

This dissertation by Kathryn Anne Chenoweth is accepted in its present form
by the Department of French Studies as satisfying the
dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Date _____
Réda Bensmaïa, Advisor

Date _____
Virginia Krause, Advisor

Recommended to the Graduate Council

Date _____
Tom Conley, Reader

Approved by the Graduate Council

Date _____
Sheila Bonde, Dean of the Graduate School

Writing in French *et non autrement*, 1529-1592

By Kathryn Anne Chenoweth

A.A., Bard College at Simon's Rock, 2000

B.A., Wesleyan University, 2002

A.M., Brown University 2005

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Department of French Studies at Brown University

Providence, Rhode Island

May 2010

© Copyright 2010 by Kathryn Anne Chenoweth

CURRICULUM VITAE

Kathryn Anne Chenoweth was born December 3, 1980 in Dayton, Ohio. She attended Bard College at Simon's Rock and Wesleyan University as an undergraduate, graduating from Wesleyan with High Honors in the College of Letters Program in 2002. She received her Ph.D. in French Studies from Brown in 2010. Her teaching appointments have included a lectureship at the University of Massachusetts, Boston and a position as Collegiate Assistant Professor and Harper-Schmidt Fellow at the University of Chicago.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It has been my privilege to write this dissertation under the co-direction of Professors Virginia Krause and Réda Bensmaïa. I thank them for all their generosity and confidence, careful reading and guidance, their prodding and trust over these past years. I could not have asked for better models of intellectual sensitivity and academic rigor to follow. Thank you for encouraging me to take decisive risks—including that of writing about the sixteenth century—but also, especially, for not hesitating to rein me in or push me when I needed it. I am grateful, too, to Professor Lewis Seifert for his terrific support and good example. Many thanks as well to Professor Tom Conley for graciously agreeing to read and comment on this dissertation.

I extend my gratitude to the Department of French Studies at Brown for these excellent years of graduate education. It has been a privilege to study with Professors Sanda Golopentia, Michel-André Bossy, Pierre Saint-Amand, Gretchen Schultz, and Inge Wimmers. I am grateful to Annie Wiart and Shoggy Waryn for their pedagogical training, and for exposing me to their own dynamic and enthusiastic teaching. I also thank Professors Kenneth Haynes, Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg, Timothy Bewes, and Esther Whitfield for their instructive seminars in Comparative Literature and Modern Culture and Media at Brown, as well as Professor Samuel Weber for allowing me to audit Northwestern's Paris Program in Critical Theory. I remain grateful to my undergraduate advisors, Professor Pim Higginson and the late Professor Hope Weissman, as well as to everyone in Wesleyan's College of Letters, which has continued to shape how I research, think, teach, and write.

As solitary as the dissertation-writing process can be, I know that mine would never have come to fruition without the friends, family, and colleagues who have accompanied and supported me. So many thanks to my parents—you somehow knew I could do this when I thought I couldn't (and made me laugh!)—and my sister, for keeping me creative and on my toes. For good friendship and good commiserating, I thank especially Teresa, Ghenwa, Ariane, Codruta, and the Cambridge *mardistes*; the graduate students in French Studies at Brown, past and present; the Paris seminar and BNF camarades; and Amy, *la moitié de mon âme*, for going first. Thanks, of course, to Kathy Kirshenbaum for getting me through it, in the end.

And to Jon Roberts for the chair, dinner, and the rest.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	<i>iv</i>
List of Figures	<i>vi</i>
Introduction: Writing (in) French	1
Chapter One: “Jen veulx escrire en François” <i>Geoffroy Tory’s call for French</i>	18
Chapter Two: The Monolingual Project <i>Vernacular grammatization and the Edict of Villers-Cotterêts</i>	69
Chapter Three: Another <i>Affection</i> <i>Vernacular advocacy and poetic authorship</i>	147
Chapter Four: Turning the <i>Propre</i> <i>The resistance of style in Du Bellay’s Regrets</i>	201
Chapter Five: “Un langage aucunement autre” <i>On the institution of Montaigne’s Essais</i>	242
Notes	294

LIST OF FIGURES

1.1. The Gallic Hercules. Geoffroy Tory, <i>Champ Fleury</i> (1529)	65
1.2. <i>Eloquentia fortitudine praestantior</i> . Andrea Alciato, <i>Livret des emblemes</i> (1536)	67

Introduction

Writing (in) French

No doubt all language refers to something other than itself or to language as something other.ⁱ

(Jacques Derrida, “This Strange Institution Called Literature”)

La proposition qui, comme on dit, fait autorité est, en même temps, la plus incertaine qui soit.ⁱⁱ

(Alain de Libera, *La Querelle des Universaux*)

This dissertation, as its title indicates, is about writing in French. More exactly, it is about the French-language discourse *about* French vernacular writing that took shape during the sixteenth century in France. Around the year 1500, Europe witnessed what linguist Daniel Baggioni has called a major “ecolinguistic revolution”: a broad reconfiguration of the geographies, technologies, habits, and social institutions of language.ⁱⁱⁱ No doubt the most significant aspect of this “revolution” is what many historians refer to as the “rise” of the European vernacular languages. What this “rise” implies is the crystallization—and in some cases, the institutionalization—of what would eventually become the national languages of Europe (Italian, Spanish, French, English, etc.). As Benedict Anderson has famously argued, these languages are the written vernaculars that took hold with the advent of print culture, forming “unified fields of exchange and communication below Latin and above the spoken vernaculars.”^{iv} Whether viewed as an “ecolinguistic revolution” or a proto-national “rise,” it is clear that this major shift brings with it a new *form* of language-of-writing in Europe, different in some fundamental way from both the Latin *and* vernacular writing cultures that had come before. What’s more, these new languages-of-writing mobilize—and are mobilized by—

new kinds of writers and textual communities who approach the activity of writing in a different way. The premise of the present work is that, in France, the textual discourses concerned with the question of vernacular writing played no small part in determining the shape this “revolution” would take. Which is also to say that the new French vernacular language writes itself *into being* and *into power* in a very literal sense—through the writers, communities, authorities who textually appropriate and form it. For a culture in which the Babel myth held a prominent place in the cultural imaginary—as it does, again, in ours today—we might see the sixteenth-century French language, like the mythical Tower itself, becoming a site of activity, ambition, and (self-)investment. A neo-Babel of print culture and the early modern state, French writing will offer its writers the possibility—an audacious, often precarious one—to make a name for themselves.

Before the seventeenth century’s more “standardizing” and “purifying” approach to French—before the Académie française and the Port Royal grammarians, before Descartes, Racine, or Malherbe came along—there was this first, more uncertain period that undertook to set its own terms of French writing. In order to understand why and how French—and one French in particular—gained cultural authority through writing, I have looked to the texts that helped write it into being on the page. These are the texts that seek to define, name, and map their language; the texts that reconfigure and appropriate the symbolic and affective terrain of writing; those that ask—either “out loud” or more implicitly—what it might mean to write in French; those that defend their *own* language-of-writing as—or against—this French. The corpus of this dissertation thus stretches across the interconnected range of disciplines and discourses engaged in such questioning. In Chapter One, I look to the writing of a printer and typographer

(Geoffroy Tory); in Chapter Two, to the first vernacular grammarians (Louis Meigret, Robert Estienne, and Ramus) and to a seminal law of language (the Edict of Villers-Cotterêts); in Chapters Three and Four to poets (Clément Marot, Jacques Peletier, Pierre de Ronsard, and Joachim Du Bellay); and in Chapter Five to a singular writer-philosopher (Michel de Montaigne). Their modes of engagement are understandably diverse: some texts wish or promise, others observe and order, still others interrogate or resist. What links them all, however, is a common desire to relate their own writing to this emergent cultural form that they themselves are contributing to re- or de-construct: the French language.

“The French language” in question throughout the dissertation is one whose status—specifically, its status as *langue*—is therefore not self-evident. “Au XVI^e siècle,” observe Simone Delesalle and Francine Mazière, “‘la’ langue française n’existe pas exactement au sens où nous l’entendons aujourd’hui.”^v Something about the expression “la langue française,” suggest Delasalle and Mazière, is in need of qualification when speaking of sixteenth-century French. Although we could of course gloss over this problem here in English, the anachronism of our understanding of what “a” language, or “the French language” is—and what it means to write “in” that language—might very well remain. As far as the modern French distinction between *langue* and *langage* is concerned, both terms were used through the late sixteenth century to designate a particular, named language (French, Latin, etc.).^{vi} This fact of historical semantics already indicates that the meta-linguistic, socio-political, and metaphysical object delimited by the modern term *langue* was not clearly established or recognized by sixteenth-century writers.^{vii} The boundaries and definition of “language” were different

enough that what it meant to write in “one” language or “another” was subject to different linguistic and social criteria. Additionally, the spelling *français(e)* was not introduced until the eighteenth century, by Voltaire.^{viii} The expression “la langue française” thus obscures not only the sixteenth-century spelling but, more importantly, the diversity—and indecision—at play in the period’s own orthographic self-representations. (These included *françois(e)*, *françoize*, *francois(e)*, *françoys(e)*, *francoys(e)*, *françoes*, and *françoeze*—sometimes capitalized and sometimes not.)

We find a final key issue in Delasalle and Mazière’s qualification of their own use of the expression “la langue française”: “Si on emploie ce syntagme, c’est en parlant d’un ensemble mouvant, dont l’unité est en devenir.”^{ix} In place of a language-unit, Delasalle and Mazière propose a moving complex or group, not yet identified as a unified object.^x Their use of the term “unité” also importantly evokes the Saussure’s definition of *langue*: “une institution sociale,” “un objet bien défini dans l’ensemble hétéroclite des faits de langage.”^{xi} In contrast to the heterogeneity of *langage*^{xii} and the unrepresentability of instantiated *parole*,^{xiii} the Saussurean *langue* is homogeneous, delimitable, representable (through writing), singular: “c’est la langue qui fait l’unité du langage.” As social institution, *langue* is a fundamentally shared property, ‘untouchable’ on the level of the individual.^{xiv} The French language of the sixteenth century, as Delasalle and Mazière indicate, does not quite constitute such a social institution or object. Hélène Merlin-Kajman is even more radical in her assessment of the sixteenth-century French-language ‘object’:

En fait, *la langue française n’existait pas*, au sens où nous l’entendons, sauf comme Idée—comme *fiction juridique*, presque. La langue française était la langue *virtuelle* d’un royaume qui parlait plusieurs dialectes. Écrire en français, c’était donc utiliser à la fois la langue du roi et la langue, plurielle, de la patrie, du ‘peuple’, ‘inventer’, c’est-à-dire *concevoir dans* la langue française et *la*

concevoir du même coup. [...] La langue française est alors moins une *langue* qu'un *langage* non fixé, vivant, incarné dans les divers usages du 'peuple' et unifié par les différentes 'inventions' des 'poètes français.'^{xv}

Merlin-Kajman's terms are highly suggestive: the sixteenth-century "French language" exists above all as an *idea*, a *virtual* language, a juridico-textual *fiction* not yet 'instituted' into a standardized practice—a language whose unity is invented, literally and literarily. What we will need to emphasize here is that such a 'fictitious', 'virtual' and literal/literary identity implies the supremely *textual* and *written* reality of "the French language" at this point. Yet what does writing look like in a scene of *langage*, before the fixation of a *langue*? We are familiar with the role afforded to writing in relation to *langue* (e.g., Saussure: "Langue et écriture sont deux systèmes de signes distincts; l'unique raison d'être du second est de représenter le premier" (45)), that role famously interrogated by Derrida and deconstruction. In an interstitial moment between language institutions—a 'falling' Latinity and a 'rising' vernacular writing culture—might writing not *do* something else? As Merlin-Kajman suggests above, sixteenth-century writing entails a negotiation between a language of authority ("la langue du roi") and a plurality of 'popular' languages; as such, it is, in every instance, a re-imagining of "the French language." In the absence of an authoritative, untouchable body of *langue*, writing means—writing marks, writing *is*—something other. Not relegated to transcribing a pre-existing body to which it defers, this writing 'conceives' (of) language on its own, again, on its own terms.

