The Historical Erasure of an Indigenous Identity in the Borderlands: The Western Abenaki of Vermont, New Hampshire, and Quebec

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The Historical Erasure of an Indigenous Identity in the Borderlands: The Western Abenaki of Vermont, New Hampshire, and Quebec

Jean L. Manore*

Abstract

Current and former US and Canadian governments have denied indigenous status to the Western Abenaki who claim what is now Vermont, New Hampshire and southern Quebec as their traditional territory. This article seeks to demonstrate the ways in which these borderlands people were separated from their lands and communities by imperial powers, surveyors and settlers, and historical chroniclers. In so doing, an alternative interpretation of the past was created in which the Abenaki were inhabitants of both the United States and Canada but indigenous to neither.

For centuries, the US and Canadian governments have denied indigenous status to those whom anthropologists have called the Western Abenaki, which is a collective name for a variety of peoples including the Sokokis, Pennacooks, Winnipesaukees, Pigwackets, and Cowasucks.¹ Yet, according to current Abenaki spokespersons, prior to European contact, the Western Abenaki peoples occupied Wobanakik, their traditional territory within what is now called Vermont, New Hampshire, and southern Quebec, and still do today.²

Before and during European occupation, the Abenaki settlements lay mostly within river valleys or along coastal waters where they harvested the resources of the rivers and lakes and planted corn and a variety of other crops. They also hunted game, picked berries and medicinal herbs, and tapped maple and other trees for their sap. Additionally, they used ash trees to make canoes, cooking vessels and other containers, spruce gum as a sealant and poplar sap as a “band-aid” for deep cuts or wounds. Finally, using the ubiquitous canoe as their primary means of transport, the Abenaki traveled to and from their villages or along various river-routes which now traverse the international boundary between Canada and the United States.³ I make these points to demonstrate that the landscape features of the states and province mentioned above would support the sorts of life-ways and styles that the western Abenaki practiced. Yet this history of ancient and continued use of the lands bordering the two nation-states has been replaced with a different history, a history that privileges the expansion of Europeans and colonists into what they considered a fluid space of nebulous occupation by a variety of obscure and indistinguishable people. This history, which appears to be the history relied on by the United States and Canadian governments, both federal and state and provincial, is as follows⁴:

One of the first written records of the Western Abenaki comes from Samuel de Champlain. When he explored what became Lake Champlain in 1609, Champlain heard of rich corn fields to the east from his “Indian” guides. He also heard that the proprietors of those fields had withdrawn from them because of war. At this time, the Abenakis were at war with the Iroquois Confederacy, and in response some of the Abenakis, the Sokokis and Pennacooks most notably, joined the French in alliance against them. By the second half of the seventeenth century, the Abenakis had been devastated by epidemic diseases and were also at war with the English, who were starting to occupy their lands.

In 1675, King Philip’s War with one of the leading chiefs, Metacom, being Abenaki, broke out as the Eastern Abenaki tried to drive the English Puritans from their territories. This bloody, vicious, war ended

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in 1677 with the result that many Abenaki removed to Quebec. For example, 150 Abenaki were reported to have “presented themselves” at the Jesuit mission in Sillery, near Quebec City. In response to this “presentation” and others subsequently, the French government, recognizing the Abenaki to be good allies and Catholic, gave them lands at St. Francois de Sales at the junction of the St. Lawrence and Chaudiere Rivers, at Becancour (Wolinak) at the junction of the St. Lawrence and Becancour Rivers and at St. Francois du Lac (later Odanak) at the junction of the St. Lawrence and St. Francis Rivers. All these lands were within the area that anthropologists and historians have attributed to the Laurentian Iroquois who presumably disappeared sometime after Jacques Cartier’s visits to Hochelaga and Stadacona in the 16th century. All of the Odanak lands were transferred from the Crevier seigneur to the Jesuits under Father Bigot, as were the Wolinak lands but from the Seigneur, Becancour. Thus, History states that the lands in southern Quebec occupied by the Eastern and Western Abenaki were granted to them out of French seigneurial lands; the lands were not theirs originally. Continued warfare with the English forced other Abenaki groups to leave their villages with some going to Quebec, especially to Odanak and Wolinak, and others retreating into the more remote areas of northern Vermont.

During the Seven Years War, the “St. Francis Indians” (those who were residing in Odanak) fought alongside the French as did others whereas other Abenakis, particularly those in New England remained neutral. Some even supported the English. The St. Francis Indians conducted numerous raids on English settlements and earned English enmity as well as the epithet “French” Indians. To retaliate against the Abenaki for these raids, Robert Rogers’ Rangers in 1759 launched a raid on Odanak, burning the village and claiming to kill many Abenaki warriors. Later historical scholarship reveals that not many Abenakis were killed because they were away from their village at the time and that Rogers’ men fared worse, as many died from hardship on the return trip (Calloway 1990).

The result of the Seven Years War was the transfer of French territory in North America to the British in 1763 with a proviso that the British would respect Indian lands and settlements. Nevertheless, the Abenaki continued to fight for recognition of their lands in Vermont and New Hampshire (and elsewhere) thereafter, sometimes conducting raids against English settlements. Petitions, conferences, and battles were, however, to no avail, and more Abenaki joined their kin in Odanak and Wolinak.

With the American Revolutionary War, the Abenaki again divided, with some siding with the British and others, the colonists. In 1783, Britain recognized American independence and handed over all the lands south of the 45th parallel without reference to the Aboriginal inhabitants. The Abenaki, among others, were not pleased with this action. Regardless, with the formation of the United States as a separate entity from Great Britain and because the St. Francis Indians had fought with the British, the Abenaki were now considered foreigners by the American government. Also, because many Western Abenaki had left their settlements in Vermont and New Hampshire, their traditional lands in those areas were now considered vacant and ready for colonization.

Conversely, the Canadian and Quebec governments considered the Abenaki to be refugees who fled the United States, not indigenous inhabitants who had simply relocated to more northern areas within Wobanakik. These governments chose to recognize Abenaki bands at Wolinak and Odanak but resisted extending their recognition to other Abenaki communities such as at Grand Forks (Sherbrooke), Ulverton, Megantic, and Coaticook (Côté 2005/2006).

In sum, after contact, as a result of a series of wars, epidemic disaster and settler incursions, the Abenaki population dwindled, and families or groups moved or were removed from their settlements and eventually wound up on reserves in Quebec or continued to live within the states created out of their former territory or “just north of the border” as a marginal, “exotic” people. To the Americans, the historic understanding of the Abenaki was that they were “French” or “Canadian” Indians or, more recently, “gypsies” (Wiseman 2001). To Canadians, the Abenaki were “American” Indians who were driven out of their traditional territories to become refugees in New France and then in British North America. The
result has been that the Abenaki, although pre-historic and historic inhabitants of both Canada and the United States, are considered by the settler governments to be indigenous to neither country, despite Abenaki claims to the contrary. To the settler governments, the Abenaki have neither occupied a specific territory since "time immemorial" nor had a recognizably distinct and coherent tribal identity at the time of contact or in the historic period.

