



**Randall, Catharine. Black Robes and Buckskin: A Selection from the Jesuit Relations**

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detailed analysis of fabric clarifies important historical details. Again, the method employed is to take certain case studies and examine the painting process, drawing on contemporary records, analysis of the paintings themselves, as well as comparison to extant fabric samples. Chapter 8, on the “reading” of textiles in painting, will perhaps be the material of most general interest to art historians, as it touches on questions of iconography and the reception of images. For instance, by examining the motif of the pomegranate in textiles, Monnas unpacks the blurred boundaries between secular and religious iconography, showing how iconographic interpretations of fabric must be approached cautiously and with an understanding for the myriad uses of textiles. There is also an interesting discussion of the use of garments that appear Arabic in style in religious scenes, a topic that evokes questions regarding exoticism and historicism, and which may be useful to many historians of sacred art.

The strength of this book is certainly the author’s wide-ranging knowledge of textile production and her detailed analysis and identification of fabrics in Renaissance art, covering a broad range of case studies; this will make the book a useful resource for historians wishing to unpack the cultural meanings of garments and fabrics in Renaissance art. More reflection on the relationships between this research and related discussions in art historical discourse — for example, the discourse regarding ornament — would have been appreciated by this reviewer, but this will not diminish the value of the book. The book is beautifully illustrated, and includes transcriptions of several primary documents in an appendix.

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**Randall, Catharine.**

***Black Robes and Buckskin: A Selection from the Jesuit Relations.***

New York: Fordham University Press, 2011. Pp. ix, 212. ISBN 978-0-8232-3262-8 (hardcover) n.p.

Catharine Randall’s edition of the Jesuit *Relations* is both a fascinating and an odd book. It gives readers a sense of how the Jesuits of New France saw themselves, their mission, and the natives they attempted to convert to Christianity during

the seventeenth century. At the same time, however, it avoids any discussion of the more destructive aspects of the Jesuits' efforts in the colony, especially among the Huron.

Randall has two main goals in *Black Robes and Buckskin*: to provide the general reading public with a modern and approachable translation of the Jesuit *Relations*, and to inspire the faithful. She certainly achieves the first of those aims. Randall's translations — or paraphrases — of the Jesuit reports from the mission field are readable, though at times they seem overly colloquial in their phrasing. It is a bit jarring, for example, when a missionary, using what sounds like the language of the twenty-first century street, denounces a particularly sinful settler as a “creep” who “sure got what was coming to him!” (46). In terms of spiritual growth, it is difficult to say how the book will affect believers and non-believers. What we can say, however, is that, in pursuing that end, Randall gives readers what amounts to a celebration of Jesuit efforts in New France — which is not necessarily a bad thing. We come away from the book with a good idea of what the Jesuits themselves thought of the colony and of the native people whom they encountered. Randall also does an impressive job of situating the Jesuits of New France in the wider context of their order's history, noting how they attempted to implement the ideas and strategies of Ignatius Loyola. And she covers a great deal of thematic ground in her selection of Jesuit reports. Over the course of the book, we find out about how and why the Jesuits came to dominate the religious landscape of New France, how they attempted to use the practice of religious syncretism to convert the Huron and other native peoples, and the place of women in propagating the Catholic faith in the colony.

This thematic approach, while valuable, is also one of the weaknesses of *Black Robes and Buckskin*. It allows Randall to overlook the darker side of the Jesuit mission to New France — most noticeably in her treatment of the relationship between the missionaries and the Huron. A reader with little knowledge of early Canadian history could come away from this book with the idea that the Jesuits played no role in the destruction of Huronia in 1649 — that it was entirely the work of the Iroquois — which would be misleading, to say the least. The Jesuits' efforts to convert the Huron to Catholicism divided that community between the converted and the unconverted. Such division, in turn, weakened the cohesion of the Huron at a critical moment in their history. This is not to suggest, of course, that the Jesuits were solely responsible for the fall of Huronia; but they had more to do with it than Randall seems willing to admit.

Part of the problem here may be related to the secondary sources upon which *Black Robes and Buckskin* is based. For historical context, Randall seems to rely quite heavily on the work of the great Bostonian, Francis Parkman. Parkman could never resist celebrating the “heroic men” of colonial North America; and despite his Protestant biases, he put the Jesuit missionaries squarely into that category. To that extent, his and Randall’s images of the Jesuits complement one another nicely. It should be noted, however, that Parkman’s series *France and England in North America* appeared more than “some decades” ago (181), as Randall says: it was written and published during the second half of the nineteenth century. A great deal of scholarly water has passed under the bridge since then. Some more recent work does appear in the bibliography of *Black Robes and Buckskin* — important books by Karen Anderson and Allan Greer, for example — but other critical studies, such as Bruce Trigger on the Huron, are absent. Trigger’s *Children of Aataentsic* or his *Natives and Newcomers*, in particular, might have complicated Randall’s account of the Jesuit mission to the Huron in a useful way.

Despite these flaws, Randall’s book is an important addition to the existing scholarship on the Jesuit missions. Though it is aimed at a general audience, it will also be useful for scholars interested in gaining a sense of what it might have felt like to be a missionary in the early years of New France, convinced of God’s plan for the colony and one’s duty to see it fulfilled.

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**Schmidt, Suzanne Karr and Kimberly Nichols.**

***Altered and Adorned: Using Renaissance Prints in Daily Life.***

New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011. Pp. 112. ISBN 978-0-300-16911-9 (hardcover) \$35.

As books and prints made by mechanical means and enjoyed as material objects become less central to our lives, we have become more interested in how people used books and prints in the early modern culture. Work by Tessa Watt, Patricia Fumerton, Tiffany Stern, Femke Molecamp, Juliet Fleming, and others reflects our interest in the questions that open *Altered and Adorned: Using*