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Burns, Jennifer M.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### Témoignage and Authorship from Ambroise Paré and Jean de Léry to Michel de Montaigne

As Chapters Two and Three of the present thesis have revealed, the body and its boundaries are central to the writerly anxiety exhibited by Ambroise Paré and Jean de Léry. We have seen evidence that the permeation, extension, violation and dissolution of the margins and material of the human body, as well as bodies whose margins are essentially unusual or different, both fascinate and preoccupy these writers. Indeed, it is this corporeal 'otherness' that triggers the process of observing and writing in the first place. Embedded in the strange and composite body of the monster, the disintegrating body of the plague victim, and that of the morally and physically transgressive cannibal, lies a problem. As Elizabeth Grosz and Mary Douglas argue, anything that undermines or interferes with the unity or boundedness of the body can be read as 'dirt', as troubling and even threatening.<sup>1</sup> In identifying the anxiety associated with the unbounded body, Grosz and Douglas are principally concerned with the ideological risk represented by, in particular, the female body. What is threatened as a result is the construction and concept of

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<sup>1</sup> M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980) p.2 and p.120-21; E. Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994) p.192-201.



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strong and contained masculine identity faced with the permeable figure of the female counterpart. When considering the disordered bodies with which Paré and Léry are principally concerned, these ideological difficulties of gender do not, in themselves, appear to be a significant source of threat. Paré, for example, undoubtedly exhibits an interest in the connection between the monstrous birth and the behaviour and frequently sexual behaviour in particular of its mother. It could be argued, therefore, that female sexuality and fecundity in such cases is, in fact, perceived as a risk, as a result of its association with the monstrous birth that is its corollary. Equally, Paré undeniably devotes a similarly fascinated attention to the phenomenon of hermaphroditism, recounting numerous cases of this physical manifestation of changing or unclear, and therefore troubling, gender identities. However, it would be untrue to claim that Paré's attention to issues of gender and female sexuality is evidence of a perceived threat to masculinity, which is central to the arguments of Grosz and Douglas. The figure of the hermaphrodite, whose unclear sex and gender are often physically manifested in the form of a changing or composite body, and that of the mother of a monstrous creature, whose disordered offspring is frequently claimed to be evidence of some form of transgressive behaviour on the part of the parent, are, crucially, depicted and interpreted in the same way as the other monsters in Paré's collection. For example, cases of hermaphroditism appear in the same chapter of *Des monstres et prodiges* as do cases of same-sex conjoined twins, a feature of the writer's ordering of his material that invites us to conclude that it is the peculiarity or hybridity of this bodily structure, and not the questions of gender that the body of the hermaphrodite may prompt, on which Paré's focus falls.<sup>2</sup> Equally, descriptions of

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<sup>2</sup> For example, the 'figure de deux Hermaphrodites, estans joincts dos à dos l'un à l'autre' appears alongside the 'figure d'un monstre ayant quatre bras & quatre pieds, & deux natures de femme' in Chapter 6 of *Des monstres et prodiges*.

women who give birth to monsters are included in the same way as Paré provides details about the date and place of birth, as well as political events, climatic conditions, and other circumstances surrounding the conception or birth. It is also worth noting that details of fathers appear too in numerous examples. I would argue, therefore, that the information relating to mothers is presented in order to ensure the comprehensiveness of the description of the monster and its history, and does not betray a specifically gender-related anxiety. If the question of gender is not, then, an important factor in the threat represented by the disordered bodies being considered in the present thesis, what use, if any, can we make of the connection between bodily disorder and risk described by Grosz and Douglas?

#### Ambroise Paré: Sealing the disordered body

Paré's act of writing, specifically, about the body whose boundaries are ruptured by injury or disease, or are characterised by abnormality, indicates that, for him, the disordered body is a condition requiring action. The relationship here between the writer and his subject, or between the Author and Hero, is one in which the former observes the features, symptoms, and physical characteristics of the latter, and presents them, by way of descriptions and illustrations, to the reader. Through Paré's verbal and visual explanations of different manifestations of bodily abnormality, which contain, as we have seen, information about the physical characteristics of disorder, its causes, and the circumstances in which it occurs, the Author creates a world for his Hero. Indeed, Paré's preoccupation with the ruptured nature of the disordered body signals the value of looking at his writing about the body in the light of the vocabulary and methodology of Authorship established by Mikhail Bakhtin. The margins of the body, and the process by which

they are delineated, are central to Bakhtin's explanation of the relationship between the Author and the Hero of his Novel. He argues that it is the objective of the Author to make use of the 'excess of seeing' he enjoys with regard to the Hero, and thereby consummate the Hero, or fill in his boundaries.<sup>3</sup> Paré is engaged in what can be described as the process of Authoring the bodies he observes: projecting himself into the Hero and imagining the world from this perspective, then removing himself from this imagined position and consummating the Hero, constructing boundaries around the Hero by viewing him in his spatial and temporal context. Paré is credited with having devised the practice of using poultices and dressings in place of the traditional process of cauterising injuries sustained on the battlefield, an important development triggered by the surgeon's consciousness of the acute suffering experienced by the wounded. Similarly, in his description of treating victims of the plague, Paré takes care to make note of changes in the patient's body, and, in particular, to his (the patient's) reactions to methods of treatment. It is this empathy with, or awareness of the experience of his patients, who are the focus of Paré's attention as both a surgeon and a writer, which corresponds to the first stage of Bakhtinian Authoring: the willingness of the part of the Author to imagine or experience the world through the eyes of the Hero. The second stage of Authoring, which involves the Author retreating to a position outside the Hero in order to complete him, is performed when Paré attempts to consummate the Hero physically, by sealing the wound and therefore restoring the broken boundary. Accompanying this material completion of the Hero is the textual consummation that occurs when Paré makes a written account of his observation of bodily disorder. When writing about illness, he describes

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<sup>3</sup> M. Bakhtin, 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity', in *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, ed. M. Holquist and V. Liapunov (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990) p.25.

what he believes to be the cause of the disease, his treatment of it, and the outcome of the physical condition, and thereby constructs a comprehensive portrait of the context of the illness around the body of the patient. In his capacity as a healer, Paré is involved, literally and figuratively, in the process of imagining and experiencing illness from the perspective of the Hero, and of filling in the Hero's boundaries by treating the disorder physically, and by describing it in the text.

Equally, Paré's fascination with monstrosity led him to establish his own cabinet of curious specimens, some of which he describes dissecting himself, such as the conjoined twins born in Paris in 1546, described as 'un enfant ayant deux testes, deux bras, et quatre jambes, *lequel j'ouvris*'.<sup>4</sup> Again, Paré can be seen absorbing himself in the Hero, experiencing him in a literal sense through surgical exploration, but this material and internal view is only one element of Paré's examination of the monstrous body.

As we have seen, he also collects data relating to each case of monstrosity he depicts: date and place of birth, parentage, length of life, political, religious or historical context and so on.<sup>5</sup> Paré, then, both examines the evidence contained within the monstrous body itself, experiencing the Hero, and constructs the spatial and temporal environment inhabited by that Hero. He can be described, therefore, as being engaged in the process of Authoring, creating a Novel of experience in which the Hero, characterised in reality by bodily disorder, is nevertheless depicted in the text as consummated, complete, and inhabiting a clearly defined world. In

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<sup>4</sup> A. Paré, *Œuvres*, p.9. Emphasis mine.

<sup>5</sup> See Chapter Two for a more detailed discussion of particular case studies.

mapping the body of the wounded patient, plague victim or monstrous birth in this way, Paré is exhibiting his inclination to correct or overcome the disorder he witnesses. Furthermore, the depiction of the disordered bodies in Paré's *Oeuvres* as being associated frequently with questions of moral transgression and divine punishment resonates with Grosz and Douglas' views of the threat represented by the body whose boundaries are problematic. There is no question that Paré connects the disordered bodies of his study with risk: he lists the two principal causes of monstrosity as 'la gloire de Dieu' and 'son ire', and these explanations, combined with, among other things, the evocative illustration of the skeleton and the accompanying verse with which Paré concludes *De la peste*, serve to give the disordered body a terrifying and troubling significance. Add to this the actual bodily danger represented by, in particular, the plague-ridden body, and I would argue that the threat of the disordered body identified by Grosz and Douglas is no longer an ideological one, but is instead a palpable hazard menacing the life of all who come into contact with it. Paré exhibits a genuine preoccupation faced with the disordered body, and his impulse to investigate and explain the disorder, which we can articulate using Bakhtin's terminology and method of Authoring, originates from this profound anxiety.

#### Jean de Léry: Staging the disordered body

For Jean de Léry, the disordered bodies that inhabit his two texts, the *Histoire d'un voyage* and the *Histoire memorable*, similarly trigger an anxious and troubled response. There is, as we have seen, a marked contrast between the language of order and ritual used to recount the tribal practice of cannibalism the Author experiences in Brazil, and the emotional and outraged language that

dominates two sections in particular: the episode in which the cannibalism of children and the debauchery of the Normandy interpreters is described in the *Histoire d'un voyage*, and Léry's account of his own discovery of the cannibalism that takes place during the siege of Sancerre. The force of Léry's response when firstly he observes these anthropophagous acts, and secondly comes to relive them when describing them in his writing, is evidence of the troubling nature of the figure of the cannibal. When the boundaries of the body are ruptured by this form of behaviour, the human and moral consequences are great. Léry's act of writing about his experiences in Brazil and Sancerre can be seen to serve a similar purpose to Paré's Authoring of plague and monstrosity. It provides a method of explaining the disorder that is intrinsically frightening, and a means of identifying order within it.

Léry's Authorial projection into the perspective of the Hero is equally tangible to that of Paré, although it takes a different form. Léry's Hero, the body of the Brazilian savage, whose disorderly dimension proceeds from the cannibalistic practices performed both by and on the body, exists in a distant location to which the Author travels. Indeed, as Lestringant has highlighted, there is evidence of Léry attempting to identify himself with the Brazilian natives, and to see himself, or aspects of himself, as part of their culture.<sup>6</sup> In this way, Léry is projecting himself into the habitat of his Hero and experiencing the world of the Hero from within its boundaries. Similarly, as the *Histoire mémorable* attests, Léry witnesses the siege and famine of Sancerre from within its walls, and observes the immediate aftermath of the act of cannibalism at first hand. He is a member, a constituent of the Sancerre community, and as such is a component of the world inhabited by the

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<sup>6</sup> F. Lestringant, *Jean de Léry ou l'invention du sauvage*, p.27-28.



Hero, which in the case of the Sancerre narrative is the family involved in the act of cannibalism, both the consuming bodies of the parents, and the consumed body of the child. L  ry does not identify himself with the perpetration of the cannibalism – it remains a reprehensible incident ‘le comble de toute mis  re [...] ce crime prodigieux, barbare et inhumain’<sup>7</sup> – but he does experience the act from his point of view as a personality living within the confines of the world in which it occurs. In the Novels he constructs of both Brazil and Sancerre, L  ry, the Author, is an active and present participant, not in the anthropophagous acts themselves, but certainly in the realm within which they are performed.

In the *Histoire d’un voyage*, L  ry can be seen to be engaged in the process of consummating the Hero through his construction of the storyboard described in Chapter Three of the present thesis. The Hero – in this instance the ritual of cannibalism, encompassing its various participants and spectators – is presented in a temporally- and spatially-defined area, and L  ry employs a range of strategies to contain what is essentially a mode of behaviour in which bodily boundaries are fractured and transgressed. As we have seen in Chapter Three, L  ry describes this form of cannibalism as a generic pattern of cultural behaviour rather than as a single event or sequence of events. The cannibalism of the prisoner’s body does occur in response to a particular set of circumstances, the capture of a member of an enemy tribe, but it is depicted as a traditional and ritualised activity. In this way, it is presented as organised and regulated, as occurring within a defined set of conditions, in response to an identifiable catalyst, and as having a familiar and precedented conclusion. The ritualised performance of the cannibalism is enacted on a form of stage, represented in the illustration accompanying L  ry’s description,

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<sup>7</sup> J. de L  ry, *Histoire m  morable*, p.290-91.

and the techniques of characterisation, dialogue, stage direction and plot combine to create the impression of the consumption of the captive's body as a piece of theatre, a spectacle, rather than as an unruly and violent act of tribal savagery. It has a location, a time frame, a cause and an outcome, and in this way is contained by the Author within clearly defined boundaries. In a similar way, the cannibalism of the child by her relatives in Sancerre is described within a framework, and appears as the final stage of a carefully defined progression. As Chapter Three explains, in their attempts to cope with the lack of food experienced during the siege, the inhabitants of Sancerre are depicted by L  ry as consuming the resources at their disposal in a controlled and logical fashion. They can be seen proceeding downwards through a natural hierarchy, the food chain, eating first the animals traditionally bred as food, then other, smaller animals, animal products, roots and other vegetation, and eventually, having exhausted all other sources of nourishment, consuming human and animal excrement. The consumption of the child's flesh occurs only after every other echelon within the hierarchy of nature has been reached and passed by the starving inhabitants. L  ry does not employ this description of the rational movement through the food chain in order to justify the behaviour of the child's parents, but rather in order to explain their conduct by contextualising it, depicting it as the deplorable but inevitable final stage of a terrible but orderly progression.

The ritualistic feasting on the prisoner's body in Brazil and the desperate consumption of the child's flesh in Sancerre are characterised by similar features in L  ry's narratives. Both are actions consciously performed in response to the cultural, spatial or temporal environment in which the perpetrators of the anthropophagy find themselves. They can therefore be read as constituent stages

within a process, and as such are associated with order, logic and structure. Léry as the Author, the figure who observes his Hero and builds the world around him in the form of a Novel, incorporates these features in his narrative, and in doing so makes sense of the disorderly consequences of the treatment of the human body, filling in the boundaries of the world of his Hero.

### Paré and Léry: Food for thought

Paré and Léry can both be read as Bakhtinian 'Authors', but it is necessary to distinguish between the two forms of Authored Novel described in Bakhtin's theory. The first is the Novel of experience, defined in the essay 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity', which is the subject's mental processing of the world he observes, achieved through projecting himself into the Hero of that world, and constructing its boundaries.<sup>8</sup> The second is the Novel as an extended fictional work in prose, usually in the form of a narrative or story, and this type of Novel is the focus of Bakhtin's later essay, 'Discourse and the Novel', in which his argument is applied for the most part to the Russian Novel genre of the nineteenth century.<sup>9</sup> The Novels of Ambroise Paré and Jean de Léry therefore fall into the former category: they are the accounts of a perceived reality, not works of literary fiction, and their narratives bear witness to the Authorial preoccupation with consummating the Hero. Their attention as Authors, therefore, falls on the boundaries of the world in which the Hero lives, and of the Hero's body. The fragmented, ruptured or inherently problematic boundaries of the disordered body, which make that body a threat according to Grosz and Douglas, require action on

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<sup>8</sup> M. Bakhtin, 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity'.

<sup>9</sup> M. Bakhtin, 'Discourse and the Novel'.

the part of these Authors in order for the threat embedded in the disorder to be managed or overcome.

The writing of both Ambroise Paré and Jean de Léry was present in the library of Michel de Montaigne, among the books he purchased for himself and those he inherited from his friend Etienne de la Boétie. The particular affinity that exists between Montaigne and writers such as Paré and Léry inheres in the activity in which they engage of 'essaying' the material about which they choose to write. In this pursuit, Montaigne places great value on experience and the knowledge gained through observation, and more importantly, on the activity of reflecting carefully on experience and developing thoughts and opinions in response to it. The information on which Montaigne's 'Des cannibales' is based, for example, is gathered through contact with natives of and travellers to the New World. Montaigne never saw the Americas for himself, and was instead forced to rely for his information on the recounted experiences of others. 'Des cannibales' reveals Montaigne's efforts to discover the New World: he employs a man who had spent some fifteen years in America, and furthermore, a man who was 'simple et grossier', able to report his experiences in the New World without clouding his narrative with the interpretations and glosses of a more scholarly mind. Furthermore, Montaigne travelled to Rouen in order to meet a Brazilian native, and reports having a conversation with this New World inhabitant, albeit through a frustratingly unsatisfactory interpreter. Léry's *Histoire d'un voyage*, his eyewitness account of cannibal culture and behaviour in Brazil, is a text through which Montaigne would have been able to gain similar access to this other world. Reading Léry's account does not constitute Montaigne experiencing the world of the cannibal at first hand, but I would suggest that the nature of Léry's writing,

which is documentary and based firmly on lived experience, is therefore methodologically comparable to Montaigne's own. Equally, Ambroise Paré would have been an appealing source for Montaigne's writing on disease, monstrosity and the medical world, again because of the experiential nature of his writing. Paré's medical knowledge is not based on ancient sources or derived from a university medical education, but instead is the result of his years of surgical practice. Paré's accounts of monstrosity are frequently, although not exclusively, about specimens he personally has seen or collected, and he shares Montaigne's scepticism towards the medical establishment on the grounds that the ability of the physician to mount an effective challenge to disease is undermined by his excessively scholarly approach to his occupation, and his lack of experience of the reality of illness. The methodological affinity that evidently exists between Montaigne and the sources, like Paré and Léry, on which he draws for his information, is an important feature of Montaigne's writing, and of his development of the 'essai'. Paré and Léry are exposed directly to the Heroes they depict in their writing, and therefore write from a position of experience, a methodology endorsed and implemented by Montaigne.

However, it is essential to note that, in spite of this direct contact between Author and Hero in the writing of Paré and Léry, the two personae do not at any point converge. At times the distance between Author and Hero in the text becomes shorter, such as when we read that Léry is presented with the opportunity to eat the flesh of the slaughtered captive of the Toupinamba tribe. He refuses, and in doing so, ensures that the distance, and crucially the difference between himself and the cannibals is maintained. There is, therefore, an asymptotic relationship between this Author and the Hero he depicts: the two converge in the

text, but never coincide. Paré and Léry are fundamentally Authoring a world that is foreign to their own, and this essential difference between the writer and what he is writing about, that sets them apart from Montaigne, who writes in his address to his reader, 'je suis moy-mesmes la matiere de mon livre'.<sup>10</sup> To what extent does Montaigne's form of writing about, or Authoring, the disordered body differ from that of Paré and Léry, who are among the most important sources of information for Montaigne's discussion of these very topics? And what are the consequences of this cohabitation in the text of the *Essais* between other worlds and Montaigne's self?

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<sup>10</sup> 'Au lecteur', p.9.



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Misérable à mon gré, qui n'a chez soy où estre à soy, où se faire particulièrement la cour:  
où se cacher!<sup>12</sup>

The setting is Montaigne's library. Situated on the second floor of his famous tower, it is where he spends 'la plus part des jours de ma vie, et la plus part des heures du jour', surrounded by his many books and writing his *Essais*. 'Là, je feuillette à cette heure un livre, à cette heure un autre, sans ordre et sans dessein, à pieces descousues; tantost je resve, tantost j'enregistre et dicte, en me promenant, mes songes que voicy.'<sup>13</sup> His description of the tower is a paradoxical one. It is the place to which he retreats ('je me destourne') from the activity and business of his estate, and the bedchamber on the storey beneath the library is where occasionally he sleeps 'pour estre seul'.<sup>14</sup> He describes the tower as a 'lieu retiré', and its secluded location is a source of satisfaction for Montaigne, who writes that '[elle]

<sup>11</sup> Views of Montaigne's tower on either side of the view from his library window over the avenue approaching his house. Photographs taken by Colin Burns.

<sup>12</sup> 'De trois commerces' (III.3) p.807.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p.806.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p.806.

me plaist d'estre un peu penible et à l'esquart, tant pour le fruit de l'exercice que pour reculer de moy la presse.'<sup>15</sup> He associates this place with privacy, autonomy and with a physical withdrawal from the outside world: 'J'essaie à m'en rendre la domination pure, et à soustraire ce seul coin, à la communauté et conjugale, et filiale, et civile.'<sup>16</sup>

Richard Regosin's picture of Montaigne, in the second chapter of *The Matter of My Book*, focuses in particular on this feature of the *Essais*.<sup>17</sup> In an exposition of Montaigne's attempts to write about himself in relation to his historical context and geographical surroundings, Regosin makes much of what he calls 'Montaigne's role as outsider'. He detects an acute awareness on Montaigne's part of his moral and behavioural 'distance and distinctness' from his contemporaries, and interprets Montaigne's emphasis on the corruptness and brutality of late sixteenth-century France as an effort 'to define himself against the world, in opposition to public ideology; he attempts to do what others do not do, to be what others are not'.<sup>18</sup> This act of separating himself from the people and events surrounding him is, in Regosin's argument, reflected in Montaigne's withdrawal to his tower library: He writes that Montaigne 'spatializes his moral antagonism to the world, a distancing emblemized in the isolated tower to which he retires'.<sup>19</sup> Viewed in the light of Regosin's description, Montaigne's decision to retire from public life in favour of a life of leisure on his estate becomes the enactment of the aversion he feels towards the space and time in which he lives;

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<sup>15</sup> 'De trois commerces' (III.3) p.807.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p.807.

<sup>17</sup> R. Regosin, *The Matter of My Book: Montaigne's Essais as the Book of the Self* (Berkeley / Los Angeles / London: University of California Press, 1977) p.31-46.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p.36.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p.36.



the act of removing himself materially is the physical manifestation of a mental and emotional repugnance towards his own era.

On the other hand, as George Hoffman has pointed out, Montaigne's life in the tower can be seen as not, in fact, representing a complete retreat, and Hoffman argues that Montaigne may not be the 'intellectual recluse' he at first appears to be from his account of the years following his retreat from public life.<sup>20</sup> This, Hoffman's suggestion, which challenges Regosin's depiction of a solitary figure in an isolated tower, disillusioned with and withdrawn from the world of sixteenth-century France, is a convincing one. Indeed we note that, in the same passage from 'De trois commerces' in which he describes its privacy and seclusion, Montaigne reveals that the tower is also a place in which he remains connected to the world outside. He writes that, while in his library, 'tout d'une main, je commande à mon mesnage': the duties of his estate follow him into the library in spite of his willingness to distance himself from them. Similarly, the fact that Montaigne mentions dictating as well as writing ('j'enregistre et dicte') indicates that he does not exclusively work alone in the library, and that, from time to time at least, a secretary or scribe accompanies him.<sup>21</sup> These details from the short description in 'De trois commerces' lead the attentive reader to reconsider the status of Montaigne's tower and the extent to which it is in fact a place of solitude and detachment.

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<sup>20</sup> G. Hoffman, *Montaigne's Career* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998) p.11.

<sup>21</sup> 'De trois commerces' (III.iii) p.806. More information on Montaigne and the Renaissance practice of employing scribes and secretaries can be found in G. Hoffman, *Montaigne's Career*, Chapter 2, 'The Company of Secretaries', p.39-62.

To return to Hoffman, it is this passage from 'De trois commerces' that leads him to imagine the aural reality of inhabiting the tower. Hoffman contemplates the

large bell hanging in the tower whose clamour [...] would have been necessary in order to send his workers to the fields at dawn and summon them back in the evening. Add to this the autumn 'racket' (as witnesses of the time described it) from his winepress across the courtyard, and it becomes difficult to maintain the image of calm and unbroken silence one has instinctively associated with Montaigne's tower library.<sup>22</sup>

The historical sound-portrait painted here by Hoffman highlights one sensory dimension of Montaigne's experience of his tower environment, and is particularly illuminating in the context of the present thesis because it allows us to consider the possibility that the space which Montaigne intends to be private is, in fact, invaded by elements of the outside world: by concerns and administrative tasks relating to the running of the estate, by the sounds of the agriculture and viticulture being carried out nearby, and by people other than Montaigne. And while these external realities are permeating the internal space of the tower, Montaigne is simultaneously experiencing the outside world by observing it from inside his library. The three library windows, which face east, south and west, afford views of Montaigne's vegetable garden, fields, and the avenue leading to the gate of the château respectively.<sup>23</sup> The window of the small closet room adjoining the library overlooks the courtyard, stables, wine press and the château's main buildings.

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<sup>22</sup> G. Hoffman, *Montaigne's Career*, p.15-16.

<sup>23</sup> The photographs of Montaigne's tower at the beginning of this chapter, taken during my visit to the site, show the location of the tower viewed from two paths approaching the building, and the view from a tower window overlooking the avenue leading to the gate.

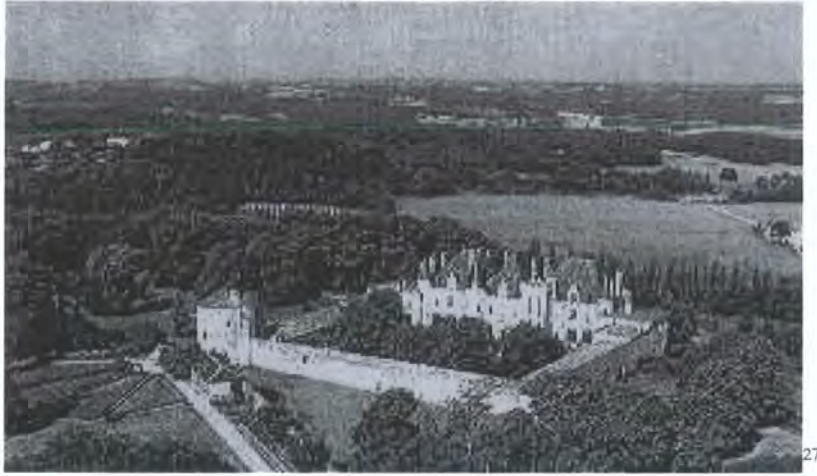
Montaigne writes, 'je suis sur l'entrée et vois sous moy mon jardin, ma basse court, ma court, et dans la pluspart des membres de ma maison'.<sup>24</sup> His 'command' of his estate from the tower has a strong visual dimension: Montaigne is expressing his ability comprehensively to survey the space around him from the four third-storey windows.<sup>25</sup> As Hoffman has rightly suggested, Montaigne's style of withdrawal differs considerably from that adopted later by Descartes, whose retreat into his *poêle* would involve detaching himself mentally, physically and sensorially from the influence of everything beyond himself.<sup>26</sup> In fact, Montaigne, by contrast, while deliberately placing himself apart from the rest of his household, remains immersed in the sights and sounds of his surroundings, and paradoxically, attached to the outside world. As the photograph below of Montaigne's château shows, the library tower, pictured on the left-hand side, is an identifiable and distinct building, but it is not freestanding, fixed as it is to the rest of the château's structure. In light of the physical evidence, I would argue therefore that even when he is inside his chosen place of retreat from the responsibilities of the quotidian and the distractions of contemporary events Montaigne remains connected to them by the same walls which both border the private space of the tower and link it to the rest of the château.

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<sup>24</sup> 'De trois commerces' (III.3) p.806.

<sup>25</sup> Three windows in the library, and one in the closet annexe.

<sup>26</sup> R. Descartes, *Discours de la méthode* (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1973) p.123. See also G. Hoffman, *Montaigne's Career*, p.15.



When Montaigne writes in 'De la ressemblance des enfants aux pères' that he works on his *Essais*, 'ce fagotage de tant de diverses pieces [...] non ailleurs que chez moy', the importance of the location in which he produces his book is clear.<sup>27</sup> However, the tower library, 'chez moy', is more than merely the place of writing and the spatial origin of the book, in that it is also a constituent of the narrative. References to the tower in the *Essais* afford it the status of a Bakhtinian Hero in that its presence in the text is fundamental and grounding to the narrative, and its spatial and temporal contexts are a noteworthy, if infrequent, focus of the Author's attention. Details of the structure, dimensions and location of the tower and the château are conveyed in the descriptions we have seen of the views from the library windows, and of the interior of the tower itself, in 'De trois commerces':

La figure en est ronde et n'a de plat, que ce qu'il faut à ma table et à mon siege, et vient m'offrant en se courbant, d'une veuë, tous mes livres, rengez à cinq degres tout à l'environ. Elle a trois veuës de riche et libre prospect,

<sup>27</sup> This aerial photograph of Montaigne's estate is taken from a postcard purchased at the estate. Unfortunately, all efforts to identify and acknowledge the photographer have been in vain.

<sup>28</sup> 'De la ressemblance des enfants aux pères' (II.37) p.736.

et seize pas de vuide en diametre [...] [M]a maison est juchée sur un tertre, comme dict son nom, et n'a point de piece plus esventée que cette cy.<sup>29</sup>

In providing this information about the tower's shape, size, altitude and position, Montaigne is painting a textual portrait of the material reality of the building, and extending the account of the sensory experience of being there which began with him describing the views of his estate from the tower windows. Being there, at home, also generates in Montaigne a series of thoughts and reactions, which he explains in 'De la vanité'. His managerial responsibility for the estate is a burden to him, and he admits that 'je me destourne volontiers du gouvernement de ma maison'.<sup>30</sup> He goes on to list some of the sources of the anxiety he suffers as a result of his administrative duties: the effect of poor harvests on his tenants, for example, disputes with and between neighbours, and the eternal problem of the impact of the weather on the activities of the estate. 'Et que à peine en six mois, enverra Dieu une saison dequoy vostre receveur se contente bien à plain', he complains, 'et que, si elle sert aux vignes, elle ne nuise aux prez'.<sup>31</sup> But, as 'De la vanité' illustrates, these worries assail him only when he is in one particular place: 'chez moy'. 'Je suis, chez moy, respondant de tout ce qui va mal', he writes, going on to maintain that 'cela oste volontiers quelque chose de ma façon au traitement des survenants [...] et oste beaucoup du plaisir que je devois prendre chez moy de la visitation et assemblée de mes amis'.<sup>32</sup> The repeated prepositional phrase used to denote Montaigne's presence at home while he is in this discontented mood stands in contrast to the language used to describe the reverse situation:

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<sup>29</sup> 'De trois commerces' (III.3) p.806-07.

<sup>30</sup> 'De la vanité' (III.9) p.925.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p.925.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p.931-31.