How this came to be is the focus of this paper, with the argument being presented that their existence as a “borderlands” people created discourses that allowed both the imperial powers of Britain and France, and then the settler governments of Canada and the United States to erase the traditional territory of Wobanikik and thus the indigenous identity of the Abenaki within the supplanted imperial and nation-state territories. These discourses were put forward by scholars, surveyors, memorialists, and novelists, and framed the Abenaki identity within colonial, racial, and nationalist imperatives. In order to explore this thesis, this article will examine the scholarly discussions of borderlands people which emphasize racial and colonial theory, as well as the theoretical underpinnings of a liberal nation-state. It will demonstrate the accuracy of these ideas by referencing scholarly and non-scholarly literature, and first-hand accounts of colonial inhabitants. In so doing, this article will challenge the prevailing understanding of Abenaki as a non-indigenous people and will demonstrate the continued imperialism of the settler governments over the Abenaki through the imposition of their international border. It will thus add to the burgeoning literature on settler colonial studies in the Canada/United States border areas in contrast to the longer-established literature on migrant Mexican populations within the US/Mexican border areas.

First, what is meant by a “borderlands people?” In a seminal article written for the *American Historical Review* in 1999, Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron argue that borderlands are areas in which local history is shaped by imperial rivalries, and in which Aboriginal inhabitants try to exploit these rivalries in an attempt to resist submission and to negotiate intercultural relations to their advantage. Borderlands are therefore areas of “contested boundaries between colonial domains” and persist as long as neither imperial nor colonial states have the power to exert their control over the Aboriginal peoples and their territories effectively (Adelman and Aron 1999, 816). It is important to emphasize that borderlands studies of this genre also demonstrate the fluidity of occupation within Indigenous territories, as colonists drive out Native inhabitants through warfare and disease and it is this characteristic of borderlands, I contend, that allowed imperial and settler authorities to construct an alternative history of the Abenaki peoples and their territory.

For example, Richard White, in his fascinating history of the “pays d’en haut” or French borderlands, demonstrates this thesis with his idea of the “middle ground” in which Aboriginal Peoples, displaced from their eastern homelands by imperial warfare and disease, move inland and through intermingling of these people with existing residents recreate Aboriginal societies and communities. They also develop various strategies of how to deal with the European imperialists and Euro-colonials including co-mingling with them (White 1991, x). As White argues:

> The middle ground is the place in between: in between cultures, peoples, and in between empires and the non-state world of villages. . . . It is the area between the historical foreground of European invasion and occupation and the background of Indian defeat and retreat. . . . On the middle ground diverse peoples adjust their differences through what amounts to a process of creative and often expedient, misunderstandings. (White 1991, x)

As a result, White’s interpretation privileges documents that demonstrate the fluidity of First Nations cultures and communities rather than documents that emphasize continuity of occupation and coherence of identity.

Gordon Day, an ethnologist working for what is now called the Canadian Museum of Civilization, provides the example for the Western Abenaki of this borderland fluidity. Day spent considerable effort trying to
track the ancestral identity of the Abenaki of Odanak. Day suggests that the ancestors of the Odanak community included, at one time or another, Sokokis or Sokwakis, Androscoggin, Pennacooks, “Loups,” and Abenakis, as well as people from Norridgewock, Schaghticoke and Missisquoi, among others (Day 1981). Through a meticulous presentation of archival evidence, Day demonstrates the historiographical theme of fluidity of movements of these groups within New England and southern Quebec.

A few paragraphs taken from his *The Identity of the St. Francis Indians* illustrate these points very well:

In 1700 Odanak received all the Sokwakis and Loups and some of the Abenakis from the Chaudière mission. We have a number of clues to the composition of that mission. There had been many Abenakis from the Androscoggin and Kennebec Rivers in Canada, probably in Quebec in 1675. Some Penacooks may have gone to Sillery in the summer of that year, but this is not certain. In the spring of 1676, 150 Abenakis had arrived at Sillery. These could have been from the Saco, Androscoggin or Kennebec Rivers or from all three. By the summer of 1677, some Indians from Hatfield, Massachusetts (Norwottucks) and some Penacooks were at Quebec. The Penacooks returned briefly to the Merrimack and brought other Merrimack River Indians back to Canada with them. The Sillery mission moved to the lower falls of the Chaudière in 1683. In 1688 many Penacooks left for Penacook but may have returned soon afterward because Penacook was abandoned during the war which followed. (Day 1981, 63)

And

The Lower Cowas in the vicinity of Newbury, Vermont, was abandoned in 1704 and appeared to have been abandoned much of the time until 1760, and the Cowassucks may have been either at Odanak or on the headwaters of the Connecticut River during this period. The first definite removal to Canada of which I have found record was made in 1763 by a group which had sat out the Seven Years’ War on the Clyde River in northeastern Vermont. Lacking more than scraps of definite information, I tentatively conclude that some 700 Cowassuck and Androscoggin Indians remained in relatively safe retreats in the forests between the American and British frontiers in 1775. Most of them probably wound up at Odanak, but details of their movements are lacking. (Day 1981, 65)

The obscurity of the records referred to in this paragraph suggests that there were places within Abenaki territory that remained unknown to either the Anglo-American or British forces during the former’s revolutionary war. Both paragraphs demonstrate the continued movement of the Abenaki peoples, but the movements are portrayed as being between and within imperial and colonial frontiers, not as being within traditional boundaries of Abenaki territory.

For an American interpretation of the Abenaki as a borderlands people, we can turn to the works of Colin Calloway. In his several books and articles on the Western Abenaki, while he details very well the fluidity of Abenaki territory and Abenaki communities, as others have done, in so doing, he argues that: “A history of the western Abenakis has suffered from the long-standing notion that their homeland was little more than a no man’s land between competing groups, before settlement by European pioneers” (Calloway 1990, xvi). The reasons for this designation are numerous and are at least partly explained by the Abenaki social and political structure.

