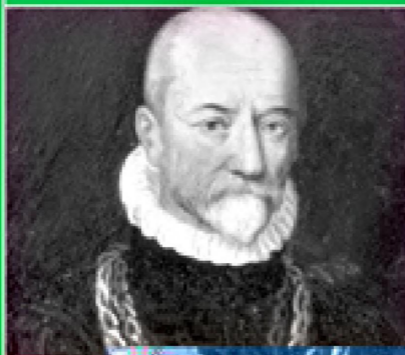The
Cambridge Companion
to
MONTAIGNE

EDITED BY
ULLRICH LANGER

The Cambridge Companion to
MONTAIGNE

Edited by Ullrich Langer
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on the right path. Montaigne practices "inwardness," an unabashed attentiveness to one's self, but without any obvious sense of exemplarity, refusing explicitly to be a lesson to anyone else. This often disarming, unsystematic revealing of Montaigne's own judgments, tastes, bodily functions constitutes the ground of what can be called the modern "self," the recentering of esthetic, epistemological, and social reflection in the subject.[3]

Although it has become customary to refer to the individual chapters of the *Essays* as "essays," Montaigne himself never refers to a single chapter as an "essay." He does refer to the entire book as his "essays," and he does speak of his "essays" in a non-specific way. That is because the term *essai* in sixteenth-century French does not refer to a delineated segment of text, but instead retains the senses of "attempt," "trying-out," "test," "practice," "assay" that are still present in the French verb *essayer* (to try, to attempt, to taste) today. His book is full of all sorts of "attempts." He tries out all sorts of judgments, of observations, of reflections, and of arguments. But these judgments, observations, reflections, arguments are all as it were suspended: they are not meant to be the final word on the matter. They are usually juxtaposed – sometimes directly, sometimes at a certain remove – with statements saying the contrary. In most cases Montaigne does not claim universal validity for his statements; he insists on the fact that they are the product of his own judgment, and that another might judge differently. This skeptical meaning underlies Montaigne's use of the word "essay." Each individual chapter might contain, then, several "essays," several instances in which Montaigne "tries out" his judgment. Although arguably this skeptical tenor of the essay connects to ancient skepticism, in particular the philosophy of Pyrrho as transmitted by Sextus Empiricus,[4] Montaigne distinguishes himself above all from the sort of philosophy practiced during his lifetime. From this perspective, too, he is not a "philosopher."

Yet Montaigne was a philosopher, in a way, and several chapters in this volume are meant to bring out the philosophical elements of Montaigne's writings, whether they arise from the skeptical tradition, from Epicurean concerns, or from the Greek and Roman moral tradition. Others place Montaigne into an intellectual context that is his own, a context which inflects the philosophical arguments and ideas that form the main body of his philosophical thought.

Montaigne's legal training and thought, his (or the Renaissance's) conception of authorship, his position as a "modern" vis-à-vis the classical tradition as a whole, and his reaction to the New World all influence the philosophical thought we would like to glean from the *Essays*. For more so than any other philosopher before him, this philosophical writer is inseparably, indelibly linked as a particular person with his "message."

That particular person was part of a society that experienced at times catastrophic changes. The initial chapter is meant to convey an understanding of the social, political, and religious context in which Montaigne lived and wrote his essays.

Warren Boutcher's chapter analyzes the meaning that writing, owning, and giving a book had in the aristocratic culture of the sixteenth century. The book was largely composed and used for social purposes that had no necessary link to the author's own existential relationship to his text. Montaigne's innovation consists in a freedom of judgment judiciously displayed, a sense of personal attention if not adherence to what he composes, making the book less a transmitter of social and cultural authority than a record of self-knowledge. This opens the way for a new kind of philosophizing, where a Descartes, for example, will feel free to test and reject philosophical tradition.

John O'Brien tackles a feature of Montaigne's writing that strikes any modern reader: the omnipresence of classical antiquity in the *Essays*. Classical allusions, examples, quotations, and themes abound. O'Brien focuses on three questions within this area: the use of quotations, the choice of a philosophy, and the choice of models of conduct. Montaigne often reaches to antiquity to illustrate a point he is making, and it is worthwhile checking the quotation in its original context, for the Renaissance writer as often distorts the meaning as not. This is a productive distortion, shedding light on Montaigne's deeper concerns. Pyrrhonism is for Montaigne a rather attractive philosophy, but not only because of its propositions (or lack thereof), but also because it relates to the type of writing that the *Essays* represent. Finally, O'Brien indicates an ethical use of antiquity, as Montaigne chooses models of conduct among the numerous lives of famous men that the Renaissance so eagerly read.

Montaigne's *Essays* are one of the first documents in European culture to weigh the cultural and epistemological consequences of the discovery and exploration of the New World. There are several

travel accounts available to the European reader before Montaigne, and there is an ardent defense of the Indians, coupled with an indictment of the Spanish, before Montaigne as well.[5] But the essayist is the first to explore with sensitivity and sophistication the challenge of the New World to Europe's sense of itself. Tom Conley's chapter investigates the two main discussions of the New World in the *Essays*, "Of Cannibals" and "Of Coaches," relating them to the themes of Otherness and friendship, both of which are fundamental to the *Essays* as a whole.

One of the salient themes of the *Essays* is the condemnation of laws, lawyers, and legal thinking. In spite of his avowed conservatism and resistance to social and theological reforms, Montaigne persistently attacked the French legal system. Montaigne himself received a legal education and had an essentially legal career in Périgueux and as counselor to the *Parlement* of Bordeaux. André Tournon argues that this legal experience is essential to understanding both Montaigne's rejection of dogmatism and the sort of philosophical writing that the essay represents. In concluding Tournon demonstrates the ultimate importance of subjective judgment, and thus of the self, for the conception in the *Essays* of what is just.

In a rather different perspective, one that goes beyond the Pyrrhonism present in the *Essays*, Francis Goyet argues that the *Essays* are the record of judgments, and specifically judgments of someone who styles himself as a "prudent" man, someone who, like Machiavelli, has an understanding of the art of statecraft and what is necessary to practice it. The classical notion of prudence is the key to this understanding. This means that Montaigne, on Goyet's count, is indeed fashioning a product, a book that is meant to have an "ethical" impact on the prince or on the noble elite in whose circle Montaigne moved. In this Goyet demonstrates that, in contrast to some current views, the *Essays* do not undermine any attempt at action in the world through their self-destructive skepticism and subjectivism.

Ian Maclean situates Montaigne's philosophical thought within the logic and epistemology of his time. Whereas his writing is notoriously unsystematic and hardly conforms to the formats through which philosophical argumentation was conducted, Montaigne does consider – and usually critiques – the language, criteria, and definitions of university philosophy. His skepticism towards "the

epistemological virtues of objectivity, certainty and universality"
is withering, but in the end the essayist is more pragmatic, more
focused on action within the contingent and highly diverse world
than his skepticism seems to entail. This is particularly true of his
use of something like the notion of equity, of his praise (and appar-
ently practice) of discussion, and true of his self-presentation in all
its diverse details.