*Absent*, je me despouille de tous tels pensemens; et sentirois moins lors la ruyne d'une tour que je ne faicts present la cheute d'une ardoyse. Mon ame se démesle bien aysément *à part*, mais *en presence*, elle souffre comme celle d'un vigneron [...] *Quand je voyage*, je n'ay à penser qu'à moy et à l'emploicte de mon argent.<sup>33</sup>

Montaigne's various mental and emotional states are, I would suggest, presented as having their origin in specific locations: being at home carries with it onerous duties, frustration and worry, whereas being away from home allows him to consider his responsibilities to his estate differently. Viewed from the distance afforded by travel in particular, the problems that confront Montaigne with such intensity while he is 'chez moy' diminish when he removes himself from their source. His feelings and thoughts here are given a firm spatial location by the positional language that accompanies his descriptions of them.

An additional manifestation of location in the text is highlighted when Hoffman describes the images of domestic and country life that appear periodically throughout the *Essais*. Hoffman is particularly struck by the opening lines of 'De l'oisiveté', in which Montaigne likens his mind to

a 'fallow field' in need of ploughing or a 'loose horse' that needs bridling; and using the traditional comparison between self-cultivation and cultivating the soil, [Montaigne] declares that he took up writing in order to clear his mind of a 'hundred thousand kinds of wild and useless weeds'.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> 'De la vanité' (III.9) p.931-32. Italics mine.

<sup>34</sup> G. Hoffman, *Montaigne's Career*, p.31, citing 'De l'oisiveté' (I.8) p.86-87. Montaigne uses the images of 'terres oisives', 'mille sortes d'herbes sauvages et inutiles', and a 'cheval

Again, Hoffman usefully charts the recurrence of vocabulary from the lexical field of country life, but one of our objectives here is to determine the consequences and meaning of this insistent presence of his familiar environment in Montaigne's book. The enterprise of writing at the beginning of 'De l'oisiveté' is presented by Montaigne as a form of agriculture, a shaping and fashioning in material terms of his unruly and disparate thoughts. Images of his domestic and local environment figure sporadically in the *Essais*, and, like the fallow field and the unbridled horse, they function as illustrations of Montaigne's ideas that are sensory, palpable and substantial. The crumbling tower that disturbs him less when he is away from home than the roof-slate that falls when he is there to witness it is just such an image, imported directly from Montaigne's immediate surroundings, his tower library, as he writes the idea that the stone tower represents.

The tower at Montaigne is the geographical origin of the *Essais*, the place in which they are written. The buildings are furthermore a component of the narrative, in that descriptions of their material features are documented in the text, and the estate and its surrounding landscape provide a fertile source of imagery for Montaigne, with which he amplifies the material and sensory elements of his writing. Finally, the physical constituents of home come to symbolise the way Montaigne feels and thinks when he is there. Montaigne's space may not be a major subject about which he chooses to write extensively, nor is it the particular focus of any one of his essays. It is, however, a feature that rises to the surface of the text regularly and palpably in all its different forms, and I would argue that the

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échappé' when describing his mind and the activity of writing. This use of the metaphor of writing as a form of cultivation is commonplace in the sixteenth century. See G. Hoffman, *Montaigne's Career*.

effect of this multivalent spatial imagery is to embed the matter of the text in a fixed and solid site from which it is inextricable.

### 'Je suis moy-mesmes la matiere de mon livre': The Text and the Self

This, the question of Montaigne as the 'matière' of his book, is central to the understanding of the *Essais* that he intends his reader to grasp. Montaigne's life, his education, home, observations, thoughts, reading habits, health and dietary preferences are the focus of his writing, and he sets out to write about himself openly, honestly, and accurately: 'C'est icy un livre de bonne foy, lecteur'.<sup>35</sup> He continues:

Je l'ay voué à la commodité particuliere de mes parens et amis: à ce que m'ayant perdu (ce qu'ils ont à faire bien tost) ils y puissent retrouver aucuns traits de mes conditions et humeurs, et que par ce moyen ils nourrissent plus entiere et plus vifve la connoissance qu'ils ont eu de moy [...] Je veus qu'on m'y voie en ma façon simple, naturelle et ordinaire, sans contantion et artifice: car c'est moy que je peints.<sup>36</sup>

According to this statement of intention to the reader, Montaigne's purpose in writing is to create a record of himself, a self-portrait in words, which can be consulted after his death by the reader who wants to learn more about the man and his life. Montaigne is the 'matière', the subject, of his book in the same way as Ambroise Paré's 'matière' covers surgery, monstrosity, and the plague, and Jean de Léry's is the territory and culture he discovers in Brazil. The *Essais* is a book *about*

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<sup>35</sup> 'Au lecteur', *Essais Livre I* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1969) p.35.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p.35.



Montaigne, in which he is simultaneously the writer, the narrator, and the central character who lives in, observes and records the world around him. However, I would also suggest that the term 'matière' implies that there is a further, more tangible dimension to the relationship between the writer and his book, and the constant reminders of the material reality from which the book emerges serve to sustain the reader's interest in this question of matter. The *Essais* is indeed a portrait of the man, an account and reflection of his life, a 'mimetic [...] artefact', but it is also a part of Montaigne, a tangible component of the man.<sup>37</sup> When Montaigne writes 'je suis moy-mesmes la matiere de mon livre' he is telling his reader that he is both the subject and the substance of his book.

Much has been written about this complicated inter-relationship between the writer, the narrator, the central character, the subject and the text. Richard Sayce, in *The Essays of Montaigne*, identifies the 'complex literary personality' which exists in the *Essais*.<sup>38</sup> He criticises interpretations of the *Essais* in which Montaigne the writer and Montaigne the fictional persona of the book are viewed as two separate voices or entities, and claims that this is a simplistic and inaccurate reading of the book. Sayce considers the recurring metaphor of self-portraiture found in the *Essais*, and proposes that Montaigne does not perform the two distinct roles of writer and persona, but that there is instead a 'doubling' of Montaigne within the text. He writes that 'the very notion of the self-portrait necessarily implies a doubling of personality or at any rate of functions within the self: someone is living and acting, someone is watching him live and act.'<sup>39</sup> In fact, this doubling of personality becomes a multiplication of personality when Sayce writes: 'We have

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<sup>37</sup> S. Rendall, *Distinguo: Reading Montaigne Differently* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992) p.6.

<sup>38</sup> R. Sayce, *The Essays of Montaigne: A Critical Exploration* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1972) p.98.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p.72.

not just a painter painting a picture of himself but a painter painting a picture of himself painting a picture and so on, in fact something like an infinite regress.<sup>40</sup> What Sayce is describing is the concurrent appearance of Montaigne as the narrator of events and the person to whom the events happen, in other words, as the observer and the observed. Making reference to 'De l'affection des peres aux enfans', Sayce explores Montaigne's process of simultaneously being Montaigne, and being Montaigne writing about Montaigne.<sup>41</sup> In accordance with his criticism of viewing these as separate roles and processes, Sayce writes that 'paradoxically and characteristically, the multiplicity of selves and points of view leads in the end to a new unity in which all are fused'.<sup>42</sup> In Sayce's argument, Montaigne's metaphor of self-portraiture, in which the man who paints and the man who is painted are the same person, gives the *Essais* unity and completeness, and leads to his conclusion that 'the book and the man are indeed consubstantial'.<sup>43</sup>

Ermanno Bencivenga, in *The Discipline of Subjectivity*, agrees that the connection between Montaigne and his book is more complex than a linear relationship in which the writer imagines and constructs the text.<sup>44</sup> Developing Pierre Villey's evolutionary reading of the *Essais*, Bencivenga argues that Montaigne and his book are both constantly evolving, and, more importantly, in response to one another.<sup>45</sup> He describes Montaigne and the *Essais* as being 'ontologically interdependent', writing that 'the book is a record of what the self has decided about itself, but also a record of decisions that come to be by being

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p.73.

<sup>41</sup> II.8, 'je me suis présenté moy-mesmes à moy', p.56.

<sup>42</sup> R. Sayce, *The Essays of Montaigne*, p.73.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p.53 and p.70.

<sup>44</sup> E. Bencivenga, *The Discipline of Subjectivity: An Essay on Montaigne* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

<sup>45</sup> See P. Villey, *Les Sources et l'évolution des Essais de Montaigne*, 2 vols. (Paris: Hachette, 1908), volume 2, *L'Evolution des Essais*.

written'.<sup>46</sup> Montaigne's process of reflecting on himself, of reading and annotating his essays, and incorporating his later ideas into the main body of earlier versions of the text, is, Bencivenga claims, not a simple recording of the self, but in addition a search for the self: 'Montaigne can claim consistently that he knows himself as well as anybody ever knew any subject, *and* that the search for the self conducted in his book is also a constitution, a making (*faire*), of the self'.<sup>47</sup> Bencivenga notes Montaigne's eagerness to construct a whole and comprehensive written self-portrait, citing Montaigne's meticulous descriptions of the less 'noble' parts of himself (his kidney stones, for example) as evidence of this desire for detail and completeness: 'no component of a man must be forgotten when one is searching for oneself'.<sup>48</sup> This, Montaigne's 'painstaking research of an *empirical* nature', involves writing about himself in health and in illness, in his youth and in his old age, a system of writing which inevitably produces varying and even contradictory images of the self that Bencivenga argues Montaigne is trying to produce.<sup>49</sup> Like Sayce before him, Bencivenga detects this multiplication of the self in the *Essais*, the coexistence of numerous different versions of the self in the text. This feature of Montaigne's book does not, however, represent a threat to the overall coherence of the text. Instead, Bencivenga argues that it is an essential component of the comprehensive self-portrait: making reference to 'Du repentir',<sup>50</sup> he writes, '[Montaigne] is not going to simplify his charge and establish his own unity and consistency by restricting the range of himself'.<sup>51</sup> For Bencivenga, it is through expressing in words all of the different and opposing dimensions of himself that

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<sup>46</sup> E. Bencivenga, *The Discipline of Subjectivity*, p.10-13.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.

<sup>48</sup> E. Bencivenga, *The Discipline of Subjectivity*, p.27.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16.

<sup>50</sup> 'moy, le premier, par mon estre universel, comme Michel de Montaigne, non comme grammairien, ou poëte, ou jurisconsulte.' 'Du repentir' (III.ii), p.20-21.

<sup>51</sup> E. Bencivenga, *The Discipline of Subjectivity*, p.14.

Montaigne is able, paradoxically, to construct a coherent and unified version of this self in the text.

Finally, Steven Rendall's *Distinguo: Reading Montaigne Differently*, puts similar emphasis on the unity of the *Essais*, which he claims is rooted in the name, 'Montaigne'.<sup>52</sup> This name, for Rendall, represents the various roles performed in the *Essais*: Author, narrator, protagonist and so on, as well as the younger man writing in 1580, and the older man preparing an edition of his book in 1592. The fact that a single name denotes each of these roles is a source of coherence. However, Rendall does recognise a significant degree of variation within the figure of 'Montaigne', and identifies a number of techniques employed in the text to convey its range and scope. Rendall identifies numerous voices within the text, the practice of role-playing on the part of the writer, and the frequent manipulation of the personal pronoun and its related forms.<sup>53</sup> Rendall explains how Montaigne's own descriptions of his writing can lead the reader to view him as consubstantial with his book, as the unique origin, the father, of his book, and as a man who can be represented in his absence by his 'speaking portrait' which is, in fact, an alter ego.<sup>54</sup> In this way, the self of the *Essais*, 'Montaigne', appears in a variety of forms, but Rendall also describes how that self varies intrinsically. He explains how Montaigne's process of writing, combining and incorporating 'alien texts' – by which Rendall means the work of other writers as well as earlier versions of Montaigne's own work – leads to a continual extension and growth of the self as it

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<sup>52</sup> S. Rendall, *Distinguo*, p.6-7.

<sup>53</sup> S. Rendall, *Distinguo*, p.36-59.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p.110.

absorbs new ideas, combines them with existing ones, and expands as a consequence.<sup>55</sup>

As my synopsis of Sayce, Bencivenga and Rendall above demonstrates, much secondary literature on Montaigne has dealt in great detail with the issue of writing about oneself in the *Essais*. The work of other scholars, including G ralde Nakam and Jules Brody, will feature later in this chapter as part of the closer analysis of a selection of the essays. It is clear that there exists considerable variation in the interpretation of the nature of Montaigne's book, both between and within studies of the *Essais*. Yet in spite of the wide-ranging readings of Montaigne, the element of unity within the text is identified and examined by the vast majority of writers on the subject of Montaigne. It is Montaigne himself who writes in 'De la vanit ' that 'mon livre est tousjours un', and that 'si on y regarde, on trouvera que j'ay tout dict, ou tout design ', and in doing so expresses his eagerness to produce a text that is both coherent and comprehensive.<sup>56</sup> Montaigne's self-imposed brand of Authorship requires him to present a complete picture of his whole self, and he assures his reader that 'si j'eusse est  entre ces nations qu'on dict vivre encore sous la douce libert  des premieres loix de nature, je t'asseure que je m'y fusse tr s-volontiers peint tout entier, et tout nud.'<sup>57</sup> Writing and the presentation of the whole self are one and the same activity for Montaigne. This dimension of his work, viewed alongside the problematic nature of the roles of Author, or writer, and Hero, or self, within the *Essais*, suggests that the ideas proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin in his essay 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity'<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p.54 and p.113.

<sup>56</sup> S. Rendall, *Distinguo*, p.196.

<sup>57</sup> 'Au lecteur', p.35.

<sup>58</sup> See Chapter One of the present thesis, and M. Bakhtin, 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity', p.4-256.

may provide a fresh and useful insight into the process of the Authoring of the self in the *Essais*.

As Chapter One of the present thesis has explained, Mikhail Bakhtin's essay 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity' deals extensively with the act of Authoring, which for Bakhtin does not necessarily involve the writing of a narrative, although in Montaigne's case, Authorship does take the form of writing. His argument, as we have seen, is that each of us is constantly making sense of the world around us: we are engaged in the process of observing and reflecting on our surroundings, and in doing so, we are what Bakhtin calls Authors, who are constructing individual Novels of our own experience. As Michael Holquist explains, 'Bakhtin uses the literary genre of the novel as an allegory for representing existence as the condition of authoring'.<sup>59</sup> In this chapter, the term Novel will be used to refer to this process of making sense of the world, which is carried out by the Author, Montaigne. However, the Author must be accompanied by a second entity, whose presence is essential for the Novel to be constructed: the Hero. The Hero inhabits the world being observed by the Author, he is the focus of the Author's gaze, and he is contained within boundaries visible and conceivable to the Author. The Hero:

is given to me entirely enclosed *in* the world external to me; he is given to me as a constituent in it that is totally delimited on all sides in space. Moreover, at each given moment, I experience distinctly all of his boundaries, encompass all of him visually and can encompass all of him

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<sup>59</sup> M. Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his World* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990) p.30.

tangibly. I see the line that delineates his head against the background of the outside world and see all of the lines that delimit his body in the outside world. [He] is laid out before me in the exhaustive completeness as a thing among other things *in* the world external to me, without exceeding in any way the bounds of that world, and without in any way violating its visible, tangible plastic-pictorial unity.<sup>60</sup>

In Chapter One, I argued that, in the cases of the Authors, Ambroise Paré and Jean de Léry, the disordered body of the plague victim, monster or cannibal, as well as existing knowledge and ideas about the body, combine to become the Hero. In both cases, the distinction between the Author and the Hero is a conscious and tangible one, in that Paré and Léry are both engaged in presenting Heroes which are, in essence, different. Paré writes about the bodies of the plague victim and the monster precisely because they differ from the healthy and normal human body, and Léry's *Histoire d'un voyage* deals with people who are geographically and culturally foreign. In Chapters Two and Three, I have argued that the lines that divide the Author from the Hero in the texts of these two writers become blurred as a result of anxiety about the subject matter of the disordered body. However, I have demonstrated that this transgression of the line between Author and Hero is a subliminal one, in that it is not part of the Author's conscious or explicit intention in writing. It is, I will argue, this feature of the work of Paré and Léry that sets these two writers and their respective Novels apart from Montaigne and his *Essais*.

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<sup>60</sup> M. Bakhtin, 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity', p.36.

Pierre Villey claims that the *Essais* was originally written as a kind of commonplace book, and that the relatively impersonal nature of the essays composed in the early 1570s supports this argument.<sup>61</sup> However, as Villey notes, Montaigne's book becomes increasingly introspective, evolving over the course of more than twenty years into the intimate self-portrait in which the Author is also the 'matière'. By 1580, Montaigne has written that 'ce sont icy mes fantasies, par lesquelles je ne tasche point à donner à connoistre les choses, mais moy',<sup>62</sup> and 'quel que je me face connoistre, pourveu que je me face connoistre tel que je suis, je fay mon effect'.<sup>63</sup> This 'doubling' of Montaigne, who both writes and is written about, has, as we have seen, been the focus of much scholarly discussion. This chapter will pursue the question of Montaigne's writing of himself by examining parts of four of the key essays in which the process of Authoring is presented: 'Des livres', 'De la præsumption', 'Du repentir' and 'De la vanité'. The analysis of the theme of Authoring in these essays will be conducted using Bakhtinian terminology, which will facilitate the discussion of the various roles and functions performed by Montaigne, and of the method of Authoring which I suggest can be identified in the *Essais*.

The Authoring of the Bakhtinian Novel involves two processes, which are performed simultaneously. One is the projection of the Author into the Hero and his world, and the other is the observation of the Hero by the Author from a position outside the Hero, from where the Author can perceive the Hero's spatial and temporal context and boundaries. Montaigne's method of Authoring can be

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<sup>61</sup> P. Villey, *La Source et l'évolution des Essais*, vol. 2, p.7-37.

<sup>62</sup> 'Des livres' (II.x) p.78.

<sup>63</sup> 'De la præsumption' (II.xvii) p.315.



seen to involve both of these separate but simultaneous stages. In 'De la præsumption', he writes,

Le monde regarde tousjours vis à vis; moy, je replie ma veue au dedans, je la plante, je l'amuse là. Chacun regarde devant soy; moy, je regarde dedans moy: je n'ay affaire qu'à moy. Je me considere sans cesse, je me contrerolle, je me gouste [...] moy je me roule en moy mesme.<sup>64</sup>

Here, he is describing comprehensively the experience of being Montaigne, using verbs of physical sensation to lend a sense of solidity and tangibility to the experience. However, in addition to these verbs (*goûter*, *rouler*), Montaigne writes that 'je me considere sans cesse'. He is experiencing himself consciously, being himself and thinking about being himself. This self-awareness and introspection, I suggest, constitutes the first stage of Bakhtinian Authoring, in other words the Author's conscious projection of himself into the world of the Hero.

The second stage in the process of Authoring occurs when the Author takes up a position outside the Hero from which he can not only observe the Hero, but also perceive the Hero's spatial and temporal boundaries. As we have already seen, the specific environment inhabited by the Hero in the *Essais* is a striking feature of the text, but the significance of position and location generally is also evident, when Montaigne, describing the process of writing, says 'je me mets hors de moy',<sup>65</sup> and that, 'je considere mes affaires de loing et en gros'.<sup>66</sup> Montaigne considers his own process of observing and writing about himself to involve

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<sup>64</sup> 'De la præsumption' (II.xvii) p.314.

<sup>65</sup> 'De la vanité' (III.ix) p.176.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p.164.

retreating to an imagined position outside, or at a distance from himself. The objective of this second stage, according to Bakhtin, is to consummate the Hero, to fill in his boundaries, and to enable him to be seen as a complete and delineated figure. The *Essais* reveal a persistent Authorial preoccupation on Montaigne's part with presenting a coherent picture of himself, the Hero. In a discussion of the mind and the body in 'De la præsumption', Montaigne writes, that 'ceux qui veulent desprendre nos deux pieces principales et les sequestrer l'une de l'autre, ils ont tort. Au rebours, il les faut r'accoupler et rejoindre'.<sup>67</sup> Here, he is emphasising the unity of the human being in spite of its composite nature, comprising both body and soul, and criticises the perception of it as two separate components. In 'Du repentir', we see the same insistence on the wholeness of the individual, but this time with Montaigne making specific reference to the self he is depicting in the *Essais*. 'Je fay coustumierement entier ce que je fay et marche tout d'une piece'; 'Mes actions sont réglées et conformes'; 'Je me veux presenter et faire veoir par tout uniformément'.<sup>68</sup>

The question of the completeness of the portrait Montaigne paints of himself highlights the significance of boundaries, both temporal and spatial. As Bakhtin argues, the Author benefits from an 'excess of seeing', which enables him to see or imagine elements of the Hero that are imperceptible to the Hero himself: the moment of his death, for example, and the space behind his head. In Montaigne's attempt to construct a complete and coherent portrait of himself, this inability of the Hero to conceive of his own temporal and spatial boundaries, according to Bakhtin, could prove to be a serious impediment. However, there is

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<sup>67</sup> 'De la præsumption' (II.xvii) p.302.

<sup>68</sup> 'Du repentir' (III.ii) p.28-33.

evidence in the *Essais* of numerous strategies that are employed by Montaigne in his narrative, and the effect of these, I would argue, counteracts somewhat this obstacle to the production of a complete spatial and temporal context.

Temporal boundaries are easily identifiable in modern editions of the *Essais* thanks to the work of Fortunat Strowski, whose edition of the *Essais* (1906-1919) was the first to draw attention to the 'strata' in the text, alerting the modern reader to the edition in which particular essays, sections and phrases had first appeared. The highlighting of the various strata allows each part of the text to be dated, in other words, to be contained within a specific time frame. Although Montaigne did not intend for the *Essais* to be presented in this way, the method he used to write his book, in which he re-read earlier printed versions of the book and filled the margins with handwritten additions, makes it easy for the reader to distinguish early ideas from later ones. However, Montaigne does in addition include temporal indicators in places, and admits that his thoughts change over the course of time: 'Moy à cette heure et moy tantost, sommes bien deux; mais quand meilleur? je n'en puis rien dire'.<sup>69</sup> By recognising this, and by retaining in the text early ideas which are contradicted by later ones, Montaigne succeeds in assigning parts of his text to distinct units of time.

The most problematic time boundary with which Montaigne is confronted is that of his own temporal end: death. As Bakhtin suggests, and common sense underlines, the death of the Author who is writing about himself cannot be recorded in the way that he records the other events of his life. Montaigne's solution to this problem is not to write about, but rather to essay his own death, to

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<sup>69</sup> 'De la vanité' (III.ix) p.177.

imagine it and confront it as the reality it will become: when he writes that ‘je cherche à flatter la mort’,<sup>70</sup> Montaigne is describing a willingness to engage mentally with death, but also to familiarise himself with death physically.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, he considers himself to be thus prepared for death, which is evident when he writes, ‘ce que je veux faire pour le service de la mort est tousjours fait’.<sup>72</sup> Death for Montaigne has not yet become a reality, but his awareness of it as a definite future event has led him to imagine it fully, and in this sense I would argue that it is given both a temporal and a bodily reality in the text.

The concepts of time and the body are also connected with one another in another aspect of the text of the *Essais*. In his biography of Montaigne, Donald Frame reveals that the house and lands of the Montaigne estate came first into the possession of Raymond Eyquem (Montaigne’s paternal great-grandfather) when he purchased it from Guillaume Duboys in 1477. On Raymond’s death less than a year later, the estate passed to his eldest son, Grimon, whose own eldest child, Pierre, was the first Eyquem to be born at Montaigne, on September 29<sup>th</sup> 1495. Pierre died at the age of seventy-two, leaving Montaigne to his eldest son, Michel, Author of the *Essais*.<sup>73</sup> This same line of ascendancy appears in ‘De la ressemblance des enfants aux pères’ when Montaigne is describing the dual inheritance he has received from his male ancestors of kidney stones and an antipathy towards the practice of medicine. Firstly, the connection between Montaigne – who, we read, has been suffering from kidney stones for eighteen months at the time of writing – and his father is established when he writes that ‘il

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<sup>70</sup> ‘De la vanité’ (III.9), p.196.

<sup>71</sup> Here I interpret *flatter* to mean both to encourage, which suggests mental interaction, and to stroke or pat, which suggests physical contact.

<sup>72</sup> ‘De la vanité’ (III.ix) p.195.

<sup>73</sup> D. Frame, *Montaigne: A Biography* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1965) p.7-15.

est à croire que je dois à mon père cette qualité pierreuse: car il mourut merveilleusement affligé d'une grosse pierre, qu'il avait en la vessie'.<sup>74</sup> In bodily terms, Montaigne is experiencing physical symptoms of the legacy left to him by his father, and this is reflected in how he responds mentally and emotionally to his illness. Having expressed his wonder that a condition with such considerable impact could be passed from father to son in 'cette légère pièce de sa substance, de quoi il me bâtit', 'cette goutte de semence', Montaigne asks the forgiveness of doctors before going on to explain that 'par cette meme infusion et insinuation fatale, j'ai reçu la haine et le mépris de leur doctrine'.<sup>75</sup> His mistrust and dislike of medicine as practised by doctors is depicted as originating from the same source as the physical complaint from which he also suffers, and the connection between Montaigne and his male antecedents is solidified when he writes that 'cette antipathie [...] m'est héréditaire'. He continues: 'mon père a vécu soixante et quatorze ans, mon aïeul soixante et neuf, mon bisaïeul près de quatre-vingts, sans avoir goûté aucune sorte de médecine'.<sup>76</sup> In his critique of medicine, defined in this passage as 'tout ce qui n'était de l'usage ordinaire', Montaigne uses the impressive collective longevity of his forebears to quantify the effectiveness of their management of their own health and illness without the intervention of doctors.

However a second function of this listing of ancestors and ages is to identify the various stages in Montaigne's own genealogy. When he writes only a few lines later that 'il y a deux cents ans, il ne s'en faut que dix-huit, que cet essai nous dure: car le premier naquit l'an mil quatre cent deux', he depicts his great-grandfather's birth date as the point at which this male line originates. I contend

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<sup>74</sup> 'De la ressemblance des enfants aux pères' (II.37) p.1189.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1189.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1190.

therefore that Montaigne, as the current incumbent of the position of *paterfamilias*, is placing himself in a sequence of male figureheads, and in doing so locates himself on a temporal continuum. However, the fact that the progenitor of this genealogy, Raymond Eyquem, is also the first member of Montaigne's family to inhabit the estate at Montaigne means that even this chronological positioning has a defined spatial dimension. Montaigne occupies a position at the origin of the axes of time and space: he situates himself temporally, in a dynasty dating back to 1402; spatially, in the ancestral home established by Raymond Eyquem; and bodily, when he begins to experience symptoms of the disease from which his father also suffered. Once again, there is a strong and meaningful insistence on the connection between time, space and the body in Montaigne's narrative.

The *Essais* similarly depict Montaigne sitting at another spatio-temporal coordinate: that of France in the era of the Wars of Religion. His writing reveals Montaigne to be a man of his time, as references to the civil wars, barbarity, and violence of his own nation punctuate the text of the *Essais*. Montaigne remembers the time of the near-fatal accident in which he fell from his horse in relation to the wars raging in his home region: he goes riding 'pendant nos troisièmes troubles, ou deuxièmes (il ne me souvient pas bien de cela) [...] à une lieue de chez moi, qui suis assis dans le moyau de tout le trouble des guerres civiles de France'.<sup>77</sup> His discussion of the purported barbarity of the Brazilian tribesmen in 'Des cannibales' leads Montaigne to make a comparison with the conduct of his own people, and he concludes that the cruelty and bloodshed carried out in France and in the name of religion are proof of a greater moral degeneracy than the cannibalistic practice

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<sup>77</sup> 'De l'exercitation' (II.6) p.594.

of the New World. This brutality on the part of those engaged in the French Wars of Religion is extremely close to home:

Je pense qu'il y a plus de barbarie à manger un homme vivant, qu'à le manger mort, à déchirer par tourments et par gênes, un corps encore plein de sentiment, le faire rôtir par le menu, le faire mordre et meurtrir aux chiens, et aux pourceaux (comme nous l'avons non seulement lu, mais vu de fraîche mémoire, non entre des ennemis anciens, mais entre des voisins et concitoyens [...] ) que de le rôtir et manger après qu'il est trépassé.<sup>78</sup>

Montaigne is aware here of the awful presence of this torture and violence close at hand, taking place among his own people, in his domestic environment, and in recent memory. Indeed, the worrying proximity of war is yet again evident in 'De la physionomie', in which Montaigne writes, 'j'écrivais ceci environ le temps, qu'une forte charge de nos troubles, se croupit plusieurs mois, de tout son poids, droit sur moi'.<sup>79</sup> The act of writing the essay is described here as taking place in the vicinity of Montaigne, and during a period of local civil and religious conflict. Montaigne is a man of his time, documenting elements of the historical epoch in which he lives; but he is, furthermore, a man writing in this time, and the closeness of the hostilities to him and to the place in which he is writing lends the text a sense of immediacy. Writing and the events being written about are almost simultaneous, to the extent that the effect of the events preceding the act of writing persists into the fabric of the text. When Montaigne breaks off towards the end of 'De la ressemblance des enfants aux pères' from his condemnation of

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<sup>78</sup> 'Des cannibales' (I.30) p.325.

<sup>79</sup> 'De la physionomie' (III.12) p.1616.

medicine to address Madame de Duras, he does so under the influence of very recent events. 'Madame', he writes, 'vous me trouvâtes sur ce pas dernièrement, que vous me vîntes voir'.<sup>80</sup> The impression is created that, between the end of the discourse on medicine and the dedication to Madame de Duras, Montaigne has been interrupted in his writing by the arrival in person of the addressee. Similarly, in 'De l'expérience', Montaigne's description of his illness and methods of handling it is brought into the real time of writing when he explains that 'voici depuis de nouveau, que les plus légers mouvements épreignent le pur sang de mes reins';<sup>81</sup> a few pages later, and following a passage about the deterioration of the human body with age, one of Montaigne's teeth drops out while he is writing: 'voilà une dent qui me vient de choir, sans douleur, sans effort'.<sup>82</sup> Regardless of the truth of these various events, Montaigne's inclusion of them in the narrative reinforces the sense of immediacy of the text, in that the experiences of living the events and writing about them occur in quick succession.