The Abenaki as a people or a group of people were traditionally fluid in their composition and identity. As Calloway points out:

Communities were generally seasonal and consensual concentrations of family hunting bands that dispersed . . . during much of the year. Complex social and
cultural interactions within tribal groups affected how they lived and how they responded to the intrusion of foreigners. Indians interacted with outsiders and newcomers on the individual, family, and band level, rarely on the tribal level. (Calloway 1990, 10)

Additionally, the traditional social structures of the Western Abenaki were fluid and flexible, with families, bands and villages expanding and contracting in membership in conjunction with the seasonal rounds of their hunting, fishing and gathering activities and with the need to respond to various crises, whether brought on by warfare, disease or resource failures (Calloway 1990, 10). As the English imperial presence increased, trade and hence social interaction between the English and the Abenaki did occur, but invariably, various Abenaki villages and families did have to organize for war and territorial defense. This required the formation of alliances among themselves and with other Indigenous nations, and increased the concentration of some groups in certain villages or locations (Calloway 1990, 10–11). It also meant that new socio-political entities were formed, sometimes temporarily and other times for a substantive period of time. Consequently, group identifications along the moving frontier changed over time as Aboriginal sociopolitical units grew larger and their constituents became more heterogeneous. As a result, as Harald Prins has argued for the Eastern Abenaki communities in Maine, “native communities were forced to maintain fluid ethnic and territorial boundaries, allowing a constant merging and fissioning . . . . Some of these communities survived; others proved abortive” (Calloway 1990, 11).

With respect to the French imperial presence, their missionary and fur-trading activities allowed for a far greater degree of interdependence, intermarriage and alliances between the French and the Abenaki than existed between them and the English. It also produced an image of the Abenaki as being French. According to Calloway, by “the eighteenth century many western Abenakis had acquired French names and donned French clothes. Many others were baptized as Catholics, wore crucifixes, and were buried in French cemeteries” (Calloway 1990, 18–19). Yet French documents obscure the Abenaki identity: references of “Abenaki” found in the colonial record could have been either to the Eastern or Western Abenaki and references to the Loups could have been either to the Western Abenaki or Mahican peoples (Cote´ 2005/2006). Additionally, French archival records detail arrivals of individuals and groups of Indians—Sokokis, Abenaki, Loups, etc., but rarely do they divulge from where these Indians came.6

Thus, despite and/or because of the recurring warfare in this region, Western Abenaki territory, as portrayed by scholars, became a classic “middle ground” to use Richard White’s term or a classic borderlands area in keeping with Adelman and Aron. While Western Abenaki communities dispersed in response to crises produced by external pressures, they also restructured, as they tried other strategies to deal with imperial incursions, and changed in composition, as they incorporated refugees from other areas into their social and political structures (Calloway 1990, 19). Yet, the Abenaki understanding of simply moving within their traditional territory of Wobanakik as circumstances dictated and of forming alliances or welcoming newcomers—Aboriginal and non—is erased or ignored. Instead, imperial authorities and their colonial descendants left records that constructed the Western Abenaki as indeterminate in occupation of land and in continuity of identity. This construction was and is fundamental to current claims by Canada and the United States that the Abenaki are not indigenous peoples within their respective nation-states.

In the nineteenth century, when these settler governments were consolidating their claims to their territories and strengthening the demarcation between them through the establishment of a more clearly defined international border, the prevailing liberal notions of property and individualism were translated into the privileging of ideas of settlement and national citizenship, as a means whereby indigenous inhabitants could be removed from their lands. More specifically, the Abenaki, as was the case for most other Indigenous Peoples, held little or no claim to the lands sought by settlers because they were not settled upon them; nor could they be citizens of the newly created nation-states because they were primitive peoples or otherwise negatively defined.7 Furthermore, once the international boundary was
established, it served as the justification for the physical shaping of the land as agricultural or resource development zones (Fehr 2008). Thus, with no clearly defined identity or occupation of land during the imperial era, the conditions for denying the Abenaki their lands and identity in the “liberal era” were set, as was the ability to recreate the Abenaki as non-indigenous to Canada and the United States. However, the conditions were not secure. Constant and broad applications of the non-indigenous discourse had to be reaffirmed to offset the one asserted by the Abenaki of Wobanakik, in terms of both their selves and their land. In subsequent decades, these applications included the development of a counter identity of the Abenaki along racialized lines and the development of an agricultural settlement frontier demarcated by the division of Wobanakik into lands controlled by the settler governments of the United States and Canada.

Sheila McManus, in her 2005 book, The Line which Separates, explores the idea of a counter-identity when examining the Blackfoot of the Alberta-Montana Borderlands. She argues that although the Blackfoot persist in their occupation of the lands after the formation of the border, their presence or absence is irrelevant to the political and economic developments of the new states. What is relevant to the settler societies is that the Blackfoot allow the settlers to construct a racialized landscape and thus treat the Blackfoot as “the foil against which their racial and gender identities were constructed.” Furthermore, quoting Ruth Frankenberg, McManus argues, “Once a person is in a landscape structured by racism, a conceptual mapping of race, of self and others, takes shape, following from and feeding the physical context” (McManus 2005, 152). Thus, nineteenth- and twentieth-century North American settler societies acknowledged First Nations societies but in a way that created them as counter-images to themselves.

McManus’s approach to borderland studies can be complemented by Mary Louise Pratt’s discussion of what she refers to as the “anti-conquest.” Pratt examines imperial travel writing in the nineteenth century, specifically focusing on the development of natural history and “explorers” or travelers recording of colonial landscapes as regions for economic or political exploitation. In this way, the imperial/colonial governments are able to gain power over these landscapes without actually having to undertake military or other overt political action such as territorial appropriation or even enslavement (Pratt 2008, 37–38). Anti-conquest also deterritorializes the indigenous peoples within these narrated lands. Indigenous peoples became “traces on the landscape” or they are extracted from the landscape in which they still live, meaning that they are erased from the economy, culture and history of the area (Pratt 2008, 52).

Pratt’s and McManus’s research and analyses hold resonance for the history of the Western Abenaki as a borderlands people. As noted earlier, the Abenaki territory became a contested space between England and France and then between Anglo-Americans and England and finally between the United States and British North America/Canada. While the contests were being waged, Abenaki territory was presented as a vacant space into which cultures intermingled, mixed and operated in opposition to each other, creating a fluidity of identity of the First Nations by the imperial and colonial authorities. Then, as the US/Canada border became legally entrenched, that is, as the border became fixed, the Western Abenaki also became “fixed” as a counter-identity to the settlers’ liberal notions of settlement and national citizenship. Furthermore, and parallel to their actual displacement from their lands were the acts of anti-conquest as exemplified by the writings of numerous memorialists, such as the explorer and surveyor, David Thompson, the colonial officer, Robert Rogers and the novelist, Oscar Masse. From these writings, and many others, came the mythologized Abenaki—cross-border migrants with no fixed indigenous address in either the United States or Canada and no indigenous identity, save for the negative ones constructed as foils against the settler ideas of who was capable of full citizenship in their nations and who was not.