Although Montaigne does not call himself a "skeptic," he does
call himself a "naturalist." George Hoffmann examines this term
within the empirical investigation of nature as it was practiced in
the sixteenth century. A naturalist is someone interested in natural
causes, not divine ones, and for Montaigne this meant the study of
cause and effects, as opposed to the analysis of means and ends. How-
ever, Montaigne submits such a study to skeptical examination, and
according to Hoffmann found instead inspiration in Lucretius' *De
rerum natura* which he annotated and whose physics of "accident"
and "fortune" he used to explain natural *mental* phenomena, such
as the process of judgment and even the meeting of Montaigne and
his idealized friend Etienne de La Boétie.

Ann Hartle examines Montaigne's skepticism. Hartle surveys
classical skepticism and summarizes the skeptical arguments in the
"Apology for Raymond Sebond," undoubtedly the most traditionally
philosophical of Montaigne's chapters. But Hartle also details several
ways in which Montaigne cannot be understood to be a skeptic: his
credulity, the fact that indeed he advances judgments, his project of
self-knowledge, his rejection of the ideal of imperturbability, and his
insistence on his Catholic faith. These features of his thought are an
element in the dialectic characteristic of Montaigne's "accidental"
philosophy, according to Hartle, a dialectic that is open to the acci-
dental and the strange, that finds the unfamiliar in the familiar, then
returns better to grasp the familiar.

The important subject of Montaigne's moral philosophy is treated
by Jerome B. Schneewind. The models that Montaigne was deal-
ing with were Raymond Sebond's natural theology and the differ-
ent moral philosophies of antiquity, most notably Senecan Stoicism.
Montaigne rejects the confident derivation of moral laws from
humans' place in the hierarchy of beings that characterizes Sebond,
as he demonstrates how similar we are to creatures inferior to us in
that hierarchy. Montaigne also insists that we practice a moral life,

not simply theorize it. He rejects the Senecan, and generally classi-
cal, proposing of rules or ideals so difficult to attain that few human
beings can live a moral life. Schneewind sees Montaigne as sketching
out an alternative, an acknowledgment that desires and their satis-
faction are limitlessly diverse, but that each human being can arrive
at a critical judgment of what is good, within him or herself. This
points the way to more modern, and especially Kantian notions of
morality. It also ties in with the conclusion of Tournon's chapter,
and illuminates a fundamental aspect of Montaigne's composition
of the "self."

Whether we focus on Montaigne's skepticism, on his notions of
the good life, of the virtues of justice and prudence, on his concept
of authorship, or on his empirical curiosity, we are struck by the
charm, the seductiveness of his inquiries and of his self-presentation.
In part, this charm derives from the reader's *impression*, justified or
not, that in most chapters of the *Essays* Montaigne is not writing
in order to convince us of a particular thesis, that he is not trying
to put forth an argument. He is not the school-master type. This
very style of philosophizing endeared him to many, philosophers and
non-philosophers alike, such that Nietzsche could say: "That such a
human being has written, truly increases one's desire to live on this
earth."[6]

NOTES

1. He goes on to say: "Evils [*maux*] crush me according to their weight,
    and their weight depends on their form as much as on their matter, and
    often more." Unlike the Stoics and the Epicureans, not only can he not
    claim to have attained a true tranquility of the soul, impervious to pain
    and (excessive) pleasure, but he also isn't sure that this tranquility is
    worth attaining for himself.
2. In fact, Montaigne was a highly careful writer who edited his own writ-
    ings extensively and was even involved in details such as punctuation
    (which for much of the sixteenth century was often haphazard).
3. See Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Iden-
    tity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), and his pages on
    Montaigne, pp. 177–84.
4. See the work of Emmanuel Naya, in particular *"La loy de pure
    obeïssance": le pyrrhonisme à l'essai chez Montaigne* (Paris: Champion,
    2004).

THE RELIGIOUS CONFLICT AND ITS POLITICAL REPERCUSSIONS

The wars of religion in France had roots in the religious reform move-ment that spread across Europe in the early sixteenth century.[5] The French version originally encouraged reform (rather than rejection) of the Catholic Church by emphasizing the unadulterated teachings of the New Testament, and by proclaiming salvation by faith as opposed to good works channelled through church-sponsored practices. The impetus of this reform movement was provided by the new availabil-ity of a French translation of the New Testament (by Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples, 1523), by preaching and lay Bible study, by the sympathy, initially at least, of the king François I, and by the enduring support of his sister, Marguerite de Navarre. However, Luther's virulent writ-ings against the Roman Catholic Church were available in France from 1519 onwards, and in 1521 they were condemned by the Fac-ulty of Theology of the University of Paris. The imprudent actions of reformist preachers (most notably during the "Affaire des plac-ards" [1534], an attempt to spread anti-Catholic teachings through public posters in French cities), hardened royal policy towards the early reform movement. Their leaders within the Church, such as the bishop of Meaux, Guillaume Briçonnet, had in fact rejoined the fold earlier. However the seeds had been sown. In the following years the combination of a more radical spirit of reform, fostered by the publications of John Calvin (1509–1564), especially his *Institution de la religion chrétienne*,[6] and aided politically by the support of some of the French nobility to the reform movement, made it clear that the reformers were unwilling simply to ameliorate this or that practice of the Catholic Church. Their doctrinal positions, in any event, were drastically opposed to ecclesiastical tradition: they believed in the absolute priority of God's grace over human good works, predestina-tion of the elect and even reprobation of the damned, universal priest-hood (all Christians have equal status in the view of God in relation to the practice of their faith), and the modification of the Catholic view of the Eucharist, whereby the bread is transformed into the spiritual – not the physical – body of Christ not by the formula of consecration but by the sole grace of God at the moment of communion with the faithful. Calvin, mostly from his outpost in Geneva, was also able to organize a political party which operated in France and provided

a structure to the French "Protestants." After 1560 they came to be called "Huguenots": the name is probably a phonetic imitation of the Swiss German "Eidgenossen," which denoted confederates sworn to an alliance, originally to defend the city of Geneva against the duke of Savoy.

The violent conflicts of the second half of the sixteenth century were motivated primarily by the differences in religious faith, but the military aspect of the conflict was often more complicated, as clientele arrangements and "friendships" between noble families traversed confessional differences. For example, during the battle of Coutras, alongside the Huguenots Henri de Navarre and Henri de Condé one finds Catholic nobles (Frédéric de Foix, François de Conti, and Charles de Soissons); Montaigne's younger brother, Bertrand de Mattecoulon, who, like Montaigne himself, remained Catholic, also fought in Henri de Navarre's army. Thus, although the troops might have believed themselves to be defending the faith first and foremost (indeed, Huguenot troops often marched into battle singing the Psalms, recently translated into French), in fact the wars came to be as much civil as religious wars. Foreign support (from England, the United Provinces, Spain, and German Protestant princes) increased the scale of violence and the suffering of the local populations, who were exposed to pillaging and devastation by foreign soldiers forced to live off the land.

