant here: his house is one of the most beautiful and the best-furnished in Quebec, and I had the pleasure of seeing that he is loved and respected by everyone there. I would exclude nonetheless a certain man who, I believe, because of his family connections is cold toward me. I am writing on this subject to Madame Hérault with some details that she will communicate to you and you will explain to her about the de Vienne situation. I would very much like it if we could return the service to him. He deserves it in every way.

I forgot to tell you that I only experienced seasickness for the first two days. Besides, for the most part, I felt better than I would on firm ground, having a large appetite and not even the slightest hint of asthma. I have experienced some very mild episodes, to be honest, since we disembarked. The voyage from Quebec to Montreal was exhausting, but I hope that I will become accustomed like so many others to the way of travelling in this land, which is so harsh. Everything here is being organized for us to begin the campaign. I believe that we will have all positions filled in such a manner that they cannot be undercut. If the circumstances permit us to do some business, that would be great! But nobody can transport munition and foodstuffs here without difficulty and wasting time. The situation is very different from the campaign in Flanders. Our battalions are all either on their way or have already arrived at their posting, with the exception of those who have recently landed and will be making their way very soon. Monsieur de Montcalm will be among

the most threatened, or the most likely to be attacked. I believe that we can leave Montreal in fewer than fifteen days, since the greatest forces that France can provide have now arrived. We have in the harbor of Quebec the King's six ships which brought la Sarre, Royal Roussillon, the senior officers, the engineers, money and powder, and six merchant freight ships that are under the King's command, full of volunteer soldiers and recruits, and various provisions for the troops and the colony. During the winter, the Indians devastated part of Virginia and Pennsylvania and gathered a considerable number of prisoners. Moreover, a detachment of 600 men, Canadians, Indians and French volunteers, took over by sword a wooden fort near Chouägen, where large amounts of provisions were stored which had been burned and 4,500 pounds of powder that they soaked on March 17th. We receive every day more news of scalplings by our Indians, almost all of which have been done on our behalf. The Five-Nations are still neutral but we hope that our courtesy and better still the wrongdoings of the English will persuade them to declare an alliance in our favor. That, my dear brother, is the state in which we find ourselves here. I get along with my general wonderfully. He has achieved plenty here. Everybody likes him and follows his orders with enthusiasm. Monsieur le Marquis de Vaudreuil is exceedingly good to me. Finally, I would not have to complain about anything here if not for the worry which torments me. It is only since the seas created an immense distance between me and the opportunity to hear about all that interests me, that I feel the anguish of this situation so deeply.

Speak of me, my dear brother, to our relatives and friends and make sure that they do not forget about me; since you know all those who hold me dear, there is no need for me to name them all one by one. I would like it if Madame de la Fxxx remembers from time to time an unhappy American who is sincerely attached to her. My respects to Monsieur and Madame de Nerville. When you write to me, do not leave anything out which would rightly interest me. Goodbye, my

dear brother, I love you dearly and send you my warmest regards from the bottom of my heart. Cherish me and think of me often. I believe that I will have another opportunity to write to you at the end of autumn. Goodbye, I love you with all my heart...

Give the details of this letter to Monsieur d'Alembert to whom I have only written one short letter. I am glad that you are doing better and that the doctor is pleased with you. Give this wonderful doctor my warm greetings, and tell him that I saw a sheep that walks only on its two front legs all alone here. I asked him his reasons for that, and he showed me that he does not have any back legs.

*Letter #3*

Bougainville to His Brother

Montreal, August 26, 1756

I had my first taste of victory, my dear brother-- I am sending to our lovely mother the account of our expedition.<sup>25</sup> Of course, this journal that is for her alone will also be for the King's historiographer. This feat, besides, is one of the most important that one could have taken on in America. I could easily prove it to you, but I do not have the time. If His Majesty wants to cast a medal commemorating this event, which is worth as much as many others, Vivant, whom you know, has all of the information that you may need. Otherwise, if the minister does not deem our report worth printing as a supplement to *la Gazette de France*, you must take every measure to

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<sup>25</sup> Bougainville is referring to the French victory at Fort Oswego (Chouägen), resulting in their gaining control over Lake Ontario.

have it done by the *Mercure* or another newspaper; nevertheless, make the appropriate changes, because I believe it is lacking in style from the harshness of the camps and the woods of America.

I am angry with you, my brother, and I wrote to our mother about it; she will scold you if she so wishes. Many ships landed here since our arrival in Canada and several came from *la Rochelle*. Had you written to Monsieur de Pati, he would have forwarded me your letters.

Today, I am in a horrible state of worry concerning your health, and the health of Monsieur de Séchelles and Madame de Hérault. I am left in complete ignorance. I am currently suffering a violent crisis, as you are aware; well, this crisis still continues for me. Truthfully, I have much to complain about. Forgive me, my dear brother, if I scold you a little; I may very well be wrong, but in my place would you not do the same? We arrived here very tired, we must leave again on Monday or Tuesday to go to lac st. Sacrament, which is 30 leagues away, and, in this short interval, prepare all that is necessary for the embarkation of three bataillons that will come with us, therefore I do not have a moment to myself. We hardly have time to eat and sleep. This campaign is extremely strenuous: the general who led the campaign in Bohemia finds this one even more exhausting. I sustain myself with the great diet that I observe, at least as much as this unregulated life allows.

De Vienne is finally Chief Storekeeper of Quebec. Monsieur l'Intendant just appointed him to this position, since Claverie has died. I thanked him in both of our names. I am very pleased with this because I adore our cousin, whose behavior alone merits the interest bestowed upon him. Goodbye, my dear brother, and a thousand tender words of affection to our good doctor. I do not have the time to write anyone; give my apologies to Monsieur de Marville, Madame de Guippeville, [friend], d'Alembert and all of our friends and family. Please, pay court to Madame

de la Fortelle; my respects to my uncles and aunts and everyone at the Académie des Sciences et des Belles-lettres. Goodbye, I send my affection and I love you with all my heart.

I forgot to tell you that I decided on the inscription. On the ashes of Chouägen, we planted a cross and a post bearing the French coat of arms. On the cross I chose the motto: *In hoc signo vincunt*; on the post: *Manibus date lilia plenis*.<sup>26 27</sup> Perhaps this is incorrect; never mind, all is fair in love and war; we did the best we could.

#### *Letter #4*

Bougainville to His Brother

Isle à la bague, November 7, 1756

This is the fifth time that I am writing you since my arrival in America, my dear brother.<sup>28</sup> I am uncertain whether you have received my letters. I have only received one from you, dated 6th of June, from Séchelles and at the same time one from Madame Hérault and Monsieur de Marville.<sup>29</sup> Six months have passed since my departure from France, six months that I have been

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<sup>26</sup> Either Bougainville misspelled this Latin phrase, or it was transcribed incorrectly. He meant, “in hoc signo vinces,” which translates to, “by this sign we will conquer.” It is said that Constantine the Great saw these words in a vision that he had before the Battle of the Milvian Bridge.

<sup>27</sup> This is a quote from Virgil’s Aeneid meaning, “give lilies with full hands.”

<sup>28</sup> This is only the third letter that we have access to; the others may have never even reached Bougainville’s brother, as ships that transported letters and other goods were often captured by the English during the Seven Years’ War. They could have also been misplaced or damaged, even if they did reach his brother. For further reading on the logistics of sending and receiving letters during the Seven Years War, you may refer to *The Bordeaux–Dublin letters, 1757: correspondence of an Irish community Abroad*. Edited by L. M. Cullen, John Shovlin and Thomas M. Truxes.

<sup>29</sup> Here, Séchelles might be referring to the family home. French aristocrats often named their homes after their surname. Contrarily, they could have taken their name from their place of origin, “de sechelles,” would literally mean “from Séchelles” in this case.

tormented by this unbearable uncertainty. When I left our delightful mother during this miserable crisis, with the state of her health being so poor I could not even hope to expect good news from her. Even so, I was desperate to receive any and uncertainty seemed to be the most cruel torture. I was at *camp de Carillon* when your letters arrived. If you want to imagine the joy that I felt when I was told that there were letters from France, try my dear brother, to put yourself in the position of a sorrowful expatriate who is separated by 1,500 leagues from all that he holds dear, that the uncertainty devours him and whose soul is sensible and gentle. The letter from my dear mother filled me with gratitude and pain. Her situation makes me tremble, I am considering all of the details. What she shares with me about her son is deeply distressing. My God! How could one know her, owe her everything, be loved by her and not adore her? What a chain of events! What a change of circumstances! It is necessary, then, that virtue, that everyone who deserves happiness, be condemned to live in torment and all types of pain. Oh! My dear brother, when I asked to come to this other world, I could not foresee the events that would follow this commitment to which I am bound. I do not flatter myself so much to believe that my presence could have been any help; but I would still have been happy to share the pain that would have torn my soul. I understand all that you are feeling, having everyday been witness to all of the objections that I do not doubt our dear Mother endures. At this moment, her health will have succumbed to restlessness and grief. She may have a winter just like the last one. Please, my dear brother, speak to her for me from time to time and tell her that I am feeling better than I could possibly express. You have not yet told me since my departure whether or not you still continue the same diet and with success; because I attribute the asthma attack that you had at Séchelles to extraordinary circumstances, and you would have believed yourself to be perfectly recovered if you had resisted the disappointment that your soul will have suffered. I am tired of this campaign. Since my arrival in Canada, I have

travelled 500 leagues. The constant travelling, the bad food, the frequent sleeplessness, the nights spent in the woods under the stars, the expeditions with the Indians have had some effect on my chest, I even spit some blood at the end of last month, and tonight, which I spent again wading through water on our way from Montreal to Quebec, I had an asthma attack. The hearty diet and rest will restore me to a state in which I can begin again in the spring. Besides, I have not suffered alone through the brutality of this campaign. We have had many of our men fall sick and Monsieur de Montcalm's health was badly affected. Indeed, one would need to be made of iron not to experience such fatigue. I continue to get along with my general. He treats me with such kindness; I also do everything I possibly can to please him; he must be satisfied with his campaign. It has been good and even brilliant, although we are everywhere much fewer in number, we have nevertheless removed the English from one of the most critical areas of this country and they could not take anything from us at all. May this campaign, along with the success that we have had in Europe, bring us peace. We desire it here more desperately than anyone. What a country, my dear brother, and what patience is needed to withstand such disgust with which they are sure to treat us. It seems that we may be from a different, perhaps even an enemy, nation. But, we must be prudent and I admire the manner in which our general carries himself. All that I can tell you is that when we leave this country we will sing the *In exitu Israël* cheerfully.