In 1834, David Thompson, the famous explorer of western Canadian rivers, conducted a survey of the Salmon and St. Francis Rivers in the Eastern Townships, while under the employ of the Canada Land Company. In his report, he records both positive and negative characteristics of the land, thereby conveying a sense of objectivity. Of course, however, what values determined the positive and negative
were entirely subjective and based on his cultural assumptions of productive land. Herein lay an example of Pratt’s anti-conquest idea.

Starting out on May 1, 1834 with two other men, Thompson records his impressions of the Salmon River: he “went up the River about 2 1/2 Miles to the mineral Springs, tasted it, slightly sulphurous & very slightly saline. The Current is about 2 Miles per Hour but wholly [sic] unfit in this distance for a Mill power, as was expected.” The next day, Thompson is slightly more favorable in his comments but still unencouraging in his description of the usefulness of the river for development:

For about 3 Miles above Lennoxville, the River is strong Current. Thence commences a series of strong Rapids, so that almost every Mile of this winding River may be said to furnish sufficient Fall, combined with the heavy body of Water that can be brought to act, to make a Water Power for mechanical use, and there are several low Points thro’ which Canals can be cut for this purpose, but the River itself cannot be made use of, as no place has sufficient descent. The Shores are rocky, the Banks steep and high in all its concave sinuosities, the River appears to roll over a bed of greenstone Slate, with innumerable boulders of Granite resting on it, obstructing the rapid Current, and making dangerous navigation to all, but expert Canoe Men, and only to be surmounted by the dexterous use of the Pole, shod with Iron. (Thompson, 1834, May 2)

On Thompson’s third day, he explores beyond the river’s edge and offers an even more promising description of the land’s potential: half the trees are hardwood, and the soil appears to be a good brown or reddish loam. The number of freshwater springs throughout the area demonstrate that the farmer would have all the moisture he needs for his crops without having to bother with the steep banks and rapids of the river (emphasis mine, Thompson, 1834, May 3).

All of these comments point to Thompson’s understanding of the land he sees. Thompson was to report on what areas would be good for development by settlers and hence he comments on water, wood and soil. Where these elements would support agricultural activities, the land is good or described positively. Where these elements would not support agriculture, the land is bad or negatively described. In providing such descriptions, Thompson is superimposing colonial understandings of the lands he is surveying over Abenaki ones.

Thompson’s survey of the St. Francis River also records the good and bad characteristics of the river and the valley through which it runs. On May 13, Thompson records:

At Noon set off & went to the S t Francis River, and up this River to the 3 Mile Lake, crossed it, and held on up the River to the entrance of 15 Mile Lake at 4 Pm, and camped in one of M’ Russell’s Huts of last Winter. The Land of to day has been mostly low, and to the foot of the rising ground, appears wet and marshy, with Burnt Woods in places, and in no ways tempting to Emigrants, but the rising Grounds are covered with mixed hard Wood & Spruce Pines, and appears good Land. Very bad Weather. Heavy squalls from NW, cold with Showers of Snow and Hail. (Thompson, 1834)

A few days later, Thompson again records the “reddish unctuous loam” in the interior with the area’s “fine exposure to the sun.” He also notes the presence of some large islands consisting “all of hard wood” and out of which “several fine Farms may be made” (Thompson, 1834, May 16). As well, he notes that salmon trout in the river were plentiful and were “tolerable good” (Thompson, 1834, May 25).

Finally, on June 28, Thompson states that “4 Pioneers” went ahead to “open out a narrow path. His use of the word “Pioneers” is particularly telling, as the need to clear a path out of the woods which at this place
are particularly dense signifies that the work of settlers intent on transforming a “trackless wilderness” into something more productive will be difficult. In this area, the trees make poor timber, and the land is full of stones. The best land is only second rate, and the majority of it is “bad.” In this region, the pioneers will have a difficult time succeeding indeed (Thompson, 1834).

Thompson also offers much insight into British understandings of “Indians.” As Indians were part of his survey party, and as he relied upon them for information about the rivers and lands over which he was travelling, the local Aboriginal people played a significant role in Thompson’s activities.

Thompson takes note of the Indians’ knowledge of the land and travel routes. On May 15th, he comments that his party passed the narrow end of a lake, “when in ancient times, the Indians relate, the Beaver dammed it across, but no vestige can now be seen of it” (Thompson, 1834). Then, on May 26th, Thompson arrived at the “Indian path that leads to [what is now] Newport.” At this point, Thompson rested and he and his party took the time to wash and mend their clothes so that they would “look something like Christians” (Thompson, 1834).

In these references, Thompson is contrasting his party with that of the Indians who, according to Thompson, have a memory of “ancient” times and do not resemble Christians in their appearance or cleanliness. In these comments also, Thompson participates in the act of anti-conquest. Thompson, however, is very reliant on the Indians for information, and so he cannot simply dismiss them as traces of the past. In being so dependent, an irony is created in that he is using the Indians to assist him in transforming the Aboriginal landscape into a British one, that is to assist him in the anti-conquest of their territory. For example, Thompson recounts his meeting with Moses Aiken, “the Indian from Quebec.” He states:

Conversed with him on the country around the Lake. He says, to the eastward of the Swell of Land, which borders this Lake, there is a fine extensive Level of good Land, and not stoney. At a short distance south of his Hut, is a carrying place of only about 1/2 Mile to the Spider Lake, which he says, has only a depth of about 1 1/2 Mile of good Land around it, all to the southward and westward, very swampy, and useless for Farms, covered with a young Forest of Pines, and very much fallen Wood, passable only in Winter, when the Snow is deep. (Thompson, 1834, June 15)

In another account, Thompson records:

Getting all the information I can of the Country around the Lake. I sent Moulton who understands the Language, to enquire of the Indians, whether we could not pass thro Chesham and Emberton on our return, as those Countries have to be examined. Soosup, the Indian, supposed to be best acquainted with them, made answer. Tell him, that if he wishes to die, he had better die where he is, for whoever goes there, will soon wish themselves dead, such is the extreme badness of those Countries, that no white Man will ever inhabit those places, but the Moose will have them for ever. Not very welcome news. (Thompson, 1834, June 11)

Herein again is the demonstration of the anti-conquest. Thompson gets accounts of the land from Abenaki or local Indians in which lands are valued as fit for agriculture and unfit if only good for Moose.