Clearly, the appearance throughout the text of the *Essais* of references to Montaigne's particular space and time grounds the narrative in a defined spatio-temporal context. In terms of Bakhtin's theory, this identification by the Author of the dimensions of time and space in the world he observes and records are central to the construction of the Hero. Equally, as Elizabeth Grosz argues in *Space, time and Perversion*, 'the relations between an organism and its environment are blurred and confused [...] its environment is not clearly distinct from the organism, but is an active component of its identity'.<sup>83</sup> Montaigne's Authoring of himself and his

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<sup>80</sup> 'De la ressemblance des enfants aux pères' (II.37) p.1225.

<sup>81</sup> 'De l'expérience' (III.13) p.1705.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1717.

<sup>83</sup> E. Grosz, *Space, Time and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995) p.88.



experience depends significantly on the context in which he finds himself, but his ability to make sense of the self he is portraying in the *Essais*, in other words to complete the boundaries of his Hero, is heavily influenced by his awareness of the body. Elizabeth Grosz goes on to explain that 'bodies are always understood within a spatial and temporal context, and space and time remain conceivable only insofar as corporeality provides the basis for our perception and representation of them'.<sup>84</sup> In this reciprocal relationship of meaning, the experience of the body on its spatio-temporal co-ordinate is fundamental to the construction of the subject's self-identity, in this case, Montaigne's literary personality, the narrative voice of the *Essais*. But as Richard Regosin points out, there appears to be a tendency on Montaigne's part to distance himself from the familiar space and time that appear so often in his writing, and mentally to transplant himself into a series of geographical and temporal 'elsewheres'. To paraphrase Regosin, the real space and time of the *Essais*, or the era and location in which they are written, are a source of discomfort for Montaigne. If we accept this interpretation of Montaigne's attitude to his contemporary environment, we can begin to view his activities differently, as a kind of escapism he uses to overcome his anxiety with the world around him. As we have seen in 'De la vanité', he writes that travel offers him the chance to escape, albeit temporarily, from the onerous responsibilities of running his estate; being away from home brings freedom from the burdens of his everyday life: 'absent, je me dépouille de tous tels pensements [...] Quand je voyage, je n'ai à penser qu'à moi, et à l'emploie de mon argent'.<sup>85</sup> The mental relief he associates with travel is mirrored in physical terms, and indeed, when in 1580 Montaigne embarks on a journey across Switzerland and Italy, he does so with the aim of

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<sup>84</sup> E. Grosz, *Space, Time and Perversion*, p.84.

<sup>85</sup> 'De la vanité' (III.9) p.1490-91.

finding a cure for the kidney stones from which he was beginning acutely to suffer. The route of his journey across Switzerland and Italy runs through a series of towns where Montaigne was able to be treated with the reportedly healing waters. Travel, therefore, presents the opportunity to escape from the tiresome and painful aspects of life at home, and to alleviate both mental and bodily suffering.

The activities of reading and writing represent a similar form of escape from the domestic and familiar world, symbolised for Regosin by Montaigne's retreat to his tower. However, there is certainly more to this method of distancing himself than a simple, physical change of location. Reading texts by other writers in his library allows Montaigne to project himself into other places and times, in other words, to transport himself mentally into the position of another Bakhtinian Hero and experience the world of that Hero through the words of the book's writer, or Author. Montaigne's characteristic practice is to cite and quote other people in his own writing, and in doing so, he brings the worlds contained in other books into the world of his own experience, and then reproduces them in the context of his own argument. The processing of his reading material in this way shows Montaigne following the model of good Authorship advocated by Joachim Du Bellay in his 1549 *Deffence et illustration de la langue françoise*:

Immitant les meilleurs auteurs Grecz, se transformant en eux, les devorant, & après les avoir bien digerez, les convertissant en sang & nourriture, se proposant, chacun selon son naturel & l'argument qu'il vouloit elire, le meilleur auteur, dont ilz observoient diligemment toutes les

plus rares & exquis vertuz, & icelles comme grephes, ainsi que j'ay dict devant, entoient & apliquoient à leur langue.<sup>86</sup>

The result of this digestive process involving reading and writing is a text that shares certain features with the commonplace book. To continue with Du Bellay's metaphor, Montaigne consumes through reading, collecting and organising information and ideas that are particularly striking or meaningful to him, and then incorporates them into his writing, using them to enrich and build his own text. In spite of his heavy reliance on other texts as sources of the ideas he re-presents in the *Essais*, Montaigne persists in his preference for experience over received ideas as a route to knowledge, and the nature of the texts written by Ambroise Paré and Jean de Léry would, I suggest, have made them especially appealing to Montaigne for this reason.

As we saw earlier, Ambroise Paré's preface expresses his disapproval of physicians who are more familiar with medical theory than with the reality of illness, a concern echoed by Montaigne when he writes, 'c'est raison qu'ils [les médecins] prennent la vérole, s'ils la veulent savoir panser. Vraiment je m'en fierais à celui-là'.<sup>87</sup> Paré writes from the perspective of one who has acquired his expertise through observation, and has developed his surgical skills through practice. Furthermore, his intention in writing is to teach, to improve knowledge and understanding of bodily disorder, and in order to achieve this objective he is obliged to ensure that the content of his writing is accurate and avoids the alienating and complex terminology of other medical texts. Indeed, experience is

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<sup>86</sup> J. Du Bellay, *La Deffence et illustration de la langue francoyse* (Paris: Henri Chamard, 1948) p.42-43.

<sup>87</sup> 'De l'experience' (III.13) p.1680.

the primary source of Paré's knowledge of the various Heroes of his book as his is not an academic or theoretical understanding of the disordered bodies of the monster and the plague victim.

Jean de Léry, equally, is an observer, a spectator at the ritual killing and eating of the enemy captive in Brazil, and a witness to the consumption of the child's body in Sancerre. As an assistant to Villegaignon during the establishment of a French Protestant settlement in Brazil, and as a clergyman and negotiator during the siege of Sancerre, writing a record of his experiences in both places was not Léry's principal occupation, unlike his contemporary, André Thevet, an historian and royal cosmographer who also served as chaplain to Catherine de Medici.<sup>88</sup> Thevet's status suggests that he may belong to that category of writer described by Montaigne in 'Des Cannibales':

les fines gens remarquent bien plus curieusement, et plus de choses, mais ils les glosent: et pour faire valoir leur interprétation, et la persuader, ils ne se peuvent garder d'altérer un peu l'Histoire: Ils ne vous représentent jamais les choses pures; ils les inclinent et masquent selon le visage qu'ils leur ont vu: et pour donner crédit à leur jugement, et vous y attirer, prêtent volontiers de ce côté-là à la matière, l'allongent et l'amplifient.<sup>89</sup>

Thevet's account of his experiences in the New World is certainly a fascinating document for Montaigne, but the scholarly and professional nature of this book,

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<sup>88</sup> Thevet also travelled to Brazil with Villegaignon in 1555, but returned to France the following year. He was appointed chaplain to Catherine de Medici in 1558, and his book *Les singularitez de la France antarctique, autrement nommé Amerique* was published in the same year.

<sup>89</sup> 'Des Cannibales' (I.30) p.317.

written to inform and amuse the royal court, compels its reader to question its reliability, under Montaigne's criteria, as a true and accurate representation of the world it depicts. The religious polemic that surfaces from time to time in L  ry's *Histoire d'un voyage*, written in response to Thevet's claims in his 1575 *Cosmographie universelle* that the Protestants were to blame for the failure of Villegagnon's colony, might lead the reader to make the same judgement of L  ry's text. However, for the purposes of the present thesis, it is L  ry's meticulous descriptions of the life of the Toupinamba tribe that concern us here. L  ry, as a clergyman and former shoemaker, is not an academically trained writer, and the fact that he spends three years living in Brazil, and participates in the life and activities of the tribe (although, crucially, not in their acts of cannibalism) gives him the additional advantage of having extensive experience of what he describes. In his reporting, specifically, of the Toupinamba tribe, with whom Montaigne later concerns himself in 'Des Cannibales', L  ry avoids the failings that Montaigne detects in other writers.

L  ry shares with Par   an intense and lengthy involvement with the Hero of his writing, and it is this quality of *t  moignage*, the reporting of what the writer has witnessed and experienced personally, that recommends the work of these two writers within Montaigne's methodological framework. In using the books written by Par   and L  ry as sources for his own *Essais*, Montaigne is keeping the distance between himself as Author and his subject matter as Hero as short as possible. Unable himself to experience the New World, to treat plague victims or to examine monstrous specimens in close detail, Montaigne seeks alternative methods of collecting reliable information, and does so by acquiring the written testimonies of the first-hand experiences of others. Montaigne uses reading to project himself

into other worlds, or Novels of experience, and although these worlds enter Montaigne's own experience only through his imagination, his intention is clearly to position himself as near as is possible to the reality of them.

Elizabeth Grosz argues that the body and the space it inhabits are reciprocal vehicles of meaning, in that each is only understood in relation to the other. To rephrase this idea using Bakhtinian terminology, the Hero is only able to be consummated when his world and its spatial and temporal boundaries are established by the Author, and the route to understanding this world is through the Hero's body. I have already explored the major role of Montaigne's spatial and temporal context in the creation of the Hero of the *Essais*, in other words Montaigne's literary identity, and I will now continue by looking in more detail at the role of the body in relation to its context in this process of Authoring. I will begin with an analysis of 'Des Cannibales', the essay in which Montaigne is engaged in Authoring the body that is rendered disordered by the act of cannibalism, and inhabits an environment that is foreign to the Author. This will be followed by an examination of how Montaigne deals with the disordered body of the monster as it appears in an environment familiar to him. Finally, I will return to Montaigne and the ways in which he Authors illness, as a generic physical event that affects the body, and ultimately as the phenomenon that results in the disintegration of his own body.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Montaigne and Bodily Disorder

#### Part One: The Experience of Cannibalism and Monstrosity

Montaigne's book bears witness to its writer's fascination with the human body and increasingly as the book progresses with his own body, sensory experience and physical idiosyncrasies. Indeed it is to the unusual, problematic or peculiar elements of the human body in particular that Montaigne devotes his attention. The aim of this chapter is to examine how two categories of disordered body are manifested in the *Essais*, by analysing the chapters and passages in which they appear. It will focus in particular on how Montaigne experiences bodily disorder and disordered bodies, and on the remarkably material nature of his writing about the body. We will begin by looking at Montaigne's experience and treatment of the disordered body of the New World cannibal, an 'other' in geographical, cultural and bodily terms. Secondly, we will consider the figure of the monster in the *Essais*, a strange and grotesque body that inhabits the Author's domestic environment. Finally, we will identify the similarities between the

depiction and uses in the *Essais* of the figures of monstrosity and cannibalism, and will analyse the effect of this on the reader's perception of what Bakhtin would label these Heroes and their Author.

### Words and Flesh: Cannibalism in the *Essais*

‘Savages!’ he echoed ironically. ‘So you are astonished, Professor, at having set foot on a strange land and finding savages? Savages! Where are there not any? Besides, are they worse than others, these whom you call savages?’<sup>1</sup>

They are brave before their enemies, loving towards their (several) wives, steadfast in battle, and, like the Houynhms encountered by Gulliver on the fourth of his travels, possess no words for lying, envy, treachery or cheating.<sup>2</sup> And yet they are violent, vengeful and repeatedly engage in the killing, bloody dismemberment and eating of enemy captives. These are the New World inhabitants of ‘Des cannibales’, the famous essay of 1580 in which civilised Europe and savage Brazil are held up beside one another for cross-examination, and the concepts of human cruelty and bodily violence are challenged and redefined by the sceptical mind of Montaigne. The alarming evidence he produces in ‘Des cannibales’ of French brutality comes from the writer’s own experience of his domestic environment especially during the French Wars of Religion. When it comes to Brazil, however, this is not the case. A writer who, as we have seen, prizes experience as a route to understanding, Montaigne never saw the Americas for himself and was instead forced to rely for his information on the recounted experiences of others. Favouring as sources the eyewitness accounts of figures like the ‘homme simple et grossier’, who had lived for some considerable time in Brazil

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<sup>1</sup> J. Verne, *Twenty-Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, Part I Chapter xxi.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Des cannibales’ (I.31) p.204.



and was employed in Montaigne's household, over the more learned written accounts of cosmographers like André Thevet, Montaigne constructs his version of the cannibal story around what he considers to be the most reliable kind of source: that of the man able to report his experiences without clouding his narrative with the interpretations and preconceived ideas likely to proceed from a more scholarly mind. Jean de Léry, originally a cobbler from Burgundy who converted to Calvinism at the age of eighteen and subsequently accompanied Villegagnon's expedition to Brazil in 1557, appears to have fitted Montaigne's bill, as parts of his *Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre du Brésil*, and the information contained therein about the habitat, customs and cannibalistic practices of the Toupinamba tribe with whom its Author lived, are reproduced, in places almost word for word, in Montaigne's 'Des cannibales'.

The New World cannibal is an object of Montaigne's curiosity, a Hero of his book. In reporting and reflecting on this newly-discovered foreign culture, Montaigne draws on numerous sources of information, both written accounts and verbal reports. French translations of Spanish texts, such as Girolamo Benzoni's *Histoire nouvelle du nouveau monde* and Francisco Lopez de Gómara's *Histoire générale des Indes*, were available to Montaigne and appear in Pierre Villey's inventory of Montaigne's reading.<sup>3</sup> However, it is clear from many passages, and notably in several found in 'Des cannibales', that Montaigne relies most heavily on the French accounts written by Léry.<sup>4</sup> In addition, Montaigne makes numerous references to

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<sup>3</sup> G. Benzoni, *Histoire nouvelle du nouveau monde*, trans. U. Chauveton (Geneva: Eustace Vignon, 1579); F. Lopez de Gómara, *Histoire générale des Indes occidentales & terres neuves*, trans. M. Fumée (Paris: Michel Sonnius, 1568).

<sup>4</sup> A. Thevet, *Les Singularitez de la France Antarctique* (Antwerp: C. Plantin, 1558). The passages in 'Des cannibales' describing the food and drink of the Toupinamba tribe, and the treatment by its members of enemy captives, are remarkably similar in content to Jean de Léry's account in his *Histoire d'un voyage fait en la Terre du Brésil*.

the verbal evidence of travellers who have returned to Europe from the New World, acknowledging in particular the testimony of the 'homme simple et grossier' who had spent some considerable time in the Americas.<sup>5</sup> This same man, whose straightforward and unpretentious nature places him among the most reliable of witnesses in Montaigne's opinion, is reported to have introduced Montaigne to other former travellers to the New World: 'il m'a faict voir à diverses fois plusieurs matelots et marchans qu'il avoit cogneuz en ce voyage. Ainsi je me contente de cette information, sans m'enquerir de ce que les cosmographes en disent'. Montaigne, in characteristic fashion, values the knowledge gained from experience over the accounts and glosses of learned writers, who, 'pour avoir cet avantage sur nous d'avoir veu la Palestine [...] veulent jouir de ce privilege de nous conter nouvelles de tout le demeurant du monde'.<sup>6</sup> Finally, Montaigne reports enjoying a long conversation, through an unsatisfactory interpreter, with an inhabitant of Brazil who visited Rouen in 1562.<sup>7</sup> Through published accounts by writers who had visited the New World, verbal testimonies from former travellers and personal contact with a Brazilian native, Montaigne is brought as close to the people and customs of the New World as is possible without travelling there to witness it for himself. Yet in spite of this reduction in the distance between Montaigne and the New World, a gap remains between the Author and the Hero he is attempting to depict in the essays devoted to this other world. Montaigne continues to play the roles we have seen him performing in other essays. He is still the Author who observes the Hero and the world, as well as himself being a Hero, the 'je', who, to use Bakhtin's terminology, is the focus of the Novel, and whose world is depicted in the text. But the New World continues to exist beyond the

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<sup>5</sup> 'Des cannibales' (I.31), p.202; 'J'ay eu long temps avec moy un homme qui avoit demeuré dix ou douze ans en cet autre monde qui a esté decouvert en nostre siecle', p.200.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.203.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.213.

boundaries of Montaigne's world. It is geographically remote, and the connection between Montaigne and this foreign culture is always ruptured because the New World appears to him refracted through the first-hand witness who is not himself, and the interpreter whose 'bestise' precludes an unambiguous exchange between Montaigne and the Brazilian native.<sup>8</sup> In addition, the difference between European cultural practice and that of the New World, which as we have seen involves the killing and eating of human flesh, appears insurmountable. So what is at stake when Montaigne decides to include this other world in the book of which he claims himself to be 'la matiere'? And to what extent does the location of the cannibal change from being outside to being inside the world depicted in the *Essais*?

In Chapter Three, we explored the problem of cannibalism, the Brazilian cultural practice in which the body of the consumed is fragmented and distributed to multiple consumers, whose bodies in turn are penetrated by the flesh of the consumed when they eat it. Cannibalism is therefore an act committed by a people foreign to our European Authors, Léry and Montaigne, and which blurs the boundaries and compromises the individuality and unity of each of the human bodies involved. For both participants the boundaries of the body are altered drastically and permanently, and this, for Léry, is a source of anxiety and, in the case of the cannibalism of the child in Sancerre, profound moral revulsion. In the European mentality, the consumption of human flesh is abhorrent, an alien form of behaviour which leads to the definition of its New World practitioners as savages, uncivilised and brutal. As we have already seen, the body whose boundaries are ruptured or permeated is, according to Douglas and Grosz, a

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<sup>8</sup> 'Des cannibales' (I.31) p.213.

source of profound unease, but the threat represented by this corporeal disorder may, in Bakhtinian terms, be reduced or overcome through the process of writing about the experience, in other words, by Authoring. We have already analysed L  ry's role as an Author, framing the cannibal in a clearly-defined spatial and temporal context, and creating a storyboard version of the act of cannibalism using the techniques of characterisation, stage direction, dialogue, and so on. The result of this process of Authoring is that the cannibal Hero is stripped of his associations with savagery and disorder, and his anthropophagous behaviour is given a moral, traditional and ceremonial status. Montaigne, I will argue, can be seen to perform a similar Authorial role in the depiction of cannibalism found in the *Essais*.

Firstly, Montaigne constructs a world for his Hero in 'Des cannibales', embedding the body of the cannibal in a clearly-delineated spatial and temporal context. The cannibals' spatial location is described in detail, and Montaigne's account of their geographical and domestic environment owes much to L  ry's *Histoire d'un voyage*. The New World inhabitants of 'Des cannibales' occupy a location distinct and geographically distant from Montaigne, that is, from both the man and the estate that gives him his name and is such a fundamental part of his book. They are depicted inhabiting their 'contr  e de pa  s tr  s-plaisante et bien temper  e' and we are told that 'ils sont assis le long de la mer, et fermez du cost   de la terre de grandes et hautes montaignes'.<sup>9</sup> The cannibals' territory is bordered by mountains and the sea, framed here in a landscape whose features and dimensions are carefully enumerated. They are contained, or to use Bakhtinian terminology, consummated, in spatial terms because Montaigne exposes in the text

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<sup>9</sup> 'Des cannibales' (I.31) p.205.

the geographical boundaries that delineate the location in which the cannibals reside. Montaigne, who inhabits a spatial context entirely foreign to that of the cannibal, presents this territory as a delineated area and, in what he writes about the tribal culture, this is a perception also shared by the cannibals themselves. As part of his description of their warfare Montaigne writes of the cannibals that,

Ils ne sont pas en debat de la conquête de nouvelles terres, car ils jouyssent encore de cette uberté naturelle qui les fournit sans travail et sans peine de toutes choses necessaires, en telle abondance qu'ils n'ont que faire d'agrandir leur limites.<sup>10</sup>

The 'limites', here, are the territorial boundaries of the tribal region, which, Montaigne explains, the cannibals experience no desire to extend beyond their needs, in contrast to the European travellers who, we read at the beginning of 'Des cannibales', are motivated by the desire to colonise new lands, and who have, with respect to territory, 'les yeux plus grands que le ventre'.<sup>11</sup> The absence of land-lust from the cannibals' outlook implies that, from their perspective, the boundaries of their world are fixed and the shape of the tribal space is, as a result, constant and stable. The perception of the tribal region which is held by its indigenous inhabitants is very different from the way in which it is perceived by the European incomers. Having explained that this same Brazilian territory is 'l'endroit où Vilegaignon print terre [et] qu'il surnomma la France Antartique', Montaigne refers to it as 'un país infini'.<sup>12</sup> At this early point in 'Des cannibales', Montaigne is considering the question of New World territory through the lens of European

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<sup>10</sup> 'Des cannibales' (I.31) p.208.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.200.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.200.

colonisation, and the image that appears is of an entirely *un*bounded land mass whose formless state invites the response made here by Villegagnon. He imposes boundaries on what Europe considers to be an undefined and amorphous area firstly by laying claim to the land and secondly by naming it 'la France Antartique'. Villegagnon's act is one of territorial cannibalism in that European and New World boundaries are consequently altered: Brazil is incorporated by France and the two territories come to share one name. However, in spite of the opposition that appears in Montaigne's narrative between the contradictory Brazilian and European views of the region's boundaries, both perspectives perform the same function, which is to delineate the territory in question. The natives of the area consider its boundaries to be defined by its capacity to provide for its inhabitants 'toutes choses nécessaires', and the colonisers, who do not share this view, impose different but equally clear boundaries upon the territory in order to satisfy their own desires and ambitions.

Furthermore, Montaigne, whose own home environment receives particular attention elsewhere in the *Essais*, gives a comprehensive account of the cannibals' domestic setting.

Leurs bastimens sont fort longs, et capables de deux or trois cents ames, estoffez d'escorse de grands arbres, tenans à terre par un bout et se soustenans et appuyans l'un contre l'autre par le feste, à la mode d'aucunes de noz granges, desquelles la couverture pend jusques à terre, et sert de flaq.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> 'Des cannibales' (I.31) p.205.

Later, he adds that the long barns in which the Brazilian natives live ‘sont bastimens qui ont bien cent pas de longueur’.<sup>14</sup> The shapes, textures and dimensions of the cannibals’ living spaces punctuate the description with the result that Montaigne exposes the structure of their immediate domestic setting in the same way as he reveals the wider geographical margins of their territory.

All of these geographical and domestic features belong to a landscape that is foreign to Montaigne, but the system of measurement he uses to denote their dimensions is a European one. The territory of the tribe measures ‘cent lieuës ou environ d’estendue en large’ and the long barns in which the Brazilian natives live are ‘bastimens qui ont bien cent pas de longueur’.<sup>15</sup> The use of units of measurement (‘lieuës’) and a number (‘cent’), which was a system not used by the Brazilian natives, who possess ‘nulle science de nombres’, means that in spite of their geographical distance and distinctness they continue to appear within a context explained using a European framework of signs.<sup>16</sup> Brazilian buildings and surroundings are compared qualitatively and quantitatively to features recognisable to the European reader: the structure of their houses, for example, is compared to that of ‘*noz granges*’.<sup>17</sup> In this way, Montaigne also provides familiar points of reference which enable the cannibal’s spatial context to be imagined clearly by readers who have not experienced the New World in person, a category of reader which of course includes Montaigne. He is therefore presenting the cannibals’ environment in a way that allows this foreign space to be Authored in terms indigenous to Europe, and in doing so, forges a connection between the two

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<sup>14</sup> ‘Des cannibales’ (I.31) p.206.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.205-06.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p.204.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p.205. Emphasis mine.

territories, in that the expanse of one, the tribal region of Brazil, is depicted in the text using a technical language and a system of measurement originating in the other, Europe. Moreover, the French term 'lieuë' which is used by Montaigne to measure the extent of the cannibals' territory in earlier sections of the essay is transformed into the 'lieu' used by the cannibal with whom Montaigne converses in its conclusion to indicate an area large enough to hold the number of men over whom he had authority in his own land. Montaigne asks his question to the cannibal, through the inadequate interpreter, and explains that, in answer, the cannibal 'me montra une espace de lieu, pour signifier que c'estoit autant qu'il en pourroit en une telle espace, ce pouvoit estre quatre ou cinq mille hommes'.<sup>18</sup> The two terms 'lieuë' and 'lieu' are not only connected by the fact that they are homonymic, but also by their shared function. They are both used, one by Montaigne and the other by the cannibal, to indicate the size of an area of Brazilian territory. In other words, the 'lieuë' and the 'lieu' represent a mutual notion of space that is shared by Montaigne and the cannibal. Finally, the cannibals' native territory is described, as we have seen, as being bordered on one side by the sea and on the other by a range of 'grandes et hautes *montaignes*'.<sup>19</sup> Montaigne's name and the name of his estate, the domestic environment in which he is writing the *Essais*, appear here as a component of the Brazilian landscape, and this name is used to refer to one of the elements that together form the geographical perimeter of the cannibals' territory. The language Montaigne is using here to convey the detail of the tribe's spatial boundaries is not merely familiar to the European mind, but personal to the Author himself and to his own territory. The process of describing the cannibal's geographical and domestic setting can be seen, therefore,

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<sup>18</sup> 'Des cannibales' (I.31) p.213.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p.205. Emphasis mine.



both as a method of establishing the boundaries of the Hero's spatial context, and also as Montaigne's way of experiencing the dimensions of the material world of the cannibal, or projecting himself mentally into the Hero's physical environment through visualising it in quantitative and qualitative detail.

In addition to the spatial detail that is provided in Montaigne's account of the New World cannibal, a strong temporal dimension is also apparent from his description. Again relying heavily for information on L  ry's report of the life of the Toupinamba, Montaigne describes the daily routine of the cannibal tribe. He tells us that they rise at dawn ('Ils se levent avec le soleil'), waking to the sound of the older men of the tribe walking through the sleeping quarters, urging their companions daily to be both valiant in battle and loving towards their wives. We learn too that although the main activity of the tribe is dancing ('Toute la journ  e se passe    dancer'), the women are responsible each day for preparing a drink which is brewed from roots and served warm in the middle of the day, while the young men go hunting: 'Les plus jeunes vont    la chasse [...] Une partie des femmes s'amuse[n]t cependant    chauffer leur breuvage, qui est leur principal office'. The cannibals, we are told, eat only one meal a day, soon after waking, but drink their warm 'breuvage' throughout the day: '[ils] mangent soudain apr  s s'estre levez, pour toute la journ  e; car ils ne font autre repas que celui-l   [...] ils boivent    plusieurs fois sur jour, et d'autant'.<sup>20</sup> Montaigne's description of the cannibal way of life contains frequent references to the times at which things happen, which establishes that there is a fixed and identifiable routine to the tribal day and that patterns of behaviour systematically occur within a defined temporal structure. In the same way as the domestic context is delineated in spatial terms, as

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<sup>20</sup> All quotations in this section are from 'Des cannibales' (I.31) p.205.

we have seen above, the daily routine of the tribe and its activities in that domestic sphere are also identified.

In addition to this quotidian time frame, Montaigne locates the world of the cannibal in a broader temporal structure. The New World is a recent appearance in the European imagination and is a place 'qui a esté decouvert en nostre siecle, en l'endroit où Vilegaignon print terre, qu'il surnomma la France Antartique'.<sup>21</sup> In the experience of Europe, and consequently in the experience of our Author, the world of the cannibal has a temporal beginning, or a birth-date, and this notion is reflected in the other essay Montaigne devotes to the New World, 'Des coches'. Here, when describing Peru and the Incas (not a cannibal tribe like the Toupinamba, but belonging to the New World nonetheless) Montaigne frequently uses the imagery and language of childhood in his depiction. The New World that appears in 'Des coches' is 'un monde enfant' and is 'si nouveau et si enfant qu'on luy apprend encore son a, b, c'. In Montaigne's narrative, America 'estoit encore tout nud au giron, et ne vivoit que des moyens de sa mere nourrice' at the time of the European arrival.<sup>22</sup> When viewed from this European perspective the New World appears as a newborn at an early stage in its development and lifespan. However, in 'Des coches', Montaigne extends his illustration of the New World time frame to include an explanation of the Inca understanding of their own temporal context: 'Ils croyoyent que l'estre du monde se depart en cinq aages et en la vie de cinq soleils consecutifs, desquels les quatre avoient desjà fourny leur temps, et que celui qui leur esclairoit estoit le cinquiesme'.<sup>23</sup> These inhabitants of the New World have developed their own

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<sup>21</sup> 'Des cannibales' (I.31) p.200.

<sup>22</sup> 'Des coches' (III.6) p.886-87.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p.892.

perception of history as cyclical, and of the era in which they are living in relation to the past, and by including this detail, Montaigne gives his Hero a world that is temporally defined in terms developed by the Hero himself. The Hero appears in Montaigne's narrative, therefore, in two different temporal contexts, one established as a notion in the European imagination and the other as a concept with indigenous origins. As I have argued above, the spatial dimensions of the New World are understood differently by its native inhabitants and its European colonisers, but in spite of the conflicting nature of these views the result is that the cannibal territory is presented as delineated or 'consummated'. The same situation arises when we consider the temporal context of the New World Hero. In Montaigne's account, Europe is depicted as perceiving the temporal boundaries of the New World to exist in very recent history precisely because America has been recently discovered: it is a new feature in the European imagination. By contrast, the temporal context of the New World from the point of view of its native inhabitants is equally fixed, in that there are frequent references in Montaigne's narrative to temporal rhythms and routines, but the native image of the New World's history is more extensive. However, the nature and origin of these notions of the New World's temporal context is of less importance than the fact that Montaigne includes frequent references to the time frame in which his cannibal Hero exists. In Montaigne's narrative, the world of the cannibal is associated with aspects of time such as daily routine, cultural history and chronology, and therefore appears to us as a temporally-delineated Hero.