The facts of writing *en francoys* and of self-consciously referring to this language did not appear out of the blue in 1529. Indeed, in many respects these were not new phenomena at all in French culture. One danger posed by speaking of the Renaissance "rise" of the vernacular languages is that it conjures up images of languages ascending

from the deep cultural darkness of the Middle Ages, or appearing *ex nihilo* on pages dominated by the Latin of Church and School. The fact of the matter is that a number of vernaculars had been committed to writing and actively used since the Strasbourg Oaths in 842. Latin was indeed the dominant and *de facto* language of writing for the joint scholastic and ecclesiastical institutions in France during the medieval period. Still, the “rise” mentality obscures the fact that a variety of vernaculars were in use as literary languages, with an especially prolific period of vernacular literary production beginning in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (the *romans* of Chrétien de Troyes, and the *lais* of Marie de France, among others). Moreover, there is record during this same period of vernacular prose writing in administrative, utilitarian and practical contexts.^{xvi} Among the different written vernaculars, the one referred to as *francoys*—the language of Paris and king’s court—had taken on an elite status in France long before the dominance of Latin was in question. This status became particularly marked in the fourteenth-century court of Charles V. A renowned promoter of culture, Charles V commissioned Nicole Oresme and other writers to produce vernacular translations and commentaries for his royal library, including works of Aristotle and Saint Augustine. The vernacular that would “rise” in the mid-sixteenth century, therefore, had already achieved a certain social and symbolic role; moreover, its expressive possibilities were already being explored in a variety of literary and non-literary domains.

Nevertheless, a palpable shift does occur around 1530. A number of factors help account for this shift, the details of which I explore in Chapter One. Among these were the technology of the printing press, the intellectual attitudes and textual practices of European humanism, as well as the importation of the Italian *questione della lingua*. The

works of Tuscan vernacular writers—from Dante’s *De vulgari Eloquentia* in the thirteenth century to Bembo’s *Prose della volgar lingua* in 1525—represented simultaneous models and rivals for French writers as they began to reflect in writing upon the question of their own language. From the standpoint of political relations between powers, it is not surprising that interest in French-language writing would percolate following the French wars with Italy during the 1520s, which was a moment of intense cultural contact as well as intense conflict between the two powers. As the Italian *questione* gets appropriated into the French context, however, it will quickly get (re)written as France’s “own”—its character transformed and its origin largely effaced, even as Italian writers like Petrarch and Boccaccio are held up as examples of vernacular excellence.^{xvii}

The major questions of this dissertation are therefore, on the one hand, historical in nature. The years 1529 to 1592 mark what I consider to be a true overture and coda in this phase of French writing. In 1529, Geoffroy Tory published his *Champ fleury*, a treatise on print typography that assembled, as no previous text had, the questions of vernacular language, politics, grammar, and textuality. I examine this text, its rhetoric, and its relationship to developing print culture in Chapter One. Tory addresses himself, as a French writer, to a textual community that he hopes to create through his address. For Tory, his language is not a mere medium of expression, it is the question—indeed, the aspiration—of his text. Writing, by the same token, is not a transparent means of putting language on the page, it is the self-conscious activity by which a *je* comes into being on that page—a *je* writing on behalf of both itself and its language. On the other end of this historical bloc, the year 1592 marks the death of Michel de Montaigne, and

thus also the end of the composition of his *Essais*. Montaigne, too, presents a subject who is above all a writer—a subject who writes, famously, to the point of becoming ‘consubstantial’ with his book: “Je n’ay plus faict mon livre que mon livre m’a faict, livre consubstantiel à son auteur, d’une occupation propre, membre de ma vie” (II, 18, 665). As I will explore in Chapter Five, Montaigne’s own relationship to the French language is somewhat more problematic, and somewhat less ‘consubstantial.’ Where Tory called for a French in which to write and publish himself, Montaigne already seems to be pushing back up against French as an institutionalized language-of-writing, in search of another writing which would be, more properly, his own. Between Tory and Montaigne (1529-1592) come a number of the famous “firsts” and *dates incontournables* of French language history: the Edict of Villers-Cotterêts (1539), the *Deffence et Illustration de la langue Françoise* (1549), the first vernacular grammar (Meigret’s *Grammere*, 1550), the first French-language works in a range of disciplines previously restricted to Latin writing (rhetoric, poetics, philosophy, and more).

My aim is to provide a cultural history or, more exactly, a *textual* history of this period, for reasons that may be increasingly evident. When the activity of writing is so overtly invested—and even over-determined—with cultural significance, any “historical” study that hopes to understand the dynamics of language and writing must, I contend, do so at the level of the text. My aim has thus been to produce a historical understanding of French writing through a series of close readings and studies of individual writers. Non-literary texts like Louis Meigret’s *Grammere* and the Edict of Villers-Cotterêts are therefore read here in terms of their form, rhetoric, and intertextual play to the same extent as literary or “writerly” texts such as Du Bellay’s *Regrets* or Montaigne’s *Essais*.

The style of reading in which I am engaged may be identified as deconstructive. Although I have endeavored to make the dissertation accessible to a reader not familiar with the philosophy of deconstruction, several key concepts and terms developed in the writings of Jacques Derrida are involved in my analyses, and two of Derrida's works on language (*Le Monolinguisme de l'autre* and *Des Tours de Babel*) inform my readings, either explicitly or implicitly, throughout.

My goal in adopting such an approach has not been to dismantle or destabilize otherwise "sound" texts, but rather to gain a better sense of the textual processes and desires underlying these texts. Indeed, insofar as deconstructive reading explores the tensions and contradictions at work in writing, it is particularly apt for producing an understanding of the mechanisms—at once intra- and intertextual, subjective and collective—of texts concerned, precisely, with the question of writing. I will not hesitate to call such an understanding *historical*, despite the claim of ahistoricity sometimes made about deconstruction, which I believe results from mis-understanding certain elements of deconstructive thought, such as "il n'y a pas de hors-texte." What the deconstructive style of reading means most of all here is that the historical understanding produced is situated very squarely "within" textuality. In this way, this study differs not only from canonical language histories like those of Ferdinand Brunot and Peter Rickard, but also from more recent linguistically-oriented works taking a "textual" approach, such as Wendy Ayres-Bennet's *A History of the French Language Through Texts*, although I have often relied on important findings from this type of research. Françoise Waquet's *Le Latin ou l'empire d'un signe* has been a crucial model of the possibilities of culturally-oriented language history.

As far as my approach to Renaissance textual practice is concerned, my work has been deeply influenced by several notable works by scholars of sixteenth-century France. These include Thomas Greene's *The Light in Troy*, which introduced me to the complexity involved in sixteenth-century writers' *imitatio* and opened up paths for understanding its ambivalence; Terence Cave's *The Cornucopian Text*, which introduced me to the problematic of the Renaissance's "problems of writing," and sent me tracking down Babelian operations of writing in its wake; Mary McKinley's *Words in a Corner*, which made me value the subtle force of citation and intertextuality in Montaigne and other sixteenth-century writers; and Marie-Luce Demonet's *Les Voix du Signe* for both its incredible storehouse of scholarship and for showing me that the language issues of the sixteenth century were just as (if not more) interesting than those of the modern period—and that sometimes they are almost the same. A number of other *seiziémistes* have provided invaluable sources of inspiration and examples of scholarship throughout the research and writing of this dissertation, including Tom Conley, Richard Regosin, Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani, Lawrence Kritzman, Marc Bizer, Paul Cohen, Floyd Gray, and Glyn Norton; not to mention the innumerable works across disciplines cited in these pages, to which the present study is indebted.

If there is one dominant narrative being interrogated in this approach to language history, it is that of the "rise" of the vernacular. It is true that a rhetoric of French-language "construction" and "triumph" is very much a part of some sixteenth-century writers' understanding of their own activity. And it can, indeed, be tempting to see the sixteenth-century's political consolidation and linguistic stabilization as moving inexorably *forward*, toward a modern configuration of French, both culturally and

linguistically. Important recent works in cultural language history, including those of Daniel Baggioni, Peter Burke, and Sylvain Auroux, have helped move discussion of this period beyond the “enfin Malherbe vint” mentality. “Looking at the early modern period,” writes Peter Burke in *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe*, “it often seems that the centralizing, standardizing forces are winning, for both political and technological reasons (the rise of printed matter and the centralizing state). [...] All the same, we should not underestimate the strength of decentralizing forces, the power of resistance, or the resilience of linguistic and cultural traditions.”^{xviii} We might say, following Burke, that deconstruction is at work as a historical—and specifically textual—process amidst the apparent “construction” of languages and states. Writing in French will work in both ‘directions’ identified by Burke: that is to say, toward centralization and standardization, but also toward decentralization, diversity, and resistance. The grammarian Jean Bosquet would testify in 1586 precisely to the accrued confusion brought on by the previous decades’ efforts at language reform. The choice of orthography for his *Elemens ou Institutions de la langue françoise* was dictated, writes Bosquet:

afin de vous en pouvoir mieux aider en langage, et escriture: sans avoir esgard, ou m’arrester à la pertinacité, et opinions de la pluspart des nouveaux reformateurs; lesquelz aujourd’huy sont tant incertains, et variables qu’il y a quasy autant d’orthographe, que d’Auteurs: entant que les uns opiniatremment maintiennent la nouvelle, les autres deffendent l’ancienne; les uns aussy veulent approprier, l’orthographe à la prolotion; autres la prolotion à l’orthographe: Tellement, qu’à grand’ peine, s’en trouve une demy-douzaine, qui s’accordent en l’orthographie.^{xix}

By the same token, the texts that are dealt with here indeed move, if anywhere, toward increasing ambivalence and uncertainty—a result, no doubt, of the French political climate during the second half of the century, but also of the symbolic tensions at play in

the domain of writing and language identity. This period may very well demonstrate, as Delasalle and Mazière argue, a French-language “l’unité [...] en devenir” from a certain perspective, but such becoming is hardly teleological—or without its share of divergences, failures, and erasures.

And yet, the overarching development I am tracing in the dissertation is indeed that of a discourse of monolingualism which, I argue, underlies the redefinition of French writing culture. As I explore in Chapter Two, this “monolingualism” refers less to a reality of a socio-linguistic “unité” than to an ideology—in Merlin-Kajman’s words, the “Idée” and “fiction juridique” of a language. In Chapter Three, I explore the symbolic reconfiguration of the socio-linguistic scene in France from medieval “colingualism”—according to which the vernacular “mother tongue” was opposed to a Latin of institutions, grammar, and texts—to a new “monolingual” landscape, in which these languages are supposed to be “one” and the *same*. In this context, monolingualism comes to mean an overlapping of the personal and political in writing: a new co-investment of subjects, institutions, and laws bound together by a French language Idea, a common cultural fiction. This monolingualism brings about a particular structure of appropriation and identification which comes to redefine what it means to have and write a “language”—especially a so-called *native* or *maternal* language.