In another account, Thompson was involved in a power contest with his English assistants and relayed how the Indians of his party were being manipulated by the assistants to avoid surveying a certain area so they could go home. While surveying the townships of Gayhurst and Dorset, and around Lake Megantic, Thompson met some resistance by his Indian guides on the route he intended to travel:

As the Indians saw I was intent on passing from the south end of this Lake, thro’ Clinton and Emberton &c, and they dreaded this Country, and were wrought on by
Thompson then goes on to explain that the Indians’ proposal to return to the Salmon River was too laborious. If he and his party followed their suggestions, then they would be walking 25 miles through the woods and hills to the Salmon River and carrying everything as well. After reaching the Salmon, they would then have to canoe for 6 miles and then walk another 26 miles to Lennoxville at which point they would pick up more supplies and return to survey the townships that Thompson wanted to survey. This would mean more walking and more hard labor. The Indians were persuaded by Thompson’s arguments and agreed to go his route as indicated on his map (Thompson, 1834, June 24).

As it turns out, the Indians’ descriptions of most of the lands in these townships were accurate. After going over them, Thompson summed up their usefulness as “second rate.” However, this incident highlights different understandings of power because according to Thompson, Maynard who was one of Thompson’s hired white assistants, had told the Indians that they were only being paid 5 pounds a day, meaning less than the white men “to render them dissatisfied, that they might leave us and thus bring in his relations and friends into their place, at 6\textfrac{1}{2} per day, and thus place me in his power” (Thompson, 1834, May 26).

This is an interesting comment on Thompson’s understanding of power relations. He was able to “control” the Indians under his charge but was ever sensitive to becoming dependent on his assistants, who were capable of exploiting his lack of knowledge of the land and its resources to their advantage. While his assistants were portrayed as conniving, the Indians were portrayed as weak-willed and subject to manipulation. In this way, the racial discourse that allowed the colonization of the Abenaki is displayed, that is, the Abenaki are child-like and therefore cannot be regarded as citizens.

While Thompson was surveying Canada Company lands, British settlers were moving into the Sherbrooke area. As settlers, their acts of deterritorialization were more direct in that they did actually occupy Aboriginal lands. They did, however, also participate in acts of anti-conquest by the diaries they kept and letters they wrote home to Britain. In so doing, they also advanced the process of deterritorialization by constructing the Abenaki as remnants of a romanticized past.

One such example of this process is found in the diary of Lucy Peel who immigrated to Canada in 1833 along with her husband, Edmund. She was one of a number of British settlers of “middle class” status who were hoping for a better life in the colonies. Although she and her husband only stayed for three years, Lucy kept a diary of her experiences, which doubled as a sort of travel narrative because it was sent back home to England for distribution among her family and friends. As the editor of the Peel diary, Jack Little, explains:

\ldots Journals such as Lucy Peel’s reflect[ed] the experiences and views of a small, privileged sector of society. Their authors were nevertheless sharp observers of their social and natural surroundings, and they provide[d] valuable insights into the ideology and behavior of the families who dominated the Canadian colonies socially and politically during the pre-Rebellion era. (Little 2001, 2)

The Peel diaries also tended to present the Eastern Townships landscape as a place out of which abundant resources in one form or another would be extracted or grow. In so doing, the diaries served as a “colonizing act” and reinforced “subjective control over an objective environment” thus stamping the “region with an unmistakably genteel British identity.” (Little 2001, 5)
In Book One of Peel’s diary, Lucy spends many paragraphs describing her trip to her new home. Initially, the diary is a catalog of hardship and suffering but then, as Lucy and Edmund get closer to their final destination, the diary reveals both hope and promise. On the road to Sherbrooke, Quebec, Peel describes the arduous travelling conditions:

We got into the Mail on Friday morning at four, with five companions, and now the roads were worse than ever, the Gentlemen were frequently obliged to get out and hold it up on both sides, the hills became almost perpendicular, often immense trees across the roads which we went over at a great rate, ruts, halfway up the wheels, once we could not proceed along the road, and were obliged to turn into a field, go through a hedge and over a ditch; I never saw such steady horses, and the coaches are so constructed that they can follow the horses almost any where. We proceeded in this manner till one o’clock when we stopped to dine and afterwards went on in an open wagon as the people at the Inn said the Mail could not proceed without being injured. This wagon had four seats, and nine of us with all our boxes were stuffed into it. This vehicle was very long and low, the roads became worse and worse and I felt so ill that really I was afraid I should not be able to bear it much longer, for though my kind Edmund sat by my side & held me in when it shook so dreadfully, it did not releave [sic] me. . . . (Little 2001, 35)

In this paragraph, the land is portrayed as harsh, especially for women, and progress through the landscape is difficult just as is the process of bringing in settlement.

For Mrs Peel, however, the next day was a better day for travelling and she was able to admire the landscape:

The next morning, Saturday, we again entered a wagon with only a pair of horses and passed through a beautiful country to Stanstead, now in the midst of a grand wood with trees so high it made my eyes ache to look to the tops of them, and then along roads with the land cultivated on each side and pretty frame houses and barns upon the different farms most of them painted white, the people all looking clean and neatly dressed and with such happy countenances I was quite delighted to see them. . . (Little 2001, 35–36)

These excerpts demonstrate well the various acts of anti-conquest that exist within travel literature. The land is evaluated based on settler understandings of what are good and bad characteristics. The roads that Lucy traveled upon and the lands over which they were built were portrayed as rough and wild, and as such were sources of considerable hardship and discomfort. As her party drew closer to Sherbrooke, and signs of settlement became evident, Lucy’s hardships were lessened, her spirits were buoyed, and she was able to enjoy a landscape that had become beautiful, even sublime. Thus, even though throughout her journey, the land remained the same—trees and hills—her depiction of these features changed from negative to positive portrayals once she drew closer to a landscape with which she could more readily identify, that being an agricultural, settled, one.

Once settled on their new homestead, Mrs Peel continues to praise the landscape but also suggests the need for improvements to be made. At one point, Lucy delights in the endless wild raspberries and strawberries which “grow all over the fields and woods” and are “excellent fresh when ripe and make very good preserves” (Little 2001, 40). This description of wild yet bountiful fruit is juxtaposed with her description of Mr Kimbles’ garden, which she describes as “beautiful” with a “fine show of flowers and fruit.” Lucy had never seen anything like his currant trees before and his house along with the “small farms, huts, and hovels on the opposite side [of the St. Francis River] looked exceedingly pretty” (Little 2001, 51). The land as wild is bountiful, but the land when transposed by settler activity is beautiful, meaning civilized. These two commentaries demonstrate the act of anti-conquest; they allow the settlers
and their readers to evaluate the landscape as negative or positive based on their own cultural understandings of what is good and bad, and in so doing create a literature that transforms Wobanakik into pioneer settlements.