The spatial and temporal boundaries of the New World emerge from the text of the *Essais* when Montaigne describes it to us. He accumulates fragments of information about the domestic environment, geographical location, daily routine

and historical context of his Hero, and constructs from these data a spatial and temporal frame inside which the cannibal appears. The Hero's world, what Bakhtin describes as the space behind the Hero's head, is thereby delineated, its boundaries completed or 'consummated' by the Author. However, the boundaries of the Brazilian New World context are less problematic than those of its inhabitant's body, fragmented and penetrated as it is through the act of anthropophagy. In the section that follows we will examine specifically the figure of the cannibal that appears in Montaigne's carefully defined context in order to reveal how he addresses the issue of the body whose boundaries are transgressed by the consumption of human flesh, or by being consumed.

The account of the act of cannibalism that appears in 'Des cannibales' follows a lengthy description of the life of the Toupinamba tribe. This includes information about, among other things, their clothing, sleeping arrangements, activities and spiritual life in addition to the details of landscape, housing, diet and cultural history I have mentioned above.<sup>24</sup> And it is in the context of a similar, flatly descriptive account of the way the Toupinamba conduct their wars with enemy tribes that their practice of cannibalism is presented. Montaigne writes:

Après avoir long temps bien traité leurs prisonniers, et de toutes les commoditez dont ils se peuvent aviser, celui qui en est le maistre, faict une grande assemblée de ses cognoissans; il attache une corde à l'un des bras du prisonnier, par le bout de laquelle il le tient, esloigné de quelques pas, de peur d'en estre offensé, et donne au plus cher de ses amis l'autre bras à

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<sup>24</sup> 'Des cannibales' (I.31) p.204-07.

tenir de mesme; et eux deux, en présence de toute l'assemblée,  
l'assomment à coups d'espée.<sup>25</sup>

Montaigne is borrowing heavily, here, from Léry's earlier description in the *Histoire d'un voyage* of the sequence of events leading to the slaughter and consumption of the captive's body, and Montaigne, like the Author of his source of information, emphasises the organised and ceremonial nature of the tribal act. In Montaigne's version of the story, the treatment of the captive remains undeniably violent, but it is a controlled violence, governed by tradition and precedent, as the use of the present tense, which suggests that this is a generic form of behaviour, illustrates. Montaigne continues:

Cela faict, ils le rostissent et en mangent en commun et en envoient des lopins à ceux de leurs amis qui sont absens. Ce n'est pas, comme on pense, pour s'en nourrir, ainsi que faisoient anciennement les Scythes; c'est pour représenter une extreme vengeance.<sup>26</sup>

Montaigne firstly anticipates his reader's potential and incorrect interpretation of the act of cannibalism as functional (the tribe's method of feeding its members) and then provides an alternative explanation, which is that the anthropophagous actions of the tribe are in fact prompted by feelings of friendship, of revenge and the memory of absent friends. The description of the violent killing is punctuated with allusions to the moral values and virtues of its perpetrators, who are depicted here as being motivated by their feelings of solidarity and generosity. Similarly,

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<sup>25</sup> 'Des cannibales' (I.31) p.207.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.207.

Montaigne writes later in the essay about the stances adopted by the prisoner and his captors during the execution process, using features of dialogue and characterisation in his description, which is a process that I have argued in Chapter Three of the present thesis is also performed by Léry. Montaigne explains that, while the captors treat their prisoners munificently in material terms, they simultaneously subject them to sustained mental torture. He writes that the Toupinamba ‘les traictent en toute liberté’, and he is alluding, here, to the more detailed account in the *Histoire d’un voyage* in which Léry lists the physical comforts provided for the prisoner by his captors.<sup>27</sup> Their material generosity is accompanied, however, by dire warnings of the prisoner’s fate: the captors ‘les entretiennent communément des menasses de leur mort future, des tourmens qu’ils y auront à souffrir, des apprests qu’on dresse pour cet effect, du detrachement de leurs membres et du festin qui se fera à leurs despens’.<sup>28</sup> The narrative is focused on the prisoner’s bodily experience, but the objective of the captors’ behaviour is entirely psychological: ‘Tout cela se faict pour cette seule fin d’arracher de leur bouche quelque parole molle ou rabaissée, ou de leur donner envie de s’en fuyr, pour gagner cet avantage de les avoir espouvantez, et d’avoir faict force à leur constance’.<sup>29</sup> Equally, the prisoner’s rejoinders (‘«Ces muscles, dit-il, cette chair et ces veines, ce sont les vostres, pauvres fols que vous estes; vous ne recognoissez pas que la substance des membres de vos ancestres s’y tient encore : savourez-les bien, vous y trouverez le goust de vostre propre chair»’) relate to matters of the body, but are pronounced as a mental challenge and as proof of the prisoner’s determination. His words may articulate a bodily threat, but they represent, in Montaigne’s version, the prisoner’s desire to insult and defy his

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<sup>27</sup> ‘Des cannibales’ (I.31) p.209.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p.209.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p.209.

captors.<sup>30</sup> In the context of the act of cannibalism, the body is central and fundamental to the practice, but the objective of the anthropophagy, or the motivation behind it, is not bodily. As we have already seen, Montaigne is careful to point out that the cannibals do not consume human flesh as food. Rather, the cannibal body is the site on which the contest of will between the consumer and the consumed is played out. Cannibalism, in fact, undergoes the same transformation here as I have argued happens in Léry's *Histoire d'un voyage*. It is presented as systematic and meaningful, both a ceremony conducted in order to perpetuate traditional tribal customs, and an exercise by way of which the prisoner can demonstrate his powers of mental endurance. In stressing the psychological and tribally- or ethnically-motivated dimensions of cannibalism in his account of the practice, Montaigne, paradoxically, brings defined parameters and moral order to this activity, which, as I have argued earlier in the present chapter, involves the drastic and irreversible fragmentation of the body.

The brutality of the treatment of the prisoner is, nevertheless, emphasised only a few lines later, but Montaigne is careful to frame this admission of New World barbarity with evidence of Europe's tendency to behave still more cruelly than the Brazilian tribe. Montaigne acknowledges the 'horreur barbaresque' of the Brazilian custom, but precedes this description with a statement that the cannibal tribe were able to discover a more severe method than their own of exacting revenge by observing the Portuguese allies of their enemy tribe:

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<sup>30</sup> 'Des cannibales' (I.31) p.211: '[les prisonniers] pressent leurs maistres de se haster de les mettre en cette espreuve; ils les deffient, les injurient, leur reprochent de leur lacheté et le nombre de batailles perduës contre les leurs'.

ayant apperceu que les Portuguois, qui s'estoient r'alliez à leurs adversaires, usoient d'une autre sorte de mort contre eux, quand ils les prenoient, qui estoit de les enterrer jusques à la ceinture, et tirer au demeurant du corps force coups de traict, et les pendre après, ils penserent que ces gens icy de l'autre monde, comme ceux qui avoyent semé la connoissance de beaucoup de vices parmy leur voisinage, et qui estoient beaucoup plus grands maistres qu'eux en toute sorte de malice, ne prenoient pas sans occasion cette sorte de vengeance, et qu'elle devoit estre plus aigre que la leur, commencerent de quitter leur façon ancienne pour suivre cette-cy.<sup>31</sup>

Conspicuous by their absence in this account of the Portuguese method of exacting vengeance are the explanatory and qualifying adjectives found in the passage relating to the traditional Brazilian treatment of enemy captives. The Portuguese practice is not motivated by honour or solidarity, but is instead characterised as malicious, immoral and bitter. And having placed this evidence of wilful and gratuitous Portuguese brutality before it, Montaigne completes the European frame around the violence of the Brazilian natives by following it with moral condemnation of contemporary behaviour within his own culture and experience. He makes a direct comparison between Europe and Brazil to expose the relative brutality of both nations: 'Je ne suis pas marry que nous remerquons l'horreur barbaresque qu'il y a en une telle action [celle du Brésil], mais ouy bien dequoy, jugeans bien de leurs fautes, nous soyons si aveuglez aux nostres'.<sup>32</sup> The sequence of events in the Brazilian killing and eating of the captive has, as we have seen, been reported and explained in a measured third-person narrative with

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<sup>31</sup> 'Des cannibales' (I.31) p.207.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p.207-08.



no explicit acknowledgement from Montaigne of the brutality of the act. The effect of surrounding the explicit moral judgement (when it eventually appears several lines later) in this way with evidence of European behaviour that is still more cruel and barbarous, is to relativise the perceived savagery of the Brazilian tribe. Their practice of killing and eating their prisoners is transformed from being the repugnant alien behaviour of an uncivilised tribe to being a method of responding to familiar cultural values (honour, friendship and solidarity) that is, in fact, less contemptible than the conduct of their European counterparts. The structure of Montaigne's argument ensures that the Brazilian natives are presented as inhabiting the same moral plane, if not the same geographical landscape, as does his European reader, in that they share a number of cultural and community values. The cannibals remain distant and different, but have also become to some extent domesticated, in that their behaviour and cultural practices can be understood on the same moral scale as can European conduct. Montaigne has, in effect, extended the boundaries of his own world to embrace the behaviour of the cannibal. In interpreting the case of the Brazilian tribe according to the codes of his own domestic context, Montaigne has established both a binary opposition and a firm connection between the two cultures: 'voilà des hommes bien sauvages; car, ou il faut qu'ils le soyent bien à bon escient, ou que nous le soyons; il y a une merveilleuse distance entre leur forme et la nostre'.<sup>33</sup> This chapter will now go on to explore the ways in which Montaigne reinforces this connection to the point of incorporating the New World into the world of the *Essais*, and also, paradoxically, how he presents the cannibal culture as a consummated Hero in its own right.

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<sup>33</sup> 'Des cannibales' (I.31) p.211.

The following passage from 'Des cannibales' is representative of what I suggest is a paradoxical depiction of the New World in the *Essais*:

C'est une nation [...] en laquelle il n'y a aucune espece de trafique; nul cognoissance de lettres; nulle science de nombres; nul nom de magistrat, ny de superiorité politique; nul usage de service, de richesse ou de pauvreté; nuls contrats; nulles successions; nuls partages; nulles occupations qu'oyssives; nul respect de parenté que commun; nuls vestemens; nulle agriculture; nul metal; nul usage de vin ou de bled.<sup>34</sup>

The culture, social structures, behaviour and habits of the Brazilian inhabitants bear little resemblance to those of Europe, and Montaigne's anaphoric repetition of negative adjectives here appears to reinforce this sense of difference. In spite of this difference, the connection between the two cultures persists nonetheless because Montaigne establishes a binary opposition between them using Europe as the point of reference. Elsewhere in the essay, he describes the Brazilian natives as they *are*, but in the passage quoted above he describes them as they are *not*. In this passage, Europe stands as the benchmark against which the New World is depicted and provides the terms and structures within which it is interpreted. When Montaigne then goes on to write 'Combien trouveroit il [Platon] la republique qu'il a imaginée esloignée de cette perfection', he in effect reverses this relationship.<sup>35</sup> The New World becomes the standard to which Plato's *Republic* is compared, and as a result Brazil now stands in the position of reference point that was formerly occupied by Europe. What is more, it outshines its more civilised

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<sup>34</sup> 'Des cannibales' (I.31) p.204.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p.204.

counterpart in moral terms. Montaigne simultaneously presents the cannibals as alien to European culture as well as comparable and indeed superior to it. He encourages the perception of the cannibals as a distinctive ethnic group by emphasising their individual features, but at the same time maintains the association between the Brazilian culture and his own, thereby incorporating the New World inhabitants into the domestic world depicted in the *Essais*. The Author, in other words, is reducing the distance between his own location and the world of his Hero, the cannibal, and this chapter will now go on to explore the ways in which further manifestations of this convergence of the two figures can be identified in the text of the *Essais*.

Authoring, as we have seen, involves performing two roles. The observer firstly projects himself into the experience of the Hero, and secondly withdraws to a position external to the Hero in order to ‘consummate’ him, in other words to view him in his temporal and spatial context. In his role as Author, Montaigne experiences his cannibal Hero in a number of ways. As we have seen, Pierre Villey’s inventory of his library reveals that Montaigne read widely on the subject of the New World and its inhabitants, and although L  ry’s *Histoire d’un voyage* is the source on which Montaigne relies most heavily in ‘Des cannibales’, books written by Andr   Thevet, Girolamo Benzoni and Francisco Lopez de G  mara were also familiar to him. Sceptical about the reliability of these written sources, and in particular those produced by ‘les fines gens [qui] remarquent bien plus curieusement et plus de choses, mais [qui] les glosent’, Montaigne exposes himself to a large quantity and broad variety of texts in order to amplify his experience of

his cannibal subject matter.<sup>36</sup> The impulse to experience things fully and at first hand is evident in Montaigne's choice of reading material, and more specifically in his choice of Léry's book as the principal source of information for 'Des cannibales'. But this impulse is also evident, I shall argue, in the other choices Montaigne makes in his Authoring of the New World cannibal.

In his long description of the habitat and customs of the Toupinamba tribe, Montaigne explains that 'Au lieu du pain, ils usent une certaine matiere blanche, comme du coriandre confit'. He continues, 'J'en ay tasté'.<sup>37</sup> His comment reveals that he, the Author, and the cannibal Hero of his writing have shared a sensory experience because Montaigne has eaten what the cannibals eat. The food he reports consuming may not be the roasted human flesh with which the Brazilian natives are most clearly associated in 'Des cannibales', but a connection between Author and Hero in terms of bodily experience is nevertheless firmly established here. Furthermore, the order in which Montaigne chooses to present the data about the cannibals' habits, and in particular their eating habits, serves to strengthen the link that is established when Montaigne eats the Brazilian equivalent of bread. The description of the bread comes immediately after the following description of the cannibals' wine-like beverage: 'Leur breuvage est faict de quelque racine, et est de la couleur de nos vins claires'.<sup>38</sup> The 'breuvage' resembles what Montaigne, the European writer, and we, his European readers, recognise to be red wine, and the appearance of this wine-like substance alongside the description of the cannibals' bread is striking and evocative. We are inevitably reminded of the Eucharist and the concept of transubstantiation. In the context of

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<sup>36</sup> 'Des cannibales' (I.31) p.202.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p.205.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p.205.

the Eucharist, bread and the body of Christ become consubstantial, and this material analogy is reflected in Montaigne's account of the cannibal diet. Although we read that the men of the tribe go hunting, Montaigne makes no reference to them cooking or consuming what they catch. Bread and human flesh are the only items reported to be eaten by the cannibals in Montaigne's narrative, and as a result, attention is drawn to these two substances in particular. The existing connection between bread and the body, which is established by Catholic theology, is thereby strengthened in Montaigne's narrative by the fact that he sets them apart in this way. The network of associations that is established here means that when Montaigne reports eating the Brazilian bread, he is not only sharing in the sensory experience of tasting the staple cannibal diet. He is in addition identifying a second analogy between his own bodily experience and that of the cannibal, which centres on the concept of eating human flesh. In the same way as the Christian chooses to consume the body and blood of Christ within the structure of a sacrament, the cannibal, in Montaigne's version, prepares and consumes the flesh of his prisoner in a similarly ceremonial manner. The act of cannibalism no longer appears, therefore, as evidence of savagery, but rather as an ordered and methodical form of behaviour which, as a meaningful cultural rite, shares many of the characteristics of the Christian Eucharist and much of its meaningful value as a cultural rite.<sup>39</sup> But furthermore, the analogy that I have argued exists in the narrative of 'Des cannibales' between cannibalism and the sacrament of the Eucharist in particular leads us to identify in Montaigne's description further evidence of the Author's desire to experience the world of his Hero. Montaigne enters metaphorically into communion with the cannibal in that they all eat of the one bread, and in doing so,

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<sup>39</sup> See F. Lestringant, *Une Sainte Horreur, ou le voyage en Eucharistie, XVIe – XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996); G. Hoffman 'Anatomy of the Mass: Montaigne's "Cannibals"', PMLA vol. 117, No. 2, (Modern Language Association of America, 1 March 2002) p.207-21.

are depicted as members of the same body of communicant people who are connected materially through their participation in the sacrament. Montaigne's religious faith and his knowledge of Catholic theology (and in particular of Paul's letter to the Corinthians in which he writes, 'For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread') would have led him to attach considerable meaning to his own consumption of the cannibal bread, and I suggest that this is further evidence of Montaigne's desire to bolster the connection he establishes between himself, the Author, and his Hero.<sup>40</sup>

Montaigne asserts that eating, and in particular the eating of human flesh, whether performed metaphorically as part of a religious sacrament or materially as part of a tribal ritual, is a physical experience he shares with the cannibal. This bodily affinity, what we might call an act of communion, is reflected in the fabric of the closing section of 'Des cannibales' in which Montaigne reports the visit to Rouen in 1562 of three Brazilian tribesmen, all of whom had an audience with Charles IX, and one of whom had a conversation with Montaigne. Firstly, Montaigne expresses his regret at the naivety of the tribesmen, whose 'desir de la nouvelleté' has brought them to Europe and will, he fears, lead to their downfall.<sup>41</sup> Here, Montaigne executes a role reversal in that he ensures that the narrative forces us to see the world from the perspective of the cannibal. Montaigne yields the position of narrator (or the Authorial role) to the cannibal, and as a result, Europe becomes the 'New World', a strange land inhabited by a race of people whose behaviour is incomprehensible to the foreign observer. Montaigne reports that the cannibal finds two features of European culture particularly unfathomable.

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<sup>40</sup> I Corinthians (10:17).

<sup>41</sup> 'Des cannibales' (I.31) p.212.

The first is that armies of strong men are prepared to serve and take orders from a king as young as Charles IX, who was, at the time of the cannibals' visit to Rouen, only 12 years old. But the second element of European culture that confounds the cannibals is the evident disparity that they perceive between rich and poor: 'ils avoyent aperçeu qu'il y avoit parmy nous des hommes pleins et gorgez de toutes sortes de commoditez, et que leurs moities estoient mendiants à leurs portes, décharnez de faim et de pauvreté'.<sup>42</sup> The cannibal, like Montaigne (who, we remember, has previously compared the bodily brutality of Europeans and Brazilians), draws attention to the body as a symbol or gauge of morality, and finds incomprehensible the physical appearance of the overfed bodies of the rich, juxtaposed with the starving figures of the poor. Montaigne allows the cannibal to speak, and causes the latter to echo Montaigne's own earlier critique of European behaviour:

Je pense qu'il y a plus de barbarie à manger un homme vivant qu'à le manger mort, à deschirer par tourmens et par geénes un corps encore plein de sentiment, le faire rostir par le menu, le faire mordre et meurtrir aux chiens et aux pourceaux (comme nous l'avons non seulement leu, mais veu de fresche memoire, non entre des ennemis anciens, mais entre des voisins et concitoyens, et, qui pis est, sous pretexte de pieté et de religion), que de le rostir et manger après qu'il est trespasé.<sup>43</sup>

Montaigne is referring here to the methods of torture and execution used during the religious conflict in Europe and having compared these to the Brazilian

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<sup>42</sup> 'Des cannibales' (I.31) p.213.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p.208.

treatment of enemy prisoners (the various elements of which, as we have seen, are conducted in response to friendship, tradition, valour and vengeance) he concludes that the European model is the more barbaric, in spite of the cannibalistic dimension of the Brazilian practices. The disparity between rich and poor, which is identified by the cannibal based on bodily appearance, is not the result of the active and deliberate torture Montaigne describes in the quotation above, but the resulting bodily evidence is equally revealing: the corpulence of the rich comes at the bodily expense of the poor. In the same way as torture causes the deterioration of the body of the victim, the bodies of the poor suffer visibly from the gluttony of the rich. The opposite is true of the behaviour of the cannibals, whose collective eating habits are characterised by sharing and generosity among their own people as the prisoner's roasted body is distributed among those who are present and parts of it are saved to be sent to absent friends. The cannibal may eat human flesh, but his altruistic behaviour elevates him to a position of moral superiority over the greedy European who deprives others of food. As we have seen, Montaigne anticipates this material selfishness using the motif of gluttony at the beginning of the essay when he writes that the European desire to conquer and civilise the New World is evidence that '*nous avons les yeux plus grands que le ventre*'.<sup>44</sup> Both Montaigne and the cannibal contemplate the attitudes to food held by the race foreign to them, and both reach the same conclusion, in other words that Europe is guilty of the greater moral degeneracy, in response to a shared alimentary experience, and using the motif of the consuming human body.

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<sup>44</sup> '*Des cannibales*' (I.31) p.200.



Equally, Montaigne's action in yielding the narrative voice to the cannibal strengthens the connection between the two figures. In the final section of the essay, the cannibal, or Hero, is transformed into an Author because he is in the role of observer, projecting himself, physically, into a foreign culture and territory, and attempting to make sense of it. However, the cannibal's views appear in the text refracted through Montaigne, because it is he who reports what the cannibal says. A similar effect is created when Montaigne includes in his text the words of two cannibal songs (the song of the enemy captive and a love-song) because in this way, the voices of Montaigne and the cannibal are in unison, speaking and singing simultaneously.<sup>45</sup> As well as functioning as a device through which the two figures are connected, the theme of the prisoner's song reinforces the sense of experience shared by Montaigne and the cannibal. Montaigne reports the words of the refrain: '«Ces muscles, dit-il, cette chair et ces veines, ce sont les vôtres [...] vous ne reconnoissez pas que la substance des membres de vos ancestres s'y tient encore : savourez les bien, vous y trouverez le goust de vostre propre chair»'.<sup>46</sup> What the cannibal prisoner constructs, here, is a bodily ancestry like the one established by Montaigne in 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres'.<sup>47</sup> In both the prisoner's song and Montaigne's explanation of his illness, we can identify an underlying belief in the transfer of materiality from father to son, a theme which I discussed in Chapter Four of the present thesis. The bodies of the descendants in each case exhibit physical characteristics that are inherited from their ancestors. Montaigne suffers from the same kidney condition as did his father, and the cannibal prisoner taunts his captors by claiming that his flesh carries remnants of the bodies of previous generations of Toupinamba. Therefore, both Montaigne and the cannibal

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<sup>45</sup> The words of the prisoner's song appear on p.211, and the love-song on p.212.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p.211.

<sup>47</sup> 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres' (II.37) p.741-43.

prisoner identify their genealogical line as the source of sensory events, and in doing so, they can be seen to share another bodily experience.

The collective effect of this configuration of episodes in which Montaigne identifies corporeal experiences common to himself and the cannibal is that a strong analogy between the two figures is established and repeatedly reinforced. They reach the same moral conclusion about the relative barbarity of Europe and the New World, they hold similar ideas on the issue of heredity, and they share an experience of eating, as well as the narrative voice of 'Des cannibales'. But crucially, it is the common denominator of the body in each of these episodes that anchors the analogy that Montaigne draws between himself and his Hero, and the status of the body is transformed within the discourse of 'Des cannibales' as a result. The problematic nature of the bodies of the consumer and the consumed is the source of the anxiety connected to cannibalism in the European imagination. Cannibalism is a practice that violates the unity of the human body, and the conventions of bodily behaviour, by altering and transgressing its boundaries. Montaigne directly addresses this concern initially by embedding this form of bodily disorder in a clearly defined spatial and temporal context, in the same way as Léry delineates the cannibal and cannibalistic activity in the *Histoire d'un voyage*. However, whereas Léry maintains a critical distance between himself and the Hero of his book, Montaigne overcomes this essential difference by constructing analogies between his own experience and that of the cannibal. Not only does Montaigne stress his similarity to the cannibal in very bodily terms, but he also elevates the cannibal to a position of greater Authority in terms of material experience. Montaigne's access to the New World is limited, and his efforts to

experience the world of his Hero at first hand are repeatedly thwarted by, for example, the inadequacies of his interpreter, the embellishments in the books of learned writers, and the fact that he has never visited the New World to experience it at first hand. The cannibals who visit Rouen enjoy a greater freedom of movement, and as a result, provide a truer and more palpable testimony of the foreign environment they Author, than does Montaigne, and in this way, the validity of their experience is a model to which Montaigne aspires. The cannibal is stripped of his associations with brutality and physical difference through Montaigne's presentation of the act of cannibalism and construction of analogies with the cannibal, and through the emphasis on the desirability of the nature of the cannibal's experience, and the result of this alternative view of the Hero is that the boundaries of the Authors world open to incorporate the foreign and disordered body of the 'other'.

### The Monster in Montaigne

'Que sont-ce icy [...] que crottesques et corps monstrueux [...]'<sup>48</sup>

The figure of the monster occupies a very similar position in the *Essais* to that of the cannibal discussed in the previous section. The monster, like the cannibal, is a manifestation of embodied 'otherness'. It is alien to the norm in physical terms, both quantifiably (having superfluous or missing limbs, for example) and qualitatively (being hybrid or composite, as is the case with conjoined twins or hermaphrodites). And, like the cannibal, the monster in late-sixteenth-century thought is accompanied by a series of very potent cultural and

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<sup>48</sup> 'De l'amitié' (I.28) p.181.

ideological associations. As Chapter Two of the present thesis has illustrated, early modern books about monstrosity invariably attributed considerable religious, moral and superstitious meaning to the appearance of unusual or deformed bodies. In spite of the practical and pedagogical objectives of his *Œuvres complètes*, Ambroise Paré, as we have seen, frequently invites and supports the interpretation of this kind of bodily peculiarity as either a prelude to some future disaster or as a consequence of moral transgression. He does explore in his book the material circumstances, events and accidents that are thought to contribute to the generation of strange bodily forms, but of the thirteen causes of monstrosity he identifies in *Des monstres et prodiges*, four relate nevertheless to religious or supernatural factors. In short, the monster's shape and bodily boundaries are connected with concepts of threat, punishment and anxiety, as Grosz and Douglas' models of the unbounded body suggest.

Montaigne's writing reveals that he was familiar with contemporary literature devoted, among other things, to the study and interpretation of monstrous births. He alludes to Paré's *Des monstres et prodiges* in his *Journal de voyage* in connection with the case of the hermaphrodite named Marie-Germain, and Pierre Villey points out that Montaigne possessed a copy of the *Bref discours de l'excellence et dignité de l'homme* by Pierre Bouaystuaue, writer of several volumes of the *Histoires prodigieuses* with which Montaigne was doubtless also familiar.<sup>49</sup> We also know from the *Journal de voyage* that while in Basel Montaigne encountered the encyclopædist Theodor Zwinger, whose *Theatrum humanæ vitæ* was known to Montaigne, as was the work of Zwinger's stepfather, Conrad Lycosthenes, author

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<sup>49</sup> *Journal de voyage*, p.1118; P. Villey, *Les Sources et l'Evolution des Essais de Montaigne*, vol. I, p.84-85.

of the *Prodigiorum ac ostentorum chronicon*, an illustrated book containing cases of monstrosity and preternatural events spanning what was, at the time, almost the whole of known history.<sup>50</sup> Montaigne is accustomed to the genre of monster-literature and the patterns of ideas and associations that occur within it. However, in his own accounts of monstrosity, Montaigne does not cite examples from the works mentioned above, but instead uses the knowledge he has gathered of cases of monstrosity from his own experience. In order to examine the monstrous Hero in the *Essais*, we will consider in what follows passages from two essays in particular, 'D'un enfant monstrueux' and 'De la force de l'imagination', and at the entry in Montaigne's *Journal de voyage* written in Basel. As I have done with the case of cannibalism, I will explore in the rest of the present chapter the process by way of which Montaigne can be said to Author the monster according to Bakhtin's model. Secondly, I will consider how the figure of the monster is employed and experienced as a metaphor in the *Essais*, and finally I will assess the impact this has on the image that emerges from the book of monstrous bodily disorder.

The second book of the *Essais* contains the short chapter 'D'un enfant monstrueux'. In it, Montaigne describes a child he has seen only a few days earlier, exhibited by members of its family in an attempt to earn money from curious onlookers. The description of the monster-child is similar in style and content to many of the case studies found in Paré's *Des monstres et prodiges*, as the extract from 'D'un enfant monstrueux' below illustrates:

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<sup>50</sup> *Journal de voyage*, p.1128. Zwinger is referred to only as 'celui qui a faict le Theatrum'. See also F. Garavini, 'Montaigne et le *Theatrum vitae humanae*' in *Montaigne et l'Europe: Actes du colloque international de Bordeaux* (Mont-de-Marsan, 1992), p.31-45. See also N. Smith, 'Portent Lore and Medieval Popular Culture' in *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 14, Issue 1 (Summer 1980) p.47-59.

il estoit aagé de quatorze mois justement. Au dessous de ses tetins, il estoit pris et collé à un autre enfant sans teste, et qui avoit le conduit du dos estoupé, le reste entier ; car il avoit bien l'un bras plus court, mais il luy avoit esté rompu par accident à leur naissance ; ils estoient joints face à face, et comme si un plus petit enfant en vouloit accoler un plus grandelet.<sup>51</sup>

Montaigne goes on graphically to explain that the two identifiably distinct bodies sharing one head are joined at the navel, and that the limbs of the smaller child's body appear limp and inert. In addition to these details, Montaigne, like Paré, gives his reader information about, among other things, the child's age, dimensions and bodily functions such as feeding and urinating. Fragments of information are assembled, here, to produce a temporally and materially comprehensive portrait of the monster-Hero.

