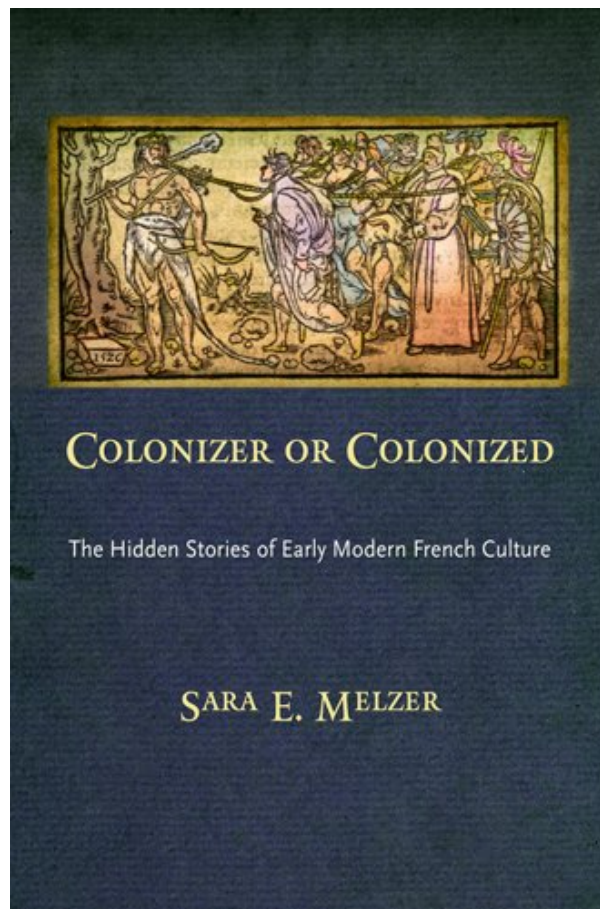


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The Hidden Stories of Early Modern French Culture

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## Review

"*Colonizer or Colonized* is a groundbreaking inquiry that will undoubtedly reset the compass of future studies of early modern France. The book is an original, deeply and widely researched, boldly thought out, and well written work. It resets our way of thinking about the field."—Michele Longino, Duke University

"Sara E. Melzer makes an intriguing and well-argued case for considering the New World together with ancient Rome and French classicism and meticulously analyzes how this triangular history develops France's civilizing mission. Her investigation, informed by contemporary postcolonial studies, brings together disparate literary and historical factors in the French tradition in ways that encourage us to reconsider the legacy of military and political conquest for the period."—Harriet Stone, Washington University in St. Louis

## About the Author

Sara E. Melzer is Professor of French and Francophone Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. She is the author of *Discourses of the Fall: A Study of Pascal's Pensees* and coeditor of *From the Royal to the Republican Body: Incorporating the Political in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century France*.

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Colonizer or Colonized introduces two colonial stories into the heart of France's literary and cultural history. The first describes elite France's conflicted relationship to the Ancient World. As much as French intellectuals aligned themselves with the Greco-Romans as an "us," they also resented the Ancients as an imperial "them," haunted by the memory that both the Greeks and Romans had colonized their ancestors, the Gauls. This memory put the elite on the defensive—defending against the legacy of this colonized past and the fear that they were the barbarian other. The second story mirrored the first. Just as the Romans had colonized the Gauls, France would colonize the New World, becoming the "New Rome" by creating a "New France." Borrowing the Roman strategy, the French Church and State developed an assimilationist stance towards the Amerindian "barbarian." This policy provided a foundation for what would become the nation's most basic stance towards the other. However, this version of assimilation, unlike its subsequent ones, encouraged the colonized and the colonizer to engage in close forms of contact, such as mixed marriages and communities.

This book weaves these two different stories together in a triangulated dynamic. It asks the Ancients to step aside to include the New World other into a larger narrative in which elite France carved out their nation's emerging cultural identity in relation to both the New World and the Ancient World.

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