The anti-conquest theme is further developed when Lucy conveys the idea that settlement entails not only an aesthetic transformation but a physical one as well. To Lucy:

This is a country where the active and industrious must prosper, the idle starve; there is on every side endless room for improvement and even our small farm would take thousands to make it look anything like an English Estate; Mr Peel and I think it is this very thing which makes it interesting, for every little change is the effect of our heads and hands, every step it advances in cultivation, a proof of our care and industry . . . (Little 2001, 83)

The anti-conquest act of writing supports the colonizing act of transformation. The cultural values of hard work and industry mentioned in this paragraph transform the landscape of Wobanakik into a “work-in-progress” and serve to support the activities of the settlers who are transforming the land of Wobanakik into an agricultural region that could support their lifestyles.

Finally, there is a reference to the Christianizing process of the land that is also part of the anti-conquest. While the “Indians” have vanished or have been rendered quaint, their territory is being transformed through progress. On another day, Lucy reports that a Doctor Wilson dined with them and that:

he had written to his friends in England and told them that as he stood upon the beautiful bridge at Sherbrooke watching the cascade which falls from Lake Magog into the river St. Francis, that it was surprising to see with what impatience the Heathen God flew into the embraces of the Christian Saint. (Little 2001, 51)

Here, Indian place names, and therefore places, are being subsumed by British ones, and the process, it should be noted, is a willing one.

While surveyors and settlers cleared the land of Abenaki peoples, both physically and figuratively, later scholars, folklorists and memorialists cleared their indigenous identity from history, meaning that settler understandings of Wobanakik came to dominate and, as argued by Sheila McManus, that understanding would racialize the landscape, that is, make it pre-eminently white with only romanticized traces remaining of any Abenaki presence. This is a necessary condition for nation states that displace indigenous inhabitants. They must create “social imaginaries” around the idea of settlement and progress to rationalize the subjection and removal of Native Peoples from their homes and homelands (Fehr 2008, 151–52). As argued in Migrant Imaginaries by Alicia Schmidt Camacho, “social imaginaries are ‘ways of understanding the social that become social entities themselves, mediating collective life’” and during the process of colonization of North America, “the nation offers the preeminent example of the ‘imagined community,’ representing the foremost expression of peoplehood” (Camacho 2008, 5). Additionally, Camacho argues that: “In the parlance of the nation-state, migrants are either failed citizens or belated arrivals to the national community . . .” Trans-border Indigenous Peoples can be substituted for migrants in this case because they too are subject to the same labeling, and as Carlos Velez-Ibanez put it: the “migrant” Abenaki become “not only strangers in their own lands, but strangers to themselves” (Camacho 2008, 12, 27). Thus, for the colonial and incipient nations of Canada and the United States, their histories of their occupation of the lands within these newly created bordered communities serve to transition their “newcomer” migratory status to one of settlement, as a means of occupying Indigenous lands and displacing Indigenous Peoples. The act of occupation and displacement represents the conquest of Indigenous lands and must be justified by acts of anti-conquest through literature, reports, etc., as has been demonstrated above. It must also be accompanied by acts of conquest of Indigenous Peoples, which can be accomplished through warfare, disease, and even legislation, or, if not possible, by acts of anti-
conquest such as again reports, novels, travel diaries, etc. The Peel diaries again serve as examples of anti-conquest over the Abenaki Peoples, as do the works of Robert Rogers and Oscar Masse.

Throughout the Peel diaries, there are scattered references to the Abenaki. At one point, Lucy, commenting on the generosity of her white neighbors, assures her mother that she is not living among “savages” (Little 2001, 40). In an earlier entry, Peel observed “two large encampments of Indians,” who looked “merry and happy and their hair shone like a well polished table.” She added that she understood them to be “a harmless people if kindly treated, honest, and make pretty baskets” (Little 2001, 36). It is interesting that Peel uses the word “Indians” here but “savages” in the entry above-noted. Perhaps, those “exotics” who are harmless are Indians, but those who exhibit un-British characteristics such as selfishness are savage.

In another account, Peel summons up the image of the “vanishing Indian.” Lucy recounts the story of Mrs Salt, a settler of longstanding, who had come to Canada 17 years previously and had been at times left alone while her “men-folk” were away. At first, there was nothing to protect her “from the Wolves and Bears,” and then when her house was built

she during the absence of her Male protectors was visited by nine Indians who remained all night and slept in the same room separated from her only by a blanket, each having a scalping knife and a Tomahawk, however they departed in peace the next morning having bartered sugar for flour. (Little 2001, 81)

Here, wolves, bears and Indians are conflated in a romantic (Lucy’s word) past; one that is the source of current amusement and entertainment.

For the historical narratives of Vermont and New Hampshire, the theme most prominent is the entry of settlers into vacant lands and their persistent harassment by the French or St. Francis Indians. The “legend” of Robert Rogers’ Rangers epitomizes this idea. During the Seven Years War, Robert Rogers was ordered to take his company of rangers north to Odanak, the Abenaki village on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River. According to Rogers’ own account, published in 1765, he was ordered to do so because the Abenaki had mistreated a British officer by capturing him and his party while they were under a flag of truce. Additionally, the “St. Francis Indians” had committed “barbarities” and “where they had an opportunity of showing their infamous cruelties on the King’s subjects,” they had done so “without mercy” (Peckham 1961, para. 104–5). Rogers was ordered to “take [his] revenge” but to spare the women and children. Rogers carried out his orders, reporting later that he had launched a surprise attack upon Odanak and killed at least 200 Indians, taken 20 women and children prisoners, and reclaimed five English captives (Peckham 1961, para. 106–7). When he returned to Massachusetts, he was praised for his heroism and skill and then largely forgotten until Francis Parkman featured him in his book Montcalm and Wolfe written in 1884. This book was extremely popular with boys and shaped the popular understanding of the Abenaki as coming from outside of the area to launch barbarous raids on Anglo-American citizens with no mercy or any reasonable justification for doing so (Peckham 1961, para. xi). Thus, as argued by Camacho, the social imaginary of the United States nation state as depicted by Rogers and Parkman created the Abenakis as foreigners in their own lands.

When looking at the historical accounts of southern Quebec, the most consistent theme that runs through all these narratives is that the Abenaki arrived in southern Quebec after the French. Guy Moreau, in his history of Windsor, Quebec, declares:

Il semble qu’il n’y avait pas d’humains qui habitaient notre région immédiate en permanence avant la fin des années 1600. Des Amérindiens traversaient sans doute notre territoire lors de migrations. En 1682 Frontenac, gouverneur de la Nouvelle-France, “installa à l’embouchure de la St.-François (Odanak) quelques centaines de familles abénaquises venues du Maine, où l’avance des Anglais de Boston sema la
guerre, la famine et la mort.” Il leur accordait en même temps le droit de chasse et de pêche dans tout le bassin de la St-François.11 (Moreau 1997, 12)

In the first sentence, Moreau suggests that the Abenaki did not inhabit “our” region until the end of the 1600s. “Inhabit” must be taken to mean “settle” for in the next sentence, Moreau argues that the Abenaki must have travelled through “notre territoire,” during their migrations.