Temporal detail appears in the form of the monster-child's age, but also in the immediacy of the experience, in that Montaigne's encounter with the child and its relatives is presented as having taken place only two days prior to the act of writing. Similarly, when Montaigne writes later in the same essay about a shepherd from Médoc (who is considered to be 'monstrous' in the context of the essay as a result of his lack of genitals) he explains that 'Je vien de voir un pastre en Medoc', and in doing so, locates the encounter in the time frame of his own very recent past. The shepherd's age is also recorded in the description: he is 'de trent ans ou environ'. Another description, in 'De la force de l'imagination', of the girl named Marie whose strenuous physical activity one day caused her to sprout male genital

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<sup>51</sup> All quotations and references here are from 'D'un enfant monstrueux' (II.30), p.690-91.

organs, contains similar temporal references. We learn that Marie was aged twenty-two when the incident occurred, and that, at the time of Montaigne's encounter with Germain (as Marie had been known since her female-to-male transition), the latter was an old man: 'Il estoit à cett'heure-là fort barbu, et vieil'.<sup>52</sup> A further account of this character is found in the *Journal de voyage*, in an entry from September 1580, which allows us accurately to date Montaigne's first acquaintance with Marie-Germain. In addition to duplicating the information about Marie-Germain's age found in 'De la force de l'imagination', the diary entry stresses this Heros temporal propinquity to Montaigne, because at the time of writing, Marie-Germain is 'encore vivant'.<sup>53</sup> Time boundaries, then, are drawn around Marie-Germain, the monster-child and the malformed shepherd, as well as around Montaigne's experience of the three cases.

Equally, information relating to the spatial context of the Hero in 'D'un enfant monstrueux' is provided when Montaigne locates the shepherd geographically in Médoc. Marie-Germain, too, belongs to a specific place, Vitry-le-François, which is where Montaigne's encounter with him takes place. Marie-Germain is not only an inhabitant of the town, but is also, according to Montaigne's diary account and 'De la force de l'imagination', a feature of local folklore: 'Il y a encore *en ceste ville* une chanson ordinaire en la bouche des filles, où elles s'entr'advertissent de ne faire plus de grandes enjambées, de peur de devenir masles, comme Marie Germain'.<sup>54</sup> The Hero, the song of his story and Montaigne's encounter with him, are all markedly embedded in a named and delineated space:

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<sup>52</sup> 'De la force de l'imagination' (I.21) p.96.

<sup>53</sup> *Journal de voyage*, p.1118.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1119. See also 'De la force de l'imagination' (I.21), p.96: 'et est encore en usage, entre les filles *de là*, une chanson par laquelle elles s'entr'advertissent de ne faire point de grandes enjambées, de peur de devenir garçons, comme Marie Germain'. Emphases mine.

Vitry-le-François. The monster-child, by contrast, does not belong explicitly to any clear geographical location, and is, in fact, described as spatially mobile, peripatetic, being transported from place to place by its relatives.<sup>55</sup> However, the monster-child's status in the essay nevertheless connects it to a particular type of space, if not a specific geographical site. As a result of its unusual bodily form, the child becomes a commodity which is exhibited for money and therefore belongs to a particular habitat, in other words, the urban setting of the market-place. Whether it is a specific geographical location or a generic environment, therefore, the spatial context of the Heroes of 'D'un enfant monstrueux' is addressed and clarified in the narrative. Furthermore, in the same way as the Hero is given a temporal location within the time frame of the Author and his act of writing, the monster-child's spatial context is connected firmly to Montaigne's own material experience. The detail in the description of the monster-child is notably sensory: Montaigne not only inspects the child closely, but reports hearing its strange cry ('ses cris sembloient bien avoir quelque chose de particulier'), and implies that he examined the child physically too ('si vous retroussiez cet enfant imparfait, vous voyez au dessous le nombril de l'autre'). The account, then, is derived from Montaigne's bodily experience, visual, aural and tactile, of the Hero, and I suggest that the materiality of the encounter with the monster-child is strongly emphasised as a result.

The moments in which Montaigne encounters monstrosity are imbued with references to elements of the spatial and temporal contexts of the monster-Heroes of his book, and the Bakhtinian concept of Author is a useful model for

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<sup>55</sup> 'D'un enfant monstrueux' (II.30) p.690: 'Je vis *avant hier* un enfant que deux hommes et une nourrisse [...] conduisoient pour tirer quelque sou de le montrer à cause de son estrangeté'. Emphasis mine.



explicating this. Montaigne uses data and phrases relating to time and space in order to establish a clear context for the monster. In other words, he is performing one of the roles of the Bakhtinian Author, consummating the Hero of these experiences by embedding them in a spatially- and temporally-delineated world. In addition, Montaigne frequently stresses in his writing the personal and bodily nature of his experience of the monsters described above. Phrases such as 'je peuz voir', 'je vis avant hier' and 'je vien de voir', which are used insistently to introduce Montaigne's descriptions of the monsters, reiterate the sensory and experiential knowledge he gains through seeing, touching and hearing them.<sup>56</sup> He is, therefore, performing the function of the Author, which is to 'consummate' the Hero by producing a depiction of the monstrous body that is delineated, bounded and comprehensive. Montaigne's temporal and spatial observations are interspersed with comments about the ways in which he experiences the cases of monstrosity, and as a result, the two stages of Author that Bakhtin identifies can be said to happen concurrently. In Montaigne's writing, he, the Author, simultaneously inhabits the world of the Hero, experiencing the monster through his senses, and 'consummates' the Hero by describing the monstrous body and its context in comprehensive detail. The feature common to both stages of Author in Montaigne's accounts is the proximity of the Author to the object of his Author. He experiences each case of monstrosity in a bodily manner, and he physically inhabits the spatial and temporal context of the Hero in each episode. In bodily terms, the unusual cases Montaigne writes about remain distinctive, still bearing

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<sup>56</sup> In the entry in the *Journal de voyage* recording his visit to Vitry-le-François, Montaigne appears to contradict his statement in 'De la force de l'imagination' that he has seen Marie-Germain. His diary entry reads: 'Nous ne le sceumes voir, parce qu'il estoit au vilage' (p.1119). However, this apparent contradiction does not weaken my argument that Montaigne's knowledge of this case study is experiential. It in fact strengthens my reading of his account of Marie Germain because in his re-writing of the story in 'De la force de l'imagination', Montaigne claims to have seen something he previously regretted not having seen, and in doing so, is apparently deliberately exaggerating the extent of his sensory experience.

the physical signs of difference that define them as monstrous, but the fact that Montaigne describes them as features of his own material experience ensures that they cannot be seen simply as 'other'. On the contrary, the boundaries of Montaigne's 'world', which includes his bodily experience, spatial and temporal context, and his writing, are expanded to include the monster.

This expansion of Montaigne's boundaries, which I have argued takes place at the narrative level, also occurs in the substance of Montaigne's argument in 'D'un enfant monstrueux'. Taking his cue from the genre of monster-literature, Montaigne addresses the readings and interpretations likely to issue from some of his contemporaries in response to the appearance of a case like the monster-child of II.30: 'Ce double corps et ces membres divers, se rapportans à une seule teste, pourroient bien fournir de favorable prognostique au Roy de maintenir sous l'union de ses loix ces pars et pieces diverses de nostre estat'. The use of the conditional tense here anticipates the critique that follows of forecasting based on this type of physical event, which reads, 'mais de peur que l'evenement ne le demente, il vaut mieux le laisser passer devant, car il n'est que de deviner en choses faictes'.<sup>57</sup> Montaigne is explicitly counteracting the climate of prognostication that leads other writers speculatively to interpret unusual physical events like comets, freak weather conditions and the monster-child of 'D'un enfant monstrueux'.<sup>58</sup> He objects to this tendency on two grounds. Firstly, he asserts firmly that monstrous births belong to the natural world which has been created by God: 'Ce que nous

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<sup>57</sup> 'D'un enfant monstrueux' (II.30) p.691.

<sup>58</sup> Montaigne's disapproval of erroneous forecasting is shared by the Toupinamba tribe. Among their number are prophets: 'Cettuy-cy leur prognostique les choses à venir et les evenemens qu'ils doivent esperer de leurs entreprises, les achemine ou destourne de la guerre ; mais c'est par tel si que, où il faut à bien deviner, et s'il leur advient autrement qu'il ne leur a predit, il est haché en mille pieces s'ils l'attrapent, et condamné pour faux prophete', 'Des cannibales' (I.31) p.206.

appelons monstres ne le sont pas à Dieu, qui voit en l'immensité de son ouvrage l'infinité des formes qu'il y a comprises [...] rien n'est que selon elle [la nature], quel qu'il soit'.<sup>59</sup> In stressing its natural condition, Montaigne alters the image of the monster by consciously and deliberately removing the preternatural status attributed to it by other writers. This explicit eradication of the monster's significance as a portent is reflected when Montaigne cites the second example of monstrosity in II.30 and the case of Marie-Germain in I.21. In neither case does Montaigne include any teleological interpretation. The rarity and peculiarity of the cases makes them worthy of note, but they do not have in the *Essais* the figurative value that is attached to them, and similar instances of monstrosity, by other writers. The short narratives in which cases of monstrosity are presented in the *Essais* allow them to be seen as remarkable, but not symbolic, as Richard Regosin has also highlighted:

Montaigne's commentaries [on the story of the monster-child] have the effect of neutralizing the monstrous, of removing the stigma of aberrance, and of eliminating its conventional referential value as a meaningful sign that points beyond itself (as prophecy, prediction, omen). [...] [The monster] has no special status, it belongs to the order common to all other things, even if its appearance flaunts what is customary or accepted.<sup>60</sup>

Secondly, Montaigne points out to his reader that the monstrosity of a particular physical specimen is not, in fact, an inherent quality of the being, but is rather a characteristic attributed to it by the imperfection of the observer. Using a

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<sup>59</sup> 'D'un enfant monstrueux' (II.30) p.691.

<sup>60</sup> R. Regosin, *Montaigne's Unruly Brood*, p.164.

quotation from Cicero's *De divinatione*, he argues that our perception of monstrosity is the result of our lack of experience and the limitations of our understanding of nature, and in doing so, echoes Augustine's statement in the *City of God* that 'The observer who cannot view the whole is offended by what seems the deformity of a part, since he does not know how it fits in, or how it is related to the rest'.<sup>61</sup> Later in the *City of God*, when referring to Varro's report of a portentous event seen in the sky, Augustine writes,

Now Varro would certainly not have called this phenomenon a portent if it had not seemed contrary to nature; in fact we say, as a matter of course, that all portents are contrary to nature. But they are not. [A portent] does not occur contrary to nature, but contrary to what is known of nature.<sup>62</sup>

We can see from this that Montaigne's argument in 'D'un enfant monstrueux' (that 'Nous appellons contre nature ce qui advient contre la coustume'<sup>63</sup>) falls clearly into line with Augustinian notion that monstrosity is the product of inadequate observation and is not symbolic or meaningful in itself.

Montaigne is resolute in his resistance to acts of prognostication that are based on the appearance of monstrous bodies, which he states explicitly in 'D'un enfant monstrueux' and demonstrates implicitly in his accounts of the monsters he has encountered in person. The mythical and portentous qualities of monstrosity

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<sup>61</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, p.662. The quotation from Cicero reads: '*Quod crebro videt, non miratur, etiam si cur fiat nescit. Quod ante non vidit, id, si evenerit, ostentum esse censet*' ['What a man frequently sees never produces wonder in him, even though he does not know how it happens. But if something occurs which he has never seen before, he takes it as a portent', trans. M. Screech, p.808].

<sup>62</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, p.980.

<sup>63</sup> 'D'un enfant monstrueux' (II.30) p.691.

are removed in these ways, and the 'otherness' of the monster is diluted as a result. This cognisant and wilful effort to present the monster as a component of nature places the Hero and the Author on the same plane of existence, in the same way as the Author's experience of the Hero (which, as we have seen, is an avowedly bodily one) connects the two figures in the narrative materially. Montaigne is aware of the content, structure and style of existing texts and ideas about monstrosity, and uses them both as sources of information and as a notional voice to which he responds in the *Essais*. However, what is more important for the purposes of the present thesis is the fact that Montaigne alters the status of the monster by challenging the existing climate of prognostication and opposing the teleological conclusions of other writers. He discourages the view that the monster is 'other'. The 'consummation' of the monstrous Hero happens, then, as Montaigne embraces the monster into his own spatial and temporal context, and his 'Authorial' and material experience.

I have argued above that Montaigne's writing about the instances of monstrosity he encounters reveals a desire on his part to consummate the Hero, in other words to present the disordered body of the monster as a natural phenomenon, and within a spatially- and temporally-delineated context. But the figure of the monster, like that of the cannibal, appears in other forms and performs other functions in the *Essais*, the most noteworthy of which is the rich source of metaphor and imagery the monster provides and on which Montaigne draws heavily when describing himself and his book. In Montaigne's own words, the *Essais* are a composite and grotesque body, prone to sprouting new limbs in the form of margin notes and addenda over time. The language he uses explicitly to describe his book suggests complexity, ugliness, chaos and disorder. In short,

the *Essais* possess many qualities of monstrosity. As Chapter Four of the present thesis has argued, the act of writing is repeatedly described by Montaigne as a bodily as well as a cerebral activity. Therefore, when for example he describes his textual self-portrait in 'Du repentir' as 'bien mal formé', Montaigne creates an image of his book as a monstrous body. Equally, the language of monstrosity can be seen in 'De l'oisiveté', where Montaigne writes that the book is 'tant de chimères et monstres fantasques les uns sur les autres, sans ordre et sans propos'. The verb he employs at this point to explain how the written ideas are produced, *enfanter*, accentuates the image of the monstrous and bodily nature of the text. It is a grotesque corpus of ideas to which Montaigne gives birth. He returns to this theme in 'De l'amitié', in which he describes his essays as a series of 'grotesques et corps monstrueux, rappelez de divers membres, sans certaine figure, n'ayants ordre, suite, ny proportion que fortuite', and the direct comparison between the grotesques painted by the artist and the book written by Montaigne strengthens the monstrous image of the book. However, as Chapter Four has also made clear, in addition to the image of Montaigne as the creator or father of his monstrous essays, the relationship between the writer and his book is described elsewhere as consubstantial, and this connection is also expressed using the figure of monstrosity. The book as we have seen is a monster and so is its writer: 'Je n'ay veu monstre et miracle au monde plus exprès que moy-mesme'.<sup>64</sup>

Montaigne uses the figure of the monster to explain the nature of his book and the process of writing, and this is reflected in the fabric of the text. The *Essais*, in visual and structural terms, are also monstrous, in that Montaigne's thoughts

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<sup>64</sup> 'Du repentir' (III.2) p.782; 'De l'oisiveté' (I.8) p.34; 'De l'amitié' (I.28) p.181; 'Des boyteux' (III.11) p.1006.

appear in long passages of vernacular prose which are frequently punctuated by italicised quotations in other languages. The result of this arrangement of Montaigne's material is that almost every page of the text is a visibly composite fusion of ideas from different thinkers, texts and languages. At times, quotations imported from other books are positioned apart from the rest of the passage, while other quotations appear incorporated into the main body of the prose, and the following extract from 'De l'institution des enfans' is typical of this varied writing style.

De ma part, je tiens, et Socrates l'ordonne, que, qui a en l'esprit une vive imagination et claire, il la produira, soit en Bergamasque, soit par mines s'il est muet:

*Verbaque præuisam rem non inuita sequuntur.*

Et comme disoit celuy-là, aussi poëtiquement en sa prose, «*cum res animum occupauere, verba ambiunt.*» Et cet autre: «*Ipsæ res verba rapiunt.*» Il ne sçait pas ablatif, conjunctif, substantif, ny la grammaire; ne faict pas son laquais ou une harengiere de Petit-pont [...] <sup>65</sup>

In the same way as Montaigne examines the monster-child of II.30 and finds the point on the chest at which the two bodies are joined, it is possible to identify points in the text of the *Essais* at which Montaigne's thoughts end and his borrowings begin. Montaigne performs a kind of textual cannibalism in that his book absorbs parts of other books, parts which are digested to varying degrees.

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<sup>65</sup> 'De l'institution des enfans' (I.26) p.169.

Furthermore, most modern editions of the *Essais* allow the reader easily to identify the different periods of time during which Montaigne wrote or added particular essays, passages, phrases and words, and this visibly fragmented chronology lends a further monstrous quality to the *Essais*. When Montaigne writes in 'De l'amitié' about his intention to include La Boétie's unpublished work in the *Essais*, writing that 'C'est tout ce que j'ay peu recouvrer de ses reliques, *moy qu'il laissa, d'une si amoureuse recommandation, la mort entre les dents, par son testament, héritier de sa bibliothèque et de ses papiers*, outre le livret de ses œuvres que j'ay fait mettre en lumière', it is possible to identify that the section I have italicised here was added by Montaigne while he was preparing the 1592 edition of the *Essais*, some twelve years after the rest of the sentence had been written.<sup>66</sup> What we see when we read the *Essais*, then, is a monstrous body of text that is composed of parts from identifiably different places and times. The text weaves together the words of countless writers and Montaigne's own thoughts, and these thoughts, although presented as fluid passages of prose, are in fact composed of ideas produced at different moments across a period of over a decade.

I have argued that the figure of the monster in the *Essais* functions not only as what Bakhtin's model of Author invites us to define as a Hero, in other words, as a character who features in the experience of the Author and is embedded in a clearly-defined spatial and temporal context by that Author, but furthermore serves as an insistent metaphor for Montaigne's book. In addition, if we bear in mind the consubstantial relationship between the *Essais* and their writer, which has been the subject of much scholarly investigation, it becomes clear that in

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<sup>66</sup> 'De l'amitié' (I.28) p.182.



using the monster as a metaphor for his book Montaigne is implying that he, too, is metaphorically a monster.

Let us return at this point to the New World, not to the Brazilian territory of the Toupinamba tribe described in 'Des cannibales', but to the Peruvian world of the Incas described in 'Des coches'. I will look particularly in what follows at a passage from 'Des coches' in which Montaigne invites us to imagine the arrival of the Conquistadores in this region of Peru.<sup>67</sup> The passage begins with a description of a forceful and deceptive race from a distant land, a race whose physical and cultural characteristics are shocking and unfamiliar to the New World inhabitants who encounter them for the first time. The Conquistadores are 'des gens barbus, divers en langage, religion, en forme et en contenance, d'un endroict du monde si esloigné'. In this description, Montaigne puts particular emphasis on the physical difference represented by the bodily features of the invading Europeans. The focus on the form and appearance of the Conquistadores continues throughout the account. They are 'garnis d'une peau luisante et dure', in contrast to the naked Incas ('des peuples nuds') who are observing them, they are seen 'montez sur des grands monstres incogneuz', which is, Montaigne goes on to inform us, both a sight and a practice that is totally unfamiliar to the Inca tribesmen.

The narrative in this passage ensures that Montaigne's reader views the Conquistadores through the prism of the Inca observer, and this means that we inevitably see the invading European in the same way as he is seen by the New World inhabitant. The Conquistador is 'other' to the narrative figure here, and the

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<sup>67</sup> All quotations here are taken from 'Des coches' (III.6) p.887-88.

language Montaigne uses in the account reflects this image. The Conquistador and the world he represents are variously ‘divers’, ‘esloigné’, ‘estrangeres et incogneues’, and, crucially, ‘inexperimenté’. The New World is our point of reference here, and we are thus obliged to see the Conquistadores measured against the New World yardstick, and not according to our own European perspective. But, paradoxically, Montaigne also maintains a firm connection between himself, his reader and the Conquistador through his use of the first person plural. He describes the Conquistadores’ armour as ‘nostre acier’ and the weapons they carry as ‘nos pieces et harquebouses’, and in this way, Montaigne forces us simultaneously to empathise with the Inca perspective and admit collective responsibility for the treatment the New World receives at the hands of the Conquistadores. But in addition to eliciting a self-reflective response from the reader, Montaigne is also enhancing his experience of the Hero he is engaged in Authoring. In order to present the Conquistador as he is seen by the Inca, Montaigne must first imagine the world from this unfamiliar perspective, and in doing so, he is projecting himself, as the Author, into the Hero’s place, experiencing the world of the Hero from within.

The Conquistador, we remember, is mounted on horseback, clothed in shining armour and carrying a sword. This armed figure is a familiar feature of the European imagination, and Jeffrey Jerome Cohen explains the significant cultural meaning that is carried by this corporeal unit:

The horse, its rider, the bridle and saddle and armour together form [...] a network of meaning that decomposes human bodies and intercuts them

with the inanimate, the inhuman. No single object or body has meaning within this assemblage without reference to the other forces, intensities, affects, and directions to which it is conjoined and within which it is always in the process of becoming something other, something new.<sup>68</sup>

The knight on his steed is an archetype, a model of virtue, honour and courage, but when this 'assemblage' appears in 'Des coches', the description that makes him recognisable as the chivalric model is punctuated with language that forces the reader to see him differently. The mounted Conquistador represents a race of people who are, from the narrative focus of 'Des coches', 'divers' in cultural terms, but are more shockingly so in physical terms. The appearance of men on horseback (significantly, connected through language to the figure of monstrosity as they are 'montez sur des grands monstres incogneuz') is so unfamiliar to the New World observer that Montaigne has previously recorded in 'Des cannibales' that 'Le premier qui y mena un cheval, quoy qu'il les eust pratiquez à plusieurs autres voyages, leur fit tant d'horreur en cette assiette, qu'ils le tuerent à coups de traict, avant que le pouvoir recoignoistre'.<sup>69</sup> The unit comprising man and horse that confronts the Brazilian natives in 'Des cannibales' is a new and unfamiliar body in spite of the fact that the cannibals have previously been acquainted with the rider. When he appears on horseback, however, the man is no longer recognisable as he has become incorporated into the larger unit which Cohen describes. Cohen argues that the combination of man, horse and apparel results in a being that is greater in chivalric terms than the sum of its parts, but when viewed through the eyes of the New World observer of 'Des cannibales', this

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<sup>68</sup> J. Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2003) p.76.

<sup>69</sup> 'Des cannibales' (I.31) p.205.

chivalric assemblage becomes not only different but 'other' in the sense that it is horrifying and threatening. Similarly, the man on horseback who appears in 'Des coches' is a forceful and invincible 'other' in bodily terms. His armour, for example, 'une peau luisante et dure', is made an organ of his body which is impenetrable to the weapons of the Inca tribesmen. In both essays the Conquistador appears as a hybrid creature, part human and part animal, like the mermaids described by Montaigne in 'De l'amitié' using a quotation from Horace: '*Desinit in piscem mulier formosa superne*'.<sup>70</sup> In this way, Montaigne takes the European model of chivalry and turns it into a monstrous creature, and, moreover, a monster from the point of view of what is considered from the European perspective to be a savage and monstrous New World race. The figure of the monstrous body, then, is used in this episode from 'Des coches' to critique the belligerent European and his attitude towards the New World, and this chapter will now go on to examine a further symbolic use of the monstrous body.

Let us return briefly to the description of the 'enfant monstrueux' of II.30. Two bodies, one weaker, one stronger, are fused together in the monster-child, a freakish physical event that stimulates enough macabre curiosity in those who witness it for the relatives of the child to earn money from exhibiting him. If we then compare the account of the material connection between these two bodies to Montaigne's description of the friendship he shared with Etienne de la Boétie, what emerges is a connection, both bodily and metaphorical, between these two moments in the *Essais*. Concerning his own soul and that of La Boétie, Montaigne writes in 'De l'amitié' that, 'En l'amitié dequoy je parle, elles [les âmes] se meslent

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<sup>70</sup> 'De l'amitié' (I.28) p.186.

et confondent l'une en l'autre, d'un melange si universel, qu'elles effacent et ne retrouvent plus la couture qui les a jointes'.<sup>71</sup> The souls of the two friends are described metaphorically as being connected in the same manner in which the bodies of the conjoined twins are linked physically, by a stitching that is imperceptible and firm.<sup>72</sup> The analogy that can be drawn between the monster-child and the friendship gives a physical dimension to the intangible loving connection between Montaigne and La Boétie, because the composite form of the monster-child reflects bodily the spiritual bond Montaigne describes. Indeed, the language used to define the friendship relates to both spiritual and bodily phenomena. Montaigne explains that each friend's reputation was known to the other before they met, and that 'nous nous embrassions par noz noms'. The verb, here, suggests a physical expression of affection, but what is being embraced is notional rather than corporeal. Similarly, Montaigne writes that 'Nos ames ont charrié si uniement ensemble', once again using a verb that suggests material attachment to describe the bond between the two souls. Montaigne's citation of Aristotle's definition of friendship (that it is 'un'ame en deux corps selon la très-propre definition d'Aristote') also alludes to both spiritual and bodily elements of such relationships. Furthermore, in describing his desire to experience the friendship as 'une faim', and in using the phrase 'jusques au fin fond des entrailles' to express the depth and intimacy of the relationship, Montaigne implies that his experience of his friendship with La Boétie is an intensely visceral one.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> 'De l'amitié' (I.28) p.186.

<sup>72</sup> Montaigne is obliged closely to examine the monster-child in order to discover where the two bodies are joined.

<sup>73</sup> All quotations here are from 'De l'amitié' (I.28) p.187-89.

In addition, there is another implied material aspect to the spiritual bond that exists between the two men, which can be identified in further descriptions of the friendship found later in 'De l'amitié'. Reporting his reaction to La Boétie's death, Montaigne writes that, 'Nous estions à moitié de tout [...] J'estois desjà si fait et accoustumé à estre deuxiesme par tout, qu'il me semble n'estre plus qu'à demy'.<sup>74</sup> This description of the friendship, and in particular Montaigne's insistent depiction of his own status as half of a complete unit, recalls the speech of Aristophanes in Plato's *Symposium*, in which he recounts the story of the androgynes. Aristophanes remembers man's original and androgynous form:

First of all, you must learn the constitution of man and the modifications which it has undergone, for originally it was different from what it is now [...] each human being was a rounded whole, with double back and flanks forming a complete circle; it had four hands and an equal number of legs, and two identically similar faces upon a circular neck, with one head common to both the faces.

He remembers too their 'circular shape and hoop-like method of progression', an attribute that made them strong and permitted them to move swiftly: 'when they wanted to run quickly they used all their eight limbs, and turned rapidly over and over in a circle'.<sup>75</sup> The body of the androgyne is perfectly balanced and symmetrical, and there are strong parallels between the way in which Aristophanes describes the androgynous body and the way in which Montaigne describes his friendship with La Boétie (the souls of the two men, as we have seen,

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p.192.

<sup>75</sup> Plato, *The Symposium*, trans. W. Hamilton (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985) p.59-60.

are depicted as being bound together). For example, having admitted the difficulty he finds in expressing the nature of this friendship in the 1580 edition of the *Essais*, Montaigne makes an addition to his sentence which appears in the 1592 version of the book. Following his reflection that, 'Si on me presse de dire pourquoy je l'aymois, je sens que cela ne se peut exprimer', Montaigne writes, 'qu'en respondant: «Par ce que c'estoit luy; par ce que c'estoit moy»'.<sup>76</sup> The sentence is an alexandrine, a twelve-syllable line divided by a cæsura (in this case, a semi-colon) into two hemistiches, identical but for the use of 'luy' in the first and 'moy' in the second. The sentence is monstrous in the same way as the original humans described by Aristophanes are monstrous. It is composed of two identical but visibly distinct parts, either one of which, if removed, will destroy the symmetry of the sentence and the completeness of the relationship it describes. Later in the same passage of 'De l'amitié' a similar structure appears, which, like the alexandrine sentence, is an addition to the text which appears in the 1592 edition of the *Essais*. Montaigne writes that the friendship developed due to an inexplicable force 'qui, ayant saisi toute ma volonté, l'amena se plonger et se perdre dans la sienne; qui, ayant saisi toute sa volonté, l'amena se plonger et se perdre en la mienne'.<sup>77</sup> This sentence, like the alexandrine line, is composed of two clauses that are almost identical but for the symbolic substitution in the second clause of 'sa' for 'ma', and 'la mienne' for 'la sienne'. The fabric of the text reflects the unity, stability and perfection of the friendship in that the two sentences to which I refer above are composed of a pair of identifiably separate parts, but the unit that is produced when they are linked together gives the resulting sentences the symmetry and equilibrium of the androgyne.

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<sup>76</sup> 'De l'amitié' (I.28) p.186-87.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p.187.

Equally, Montaigne's description of his friendship with La Boétie bears further similarities to the model of the androgyne as a result of the fate they share. We read in the *Symposium* that, faced with the growing arrogance of the androgynous humans, Zeus decides to bisect their bodies as a punishment and method of weakening them, thus creating two identical but separate, and, crucially, imperfect beings. Aristophanes explains that,

Man's original body having been thus cut in two, each half yearned for the half from which it had been severed. When they met again they threw their arms around one another and embraced, in their longing to grow together again, and they perished of hunger and general neglect of their concerns [...] Each of us then is the mere broken tally of a man [...] each of us is perpetually in search of his corresponding tally'.<sup>78</sup>

The response of the newly-separated humans who appear in the *Symposium* to this divine action is reflected in Montaigne's account of his loss of La Boétie. In 'De l'amitié', Montaigne echoes in bodily terms a similar experience of yearning in response to the loss of his friend: 'Depuis le jour que je le perdy [...] je ne fay que trainer languissant; et les plaisirs mesmes qui s'offrent à moy, au lieu de me consoler, me redoublent le regret de sa perte'.<sup>79</sup> Montaigne understands his relationship with La Boétie in a way that resonates with the explanation of human love and loss articulated by Aristophanes in the *Symposium*. As a result of the death

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<sup>78</sup> Plato, *The Symposium*, p.61-62.

<sup>79</sup> 'De l'amitié' (I.28) p.192.



of La Boétie, Montaigne perceives himself to be a mere half of a perfect unit, unable to experience the pleasures he previously enjoyed and sorrowful in the absence of the friend he considers to have been his other half.