I do not know, my dear brother, if the position of second-in-command, that the nomination of Monsieur de Parieux to that of associate left vacant, has now been filled. In case it is not and if they might take some time before filling it, I will write to Monsieur le Comte d'Argenson and to some members of the *Academie* to beg that they not take my brief stay in America for the service of the King as a reason to exclude me. If your health allows you to do so, I would be grateful if you might follow this matter and inform me by springtime of its status. Monsieur Hérault wrote to



me that, in June, he was the 3rd to join the French grenadiers. As it is, the promotion that this campaign will have earned him, given the ordinary course of mortality, can make him colonel this winter. If I were in Europe, I would ask for his company of dragoons and perhaps obtain it. I wrote to my uncle about it and you can see what Monsieur de Montcalm wrote concerning it at the bottom of my letter. I will not speak of it to Monsieur Hérault. I hope that you will be willing to try everything possible with my uncle in this regard. I am gathering all of the information that I can with respect to setting the boundaries of the colony. I have even begun on this matter a memoir that I plan to finish this winter. Anyway, these resolutions must depend on the events of the war and the disposition of the King, whether he will be difficult or use his customary moderation.

Letter #5

Bougainville to His Brother

Quebec, November 9, 1756

I finally arrived in Quebec, my dear brother, by water, by foot, jolting along with difficulty and I made my entry into the capital in a wain. This is how one travels here in this country. I am staying at the home of de Vienne who is acting as Chief Storekeeper, a position to which Monsieur l'Intendant assigned him, as I already told you. His difficulty now is to obtain the official document. Monsieur l'Intendant told me that he will ask the court, but that it would be best to request it there. I request your goodwill for a relative who deserves it and I am very pleased to have found it here. Monsieur Bigot did not speak to him about the commission of Writer in the Office of the Marine, which you told me you have obtained for him. I do not know why. You must have obtained it only after the King's council of this year has been effected and sent. Clarify this

issue somewhat and see if this conjecture is accurate or if the silence on this commission is voluntary. De Vienne thinks quite reasonably that it is not necessary that his nephew be sent to him in the spring. He would run the risk of being taken and suffering terribly in the English prisons. For that matter, everything here is of an inconceivable price and in all likelihood the costs will only increase during the next campaign. One should also mind the susceptibilities of the people who disapproved of the fact that Seigneur Claverie, predecessor of de Vienne, had placed his relatives in the *magazin* immediately following his appointment as its guardian. I beg you to discuss this with my cousins who without a doubt will find like us that it would be appropriate to postpone Duffraye's voyage.

You will receive, my dear brother, a visit from Monsieur Pellegrin, captain of Quebec's port, who commands *l'Abénaquise*, a frigate, and who will bring you this letter. He is a man who is excellent at his task, very honest and very well known at Versailles for having steered the squadron of Monsieur Dubois de la Motte through the strait of Belle-Isle. He is naive and very much a sailor, but he will talk to you about this country and he will do so competently. He travelled this year on *la Licorne* with us. Take him to our mother's home, he might be able to amuse her. I must warn you that he is a little deaf. I would be much obliged if, by springtime, you could send me a provision of gunpowder and ointment, 20 pounds of candles, 2 pairs of colored silk stockings, and 6 pairs of wool stockings, 12 pairs of slippers and as many collars, two white plumes, the new interesting books and plays that may have been released since my departure. I would also like to make a present for de Vienne: a Persian robe, some women's lotions, and pretty fans. Of course, my dear brother it is not you who should burden yourself with all of these errands, but do find someone to do them. Monsieur Dupré will reimburse you for these expenses and Monsieur Pellegrin will take them back with him upon his return.

I am sending you a summary of the end of our campaign. Send from me a thousand compliments to all of our relatives and friends. It is useless for me to name them one by one. My respects to Madame de la Fortelle and congratulate for me Monsieur Morisot, whom I hold dear to me with all my heart, for the success of the inoculation. I hope that it is keeping him occupied. Do mention me by name to Monsieur l'abbé Fouchet and above all, give me a full account of your news. Goodbye, my dear brother, I send you kisses and I love you with all my heart.

So much time will pass before I hear from you! It is a nuisance of this miserable country which I will never become accustomed to.

Deliver to their addresses the letters included here. I do not know if la Condamine has returned from his travels. I only write to him if he happens to be in Paris. I am also unsure of the fate of Vivant, the Frenchman who returned from London after me, and if he is always with le Chevalier de Vatan. Goodbye, one more time. It can be said twice when we are so far from one another and for so long. Write me, as always, from time to time from la Rochelle, during the course of the campaign; the letters will stay at Monsieur Dupati's home until the ships leave. I leave you with regret, my dear brother, but the frigate leaves tomorrow and I am overwhelmed with work.

Thousands upon thousands of compliments to our wonderful doctor. Thank him for his friendship on my behalf, and do not anger him by violating the diet that he prescribed you. Tell him that I am following a very strict one here, and that if he saw me, he would still cite me as your model. Let me know where Madame Hérault is staying now and if I am still welcome in her home.

Letter #6

Bougainville to Madame de Séchelles

Montreal, June 30, 1757

Finally, my dear mother, after nine whole months of waiting impatiently, I have received news from France. The death of the best father of all caused me an immense pain. I loved him dearly and knew that he felt the same for me. For that matter, he owed you the affluence that he was beginning to enjoy and it was yet another tie that bound me to him. I am profoundly grateful for that which you desired to provide my aunt with. How will I ever express all of the gratitude that I owe you? I do not believe that I am ungrateful, my dear mother, my heart is yours: but I would like to be worthy of it. Dare I recommend to you also a sister whose position is sorrowful and whose destiny is not happy, although it is no fault of her own? She is the only one, of the family that you adopted, who has not personally felt the effects of your good deeds. I ask you this for her, in the hope that, at least my dear mother will forgive my persistence. Why is her character generous and charitable? No, gratitude toward you is not a burden, it is pleasant to be indebted to you and we could not possibly be too devoted to you. For a long year now, I have endured cruel moments in a dreadful country, far from all that I hold dear, longing to receive news, fearing, nonetheless, more than I could hope for. However, you were in good health this winter, indeed, the best news that I could receive. How did your fragile body resist to your soul's great agitation? May Monsieur de Séchelles not give you any more worry. I wish for his good health, for whatever may cause you the most satisfaction, or the least grief on this subject. My friend told me the story of his regiment. But he left off at the most interesting part. Mr d'Estaing has not calmed down yet and Admiral West worries me terribly. There is nothing that I would not give to know the happy

ending of a matter that will influence the rest of his days. So, he is finally in agreement with you, my dear friend. I love him a thousand times more with the affection that he shows you, that he feels what I knew well to be in his heart. Heaven would have been unjust, if it had refused you this satisfaction. I wish that, if it were possible, that you would love this charming man even more. The more you love him, the more he will make you happy and you will never be as happy as I want you to be. I thank you, because I still have to thank you, my dear mother, for the letter that you wrote to my general. I would like to accomplish what you tell him that I am capable of. I am making and certainly will continue to make every efforts toward this. It is not up to him to soften the bitterness of my exile; he shows me great friendship and the greatest trust. Sometimes he scolds me, but I benefit from it and my character will prosper from it. Allow me to tell you, my dear mother, it could not be farther from the truth that the commission that he is responsible for here is as pleasant as one may imagine. You will see, from what he writes to you about it himself, that he has many things to complain about. He is under the orders of a closed-minded man, without talent, perhaps free of vices, but having all the faults of a small spirit, filled with Canadian prejudices, which of all are the most stupid, jealous, and glorious of all, wanting to attract everything to themselves. He shows no more confidence in Montcalm than to the army's last lieutenant. It is even certain that he neglects, in this regard, to perform the tasks that are ordered to him. However, I can testify that my general has, concerning him, shown him the most accepting, wisest, and most respectful behavior, that there are no overtures that he refrains from making every day, so that the service of the King does not suffer on his part. He takes all of the grief upon himself; he devours it in secret and in silence. However, I am convinced that if they listened to him and followed his advice, the King would be better served, the colony better organized, the operations of the war less costly, prompter and less dangerous. Because our leader has to suffer, imagine the situation of his