Appropriation is the cornerstone of any discourse that makes language practice into a political need or demand (*exigence*), as philosopher Marc Crépon observes.^{xx} Crépon identifies three fundamental assumptions of such appropriation: that it be at once possible and necessary (“qu’on peut et qu’on doit s’imposer pour tâche (en même temps qu’on l’impose aux autres) d’être le maître de sa langue”); that the imposed or

institutional character of language be minimized in favor of its ‘commonality’ or naturalness; and that language act as the primary identificatory mark of a culture—a culture imagined to be homogeneous, identical to itself (182-83). These assumptions are precisely those called into question by Derrida in *Le Monolinguisme de l’autre*. There, Derrida expresses what he finds to be the inherent contradiction of monolingualism in the form of a personal, paradoxical statement: “Je n’ai qu’une langue et ce n’est pas la mienne.” Where there is only one language, Derrida argues, it is necessarily the language—as law—of an other. And yet the *experience* of language seems to make a different promise: that of autonomy, possession, identification. This tension is fundamental, irresolvable:

Le monolinguisme de l’autre, ce serait d’abord cette souveraineté, cette loi venue d’ailleurs, sans doute, mais aussi et d’abord la langue même de la Loi. Et de la Loi comme Langue. Son expérience serait apparemment *autonome*, puisque je dois la parler, cette loi, et me l’approprier pour l’entendre, *comme si* je me la donnais moi-même; mais elle demeure nécessairement, ainsi le veut au fond l’essence de toute loi, *hétéronome*.^{xxi}

In Derrida’s analysis, what is most characteristic of language is this paradoxical experience of being with it: a simultaneous having/not-having, an autonomy/heteronomy which will not let our relationship to it, or in it, sit easy. If writing provides a privileged lens for examining this relationship, it is because these extremes of appropriation tend to find their most intense expression there, as well as their most intense resistance to resolution.

Although *Le Monolinguisme de l’autre* relates this experience from within the framework of the philosopher’s particular autobiographical situation (growing up doubly-alienated as a Jew in French-colonized Algeria), Derrida argues for its validity as a universal structure of language:

J'oserais prétendre que cette analyse vaut même pour quelqu'un qui aurait une expérience sédentaire, paisible et sans grande histoire de sa propre langue maternelle: à savoir qu'une langue n'appartient pas. Qu'elle ne se laisse pas approprier, cela tient à l'essence de la langue. Elle est, la langue, cela même qui ne se laisse pas posséder, mais qui, pour cette raison même, provoque toutes sortes de mouvements d'appropriation.^{xxii}

Language does not become an object of appropriation because it is appropriable but rather precisely because it is not; each 'movement' of appropriation may in fact indicate above all an expropriation already at work—or at least sensed on that language's horizon. (Here, too, we may recall the Tower-builders of *Genesis*, speaking to themselves before Babel was so named for the "confusion" caused there: "Et dirent: venez faisons pour nous une cité/et une tour: de laquelle le coupeau touche iusques au ciel: et magnifions nostre nom devant que nous soyons divisez en toutes les terres."^{xxiii}) For Derrida, the 'universality' of this structure in no way de-historicizes or de-politicizes particular language situations. On the contrary, he argues,

c'est là ce qui permet de re-politiser l'enjeu. Là où la propriété naturelle n'existe pas, ni le droit de propriété en général, là où on reconnaît cette dépropriation, il est possible [...] d'identifier, parfois pour les combattre, des mouvements, des phantasmes, des 'idéologies', des 'fétichisations' et des symboliques de l'appropriation.^{xxiv}

It is in this light that I will read the various "movements" of appropriation at work in sixteenth-century French writing, as well as the ideology of monolingualism being elaborated in the discourse on writing: in the knowledge of a fundamental dis-proprietation inhabiting language—as *its* own—and of a kind of "monolingualism" at work in even the most ostensibly multilingual scenarios and subjects. Starting from the premise that no 'natural' propriety exists in language (even in the most 'maternal' tongue) opens up the reconfigurations of the sixteenth century's "ecolinguistic" and textual revolution to a

different kind of interrogation—one that may help to better identify, as Derrida suggests, the various symbolic investments being made in the name of French.

By viewing certain French writings from this period as so many “movements” of appropriation, I thus hope to have contributed to discussion of the interactions between different discourses and disciplines that concerned themselves with the question of language (for example, legal and literary, grammatical and philosophical). I further hope to have provided a new lens through which to view key issues and texts where the fields of language history and literary studies intersect, including vernacular advocacy, the Edict of Villers-Cotterêts, and vernacular grammatization. Crucial work has been done over the past several decades on the role of translation and bi- or multilingualism in sixteenth-century textuality. I believe this work can be valuably supplemented by bringing the concepts and sensitivities of translation studies to bear on the *monolingual* dynamics of French—that is, understanding how French operates not only in relation to Latin, Greek, or Italian but in relation to its heterogeneous “self.” Finally, I hope in my final chapters to have provided an opening onto the ambivalent relationships to the French language demonstrated by two of the sixteenth-century’s canonical writers, Joachim Du Bellay and Michel de Montaigne. While we might, on the one hand, see the French of their texts as “theirs”—as many Renaissance writers themselves did reading the Latin texts of Cicero or Virgil—we might also consider how their writing looks to mark a more singular inscription: an act of withdrawal or resistance in relation to *la langue françoise*, as much as its “defense” or “illustration.”

One final, underlying intellectual inspiration for this dissertation is Derrida’s famous critique of logocentrism—as the “repression” of writing—and his call for a

“science of writing” in 1967’s *De la Grammatologie*. In one sense the object of this study is nothing other than a sixteenth-century *écriture* that precedes the modern French *langue*—indeed, before the word *langue* took on its role of designating a particular kind of cultural, political, and linguistic object. Following Derrida, we might therefore call this writing an *archi-écriture* in French, of French. The *telos* implied by this term is that the *langue* produced by writing will, in turn, “repress” that writing. Such “repression,” as so much of Derrida’s work showed, is an on-going process whose traces remain textually evident to a certain kind of reading. (Or in Saussure’s words, “c’est une idée très fausse de croire qu’en matière de langage le problème des origines diffère de celui des conditions permanentes [...]”^{xxv}) But what we encounter here is a writing much more actively, if not “consciously,” conflicted and inquisitive about its status *as* writing, and *as* French. The dissertation’s subtitle, “et non autrement,” cites the Edict of Villers-Cotterêts’s (in)famous legal codification of French in 1539, with the instruction to write the law “en langage maternel francoys, et non autrement.” My use of this phrase suggests, among other things, a kind of “repression” of writing, as alterity, in the construction of the identity of the French language as a new political object (Benedict Anderson’s “language-of-power”). I will consider this tension explicitly in Chapter Two with my reading of Louis Meigret’s *Grammere*: the first vernacular-language grammar which, paradoxically, proposed a radically phonetic spelling system and looked to deny its own status as “grammar”—that is, as an art of writing. Yet even where it is not mentioned, this question underlies each reading in the dissertation: when writing looks to overcome its present form, or speech, or the need to write, what—or whom—else is it

looking to overcome? What kind of French—French language, French subject, French community, French state—is the discourse about “writing in French” writing toward?

Chapter One

“Jen veulx escrire en François”

Geoffroy Tory’s Call for French

1529

Il n’appelle même pas quelqu’un qui serait là avant l’appel. Dire qu’il appelle l’appel, qu’il s’appelle, ce serait plus juste [...].^{xxvi}
(Jacques Derrida, *Parages*)

Jen eusse traité & escript en latin, comme je pourrois bien faire, ce croy je [...]. Mais volant quelque peu decorer nostre langue François, & afin qu’avec gens de bonnes lettres le peuple commun en puisse user, jen veulx escrire en François.^{xxvii}
(Geoffroy Tory, *Champ fleury*)

Introduction: Writing *en François*

Several years before the first vernacular grammars and dictionaries appeared in France, *Champ fleury*, published in Paris in 1529, took up the question of French writing. Often evoked in histories of the French language as a precursor to Joachim Du Bellay’s *Deffence et illustration de la langue françoise* (1549), *Champ fleury* is ostensibly a treatise on print typography—in its own terms, “la façon et qualité des lettres.” The *privilege* identifies the work’s author as “[n]ostre cher & bien ame maistre Geoffroy Tory de Bourges, libraire demourant a Paris.” An established scholar and teacher, Tory would be appointed France’s first royal *imprimeur* by François I in 1530, shortly after the book’s publication. The majority of *Champ fleury*’s pages are dedicated to visual layouts and detailed discussion of the author’s designs; inspired by the architectural principles of Vitruvius and the work of contemporary Italian typographers, Tory offers letters

proportioned in harmony with the human body^{xxviii} and proposes innovations specific to French-language text, including the accents, *cédille* and apostrophe still in use today.

To begin, however, the writer issues a broader appeal for the French language to be “couchée par escrit” like Greek and Latin—languages which were themselves, Tory reminds his reader, “quelque temps incultes & sans Regle de Grammaire, comme est de present la nostre.” While Tory makes reference to grammarians of antiquity and may have been influenced by recent efforts in Italy (notably Bembo’s 1525 treatise on the vernacular entitled *Prose Della Volgar Lingua*), his work offers nothing resembling a systematic grammar of its own; nor does he propose any specific modeling or imitation of the ancient languages, as Bembo had done for the Tuscan vernacular and as Du Bellay and others would later do in the French context. Instead, *Champ fleury* lays the *discursive* foundation for a future written vernacular and its promotion. Beginning with a defense of his own decision to write in French instead of Latin, building toward a call for others to come participate in the construction of a more ‘ordered’ vernacular, Tory assigns himself and all writers of French a privileged role as potential architects of a language of their own. At the same time, Tory proposes for the activity of writing itself—not only literary writing but, indeed, the entire domain of the written and printed word—a fundamental task in building “nostre langue Françoisse.” In Tory’s hands, vernacular-language text is made into the site of a collective construction project, though one whose blueprint remains—perhaps necessarily—experimental and rough. Instead of providing a concrete grammatical or poetic framework for future writers, Tory lays down an aspirational trajectory to be traced; instead of a “Regle de Grammaire,” Tory announces the *need* for such a rule and, perhaps above all, a new *desire* for others to

follow: “Jen eusse traité & escript en latin, comme je pourrois bien faire, ce croy je [...]. Mais voulant quelque peu decorer nostre langue François, & afin qu’avec gens de bonnes letters le people commun en puisse user, j’en veulx escrire en François.”

More than anything else, what has earned *Champ fleury* its consecrated place in traditional histories of the French language is its early, even seminal promotion of vernacular writing. Perhaps the first work to address both the specific *problems* and *possibilities* of French-language text^{xxix}, Tory’s advocacy of French was voiced a full decade before François I issued the Edict of Villers-Cotterêts (1539), the law which would codify the vernacular as the official written language of France.^{xxx} His promotion of the vernacular may also seem especially noteworthy appearing during the height of scholarly and literary enthusiasm for the ancient languages, Latin in particular, in France. The dominant language of both Church and School throughout the Middle Ages, Latin had taken on renewed currency and cultural authority as a modern language of writing (“neo-Latin”) during the early sixteenth century. Thanks both to intensified contact with Italian Renaissance culture and the circulation of humanist ideas in print, French interest in Latin as a language to be read and—what may be more surprising—a language to be *written* was strong, and in fact growing, in 1529. Across Renaissance Europe, with the study of classical texts came a revived interest in composing in Latin *as* revered classical authors had; writers in France thus increasingly paid attention to certain formal aspects of language, analyzing textual construction and rhetorical principles, and imitating certain authorial styles (especially Ciceronian). The Latinist trend had perhaps no greater supporters in France than the intellectual elite of François I’s inner circle, who would encourage the king to establish the tri-lingual *Collège royal* in 1530. Beyond connecting

French writers to those of Antiquity, writing in Latin offered communication, kinship and legitimacy within the broader scholarly communities of Europe through their common, “universal” language and textual corpus.

Appearing concurrently and within very much the same cultural milieu—yet proposing a fundamentally divergent trajectory for French writers—Tory’s *Champ fleury* gives voice to a new *kind* of desire to write and publish in the vernacular, one based in the task of making French a language-of-writing like the more established, ancient textual languages. It may already be clear, then, that far from simply inheriting the cultural terrain left by Latin’s “death” as a dominant language, this interest in developing and codifying the vernacular as a written form came about well before the School and Church Latin traditions (both of which found their strongest defender in the Sorbonne) had died out and, what’s more, amidst a thriving neo-Latin movement. As much as the two languages would become cultural rivals—and as much as the promotion of French would be voiced as an overt rejection of Latin, the authority, ideology and the range of institutions it represented—evolving interest in both languages, as languages-of-writing specifically, appears to have been fostered by the same cultural movements: the influx of European humanist ideals and the growth of print culture in France.