Another complicating factor was the heterogeneity of the Catholic camp. From the beginning of the reign of Charles IX (1561–74), certain Catholics were horrified by the Protestants' iconoclasm, by their profanation of the Eucharistic host, and by their ridiculing of Catholic rituals. They began forming associations (*ligues*) in defence of the Catholic faith and in obeisance to the king (although only if he was faithful to the religion of his forefathers). The most important of these was created in 1584 by the Guise family, who in addition formed an alliance with the Spanish to ensure that royal succession would never pass to a Huguenot. The leader of the Huguenots Henri de Navarre (later Henri IV), according to interpretations of the Salic law of male primogeniture, was next in line to the throne after Henri III (1574–89), who like his brothers remained without male offspring. Parallel to this "aristocratic" *Ligue* there was a popular one, founded in Paris in the same year, which was more radical and more strictly religious (whereas some of the aristocratic *Ligue*'s

impetus was purely political, in reaction to threats to their members' privileges). The Parisian *Ligue*'s discontent with royal concessions to the Huguenots and their admiration for Henri de Guise led to open revolt against the king. On May 12–13, 1588, *Ligueurs* and sympathizers barricaded the streets of the city, forcing the king to negotiate the freedom of the troops he had sent to pacify Paris.[7] This act of treason in turn provoked Henri III's revenge, and he ordered the murder of the duke of Guise and his brother in December of the same year. Henri III's subsequent assassination in August 1589 by the Dominican monk Jacques Clément was felt by the *Ligue* to be an act of God.

Whereas the Catholic *Ligues* constituted the gravest challenge to royal authority, outside of the Huguenots themselves, the conflicts spawned other political factions, most notably the *Malcontents*, who were aristocrats literally "disappointed" by the monarchy's lack of respect for their positions, their service, and the "ancient laws of France." They were a loosely connected group, led by François d'Alençon, Henri de Condé, and other important nobles, and they forged a temporary alliance with the Huguenots during the fifth war of religion (1574–6). But the troubled monarchy also found defenders after 1568, and increasingly during the final decades of conflict, who preferred peace to an eradication of the Huguenots. Their name – the *Politiques* – was not complimentary, since it meant someone willing to compromise his principles, and the name implied that they were inspired by the infamous Machiavelli. They were a group of moderate Catholics, some highly educated and often of bourgeois background, who initially enjoyed the protection of Catherine de' Medici's chancellor Michel de l'Hospital (ca. 1505–1573). Many famous men of erudition, including the historiographer Estienne Pasquier and Montaigne himself, were associated with this movement.

According to *Politique* thinkers, only a strong monarchy could ensure order in these troubled times. During these decades there emerged what was later called absolutist political theory: sixteenth-century theorists use the term "absolute monarchy."[8] The most notable exposition is found in Jean Bodin's *Six livres de la république* (1576).[9] The sovereign, by virtue of the functioning of true sovereignty itself and of the power given to him by God, cannot be bound by the laws he lays down, but only by divine and natural law. Theories of sovereignty connect with justifications of

extraordinary measures necessary to save the state ("raison d'état," a superior political calculation based on knowledge not available to ordinary subjects), and only the king by a sublime act of prudence can take these measures. On the other side, political thinkers who opposed the unbridled government of the realm by a single person, characterized later as the *monarchomaques* (a term coined in 1600 by William Barclay), believed in the sovereignty of the people, organized and represented by the assemblies of the estates. They thought that the people should decide on war and peace and hold power of legislation. The people had delegated its power to the king and in the event that the king did not hold to his promises (to respect the lives, possessions and liberties of his subjects, and to defend traditional laws and customs of the realm), the people had the right to resist, and in extreme cases to kill, the tyrannical king. Montaigne's friend Etienne de La Boétie (1530–1563) wrote a brief treatise in this spirit, *De la servitude volontaire*, that was later used by Protestant political thinkers during the religious conflicts. The first *monarchomaques* were Huguenots,[10] but as ultra-Catholic hostility to Henri III increased and the succession of the Protestant Henri de Navarre to the throne became a real possibility, this contractual thinking was found among Catholics as well.[11]

VIOLENCE AND MASSACRES

Even if they were sporadic, the wars of religion were above all an incredibly wrenching experience. The intensity of the violence is reflected in literature and historiography of the period. One of the most striking examples is the Huguenot Agrippa d'Aubigné's epic of the wars of religion, *Les Tragiques* (published in 1616, but probably composed starting in 1572): the poet provides detailed descriptions of the horrors inflicted upon the population by marauding soldiers, including scenes of half-dead peasant families begging d'Aubigné for a *coup de grâce* (the poet figure, a combatant himself, is witness). The rivers of France are described as choked with maimed corpses. Even more sober historical accounts comprise the most graphic violence, such as Jean de Léry's account of the famine provoked by the siege of Sancerre (1573), whose population was reduced to acts of cannibalism. Fanatical polemics were conducted on both sides.[12] Descriptions and images of the massacres spread through the new

medium of printing, in pamphlet literature, and through woodcuts and engravings, such as the prints of Jacques Tortorel and Jean Perissin (collected and published around 1570). Parallel to the violence caused by the religious conflict, France in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries witnessed a marked increase in the persecution of witches, spawning literature on their identification and punishment, and cases of mass hysteria.[13]

Foremost among the atrocities connected with the religious conflict was the St. Bartholomew's massacre (August 24, 1572).[14] As a culmination of her efforts at reconciling the warring factions, Catherine de' Medici had invited Huguenot leaders to Paris to celebrate the wedding of Marguerite de Valois (Charles IX's sister) and Henri de Navarre. After the wedding ceremonies had taken place, during the night of August 23–4, the king arrived at the decision to execute a limited number of Huguenot nobles, undoubtedly believing them to be seditious. The royal troops surrounding the noblemen proceeded to do so, but the news of the executions reached the Parisian populace, inflamed by anti-Protestant preaching, and a general massacre ensued, devastating the Huguenot community of Paris. Bodies were stripped naked, mutilated, and thrown into the Seine. The massacres continued throughout France into the fall of 1572, spreading as far as Bordeaux, Toulouse, and Albi. Estimates of the total number of deaths vary widely; modern historians tend to accept the approximate number of 10,000. The St. Bartholomew's massacre marked the mentality of French Protestantism profoundly; the religious persecution produced vast numbers of martyrs, recorded and celebrated by the faithful. Huguenots were not entirely innocent of massacres themselves. The most famous occurred in the city of Nîmes at the beginning of the second war of religion (September 30 – October 1, 1567), when Catholics were killed and thrown into wells by the Huguenot majority. The scale of the "Michelade," as this massacre was called, was however not comparable (according to contemporary accounts there were up to 200 victims, but according to modern scholarship possibly as few as two dozen).