subordinates, as far as I am concerned, I know that there have been disparaging remarks about me to Monsieur de Vaudreuil, who thinks that I give perilous counsel to Monsieur de Montcalm. I only desire your respect, my dear mother, and the honor of my conscience. All that I need to know is that I do not have, in this regard, the slightest reproach toward myself and that you believe it. You will read the particular letter that Monsieur de Montcalm wrote to our new minister; he sent it to you under flying seal, so that you may finally use in any way you deem it appropriate. The matter of Monsieur de Vaudreuil's death which almost took place this winter, seems to be one of those that is essential to prepare for. I believe it is also necessary for the good of the service to pursue, in my time here, all the means of giving my general the consideration that he deserves for himself and his own status, that we should consult him, listen to him, and let him know, at least, the news, because you will know that he learns what happens in the colony by word of mouth, that he should not be given deceptive instructions and such that some can claim all the glory of success and charge him alone with unfortunate events. A letter from Monsieur de Moras could produce this desirable consequence. What compels me to speak like this, my dear mother, is my love for my homeland, the zeal of a good citizen, the desire to do good work and that all, under the ministry of Monsieur de Moras, be happy and glorious for him. I can assure you, that from the moment that I learned that I would serve in his department, I felt my fervor intensify. I would like to be able to be of some use to him, this would prove my attachment to you. Since I have been in this colony, I have learned about that which concerns its situation, government, commerce, etc. I am sending you different reflections relating to these subjects. If you deem this essay useful, you will pass it along to the minister, but if not you will discard it. Included are truths that the first secretaries of the ministry have not forwarded to those who could resolve the issues. They take advantage of these problems, as it is in their interest to keep them unsolved. Moreover, this essay would require

several more detailed others on specific issues, but would require more time, which would allow for rewriting. I only thought that Monsieur Moras would be pleased to know the truth about many things that are important for him to know. In any case, my dear mother, it will never be my fault, if my intelligence does not correspond to my intentions. I address you a letter for Monsieur de Moras in which I speak to him about the essay in question. You can make use of it as you please. I also worked on our borders in this country with the English colonies: this issue is muddled, obscure, filled with difficulties. I have tried to obtain all the knowledge that the country can provide and I began in this regard a memoir that I will not have the time to finish until I return from this campaign. These different occupations have filled my time during this dreadful winter and in a country that does not offer me anything but sad thoughts, regrets, and invincible boredom. I have thankfully maintained good health despite the harshness of the winter. I had no more than one or two bouts of asthma: also, I can assure you that I am exemplary in my behavior and that I completely observe a diet that the doctor would approve of. You will find with this letter the details about the most notable events that happened during the winter. I hope that the details about the embassy of the Five Nations will amuse you a little: I think that it must please you with its singularity and the depiction of mores that are unknown in Europe. The rest of the operation done this winter at *fort Gorges* should have been the siege of this place as soon as the melting of the ice. But Monsieur de Montcalm is playing the unhappy *Cassandra*. We are lacking supplies in this colony. Monsieur de Rigaud's detachment was much more considerable than was warranted for the execution of what he was charged with: a useless consumption of food supplies. My general had then proposed a search for grains on the coasts as soon as the winter is over. This was not in the interest of the purveyors. They rejected it. Nevertheless, as the help from France failed to arrive, we had to do this. That way, we found a way to feed ten thousand men for six months. But it is

very late to enter in this campaign today! Despite this, we will. In twelve days we will all be assembled in Carillon. Monsieur de Montcalm, in the letter that he wrote to you, spoke to you of our plans, of the strength of our small army, of these masses of Indians that we have put to work. I would only tell you that we are counting on setting and sustaining the siege, and on a battle your child trembles from the horrors that he will be forced to witness. With difficulty, we can include these Indians from the northern region who are the most ferocious men and cannibalistic in their nature. Listen a little to what the chiefs came to say three days ago to Monsieur de Montcalm, “[My] Father, do not expect us to easily give quarter to the English. We have some young people who have not yet tasted this broth. Fresh flesh brought them here from the extremities of the universe. They must learn to handle the knife and to force it into the heart of the English.” Those are our comrades, my dear mother. What a company! What a spectacle for a human heart! Last year a small six year old child was crying, I believe because his teeth hurt. His father, a member of the *Folle Avoine* nation, to keep him from crying gave him an Englishman to kill. Those are their pacifiers. Pity us and may peace promptly deliver us from the company of such monsters. We received the report on the siege of Chouägen that my brother sent me; it is good and very wise. Even so, I corrected a small erratum there that I took the liberty to show to monsieur l’Académicien; I was flattered when I saw that he kept entire sentences from an Iroquois. You know, my dear mother, that he is a harsh censor and a little difficult to get along with and you sometimes took pleasure in seeing me under his tutelage. Being in the new world will do me well as I must submit to new lessons; but I like the teacher enough to be charmed to be dealing with him. I am grateful that he willingly followed our example and to have borne this winter, just like any other. I ask him to speak to you of me sometimes; in the event that he did not, would you have the goodness to scold him? Presently, he is your neighbor; I think that is wonderful and I long to



occupy that room next to him; it is for me, the promised land; but the desert that I must cross first is long! Our friend tells me that he will be staying almost alone in Beaumont; it is in Beaumont that we met again for the first time upon returning from England. Will such a moment ever return for this miserable expatriate, that the very idea of returning makes him tremble? Then, there will not be any more bad jokes about the dovecot, and the charms of this rustic and quaint view will not be shielded from our eyes. Seriously, I would rather also demolish this pigeon fort than those of *Lydius* and of *lac St. Sacrement*. Still, we are marching with a confidence that would please you. Would victory dare not follow the people who call it in such a forceful tone? I knew, my dear mother, that you would receive my friend Pellegrin with kindness and that his naivety would amuse you. I look forward to seeing him! I have so many questions for him! I am beginning to worry a lot about him. He has not yet arrived and we know that an English squadron was seen on the snowbank and even one of their warships passed at the entry of our river. In all likelihood, today they are preparing for the siege of Louisbourg. A large squadron and thirty-thousand men are disembarking under the orders of Milord Lowdon and employed in this operation. Last year, Monsieur de Montcalm had asked Monsieur de Machault to give Monsieur Marcel some income as *aide-de-camp*, as he has none from the King. I beg you, my dear mother, to do everything that you can to get them from Monsieur de Moras, so that I have them, he is a good man who serves here very usefully, who has nothing, but he is my friend and I would be so pleased for him to owe you this favor. I would ask you the same favor for Monsieur de Fonbrune, *Capitaine au Régiment de la marine*, who serves as *aide-de-camp* to Monsieur le Chevalier de Lévis. Monsieur de Lévis wrote a letter to Monsieur de Moras to ask him, which I am attaching here, asking you to support it with your recommendation. If this request is met and it does not have a retroactive effect for the year 1756, his payments should at least begin to run from the month of March 1757, for the former

and the latter. I write to you with confidence, my dear mother, to make this request. If it is indiscrete, my intention will be my excuse. Due to the state of worry regarding the health of Monsieur de Séchelles, which I currently am and will be in when this letter arrives in France, I will not write to Madame your mother. Please do this for me. We have received some news that Monsieur de Cantades and Monsieur de Chevert are serving in the army of Monsieur le duc d'Orléans. I am very worried to learn about the fate of Bonhomme and where the *Regiment de Rouergue* will lead their campaign. Wherever it should be, may it be glorious and happy. He wrote to me that you were pleased with his intended wife; I hope that she will be your daughter before the winter comes. Goodbye, my dear mother, love always your adopted son, it is all that I ask. I have just received the memoir about Canada that the copyist has completely disfigured with plenty of mistakes, and which I do not have the time to correct, being ready to leave. I thank you for sending it to my brother who will correct it and make a copy, if it is at all worthy of being presented to the minister.

*Letter #7*

Bougainville to His Brother

Montreal, July 3, 1757.

Received October 3, 1757.

I had foreseen, my dear brother, that the news from France, which I have anticipated for ten months with the most enduring impatience, would provoke tears. I will eternally miss the best of all fathers. Sadly, he was beginning to enjoy some sort of comfort that he so well deserved...!