Indeed, a series of laws passed and actions taken by François I over the course of the 1530’s are a testament to the side-by-side (if frequently contradictory or oppositional) progression of these movements: in 1530, as we have seen, Tory is made the first *imprimeur royal*—officially recognizing efforts to promote vernacular writing and standardize French-language printing; the same year, the king’s establishment of the *Collège royal* endorses the learning of Latin, Hebrew and Greek, along with further

dissemination of classical knowledge; in 1535, the year Olivétan would publish a new vernacular translation of the Bible (a revised version of Lefèvre d'Étaples's landmark 1530 translation) and the so-called *affaire des placards* causes the king to take a stand against the Reformation, François issues a ban on the printing of *all* books, only to revoke it shortly after^{xxxi}; in 1537, he establishes the *dépôt légal*, the world's first legal deposit system (a law still in effect in France and the foundation for the future *Bibliothèque nationale*), which requires publishers to send a copy of every book printed in France to the king's library; finally, in 1539, François passes the Edict of Villers-Cotterêts, codifying one vernacular as the exclusively recognized language-of-writing for all official and legal acts in France by ordering that they be written “en langage maternel francoys, et non autrement.”

During the half-century to follow, French and Latin would continue to co-inhabit the field of textual production in France, with other languages both ancient (Greek) and modern (notably Provençal and the other proto-national vernaculars of Europe: Tuscan, Spanish, German) occupying a considerably smaller space. In the wake of the Edict of Villers-Cotterêts, however, writerly interest in *le François* gained considerable momentum, having been legitimized and to some extent made imperative by the king's law. Investment in both resolving the specific challenges of writing French and making good on the language's specific possibilities—that project initiated by Tory's call in 1529—would become manifest in a range of publications, from grammars and spelling reforms to treatises on rhetoric and poetics. Literary and non-literary writers alike, with interests as diverse as those of Jacques Peletier du Mans, Louis Meigret, Pierre Ronsard, Antoine Fouquelin, Robert Estienne, Guillaume des Autels and Abel Matthieu would find

themselves linked by a common cause: the promotion of *notre langue*.^{xxxii} As Paul Cohen has demonstrated in his work on language politics during this period, and as I will look at in greater detail in Chapter Two, the actual force of monarchic linguistic authority in sixteenth-century France must be considered carefully; this proliferation of texts may indeed be seen as much as the attempt to fulfill or enforce an otherwise lacking monolingual legal measure by textually inscribing laws in the body of the language itself.

In defending or pleading the case of the vernacular as language of expression, French writers would, above all, call upon the vernacular as their “maternel,” “native,” “domestique,” “naturel,” or “propre” language—as opposed to the “peregrine,” “etrangere,” or “acquisitive” choice represented by Latin. Choosing French instead of Latin as a language of writing would come to be bound up in a series of dichotomizing valorizations: the natural over the acquired, the domestic over the foreign, legitimate property over stolen goods, freedom over servitude (but also duty or service over self-interest), sincerity over lying, and speaking for/as oneself over speaking “par la bouche d’autrui.” In short, the stakes of the discourse on *why*, *how* and *whether* to write in French for writers in France in the mid-sixteenth century appear over-determined from the start—self-consciously and sometimes precariously so. In the efforts to define, defend and promote it through writing, the French language as an object of discourse takes on so much ideological weight that its very name will come to represent a certain definition of writing and a new relationship to language to be defended and illustrated—an effect only redoubled by the language of the text itself.^{xxxiii} Indeed, what is perhaps most striking in the texts we will be looking at throughout the dissertation is that, *as writing*, this meta-discourse about writing cannot help but rehearse the very problems of

language it aims to overcome—including texts like the Edict of Villers-Cotterêts that looked to legislate language. Always promoting an object which they do not quite yet embody and cannot yet envision precisely, forming themselves in the very act of speaking their desire, these texts write *toward* a French language to come: attempting to become through writing some written form which they are not yet, but which may appear over the horizon of their own pages.

In order to understand how practices of writing would come to be so reconfigured around the call to write *en François*, it is finally worth considering that the French language as a discursive object *as such* appears to take on the initial contours of its modern form in the two and half decades following the publication of *Champ fleury*. Under the guises of “le François,” “nostre langue,” and “le langage maternel” (“native,” “propre,” etc.^{xxxiv}), this language comes to be reified as a locus of writerly investment—that is, as a new kind of object for writers to name, define, defend, and call upon to identify themselves and their texts with. Moreover, it is precisely *within* and *through* the discourse promoting vernacular writing that three previously distinct fields of language come together to be represented as a *single* language for the first time: namely, the administrative language whose name coincides with that of the king; the communal idiom of a *nous*, each of whom are made to have a stake in the language and identify (with) it as his or her ‘own’; and the seemingly natural, legitimate and even intimately belonging ‘mother tongue’. It is thus as a language-of-writing that *le François* takes shape in the early sixteenth century, a crystallization of these heterogeneous cultural, political and linguistic functions.^{xxxv} These domains are made to converge—although not seamlessly by any means—in the promotion of French writing and the varied textual efforts to make

the vernacular language writable during the early years of print culture, laying the groundwork for the identity which French will take on as *langue nationale* and for its mode of belonging as a common *langue maternelle*. At this moment of contestation and convergence, not just the act of writing *in* French but also, as I will be examining more specifically in these pages, that of writing in French *about* writing in French reveals itself to be a means of both *laying down* (like the foundation of a monument or home) and *laying claim to* (like a virgin territory) this new object. And the call to write *en François*, at once dream, desire and imperative, is made to resound on the page, a textual shot announcing a race of quills and printing presses, summoning linguistic cultivators, admirers, legislators, architects to come give form to *their* language.

I. *Le langage daujourd'hui*

In the opening pages of *Champ fleury*, Tory locates in French writing of the past evidence of the written vernacular's susceptibility to change: "Le Langage daujourd'hui," he writes, "est change en mille facons du Langage qui estoit il ya Cinquante Ans ou environ." Demonstrating a fundamentally textually-based understanding of linguistic variation, Tory arrives at this conclusion by comparing written works from different periods: "L'autheur du Liure des Eschecqtz disoit en son temps Neantplus & nous disons, Non plus [...];" "On voit au dict temps passe de dire Herper, pour louer de la Herpe [...]," etc. Observing a number of such differences in spelling, vocabulary and idiomatic uses, Tory comments that in addition to his sampling, "[o]n porroit trouver Dix Milliers de telz motz & vocables laissez & Changez desquelz Cent aultres Autheurs usoient au temps passe." The lament of words altered and lost was a *topos* already familiar to

Italian humanists—language’s fleeting nature standing in for the vanity of human creations, charged with all the fatal contingency of a post-Babelian universe—and would be echoed by Renaissance French writers through Montaigne. The vernacular’s variability over time, implicitly contrasted to the ancient languages’ relative stability (at once grammatical, textual, and monumental) is framed by Tory as a collective failing of French writers past and a source of collective concern for the future. Yet this very awareness, arrived at through historical textual comparison, is offered as a path towards something like a new linguistic consciousness for the French-speaking *nous* “daujourd’hui.” Even as historicity seems to issue a death sentence for the vernacular, Tory presents the moment of his own writing as that of a linguistic *prise de conscience* out of which a new project of writing can be born.

Concern and consciousness indeed come together to serve as the impetus for a call, placed to all those who might find themselves included and appealed to in “nostre Langage François”: a call to write and, more specifically, to write *differently*. “Pleust a Dieu,” Tory writes,

que quelque Noble cueur semployait a mettre & ordonner par Reigle nostre Langage François, Ce seroit moyen que maints Milliers dhommes se everturoient a souvent user de belles & bonnes parolles. Sil ny est mys & ordonne on trouuera que de Cinquante Ans en Cinquante Ans la langue Francoise, pour la plus grande part, sera changee & pervertie.

(2)

Even while facing the Babelian peril that the French “daujourd’hui” will be “changee & pervertie,” writing seems to be imbued for Tory with a new promise. Indeed, the flipside of the Babel myth which regulates this scene is precisely that *potential* force of writing to “mettre & ordonner par Reigle nostre Langage François.” Nevertheless, the fulfillment of this promise remains conditional; not just any writing is able to prevent vernacular

perversion, as the very textual examples culled “[d]u dict temps passé” make all too clear. Mitigating but also spurring his hope for French with the threat of failure, Tory looks to what writing in the vernacular *now* might accomplish in the future if a pen—or press—were to fall into the right hands: “Iaurois couleur de deplorer la sterilite de noz mains, mais iespere q’au plaisir de Dieu quelque Noble Priscian [...] ou quelque Quintilien Francois, naistra de Bref, sil nest desia tout edifie.” From the fatality demonstrated by texts of the past to a more noble, ‘ordered’ future for the vernacular, Tory’s threat and hope specific to ‘today’ seem to be of a piece. The fact of language’s historical contingency thus appears to have, like Babel, two faces: the eroding passage of time and “la sterilite de noz mains” versus the potential for creation and edification.

“[I]t was in language,” observes Richard Waswo in *Language and Meaning in the Renaissance*, “that humanist philologists had discovered time as history. And, in turn, it was history, by observing the fact of change in all languages, that made it possible to liberate and dignify the vernaculars, to perceive their status and potency as equal to those of Latin and Greek.”^{xxxvi} The object of a new consciousness, language has undergone an ontological shift for writers of the Renaissance: it has ceased to be an object which *is* in order to become one which *becomes*. And if language demonstrates change over time then it can *be changed* by human hands; we must only cross our fingers that this project undertaken today will meet with the “plaisir de Dieu” and not his wrath, as it did for the builders of the Tower. The crux and paradox of Tory’s particular project thus lie in the fact that his language-building aims (again, much like the building at Babel) precisely at overcoming change itself, achieving a survival^{xxxvii} for language which rises above contingency (even though made possible precisely by an awareness of contingency) into

some more durable form. The name of this process—that which will deliver the French of today from further change, transforming and transporting its becoming beyond becoming—is writing.

In seeking to understand the stakes of this activity, the promise extended in writing French, it is worth pausing to consider the “state” of vernacular writing in 1529. Up to and through the beginning of the sixteenth century, written forms of French (as with other European vernaculars) do indeed demonstrate the significant diachronic variation lamented by Tory. Historians Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin suggest that this can largely be understood as a fact of the vernaculars’ being bound to the evolution undergone by spoken language.^{xxxviii} “C’est pour cela,” they note (much like Tory above), “que le français employé au XIIe siècle dans les *Chansons de geste* diffère profondément de celui qu’écrivait Villon au XVe siècle” (*ibid*). The printing press, that same technology which supported both the spread of Protestantism and the broader secularization of European culture, would come to radically alter the nature of Europe’s written vernaculars, playing in Febvre and Martin’s words “un rôle essentiel dans la formation et la fixation des langues” (*ibid*). As their term “formation” suggests, print culture would also crucially contribute to the establishment of what Benedict Anderson refers to as new “print-languages”: standardized vernacular forms which crystallized around the demands and possibilities of both the printing press and its burgeoning market.^{xxxix} As Anderson points out, this process entailed a marked reduction of *synchronic* linguistic diversity, which in pre-print Europe was “so immense, indeed, that had print-capitalism sought to exploit each potential oral vernacular market, it would have remained a capitalism of petty proportions” (43). The effect of print culture was

thus to “gather” these varied oral (and, it is worth adding to Anderson’s assessment, *written*) vernaculars into “print-languages far fewer in number.”^{x1}

Anderson boldly locates in the demands and desires of the market itself the marked reduction of linguistic diversity which was to take place over the course of the sixteenth century. “Nothing,” he maintains, “served to ‘assemble’ related vernaculars more than capitalism, which, within the limits imposed by grammars and syntaxes, created mechanically reproduced print-languages capable of dissemination through the market” (43). Anderson points to three major effects of these new European print-languages: they first “created unified fields of exchange and communication below Latin and above the spoken vernaculars,” such that groups which could not communicate orally could understand each other *textually*—while still belonging to a “particular” language group (i.e., French or Spanish as opposed to Latin’s trans-European “universal” character); secondly, they provided a new “fixity” to languages previously subject to rapid evolution (here Anderson also refers to the work of Febvre and Martin); thirdly, they gave rise to a new “languages-of-power” (43-45). To this last point, Anderson points out that “[c]ertain dialects inevitably were ‘closer’ to each print-language and dominated their final forms” (45). Those languages not assimilable to the printed version of the vernacular became marked as exclusively spoken and thus sub-standard, whereas those previously written languages less successful in “insisting on their own ‘print-form’” would lose status. The languages which did manage to take hold in print culture gained a new kind of status—becoming, in Anderson’s words, “elevated to a new politico-cultural eminence” (*ibid*).