It is not until well after Montaigne's death in 1592 that a lasting peace was achieved. The newly Catholic king Henri IV (he converted in 1593 and was crowned in 1594) was able to subdue the final *Ligue* military resistance, make peace with Spain, and arrive at a settlement between Catholics and Huguenots. The

The changing composition of France's elites is reflected in the changing theoretical definition of nobility.[17] Conceptually at least, the aristocracy originated in the medieval theocratic partition of society into three "orders" or "estates." At the top of the hierarchy was the clergy, those who prayed and preached the Word. Next came the aristocracy or nobility, those who fought (to protect the Church and the community of faithful, and the weakest in society: women, orphans, and the poor). Finally, the third estate ("tiers état") comprised those who worked, that is, mainly the peasants but also all who engaged in manufacturing or commerce. The members of the third estate nourished the other two orders, for the first order provided their spiritual salvation and the second order their physical protection. The old nobility liked to trace its roots back to Charlemagne and the thirty-odd warrior families who constituted the backbone of his army and his court.

A nobleman's horse and sword were the symbols of his status and his responsibilities. His material survival was guaranteed by his "fief" (from Vulgar Latin *feudum* or *feodum*, which is the root for "feudal"), the goods or land given to him by his lord in exchange for his military services. The fief originally took various forms, but eventually came to mean land that he was expected to pass on to his eldest son who would continue to serve his lord. A nobleman was expected to provide *auxilium* and *consilium*, aid and counsel: military service, in response to the call from his lord (the king had "ban et arrière-ban" called out in the event of war, assembling, through the hierarchy of his vassals, the knights who were obliged to him). But the nobleman also furnished financial help (for example, to ransom his lord or to provide a dowry for his daughter), administrative and judicial assistance, and political counsel. The privileges he enjoyed as a compensation were first of all fiscal, but also honorific (hunting on his domain, carrying the sword, special seating in the church, burial rights, etc.). He needed above all to ensure his succession, that is, have a male heir, and he was obliged to maintain a "noble life," not working "with his hands" by personal field labour or commerce. In the event that he could not avoid engaging in work, he risked *dérogeance*, losing his title as nobleman. Certain remunerative activities were allowed, however, such as glass-making, mining, and iron-works, medicine and the law. Even though the nobility never constituted more than 1.5 percent of the population, they owned a considerable part of the land (approximately one-third of

French land was originally "noble," although by the sixteenth century much noble land was no longer owned by the aristocracy, who also owned non-noble lands) and occupied the highest posts in the military, the Church, and often in royal, provincial and municipal administration.

The common element of the old nobility was, ideally at least, the sword. One should emphasize "ideally," since by the sixteenth century in fact most members of the nobility practiced only intermittent military service if any at all. In addition, the conditions of warfare were evolving.[18] The impact of artillery, larger armies of infantry, and long sieges might only have been gradual, but the idea of the armoured knight had already been vulnerable for some time, and its anachronistic nature was becoming more and more apparent. It was already possible in the Middle Ages to receive a noble title as a reward for administrative talent, even if the noble ethos remained that of the warrior.

It was also in the Middle Ages that nobility began to be defined as "virtue," that is, as the exercise of several distinct virtues. The most commonly cited ones were piety and fidelity to the king, magnanimity (greatness of the soul, manifested in courage on the battlefield), liberality (an indifference to material wealth, manifested in generous gifts), loyalty or faithfulness to one's word, and *courtoisie* (a civil and peaceful demeanour when not on the battlefield). The increasing presence of virtues of temperance and prudence attested to the turning away of cultural ideals from raw warrior qualities to the more "civilized" ones which were essential to the courtier and servant of the state. Humanist discussions of nobility included the possibility that virtue might be all that is necessary for nobility. In the end, birth, that is lineage, "blood" or "race," did not alone suffice to constitute true nobility. Noble birth could provide a man with "seeds" of virtue, since he would be called upon to emulate the examples of his ancestors.[19] Although Montaigne openly admired the military life, in his personal conduct and in his discussions of various behaviour and virtues it is implied that the purely war-like qualities of the old nobility were not only insufficient but actually dangerous to the polity.[20] One sign of the increasing irrelevance of old warrior virtues was the frequency of duels "de point d'honneur" (on a point of honour) among aristocrats in the sixteenth century, a practice condemned by Montaigne.[21] Nobles

risked decapitation (in defiance of the king's justice) and excommu-
nication (since they were committing either intentional homicide
or suicide, according to the Council of Trent), but in spite of the
threat of harsh legal punishment if they were caught they fought
duel after duel. Thousands of nobles lost their lives over questions
of "honour," most spectacularly so during the reigns of Henri III
and Henri IV.[22]

INTEREST AND INFLATION IN THE NEW ECONOMY

If the status of the aristocracy was symbolically most invested, the
development of commerce in the expanding economy accompanied
changes no less significant in sixteenth-century culture. Montaigne's
family's wealth derived from commerce. The "capitalist" energies of
the period were aided by a loosening of the strictures put on inter-
est. The Old as well as the New Testament seemed to banish the
demanding of interest,[23] and medieval theology condemned usury,
that is, excessive interest. In practice, however, the Church allowed
payment for *damnum emergens* (damages occurring to the lender
because of the loan) and *lucrum cessans* (the absence of profits he
would have made with the lent money). Sixteenth-century economic
thinkers expanded the possibilities for interest (and thus credit), even
if they ended up giving theological justifications for their ideas.[24] The
rise of prices in France occasioned debates on its causes by highly
placed officials and historians, such as Malestroit (a pseudonym?),
Paradoxes sur le faict des monnoyes (1566, "Paradoxes on Money"),
Jean Bodin, *La Response . . . au paradoxe de monsieur de Malestroit*
(1568), and Alexandre de la Tourette, *Response . . . aux paradoxes
du sieur de Malestroict* (1567). Malestroit contended that the deval-
uation of the currency (in terms of the "real" value of the money)
explained the apparent rise in prices, whereas Bodin identified as
principal reason the greater abundance of gold and silver in the king-
dom and the international scene, and for Tourette it was a ques-
tion of the vicissitudes of the time. The growing importance of the
merchant economy is also reflected in publications enabling bet-
ter accounting and calculating procedures, such as the double-entry
ledger (listing simultaneously credits and debits). The international-
ization of the market increased the wealth of cities at commercial
crossroads, such as Lyons, in the first half of the sixteenth century.

That being said, it is no doubt premature to speak of an economic "policy" in the sixteenth century, or of a true science of economics.[25] Economic terms, however, were often found in literature and the dynamics of the book trade influenced the composition and revision of material. Montaigne himself was financially involved in the publication of his *Essays*, which sold well, and their revision and expansion corresponded to the rhythm of the royal "privilege" system which gave printers publication rights that needed to be renewed regularly.

