In *Embodied Eloquence*, Céline Carayon uses the lens of nonverbal communications to challenge the notion that the lack of mutual linguistic understandings between French and Indigenous peoples produced an environment filled with miscommunication and misunderstanding. Instead, Carayon argues that nonverbal communications not only played a critical role in early encounters (French colonial exploration and colonization plans) but continued long after verbal understandings developed and improved. In fact, nonverbal elements of communication increased in usage and precision from the era of exploration in 1500 to the end of the early settlement period in 1700. Carayon sees the ubiquity and complexity of nonverbal communications—or kinetic communications like body gestures with hands, arms, or fingers, as well as visual signs—as critical to understanding specific aspects of early encounter relationships and larger themes of “colonialism, power, and cultural change” (p. 13).

*Embodied Eloquence* is extensively researched, spans two centuries, and offers a geographically comparative focus on the interactions between French and Indigenous peoples in the St. Lawrence River Valley, Florida, eastern Caribbean, and Brazil. This transhemispheric scope allows Carayon to analyze common Indigenous gestures that the French observed in different spaces and their perceived understandings of these nonverbal forms of communication. More importantly, Carayon shows how Indigenous peoples employed nonverbal communications and alternate literacies to outline their sovereignty and challenge French colonizing ambitions. The study is also interdisciplinary as it combines ethnohistory with literary analysis, performance studies, sensory history, and Native American and Indigenous studies methodologies. As Carayon explains, “using innovative, multidisciplinary approaches, scholars have begun to excavate from the colonized archives some of the ways in which the people of the Americas experienced and responded to the transformations and upheavals brought by European arrivals and how the Native peoples, in return, influenced major developments and changes in Western Europe and around the world” (pp. 22-23). Much of the evidence originates with familiar sources that describe or illustrate culture contact and nonverbal gestures: missionary journals, official reports, printed travel narratives, and engravings. Carayon, however, provides her own translations of these French documents and approaches European observations as texts or images that “can reveal the actual, embodied experiences on which they were based,
including Indigenous practices and voices that were often unconsciously textualized by early European visitors” (p. 22).

Carayon divides the study into three sections, with two chapters each. The first section, “Signs of the Times,” explores nonverbal communication traditions in Native America and Europe in the early modern period to lay the foundation for perceived mutual understandings in early exchanges. Carayon demonstrates that physical gestures, oratory skill, and emotional performance played a role in nonverbal communications on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. As a result, French colonial chroniclers, whether highly educated religious missionaries or soldiers and fur traders, believed their previous cultural experience with drama, oratory, and performance made them especially skilled at deciphering the intent and meanings of Indigenous gestures. But what early French chroniclers often described as spontaneous nonverbal communications, Carayon documents as Indigenous speakers engaged in scripted performances that outlined sovereignty and affected the French colonial experience.

In the second section, “Signs of Change,” Carayon reexamines early encounters from the Indigenous perspective to highlight the central role that leaders, protocols, and political agendas played in early encounters. While French chroniclers often described joyful and childlike behaviors of Native Americans to convince sponsors in the metropole of the ease of colonization and conversion, Carayon outlines the ways Europeans conformed to the protocols of Indigenous hosts, regardless of their comprehension of their hosts’ and their own choreographed actions. Throughout the 1600s, French and Indigenous men and women increasingly learned to communicate with each other verbally. Nonetheless, nonverbal communications remained essential to intercultural exchanges. In fact, Carayon notes, the more the French learned about their Indigenous allies, the more they relied on their reading of Indigenous body language and gestures to determine trust, distrust, honesty, and deceit.

The third section, “Speaking of Signs,” investigates the development of linguistic fluency and the targeted sophistication of nonverbal communications in diplomatic and religious exchanges into the early eighteenth century. While Jesuit missionaries produced volumes of records regarding their observations and experiences, most of those missionaries lacked linguistic fluency. In addition, missionary efforts to learn languages often ended with the verbal and did not extend to understandings of how spoken words interacted with gestures, oratory, and performance. As Carayon explains, “the best French student of Indian languages or Indian student of French was, not the one who mastered grammar and syntax, but the one who could perform the speech in adequate nonverbal cultural terms” (p. 356).

_Eloquence Embodied_ concludes with a brief comparison of the experiences with and the comprehension and documentation of nonverbal communications among French, English, and Spanish colonizers. Each imperial power, for example, encountered, described, and employed nonverbal communications with Indigenous peoples to build diplomatic and economic relationships and to evaluate trust. The French, however, left more detailed descriptions and intimate portrayals of Indigenous signs and gestures than their European counterparts. English documents, by contrast, highlight negative interactions and body gestures and portray scenes of violent encounters, reflecting a rush “to assume the worst from the onset” (p. 428). Despite the distinct French experience in representing and engaging with Indigenous modes of nonverbal communications, Carayon successfully demonstrates that “communicative adroitness at adjusting to Indigenous modes of expression, even when it produced ‘friendship,’ was used to pursue imperialistic goals and led to the subjugation and weakening of many Native groups” (pp. 433-434).
While *Eloquence Embodied* is a transhemispheric study, the body of available primary source evidence can make comparisons across geographic spaces feel unbalanced. The North American northeast and Great Lakes regions, for example, receive greater coverage than Brazil, the eastern Caribbean, or Florida. The written sources also silence the actions and roles of Indigenous and French women. This raises questions about how Carayon can employ the interdisciplinary and innovative methodologies to uncover the actions and agency of women. In addition, the study ends in 1700 because, as Carayon states, “the decades after 1700 are marked by incessant imperial warfare between the great European powers in the Americas and their respective Indigenous allies” (p. 17). This end date, however, eliminates a focus on the mature period of French colonization and whether colonizers continued to learn from their experiences in the earlier period. In addition, decades of warfare embroiled Indigenous nations and imperial competitors during the 1600s. Therefore, it is not entirely clear how or why 1700s warfare is marked as different.

Despite these minor critiques, *Eloquence Embodied* makes significant contributions to our understandings of Indigenous experiences with the colonial encounter, continues the shift in expanding the field of French colonial studies throughout the entire Atlantic, and provides new ways for thinking about long-familiar sources. In addition, the extensive footnotes provide an excellent bibliography, assess scholarly debates, and offer new translations for original sources. By centering nonverbal communications, Carayon successfully demonstrates that misunderstandings and confusion, although still present, did not dominate intercultural attempts to communicate. Most importantly, by highlighting Indigenous nonverbal communications, oral traditions and epistemologies and the role of Indigenous communicators in shaping colonial encounters and French colonizing ambitions, *Eloquence Embodied* continues the work of decolonizing the archives to find Indigenous authorial voices.
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