All three of these major effects of print culture will be crucial to bear in mind as we consider the shifting significance of vernacular writing during the middle years of the sixteenth century. The evolution witnessed in the particular case of French is above all the struggle of a print-language to come into being and take on status: a *coming into its own* through writing. As we have begun to see in the case of Tory's *Champ fleury*, vernacular writing gets represented not only as the victory of one language over another (Latin) but, even more strikingly, as the process of language's overcoming *of itself*—an activity whose future-oriented telos aims paradoxically both at *preservation* of linguistic form (change or variation as perversion) and the *erasure* or *negation* of a linguistic past (the desire to reduce, regulate and purify). Moreover, during this time when the printed page would represent cultural territory to be staked out and claimed over other languages (Latin but also competing domestic and foreign vernaculars), and when the book would present itself to the writer-language-king(dom) triad as the most compelling medium of self-propagation and monumentalization, this self-overcoming of the vernacular into its existence as print-language would equally constitute a major form of cultural and political conquest: a survival, we could say, of the printed. The most successful language-of-writing was positioned to become the dominant language-of-power, perhaps even the new “universal” idiom, carrying *je*, *nous*, and *François* over space and time on its shoulders.

Although Latin was indeed spoken in diverse contexts in Renaissance France—and was in fact the exclusive language of most schools and the Catholic church—it remained *essentially* a written language, drawing the foundations of its authority from its grammatical stability, textual fixity, and millennial endurance on the page. French, by

contrast, as an essentially oral (but also literary) language, would pose a new set of challenges for its writers-to-be. As we have begun to see, the process of making the vernacular a proper language-of-writing comes to resemble the veritable *invention* of a new linguistic form: an entity with its own body and particular set of laws (ones modeled after the grammars of classical languages with a concern for what was specific or *propre* to French), which might in turn serve to regulate and elevate the language as a whole (i.e., both spoken and written elements). This seems to be what Tory projects in his hope that “quelque Noble cueur semployait a mettre & ordoner par Reigle nostre Langage François.” So expressed, this call to make French a language-of-writing is inseparable from the desire for a “Reigle.” We may understand this *grammatical* desire—that is, desire for writing as desire for a rule (of writing)—as the dense conjunction of multiple others, namely 1) for French to be held accountable to and, moreover, embody a stable authority, 2) for spoken language to be removed from the flux of lived experience through a process of grammatization as “solidifying” or “fixing”, and thus 3) to refashion the vernacular after no-longer-spoken languages of the past (Greek and Latin) in order to render it both *learnable* and *writable*. To call for a “Reigle” for “nostre Langage François” is thus to call for a splitting of the maternal language, in which its ‘ordering’ is also its reification *unto itself* from within in order to render it a reproducible and appropriable object. The desire of the “Reigle” is the remaking French as a language-of-writing by making it, in a manner of speaking, foreign—by having the “living” language imitate the “dead,” by fashioning it as other in order to reinvent it as more properly itself.

Writing French will thus mean the creation of a language which in a very real sense *did not previously exist*, or will, at the very least, entertain a different, often

troubled relationship with *both* written vernacular form(s) of the past *and* the language's spoken form(s). It may also become evident, then, that the term "fixation" offered by Febvre and Martin is to some extent inaccurate for conceiving of the shift occurring in the nature of French writing, since the "fixed" form arrived at was neither a visual-phonetic representation of a dominant dialect ("une image de la parole," as the neo-Platonic vision of the era's phonetic spelling reformers would have it) nor even the cryogenic freezing of a pre-existing written language on the printed page.^{xli} Most interestingly, however, the notions of "fixation" and "formation" are not merely the product of a retrospective or comparative evaluation (i.e., vis-à-vis classical or modern French). As we have already begun to see in Tory's *Champ fleury*, these terms are, in large part, inherited from French Renaissance writers and promoters of the vernacular themselves. Among the oppositional schemas regulating much early modern understanding of the ancient languages and the French vernacular, the ordered, stable (in time), and solid (in form) character of the former would frequently be contrasted to the chaotic, fluid, or variable nature of the latter: partial linguistic realities intensified, dichotomized and assigned varying value by ideologies of the meta-discourse about these languages.

Michel de Montaigne, writing at the end of the sixteenth century, comments on his own choice of the vernacular for the *Essais* in "De la vanité" (III, 9):

J'escris mon livre à peu d'hommes et à peu d'années. Si ç'eust esté une matiere de durée, il l'eust fallu commettre à un langage plus ferme. Selon la variation continuelle qui a suivy le nostre jusques à cette heure, qui peut esperer que sa forme presente soit en usage, d'icy à cinquante ans? Il escoule tous les jours de nos mains et depuis que je vis s'est alteré de moitié. Nous disons qu'il est à cette heure parfaict. Autant en dict du sien chaque siecle. Je n'ay garde de l'en tenir là tant qu'il fuira et se difformera comme il fait. C'est aux bons et utiles escrits de le clouer à eux, et ira son credit selon la fortune de nostre estat.^{xlii}

The vernacular's "variation continuelle" and perceived lack of "durée" are valorized by Montaigne, philosophically and aesthetically, as a principle of writing—an act of "vanité" which can do no more and no less than "clouer" the language's present form to the text. While the essayist thus encounters his language's change as inevitable ("Je n'ay garde de l'en tenir là tant qu'il fuira et se difformera comme il fait") and perhaps even advantageous as a condition of writing,^{xliii} a number of vernacular advocates from earlier in the century would be concerned precisely with reforming the language in order to give it greater order and consistency, as we have seen in the case of Tory. What exactly such reform should entail, however, or which criteria should be used to determine a range of grammatical, spelling and rhetorical choices would become a significant source of struggle and ideological divide. These early linguistic efforts were polemical from the outset, as reformers such as Louis Meigret, Jacques Peletier du Mans, Guillaume des Autels, Du Bellay and others published divergent, often overtly oppositional views of how French should be written. The fundamentally contentious nature of this discourse may be better understood if we bear in mind that Tory's grammatical desire, the vocative wish for "quelque Noble cueur" to come "mettre & ordoner par Reigle nostre Langage François," is indeed the plea for authority—and, more specifically perhaps, for a singular, properly named figure's authoritative hand, despite the otherwise collective or common nature of his appeal. In short, what such a call presupposes is the absence of the linguistic law necessary to write (and which writing alone is positioned to establish, over time and space), and the need for linguistic arbitration in a potentially fertile textual landscape whose prosperity was threatened by both plurality and arbitrariness (recalling Anderson's assessment that "had print-capitalism sought to exploit each potential oral

vernacular market, it would have remained a capitalism of petty proportions”). As daunting a task as they may have been, the first vernacular grammars offered their authors the chance to *re-form* the French language itself: to dictate and publish their law as law, establishing their vision for the written vernacular as the common, perhaps enduring order. Grand ambition, then, countered by inherent limitation, since this written form had to be *recognized* by readers (i.e., as familiar, as desirable, as legitimate) in order to take hold, and since the same “variation continuelle” and arbitrariness which made their efforts possible and necessary threatened them, continuously, with failure.

Despite certain marked differences in the efforts of vernacular reformers around mid-century, we could say, following Ferdinand Brunot’s assessment in his *Histoire de la langue française*, that their prevailing and common objective was to stop—or at the very least slow down—the written vernacular’s evolution.^{xliv} Their effort, in other words, would be to make the vernacular the same *as itself* over time, to cease to differ “profondément” from century to century or, in Montaigne’s words, to “s’altère[r]” and “se difforme[r]”: to render it a self-same *object* able, like a book, to be held reliably in one’s hands without fear of its slipping away—like a book, able to be put down and returned to unchanged. What’s more, as a consistently recognizable and repeatable form, written French would be the same *for everyone*: legible to a broader range of contemporary “native” speakers and able to serve as an effective official or administrative idiom. It would thereby be positioned to play the role of a veritable “common” language—one of the key functions of print-languages, as Benedict Anderson points out, in the formation of early modern proto-national communities. Through an identificatory logic of belonging, the vernacular so *recognized* could become a property

shared by all yet experienced by each speaker—or, more appropriately, each reader-writer—as naturally, legitimately, even intimately his or her “own.”

A related concern voiced by vernacular writers was the language’s legibility and ability to be learned by non-native speakers—and thereby to support cultural or even territorial expansion, on the model of Latin in the age of the Roman Empire.^{xliv} This objective was supported by a growing perception, indeed largely inherited from the classical tradition but taking on new nuances in the sixteenth century, that language was a mechanism of cultural power—perhaps *the* privileged mechanism—and that the “fixation” and “formation” of a language through writing would mean the possibility of its (and thus the culture’s) dissemination. If Latin and, less openly, the Tuscan vernacular served as inspiration for promoters of French, these languages were also rivals: not merely *representatives* of cultural and political threats to the French (besides being the dominant language of European intellectual culture, Latin was the language of Papal authority), they were understood to be the very *means* by which those rival powers spread themselves and exercised authority at a distance. “Une conviction commune réunit tous ceux qui pensent à la liaison nécessaire entre la langue et le pouvoir,” observes Marie-Luce Demonet of writers of the early to mid-sixteenth century, “la première est un instrument du second.” Indeed, the future viability of France as a political force both domestically and in relation to other nations would come to be seen as intimately bound up in the success of its language; their respective “orders” would be viewed as mutually dependent, if not one in the same—a bond expressed in a less causal (and thus ideologically distinct) fashion above by Montaigne’s “et ira son credit selon la fortune de nostre estat.”^{xlvi}

Foremost in the mind of reformers such as Jacques Peletier du Mans were the descendants of French writers, proposed as the future readers on whose behalf a written form must be fixed: a vision of language as inheritance, writing as a means of ensuring genealogical continuity, and the text as that faithful *legs* which allows the author to continue to speak in the absence of his body and voice.^{xlvii} Certain grammarians, such as Louis Meigret, would insist on the primacy of usage and the inevitability of the vernacular's evolution; demonstrating a sensibility similar to Montaigne's, they aimed above all with their work to *slow down* the vernacular's rate of change rather than struggle against its insurmountable force and momentum. Others, such as Guillaume des Autels, operating under a more monumentalizing or archival directive, indeed looked to *stop* it: aiming to raise French up above the vicissitudes of speech, liberating it (and thus their own vernacular-language work) as much as possible from temporal and spatial contingency, perhaps even granting it (and thus themselves) some degree of immortality.^{xlviii} Although this promise of survival embodied in the written word was inspired by a classical conception of writing, it took on a newly possible and insistent inflection for writers of the sixteenth century who were confronted with the disjunction between the vernacular's written instability and its durable materialization in printed text.^{xlix} The paradox lay in the fact that it would be the vernacular's very capacity for variability, its relationship to speech (what we would now call its status as a *living* language) and its privileged bond to a modern, lived world of experience—not to mention to the very bodies and tongues of its writers—that promised a different kind of survival, in opposition to the ancient language's more brittle textual fixity. “[D]’ailleurs n’est-il pas permis de voir, précisément dans son caractère flottant et mal défini, un gage de son

aptitude à survivre, puisque toute langue vivante doit s'adapter sans cesse à des circonstances et à des exigences nouvelles?"^l The new vernacular imperative of the Renaissance was, we could say, to make tomorrow's language the language of today.