THE RURAL LIFE

Montaigne's explicit pride in his noble pedigree on the one hand, and the actual merchant origins of his family on the other, conceal the fact that after 1570 the essayist was in touch on a daily basis with the peasants working his lands and the people employed on his estate. Montaigne spoke Gascon with ease and readily identified himself as a Gascon.[26] As a provincial nobleman with a solid but not spectacular income he and his wife managed the castle and the vineyards themselves. Peasants and other rural inhabitants (artisans, millers, tavern-owners, smiths, etc.) accounted for over 85 percent of the French population, and the rhythm of life was essentially bound to the seasons. Living "nobly" entailed for Montaigne, as well as for many provincial nobles, a thorough knowledge of agriculture. The sixteenth century witnessed publications designed precisely for the rural gentleman, such as Olivier de Serres' *Théâtre d'agriculture et mesnage des champs* (1600). But in spite of the attention which was being brought to agricultural techniques, peasant life in fact changed little in substance before the eighteenth century.[27] The "eternal village" comprised its social hierarchy, from *laboureurs* at the top to artisans and day-workers at the bottom. French agriculture remained heavily based on grains; the lack of diversity exposed rural populations to famine when weather or disease diminished the crop. The consequences of particularly the later wars of religion, coupled with a resurgence of the plague and colder weather, increased the suffering of the peasants, some of whom turned to open revolt in the 1590s. Montaigne admired the constancy of peasants stricken with the plague:

In this place the best part of my revenue is from manual labor; the land that a hundred men worked for me has lain idle for a long time. Now, what example of resoluteness did we not see then in the simplicity of this whole people? Each man universally gave up caring for his life. The grapes remained hanging on the vines, the principal produce of the country, as all prepared themselves indifferently, and awaited death that evening or the next day with face and voice so little frightened that it seemed that they had made their peace with this necessity . . . (III.12, *F* 802, *V*1048–9)

STOICISM AND SURVIVAL

The relative tenuousness of social bonds and political life in France in the last third of the sixteenth century contributed to the revival of Stoicism among the elites.[28] Although the most influential neo-Stoical works postdate the *Essays*, clearly Montaigne's jurist milieu was attracted to a philosophy of internal constancy and freedom in the face of uncertainty and change. Justus Lipsius' *De constantia libri duo* ("Two books on Constancy," 1585), Guillaume du Vair's *Philosophie morale des stoïques* ("Moral Philosophy of the Stoics," privilege 1585, 2nd edn., 1599) and his *De la constance et consolation és calamitez publiques* ("On Constancy and Consolation during Public Calamities," 1594) provided a synthesis of stoicism and Christian theology.[29] Du Vair (1556–1621), a *Politique* parliamentarian and Ciceronian humanist, drew on Epictetus' *Manual* (which he had translated into French) and Seneca's epistles and their lessons for troubled times. The reliance on reason, the control of the passions, and the reflection on death are combined with Christian spirituality: Du Vair had written a meditation on the Psalms and an attempt at synthesizing Christianity and classical ethics, *De la saincte philosophie* (before 1585). Du Vair's publications enjoyed great success around the turn of the century. Montaigne referred admiringly in the *Essays* to the work of Lipsius (1547–1606) and corresponded with the scholar. Some of Montaigne's early essays took up Stoicism's themes, especially the contemplation of death, but he clearly rejected Stoic insistence on indifference to joy and suffering and the complete denigration of the passions. However, responding to the social and political context became an imperative for the educated, and Montaigne's generally pessimistic view of contemporary France was shared by many well into the reign of Henri IV.

8. The term was based on the maxim derived from Roman law, *princeps legibus solutus est* ("the prince is absolved of the laws"), found in the *Corpus iuris civilis* (*Digest* 1.3.31).

9. See in particular book 1, ch. 8 ("De la Souveraineté").

10. Such as the jurist François Hotman, known for his *Francogallia* (1573).

11. Such as Jean Boucher, *De justa Henrici tertii abdicatione* (1589) ("On the Just Abdication of Henri III"). A sample of the political treatises of the time is provided in Julian H. Franklin, *Constitutionalism and Resistance in the Sixteenth Century: Three Treatises by Hotman, Beza, and Mornay* (New York: Pegasus, 1969).

12. On the emergence of "propaganda" in the polemics of the sixteenth century, see Donald R. Kelley, *The Beginning of Ideology: Consciousness and Society in the French Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

13. See Robert Muchembled, *Sorcières, justice et société aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles* (Paris: Imago, 1987). While not excluding the possibility of their existence, Montaigne is skeptical of procedures for identifying witches (III.11, *F*788, *V*1031).

14. On the effect of this massacre on the Huguenot community, see Robert M. Kingdon, *Myths about the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacres 1572–1576* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988). To this day the precise details of the decision-making leading to the massacre are unclear, and accounts of the number of victims vary greatly. For a reading of the religious violence in general as primarily inspired by notions of sacred "cleansing," see Denis Crouzet, *Les guerriers de Dieu. La violence au temps des troubles de religion vers 1525–vers 1610* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 1990).

15. For a review of Montaigne's views on nobility and the controversies they have produced in Montaigne criticism, see James J. Supple, *Arms versus Letters: The Military and Literary Ideals in the 'Essais' of Montaigne* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

16. On the upward mobility of the bourgeoisie and their "tacit" ennobling, see George Huppert, *Les bourgeois gentilshommes. An Essay on the Definition of Elites in Renaissance France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977).

17. The early modern aristocracy in France has been the subject of much recent critical work. See Arlette Jouanna, *Le devoir de révolte. La noblesse française et la gestation de l'Etat moderne, 1559–1661* (Paris: Fayard, 1989), and Kristen B. Neuschel, *Word of Honor. Interpreting Noble Culture in Sixteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986). For a wider perspective, see Jonathan Dewald,

The European Nobility, 1400–1800 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

18. See J. R. Hale, *War and Society in Renaissance Europe 1450–1620* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985).

19. Montaigne proclaims that he was born of a family (*race*) "famous for integrity" (II.11, *F*311, *V*427), since way back – "de longue memoire" (III.10, *F*782, *V*1021). "Integrity" in both instances is the translation of *prud'hommie*, a virtue associated with the nobility since the late Middle Ages.

20. See especially II.11 ("On Cruelty"), which condemns the extremes of violence that the wars of religion have spawned. See David Quint, *Montaigne and the Quality of Mercy*: *Ethical and Political Themes in the Essais* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

21. Montaigne observed that the demands of justice are contrary to the demands of aristocratic honour: "Whence it comes about that there are two sets of laws, those of honor and those of justice, in many matters quite opposed. The former condemn as rigorously a man's enduring being given the lie as the latter condemn his avenging it" (I.23, *F*85, *V*118).

22. See François Billacois, *The Duel: Its Rise and Fall in Early Modern France*, trans. Trista Selous (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

23. Based on Deuteronomy 23:19–20, 28:12, and Luke 6:35, *Date mutuum nihil inde sperantes*, "give the loan without hoping for anything from it," in the disputed Vulgate Latin translation.

24. See in particular Charles Du Moulin, *Tractatus commerciorum et usurarum* ("Treatise on Contracts and Usury"), translated in 1547 into French.