And it is at that precise instant that his career ends. I feel, through my personal grief, all the weight that must have overwhelmed my poor aunt. For thirty-seven years, she lived with him. It is you today, who takes the place of a brother whom she lost from a nephew who, relegated in another universe, does not know when his exile will end. I thank Madame Hérault for all that she was kind enough to do for my aunt. So many claims to our hearts acquired by our good Bienfaitrice! Thank you, my dear brother, you who knows how to convey feelings; impart to her often, every day, the feelings that I have for her. Just a few lines, traced at a cruel distance, can bring me back to her, along with an homage from my soul. Be present for me. Do not let her forget about me. Absence is so cruel and I am vulnerable against its almost constant effects! Although convinced, my dear brother, that your demands are and will be as well heard as mine, I am doing what you said for my sister. I am so inclined; her fate touches me and I love to believe that she does not deserve her misfortune. I will not hide from you, however, what you tell me about this subject raises some doubts in my soul. Could those unhappy events have embittered and changed her nature? The unfortunate are sometimes unfair: but it is more unfair to not forgive them. She wrote to me, and in her letter, she vaguely talks about the sad situation, of pain, of bitterness, but without self-pity nor specifying anything. Her husband wrote to me, as he ordinarily does, just relating mundane news, and nothing particularly about himself, nor about his family. I will return to you, my dear brother, I am undoubtedly delighted that you would so strongly assure me of your affection for me, these assurances are precious and dear to me. But rest assured that I never doubted it. I may have complained about not having received any news from you, but my heart did you justice. I know very well that it will not be your doing if I do not get more than I deserve. Although, if it is easy to obtain, if it is possible, being refused will not make me miserable. What touches me the most is to be deserving. I work only to have some consideration, to be worthy of the respect of

those whom I honor, to increase their friendship; in a word, to have this good reputation that is worth more than a golden belt. Content with the small inheritance that was left to us, I do not want a greater fortune. To be worth something, to make my soul capable of sustaining any hardship - that is the object of my ambition. My stay here has bound me even closer to all that I loved upon leaving France. My soul, from the depths of these woods, sometimes launches toward its homeland with emotions that I do not know how to depict. I imagine myself greeting you, talking to my dear mother, I enjoy your friendship, and hers; but soon the illusion is over, the charm disappears and I find myself back among the Indians or people who are hardly any kinder. So, a miserable winter for everyone, even those from this country, has passed. The thermometer was down to 28 degrees, more snow than old men remember ever seeing. I passed my time reading, meditating and writing. This boredom that nagged me turned out to benefit my soul. You will see an essay which I send to Madame Hérault for the minister. It is only the seedling of ideas that must be developed and other random details. But all that it includes is true for the facts; as far as politics, I will leave it to those who are more enlightened than I am to decide if I followed the principles. I also worked on the much muddled, obscure and difficult subject of limits. I plan to finish a thesis begun on this subject upon my return from this campaign and send it to you by the last ships. Madame Hérault, my uncle and you will decide what to do with it and you may do as you wish regarding this subject. My journal is full of observations on the customs of the Indians, their language, the quality of the country, finally what is necessary to compose a journal that may be interesting. I do not miss any opportunity to educate myself. I hope it will make my company more enjoyable when I return to those who I love! I spent three months of winter at de Vienne's home. I cannot praise him enough. Good father, good husband, good worker, honest, he deserves the respect that everyone shows him. I have told him about the arrival of his nephew. He received this news with much grace and

he will do all that depends on him for this young man. I reflected a lot on the change of ministry. It seems that the King regretfully dismissed Monsieur le comte d'Argenson and sacrificed Monsieur de Machault to the souls of the dead in favor of the former.

May Monsieur de Moras carry the burden that he must bear with dignity! Everything is, as it were, in his own hands. Europe has its eyes on him. It is time for a great success or a great failure. How is our mother with him? I believe him to have a tender friendship, as it for a sister to whom he is certainly obligated. But, I suspect some intrigues in the family. Tell me if I am mistaken and whether or not there are. I have also received news meant to cast doubts on the conduct of my uncle regarding the disgrace of his dear count. What do you think? It is his honest nature that knows the ways of the world and general sentiments that I am wondering about here. Do tell me how this has affected you. I would also like to know if he has left Peilhion, if he is in the house of *la Grange Batelière*, if he has some plans for his fortune, how is Monsieur l'abbé de Bernis, who it is said here is the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and finally some details about this uncle that I think I must always respect. The most pleasant news that I received is that of our lovely mother's good health. So she has passed the winter without sickness, almost even without any difficulty. What! This body, which is weak and fatigued by the efforts of a perpetually restless soul is restoring itself in the midst of turmoil and worry! It seems to me that we must be in a continual trance concerning Monsieur de Séchelles, and, to make matters worse, there are some reasons to fear for him, even worse than death. What a situation for a tender heart that was beginning to love him, as she was slowly feeling and loving him as only our mother loves!

Bonhomme, she claims, makes her happy. My affection for him has increased since I learned this. I knew that he had a beautiful soul. If he got the regiment of Rouergue, if his future wife will become a *colonelle*, I do not wish more for him than good health. Now that everyone is

accommodated at *l'hôtel des ambassadeurs* you are very much neighbors. It is only a few steps away from your *rue Neuve des Bons Enfants*. I can see your palace from here: it must be nice and it cannot be situated more comfortably for all your affairs. I am writing to Monsieur Dupré to thank him for his good services. I feel all the gratitude that they deserve. I am sending him my mandate and affidavit of existence whose templates he sent me. Certainly, my dear brother, all that you and he have done and will do for me, is and will always be well done. I am so happy to have you both, far away as I am and unable to conduct my business. Nobody is more attached than I am to the beautiful lady who found it in her heart to remember a poor expatriate. I respect her, I honor her, I would be proud to deserve any affection from her. I am sending along a letter of thanks and the bulletin of our America. Please give it to her with the affection of a heart that, albeit Iroquois, is most sincere. Can you visit her at your leisure? What life do you lead in general? Do not be afraid to give me too many details. I saw some changes in your *Première Académie*. Concerning this, do you know that my general is truly a man of letters, that is to say that he writes dissertations and memoirs; that if he returns from America a famous man with a new title, he would be most flattered to have an honorary position there. Apart from his interest in the role of *aide-de-camp*, I believe that he would play the part well. He wrote you to thank you for the account. We found some mistakes, one or two of which said the opposite of what I told you. Always believe our journals by *préférence*. The Canadians boast and lie. Whereas we only know how to tell the truth. I add at the end of this letter the list of these mistakes. Monsieur Bouguer wrote to me that the vacancy was given to Monsieur Borda. My absence is detrimental to me. However, I rely on you for any possibility available; as however much I desire to enter this illustrious organization, I am not mistaking my dreams for reality. Truthfully, I have little time to botanize. During the winter, the snow covers the ground. In the summer, the war, my occupations, the Indians if you wander

off the beaten path, a plant is not worth the risk of getting scalped, and they have done so in plain view of our major guards. Attached here is the detail about what of interest happened this winter. Now we are about to enter the dance. I leave with my general in a week. The enemy has ten or twelve-thousand men to bring close to *lac St Sacrement*. We will be close to eight-thousand of whom 1,800 naked, black, red, roaring, dancing, chanting, drunk Indians, demanding stock, that is to say blood, lured from 500 leagues away by the smell of fresh human flesh and the opportunity to teach their young how to cut a human destined for the cauldron. Those are our comrades who day and night are our shadow. I tremble at the atrocious scenes that they prepare us for. I do not know if we will do or if we will be undone. I am prepared for everything and my health is well enough for me to hope that I will survive like all the others.

I will only close this letter at the end.

*Errata of the Account*

1. The description of Fort Chouägen is done in such a manner that I did not recognize this fort. You took it in *la Gazette de France*.

2. *Le Sieur de Villiers had just destroyed a convoy of about two hundred ships,*(meaning boats like those in St-Cloud) *and to kill or take more than 500 men* (hardly 100).

3. *On the rivière de Chouägen at the baie Miaouré.* This river, which finds its source in the country of the Five Nations, does indeed run into *le lac Ontario*, but very far from *la baie Miaouré*.

This is the question of an Iroquois. Le marquis de Montcalm did not lose time, etcetera. Why all of a sudden, the aorist is changed into perfect tense, and a moment later the perfect turns into an aorist. Tell me why, my dear brother.

4. Sieur de Rigaud sent away two officers to the marquis de Montcalm. These officers came to our battery directly where Monsieur de Montcalm was and simply did not see Monsieur de Rigaud. I know this, because I was sent with the latter to make this famous passage by river and to then summon the English with the agreed upon signal. It was in this interval that they displayed their white flag. So, you were mistaken when you wrote below: *and still more than anything the bold manoeuver of Sieur de Rigaud*. The English officers were already at our trench when this manoeuver was executed.

5. *who dropped in the churches of Quebec and of the Trois-Rivières*. You forgot *and of Montreal*. There were five flags in total, two in Quebec, one in Trois-Rivières and two in Montreal.

As I send my letters by different boats which may be taken, if this letter reaches you, here is the list of people to whom I wrote:

Messieurs de Morveille *by triplicate* Yon, de Chastellux, Dupré, de Séchelles, colonel, de Moras, l'abbé Foucher, Bouger, d'Alembert, Clairault, de Chabanon, de Chamousset d'Hauthuille, Vivant, de Chevert, le duc de Mirepoix, de Raigemortes, Turgot, de Tournai, de Baraudin, de la Marvalière, my uncle, de la Barde father and son, my aunt, Madame Hérault, de Moras, de la Fortelle, de La Baraudin, de Méniglèze, de Cramayel, *by triplicate* too.

Please, if this letter reaches you, do tell any of these people you might see about it. I am trying not to waste time. Also, if you meet anyone who asks about me, please give them my sincere regards.

The copyist gave me a memoir about Canada to me so full of mistakes and I do not have the time to correct it. I am asking Madame H. to pass it over to you. You will correct it and make a copy.



Letter #8

Bougainville to his brother

Montreal, August 19, 1757.

I wrote you by duplicate, my dear brother, before my departure for the army. We just took Fort William Henry and my general sent me to bring the news to *Montreal*. Monsieur de Vaudreuil is immediately sending on this occasion a frigate to France. Judge by yourself if I have a moment to myself. I must write to the two ministers, to the family of Monsieur de Montcalm and that of Monsieur le chevalier de Lévis, our generals, who are occupied by the success of their conquest, thereby being unable to do it, and I must go back immediately to Carillon. I am exhausted; I spent twenty nights without changing my clothes, using the ground as a bed, bacon and biscuits for food. My health is strong because this extraordinary exhaustion did not disturb it, although the day that we took over the battleground I fainted of weariness three times. I am sending my dear mother a copy of the letter that I wrote to Monsieur de Paulmy. This letter will tell her everything. The shorter report that I am sending you, please forward it to our parents and friends: Madame de Fortelle, hotel de la Tremoille, Monsieur and Madame Guibbeville, Monsieur Turgot, Monsieur de Gournay, de Chamousset, etcetera because I do not write to anyone: in short, my dear brother, do as if I wrote to everyone.