Exactly what is at stake in Tory's new vision of writing in 1529, his work's vocative mode, its defensive yet imperative tone and the specific *task* it puts forth may come into clearer focus if we compare the passages above to an analogous moment in Nicole Oresme's preface to his translation of Aristotle's *Ethics* in 1370. "Se dieu plaist," writes Oresme,

par mon labeur pourra estre mieulx entendue ceste noble science et ou temps advenir estre baillee par autres en francois plus clerement et plus amplement. Et pour certain translater telz livres en francois et bailler en francois les ars et les sciences est un labeur moult profitable car cest ung langaige noble et commun a gens de grant engin et de bonne prudence.^{li}

Oresme, like Tory, voices a desire to make the "science" of antiquity accessible to a French-reading public ("poura estre mieulx entendue..."), and voices his support for the vernacular—though notably as language of translation rather than of writing *per se* (a distinction to be examined in greater depth in this chapter, below, and the next).^{lii} What Oresme articulates above all is confidence—and his own text's participation—in the cultural transfer dictated by *translatio studii*, that process by which the contents of classical knowledge would come to enrich an already "noble" French language and literary tradition, passing to France from Rome as it had passed to Rome from Greece—an enrichment achievable if writers would merely "translater telz livres en francois." And although Oresme looks, like Tory, towards a more apt vernacular in a "temps advenir," his vision is that of a language capable of expressing this cultural heritage "plus clerement et plus amplement." Contrasting Oresme's tone and objective to those of mid-

sixteenth century translators, Luce Guillerm observes that for the former “l’exercice vise à rendre la langue vulgaire apte à transmettre un contenu de grande autorité,” an aim which “semble devenir secondaire par rapport aux performances linguistiques du français considérées pour elles-mêmes” for the latter (358). Poets and translators of the late Medieval period, maintains Marc Fumaroli, “ne sont nullement hantés par la distance désespérante qui séparerait la ‘grandeur’ des Anciens et la ‘bassesse’ des modernes”; they have yet to be exposed, in Fumaroli’s view, to “l’angoisse linguistique italienne” epitomized in the texts of Bembo and Speroni, “[qui] gagne la France au XVI^e siècle.”^{liii}

What accompanies the textual, historical and essentially analogical consciousness crystallizing in questions of vernacular writing in France in the early sixteenth century is thus 1) an increased sensitivity to and emphasis on linguistic *form* as such and 2) a fundamental reorientation in the affective relationship to language. Tory’s proposed project may be understood, then, as part of a broader shift in which an established ancient-modern hierarchy and the textual ambition to transmit content above all, both previously guaranteed in a certain way by the *translatio studii* model, was coming to be accompanied if not replaced by a (hyper-)attention to form and rivalry with the ancients—a shifting of the traditional models of linguistic values which, somewhat paradoxically, served to heighten vernacular writers’ “angoisse” about the relative insufficiencies of their language.^{liv} The new possibilities and requirements brought by the printing press (to which Tory, concerned above all with the printed word in its visible materiality, demonstrates a particular sensitivity), in conjunction with this larger text-based consciousness of linguistic historicity encouraged by Italian humanism may thus be seen as occasioning the reevaluation of vernacular writing. Comparing Oresme and Tory,

the latter expresses at once a more ardent hope in the future of French writing and a more insistent sense of its *imperative*: the written word no longer represents a mere support for the transfer of cultural heritage but some more urgent need, and itself an object to be cultivated and preserved; it thus occupies an essential, privileged role in the realization of a new linguistic consciousness, and the potential appeasement of a new linguistic “angoisse.” “Je croy quil nya ordre de purement agencer tel langage,” writes Tory, “car les Personnages qui le forgent sont incapable de saine Raison. Toutesfois si nostre Langue estoit deuement Reiglee & Polye, telles immundices en porroient estre deiectees. Parquoy ie vous prie donon nous tous courage les ungz auxaultres, & nous esueillon a la purifier.” For Tory, a new age for writing the French language seems to be on the horizon—but with it come a new imperative born of lack and a pressing sense of the language’s formal, material, and expressive insufficiency. Such that the writer’s hand shakes slightly as his language teeters on the brink, poised to fall into (continued) degradation or rise to an unprecedented fulfillment.

Only a half-century after the publication of *Champ fleury*, Estienne Pasquier writes from the vantage point of a rather different “Aujourd’huy” in his *Recherches de la France*. Like Tory, Pasquier observes variations in the vernacular’s written form: “Nostre langue François, [...] selon la diversité des siecles, a pris diverses habitudes [...].”^{lv} Yet instead of citing examples of these older incarnations of French (as Tory does at length), Pasquier deems them all but untranslatable—“mais de les pouvoir représenter, il est mal aisé”—and omits them from his pages. Curiously, for Pasquier, this difficulty is not merely due to language’s former “diversité.” Instead, he writes that it is “[p]arce qu’anciennement nous n’eûmes point une langue particulièrement

courtisane, à la quelle les bons esprits voulussent attacher leurs plumes.” France’s writers found themselves, in Pasquier’s telling, without a language—or, at the very least, one to which they wanted to ‘attach’ their pens or names. Those who did take up the task were forced to write “au vulgaire de la cour de leurs Maîtres,” that is, in what today’s linguists might refer to as regional or local ‘dialects’.^{lvi} Pasquier contrasts this past, quasi-unrepresentable state—at once an *insufficiency* and *over-abundance* of writable languages that left (potential) French writers in a state of frustrated desire—to the time of his own writing, when one vernacular seems to have emerged as good for all of “nous”:

Aujourd’huy il nous en prend de toute autre sorte. Car tous ces grands duchés et comtés, étant unis à notre Couronne, *nous n’écrivons plus qu’en un langage*, qui est celui de la cour du Roy, *que nous appelons langage françois*.

(*ibid*, emphasis added)

What marks the difference between past and present, what has fulfilled the desire of France’s “bons esprits” is precisely a process of *unification*: a single language with an identifiable, common locus of authority. In Chapter Two, I will further explore this singularization of the vernacular—as a language-of-writing, under the proper name *François*, and specifically as a textual product of the Edict of Villers-Cotterêts. For now, it will be crucial only to remark upon how Pasquier recounts the birth of a desirable language-of-writing in France as a *reduction* of yesterday’s multiple to today’s singular: the triumph of one king and his “langage” over a horde of “vulgaires” and their “maîtres” which is, in Benedict Anderson’s terms, the crystallization of a new “language-of-power” accompanying both the political unification of the French territory under one “Roy” and, perhaps just as significantly, under the empire of the book as gatherer and guarantor of linguistic form.

To this latter point, Pasquier himself goes on to designate the coming of printed text as a veritable turning point in the collective linguistic “cognoissance” in France—one which, once again, marks a rupture from practices of writing in the past and underscores the significance of the activity for French writers of his “Aujourd’huy”:

Et ce qui nous oste encore d’avantage la cognoissance de ceste ancienneté, c’est que s’il y eust un bon livre composé par nos ancestres, lors qu’il fut question de le transcrire, les copistes les copioient non selon la naïfve langue de l’Auteur, ains selon la leur. [...] Prenez en une douzaine escrits *à la main*, vous y trouverez autant de diversité de vieux mots, comme ils ont puisez de diverses fontaines.
(*ibid*, emphasis added)

Here, much like Tory, Pasquier situates himself within a textual mode decidedly, deliberately distinct from that of *translatio studii*; indeed, awareness of and sensitivity to form (here as *langue* itself) are precisely what Pasquier offers as distinguishing himself and his contemporaries from “nos ancestres”; it is what places them in an incommensurate linguistic and textual universe. For Tory, we saw that this same shift translated into a rhetorical call vacillating between hopeful and helpless tones—in either case testifying to a state of uncertainty about the future, a symptom of language’s materiality and contingency and the imperative to “fix” it. For Pasquier, the prospect of variation evokes something closer to a pitying nostalgia for “ceste ancienneté” which has faded into an illegible past, under the hands of copyists who, not knowing any better, rewrote texts in their “own” language. The medieval era’s practice of transcription has thus itself become subject to disdain, to blame for an irrecoverable loss of “bon livre[s].” As Tory’s hope and anxiety fade along with the copyists and “vieux mots,” we witness a concern for “la naïve langue de l’Auteur” coming to the fore. Print technology, though expropriating the text from the writer’s *hands* properly speaking through the mediation of the machine, will make possible—or at least desirable—a new kind of hold on linguistic

property produced and preserved uniquely on the page. In Pasquier's case, this property—which is simultaneously the possibility of *knowledge* and *consciousness* of language (“cognoissance”)—appears rather paradoxically alongside the insistence that *instead* of writing in our ‘own’ language (as the pre-print copyists did, or as did the writers of multiple *maîtres*) ‘we’ all now find ourselves under the happy imperative to attach ourselves to *one* language, “celui de la cour du Roy, que nous appelons françois.”^{lvii}

II. *Jen eusse traité et escript en Latin...*

What may be most astonishing about Tory's call to write “en François” is that some very real change in the writing of French does, in fact, appear to have taken place during the half-century that followed it. Even if no single grammatico-messianic writer figure on the order of a “Noble Priscian” or “Qintilien Francois” was to appear on the French scene to settle the vernacular once and for all, a number of writers (Meigret, R. Estienne, Peletier, Du Bellay, etc.) soon sought to fill those roles: a collective of language laborers looking in various ways both to invest the language with new capital and capabilities, and to structure or even monumentalize its textual form on the model of the ancient languages. In conjunction with the considerable gains in cultural terrain and status achieved by the vernacular during this time, the sixteenth century is largely considered by historians to represent a period during which much of the definitive linguistic groundwork is laid for classical and modern French. In other words, the language approaches the “fixed” and “formed” *langue française*, familiar and legible to

readers of French “aujourd’hui” in a way that the language of Tory’s “aujourd’hui” may not be. By the mid-seventeenth century, observe Febvre and Martin,

les langues nationales [i.e., of Europe] apparaissent un peu partout cristallisées. En même temps, une partie des langues écrites au Moyen âge cessent de l’être, ou le sont de plus en plus exceptionnellement. [...] Enfin, le latin cesse d’être employé peu à peu dans bien des cas et tend à devenir une langue morte. Unification donc au sein d’aires linguistiques assez vastes. Fixation plus ou moins rapide à l’intérieur de ces aires des langues qui sont encore aujourd’hui les langues nationales.

(477-478)

By the end of the sixteenth century, the vernacular called *François* is not only perceived to be a more *writably* “formed” and “fixed” tongue, but has, just as significantly, come to “dominate” as a language of writing over Latin and competing regional vernaculars. According to Febvre and Martin, the technology of the printing press contributed more than any other single factor to the establishment of French (along with the other major national languages of the continent) (478); for Benedict Anderson, the primary player and driving force in this process was capitalism itself. Whichever element one chooses to stress as causal, what becomes increasingly apparent, and what I would like to stress here, is that prior to its establishment as a modern national language, the French vernacular comes into being (i.e., takes shape linguistically and takes hold culturally) *as* a print language. What has too often been overlooked is the significance of this fact’s logical extension: that the proto-national language “on the rise” during the sixteenth century is primarily and specifically a *language-of-writing*. This written idiom is *new* in the most material sense, crafted by French writers who, reshaping the language and the practice of writing itself in the midst of major cultural and technological shifts, related to both according to models of desire, attachment, authority and appropriation that fundamentally differed from those of their predecessors. It is within this new series of

relations, in the establishment and promotion of the vernacular as a language-of-writing, that conditions of modern French are set (as Pasquier's *Recherches* attests to). Buried within them, however, are the seeds of an unresolved and perhaps *necessarily* ignored tension in the task of appropriating this language—a tension rehearsed, played out, and brought to its most poignant impasses in the scene of writing itself. How the desire, imperative and impossibility of appropriation in the writing of French unfold—perhaps only to close back in upon themselves—during this period of vernacular “fixation” and “formation” are what I am looking to uncover here, beginning with Tory.