The difficulty of articulating the feeling of loss resulting from the separation of two halves is addressed by Aristophanes in his speech in the *Symposium*, where he explains that 'It is clear that the soul of each has some other longing *which it cannot express*, but can only surmise and obscurely hint at'.<sup>80</sup> When Montaigne writes in the edition of 'De l'amitié' published in 1580, that 'Si on me presse de dire pourquoy je l'aymois, je sens que cela *ne se peut exprimer*', he is echoing the words of Aristophanes, and experiencing the impossibility of expressing the effect of his friend's absence.<sup>81</sup> The fact that Montaigne describes his friendship with La Boétie in the terms used by Aristophanes in the *Symposium*, and indeed paraphrases the explanation offered by Aristophanes of human longing in 'De l'amitié', demonstrates how the friendship is experienced bodily, and that Montaigne's love and yearning for La Boétie are the result of a physical separation after the latter's death. The insistent drawing of analogies between the friendship and the story of the original humans in the *Symposium* suggests that Montaigne views the monstrous body of the androgyne as a bodily symbol of the spiritual bond between the two friends.

The text of 'De l'amitié' contains these modes of articulating the experience of loss, but, furthermore, the fabric of the *Essais* embodies this experience. In the same way as Montaigne defines the yearning for the friendship

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<sup>80</sup> Plato, *The Symposium*, p.63. Emphasis mine.

<sup>81</sup> 'De l'amitié' (I.28) p.186-87. Emphasis mine.

as a hunger, La Boëtie's absence from Montaigne's life is also depicted as 'une faim', a physical lack in the text of the *Essais*. In the essay that follows 'De l'amitié' (entitled 'Vingt et neuf sonnets d'Estienne de la Boetie') Montaigne provides what is apparently a preface to the poetry written by La Boëtie which is intended to follow.<sup>82</sup> As Michael Screech points out, La Boëtie's sonnets appeared in every edition of the *Essais* published during Montaigne's lifetime, but 'In the Bordeaux copy Montaigne simply struck them all out – leaving his own text as 'grotesques' surrounding an absent masterpiece. No attempt is made to conceal the omission: the gaps are like blank columns in a censored newspaper'.<sup>83</sup> A 1592 addition to I.29 reads 'Ces vers se voient ailleurs': La Boëtie's poetry is elsewhere, physically missing from Montaigne's book in the same way as the man is now physically missing from Montaigne's life: a Hero now located beyond the boundaries of the Author's world. I have argued that the perfection of the friendship is symbolised by the alexandrine sentence, but in addition, the absence of La Boëtie is symbolised by the conspicuous absence of his work from the pages that follow 'De l'amitié'. Montaigne leaves a hole in the text of his own book and in doing so suggests that his book is incomplete, in the same way as he considers himself to be incomplete after La Boëtie's death. The connection between Montaigne's book and his body is apparent here, because his incomplete book stands as a reflection of his imperfect physical state, severed from his friend, his bodily other half.

The figure of the monster appears periodically and insistently, as we have seen, in Montaigne's account of his friendship with La Boëtie, and the depiction of monstrosity as a form of bodily disorder mutates as a result of Montaigne's use of

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<sup>82</sup> (I.29) p.194.

<sup>83</sup> M. de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, trans. M.A. Screech, p.220.

the monster as a metaphor in 'De l'amitié'. When we consider one of the real bodily examples of monstrosity encountered by Montaigne, the main case study of 'D'un enfant monstrueux', we inevitably conclude that the source of its monstrosity lies in the fact that it is a single unit (it is, according to Montaigne, '*un enfant monstrueux*') comprising two identifiably distinct bodies. The 'otherness' of this child resulting from the composite nature of its body stimulates the morbid curiosity of onlookers in the marketplace, but an entirely different response is prompted by Montaigne's depiction of his friendship with La Boétie, which, I have argued, also appears in the text as a monstrous or composite bodily unit. The friendship, unlike the freakish and disordered monster-child, is presented as ideal, balanced and symmetrical, and, having identified moments of the text of 'De l'amitié' at which Montaigne appears to be alluding to the model of bodily perfection represented by the androgynes of Plato's *Symposium*, I contend that the perception of the monstrous body undergoes a transformation in that it appears at this point as a bodily metaphor for the perfect friendship. However, at the time of writing, the perfection of the relationship has already been destroyed in that one half of the perfect unit, La Boétie, has been irretrievably lost. In bodily terms, the surviving half, Montaigne, persists, but he does so, metaphorically, as an imperfect, severed component of the formerly perfect unit. The figure of the monster thus comes also to represent Montaigne, who, as a result of his friend's death, has become a 'mere broken tally of a man' perpetually suffering from insurmountable physical loss and imbalance.<sup>84</sup> I have argued too that the alexandrine sentence of 'De l'amitié', 'par ce que c'estoit luy; par ce que c'estoit moy', reflects the bodily monstrosity but also the symmetry and perfection of the androgynous body of the *Symposium*, and, crucially, this manifestation of the friendship is not corrupted by

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<sup>84</sup> Plato, *The Symposium*, p.62.

the death of La Boétie. If we recall Montaigne's insistence on the consubstantial relationship that exists between the *Essais* and their writer, we must inevitably conclude that what Montaigne does in writing the alexandrine sentence is to produce a physical version of the friendship that embodies the perfection of the relationship. The monstrous sentence remains, therefore, as a testament to the perfection of the friendship when it has been shattered by the death of La Boétie.

### Conclusion

I have argued that the cannibal and the monster are two material phenomena which carry considerable cultural and ideological significance in the late-sixteenth-century imagination as a result of abnormal bodily behaviour and unusual bodily composition respectively. Their corporeal difference, whether intrinsic or the result of practices performed on the body which alter the boundaries of its structure, makes them objects of Montaigne's attention as a writer, and in writing about these material phenomena, Montaigne addresses directly the very characteristics of the cannibal and the monster that define them as 'other', as symbolic, threatening or transgressive. The body is central to the status of the cannibal and the monster, and features of these disordered bodies appear, as we have seen, with remarkable frequency and insistence in the essays that have been examined in this chapter. Montaigne describes cannibal activity and monstrous bodies in potent material terms, which is a reflection of the palpability of his encounters with the bodies he describes. There is, I have argued, an avowed effort on Montaigne's part to stress his bodily experience of the cannibal and the monster. He accumulates his sensory experiences of them: he reports seeing,

hearing, touching, speaking to them, and most symbolically, sharing with the cannibal the physical experience of eating, in order to establish bodily connections with the Heroes he is Authoring. In the substance of his argument, Montaigne challenges and overturns existing ideas about the troubling elements of these disordered bodies, denying the status of the cannibal as savage and the monster as portentous. But furthermore, in his behaviour which is reported in the *Essais* and in the process of writing Montaigne adopts characteristics of the cannibal and the monster, and in doing so embraces and employs the 'other' in his attempt to write about himself. The figures of the Author and the Hero, which are originally separated and distinct from one another in bodily terms, converge materially (in the text and in the body) at numerous moments in Montaigne's discourse. He projects himself, metaphorically and corporeally, into the Hero of the 'novel' he is creating, and experiences the Hero through this performance. This projection is accompanied by the 'consummation' of the Hero which happens when Montaigne locates the monster and the cannibal on a temporal and spatial co-ordinate. The result of Montaigne's Authoring of these two manifestations of bodily disorder is that they are familiarised, and the ideological and bodily threat they represent, which is symbolised by the fragmented and transgressed boundaries of their bodies, is removed. However, in spite of Montaigne's emphasis on the material nature of his experiences of these forms of bodily disorder, the Author and his disordered Heroes never coincide, and the analogy between them remains metaphorical and performative. The final chapter of the present thesis will now consider the depiction of the bodily disorder of disease in the *Essais*, and will explore the process by which Montaigne Authors his experience of his own disordered body.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Montaigne and Bodily Disorder Part Two: The Experience of Disease

Disease is a pathological condition, characterised by an identifiable and specific group of signs and symptoms, which interrupts or impairs the normal functioning of the healthy body. This physical phenomenon, and the deterioration of the body unit that is its consequence, comes about as a result of an excess of harmful elements in the body, or a lack of healthy ones. The principal causes of disease (infective agents such as bacteria, viruses and parasites, environmental factors including malnutrition, toxins and climatic conditions, and genetic defects inherent in the affected body) relate to the composition of the body, its boundaries, what is contained within them or missing from them. As Chapter One of the present thesis has argued, the sixteenth-century belief in the direct influence of the four humours on health and illness shares this focus on the concept of excess and lack within the body. According to humour theory, health is associated with *eucrasia*, or humour balance, and illness with *dyscrasia*, a humour imbalance, typically a harmful excess of one of the four fluids believed to permeate the body influencing health and illness (blood, black bile, yellow bile, or phlegm). Commonly-used methods of treatment like blood letting, cupping, induced

vomiting and sweating further highlight the belief in the toxicity of imbalance, and express the need to drain the body of a noxious presence in order to restore the patient's health, in other words, to correct the body's internal humour balance using approved modes of moving material across the body's boundaries. The connection between humour balance and health did not, however, rely solely on the basis of the quantity of each fluid found in the body. Each humour was associated with a pair of qualities and corresponded to a site of generation and a season: blood, dry and hot, was produced in the heart and was associated with Spring; black bile, dry and cold, came from the spleen and was connected to Autumn; yellow bile, wet and hot, was produced in the liver and associated with Summer; and phlegm, wet and cold, was produced in the brain and its corresponding season was Winter. In addition, each humour was associated with one of the four classical elements (fire, earth, water or air) and a connection was established between the microcosm of the human body and the macrocosm of the universe. This network of associations and connections was most commonly represented pictorially, as familiar diagrams like the one below from Oronce Finé's 1532 *Protomathesis* illustrates.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> O. Finé, *Protomathesis* (Parisiis: [impensis Gerardi Morrii & Ioannis Petri], 1532).

The diagram contains two overlapping squares of contradiction, the first with one of the four classical elements at each of its corners, and the second similarly showing the four qualities: dry, wet, hot and cold. Straight lines connect each of the qualities to the others, and the script printed on these lines indicates those permutations that are possible (*'combinatio possibilis'*, for example the qualities of cold and wet associated with the phlegmatic temperament) and those that are impossible (*'combinatio (im)possibilis'*, in other words hot and cold, or wet and dry). Similarly, contrary elements are positioned at either end of the intersecting lines in the centre of the diagram which bear the word *'contraria'* to indicate that fire and water, for example, are opposites. The universe, its elements and qualities are perceived as being governed by the rules and relationships identified in Finé's diagram. The microcosm of the human body is considered to operate in the same way as the macrocosm of the universe, as each temperament (melancholic, phlegmatic, sanguine and choleric) is, as we have seen, associated with one of the elements and one pair of qualities. It is a balanced, ordered and structured system, a network consisting of components occupying specific locations, and held in their proper positions by lines of connection to the other elements and qualities. It is when the structure varies, when the lines of connection are crossed or altered, that disorders of the body occur. For the sixteenth-century observer who traditionally sees the body, and particularly matters of its health and disease, in these very clearly defined, delineated terms, the reality of illness, in other words the visible bodily disintegration it brings in addition to the perception that it is caused by a physical imbalance of the humours flowing around the body, is intensely threatening. This is certainly the case for Ambroise Paré who identifies the shattering effect on the body (and other structures including the family, the community and the law) that is brought about by the plague when he describes the



symptoms he witnesses in plague victims as their healthy and contained bodies visibly dissolve and deteriorate as a result of the disease.

The sixteenth-century concept of disease and its treatment belongs in that category of bodily experiences in which boundaries are permeated or transgressed, and which is, as Douglas and Grosz argue, associated with threat and anxiety as a result. In Chapter Four, we considered how the problematic boundaries of the disintegrating body of the plague victim and the consuming or consumed body of the cannibal come to represent a real and embodied threat to the observer who experiences them. The material fluidity of the body's boundaries when it experiences disease is a source of anxiety which is addressed by the model of *eucrasia*, in that humour theory sets out the methods by which the illness can be cured, or the structure of health restored. In short, treating illness according to the principles of humour theory involves removing excess or counteracting deficiency, in other words, restoring the correct lines and boundaries that delineate the body and what is contained within it. The process of identifying, constructing or repairing boundaries is also the concern of the Bakhtinian Author, whose role is to consummate the Hero of his Novel by identifying and filling in the boundaries of the world he inhabits, and thereby presenting the Hero as a complete and contained figure. However, it is essential to explain that we are not dealing, here, with the consummation of the fictive, ideological Hero-figure of the Bakhtinian Novel, the details of whose world must be carefully enumerated by the Author. The focus of our attention is not this ideological Hero of which Bakhtin speaks, but rather an embodied Hero, and the boundaries that must be identified by the Author are those of the disordered body, ruptured and permeated, with which disease has interfered.

This chapter will consider the account of disease in the *Essais* from this point of view. It will explore how the relationship between Montaigne's received ideas about health, disease and medicine, and his new experience of illness is played out in the text, and will identify the processes and techniques he uses in his presentation of the experience. It will also compare Montaigne's Authoring of disease with his Authoring of monstrosity and cannibalism, identifying common features in the perception and presentation of the three forms of disorder. But ultimately, this chapter will expose how disease differs in Montaigne's writing from the forms of bodily disorder discussed in Chapter Five of the present thesis. Through an analysis of the parts of the text in which it is described, I will argue that disease is unique in Montaigne's writing, both as a form of bodily disorder, a tangible Hero to be Authored, and as a profound and seminal experience.

#### Humours and Heredity: The Author's Scaffolding

The essay 'Des mauvais moyens employez à bonne fin', in which illness serves as a familiar metaphor for the corruption and inefficiency of human government and politics, opens with a description of the harmony generated by the connections between all the elements of the natural world: 'Il se trouve une merveilleuse relation et correspondance en cette universelle police des ouvrages de nature, qui montre bien qu'elle n'est ny fortuite ny conduyte par divers maistres.' When Montaigne goes on to explain that the characteristics and disorders that affect our bodies can also be seen in the function, or malfunction, of the body politic, he is reflecting the belief that the universe is an ordered and balanced structure, a mechanism engineered by a single creative force, and composed of

many elements, each with its own function. A brief and generic explanation of illness follows only a few lines later: 'nous sommes sujets à une repletion d'humeurs inutile et nuisible; soit de bonnes humeurs [...] soit repletion de mauvaises humeurs, qui est l'ordinaire cause des maladies'.<sup>2</sup> Montaigne juxtaposes the universe, the body politic and human disease, presenting them consecutively, and, in doing so, connects the body to the universe in the same way as humour theory links the body's fluids to the four classical elements. The received notion of the structure of the universe, the macrocosm which is reflected in the microcosm of the human body, provides Montaigne with a framework, a starting-point from which he explores the theme of disease. Indeed, in accordance with humour theory, Montaigne subscribes, as we have seen above, to the idea that disease is the result of *dyscrasia*, a disturbance of the individual's complexion or humour balance, as the following episode reported in the *Journal de voyage* illustrates. Suffering from an aggressive toothache, Montaigne, in spite of his profound dislike of official medical practitioners, seeks help from a doctor, who identifies the source of Montaigne's complaint as follows: 'c'étoient des vents mêlés de quelque humeur qui montoient de l'estomac à la tête [qui] me causoient ce malaise'.<sup>3</sup> Montaigne responds to this by recording that the doctor's opinion 'me paroissoit d'autant plus vraisemblable, que j'avois éprouvé de pareilles douleurs entre d'autres parties de mon corps'.<sup>4</sup> The fact that Montaigne accepts the doctor's diagnosis and the connection he identifies between Montaigne's toothache and complexion suggests that Montaigne too considers his health to depend, in part at least, on the balance of his humours.

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<sup>2</sup> 'Des mauvais moyens employez à bonne fin' (II.23) p.662-63.

<sup>3</sup> *Journal de voyage*, p.1311.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1311.

Furthermore, Montaigne uses the model of the humours to describe what he believes to be his temperament, diagnosing himself in 'De la præsumption' as 'entre le jovial et le melancholique, moiennement sanguine et chaude'. This self-diagnosis places Montaigne's temperament roughly in the centre of the diagram of the humours, indicating a balanced and healthy complexion, and indeed he goes on in 'De la præsumption' to support this positive diagnosis by giving evidence of the good health he has enjoyed: from his youth, his health has been 'forte et allegre, jusques bien avant en mon aage rarement troublée par les maladies'.<sup>5</sup> However, in spite of the implication in 'De la præsumption' that his temperament is an enviably balanced one, there are numerous indications elsewhere in Montaigne's writing that he identifies his complexion as predominantly melancholic. As Michael Screech argues in *Montaigne and Melancholy*, Montaigne's frequent references throughout his writing to feelings of sluggishness and heaviness,<sup>6</sup> the result of his 'complexion lourde', support this classification of his temperament.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the cold and dry qualities of the melancholic complexion to which Montaigne believed himself to be subject provide an explanation for the extended period of travel on which he embarks in June 1580, a time when he was frequently experiencing the symptoms of kidney stones.<sup>8</sup> His visits to the spa towns of Switzerland, Germany and Italy were certainly prompted by the reputed curative properties of the waters found in these places, and Yvonne Bellenger draws attention to the amount of

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<sup>5</sup> 'De la præsumption' (II.17) p.624-25.

<sup>6</sup> Such as, for example, the 'pesanteur' to which Montaigne refers frequently in the *Journal de voyage*.

<sup>7</sup> 'De l'institution des enfans' (I.26) p.174. See M. Screech, *Montaigne and Melancholy: The Wisdom of the Essays* (1983) p.23-24. For lengthier discussions of Montaigne's melancholic temperament, see also O. Pot, *L'Inquiétante Étrangeté: Montaigne: la pierre, le cannibale, la mélancolie* (Paris: Champion, 1993), G. Nakam, 'Montaigne, la mélancolie et la folie', in *Études montaignistes en hommage à Pierre Michel* (1984) p.195-213, and J. Starobinski, *Montaigne en mouvement* (Paris: Gallimard, 1993) p.52-64.

<sup>8</sup> Montaigne describes suffering from kidney stones in 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres' (II.37), p.738. As the first edition of the *Essais* containing this description was published in 1580, we can assume that the account of the early stages of Montaigne's illness was written prior to this date.

space in the *Journal de voyage* that is devoted to the discussion of Montaigne's illness and the treatments with which he experimented. She writes,

Atteint de la gravelle (coliques néphrétiques) et sceptique à l'endroit de la médecine, Montaigne croyait à la vertu des eaux. Son itinéraire est donc jalonné de sources thermales et le *Journal de voyage* fait le décompte des bains pris, des verres bus, des 'pierres' rendues et même de leur grosseur.<sup>9</sup>

An illness caused by an imbalance in Montaigne's melancholic temperament, which is distinguished by excessive coldness and dryness, would require a hot and wet treatment to restore the humour balance, and, therefore, health. Montaigne is undoubtedly led to experiment with the 'eaux chaudes' as a result of his knowledge of humour theory, according to which the warm spa waters would provide an effective method of counteracting the cold and dry qualities of his illness.

However, Margaret Brunyate, in response to the same description of Montaigne's complexion understood by Screech to indicate a melancholic predisposition, diagnoses him as phlegmatic, the temperament associated as we have seen with the element of water and the quality of coldness.<sup>10</sup> Although the diagnoses offered by Screech and Brunyate appear to be contradictory, it is possible to see how both are, in fact, plausible. Montaigne, in his late forties, considered himself to be approaching old age, writing in 'De la præsumption' that, 'j'estois tel, car je ne me considere pas à cette heure, que je suis engagé dans les

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<sup>9</sup> Y. Bellenger, *Montaigne: une fête pour l'esprit* (Paris: Balland, 1998), p.109.

<sup>10</sup> M. Brunyate, 'Montaigne and Medicine', in *Montaigne and his Age*, ed. K. Cameron (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1981) p.35.

avenues de la vieillesse, ayant pieça franchy les quarante ans'.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, in 'Du repentir', when writing about the course of his bodily life, what he calls 'mon estat corporel', he explains that 'J'en ay veu l'herbe et les fleurs et le fruit; et en vois la secheresse'.<sup>12</sup> An element of the natural world to which the body is connected again serves as a metaphor for the experience of ageing physically. Montaigne's reference to the withering of the fruit indicates the connection he makes between old age and winter, the season of the phlegmatic temperament, and also reveals his awareness of the reputed increasing coldness and dryness of old age, which disturbed the natural complexion of the ageing individual causing illnesses like the one from which he suffers. He demonstrates this notion he writes, in 'De l'experience', that

L'age affoiblit la chaleur de mon estomac [...] Pourquoi ne pourra estre, à certaine revolution, affoiblie pareillement la chaleur de mes reins, si qu'ils ne puissent plus petrifier mon flegme, et nature s'acheminer à prendre quelque autre voye de purgation? Les ans m'ont evidemment faict tarir aucuns reumes. Pourquoi non ces excremens, qui fournissent de matiere à la grave?<sup>13</sup>

For this reason, both the melancholic temperament, as identified by Screech, and the tendency towards a phlegmatic temperament of an ageing person, as diagnosed by Brunyate, would be subject to the same cold and dry qualities. As humour theory advocated the use of contraries to cure contraries, we can assume that Montaigne's willingness to try the hot, wet spa treatments with which he

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<sup>11</sup> 'De la præsumption' (II.17) p.625.

<sup>12</sup> 'Du repentir' (III.2) p.794.

<sup>13</sup> 'De l'experience' (III.13) p.1071. See also L. Brockliss & C. Jones, *The Medical World of Early Modern France*, p.111.

experimented in Italy was in response to his assumption that his complexion was excessively cold and dry, regardless of whether this was as a result of a disturbance in his natural temperament or of the ageing process.

Nevertheless, as Screech points out, Montaigne does identify himself as of a predominantly melancholy temperament, possibly because of the strong contemporary association between complexions of this nature and genius.<sup>14</sup> This tendency towards melancholy is identified, in 'De l'affection des peres aux enfans', as the stimulus for the writing of the *Essais*. Montaigne reasons that 'C'est une humeur melancholique, et une humeur par consequent très ennemie de ma complexion naturelle, produite par le chagrin de la solitude en laquelle il y a quelques années que je m'estoy jetté, qui m'a mis premierement en teste cette resverie de me mesler d'escire'.<sup>15</sup> The situation in which he finds himself, isolated in his library tower and suffering from the absence of his great friend La Boétie, intensifies the melancholic side of his temperament, causing an imbalance in his complexion that in turn leads him to write. As I argued in Chapter Five, Montaigne's loss of his spiritual and intellectual 'other half' is expressed in insistently bodily terms, and we see here that there are, in addition, bodily consequences to La Boétie's death for Montaigne. He suffers physically as a result of his loss, the grief effecting a change to his humour balance, and, as we have seen, he explains in 'De l'amitié' that 'je ne fay que trainer languissant', using, here, an experience of bodily impairment, and, furthermore, one associated with a melancholic temperament, to express the emotion of grief.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> M. Screech, *Montaigne and Melancholy*, p.23-24.

<sup>15</sup> 'De l'affection des peres aux enfans' (II.8) p.364.

<sup>16</sup> 'De l'amitié' (I.28) p.192.

It is clear from this that Montaigne is not only knowledgeable about the humour theory that dominates contemporary ideas about health and illness, but that he also appropriates the tenets and language of humour theory to make sense of and articulate his own experiences. His melancholy causes him physical suffering in the form of illness, but this is accompanied by an emotional pain which is also connected to the melancholy predisposition. Furthermore, having argued that the figures of cannibalism and monstrosity provide Montaigne with a literal, material experience that he uses as a metaphor to express an intangible, abstract experience, I suggest that Montaigne's melancholy temperament also serves as a metaphor, similarly derived from a physical experience, which he uses to articulate his psychological and emotional state.

Let us return, at this point, to Montaigne's comment in 'De l'affection des peres aux enfans' that 'c'est une humeur melancholique [...] qui m'a mis premierement en teste cette resverie de me mesler d'escire'. Melancholy is Montaigne's disorder: physically, the excess of black bile brings on painful attacks of the stone; emotionally, feelings of grief and isolation exacerbate his melancholic predisposition. On two levels, then, Montaigne experiences disorder, and this prompts him to write the *Essais*, which suggests that the act of writing is, for its writer, a method of counteracting the harmful imbalance associated with his melancholic *dyscrasia*. His book, Montaigne tells us, is a faithful self-portrait in words, a material version of the man in whose pages those who loved him during his life 'puissent retrouver aucuns traits de mes conditions et humeurs' after his death.<sup>17</sup> The book, then, is intended by its writer to replace the man who is lost, in other words, to restore a missing element, and in using the language of the

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<sup>17</sup> 'Au lecteur', p.9.



humours to explain this process of material replacement through text, Montaigne can again be seen to bring a bodily dimension to his writing. Equally, if we recall the alexandrine sentence of 'De l'amitié' we can see that Montaigne is using the same technique to address the sense of loss after La Boétie's death. The perfect alexandrine sentence, as I have argued in Chapter Five, mirrors with words the balanced and seamless unit composed of the two friends, which is described in 'De l'amitié' in a way that is reminiscent of the androgynous bodies of the original humans described by Aristophanes in Plato's *Symposium*. La Boétie's death creates a lack, an imbalance in the structure of the relationship which Montaigne addresses in the essay devoted to friendship, where the alexandrine sentence, with its near-identical hemistiches, becomes a version of the perfection and balance of the relationship as it was prior to the loss of one half. The *Essais*, of which Montaigne is the 'matiere', and the sentence from 'De l'amitié', are textual replacements for the men who are (or, in the case of Montaigne, will be) missing. Their absence, real (in the case of La Boétie) or foreseen (in the case of Montaigne) is a form of bodily imbalance, in the same way as a lack of one of the humours is a cause of *dyscrasia*. The printed words of 'De l'amitié', through which Montaigne remembers La Boétie, and the *Essais*, Montaigne's written version of himself, are designed to compensate for a lack created by physical absence. In Bakhtinian terms, the text serves to consummate the Hero, because through writing, Montaigne produces a version of his world that is more stable, durable and complete than the one he experiences in reality.

Montaigne, I suggest, uses the language and premises of humour theory to articulate and make sense, not only of the physical composition of his body and the disease from which he suffers, but also of his reactions to the circumstances in

which he finds himself, and finally to explain the impulse to write he experiences as a result of the loss of La Boétie. The humours of the body are part of Montaigne's personal and material experience of disease (which will be discussed more fully later in this chapter), but humour theory is also a model, based on a perception of bodily reality, that he uses to express other experiences. The humour model, which connects the microcosmic human body to the macrocosmic universe, is a familiar and inherited paradigm according to which the universe is believed to function, and it provides a theoretical infrastructure for the discourse within which Montaigne presents, for example, his experience of La Boétie's death. This event, I have argued, creates a physical lack or *dyscrasia* for Montaigne, which he experiences and expresses bodily, describing himself as 'languissant' and depicting himself as a severed and monstrous half of a formerly perfect unit. The logical, balanced and delineated model of the humours is deployed, as we have seen in the cases of cannibalism and monstrosity, as a literary figure, one of the frameworks within which other things come to make sense, are Authored or 'consummated' by Montaigne who experiences and writes about them.

In addition to subscribing wholeheartedly to humour theory, Montaigne is convinced of the additional influence exerted over health and illness by other factors, including hereditary predisposition, and the notion of disease as a legacy inherited from his ancestors has a similar function to the notion of his humour balance in Montaigne's writing. In Chapter Four of the present thesis I argued that the concept of his genealogy is central to Montaigne's role as a Bakhtinian Author, in that his emphasis on his biological and geographical history allow him to situate himself and his activity as a writer in a clearly-defined spatial and temporal context.

This chapter will now return to this notion of Montaigne's ancestry and explore how it contributes to his Authoring of disease. In order to do this, I will now go on to consider in more detail the passage from 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres' in which Montaigne reconstructs his genealogy for the reader.

Originally intended to be the concluding chapter of Montaigne's *Essais*, coming as it does at the end of the second book, 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres' addresses several of the key themes that reappear later in Montaigne's actual final chapter, 'De l'experience', namely disease, its causes and Montaigne's profound scepticism regarding contemporary medical theory and practice. Montaigne links explicitly these themes to the title of the essay 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres' in the passage we will now consider. Having taken the first few pages of the essay to describe for his reader the episodes of frightening pain, 'cette douleur excessive [...] la plus douloureuse et penible qui se puisse imaginer', that he has been enduring for some time, Montaigne addresses the question of the hereditary nature of his condition.<sup>18</sup> He introduces this theme with a series of rhetorical questions through which he wonders at the process by which mental and physical characteristics of previous generations are evident in the bodies and behaviour of their descendants:

Quel monstre est-ce, que cette goutte de semence dequoy nous sommes produits porte en soy les impressions, non de la forme corporelle seulement, mais des pensemens et des inclinations de nos peres? Cette goutte d'eau, où loge elle ce nombre infini de formes?<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres' (II.37) p.740-41.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p.741.

What follows is a short series of examples from Antiquity of evidence of the remarkable similarities observed between family members from different generations: Pliny, Plutarch and Aristotle furnish Montaigne with his case studies. Firstly, there is an account of the family of Lepidus, in which three children are born with strange growths over one of their eyes, and, secondly, Montaigne cites the example of a family in Thebes whose members bear similar, unusually-shaped birthmarks. Finally, Montaigne reports that there is a 'certain nation où les femmes estoient communes, [où] on assignoit les enfans à leurs peres par la ressemblance'.<sup>20</sup> Montaigne establishes a history stretching back as far as the ancient world which highlights a pattern of identifying bodily similarities or inherited physical features that pass inexplicably from father to child.