My aunt will forgive me if I do not write to her today, I lack the time as it flies so quickly. I send my affection to her and to you too, my dear brother, with all my my heart...

I received your letter for the officer of artillery, recommended by Monsieur de la Corne. Tell them that he has become my friend and that everything that depends on me is his. I forgot to

tell you that I received a letter from Clairault in which it seems that there is a preference at *l'Académie* for me to ask for a free associate's position instead of an ordinary associate.

With all my heart, truthfully. The idea of a future pension does not interest me at all. All that I want is the honor of belonging to a body to which I devoted the first years of my life. The career that I have today could perhaps grant me some occupations of a completely different sort from academic studies and I would hardly be able to perform the duties that I would be desperate not to miss out on. I will write in this vain to all these gentlemen. Let them know, please, and put me as of now on the path to a free associate seat. If one became vacant before my return, make a request for me. My absence should not be detrimental, at least in this regard.

I wrote to Madame de la Fxxx by triplicate before my departure for the army. I will write her again at the end of the fall.

Letter #9

Bougainville to Madame de Séchelles

August 19, 1757

I am back from the war, my dear mother, bearer of good news and charged by my general, who does not have any time to write about it in detail to the ministers. I am sending you the copy of my letter to Monsieur de Paulmy; it will instruct you on everything. I also wrote Monsieur de Moras, but in general and without getting into any details. It is up to Monsieur le marquis de Vaudreuil to write them, and I gave him a journal on this occasion that he will send to him, I believe, without changing anything. As it is less detailed than the letter written to Monsieur de

Pauly, you will communicate it to him, my dear mother, if you deem it appropriate. I wish with all my heart that you be happy with the story and the historian.

I am leaving again in an instant for Carillon and I am truthfully very tired. I spent twenty nights without changing my clothes, poorly fed, and using the floor as a bed. I am surprised to have so well endured this excessive fatigue: this gives me pride in my health. I received your news, as I had the honor of asking you just before my first departure from Montreal, in sending you three copies of the summary of the events of this winter and a memoir on the colony for Monsieur de Moras. I was surprised to see the *Regiment de Berri* arrive here. This regiment was supposed to go to *les Indes*. This expedition, therefore, is no longer taking place: my friend is therefore not leading the *regiment de Rouergue*. If this hypothesis is true, I am desperate. How can one be, for two years, the pawn of such well-founded expectations. Tantalus' punishment! I put myself in the place of my poor friend and I will not be reassured until I know the end of this adventure and he is officially a colonel. Forward him, please, my dear mother, the details of our expedition that I cannot send him because I do not have the time and have the kindness to communicate it to your family and your friends who do me the honor of taking an interest in me. Since I wrote you, I very much extended your family, and without vanity, I gave you rather foul relatives. The Iroquois of *Sault St Louis* naturalized your adoptive child and named him *Garoniatsigoa*, which means *Thunderous Sky*. My celestial atmosphere, therefore has a very mean air. My new family is that of the Turtle,<sup>30</sup> the second for the war, but the first for guidance and eloquence. You will recognize in this choice the brother of an *académicien* who is also aspiring to become one. Monsieur de Montcalm, during the siege, received the red cord, it seems that since Monsieur de Moras is in place, Monsieur le

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<sup>30</sup> Edward P. Hamilton, trans., *Adventure in the Wilderness: The American Journals of Louis Antoine de Bougainville (1756-1760)*, first edition ed. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), 124. Bougainville was ceremonially adopted into the Iroquois Turtle Clan in July, 1757.

Marquis de Vaudreuil treats him with more consideration, but I only speak as an outsider. May he finally consult him and follow his advice! I have not yet seen Pellegrin and I cannot convey to you my yearning to embrace a man who saw you, who passed the winter with you, who just left you. I know, at least, that my dear mother is well and this idea softens the bitterness of an exile that becomes day by day more unbearable. We have been witnesses of everything that cruelty can imagine by these monstrous Indians. What a country! What men! What a war! No, my dear mother, your child is not made for living in this barbaric land.

I am very worried about my brother. I know that he suffered all winter and that his asthma is back, just when we vainly thought that it was cured. But now that he has recovered, could he not take care of his asthma also? All hopes of my return depend on him, and on you, my dear mother. Please give my respects to all of your family. Love always, your Iroquois who loves you with all his heart, and for life! Send my respects to the friend to whom I do not have the time to write. If he is Beaumont, he is much happier than I.

Letter #10<sup>31</sup>

Bougainville to Madame Hérault de Séchelles

Quebec, November 8, 1757

This is the last time this year, my dear mother, that I will be able to talk to you. For eight days now, snow has covered this miserable land and this cold period is going to be supplemented by other hardships that promise us a winter of eight months, during which I will think about you and France, and study to benefit my soul from *la malaise de la machine*.<sup>32</sup> Upon my return, my dear mother, you will find me to be a peculiar creature: an intermittent philosopher, with the same passions as before, but more inclined toward wisdom, reflection and good projects, but generally with little to show for them. What can I tell you? This place so well suited to give rise to and sustain melancholy, those events one after the other always sad, hideous, horrible even, the nature of this untamed world and more so of the inhabitants, what a scene! What a sight! What a place for misanthropic ideas! What a quarry for regrets and yearning! The hope to return from this exile harks back, the thought comes without warning and captivates me, the illusion becomes reality for a moment, but it dies immediately and the image of the present situation destroys any hope for the future. There you have it, my dear mother, the situation in which your child currently finds himself,

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<sup>31</sup> Due to time constraints, I only translated the first nine letters in full. I selected the following passages because they represent one or more of the themes that I believe are most important to understanding the intention of Bougainville's letters and situating them in their larger historical context. Among these themes are: 1) maintaining a presence in Parisian social life during his physical absence and preparing for his return, 2) the battles and the French alliance with Canadians and the Five Nations, and 3) the conditions under which he lives in Canada. From this point on, I will include the corresponding page number from Lamontagne's 1993 edition at the end of each passage in italics.

<sup>32</sup> "*La malaise de la machine*" translates to English as "the malaise of the machine." Here, Bougainville is referring to his body as a "machine." Bougainville sees his capacity to endure hardships as a means by which to acquire honor.

a cruel state that requires my soul to have many levels. The idea of being loved by you a little, of deserving your respect, is the only thing that sustains me. I prefer everything to this dominant image, I do not do anything but imagine that you are present, that you are watching me, that you will either condemn or approve of me: you are my judge or my reward. Am I wrong, my dear mother, to think like this? And if I may pretend to be of some value, would it flatter you? I will confess, your feelings for me will be the touchstone of my inherent value, and my ambition would dwindle if you were to stop caring about me.

... Thank you, my dear mother, for saving a small room near you; do not send me away, please; an Iroquois takes so little space: a mat, a blanket, a calumet, honestly, this is not cumbersome equipment: and then, I know many stories, I will try to keep my lovely mother amused. By the way, did my brother find a way to teach you about Greek history? I recall that it was, according to him, an impossible task. Oh! Well, I will be the one to teach you because, truthfully, the Indians are, more or less, the Greeks of Homer. I found the equivalents to Achilles, Ajax, Ulysses, Nestor, Calchas. We also have some Didos, but we do not fight over them. This is not because they are not worth it; but we are neither jealous nor exclusive. (*p. 410*)

...Monsieur de Montcalm wrote to two ministers on my account, he also wrote to you and sent you copies of his letters to our superiors. I do not ask anything of you. I am sure that my dear mother will do everything that depends on her. Only if the war continues I would like, at the end of the next campaign, to be allowed to go see you, but first Monsieur de Moras must order Monsieur de Vaudreuil to charge me to bring the documents to the Court in the month of September. Then I would return to Canada in the Spring of 1759, and peace made, I would stay there to work on mapping the frontiers. If he would like to employ me to do this work, I would visit the English colonies and Louisiana before I return to France. If peace is made this winter or

a ceasefire is declared, my mission would either to be appointed to the Commission for the finalization of the frontiers or to have an order from the minister to travel across all the land that stretches from Quebec to Louisiana by taking an exact account of them and directing my journey back through Florida, Georgia, and Carolina to Boston. (410-411)

...It is essential that the various statements that I addressed to you be handed directly to him and that the various offices not have any knowledge or suspicion about them; it is in their best interest to stifle this timid truth and up to the present they have been very successful in doing so. I am still sending you the following fragments:

1. A very detailed map with a report both related to the trading posts and forts in Canada. I did not strive for great precision in the latitudes and longitudes on the map: I only needed a map that gives me the opportunity to detail what is related to the posts; one of the most important purposes of this Colony and that the minister surely knows the least. The map ends at *fort de Châtre*: it is the first to be served by the officers sent from New Orleans, I do not know this area. All of the Commandants of the other posts are supplied by Canada and I do not believe that any are left out.
2. A note about the terrible famine, which will reduce this colony if someone does not promptly bring us provisions; the consequences are already terrible.
3. A note on the Eskimos. It is a strange affair, however fairly interesting for commerce.
- ...6. The design and details of a boat equipped with six and two swivel guns. It is an excellent invention for this country, especially by *Sieur Jacquot*. Please, tell the minister that this officer is one of the best that there has been in the King's troops, that along with the valor of a grenadier he combines all of the talents of an artilleryman, an engineer, a soldier, and all the modesty that should have *Sieur Mercier*, his captain, made officer after

him, who crushed him with protection, babbling and sufficiency, who only has some intelligence that is entirely different from that of his occupation as well as the talent of making money, a talent common enough in this country that it does not deserve to be mentioned.

