The Story of Radio Mind

Pamela E. Klassen

Following the journey of an Anglican missionary across Indigenous land, this book examines how contests over the mediation of stories—via photography, maps, printing presses, and radio—lucidly reveal the spiritual politics of colonial settlement. A city builder who bargained away Indigenous land to make way for the railroad, Archbishop Frederick Du Vernet (1860-1924) knew that he lived on the territory of Ts’msyen, Nisga’a, and Haida nations who had never ceded their land to the onrush of Canadian settlers. He condemned the devastating effects on Indigenous families of the residential schools run by his church while still serving that church in part through attending to settlers through “White Work.” At the same time, Du Vernet came to a “late style” embrace of psychic research—with a special focus on telepathy—as the path to understand the soul and to bring about social and political harmony. Testifying to the power of what he called radio mind, with evidence from the apostle Paul and the philosopher Henri Bergson, Du Vernet found a way to explain the world that he, his church, and his country made. Through Du Vernet’s imaginative experiment, we see how agents of colonialism built metaphysical traditions on land they claimed to have conquered. Expanding approaches to religion and media studies to ask how sovereignty is made through stories, this book shows how the spiritual invention of colonial nations takes place at the same time that Indigenous peoples—including Indigenous Christians—resist colonial dispossession through stories and spirits of their own.
Distant Relations: The Jesuits in New France
Robert Launay

In Savages, Romans, and Despots: Thinking about Others from Montaigne to Herder

For much of the seventeenth century, the Jesuits enjoyed monopoly over missions in New France, the French possessions in Canada, particularly Quebec. They published an annual series of Jesuit Relations, accounts of Native Americans and their attempts to convert them. Notably, Paul Le Jeune, the first superior, published an account of an expedition accompanying a hunting band of Montagnais (Innu). Other detailed accounts include Jean de Brebeuf’s mission to the Huron (Wendat). In the eighteenth century, Lafitau published a treatise comparing “American Savages”, particularly the Iroquois among whom he had worked, to Ancient Greeks and Romans, suggesting that the matrilineal Iroquois were actually descendants of the Lycians described by Herodotus.