To this list of ancient examples Montaigne now adds his personal history and begins by describing his physical resemblance to his father: 'Il est à croire que je dois à mon pere cette qualité pierreuse, car il mourut merueilleusement affligé d'une grosse pierre qu'il avoit en la vessie'.<sup>21</sup> The report of his father's experience of the stone reflects Montaigne's account of his own suffering: the older man too endures 'une fin de vie bien douloureuse' as a result of the illness.<sup>22</sup> References to his father's 'goutte de semence', 'goutte d'eau' and 'cette legere piece de sa substance dequoy il me bastit' which transport the older man's physical characteristics to his son are evidence of Montaigne's belief that ancestry and heredity are the products of a transfer of materiality from one generation to

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<sup>20</sup> 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres' (II.37) p.741.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p.742.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p.742.

another, from body to body.<sup>23</sup> In other words, what is contained, mysteriously and invisibly, in his father's seminal fluid will cause Montaigne's body to produce the painful kidney stones he describes many years later. The manner in which one of these stones, passed during Montaigne's stay at the spa town of La Villa, is described is very suggestive of this connection between the stone and the semen of Montaigne's father which causes it eventually to be produced in his son's body. According to the account of it that appears in the *Journal de voyage*, this stone 'avoit exactement la forme du membre masculin'.<sup>24</sup> The stone's appearance reminds Montaigne of the hereditary source of his illness, and its resemblance to the male organ of generation is symbolic of this ancestral and bodily connection. But there is, in addition, an intangible, psychological transfer from father to son which is also traced to the physical connection between Montaigne and his forebears, and this comes in the form of the hostility Montaigne feels toward the contemporary practice of medicine and, in particular, toward its practitioners. Of course, a bodily dimension in the dislike of medicine is inevitable because medical treatment concerns the body by definition. But a further link between the physical transfer of the disease and the inherited dislike of medicine is established when Montaigne, addressing his comment to 'les medecins', writes that 'par cette mesme infusion et insinuation fatale, j'ay receu la haine et le mespris de leur doctrine: cette antipathie que j'ay à leur art m'est hereditaire'.<sup>25</sup> Montaigne's bodily connection and physical resemblance to his father are revealed, then, through two experiences: kidney stones and an antipathy toward medicine.

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<sup>23</sup> 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres' (II.37) p.742.

<sup>24</sup> *Journal de voyage*, p.1311.

<sup>25</sup> 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres' (II.37), p.742.

As the passage progresses, the line of heredity extends beyond Montaigne and his father to include several more generations of male antecedents. As I argued in Chapter Four, the passage from ‘De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres’ we are considering here is evidence of Montaigne’s desire to establish his temporal and spatial context; in other words, to identify himself as part of a sequence of male figureheads connected by the place in which they live – the estate at Montaigne – which is, like the kidney stone Montaigne inherits from his father, a material legacy passed on from each man to his son and heir. But there is, in the antipathy toward medicine he describes, a further resemblance identified between Montaigne and his forebears, and there is another function to the personal ancestry he establishes here. The additional feature that is common to the four generations of men in Montaigne’s family who appear in ‘De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres’ is their decision to manage their health, and illness, without the intervention of medicine, which, as we have seen, was considered ‘entre eux’, Montaigne’s ancestors, to be ‘tout ce qui n’estoit de l’usage ordinaire’.<sup>26</sup> Montaigne lists his progenitors, identifying them by their relationship, or more importantly by their blood connection to him, and includes the age at which each man died: ‘Mon pere a vescu soixante et quatorze ans, mon ayeul soixante et neuf, mon bisayeul près de quatre vingts, sans avoir gousté aucune sorte de medecine’.<sup>27</sup> This sentence is characteristic of the rest of the passage precisely because of the *un*characteristic frequency with which such statistics appear in Montaigne’s writing generally. In addition to the ages of his male ancestors when they died, Montaigne reveals in this passage the age at which his father began to suffer from kidney stones (‘il ne s’apperceut de son mal que le soixante-septiesme an de son aage’), Montaigne’s age

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<sup>26</sup> ‘De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres’ (II.37) p.742.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p.742.

when this happened ('J'estoy nay vingt ans et plus avant sa maladie'), the age at which he experiences symptoms of his own illness ('quarante cinq ans après [ma naissance], j'aye commencé à m'en ressentir' and 'd'avoir vescu sain quarante sept ans pour ma part, n'est-ce pas assez?'),<sup>28</sup> the length of time that passed between his father's first symptoms and his death ('[il] dura encores sept ans en ce mal'), and the birth-date of Montaigne's great-grandfather ('[il] nasquit l'an mil quatre cens deux'), among several other pieces of statistical information.<sup>29</sup> All of the figures Montaigne provides relate to age, periods of health and illness, and death, and the effect of listing this type of statistic is to quantify the length of time Montaigne and his ancestors managed to enjoy good health and live without the intervention of doctors. And the collective longevity of the individual members of Montaigne's family is impressive, particularly if we take into account that Montaigne considered himself to be approaching old age, 'engagé dans les avenues de la vieillesse', while only in his late forties, still some thirty years younger than the age at which, for example, his great-grandfather had died.<sup>30</sup> In spite of this significant age-gap, Montaigne believes that he too has enjoyed a more than satisfactory lifespan. We have seen him ask, having lived a life untroubled by illness for forty-seven years, 'n'est-ce pas assez?', and he continues, 'quand ce sera le bout de ma carriere, elle est des plus longues'.<sup>31</sup>

Throughout the passage of 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres' in which Montaigne reconstructs his male ancestry he can be seen stressing the length

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<sup>28</sup> There is a discrepancy, here, as Montaigne claims to have experienced the first symptoms of kidney stones at different times. Maurice Rat points out in his note to this quotation that 'Les éditions antérieures portaient: ... *d'avoir vescu quarante six ans*' (p.1614). The important point, for the purposes of my argument, is that Montaigne includes *some* details of his age here. The accuracy of the information he provides is irrelevant at this stage.

<sup>29</sup> 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres' (II.37) p.742-43.

<sup>30</sup> 'De la præsumption' (II.17) p.625.

<sup>31</sup> 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres' (II.37) p.743.

of each man's life and the collective longevity of his family's male line. Montaigne's description of himself and his male ancestors presents the four men as members, not only of a family, but also of a type. Indeed, it is Montaigne's bodily connection to the other men enumerated in the essay – their blood tie – that leads him to consider their experience, or rather their conscious lack of experience, of medicine to count as his own. He describes the bodily experiences of his ancestors as 'mes exemples domestiques', combining the evidence of the efficacy of their behaviour with his own, and then continues by referring to their collective experience in the singular: 'il y a deux cens ans, il ne s'en faut que dix-huict, que cet essay nous dure, car le premier nasquit l'an mil quatre cens deux'.<sup>32</sup> In place of the separate span in years of each man's life which he has provided in the previous paragraph, Montaigne now combines them into a single uninterrupted period of just under two hundred years. As the title of the essay suggests, the men resemble one another in a number of ways: spatially, in that they inhabit and are the male figureheads of the Montaigne estate; temporally, in that each man is presented as having a notably long lifespan, and these run consecutively to produce the two-century-long case study; and bodily, in that all four are reputed to have managed the health of their bodies in the same way, and at least two of them, Montaigne and his father, share the same bodily complaint.<sup>33</sup> Like the humour theory discussed earlier in the present chapter, the concept of heredity provides Montaigne with a framework within which he can understand and write about the illness from which he suffers. His kidney condition, which, as we will see later in this chapter, causes Montaigne's body agonizingly to generate stones, poses a similar problem to that identified by Douglas and Grosz in their analyses of the

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<sup>32</sup> 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres' (II.37) p.742-43.

<sup>33</sup> No details are given about illnesses suffered by, or of the causes of death of Montaigne's grandfather, Grimon Eyquem, and great-grandfather, Raymon Eyquem.



threat represented by the body whose boundaries are shifting or transgressed, although the threat perceived by Montaigne, like those perceived by Paré and Léry, is an embodied rather than an ideological one, as I have argued in Chapter Four. Heredity, with its spatially-, temporally-, and bodily-delineated context, serves as an instrument of Bakhtinian Authorship for Montaigne in much the same way as we have seen humour theory doing elsewhere in the *Essais*. The notions of humour theory and heredity provide a set of pre-existing boundaries within which disease, the Hero, can be presented, and the troubling disorder it represents can be addressed.

The Desire to Live ‘non pas sans medecine, mais ouy bien sans medecins’<sup>34</sup>

The episode in ‘De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres’ containing the case history of Montaigne’s family serves also as a comparatively mild preamble to the vitriolic attacks on contemporary medical practice and practitioners we find later in this essay and, later still, in ‘De l’experience’. In the previous section, I highlighted the striking recurrence of numbers and statistics in Montaigne’s account of his ancestry, and will now argue that there is another feature that reappears several times in the same passage and one that is equally worthy of note. ‘Que les medecins excusent un peu ma liberté’, Montaigne writes, immediately before describing ‘la haine et le mepris’ that he has inherited from his ancestors toward the practice of medicine. Then, depicting himself in the throes of his illness, Montaigne again addresses doctors and asks ‘Qu’ils ne me prennent point à cette heure à leur avantage; qu’ils ne me menassent point, atterré comme je suis’. Once more, only a few lines later, the same structure appears: ‘Qu’ils ne me

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<sup>34</sup> ‘De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres’ (II.37), p.745.

reprochent point les maux qui me tiennent aesteure à la gorge'.<sup>35</sup> Montaigne's exhortations come in quick succession, and the same syntactic structure is used repeatedly to implore medical practitioners not to be angry with him, and not to threaten him, scold him or exploit him. The fact that Montaigne pleads with doctors *not* to behave in these ways implies anticipation on his part that this is precisely what they will in fact do. He is expecting doctors to be aggressive and predatory, liable to abuse the power they hold over the sick and vulnerable patients in their care, an unfavourable depiction of the medical profession that is reflected and reinforced elsewhere in the *Essais*. 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres' contains the direct accusation that doctors are careless and flippant in the treatment of their patients, Montaigne claiming that 'ils vont bastelant et baguenaudent à nos despens en tous leurs discours'.<sup>36</sup> In addition, the predatory nature of doctors, which Montaigne has suggested in 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres', is stressed in 'De l'experience' when Montaigne writes that

ces gens icy [les médecins], sont avantageux quand ils vous tiennent à leur misericorde: ils vous gourmandent les oreilles de leurs prognostiques; et, me surprenant autre fois affoibly du mal, m'ont injurieusement traicté de leurs dogmes et troigne magistrale, me menassant tantost de grandes douleurs, tantost de mort prochaine.<sup>37</sup>

The patient, here, is no longer the victim of the illness that afflicts him, but has been transformed into the unfortunate prey of the menacing doctor who claims to be his healer. In addition, Montaigne states a few lines later that, in his experience

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<sup>35</sup> 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres' (II.37) p.742-43.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p.755.

<sup>37</sup> 'De l'experience' (III.13) p.1068.

of the relationship between sufferer and healer, 'c'est tousjours agitation et combat'. Patient and doctor, who should be united by the shared objective of curing the bodily disorder, appear here as adversaries. The function of medicine is to heal the sick patient, to alleviate symptoms and restore the health of the body, but at the hands of the doctors portrayed by Montaigne, the patient merely suffers more acutely; in other words, the bodily disorder is not corrected but exacerbated. Indeed, the accusation contained in the two quotations above is that patients are at risk because of doctors' attempts, conscious and deliberate, to harm them. Montaigne claims that 'il faut estre merueilleusement aveugle si on ne se sent pas bien hazardé entre leurs mains', and supports his allegation by drawing attention to individual medical practitioners and their perception of their social role.<sup>38</sup> Doctors are accused of prioritising their personal interests over those of their patients, and of being motivated not only by professional vanity but in addition by material greed. They are accused of acting to feed their hunger for power when Montaigne writes in 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres' that 'Les medecins ne se contentent point d'avoir la maladie en gouvernement, ils rendent la santé malade, pour garder qu'on ne puisse en aucune raison eschapper leur autorité'.<sup>39</sup> They are eager to prolong, indeed to exacerbate, the physical vulnerability of their patients because the presence of illness creates a need for a cure, and therefore, for a medical profession. The conflict of interest between doctor and patient is further exposed when Montaigne claims that doctors 'considerent plus leur reputation, et par consequent leur profit, que l'interest de leurs patiens' and 'n'ont garde de faire mal leurs besoignes, puis que le dommage leur revient à profit'.<sup>40</sup> An economic dimension is thus introduced to this critique of contemporary medical practice,

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<sup>38</sup> 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres' (II.37) p.749.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p.745.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p.749-50 and p.747-48.

and Montaigne extends his condemnation of doctors in this respect by denying them their status as healers, and depicting them instead as salesmen: 'On peut dire d'eus pour le plus, qu'ils vendent les drogues medecinales; mais qu'ils soient medecins, cela ne peut on dire'.<sup>41</sup> Viewed from this perspective, medicine is not a calling, but a trade, and like any other business, the medical profession, in Montaigne's argument, aims to ensure its survival in the marketplace and maximise its profits by guaranteeing a demand for the service it claims to provide.

Montaigne's attack on the motivation behind the actions of medical practitioners is accompanied by further criticism, this time of the principles according to which medicine is practised. He employs a sceptical approach when considering the foundations of medical knowledge and doctrine, exposing the inconsistency of current medical theory and practice when he writes that

L'art de medecine n'est pas si resolute que nous soyons sans autorité, quoy que nous facions: elle change selon les climats et selon les Lunes [...] Si vostre medecin ne trouve bon que vous dormez, que vous usez de vin ou de telle viande, ne vous chaille: je vous en trouveray un autre qui ne sera pas de son advis. La diversité des argumens et opinions medicinales embrasse toute sorte de formes.<sup>42</sup>

Such disagreement and inconclusiveness implies a general professional knowledge that is based on speculation and guesswork, and which entails too much variety of opinion to be reliable. In the light of this inconsistency, Montaigne

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<sup>41</sup> 'De l'experience' (III.13) p.1057.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1065.

argues that the apparent success of any medical treatment carried out by doctors in this way cannot, therefore, be attributed to the capability or expertise of the practitioner, and must instead be due to something else. In 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres', the more likely contributory factor is identified as luck: 'Chez les medecins, fortune vaut bien mieux que la raison'.<sup>43</sup>

Contemporary medicine comes under further criticism in 'De l'experience' when Montaigne enumerates the most common courses of treatment employed by doctors in their attempts to force the unwelcome presence of illness into submission. These were purgative measures – bleeding, cupping, induced vomiting and sweating – measures which correspond to the belief in the need to remove from within the boundaries of the body a noxious substance, in other words, to cleanse it of a harmful and objectionable presence in order to restore *eucrasia*. Montaigne denies the efficacy of such drastic and aggressive action, and condemns practitioners for promoting such treatments, which, he claims, serve only to intensify the symptoms and expedite the death of the patient. He describes the 'cauterres, incisions, suées, sedons, dietes, et tant de formes de guarir qui nous apportent souvent la mort pour ne pouvoir soustenir leur violence et importunité'.<sup>44</sup> Given the existing level of incompetence that Montaigne alleges exists among the official medical community, and his accusation that it is the tendency of medical practitioners to do more harm than good to the patients under their jurisdiction, Montaigne argues that there is no merit in adhering to existing principles of treatment, especially in the light of the impressive longevity of his own 'exemples domestiques' who unanimously rejected medicine.

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<sup>43</sup> 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres' (II.37) p.742.

<sup>44</sup> 'De l'experience' (III.13) p.1072-73.

In addition, Montaigne's misgivings about contemporary medicine are intensified by the resemblance he detects between medical language and treatments, and sorcery and magic, which leads him to place medicine in the same category as 'toutes les arts fantastiques, vaines et supernaturelles'.<sup>45</sup> He provides examples of the unusual remedies doctors have been known to prescribe, which include 'le pied gauche d'une tortue, l'urine d'un lezart, la fiante d'un Elephant, le foye d'une taupe [et] du sang tiré sous l'aile droite d'un pigeon blanc'.<sup>46</sup> The exotic nature of the ingredients he lists, and the insistence on the use of, for example, the *left* leg of the tortoise and blood drawn from under the dove's *right* wing, are evocative of magic spells and charms, and Montaigne uses this analogy to signal what he believes to be an inclination among medical practitioners toward superstition and folklore, and away from reason, logic, and experience. Their practices are condemned as 'singeries qui ont plus le visage d'un enchantement magicien que de science solide', and if we compare the list of treatments above to the 'Eye of newt, and toe of frog, Wool of bat, and tongue of dog' added to the cauldron of the three witches in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the difference is barely perceptible.<sup>47</sup>

Doctors, then, have disreputable motives for practising their 'art', their medical knowledge is inconsistent and insecurely founded, and the therapies and remedies they prescribe are questionable, according to the picture Montaigne paints in 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres' and 'De l'experience'. The result, he claims, of this catalogue of inadequacies is medical treatment that is, at best, ineffective at addressing the troubling issue of bodily disorder, and, at worst,

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<sup>45</sup> 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres' (II.37) p.749.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p.749.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p.749. Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (IV.i).

dangerous and likely to aggravate disease and the suffering caused by its symptoms. But in addition to these concerns, Montaigne also challenges the basic principles of medicine and its claims to be an effective response to bodily disorder. He provides, in 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres', an extensive list of elements which, according to medical theory, are necessary for doctors to take into consideration in the diagnosis and treatment of their patients.

Il faut qu'il [le médecin] connoisse la complexion du malade, sa temperature, ses humeurs, ses inclinations, ses actions, ses pensements mesmes et ses imaginations; il faut qu'il se responde des circonstances externes, de la nature du lieu, condition de l'air et du temps, assiette des planetes et leurs influances; qu'il sçache en la maladie les causes, les signes, les affections, les jours critiques; en la drogue, le poix, la force, le pays, la figure, l'aage, la dispensation; et faut que toutes ces pieces, il les sçache proportionner et raporter l'une à l'autre pour en engendrer un parfaicte symmetrie.<sup>48</sup>

The objective of medicine as it is identified here is to restore to the disordered body the 'parfaicte symmetrie' that is, as we have seen, represented by the symmetrical and ordered diagram of the four humours and classical elements. In the quotation above, Montaigne makes a connection between the health of the body and the condition and movements of the environment and the cosmos, which reflects the contemporary notion of the relationship between the microcosmic body and the macrocosmic universe mentioned at the beginning of the present chapter. Montaigne is aware of the concept of the body and the

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<sup>48</sup> 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres' (II.37) p.753.

universe as inter-related components of the same system, and uses it to depict bodily health, here, as a balance of humours and elements within the microcosm and macrocosm. In enumerating the many factors believed to influence health and illness, Montaigne highlights the impulse within contemporary medical thought to attribute bodily symptoms to features of the surrounding environment. In Bakhtinian terms, the fact that medical practitioners consider climate, geographical location, planetary movement, dates and times to be important in the treatment of the sick patient is suggestive of the desire to Author the disordered body by identifying and constructing its spatial and temporal context. However, the list of what doctors claim they need to know in order to cure a patient is divided into two distinct groups of factors influencing the body's health. The first group includes, for example, the patient's humours and complexion, his thoughts and emotions, which are all factors whose relevance to and influence on illness are mentioned and explored repeatedly in the text of the *Essais*. The factors which fall into the second group, which includes the influence of astrological movements and specific herbal and chemical remedies, are, by contrast, conspicuous by their absence elsewhere the *Essais*, in spite of the notably comprehensive description of Montaigne's personal medical history in 'De l'experience', and numerous other narrative episodes throughout the book on the subject of bodily disorder. We can extrapolate from this, then, that Montaigne is less convinced of the influence of the second group of factors than he is of the first group, and the list, then, can be seen to have two functions. Firstly, it suggests Montaigne's belief that providing effective medical treatment is beyond the abilities of doctors, as no practitioner could be sufficiently knowledgeable about, or experienced in, all of the suspected causal elements of disease. In fact, he claims that 'la totale police de ce petit monde



leur est indigestible'.<sup>49</sup> Secondly, the purpose of listing both the convincing and the tenuous factors suspected of having an effect on health and illness is to expose, using the rhetorical figure of *enumeratio*, the uncertainty of contemporary medicine which tends, in Montaigne's opinion, to diagnose illness and prescribe remedies without making a distinction between the understanding that is gained through experience and observation, and questionable medical concepts that are based on superstitious assumptions.

The concept of official medical practice, then, is fundamentally flawed, and Montaigne supports this contention using a series of examples of the ineffectiveness of medicine from his own experience. The case of Montaigne's uncle Raymond de Bussaguet, cited in 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres', is one such case, and constitutes one of Montaigne's 'exemples domestiques' as a result of the family connection between them. Of the four brothers in his generation, Raymond was the youngest, and apparently the healthiest according to Montaigne's account, and yet he died before two of his older brothers whose complexions appeared less favourable than Raymond's. The factor identified by Montaigne that contributed to Raymond's early death was that he was the only one of the brothers not to share the distrust of medicine that was a family characteristic, and identified as the explanation for the impressive longevity of Montaigne's other ancestors.<sup>50</sup> A second example of the inadequacy of contemporary medicine comes when Montaigne describes the death of La Boétie, which can also be considered to fall in the category of Montaigne's personal experience of illness because of the firm bodily connection between himself and

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<sup>49</sup> 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres' (II.37) p.754.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p.743 'Le dernier des freres, ils estoient quatre, Sieur de Bussaguet, et de bien loing le dernier, se soumit seul à cet art [...] et luy succeda si mal qu'estant par apparence de plus forte complexion, il mourut pourtant longtemps avant les autres, sauf un, le sieur de Saint Michel'.

his friend we have observed him describing in 'De l'amitié'. La Boétie died of dysentery in 1563, and Montaigne claims that it was the medical practitioners' anxiety in their treatment of La Boétie, the result of their own awareness of the limitations of their knowledge and their art, which led to fatal complications: 'Cependant qu'ils craignent d'arrester le course d'un dysenterique pour ne luy causer la fièvre, ils me tuarent un amy qui valoit mieux que tous, tant qu'ils sont'.<sup>51</sup> Finally, concerning the health of his own body, Montaigne admits putting to the test the capacity of doctors known to him, explaining that

J'ay maintes-fois prins plaisir, estant en seurté et delivre de ces accidens dangereux, de les communiquer aux medecins comme naissans lors en moy. Je souffrois l'arrest de leurs horribles conclusions bien à mon aise, et en demeurois de tant plus obligé à Dieu de sa grace et mieux instruit de la vanité de cet art.<sup>52</sup>

This is the essential difference between official medical practice and Montaigne's preferred approach to medicine. In the anecdote he tells us here, it is as a result of his experience of illness, from its first symptoms to his recovery, that he is able retrospectively to examine the accuracy of his doctors' diagnosis and prognosis, and he takes pleasure in finding that his distrust of medical opinion is well founded when the practitioners' assessments of his condition differs from what he has observed to be true. It is, in fact, vital to take note of the distinction Montaigne deliberately draws between the contemporary practice of medicine, its principles and practitioners, and the activity of maintaining the health of the body.

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<sup>51</sup> 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres' (II.37) p.754.

<sup>52</sup> 'De l'experience' (III.13) p.1074.

Protecting good health, the internal balance and structure of the body, is of the utmost importance to him, as he explains in 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres': 'c'est une pretieuse chose la santé, et la seule chose qui merite à la verité qu'on y employe, non le temps seulement, la sueur, la peine, les biens, mis encore la vie à sa poursuite; d'autant que sans elle la vie nous vient à estre penible et injurieuse'.<sup>53</sup> Having articulated the value of caring for the health of the body, Montaigne, citing the example of Cato the Censor, who, like Montaigne's ancestors, enjoyed a notably long life, remarks that good health can be maintained 'non pas sans medecine, mais ouy bien sans medecins'.<sup>54</sup> While both 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres' and 'De l'experience' articulate a vigorous critique of the contemporary state of medical practice, Montaigne acknowledges that there is a practical need for some form of therapeutic study, understanding and treatment as a substitute for the existing medical methodology that he subjects to such forceful condemnation. In response to this requirement, he furnishes his reader with an alternative method of approaching illness, which avoids the pitfalls he associates with the present medical milieu. In characteristic fashion, he alludes to a series of historical and traditional sources that provide him with an intellectual structure within which to explore the issue for himself. In 'De l'experience', for example, he writes that

Tibere disoit que quiconque avoit vescu vingt ans se devoit respondre des choses qui luy estoyent nuisibles ou salutaires, et se sçavoir conduire sans medecine. Et le pouvoit avoir apprins Socrates, lequel, conseillant à ses disciples, soigneusement et comme un très principal estude, l'estude de leur

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<sup>53</sup> 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres' (II.37) p.744.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p.745.

santé, adjoustoit qu'il estoit malaise qu'un homme d'entendement, prenant garde à ses exercices, à son boire et à son manger, me discernast mieux que tout medecin ce qui luy estoit bon ou mauvais.<sup>55</sup>

The language in this passage is that of learning ('estude', 'entendement', 'discernast'), and in particular the knowledge that can be gained of the self through the examination of experience. Montaigne refers to Socrates (who, according to Plato's *Apology*, declared that 'the unexamined life is not worth living')<sup>56</sup> just at the moment when he is most powerfully advocating the use of critical intellect to reflect on experience and learn from it. In fact it is the experience of illness, and the ability to reflect on it, that is the quality missing from the theories and actions of the doctors who, we read in 'Du pedantisme', 'cognoissent bien Galien, mais nullement le malade'.<sup>57</sup> The insistence, in the passage I quote above, on the personal experience of health and illness corresponds to the emphasis in Hippocratic doctrine on the 'consideration of individual cases rather than grand conceptual schemes'.<sup>58</sup> As Stéphane Grisi points out, '[Montaigne] ne reconnaît que l'expérience subjective et sensitive du malade, et dénie toute valeur à l'expérience objective et raisonnée du spécialiste de la santé'.<sup>59</sup> Like Bakhtinian 'authorship', the effective Authoring of the Hero requires the observer to project himself into the Hero's world and experience, but as Montaigne's reporting of his own case suggests, both the man and the disease are 'heroes' of the narrative, and coincide bodily.

<sup>55</sup> 'De l'expérience' (III.13) p.1056.

<sup>56</sup> Plato, *Apology of Socrates*, trans. M. Stokes (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1997).

<sup>57</sup> 'Du pedantisme' (I.25) p.138.

<sup>58</sup> I. Maclean, *Logic, Signs and Nature in the Renaissance*, p.22.

<sup>59</sup> S. Grisi, *Dans l'intimité des maladies, de Montaigne à Hervé Guibert* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1996) p.68.

The ultimate and ideal objective of the doctor is to support and encourage the health of the disordered body of his patient, and humour theory dictates that this can be achieved by way of restoring the balance of fluids in the body; in other words, by ‘consummating’ the transgressed boundaries of the body illustrated in the diagram of the humours. However, in Montaigne’s opinion the doctor’s lack of experience, that essential component of ‘authorship’, renders traditional and official medicine incapable of mounting an effective challenge to disease. Citing Plato, Montaigne articulates this contention: ‘Platon avoit raison de dire que pour estre vray medecin, il seroit necessaire que celui qui l’entreprendroit eust passé par toutes les maladies qu’il vaut guarir et par tous les accidens et circonstances dequoy il doit juger. C’est raison qu’ils prennent la verole s’ils la veulent sçavoir penser’.<sup>60</sup> The patient, the inhabitant of the disordered body in need of Authoring, is the only person with the experience effectively to address the problem posed by disease, and it is using his experience of being the diseased Hero that Montaigne Authors this bodily disorder.

### Montaigne’s Essaying of Illness

On the morning of 24<sup>th</sup> August 1581, after a week of suffering from stomach pains, fever, headaches, toothache and sleeplessness, Montaigne finally, and painfully, passed a kidney stone about the size of a pine nut.<sup>61</sup> Entries written at the time in his *Journal de voyage*, in which the details of his health over the course

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<sup>60</sup> ‘De l’experience’ (III.13) p.1057.

<sup>61</sup> Many scholarly books and articles have dealt in detail with the subject of Montaigne’s illness. See, in particular, J. Starobinski, *Montaigne en mouvement* (Paris: Gallimard, 1993) p.266-303 (‘Le moment du corps’); G. Nakam, *Montaigne: la manière et la matière* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1991); M. Screech, *Montaigne and Melancholy: The Wisdom of the Essays* (London: Duckworth, 1983), and ‘Medicine and Literature: Aspects of Rabelais and Montaigne (with a Glance at the Law)’ in *French Renaissance Studies 1540-70: Humanism and the Encyclopædia*, ed. P. Sharratt (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1976).

of his travels are recorded, reveal that Montaigne noted carefully his behaviour and activities, diet, and physical sensations in the days leading up to this distressing event. Having arrived at the baths of La Villa ‘non-seulement en bonne santé, mais [...] encore fort allègre de toute façon’, he rapidly begins to experience troubling physical symptoms, which continue for several days.<sup>62</sup> He passes both blood and sand in his urine, his skin colour becomes yellowish, he feels discomfort and movement in his kidneys, colicky pain (‘assez fort et même poignant’) on his left-hand side, and ‘un mal de dents très aigu, que je n’avois point encore éprouvé’.<sup>63</sup> In addition, Montaigne catalogues the hot water treatments with which he experiments during his stay at La Villa, as well as the other destinations he visits.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, his constant references to the places in which he samples the palliative treatments for his condition indicate his urge to locate and later track his experiences geographically. He records the time at which he visits the baths, and the length of time he spends there each day: for example, he writes that ‘Le mardi 15 août, j’allai de bon matin me baigner; je restai un peu moins d’une heure dans le bain [...] Le 19 j’allai au bain un peu plus tard [...] j’y restai deux heures’.<sup>65</sup> The effects of the treatments are also listed and explained. After his two hours of bathing on 20<sup>th</sup> August, for instance, Montaigne passes ‘des urines troubles, rousses, épaisses, avec un peu de sable’, and later that day, he reports that ‘aussitôt que j’eus diné, je sentis de vives douleurs de colique’.<sup>66</sup> Three days later, having lost his appetite but slept well, Montaigne wakes to find himself ‘las et chagrin, la bouche sèche avec des aigreurs et un mauvais goût, l’haleine comme si j’avois eu la fièvre’. Montaigne’s experience of being ill, here, is presented in a systematic

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<sup>62</sup> *Journal de voyage*, p.1308.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1309-110.

<sup>64</sup> La Villa is located to the north of Pisa and to the west of Bologna.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1308-09

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1309-10

manner. Diary entries begin with the date, and are followed, typically, by an account of Montaigne's activities during the day and the treatments he uses, and finally by the symptoms he subsequently experiences. There is, then, an identifiable method to his diary entries, which reflects the fact that the course of his journey is designed to serve the clear purpose of finding relief from the painful symptoms of the stone by taking Montaigne from one town famed for the curative properties of its waters to another.