25. For a brief overview of these debates and the presence of economic terminology in French letters, see Philippe Desan, *L'imaginaire économique de la Renaissance* (Mont-de-Marsan: Editions Interuniversitaires, 1993).

26. See II.8 (*F*281, *V*388). Gascon seems to have been a "default" language for the writer: "let Gascon get there, if French cannot" (I.26, *F*127, *V*171). That being said, Montaigne's father had him tutored in Latin as a small child.

27. On French rural life, see George Huppert, *After the Black Death: A Social History of Early Modern Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 1–13, 67–79, and Hugues Neveux, Jean Jacquart, and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Histoire de la France rurale*, vol. 2 (Paris: Seuil, 1975).

28. See Gerhart Ostreicht, *Neostoicism and the Early Modern State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), Günter Abel, *Stoizismus und frühe Neuzeit* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1978); and Gordon

Braden, *Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition: Anger's Privilege* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 63–98.

29. See Jason L. Saunders, *Justus Lipsius: The Philosophy of Renaissance Stoicism* (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1955).

30. Similarly, in III.1 ("Of the Useful and the Honorable"): "In truth, and I am not afraid to confess it, I would easily carry, in case of need, one candle to Saint Michael and one to the dragon, according to the old woman's plan. I will follow the good side right to the fire, but not into it if I can help it. Let Montaigne [the castle] be engulfed in the public ruin, if need be; but if not, I shall be grateful to fortune if it is saved; and as much rope as my duty gives me, I use it for its preservation" (*F*601, *V* 792).

3   Montaigne's legacy

A legacy is something that is given by an ancestor or predecessor and handed down to future generations. A philosophical legacy is normally held by philosophers to consist of a set of questions and concepts that claim attention on their own merit. The origins and tradition of the gift have no effect on its intrinsic significance and authority. Montaigne bequeaths questions about what man can know, together with concepts of selfhood and experience. Philosophers from Descartes and Pascal to Husserl and Merleau-Ponty designate themselves heirs by *freely* assessing the philosophical merit of the bequest and moving the discussion on unhampered by any obligations to the legator. Their own authority, in turn, does not depend on the origins of their philosophical questions and concepts.

Someone who thought that the authority of a legacy with its heirs is or should be conditioned by the origins of the philosophical gift, by the moral character of its donor or author, by the social tradition identifying it as a source of guidance, would be accused of committing a fallacy.[1] Yet the majority of Montaigne's contemporaries thought in something like this way. When Montaigne received the philosophical legacy of Raymond Sebond, his freedom of response was significantly conditioned by the circumstances in which he received it from his father, by the fact that court ladies were seeking guidance from the work. But, as we shall see at the end of this chapter, it was precisely the *freedom* to judge others' philosophical legacies on their own merits that became Montaigne's own legacy. To put this another way, he retrospectively changed the character of the ancient philosophical *auctoritates* (authorities), and the spirit in which they gave their thoughts to posterity. After Montaigne, they became more doubtful, more free-spirited, more open.

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For the conception of philosophy and a philosophical legacy with which I began is modern. It derives from a type of history of philosophy that emerged after Montaigne's own time. Montaigne and his contemporaries understood philosophy to comprehend vast areas of human learning, and some areas of divine learning, not just particular trains of thought about subjectivity, language, and mind. Many still believed that all humanity's knowledge was originally given by God. This was just one reason why they thought differently about legacies. In the aftermath of the Reformation, they were more anxious about questions of philosophical good faith, questions of authority and authorship, than modern historians of philosophy. Families were confessionally divided; the spiritual formation of the young was at stake. The image of sovereign power increasingly comprehended philosophical mastery of natural knowledge and priestly mastery of theological knowledge. Philosophy was at one and the same time deeply controversial and highly syncretistic. Ancient philosophical and theological disputes over the nature of man and being were being refought within an intellectual environment shaped by Christianity. The alarming proliferation of sects and schools of philosophical and religious thought produced ever more militant attempts at root-and-branch reformation and harmonization.

Montaigne did not feel that the legacy of classical philosophy had been properly collected in his time. He wanted a professional scholar like Justus Lipsius to make a book offering a methodical register of the opinions of the ancients on being and morals. The register would include their controversies, their moral reputations, the development of the various sects and schools. It would recount how, during the course of their lives, philosophers actually applied their precepts on memorable occasions that might serve as examples (II.12, *F*436, *V*578B). Montaigne's desire (not met in practice) reveals that the printed book assembled with scholarly expertise represented an important new instrument of philosophical legacy-making in the sixteenth century. It could give general access to the examples or *patrons* of ancient philosophy and theology, which could then be applied in contemporary life. Montaigne makes a more haphazard collection of the wisdom of the ancients in his own book, especially in the "Apology for Raymond Sebond" (II.12, *F*408, *V*545C).

The word "legacy" still makes us think of fathers, of heirlooms, of portraits passed down within the family. Montaigne does not think of

are admitted. He does not allow his house to become part of a civilized philosophical society. An "unusual freedom" is reserved (III.3, F625, V823–4B).

When a patroness to whom he is obliged comes to visit, Montaigne does not interrupt his textual "form," his free-flowing essay, but incorporates the visit and the corresponding dedicatory letter within it (II.37, F595–7, V783–5A). Elsewhere he tells us that when he is writing, he would prefer to do without the company of "good authors" ("bons autheurs"), both in the form of classical books and of visiting nobles or scholarly friends such as lawyers and theologians who might want to correct or perfect – author – his work, thereby making it less his. But his favorite authors do inevitably insert a helping hand, just as his most valued noblewomen friends will visit and show interest in his work, and he accommodates their presence and support in his own house-style.

Plutarch, for example, is described in the same passage as inexhaustible in riches and embellishments (III.5, F666, V874–5B). He is like a magnificent benefactor who on all occasions and subjects – whether you like it or not – extends his liberality. The benefactor's gifts create a reciprocal relationship that exposes Montaigne to risk. For accepting such gifts so liberally as parts of his own work means that others who steal from Plutarch may also be stealing from him, endangering the integrity of his own form. This is so because Montaigne freely binds himself to the support and protection of Plutarch, as he does to that of other patrons. As in the case of Sebond, however, other authors are involved, other actors play a part. Plutarch's liberality is dispensed via Montaigne's acquaintance Jacques Amyot, a scholarly bishop who selected Plutarch's book and gave it to his country (in French translation). Without Amyot, it would not have been possible for Plutarch to have lifted "us" ignoramuses out of the quagmire (II.4, F262, V363–4A).

So Plutarch, a rich and powerful Greek who became a Roman citizen and an emperor's private instructor, is to Montaigne's mind a noble patron–author of philosophical works. The Greek's chief characteristic is evident in his writings, for he is "libre par tout," free everywhere (II.10, F300–01, V413A). And early readers understood Montaigne to be emulating Plutarch and other classical models, not least in his very freedom. For La Croix du Maine, Montaigne's first bibliographer, the *Essays* were composed "after" Plutarch. The

essayist had fashioned his self-portrait on the most esteemed, the most "recommendable" classical prototype of the moment.[5] This goes against the grain of Montaigne's own comment – added in a later edition, perhaps as a response – that he had no external classical *patron* in forming himself and his writings (II.12, *V*546B, *F*409).