Letter #11

Bougainville to Madame Hérault de Séchelles

Quebec, November 9, 1757

... Monsieur Bigot first promised me that this year he would request the charge of Ecrivain Principal. The position that he occupies was augmented by two thirds of work upon our arrival and the establishment of the general purveyor reduced his earnings by two thirds. Since then, Monsieur Bigot changed his mind because the Court did not send the favors requested in 1756 this year, and this delay seems to forbid asking for new ones; but, he argued to me that next year he would request the patent and address you through the minister on this subject. One mere word from you, my dear mother, to Monsieur Bigot, which would make him know that you take interest in de Vienne, would determine me to abide by my words. If he demands this patent, he will obtain it and if you write to him that you want it he will request it, I know him and I trust him. Forgive me, a thousand times forgive me, my dear mother, but the subject with which I pray you to occupy yourself is one that serves the King best in the harbor, and the benefit of the service requires that it be advanced, Monsieur Bigot told me this a hundred times.

...What a perspective we are left with! Seven months without sending nor receiving any news! France no longer exists for us. What will we become, if no one does take pity on us? (414)



Attachment to Letter #11

Monsieur de Montcalm to Madame Hérault de Séchelles

Quebec, September 13, 1757

... I have acquired the trust of the Canadian and the Indian to the point of arousing some jealousy. The people here believe me to be too honest a man and I certainly do not seek to infiltrate anything. Oh! If I did not want to accumulate debt here I could, I may be better liked and I could spend more, but I would not change anything about my behavior; I believe it to be good; let's run a good war; I would prefer it if Monsieur de Moras or the wind of some land pay my debts rather than being a member of high society. Burn my letter. I have much to praise about Monsieur Bigot, being an intelligent, hardworking, resourceful man, a defense as noble as it is great, he takes good care of his friends and their fortune. I believe that he will return to France rich, but he serves the King well. (415)

... I have not yet received the letters from Monsieur de Moras among those which the Marquis de Vaudreuil received. It did not seem that there was a single line for me. They will come apparently. This is not for me, it is for the public; they must not think of me merely as a man of the Minister of War; they must also believe me to be a man of the Minister of the Marine. For that matter, I am the King's zealous servant and consequently, both of you and yours can assure Monsieur de Moras that I am personally his. (415-416)

Letter #12

Bougainville to His Brother

Quebec, September 17, 1757

I sent you, my dear brother, a survey of the events of this winter by way of a ship from Bayonne, which left Quebec on August 5, the duplicate and the account of the seizure of Fort William Henry by the King's ship, *la Fortune* which set sail on the 25<sup>th</sup> of the same month. May the winds and the English let them pass until they reach you. I am taking this opportunity to address the duplicate of the account of our siege to you. You must believe, my brother, that we shuddered at the horrible actions of the Indians after the surrender. The sight was awful. A painting alone would make you shudder and that painting would be a thousand times less horrific than the event itself. Alas! Will your brother live much longer among these barbarians? Undoubtedly, the French general and officers risked their lives to save those of the unfortunate English. We shared with them the little that we have, and they published and praised these actions. But these Indians and others even worse than savage are our allies and their vileness defiles our glory. My dear brother, we all have ulcerated hearts to the point that, in a moment of outrage, the officers of our troops wanted to ask that we fight the war alone on our side, and refuse as companions these monsters capable of dishonoring us. On this occasion, incredible acts of fury and baseness that one cannot write and that I would most like my heart to forget, but unfortunately, I have seen and heard too much. I go further: the air that we breathe is contagious, and I fear that a long stay here will make us take up the vices of those with whom we share no virtue. (416)

... From what I can gather based on the nomination of Monsieur de Borda and a letter that Clairault wrote to me, I concluded that my occupation, with its long and necessary absences, would

be an obstacle preventing me from entering the *Académie* and having a regular career there, that these gentlemen are more inclined to see me requesting a position of *associé libre*.<sup>33</sup> It is effectively all that I desire, my dear brother. Never could I fulfill my academic duties in a manner that deserves the pension and I would be very embarrassed to do wrong by those who would be a thousand times worthier than me. Please, request for me the first open position of *associé libre* and inform these gentlemen. I will write them by the first ships in order to secure my place in this rank. My absence no longer appears to be a title of exclusion. I rely on your friendship. (417)

Letter #13

Bougainville to Madame Hérault de Séchelles

Quebec, September 20, 1757

... I believe that I am obligated to educate myself, as much as I can, about everything that concerns this colony. Monsieur de Moras is the colony's minister and I tell you everything. You can be sure that what I say and will say is and will be the truth. If this truth offends some people, too bad for them. I expect that I will be able to send you by the last ships a very detailed map on which all of the forts and trading posts in Canada will be marked, along with commentary about these posts. Monsieur de Moras will be able to see at a glance of the layout of this colony and the details of an area that is, I believe, essential for him to be familiar with. If my zeal may please you, my dear mother, I will be much rewarded for my work; I will only be upset if my intelligence does not correspond to my good will. Please tell me if you have decided to share the account of the

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<sup>33</sup> Bougainville was an honorary member of the *Académie des sciences* at this point, as he did not have adequate qualifications to become an official member.

current state of the colony and the effect that it will have. I lament when I see the nonsense and mischief that takes place here, when I think that but for some vile goings-on, we would have entered in this campaign six weeks sooner and today Fort Edward would be ours; I witness that the best is always proposed, never followed. Do you think that the the Indians who committed such abominable actions at Fort William Henry have accomplices among those who claimed to be natives of France? That the greed for profit, the certainty of getting from these Indians for a very low price all the pillaging that they did, are the first causes of a horror that England will not fail to blame us for a long time thereafter? Thank Heavens our officers are blameless in this regard; many have risked their life on this occasion, that they have shared all they has with the unfortunate English, who say that if they are ever in a position to lay siege and defeat us, there will be two surrenders-- one for the French troops and another for the Canadians. There you have it, some dreadful truths, my dear mother, but many, especially the more atrocious events, have defiled my eyes and filled my soul with permanent bitterness! May the memory of these abominations cease! What a land! What people! Will my exile last much longer? For the sake of the friendship that you would like very much to have with me, make sure, my dear mother, that if the war continues, the next campaign would be the last for me in this country. Whether or not they promote me, I would always be content so long as I see you and France again. There is nothing to learn here. (419-420)

... Five days ago, we received some letters from *l'île Royale*, dated August 20, which mark the English arrival, that their fleet numbers two hundred sailboats, of which twenty are ships of the line. The matter is now settled; but we are unaware of the number of their warships and the division that will have taken Monsieur Dubois de la Motte. This matter is determining for both nations. I see with grief two ships with sixty-four useless canons in this harbor. Is it possible that the Court believed that Quebec would be taken by some row boats and eight hundred men, of

whom four hundred are Indians, and the other four hundred disguised as Indians who would have come and slaughtered us, for the purpose of *la traite*,<sup>34</sup> that Monsieur de Montalais had consequently an order to gather all the inhabitants from the source of the river and grant refuge to the rest of this colony who will be able to escape. I do not understand any of this. Besides, our situation is critical. Since all the ships carrying flour for us had been taken, this year's harvest is the worst that we have ever seen it, all that we have here is four ounces of bread a day; I do not know how we will manage. The English who are here and who are going to be sent back to Halifax are aware of our position, they see it and will make an accurate report of it. They have told me that their general must have been a fool to come besiege Quebec; that they knew another way to reduce us to nothing.

... I do not know, my dear mother, if I told you that your child is now an ugly Iroquois of the Turtle clan, and that he calls himself *Garoniatsigoa*, which means *Thunderous Sky*. (421)

Letter #14

Bougainville to Madame de Séchelles

Quebec, February 20, 1758

He arrives at last, my dear mother, a messenger from Louisbourg who brings us news from France, dated September 24 and two letters from Monsieur de Moras to Monsieur de Montcalm, one from May 27 in response to his correspondence with Monsieur de Machault, and the other from August 3. This last one is brief and unimportant. The first one is filled with lessons on the

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<sup>34</sup> *Traite* means "trade" in English, but it could also connote "slave trade." The French traded goods as well as prisoners with their Native allies, so it is difficult to decipher the exact meaning here.

manner in which one should behave toward the Canadians and the Indians. They teach us that the Canadians are brave and that they and their brothers, the Indians, ask to be treated gently. The minister complains that some of the French officers did not, in commanding their soldiers, follow these rules. Monsieur de Montcalm was perceptibly upset by this letter, which he refrained from showing to the French officers. It would have had a discouraging effect and started quarrels. Subordinate writers or perhaps leaders of this country have secretly complained about the expatriates, already much to be pitied, while all they did was come to rescue them? I will not defend my general; his behavior speaks for itself. Simply, I would tell you that with this most undisciplined and independent people, he did not show any particular severity; that the Canadian inhabitant likes to march with him and the French better than with their own officers; that his name is loved, respected by the Indians; that these Frenchmen, whose strength you are familiar with, allowed themselves to have been defied, and have seen even things of the utmost necessity for their subsistence removed from their tents by these barbarians that they despise without having mistreated a single one: we order them to be patient and set an example for them. God forbid we ever tried to dispute the value of the Canadians! We knew to bury in silence and forget the actions from which our eyes bore witness and that they would have tarnished the brilliance of the great names of this colony. In the woods, behind the trees, a thousand troops, comparable to the natives of this country; but I saw the battlefield that was fatal to Monsieur de Dieskau and I thanked the heavens that my general did not have in the Canadians this blind trust, the sole cause of the misfortune of his predecessor. (422)

... The famine is still upon us more than one could ever believe it to be. It was necessary that we reduce our rations once again.