Some historical narratives even went so far as to entirely erase the Abenaki from their lands in southern Quebec. The book Histoire des Cantons de l’Est published in 1998 flatly declared that: “Au début du XVIIe siècle, le nord du Vermont et les Cantons de l’Est se situent dans la zone de contrôle des Mohawks.”12 (Kesteman, Southam, and Saint-Pierre 1998, 64). One of the reasons for this elimination has to do with what Frederick Wiseman calls the Iroquoian bias. Because the Iroquois or Haudenosaunee Confederacy played a dominant role in French–British imperial struggles, their activities, identities, and territories were much better known to the imperial authorities and were regularly featured in the historical documents that were created during the 17th and 18th centuries. Consequently, understandings of the Abenaki are subsumed within the history of the Iroquois contacts and conflicts, and are one of the causes of the Abenaki erasure from their territories. (Wiseman 2001)

Additionally, the Eastern Townships has its own fictional representation of the Abenaki, one of mystery as well as tragic romance that thrilled “townshippers” for decades and solidified the translation of Abenaki identity and territory into a vestige of a romanticized past. Mena’sen: le rocher au pin solitaire,13 a romance novel written in 1922 by Oscar Masse is one of several works that derive from an “old Indian legend” arising out of events that occurred at the junction of the Magog and St. Francis Rivers mentioned by Mr Wilson in Lucy Peel’s diary, noted above. The same site is mentioned in an article on the St. Francis River by the Sherbrooke Daily Record:

There is the legendary tale of the race between the Abenakis and Iroquois for the supremacy of the St Francis Valley, which took place where stood the Lone Pine for over three hundred years. This was a half-mile below Skaswantegon, the point where the Magog joins the St. Francis, and where the Indians built their council fires. (Sherbrooke Daily Record, April 6, 1927, 6)

While Mr Wilson’s comments represent the displacement of Abenaki indigeneity from the site by British civilization, the Record demonstrates the nostalgic representation of the Abenaki in the “legendary” past.

Mena’sen, on the other hand, takes a trans-border historical event and turns it, and the Abenaki, into characters of a romanticized, tragic, past. The story tells the tale of a young couple engaged to be married, living in Deerfield, Mass., who, through the machinations of French imperial authorities end up being captured by the Abenaki and French Canadian militia during a raid on their colony. Before their imminent arrival at the Indian village on the shores of the St. Lawrence, the young couple escape and try to make their way back to Deerfield where they hope to re-establish their lives and live happily ever after. Unfortunately, the young woman dies of exhaustion en route, and the young man, unable to carry her remains back to Deerfield, buries her on an island at the junction of the Magog and St. Francis Rivers. The young man, exhausted and disheartened by the death of his fiancée, is unable to cross from the island to the shore and succumbs to the pull of the current. Because the woman was a virgin (of course she was), out of her body and the humus that the young man used to cover her grows a solitary pine tree where it stands as a marker to Indian perfidy and romantic tragedy for generations. Eventually, in 1913 the pine tree is struck by lightning and dies, whereupon a cross is erected on the site, where it remains to this day.

Within this narrative, anti-conquest and racial rhetoric are pervasive. While enroute to Deerfield, the Canadien militia and Abenaki warriors arrive at the Grand Forks or K’tine, the confluence of the Magog and St. Francis Rivers and the future site of the solitary pine. At this point, the company has to halt because the site is inhabited by a heathen evil spirit, Mena’sen, which much be pacified. The shaman,
Sked8a8asino, performs the necessary ritual with all his comrades dancing along with his song. Masse describes the scene:

. . . Cette fois, le présage est heureux car déjà le sked8a8asino s’est élancé et a gravi le rocher où il entonne un chant rauque. Les sauvages sautillant ou plutôt trépidant comme sous l’empire de quelque frénésie hiératique tournent autour du rocher en vociférant des répons gutturaux aux invocations vénéreuses que clame l’homme de médecine.14 (Masse 1922, 57)

Meanwhile, the Canadiens patiently wait out the “l’interminable cérémonie,” silently wishing that wars could be fought without the tomahawk (Masse 1922, 57).

The narrative quickly moves through the forests between Quebec and Massachusetts with the Canadiens and Abenaki arriving 5 miles from Deerfield after three weeks. When the battle begins, the Abenaki continue to be portrayed as savages. Masse comments that the Abenaki love wars as the French love beautiful women, good wine and chess. The Abenaki begin their assault with a “cri vociféré avec rage.”15 The carnage they create includes smashing babies’ skulls, raping and violating women, and looting houses. They are described as wild beasts who delight in the smell of blood, who have no pity and who laugh like idiots so hysterical are they in their behavior. They also sprinkle blood on their “faces hideuses, sataniques des assassins”16 (Masse 1922, 61–62). While the Abenaki attack families in their homes, the Canadiens are concentrating on a fortified house in which the English militia have taken refuge (Masse 1922, 62). Herein again, a juxtaposition is established between the savage Indian and the noble Canadien. The Indians attack the helpless and are inhuman(e); the Canadiens fight the real fight by taking on armed men and by seeking captives. The Canadiens’ leader does not want “la mort des hérétiques mais leur . . . rançon.”17 [ellipses in original (Masse 1922, 62)].

Among the captives taken are the young couple, Alice and Robert. But before Masse continues with their story, he first puts in a chapter presenting an analysis as to why the “peaux-rouges”18 were so numerous at the time of “discovery” but yet today are almost completely vanished. His simple answer is that the Abenaki were killed by civilization (Masse 1922, 65–67).

The captives suffer on the long journey through the forest with some dying along the way. Robert is determined to escape and counsels Alice not to give up hope. Alice responds romantically: “Oui je serai courageuse. . . . Si la force me fait défaut, l’amour me soutiendra.”19 (Masse 1922, 99). One night, when they were closing in on Odanak, Robert and Alice make their escape by stealing a canoe and proceeding down the St. Francis or Alsigonteka. At one point, they have to abandon it and set off through the forests. This proves too much for Alice, who collapses under the pines at Ktine, the place of Mena’Sen. Masse takes a couple of pages to describe the beauty of Ktine—its enchanting spectacle, its rich colors. It captivates the eye, sends the heart into exultations and the soul raving, but Masse notes that this is also the place of Mena Sen, “le redoutable dieu terme que, suivant la mythologie abénaquise, il faut, avant de passer outre, propitier par quelque sacrifice expiatatoire. On dirait, . . . un dolmen qui appelle une victime.”20 (Masse 1922, 111). Will Alice be that victim, the reader wonders? So, too, does Robert, although not within the context of Mena’Sen. Seeing Alice in such a sorry state, he regrets his actions which now seem rash and wonders if he could return to the Abenaki and offer his life in exchange for their promise to take care of his fiancé. He does not have long to ponder that possibility as Alice overcome by fever, exhaustion, and malnourishment, succumbs before the dawn ascends. (Masse 1922, 112–13).