Certainly, Montaigne does not appear to be as grand a personage as the classical Greek essayist and biographer. But there are some respects in which his self-portrait does recall his favorite author. He studies the natural morals of the heroes and authors of the past (II.10, *F*302, *V*414–15A). He imagines himself giving rich matter to his readers (I.40, *F*185, *V*251C). He prints his charter of Roman citizenship (III.9, *F*765, *V*999–1000B). He imagines that he could have been a private instructor to a king (III.13, *F*825–6, *V*1077–8B). He does claim, most importantly, to be *almost* free everywhere. He would have been so had he been living in free times ("To the Reader", *F*2, *V*3A). But this apparent conformity with a famous classical *patron* was not premeditated. It happened by chance, after he was already formed by nature – or so Montaigne would have it (II.12, *F*409, *V*546C).

Montaigne presents himself as a nobleman who merely dabbles in philosophy and the making of books – a patronly author, not a writerly author. He is a casual collector, like his father, of the wise opinions of the ancients and the moderns on being and morals. My point is that we have to look at the norms of patron-authorship in Montaigne's culture if we want to understand exactly what lies behind this self-portrait, exactly what Montaigne intended to be distinctly *free* about his self-image. To recover these norms is to see what Montaigne shares with the European elite's understanding of the place of philosophical books and book-learning in elite individuals' and families' histories. But I have already been using "patron" in more than one sense, and this needs explanation.

THE PATRON AS AUTHOR

A patron is a lordly protector and supporter of others, and a moral pattern deserving imitation.[6] So in sixteenth-century English "patron" could mean both a pattern or mould to copy, and a lord protector or father. The separate senses of "patron" and "pattern" emerged during

the seventeenth century. In sixteenth-century French, the two concepts were closely related. Montaigne uses the word "patron" in the sense of an example or model to be followed, but he refers to the "patronage" of seigneurs such as himself (II.37, *F*591, *V*778A), and he expects that a "grand personnage" with a reputation will also be a "patron" for imitation ("It ill befits anyone to make himself known save him who has qualities to be imitated, and whose life and opinions may serve as a model ["peuvent servir de patron"]"; II.18, *F*503, *V*663A). So the greatest patrons are the likes of Alexander and Caesar. This prince, says Montaigne of the former, is the supreme "patron" of hazardous, or beautifully courageous acts (I.24, *F*94, *V*129B). Patronage of the arts was not distinct, as now, from other forms of patronage; neither was it so distinct from the authorship of art.

For a patron could be a sponsor, or privileged consumer of art, but also an *auctor* or author. Like God, he is visible and readable in his works. So a rich and powerful citizen like Cosimo de' Medici used art patronage as a way of publicly registering and memorializing exemplary moral works of which he was the prime mover. He aimed to express the Christian charitable virtue of liberality, a virtue which shaded into "magnificence" when greatness of scale and conspicuous expenditure on art were involved. The magnificent man is like an artist. He can see what is fitting and spends accordingly. What he collects and builds reflects his own prototypical virtues as mediated by the skills of his artists.[7]

Patrons could author theological and philosophical books in the same spirit. Take a pair of items on display in the Vatican library when Montaigne visited. The first is a copy of the luxurious, monumental edition of the Antwerp polyglot Bible (8 vols., 1569–72) commissioned from Christopher Plantin by Philip II, its patron–author, and printed on parchment. An inscription on the binding tells Montaigne that this copy was a gift from Philip to the present pope. The gift had been timed carefully: a crucial and delicate moment in relations between the papacy and a France torn by religious war.[8] It stood in the Vatican library like an inscribed statue indexing the Spanish king's good faith.

To accompany it on display is an equally statuesque index of the English king Henry VIII's bad faith. As originally transacted, the special presentation copy of Henry VIII's *Vindication of the Seven*

Sacraments of course bore the opposite intention. Montaigne carefully reads the prefatory Latin distich written out in Henry's hand. It offers the book to a previous pope (Leo X) as a witness of the king's good faith and friendship. Montaigne also carefully reads the prefaces, one to the pope, the other to the reader and describes the style as good – for scholastic Latin.[9] The copy can serve as a model of a sixteenth-century book that an international readership understands to be authored and given by a patron.

For obvious reasons the Reformation forced the printed book into prominent service as a potential index of good faith and doctrinal command – and their "bad" opposites. This was as true in the case of Pierre Eyquem as it was in that of Henry VIII. The printed book could of course circulate more easily and in greater numbers than the luxury manuscript. Compared with other kinds of art you might commission it had obvious advantages. Instead of one statue in one location with a brief inscription you could circulate a whole series of portable statues with elaborate inscriptions. So in 1521 Henry VIII conceived a brief for a book against Luther designed to give him the right doctrinal and spiritual credentials and to win him a title from the pope to match those of the French and Spanish kings.[10] The book was to function like the commemorative self-portrait given by king René of Sicily to the king of France (II.17, *F*496, *V*653–4A). The whole point for Henry is that the book shows him to be personally involved in the intellectual debate as a learned agent on the pope's side.

From the start, however, there were doubts about Henry's authorship of the work because everyone suspected he would naturally be employing the learned expertise available at his court. Rumors persisted that Erasmus was the author. Erasmus opined that the king *and* his advisers were the author. Luther wanted to attribute it to Erasmus' enemy Edward Lee, so as to dissociate the king's name from such an anti-Lutheran tract. A consensus emerged that the king had indeed used a group of ecclesiastical and lay scholars for consultations and for collection of materials. Thomas More was later described as "a sorter out and placer of the principal matters," though Henry, upon realizing what a sharp sword he had handed to his papal opponents, was to blame More for having made him write the work.[11] By that stage, what had been designed as a public index of his good faith, had become a public index of his bad faith.

Montaigne seigneurially implies that he uses the printing-press only as a convenient way of copying his work for distribution to "friends and family" ("To the Reader," *V*3a, *F*2). Distinct and personalized copies of the *Vindication* were prepared for Henry's international "friends and family" as Cardinal Wolsey began negotiations to secure the special papal title. The title of *Defensor fidei* ("Defender of the Faith") was duly conferred.[12] As exhibited in the Vatican library long after Henry's divorce and the dissolution of the English monasteries there could hardly be a more monumental index of Henry's bad faith than the *Vindication* – from the papal point of view.