The description of the moment, on 24<sup>th</sup> August, at which the stone is finally passed, reads as follows:

Enfin, le 24 au matin, je poussai une pierre qui s'arrêta au passage. Je restai depuis ce moment jusqu'à dîner sans uriner, quoique j'en eusse grande envie. Alors je rendis ma pierre non sans douleur ni effusion de sang avant et après l'éjection. Elle étoit de la grandeur et longueur d'une petite pomme ou noix de pin, mais grosse d'un côté comme une fève, et elle avoit exactement la forme du membre masculin [...] Je n'en ai jamais rendu de comparable en grosseur à celle-ci; je n'avois que trop bien jugé, par la qualité de mes urines, ce qui en devoit arriver. Je verrai quelles en seront les suites.<sup>67</sup>

Here again we see Montaigne's method of collecting details of place, time, behaviour and sensation in his diary entry, through which he creates, in effect, a delineated spatial and temporal context for this particular attack of the stone. We are aware that the episode takes place at La Villa, and although this detail is not

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<sup>67</sup>*Journal de voyage*, p.1311.

mentioned in the extract above from the entry of 24<sup>th</sup> August, Montaigne's location at this time has already been established in the earlier entry of 14<sup>th</sup> August. Even the familiar room in which he stays is described: 'Je logeai encore dans la même chambre que j'avois louée ci-devant vingt écus par mois au même prix et mêmes conditions'.<sup>68</sup> The episode, therefore, is presented as taking place within an identifiable and defined spatial context. The temporal context of the event is similarly highlighted because presented here are the date and times of day at which the various stages of the disorder and the bodily changes Montaigne experiences take place, and several prepositions relating to time (jusqu'à, avant, après) appear too.

However, in addition to the specific spatial and temporal details of the episode, another, broader, context is also implied when it becomes clear that Montaigne considers this bout of suffering to conform to a pattern which he recognises from previous experience. Between 15<sup>th</sup> August, when, as we have seen, Montaigne considers himself (albeit briefly) to be in good health, and the moment at which he passes the stone nine days later, his symptoms steadily intensify in a manner that is familiar to him. As a result of observing and recognising his recurring symptoms he is able to report, as we see above, that 'je n'avois que trop bien jugé [...] ce qui en devoit arriver'.<sup>69</sup> He passes the stone – which is also compared to the stones previously produced by Montaigne's body, and is found to be the largest – and observes the following day that 'l'urine reprit sa couleur, et je me retrouvai dans le même état qu'auparavant'.<sup>70</sup> The process by which the stone is generated, makes its presence felt, and is ultimately expelled by Montaigne's body

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<sup>68</sup> *Journal de voyage*, p.1308.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1311.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1311.



is presented as cyclical, and this is reflected in the prefixes of the verbs used here (*re*prit, *re*trouvai). As a result of the familiar pattern of the experience of this disorder, Montaigne is able, if not actually to predict, then at least not to be surprised by the onslaught of his symptoms and the progression of each stone through his body. In the same way as he, like L  ry before him, depicts acts of tribal cannibalism as ceremonies and rituals – in other words, as ordered and predictable events in spite of the bodily fragmentation and disorder they involve – Montaigne presents his illness here as an experience whose progression he is able to anticipate, because it is a disorder which recurs with the same bodily symptoms and within the same time frame as the previous attacks he has experienced. I argued at the beginning of the present chapter that humour theory and the concept of bodily heredity provide Montaigne with a pre-existing structure within which the disease he experiences can be Authored and understood. The way in which he describes the bout of illness he experiences in La Villa performs a similar function. From past experience, observing, noting and reflecting on the progression of his body through earlier periods of ill health, Montaigne constructs, rather than receives or inherits, an additional model of disease against which he can measure the present condition of his body, and writing his diary while on his travels is the method he uses to achieve this. Appearing for the first time in the 1595 edition of the *Essais*, the following quotation from ‘De l’experience’ reveals the extent to which this process of faithfully recording his early experiences of his illness help Montaigne to cope with his kidney condition as it worsens toward the end of his life.<sup>71</sup> He writes that

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<sup>71</sup> The sections of the text marked [c], of which this quotation is one, were added to the text of the *Essais* after 1588. Montaigne must, therefore, have written the section quoted here at least seven years after writing the *Journal de voyage*, and no more than four years before his death in 1592.

A faute de memoire naturelle j'en forge de papier, et comme quelque nouveau symptome survient à mon mal, je l'escris. D'où il advient qu'à cette heure, estant quasi passé par toute sorte d'exemples, si quelque estonnement me menace, feuilletant ces petits brevets descousus comme des feuilles Sybillines, je ne faux plus de trouver où me consoler de quelque prognostique favorable en mon experience passée.<sup>72</sup>

By the time of writing the section I have quoted above, Montaigne's method of recording in text the changes that he observes happening to his body has become a conscious one with an explicit objective, and one which directs his behaviour and the way in which he manages his bouts of illness. His descriptions of the symptoms of his illness that we find, firstly in 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres' (of which most of the parts relating to illness had been composed prior to Montaigne's journey) and later in 'De l'experience', are not reports of pains recently experienced and recorded as individual facts, but are, in fact, generic accounts of the disorder. The description we read in 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres', in which Montaigne reports that 'Je suis aus prises avec la pire de toutes les maladies, la plus soudaine, la plus douloureuse, la plus mortelle et la plus irremediable', conveys the extreme discomfort of the writer's experience of the illness, and the insistent repetition of the superlative adjectives used here to describe the onset of the disease indicates a similar intensity of experience to the bout of acute suffering that is reported in the *Journal de voyage*.<sup>73</sup> However, the description of the illness found in 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres' is very different to the account we read in the entry in the *Journal de*

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<sup>72</sup> 'De l'experience' (III.13) p.1071.

<sup>73</sup> 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres' (II.37) p.738.

*voyage*. What is depicted in the essay is not the series of symptoms found in the diary entry, but rather a ‘maladie’, an experience that can be identified by the recurring pattern of symptoms that it causes. A later depiction of Montaigne’s illness is found in ‘De l’experience’. He writes that, when experiencing an attack of the stone,

On te voit suer d’ahan, pallir, rougir, trembler, vomir jusques au sang, souffrir des contractions et convulsions estranges, degouter par foys de grosses larmes des yeux, rendre les urines espesses, noires et effroyables, ou les avoir arrestées par quelque pierre espineuse et herissée qui te pouinct et escorche cruellement le col de la verge [...]<sup>74</sup>

This catalogue of symptoms also recalls the similarly distressing experiences Montaigne reports in the *Journal de voyage*, but the manner in which they are presented in ‘De l’experience’ is also quite different to the diary entries from August 1581 that I have discussed above. Rather than producing a retrospective report of the symptoms he has experienced across the course of each day, which is what we find in the *Journal de voyage*, Montaigne’s description of the physical effects of his disease now appears in the present tense, and takes the form of a pattern of recurring bodily signs and activities that are repeatedly visible to the people who come into contact with the patient. Similarly, the culmination of each episode of illness is also presented as an inevitable conclusion, which Montaigne is able to predict based on previous experience. Again, the present tense is used to indicate the habitual nature of the illness:

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<sup>74</sup> ‘De l’experience’ (III.13) p.1069.

Mais est-il rien doux au pris de cette soudaine mutation quand d'une douleur extreme je viens, par le vuidange de ma pierre, à recouvrer comme d'un esclair la belle lumiere de la santé, si libre et si pleine, comme il advient en nos soudaines et plus aspres choliques?<sup>75</sup>

Depicted, here, is the same cycle of illness that I identified earlier in the *Journal de voyage*, which involves Montaigne progressing through the gamut of various painful symptoms before passing the stone and being returned to health, but the difference in 'De l'experience' is that this cycle is depicted as occurring so frequently that it is a model, rather than a report, of bodily disorder. I have argued that parts of Montaigne's diary account of passing a kidney stone also suggest that the disease has a cyclical nature, in that Montaigne is able to compare his current experiences to ones he has had in the past. However, his illness, in the *Journal de voyage*, is still a relatively new experience for Montaigne, and each physical sensation and permutation in his treatment is therefore carefully recorded in his diary in order to identify a precedent and to help him to remember the experience. The passage from 'De l'experience', by contrast, is written at a late stage in the progression of Montaigne's illness, when his symptoms are no longer abnormal. They have become so frequent and familiar a pattern that they now appear as a generic description of what happens to Montaigne's body during attacks of the stone, and the accounts of them in 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres' and 'De l'experience' (in other words, the descriptions belonging to the text of the *Essais* rather than to the *Journal de voyage*) have been turned, therefore, into a regular structure that can be used as a model to express the experience of all bouts of illness caused by this disorder. Through his presentation of this bodily experience

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<sup>75</sup> 'De l'experience' (III.13) p.1071.

as a regular occurrence with a familiar and preceded outcome, Montaigne in effect strips the illness of its frightening unpredictability and disorderliness, thereby suggesting that disease has, in his own experience at least, elements of structure and consistency.

I have suggested that the typical accounts of periods of illness that are recorded in the *Journal de voyage* differ from those found in the *Essais*, but I would also argue that a considerable contrast can be drawn between the two passages I have mentioned above from 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres' and 'De l'experience'. The description of his illness from the former, which contains a list of superlative adjectives to convey the intensity of the pain he suffers, comes in a section of II.37 in which Montaigne is advocating a stoical attitude towards illness. Having enumerated the numerous physical characteristics of his complaint, including the suddenness with which it attacks his body and the agony it causes, Montaigne writes that, 'Mais l'effet mesme de la douleur n'a pas cette aigreur si aspre et si poignante, qu'un homme rassis en doive entrer en rage et en desesper.'<sup>76</sup> He continues in this vein, reasoning that bodily suffering is of no consequence provided that the stability of the mind is not compromised as a result of it: 'Qu'importe que nous tordons nos bras, pourveu que nous ne tordons nos pensées!'<sup>77</sup> The list of powerful and evocative adjectives that appears in this section of II.37 therefore has a rhetorical function in the narrative: Montaigne emphasises the intensity of his bodily experience for maximum rhetorical effect in his defence of stoicism in the face of physical suffering. I would argue that this is a discourse destined for public consumption, and Montaigne is advocating this philosophical

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<sup>76</sup> 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres' (II.37) p.738.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p.739.

posture to a perceived external reader. The fact that the final section of II.37 bears the dedication 'A Madame de Duras' implies that Montaigne considers this essay to be his contribution to a dialogue with an external reader.<sup>78</sup>

The passage from 'De l'experience' belongs to a moment of the text which performs a very different function. In this essay, Montaigne's description of his experience is preceded by two imperatives. Referring to his illness, he writes 'Regarde ce chastement [...] Regarde sa tardifveté'.<sup>79</sup> The conjugation of the verb *regarder* here reveals that the encouragement to reflect on the experience of illness is made in a gentle and intimate way, and this is reflected in the repeated use of the informal 'tu' form in the sentences that follow ('ta vie', 'ta jeunesse', 'ton discours', 'tes amys', and so on). This feature of the passage gives the narrative at this point a tone more personal than the rhetorical discourse of II.37. Indeed, Montaigne's description of his symptoms in 'De l'experience' varies from the one found in 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres'. The account in the earlier essay describes a *type* of experience – sudden, agonizing, deadly – whereas the description in 'De l'experience' is of the real and specific bodily evidence of Montaigne's condition. The account here is material, sensory and visceral, in contrast to the carefully-managed and generic description found in 'De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres'. The effect of this combination of the informal second-person form and the intimate revelations of Montaigne's most intimate and traumatic bodily experiences is to make this moment of the *Essais* intensely personal. This description is not directed formally to an external reader, but is, rather, Montaigne's internal communication with himself. In Bakhtinian terms, this is a moment at which

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<sup>78</sup> The dedication is found on p.763.

<sup>79</sup> 'De l'experience' (III.13) p.1069.

Montaigne is Authoring his disorder, simultaneously reliving the past experience of acute suffering and reflecting on it through writing. The act of articulating the pain of his illness through this dialogue with himself becomes a form of therapy for Montaigne, a method of expressing his experience tangibly in order to make sense of it.

Disease, in Montaigne's 'Novel' of experience, is a question of bodily boundaries and is, paradoxically, associated with the contradictory notions of fragmentation, disintegration and imbalance, and structure, regularity and order. He observes that his disease accompanies what he considers to be old age, and by seeking relief in the hot, wet spa treatments with which he experiments on his travels, he indicates that he connects his illness with the qualities of coldness and dryness that are the inevitable consequences of the ageing process. Disorder manifests itself simultaneously in two forms in Montaigne's bodily experience: in the excessively phlegmatic temperament that comes with old age – evidenced by the bodily dryness and coldness of which he speaks –<sup>80</sup> and in the generation of superfluous and noxious material in the form of the kidney stones it is necessary for him to force out. Montaigne's methods of targeting his disorder are evidence of an intention on his part to restore the broken or transgressed boundaries of his body, in other words, his body's balance: he intends the therapeutic waters to counteract his humour imbalance, and expelling from his body superfluous material in the form of his kidney stone restores him to the good health he previously enjoyed. Elements of order and structure are brought to Montaigne's experience of bodily disorder through his behaviour, or the action he takes in

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<sup>80</sup> Montaigne draws attention to these symptoms of old age in 'De l'expérience' (III.13) p.1071: 'L'aage affoiblit la chaleur de mon estomac [...] Pourquoi ne pourra estre, à certaine revolution, affoiblie pareillement la chaleur de mes reins, si qu'ils ne puissent plus petrifier mon flegme [...]?'.

response to the illness, both voluntary (the treatments with which he experiments) and involuntary (the passing of the stone). But Montaigne exerts further control over the disorder of his body through his writing, depicting periods of illness, as we have seen, as recurring, predictable and, to an extent, controllable events. Authoring takes place, in the case of illness, bodily and textually, as the source of Montaigne's disorder is tackled through the way he treats his bodily disorder and the way in which he writes about his experience of it.

The importance of experience, the subjective familiarity with disease, is a crucial element in the Authoring of this form of bodily disorder in Montaigne's writing. The experience of Montaigne's disorder has both a physical dimension – the symptoms and sensations it causes, and the material that is generated and eliminated by his body – and a psychological one. The *Journal de voyage* is, in Montaigne's words, a written memory, the product of Montaigne's mind which is recorded during and in the immediate aftermath of his bout of illness; the essays in which Montaigne writes about his kidney stones (II.37 and III.13 in particular) are, equally, recollections of the disease, although the accounts in the text of the *Essais* are more reflective than documentary. In the Authoring of Montaigne's illness, then, the mind is as involved in the experience of the disorder as is the body. Montaigne's body is the site of the disorder and its painful progression, but the Authoring of this disordered and bodily Hero takes place when Montaigne withdraws, albeit temporarily, from the purely bodily dimension of the experience in order to record it in text: a mental activity. Indeed, evidence of the impact of the mind in the experience of illness, and its potential both to exacerbate physical damage and to heal it, is presented in a catalogue of disparate anecdotes, again from Montaigne's experience, which appear throughout the *Essais*. 'De la force de



l'imagination' contains several such examples. A bridegroom on his wedding day is teased by his friends about making love to his new wife for the first time. The fear of the sexual act resulting from the teasing is so great that it has a physical effect and renders the unfortunate bridegroom incapable. Montaigne resolves the situation by making a gift to the bridegroom of a lucky charm, a gold coin reputed to cure a number of minor conditions including sunstroke. Montaigne lies to the bridegroom, telling him that the coin is an effective cure for impotence. The bridegroom accepts Montaigne's claims as true, regains his confidence, and is able to make love to his wife.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, Montaigne reports that,

Une femme, pensant avoir avalé un'esplingue avec son pain, crioit et se tourmentoît comme ayant une douleur insupportable au gosier, où elle pensoit la sentir arrestée; mais, par ce qu'il n'y avoit ny enfleure ny alteration par le dehors, un habil'homme, ayant jugé que ce n'estoit que fantasie et opinion, prise de quelque morceau de pain qui l'avoit piquée en passant, la fit vomir et jetta à la desrobée, dans ce qu'elle rendit, une esplingue tortue. Cette femme, cuidant l'avoir rendue, se sentit soudain deschargée de sa douleur.<sup>82</sup>

In these two reported cases both the cause of the suffering and its cure are entirely psychological. Indeed, Montaigne's conviction that the state of the mind can affect the state of the body to the extent that the body will experience pain, or the relief of pain as a result of a psychological stimulus, stresses the role that is played by the mental dimension of the experience of disorder in which Montaigne

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<sup>81</sup> 'De la force de l'imagination' (I.21) p.98.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p.102.

is involved when he reflects on his illness through writing. A connection is thus established between experience, mental attitude and physical disorder. John O'Neill highlights this fundamental link between consciousness and physical suffering in his discussion of the riding accident Montaigne reports in 'De l'exercitation'. Having been knocked from his horse by a careless servant, and lost consciousness, Montaigne writes in this essay that

Je me laissoy couler si doucement et d'une façon si aisée que je ne sens guiere autre action moins poissante que cell-là estoit. Quand je vins à revivre et à reprendre mes forces [...] qui fut deux ou trois heures après, je me senty tout d'un train rengager aux douleurs.<sup>83</sup>

O'Neill stresses the involvement of consciousness in Montaigne's physical suffering: 'after a fall from his horse, [Montaigne] describes how he clung to life, half-conscious and yet in a sweet and peaceful state in which the line between life and death seemed easily crossed. His pain only set in once he had regained consciousness'.<sup>84</sup> The connection is further underscored when Montaigne himself asserts that '[les] passions qui ne nous touchent que par l'escorse, ne se peuvent dire nostres. Pour les faire nostres, il faut que l'homme y soit engagé tout entiere; et les douleurs que le pied ou la main sentent pendant que nous dormons, ne sont pas à nous'.<sup>85</sup> Given this centrality of consciousness to the experience of pain, Montaigne uses the final essay of his collection to highlight what he believes to be the medical world's mistaken perception of illness as a hostile physical force to be attacked, and advises a shift in its perspective on disease. He urges his reader to

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<sup>83</sup> 'De l'exercitation' (II.6) p.357.

<sup>84</sup> J. O'Neill, *Essaying Montaigne: A Study of the Renaissance Institution of Reading and Writing* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982) p.129.

<sup>85</sup> 'De l'exercitation' (II.6) p.356.

consider that 'tu ne meurs pas de ce que tu es malade; tu meurs de ce que tu es vivant'.<sup>86</sup> In effect the status of illness is altered, here, and it is acquitted of causing human demise because that demise, for Montaigne is an inevitable and universal trait of humanity; 'la mort te tue bien sans le secours de la maladie'.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, the intensely subjective and personal dimension of illness stemming from its roots in the humour balance, psychology and heredity of the sufferer leads Montaigne to understand it as not merely a characteristic of mankind, but also as specific to the individual man himself. In this argument the objective of medicine is undermined as illness is transformed. From being perceived as an abnormal and foreign presence it becomes, in Montaigne's definition, an integral element of human experience and the natural order, for which he expresses the highest respect. In fact with reference to nature he writes that 'c'est injustice de corrompre ses regles'.<sup>88</sup> Montaigne, in opposition to the official medical dogma of his time, redefines illness as 'un phénomène du vivant', an innate and therefore God-given characteristic, and as such is depicted as a meaningful experience.<sup>89</sup> Its purpose, he concludes, is similar to that of philosophy, which is presented as a method of practising the separation of the mind or soul from its physical confines, and of preparing the intangible, spiritual element of the human being for its separation from its physical counterpart at the moment of death. Citing Cicero, Montaigne claims that 'Philosopher [...] n'est autre chose que s'aprester à la mort'.<sup>90</sup> In Montaigne's eyes, then, periods of illness perform a similar function in two ways. Firstly, they are the constant reminders of human weakness and mortality, which anticipate death and provide the opportunity for the body to become gradually

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<sup>86</sup> 'De l'expérience' (III.13) p.1070.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1070.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1088.

<sup>89</sup> G. Nakam, *Montaigne: la manière et la matière* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1991) p.63.

<sup>90</sup> 'Que philosopher c'est apprendre à mourir' (I.20) p.79.

accustomed to its fate.<sup>91</sup> He reminds his reader that the prospect of death is a considerably more frightening spectre to the young and healthy than it is to the old and infirm, proof that the experience of illness, ageing and bodily deterioration serves to familiarize Man with death and prepare him for it. The sporadic nature of Montaigne's own illness, in which sensations of acute and intense pain are suddenly replaced by elation and relief when he passes the stone that afflicts him, makes his a condition particularly well suited to this purpose. O'Neill explains how Montaigne perceives the benefits of becoming accustomed to his condition:

Montaigne finds it natural at his age for his body to begin to collapse and function less reliably [...] The stone has the decided advantage, in comparison with many illnesses, that it is an intermittent crisis, dreadfully painful at the time (or in presentiment), but manageable with experience, and afterwards heightening the pleasure of ordinary health as the sweetest gift of life. Thus out of the contortions of this awful malady, Montaigne achieves a serenity and harmony of nature that repeats the paradox of beauty and serenity hidden in ugliness and terror.<sup>92</sup>

Secondly, disease constitutes the erosion and demise of the individual part of the body affected by it and as a consequence the death of the whole person is not perceived to be a conclusive event, but rather the last stage of this process of gradual deterioration that happens one piece at a time. Montaigne's line of reasoning is neatly illustrated when he informs his reader that one of his teeth has fallen out while he has been writing; 'voilà une dent qui me vient de choir, sans

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<sup>91</sup> See, for example, 'De l'experience' (III.13) p.1081: 'Dieu faict grace ceux à qui il soustrait la vie par le menu [...] La dernière mort en sera d'autant moins plaine et nuisible'.

<sup>92</sup> J. O'Neill, *Essaying Montaigne*, p.136-37.

douleur, sans effort: c'estoit le terme naturel de sa durée'.<sup>93</sup> One small part of his body has perished naturally, a *mise en abîme* of what is happening to his ageing body as a whole.<sup>94</sup>

In Montaigne's argument illness is portrayed not as a destructive and foreign force to be tackled and defeated in order to sustain the life of the body, but as a fundamental human experience emanating from the maternal phenomenon of nature and the paternal figure of God.<sup>95</sup> Montaigne presents a challenge to the standard contemporary approach which interprets disease as an event inducing a physical response, as a condition requiring vigorous action, and consequently involves attacking the unwelcome presence of, for example, the toxic excess of humour in order to heal the body. His proposed alternative therapeutic methodology is much less confrontational and advocates approaching illness not with aggression but with tolerance in accordance with the method of allowing nature to take its course advocated by Hippocrates. This accepting and respectful approach to illness, is explained when Montaigne writes,

Je suis de l'avis de Crantor, qu'il ne faut obstinément s'opposer aux maux, et à l'estourdi ny leur succomber de mollesse, mais qu'il leur faut ceder naturellement selon leur condition et la nostre. On doit donner passage aux maladies; et je trouve qu'elles arrestent moins chez moy, qui les laisse faire.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> 'De l'expérience' (III.13) p.1081.

<sup>94</sup> For an extensive discussion on the significance of Montaigne's tooth, see J. Brody, *Lectures de Montaigne* (Lexington: French Forum, 1982) p.55-67.

<sup>95</sup> 'De l'expérience (III.13) p.1088 : 'Nature a maternellement observé cela, que les actions qu'elle nous a enjointes pour nostre besoiing nous fussent aussi voluptueuses'.

<sup>96</sup> 'De l'expérience' (III.13) p.1088.

It is important to note that Montaigne's method does not involve tolerating each bout of illness in a state of total passivity, and there is, as we have seen, evidence of his experimentation with various treatment methods in his search for relief from his suffering; the spa remedies he employs in Italy, for example, can be considered to be a form of medication or proactive treatment because of the correspondence between using remedies with certain qualities and the dominant humour theory of the period. However, Montaigne presents the healthcare measures he has developed merely as a suggested model for others to follow, and not as a prescriptive guide. It is not the physical practices of exercise, diet or medication that he advocates; rather it is his approach, constructed in response to the wisdom and understanding he has gathered, crucially, through personal experience, that he recommends.

There is evidence of Montaigne's application of this tolerant approach to his own medical condition when he writes that '*dépuis qu'il est esbranlé, il n'est que de luy donner passage; aussi bien le prendra il*'.<sup>97</sup> This compliance with the course of illness is especially noteworthy in Montaigne's case, as his particular condition involves the regular and agonizing expulsion of the tangible bodies of noxious substances that are his kidney stones. Montaigne's chosen medical method furthermore involves accommodating the symptoms associated with his illness while continuing to follow a normal routine with as little disruption as possible. In fact health is defined by Montaigne in the following way: '*c'est maintenir sans destourbier mon estat accoustumé*'.<sup>98</sup> The conclusion at which Montaigne ultimately arrives is twofold; when considered alongside good health, illness can be

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<sup>97</sup> 'De l'expérience' (III.13) p.1073.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1057.

used to stimulate us to reflect on the human condition, and appreciate the benefits of the absence of suffering afforded us by relief from illness. Finally, it should be tolerated as a natural phenomenon over which we have little control, and embraced as a valuable vehicle for the understanding of the nature of man.

The Authoring of disease in Montaigne's writing is a complex process, but one which can be seen closely to correspond to Bakhtin's model. The Author of the *Essais* and the *Journal de voyage* is immersed in the experience of the disorder or Hero, enduring the symptoms of the illness and enjoying the relief from pain that comes with the passing of the stone, and portraying the bodily reality of the disorder in comprehensive sensory detail. Furthermore, Montaigne can be seen to perform the second stage of Authoring described by Bakhtin by way of the structures and models of order that he introduces into his text, and which I have identified and discussed throughout the present chapter. Notions of his humours and complexion, heredity, and the cyclical nature of his disease, and the elements of order and regularity that these notions carry come together to serve as the gridlines of a matrix onto which the chaotic and threatening presence of illness can be projected. In this way, the Hero, a bodily disorder which involves the painful transgression of the body's real and notional boundaries, is 'consummated', in other words, presented in a spatially- and temporally-defined context by the Author.

## CONCLUSION

Jonathan Sawday's remark in *The Body Emblazoned* that, 'the human body may, in the Renaissance, have been 'emblazoned' or embellished through art and poetry. But to 'blazon' a body is also to hack it to pieces', articulates the problem represented by the fragmentation of the body, both physical and metaphorical, during the early modern era. For Ambroise Paré, Jean de Léry and Michel de Montaigne, the issue of the disordered human body is a reality with which they are faced as part of the various experiences they undergo both voluntarily and involuntarily. What the present thesis has illustrated, I suggest, is that in retreating from their experiences of cannibalism, disease and monstrosity, all three of our writers take up a reflective position from which they attempt to present the troubling and threatening bodies they have observed as comprehensively and truthfully as they can, at the same time as establishing sources of order and organisation in their experiences which to an extent reduce the threat that the disorder embodies.

While Paré's *Œuvres* has previously been seen as a factual text, the process of reading this book, not as an historical document, but rather as a Novel of experience, has revealed features and tendencies in the fabric and content of Paré's



writing which suggest that, in his attempt to depict the reality of the disordered human body, Paré develops a range of structures and strategies to address and diminish the disorderly impact of plague and monstrosity. He is careful, for example, to identify the precise spatial and temporal contexts in which appear the numerous cases of monstrosity to which he refers in *Des monstres*, and while the plague retains its status as a chaotic and physically shattering phenomenon in *De la peste*, Paré's narrative encourages the reader's awareness of its role in the broader structure of the divinely-controlled world.

Jean de Léry, too, exhibits an acute awareness of the spatial and temporal context in which his Hero resides, and in both the *Histoire d'un voyage* and the *Histoire mémorable* he performs a similar function to Paré in that, when faced with the physically and morally transgressive act of anthropophagy, he identifies and constructs elements of order and structure in his reporting of the experience. The overt staging of the cannibal spectacle in Brazil and the detail with which a food chain is constructed in his account of Sancerre are examples of this quest to identify aspects of method and stability in each episode of what is inevitably a profoundly troubling bodily practice.

With respect to cannibalism and monstrosity, Montaigne, I have argued, experiences the phenomena very differently to the way in which Paré and Léry come into contact with the cannibals and monsters of their books. Montaigne's experience comes mainly from reading about disordered bodies, and this stimulates him to seek out further knowledge of, and even contact with, for example, the cannibals who visit Rouen and the trans-sexual 'monster' Marie-Germain. Moreover, Montaigne's use of the figure of the cannibal and the monster as

metaphors for elements of his own life and behaviour serves to intensify the experience, and to strengthen the connection between Montaigne and these disordered bodies through the construction of numerous analogies between them. The ultimate conclusion to which Montaigne takes cannibalism and monstrosity is, I contend, the most revealing and significant aspect of his Authoring of these disordered bodies. The final depiction of the cannibal, for instance, reveals that his behaviour provides for Montaigne a useful metaphor for describing the method of 'essaying' that he employs in the writing of his book, and in addition, that the cannibal is at least no more savage and brutal than his non-cannibalistic European counterparts. Monstrosity, too, is transformed utterly in Montaigne's narrative because it is a notion that comes to represent both Montaigne's book and his friendship with La Boétie. I conclude, therefore, that Montaigne's Authoring of cannibalism and monstrosity reduces, through the use of metaphor, the disorderly image of these two bodily phenomena. Equally, in his account of disease, Montaigne reflects the narrative processes of both Paré and Léry when he identifies his illness as a necessary stage within the larger structure of his life. In itself, his painful kidney condition causes the material disintegration of his body, but when viewed in the context of his life, it becomes a constituent of order. Montaigne's narrative strategies therefore alter the definition of cannibalism, monstrosity and illness as bodily disorders by emphasising the elements of order and organisation that can be found within them.

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