... The winter was and still is very harsh. We abandoned ourselves to gambling. The quartermaster lost some immense sums, the officers do not find themselves to be badly affected by it. In Montreal, an officer of the Colony bankrupted his brother-in-law, an example of what happens in such a barbarous climate. (423)

... We are surrounded by rough characters because they made their fortunes fast, hated, envied, served with danger because it is done in secret, lacking everything, isolated, forgotten perhaps by all those who we hold dear, associated with barbarous actions and of which, I will not describe what I saw, but the idea causes one to shudder, practically unable to share the truth beyond the seas, regretting the past, tired of the present, destined, perhaps, for a more miserable future: what a situation! Meanwhile in Europe, our friends have careers sown with flowers and count their days with unblemished success, I do not mention the rigor of a miserable climate for anything, being deprived of all pleasures, the anguish, the fatigue, the bad food. May they at least not envy our sad and somber glory attached to patience and knowing how to overcome difficulties of all kinds. (424)

... [This is written by Montcalm]

The governor of Montreal benefitted from a trading post that earns him immense sums, which will never be known by the minister of the colony. The letters from Paris say that an assistant to Monsieur de Rigaud replaced Monsieur de Kerlérec in Louisiana. So, all this government wants is a wig.<sup>35</sup> What a man! The quartermaster who told me this could not believe it himself. I am asking Monsieur de Moras to help me to pay the debts that I am contracting and will continue to contract for the service of the King. Some only occupied themselves with making money and doing

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<sup>35</sup> “Wig” refers to the wigs worn by aristocrats and courtiers.

business here, and pay very little attention to the wellbeing of the colony and the interest that our *Cara patria* should take in it. When will we be in the old world to lament all that has happened in the new world 1,500 leagues from the sun! This tirade is devoid of anger and bitterness, but patriotism forces me to speak like this to the person whom I honor the most and pray to commit his brother to read my letters despite his many obligations and to be persuaded by the interest that I take in the minister and his reputation. Your American son is well and very much wishes that we may act in this campaign; as for food supplies, we will try our best; all will go well as I have a secret intuition about it, Madame. (425)

Letter #15

Bougainville to His Brother

Montreal, April 21, 1758

...You will find that I have changed in many regards, my dear brother, my mood is becoming more impassive and consequently, is more serious; I exhibit reflection, I meditate, I even think more profoundly, I therefore act in the manner of a philosopher. (426-427)

How difficult it is to remain happy because of this climate and its inhabitants? Without Montaigne, Horace, Virgil, Tacitus, Montesquieu, Cornelius, the conversations and kindness of my general, boredom would consume me. I want you to tell Monsieur l'Académicien that Monsieur de Montcalm is very knowledgeable, particularly in the style of *l'Académie des belles lettres*. He has read tremendously and his memory is astonishing, he can quote the texts he read. With these qualities and who he is, I think that, upon his return, he would make an excellent



honorary member of the Academy. He would not be satisfied with just the title, he will no doubt send you as much of his writing as his occupation will allow him to.

We reflected, some time ago, and this reflection is much truer for me than it is for him, that upon our leaving America our conversations will be filled with American words, barbarous phrases, and uncivilized expressions. Here, we are hardly polite, and is it possible to be unaffected by an air that we have breathed for so long? I will beg you, my dear brother, and I will make the same request to my mother, not to accept any vulgar language and to treat me as if I were a schoolboy just out of school because, between us it should be said, the tone of the troops and the camps is not very good. (427)

... Tell him that I am becoming devout. I get along well with all the priests and Jesuits on this continent. I socialize with and discuss theology like the rest of them. It is true that, from time to time, I must at least listen to some insults against the Jansenists, but then I cough, I spit, and I secretly protest against these remarks. This country is surely a disciple of the Constitution; we do not see Jansenists there, there is even mistrusts against those who know what it is. (427-428)

Letter #16

Bougainville to Madame de Séchelles

Montreal, April 21, 1758

... Since the expedition of Monsieur de Bellestre, of which I gave you a report, my dear mother, in my letter from the month of February, the movement of our Indians has continued without interruption, as much in Corlar or Schenectady, a small town situated on the Mohawk River, than in the communication of Fort Edward or Lydius to Orange. We have stopped some

convoys, collected prisoners, and some scalps. Sieur Wolf, officer of our troops, in charge of thirty Abenakis, brought the terror of the Indian name to the river banks in Massachusetts. Other Abenakis, who were on the hunt went as far as ten or twelve leagues from Boston, discovered a small country estate, where they massacred the inhabitants and took its lady who, with her earrings, jewels and a dirty chemise, arrived at Fort St. Frederick where you will trust without difficulty that she has arrived a little weary and indisposed. (429)

...Immediately, [Wolf] ordered two hundred Indians, who arrived the day before, to march under the orders of Sieur de la Durantaye, ensign of the colony. Some Abenakis, Neppings, Odawas, and some officers from our troops joined them. Our front line having been discovered by the enemies, we suffer a shot at point-blank range that caused them to retreat. The entire detachment was alerted by the cries of the Indians. The English, surrounded, besieged from all sides, unable to see who was attacking them, deafened by these shrieks, as if from hell, fled. This was a true massacre. The Indians performed one hundred and forty-four scalplings and took several prisoners. The rest of this detachment, consisting of two hundred elite soldiers and twelve officers under the orders of Major Roger, their most famous partisan, must have perished in the woods, of cold, hunger and fear. Six days after the event, two young officers from old England came to surrender at Carillon. What a situation! What a war! What a country!

The English use all that they can to disrupt our alliance with the Five Nations, the Loups, and the Shawnee. These Indians are the rempart of the Belle Rivière and I would imagine it lost if they grant our enemies neutrality, to which their demands are limited. (429-430)

... I forgot to tell you, my dear mother, that at the battle of March 14<sup>th</sup> we had two cadets and one Canadian shot, three Iroquois, one Neppissing and one Abenaki killed; 17 Iroquois shot substantially, of which six have since died from the wounds. What grief among the Iroquois!

As many of the deaths are of the Turtle clan, which is a family, I had to cry, howl, smoke in the funereal calumet. Le Marquis de Vaudreuil covered the dead with much wampum, a mourning gift composed of a black porcelain necklace and of a complete equipment: These poor souls must arrive to the other world fully dressed. They must also be replaced on their mat by as many Pawnee slaves, a nomadic nation along the banks of the Missouri and who, on this continent, play the role of the African slaves in ours.

Our misery grows each day. Almost no meat or bread is left. Through sparing my meager ration, I have become accustomed to eating very little. The locals eat the grain that would be necessary for the sowing season. Fortunately, the ground is beginning to appear under the snow and we are encouraging them to sow promptly. The soldier is worse off here than in Prague, his tone is good, thanks to the generals' example; but what will become of us if France's help does not arrive very soon? We still don't know what are, for this part, the projects of the English. If they go to Louisbourg we will be free to act. If, on the contrary, they employ against us, so weak, twenty-three complete battalions that we know to be in this continent, the defense of our army will be deserving, isn't it, my dear mother? For me, I hardly fear the English and I no longer fear the hardships of the campaign, I feel strong enough to bear them. (431-432)

...I am very worried that the English will obstruct commerce between this country and yours. ...We just learned that General Johnson said to the Five-Nations that the English found a way to prevent any rescue ship from arriving here. (432)

## Letter #17

Bougainville to Madame Hérault de Séchelles

Montreal, June 17, 1758

... I do not know what my destiny will be yet. My general has the intention to send me to France at the end of this campaign. He claims that my voyage would be useful to the colony, and I will leave unless the letters that we await and that would be from this year do not permit me to. Believe, moreover, my dear mother, that if I leave, this will not be a result of boredom, nor fickleness, but instead because Monsieur de Montcalm sees my departure as necessary. (433)

## Letter #18

Bougainville to Madame Hérault de Séchelles

At Camp du Lac Saint Sacrement, July 23, 1758

My wound is beginning to heal, my dear mother, I am using the cauterizing stone, which is good brand. Nonetheless, my strength is still weak and I cannot write without getting a headache and the surgeons yell at me. I am sending you the report of our adventure, which you asked me to send, when you will have read it to Monsieur de Séchelles with this letter of thanks for all the kindness that he honored me with, unlike Monsieur le maréchal de Belle-Isle. Monsieur de Montcalm asked the minister to grant me the title of colonel and the affairs with which he is burdened do not permit him to write you until now. (434)

... I only have one letter from you, my dear mother, in which you announce to me the processes that you and your father have the kindness of enduring with regards to the position of

aide-maréchal-des-logis of which Monsieur le maréchal de Belle-Isle sent me the patent. I received it five or six days before the event. We still do not have any letters from Monsieur de Moras regarding this subject, so I do not know what my salary is. I fear being obligated to take up a wig. This is unfortunate, but it worries me. You will make fun of me, my dear mother. (435)

Letter #19

Bougainville to Madame Hérault de Séchelles

Montreal, May 16, 1759<sup>36</sup>

... I am no longer *maréchal des logis*, but rather employed as Colonel and this is so much better. The English will necessarily attack us and on many sides. Their forces are immense. Even better, this campaign will be decisive and one way or another, will return us, I hope to the manor where my lovely mother lives. (435)

Letter #20

Bougainville to Madame Hérault de Séchelles

Camp de Lorette, September 22, 1759

...The most unfortunate affair has taken our general away from us:<sup>37</sup> Monsieur de Joannes was there and will report it to you. This causes me pain, which grows with every instant. I believed

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<sup>36</sup> Bougainville left for France in November, 1758 to announce France's victory at Carillon and to request aid. He returned to Canada in May, 1759.