The point here is not of course that Henry's work is typical of the book in Montaigne's age. It is a luxury product exchanged between magnates. But I described above how a gift of an anti-Lutheran book was offered to Montaigne's father, then by him via his son to the public; and, however much he hedges it round with warnings about vanity, Montaigne *does*, after all, print the title of Roman citizen which his reputation as the Catholic author of the *Essays* won him at Rome (III.9, *F*765, *V*999–1000B). I am suggesting that royal transactions such as the English king's and the pope's set the mould for elite understanding of what learned – theological and philosophical – books produced by and on behalf of the aristocracy were for, and that this understanding is not as different as we might expect from their understanding of what other collected or commissioned art was for.

For such books – as the *Essays* do, in their own distinctive way – show aristocratic patrons in relations with other patrons, with artists and experts, classical and biblical prototypes, a wider public audience. They index the patron's moral and intellectual agency as mediated by these subordinate artists and ancient prototypes; they reflect his reputation and his honors on given occasions. But they are risky investments and can result in a net loss of reputation. Montaigne knows that his book will be judged against a background of investments of this kind and distinguishes it accordingly for presentation to the public. The nature and fate of Henry's learned book explains Montaigne's concerns for his own. Montaigne would have his book be judged enduringly as an index of his good faith. He would not have it perceived as a work modeled on or for external patrons, for his glory or their service.

on Montaigne's shelves designed to service his need for discursive authorities. Montaigne then gives two cases where he has seen how a book has been put together. It is crucial that he has actually witnessed the "inside story" of these books:

I have known books to be made out of things never either studied or understood, the author entrusting to various of his learned friends the search for this and that material to build it, contenting himself for his part with having planned the project ("d'en avoir projeté le dessein") and piled up by his industry this stack of unfamiliar provisions; at least the ink and paper are his. That, in all conscience, is buying or borrowing a book, not making one. It [shows] men, not that you can make a book, but, what they might have been in doubt about, that you cannot make one.

A [chief presiding judge] was boasting in my presence of having heaped up two hundred-odd quotations from others in [one of his written presidential judgments]. By proclaiming this to everybody he seemed to me to efface the glory that people were giving him for it.[14]

Nowadays, when patrons put their name to something, we do not think that they "made" it – least of all if it is a book they are sponsoring. The Renaissance audience for art and for books did think patrons made art. They thought so quite habitually. So the passage reveals an understanding that patrons could commission books, rather as they did buildings or gardens or statues. We saw a concrete example of this earlier: Henry VIII's *Vindication*. The nature of the author's involvement in the making of a book is the same as that of a patron in a building project, and he expects to get the same thing out of it – a monument to reflect his or his superiors' glory in an enduringly public way. The patron provides the general brief and the "industry" necessary to bring everything together; artisans and architects assemble the materials themselves in line with the brief. The problem for Montaigne is that the materials have not been shaped, in any sense, by the patron's understanding. The patron simply expects to get the honor of having sent for the literary materials from afar and assembled them in one place for construction by his architects and artisans. Neither of these patrons are "authors" in good faith – something we might not have known had we not had the chance to observe them putting a book together.

The second example shows that a *president* or noble presiding judge expected to be accorded a glorious reputation simply on the

basis of having amassed a discursive form of what might now be called cultural capital. He did not care to hide the fact that he had done *no more* than amass. He just needed quantities of erudite authorities to back up his point and expected his power to collect them to bring him honor. Montaigne is picking up again on an expectation that conspicuous acquisition – by expenditure or borrowing – of literary capital will routinely bring social credit. The authors are not even pretending to have been personally involved as judgmental agents in making the books. They had a *dessein* or brief that needed backing with authoritative materials. They expect "honor" to accrue from their industry in collecting the materials together in books.

Modern philosophical and literary critics are intrigued by the ontology of Montaigne's claims about the presence of his being in his book. But another way of expressing the point of the consubstantiality of the *Essays* and Montaigne, is to say that he has manifestly made a book, not bought or borrowed one. He has not just ordered the materials and wafted in to see how the workmen were doing. He is present at and in its writing. We know this because we see the inside story of his book from the start (he *lets* us see it). We see everything pass through *his* understanding onto the paper. It is not just furnished from the heads of his educated servants or from the printed commodities on his shelves. He is not just amassing erudition and collecting examples under heads. So, again, when Montaigne disavows the motives of *service* and *gloire* in his preface and throughout the *Essays* he is ironically telling us that he has not been up to commissioning a book in the manner described in this passage. His work is not the product of a deliberated brief to reflect his own or some higher patron's glory. It is not backed up by powerful classical and biblical prototypes or *patrons*. He does not have the power, the means to put together such a project. He is no Caesar, no Cosimo de' Medici, and he does not emulate their kind of glory.

There is a further distinction. As he is not trying to build a big public reputation his book can reveal all his weaknesses and bad qualities as well. His central claim is not to honor and authority for his public persona and positions but to *be*, "au naturel," the moral and intellectual agent indexed so freely by everything in the book. He is his own prototype, his own *patron*; he truly is the patron-as-author, the prime mover of a work which reflects him, which *is* him, in every changing, flawed detail.

of heterogeneous production that reminds one of a fish's tail stuck on to a beautiful woman's body. What Montaigne is thus implicitly emphasizing is the difference between classical esthetics symbolized by Horace and the type of writing that will be associated with the essay form. Unlike classical writers and indeed unlike the writer that La Boétie would eventually have become, Montaigne characterizes his own work as the product of disjointedness and heterogeneity, a home for fancy and the grotesque.[6]

Essay 1.8, "Of Idleness," is a compact example of the interaction of text and co-text over the course of a single short essay. It might even be considered as reinforcing, at a significantly early stage, the point about non-systematic, disorderly, incongruous writing in essay 1.28 and the valorization, alongside grotesques, of the imagination. Essay 1.8 brings these elements together. It begins with an extended double comparison. The first deals with fallow land that needs careful weeding and sowing so as to be made serviceable. The second is drawn from Renaissance medicine: the shapeless pieces of flesh (spontaneous abortions or still-births) produced by women likewise indicate the need for proper seed. The point of the comparisons is then clarified: the mind too, if not bridled and controlled, will cast itself in disorderly fashion into the "vague field of imagination" (F21, V32). The disorderly aspect with which the imagination is connected is soon after emphasized by a Latin quotation from Horace: *velut aegri somnia, vanae / Finguntur species* ("like a sick man's dreams / They form vain visions," F21, V32). The original context is once again Horace's *Art of Poetry* and once again it is a passage where Horace is criticizing an excessive propensity for variety in art (the poet's art and the painter's art). Such excessive variety produces incoherence, a sick man's dreams, idle fancies. While Horace's point underscores Montaigne's at this stage, the essayist will go further than his classical counterpart in the second half of this short essay, which in effect takes up the initial image of the fallow field. Taking retirement from his post in the *Parlement* of Bordeaux, the essayist had sought to give his mind the leisure to get to know itself and settle into itself. But the result has been the opposite: his mind has behaved like a runaway horse, begetting fantastical delusions and monsters, which the essayist has decided to write down. The economy of Montaigne's technique is apparent here, as the closing lines of the essay echo the imagery of childbirth, delusion, and idleness that had been evoked