Unlike the Pléiade poets and a number of other so-called defenders of French to come, Geoffroy Tory does less to champion the vernacular *per se*, than to set a scene of writing *specific to this language* and a problem of the French language *specific to writing*. Building on examples from texts of antiquity and taking ancient Greek and Latin as explicit models, Tory offers a rough appraisal of both the potential gains of writing in French and the difficulties inherent in this task. In *Champ fleury*, as I have looked to demonstrate above, it is above all a matter of providing regularity and order to a shifting and unruly vernacular tongue through deliberate, collective work on the written word. Writing, for Tory, thus emerges at once as *symptom*, *obstacle* and *(re)solution*; it is that which, because it cannot yet be done to satisfaction, stands as the language's confrontation with its own lack of “perfection,” while at the same time being offered as the best, and possibly sole, means of achieving its task. Not *yet* writable, French can only come to be so through the process of writing itself. This is thus the performative challenge if not outright contradiction in Tory's call, but also the crux of his singularly troubled want-to-write (“jen veulx escrire en François”).

As we have already begun to see, writing thus comes to represent the vernacular's becoming: at once its *overcoming* (of itself) and its *coming* (into its own). "Toutes choses ont eu commencement," Tory writes, drafting the blueprint of his own dream-language project and issuing an appeal to future builder-writers of French:

Quant lung traictera des Lettres, & laultre des Vocales, ung Tiers viendra qui declarera les Dictions, & puis encores ung aultre surviendra qui ordonnera la belle Oraison. Par ainsi on trouvera que peu a peu on passera le chemin, si bien quon viendra aux grans Champs Poetiques et Rhetoriques plains de belles, bonnes, & odoriferentes fleurs de parler & dire honnestement & facilement tout ce quon vouldra.

Champ fleury self-consciously presents itself as textual labor and material, an *ouvrage* in every sense: the foundation for a nascent language-building project or, at the very least, a cornerstone in the edifice that "nostre langue François" could become. What it produces is a promised vision of writing as a performative activity capable of altering and someday perfecting the face of *le François*—a vision ambitious both in its practical orientation (as embodied in Tory's typographical reforms) and its more abstract, even eschatological gesturing toward a linguistic future. Less overtly, Tory's work will set forth an imperative by way of its own example: that French writing represent a practice of linguistic appropriation at once enacted and put on display in the text. The author will implicitly call upon writing to perform some binding of the writer's "je" and the French language; through such binding, the vernacular would, paradoxically, become *more* or *better* possessed while simultaneously being revealed as a natural, preexisting, and legitimate possession: the writer's *langage maternel*. Write in your own language, Tory tells his virtual community of reader-writers, so that it can be(come) your own.

Having professed his desire to share his knowledge of "la façon & qualité des lettres" with the French public, Tory concludes his opening remarks by discussing his

motivation for composing *Champ fleury* in French rather than Latin (the passage quoted *in exergum* at the beginning of this chapter):

Jen eusse traité & escript en latin, comme je pourrois bien faire, ce croy je, & comme on peult cognoistre aux petits oeuvres latins que j'ay faict imprimer [...]. Mais voulant quelque peu decorer nostre langue François, & afin qu'avec gens de bonnes lettres le peuple commun en puisse user, j'en veulx escrire en François.

Whereas another piece of writing might make its language known only tacitly (allowing its Latin, for example, to speak for itself as Latin without the language's needing to be named outright, its presence commented on or subject to justification), this matter gives pause at the outset of *Champ fleury*. Far from self-evident or self-explanatory, the French language does seem to need an introduction, and the writer's selection of it to call for some self-defense at the *incipit* before the book can properly begin.

Given that Latin remained the so-called universal language of writing throughout Europe at this time and that Latin-language works constituted the distinct majority of all publications in France, it is at first glance hardly surprising to find Tory needing to account for his unusual or even aberrant choice of language. While Tory is certainly not the first to publish a non-literary work in the vernacular, textual production in general was heavily weighted on the side of Latin during the early years of print culture in France. As language historian Claude Longeon observes, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the two languages “se partagent inégalement les domaines des idées, des connaissances, de la prédication et de la littérature, bref l’empire du livre, en constant enlargement.”^{lviii} According to the figures offered by Febvre and Martin in *L'apparition du livre*, of the eighty-eight books printed in Paris in 1501, a scant eight

were *not* in Latin; and of the 269 books published the year before *Champ fleury* (i.e., 1528), only thirty-eight were in French.^{lix}

Thus even as an increasing output of French works was witnessed with growing numbers in overall publication, Latin continued to hold a disproportionate share of the French publishing market; this would be the case, moreover, well into the sixteenth century. A rising chorus of advocates for the vernacular (of which, again, Tory is among the very first) would begin to promote the cultural status of French writing by reforming spelling, providing the language with its own grammar and rhetoric, and “illustrating” it literarily—thereby making able to rival the ancient language in its expressive capabilities. The eventual so-called “fall” of Latin^{lx} as the universal language of Europe—a movement whose beginning can paradoxically be traced back to the same period that witnesses its revival^{lxi}—corresponds to the breakup of the larger European publishing market into more discrete, national or regional centers.^{lxii} Given that Tory’s declared objective with *Champ fleury* was to disseminate and standardize certain typographical practices within the growing community of French publishers, his claims that the vernacular is more apt for his subject matter than Latin and will allow him to address a broader audience (“le peuple commun” in addition to “[les] gens de bonnes lettres”) could very well represent genuine practical concerns, and cannot be disregarded.^{lxiii} The greatest advantage of writing in French in the early sixteenth century, according to Brunot, was precisely a question of numbers: “le livre français courait la chance d’aller à un public plus considérable et, pour dire le mot, d’avoir plus d’acheteurs” (3). As Benedict Anderson observes:

The initial [publishing] market was literate Europe, a wide but thin stratum of Latin-readers. The determinative fact about Latin – aside from its sacrality – was that it was a language of bilinguals. [...] The logic of capitalism thus meant that

once the elite Latin market was saturated, the potentially huge markets represented by the monoglot masses would beckon.

(38)

Brunot, for his part, goes so far as to suggest that in the years following the development of the printing press, such incentives—including the desire for increased distribution and dissemination of knowledge, as Tory purports, which need not be entirely chalked up to a question of economics—may ultimately account for the ‘triumph’ of French in the cultural battle of languages being played out at this time. He writes that the extension of the printing press,

devait avoir pour conséquence nécessaire l’adoption d’une langue encore plus connue que ne l’était le latin ; il fallait faire tôt ou tard, si les ateliers ne voulaient pas chômer, des livres qui allassent à tout le public qui savait lire. Il y a là une raison d’ordre économique qui a peut-être contribué plus qu’aucune autre à assurer le triomphe du français sur le latin.^{lxiv}

This economic advantage was, moreover, bolstered by the vulgarizing momentum of European humanism. One major result of both was an increased output of vernacular translations of classical texts.^{lxv} Nevertheless, Latin would long maintain a unique position within elite and scholarly communities—the majority of those composing and publishing texts—as a language-of-writing. Curiously enough, it was with 1) the increase in studying ancient texts (especially Greek and Hebrew) in their original language and 2) the development of vernacular-language translation as a widespread practice that “original” *writing*, as distinct from copying or translating, is construed as a distinct category and mode of textual production (as we saw hints of in Pasquier’s *Recherches*).^{lxvi} Especially in mid-century promotions of the vernacular, the scene of writing as a point of textual origin is depicted as unique and ultimately irreproducible, a locus not only of meaning but of linguistic force and textual authority. In the same stroke, the bond between the writer and his or her language (that is, both “style” and

“native” language, two literary concepts crystallizing in a sort of dialectical tandem^{lxvii}) takes on a singular force and significance in relation to the text, similarly conceived of as unique and fundamentally *untranslatable*.

Although promotions of the vernacular can be found in many translators’ prefaces from the sixteenth century—indeed, perhaps nowhere is French more ardently defended as a legitimate form of expression—*writing* a text in French would therefore have a different status and would require a different mode of defense. Even though the activity of writing came to be highly valued (one need only think of Du Bellay’s dismissal of translators in the *Deffence* or Peletier’s “Le traducteur n’aura jamais le nom d’Auteur” in his *Art poétique*), translations of ancient authors continued to carry their venerated authors’ names as legitimizing seals. And while their potential readership was increased locally, regionally, or even kingdom-wide, texts composed in the vernacular were marked as lower in status and would be excluded from international intellectual circles whose existence, both real and symbolic, continued to legitimate scholarly work. Throughout the first half of the sixteenth century, Ferdinand Brunot observes, Latin “garde encore à peu près intact le privilège d’être la langue littéraire et scientifique,” whereas the vernacular “est toujours tenu à un rang inférieur” (1). Writing in French at this time, as Brunot remarks laconically, “c’est se déclasser” (14). While this latter characterization may seem simplistic, the infrequency of vernacular publication, the self-defenses mounted by authors such as Tory, and the overwhelming authority of Latin as a learned language all indicate that the choice of French alone could categorically stigmatize an author as uneducated and his work as uncultured.

This serves to shed some light on Tory's insistence that he *could have written* in Latin, as well as to explain his exhibitional indexing of past Latin-language works in order to legitimate himself as a writer ("Jen eusse traité & escript en latin, comme je pourrois bien faire, ce croy je, & comme on peult cognoistre aux petits oeuvres latins que j'ay faict imprimer [...]"). To say "I can write in Latin" means "I can write"—and thus not only "I am recognized by others as one-who-writes" but, perhaps even more interestingly, "I can create." From this position of legitimacy, French is not an obligatory language of expression, the lowly possession of a poverty-stricken man, but rather the active choice and desire of a writer: though the language itself may be lacking, it marks *his* over-abundance. Before returning to the rhetoric and further implications of this choice, I would like to further explore the respective symbolic positions held by Latin and the vernacular during the period when *Champ fleury* was published. In order to become an established language-of-writing, the vernacular had to overcome not just preconceptions about those choosing to write in it, but also about the very nature, capacities and proper domain of the idiom itself—in Brunot's words, the idea that it was "non seulement inculte, mais indigne d'être cultivé, impropre à exprimer avec une précision et une abondance suffisantes, les choses qui n'étaient pas de la vie commune" (14). Brunot celebrates Tory as an initiator in making French "un instrument de haute culture." In his *Histoire*, *Champ fleury* earns a place in his corpus of the first "revendications en faveur du français": apparently Herculean efforts in the widespread uprooting of the hierarchy privileging Latin over the vernacular as the *de facto* language of scholarly writing.^{lxviii} The middle years of the sixteenth century (roughly, 1530-1580) mark, in Brunot's terms, a decisive period for the vernacular's "victoires" in a deliberate

and hard-fought contest for textual terrain. While such a description may strike contemporary critical ears as ideologically loaded (and Brunot's work may indeed be seen as participating in, or even leading, a monumentalizing and nationalistically-charged tendency in French language historicism), this fundamentally performative, oppositional and even aggressive characterization of early vernacular writing cannot and should not be ignored. For its early modern promoters, writing in French was in many ways less a positive activity, conceived of on its own terms, than a negative one defined against a culturally dominant practice: writing in French meant *not* writing in Latin.^{lxix} This becomes especially relevant if we recall how varied the written forms of that which was called "François" indeed were at the time; what unified these vernacular writings above all was their common identity as *not-Latin* and their common, defensive self-demarcating stance *against* writing in the ancient language. The two language's unequal share of both the publishing market and cultural capital is crucial to bear in mind in seeking to understand what is at stake in the explicit rejection of Latin and the discourse promoting use of the vernacular—and how writing in Latin could come to be ambivalently coded as both legitimizing and submissive with regards to a range of institutions and cultural authorities.