The last act in this romance is that of burial and regeneration. Robert is too exhausted himself to carry Alice’s body back to Deerfield so he decides to bury her within a crevasse of Mena Sen rock. He carries her over to the crevasse along with humus, pine needles, and gravel to put over her body. He hopes that in covering her up, her body will be safe from the ravages of wild animals. He then walks into the raging waters, “Défaillant, Robert tourna vers Mena’sen un regard déchirant de détresse, battit des bras et
s’écroula dans le fleuve.” Masse ends the story with: “Le courroux de l’implacable Menas’en [sic] était satisfait” (Masse 1922, 121).

There is an epilogue that starts with “1904, two centuries have passed.” In that time, Krine has become the beautiful bustling city of Sherbrooke, and the rock upon which Alice was buried has given rise to a giant pine tree. “L’amour a fécondé le rocher aride” and

Le pin funéraire a ramifié ses racines jusque au coeur de celle dont le rocher fut le tombeau pour y puiser le suc bienfaisant qui anime et vivifie. L’amour défie le temps et survit à la mort!

Mena’sen a perdu son aspect farouche; le sacrifice l’a exorcisé. Le mystère qui l’entoure n’est plus d’effroi mais d’apaisement. (Masse 1922, 122).

Masse’s “historical” representation, like the others cited here, demonstrates the act of anti-conquest by racializing the past: the Abenaki are savage figures of legend long since overcome by the Canadien nation and progress (Camacho 2008, 56). As surveyors and settlers displaced the Abenaki from their territory by occupation and by articulation, memorialists removed the Abenaki’s indigenous identity by perpetuating the ideas of transiency and reducing the Abenaki identity to fragments within a romanticized past of colonial suffering and hardship.

In conclusion, colonial and emerging nation states are dedicated to establishing and enforcing their understandings of geographic or political borders as a means of promoting a specific identity against other, conflicting ones. In the case of the Western Abenaki, who were a trans-border people, that meant suppressing their trans-border identity and removing their indigenous connection to their traditional lands. Given their inherent fluid social and political organization, when the tumultuous times of the 17th and 18th centuries, with their disease, warfare and colonization, hit the Abenaki, the imperial authorities sought to sever the Abenaki’s connections to Wobanakik and the identity that went along with it, through acts of both “conquest” (settlement) and anti-conquest. By the 19th century and the emergence of Canada and the United States, the trend of denying indigeneity was carried forward by the settler societies intent on establishing their own history in their new lands. At this point, the idea that the Abenaki were “foreigners” in their own lands was well entrenched. With the severing from their lands supposedly complete, the settler societies engaged in one final act of anti-conquest, that was, they sought to sever the Abenaki people from history by creating a romanticized, and sometimes brutal, image of them in fictional representations or by reinforcing the idea of their “unsettled,” non-permanent, existence within nation-state territories.

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Endnotes
1 There are also the Eastern Abenaki who are more well known. They also consist of several groups, among them the Passamoquoddy, Androscoggin, Wawenocks, and Penobschts.


3 Information provided by Patrick Coté, former curator of the Musee des Abenaki, Odanak, Quebec.

4 The following summary is a compilation of common ideas and interpretations taken from Colin Calloway, Gordon Day, Thomas Charland and J.P. Kesteman.
5 The one slight exception to this is the recent recognition by then-Vermont Governor Howard Dean that the Abenaki “have always been here.” See Wiseman (2001, 186–87).

6 See, for example, Library and Archives Canada, MG1, Series C11A, Reels C-2383, 2384 and 2385.

7 There is a vast literature on liberalism. For a recent discussion on nineteenth-century liberalism in Canada, see, for example, Harris (2002), Herring (1998), Korneski (2006), McKay (2000), and Sandwell (2003).

8 Conversely, First Nations continue to maintain their trans-border identity as a means of self-expression and as a counter to colonialist oppression. See Hele (2008) and McManus (2005).

9 The point where Lake Magog flows into the St. Francis River is an historic Abenaki site, a place of Indian legend, and became the scene for a celebrated novel by Oscar Masse, more of which will be discussed below.

10 There is a plethora of literature on Mexico and its migrant population, much of which has been documented elsewhere. For additional information on how anti-conquest literature relates to Mexican migrant communities and Mexico itself, see Gonzalez (2004).

11 Translation: It appears that there were no humans permanently living in our immediate region before the end of the 1600s. Without doubt, some Amerindians traversed our territory through their migrations. In 1682, Frontenac, governor of New France, “installed at the mouth of the St. Francis (Odanak) some hundreds of Abenaki families that had come from Maine, where the advance of the English of Boston [brought] war, famine and death.” He gave them, at the same time, the right to hunt and fish throughout the St. Francis basin.

12 Translation: At the beginning of the seventeenth century, northern Vermont and the Eastern Townships were situated within the area controlled by the Mohawks.

13 Translation: Mena-sen, the rock of the solitary pine.

14 Translation: . . . This time, the omen was good as Sked8a8asino had already rushed to and climbed the rock where he intoned a husky chant. The wild men jumping or rather vibrating as if under the power of some solemn frenzy circled around the rock shouting guttural answers to the vehement invocations of the medicine man.

15 Translation: an enraged shout.

16 Translation: faces hideous, like fiendish assassins.

17 Translation: the death of the heretics but their ransom.

18 Translation: “Red-skins.”

19 Translation: Yes, I will be brave. If my will fails me, love will sustain me.

20 Translation: The formidable god demanded, according to Abenaki mythology, that before passing beyond it, it was necessary to propitiate it by some atoning sacrifice. It was said . . . a dolmen had a taste for victims.

21 Translation: Feebly, Robert turns towards Mena’sen with a look of searing distress, waves his arms and collapses into the river.

22 Translation: The wrath of the implacable Menas’en was satisfied/satiated.
Translation: Love fertilized the sterile rock. The funeral pine spread its roots to the heart of which the rock entombed in order to draw from the beneficial fruit which gave it life. Love challenged time and survived death. Menasen lost its ferocious aspect: the sacrifice had exorcized it. The mystery which surrounded it was no longer terror but appeasement.

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