<sup>37</sup> Bougainville is referring to the death of Monsieur de Montcalm, who suffered a mortal wound the day before his passing on September 14, 1759.

that I had to follow the fate of this colony, the memory of my general and the critical circumstances under which his death leaves this country are a link that attach me to it. I can say that I served successfully: I have for two months defended communications against a squadron and forces far superior to my own, with three hundred and fifty men. I have, twice in the same day, repelled 1,500 and killed or shot three hundred of them. After the events of September 13<sup>th</sup>, I covered the retreat of our army and when Quebec surrendered I was only three quarters of a league away, and I hurled myself into the following night with an elite corps that could have saved it.

Now, I am entrusted with a reserve of 1,200 men and I continue a grueling campaign, since we spent three months at the encampment without knowing when, how it will end and if the winter, with the ice, will bring us any rest. (436)

...Goodbye, my dear mother, your child broke the ties which displeased you and caused you to complain. (437)

## Timeline of Louis-Antoine de Bougainville's Life and Career

**November 12, 1729**

Louis-Antoine de Bougainville is born in Paris, France.

**1734**

Bougainville's mother dies and Madame Marie-Hélène Hérault de Séchelles begins to provide motherly support.

**1750**

Bougainville begins his military career as a Mousquetaire noir.

**1754**

He publishes the first part of his *Traité de calcul intégral*.

**1756**

He publishes the second part of his *Traité de calcul Intégral* and is awarded a membership to the Royal Society in London for his scientific accomplishments.

**May 10, 1756**

Bougainville arrives in Quebec.

**July-August, 1756**

Bougainville serves as aide-de-camp in the battle of Fort Oswego (*Fort Chouägen*), which would secure French control of Lake Ontario.

**August, 1757**

Bougainville participates in the siege of Fort William-Henry and is chosen by Montcalm to bring the news to Vaudreuil.

**September, 1757**

Bougainville is adopted by the Iroquois Turtle clan.

**July, 1758**

Bougainville is wounded during the Battle of Carillon, which the French won and resulted in the English abandoning the fort.

**November 15, 1758**

Bougainville leaves Canada for France to announce their victory at Carillon and request more ships and munition.

**March 28, 1759**

Bougainville returns to Canada.

**August 27, 1760**



The French are evacuated from Ile-aux-Noix and head toward Montreal following an English attack, leaving only thirty soldiers and one officer to protect the wounded. De Bougainville negotiates the conditions of France's surrender. He and the rest of the troops were taken as prisoners.

### **September 8, 1760**

The French surrender to the English.

### **1760-1763**

Bougainville helps negotiate of the terms of surrender and drafts the Treaty of Paris (1763), officially ceding New France to the English.

### **September 6, 1763**

Bougainville, captain of *le Sphinx*, embarks on a journey to the Falkland Islands to find an Island that he hoped would redeem the loss of New France.

### **March 16, 1769**

Bougainville becomes the first Frenchman to complete a circumnavigation of the globe.

### **1779-1782**

Bougainville serves as admiral of the *Augustin* during the American Revolutionary war, taking a major role in the Battle of the Chesapeake (1781).

**January 27, 1781**

Bougainville marries Florence Josèphe.

**1783**

Bougainville and Florence Josèphe have their first of five sons.

**February 1789**

Bougainville becomes a member of *l'Académie des sciences*.

**1799**

Madame Catherine Hérault de Séchelles dies at 85 years old.

**August 31, 1811**

Bougainville dies at the age of 81.

## Conclusion

In 1760, England launched a three-part campaign that would ensure the French capitulation of Montreal. English troops would move in on the French city from the south and the west, preventing the French from escaping and ultimately forcing them to surrender. By August, the English only had two obstacles left to take down: Fort Lévis and Louis-Antoine de Bougainville's fort on Ile-aux-Noix. On August 25, 1760, the English took down the fortification protecting Bougainville's fort. On August 27, Bougainville left the fort with the majority of his men and ordered the thirty who remained to open fire against the English the following morning and to use their own judgement to decide when to surrender. Concurrently, the English staged a siege at Fort Lévis. The men were stuck inside the walls of Montreal without any provisions. On September 8, Vaudreuil chose Bougainville, who was fluent in English, to exit with a white flag of truce and negotiate the terms of surrender. At first, General Jeffrey Amherst refused to show the French any mercy, taking the "massacre" at Fort William Henry as a pretext. Refusing to cooperate with Vaudreuil's demands, Amherst gave in and allowed the French to burn their colors instead of turning them over to the English.<sup>38</sup> Bougainville, along with other Frenchmen were then taken as prisoners. This was a humiliating defeat for France, and for Bougainville personally. He spent the remainder of his career making attempts to redeem his name.

Bougainville returned to Paris in December, 1760. One of his first projects was to erect a monument dedicated to his general, the Marquis de Montcalm. What is significant about this monument is that it was erected in Quebec, which now belonged to the English and had to be

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<sup>38</sup> Victor J. H. Suthren, *The Sea Has No End: The Life of Louis-Antoine De Bougainville* (Toronto, Ont.: Dundurn Group, 2004), 101-104

approved by William Pitt, the English Prime Minister.<sup>39</sup> As in the instance of negotiating the terms of surrender, the English government's cooperation shows that there still existed a mutual respect between the English and the French, even when they were at war. The war in America was over, but England and France were still fighting each other in Europe. Although Bougainville was home, he was not free of the consequences of their surrender, since he was still on parole, a condition that he would have to plea to be released from. While he technically could participate in the army, doing so would dishonor the code of conduct that he and Vaudreuil counted on the English to follow when they surrendered.<sup>40</sup> With the help of French officer, Étienne-François de Choiseul, Bougainville was permitted to re-enter the military for the month of July. He would accept this measly opportunity and serve for one month in Germany.<sup>41</sup> By the end of the Seven Years War, Bougainville's status of parole was fully lifted.

In 1763, the Treaty of Paris was signed. France was low on resources, funds and no longer benefitted from the fur trade in Canada. Additionally, many politicians agreed that the peace agreed upon by England and France was only temporary. After agreeing to what they took to be degrading conditions, France turned to the previously uninhabited Falkland Islands in order to regain prestige. There, they would relocate some of the Acadians who were expelled from New France from 1755 to 1764.<sup>42</sup> With support from King Louis XV Bougainville embarked on his journey to the

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<sup>39</sup> Suthren, *The Sea Has No End*, 105.

<sup>40</sup> Suthren, *The Sea Has No End*, 105.

<sup>41</sup> Suthren, *The Sea Has No End*, 107.

<sup>42</sup> Suthren, *The Sea Has No End*, 110.

Falkland Islands on September 6, 1763, bringing along three families, of whom the first settlement would consist, as well as a naturalist and several scientists.<sup>43</sup>

Today, Louis-Antoine de Bougainville is best known for the work that he did following the Seven Years War (1756-1763), despite taking an integral part in it. In 1766, King Louis XV granted him permission to circumnavigate the globe, a task that he completed on March 16, 1769, making him the first Frenchman to do so. In March, 1768 Bougainville encountered an island previously unknown in Europe: Tahiti. Upon his return, Bougainville brought back a Tahitian passenger. As we saw earlier, Bougainville had anticipated this project to compensate for his failure in the Canada, but his findings were received with little praise. Despite the criticisms of Rousseau and Diderot, Bougainville did gain a more accurate understanding of the Pacific Ocean's vastness than had been established by Pierre-Antoine Véron's astronomically-based conclusions.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, he would go on to become a member of the *Académie des sciences* in February of 1789.

Bougainville was presented with yet another chance to redeem his reputation in the American Revolutionary War (1776-1783) on the side of the rebels. He participated in the Battle of the Chesapeake in 1781, which resulted in the English surrender.<sup>45</sup> Most significant, perhaps, was his appointment to the senate in 1799 by Napoleon, which was followed by the granting of a new title as Grand Officer in the Legion of Honour, and ultimately Count of the Empire.<sup>46</sup> In 1803,

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<sup>43</sup> Suthren, *The Sea Has No End*, 112.

<sup>44</sup> Suthren, *The Sea Has No End* 159.

<sup>45</sup> Suthren, *The Sea Has No End*, 191.

<sup>46</sup> Suthren, *The Sea Has No End*, 199.

France's mission to extend its empire to the American continent came to a complete end with the Louisiana Purchase. Louis-Antoine de Bougainville died on August 31, 1811.

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