Much of Latin's hold resided in the fact that it played a variety of essential functions in different domains across the cultural spectrum. "Il demeure la langue quasi obligée des sciences, des techniques, de la médecine et de la théologie," observes Claude Longeon in regards to the status of Latin in the early years of the century, "langue de l'École et de l'Église, langue de la connaissance et de la religion."^{lxx} A codified instance of this obligatory character can be found in the Sorbonne's official condemnation of the

vernacular in 1527, only two years before the publication of *Champ fleury*. At the heart of this particular case of censorship was the question of Biblical translation and the implicit ties of vernacular promotion to the Reformation more generally. The influence and status of Latin, however, extended beyond that of the Catholic church and its allied institutions of education, as Longeon suggests above, into nearly every domain of knowledge and cultural production. As we have seen, the impact of humanism and its interest in reviving classical languages took on a particular intensity in France during the period following the wars with Italy; when combined with its traditional role in the Church, this worked to afford Latin a curiously hybrid and all the more compelling authority as a textual language.

A number of ancient languages, most notably Hebrew and Greek, would be mined for etymological investigation and endowed with metaphysical mystique as scholars sought to recover traces of an original, natural, God-given human language, as well as the genealogical roots of the French vernaculars. Perhaps none, however, was considered “perfect” so much as Latin in its written classical form (as distinct from the lexical and syntactic variations undergone over the course of the Middle Ages). In his *De Disciplinis* (1531), Jean-Louis Vivès offers a striking example of the veritable ‘cult’ devoted to classical Latin, and the conflation of the principles of classical rhetoric with a religious or mystical belief in the language’s authority—here extrapolated to the point of an ontologically necessary relationship between Latin words and the essence of what they signified:

la langue latine me semble ainsi [posséder les critères de doctrine, faconde et abondance], parmi les langues que les hommes utilisent, et qui nous sont connues. En effet elle serait la plus parfaite de toutes, celle dont les mots expliqueraient les natures des choses: il est croyable que ce fut celle par laquelle Adam a imposé les noms aux choses prises une à une.^{lxxi}

Even those less reverent in their veneration of Latin found a discrepancy in the degree of “perfection” attained by French and the classical languages. Pierre Fabri, for example, while viewing Hebrew, Greek and Latin (the trio taught at the *Collège royal* and most championed by humanists) as decidedly post-lapsarian, understood them to have a ‘universal’ status, created (“artificiellement composez”) to be the medium and storehouse of knowledge. Indeed, writing is the primary sign of this perfection—it not only communicates human “science” and “sapience” but is additionally their condition of possibility and *titre de noblesse*. For Fabri, however, like for Tory and other promoters of French, far from representing a frozen and unattainable ideal, Latin’s written perfection points to the potential perfectibility of the vernaculars: “Ja soit que le latin contienne en soy science universelle, si est elle applicable en tous langages.”^{lxxii} Precisely because the written forms of the ancient languages were *not* natural, but rather a product of “artifice,” they could be imitated, applied, and mastered in all languages.

We may also understand initial writerly resistance to adopting the vernacular as a language of writing (as well as its *déclassé* status) as a result of the fact that it was not a language of *teaching*. Throughout the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance, Latin was, as Marc Bloch observes, “not the only language in which teaching was done, it was the only language taught.”^{lxxiii} In universities and even at the level of *collège*, French writing served almost exclusively as a translation aide and intermediary support for Latin composition, as is evident in the first vernacular grammars and dictionaries (in fact bilingual Latin-French^{lxxiv}), conceived of primarily as tools for improved understanding of the ancient language.^{lxxv} To place Tory’s defense of his decision to write in French in this context, even three decades after the publication of *Champ fleury*, Jean Bodin’s

public advocacy of instruction in vernacular writing (*De instituenda in rep. Iuventute oratio*, Toulouse, 1559) still needed voicing, and was indeed met with strong resistance. Despite a significant increase in the publication of texts written in French, this would continue to be the state of affairs for French education—with some notable exceptions such as the Port Royal pedagogical reforms in the seventeenth century—up until the end of the Ancien Régime.^{lxxvi} This aspect of sixteenth-century educational practices sheds light on promotions of French as “naturel” as opposed to “acquis” and vernacular writers’ efforts to make their language grammatical, ordered, and learnable: they are, in a very real sense, teaching themselves and each other how to write their own language.

III. *Mais... jen veulx escrire en François*

Benedict Anderson maintains in *Imagined Communities* that “in their origins, the fixing of print-languages and the differentiation of status between them were *largely unselfconscious processes* resulting from the explosive interaction between capitalism, technology and human linguistic diversity” (45, emphasis added). If Anderson’s thesis were applied to the French context specifically, we would say that the “rise” of the vernacular called *François* as a print language and language-of-power, as well as its textual “fixing,” were not the result of deliberate or reflective choices on the part of writers or other political and cultural actors, or at least not of the kind witnessed in modern nation states. Paul Cohen has argued more recently that the significance and effectiveness of François I’s Edict of Villers-Cotterêts in instituting the vernacular as the France’s written language has often been subject to anachronistic misinterpretation, and that the law should not be regarded as the foundation of a national language program in

any modern sense. In making his argument about the general “unselfconscious[ness]” of European vernacular “fixing,” Anderson himself points to the apparent inconsistency of François’s actions during the 1530’s^{lxxvii}, culminating in the passage of Villers-Cotterêts, to demonstrate the “unselfconscious” and disorderly linguistic politics of this period.^{lxxviii}

While a complex configuration of social, economic, and technological forces must indeed underlie the vernacular promotion on display in *Champ fleury* and later texts, the discourse in French about French writing that arises alongside increased vernacular-language publication could not in some sense be *more* “self-conscious.” More specifically, this discourse gives rise to a new kind of linguistic and writerly self-consciousness—that is, *writing as self-consciousness*—which will come to characterize writing “en François” and motivate its fraught dynamic of appropriation. In Tory’s case, defending French will call attention to his use of the language, both the fact of its selection and specific linguistic choices made in the course of the text’s composition. Through a series of defensive rhetorical strategies, the writer’s textual presence—however spectral—will come into being on the page: a writer reflecting on his writing, his relationship to the language called “François,” and the effect his text might potentially have on this, his language.

“Mais voulant quelque peu decorer nostre langue Françoisse,” writes Tory, “j’en veulx escrire en François.” The choice of language precedes the act of writing, and necessarily so. For this very reason, it may also be the least visible—and seemingly least conscious—decision made in a work’s composition. It may, in other words, never present or announce itself in the text as a decision *as such*. In the case of *Champ fleury*, however, we have seen how the writer’s choice of language is put prominently on

display. Whether or not to write in French, and specifically to choose French *over* Latin, is put forth as a self-conscious and deliberate—if still somewhat tentative—act on the part of the writer. The posture he takes is openly defensive and, in being so exposed, vulnerable to attack. In the same stroke, the French language is itself placed in the foreground to be tested or examined, even as it serves as the medium of communication and expression. This is perhaps not surprising in a work where, it is worth remembering, the visual-material element of the text figures as its argument and demonstration—where, indeed, form and content are brought into a deliberate, transubstantiating alignment, and where the letters themselves are, as its title suggests, *proportionnées selon le corps & visage humain*. Under a common *want-to-write*, an alliance and collective gamble are announced: the writer’s “je,” the textual project, the book’s pages and the language itself are made to seek their fortune—and stand trial—together.

Tory opens his defense by making known that he could have written *otherwise*: *this* book is contrasted to his own previously published works, and *this* writing Geoffroy Tory to other conditional or past authorial selves (“comme je *pourrais* bien faire,” “que j’*ay faict* imprimer”). In this way, Tory affirms “nostre langue Françoise” first and foremost in opposition to ‘his’ other possible language of writing, conferring upon French its identity and rhetorical force through negation—namely, as *not*-Latin. In the clearing created by these dismissed conditions, French thus enters the scene as the writer’s *present* and *chosen* language: two elements of the vernacular as language-of-writing which go (so to speak) hand-in-hand. As the imperative selection for his here-and-now, the vernacular’s very present-ness is itself foregrounded; it is lent currency as the idiom of choice for today’s unhindered writer. Thus, even as Tory must take Latin

into account and dismiss it before actively affirming his French, he does so as if casting off shackles of the past, liberating himself from a known—and even mastered (“comme je pourrais bien faire, ce croy je”)—constraint towards a state of more uncertain, but most certainly present and desired, state of linguistic self-determination.

For Tory, French is presented a privileged and *continued* object of the writer’s “vouloir.” Although the decision to compose in the vernacular must have already taken place in order for writing to begin, Tory’s expression of desire somewhat curiously appears in the present tense: “Mais *voulant* [...] descorer nostre langue François [...] j’en *veux* escrire en François.” The writer who *could* write and *has* previously written in Latin now *wants* or *is wanting* to write in French.^{lxxix} The effect of this present-tense “vouloir” is a temporary transporting ‘back’ into a (re)constructed scene of decision with the writer, placing the reader in a moment that necessarily predates the text. It is, we could say, as if a *will* and *want* to write this text in French remained in effect, a potential energy continuing to drive it even ‘after’ the event of its composition—as if the French of the text were, somehow, still wanting to be written.^{lxxx} In this way, around the desire and decision to “escrire en François,” a self-consciously writing “je” takes shape and asserts itself alongside its language, even as it calls out to its reader for identification or companionship in its moment of writing. Writing, in French specifically, appears in this scene as the activity of this writer’s “jen veux,” and the text in French is offered as the manifestation if not (yet) the fulfillment of what this “je” wants—at once for itself, its readers, and the subject matter of the text, not to mention for the language itself—their common possession (“voulant... descorer nostre langue François”).

An imagined scene of writing is thus inscribed in the text at/as its origin, with some privileged relationship to and desire for French occupying a central place there. And the French vernacular, in turn, is made a thoroughly over-determined object for the writer choosing and defending it. Much more than simply the medium of expression used to communicate the text's content, because it is the language which *must* be talked about, explained, and defended—in other words, as the language whose presence and form on the page seem not to be able to *go without saying*—it becomes the terrain of the writer's self-conscious engagement with language, the act of writing, and himself (or rather, the textual incarnation of himself) as a writer. Moreover, as the expressed desire to “decorer” suggests, the vernacular language becomes that material which will be worked on, transformed, amplified, and ordered through the very activity of writing; and this text written “en François” is meant to have some transformative *effect* on the body “nostre langue Françoise” as a ‘whole’. Finally, the text's French—again, both the fact that it is in French and the specific form French takes in this text on the level of spelling, syntax, and vocabulary choice (which we saw highlighted in the discrepancies of the French “du temps passe” and Tory's own), not to mention the French-specific typography which is its primary subject—acts as the formal materialization, if not (*yet*) the total realization, of the writer's deliberate decision and “vouloir.” The French language itself, in other words, becomes the *mark* of a self-reflective, desiring “je” who *is* because it *writes*.

At this willfully and self-constructedly initiating moment, then, writing in French means addressing and coming to terms (to take that expression in its fullest sense) with this activity itself. As will continue be the case in later works, this “coming to terms”

entails above all a textual awareness of the writer's and language's respective—and coextensive—failures or incompleteness; the ancient languages and ancient authors loom as counterexamples of an unachieved if not unachievable perfection. I would like to propose, then, terming *this* French vernacular—as a topic of discourse, medium of expression, and object of writerly desire—a *langue-à-écrire*. In other words, a language of writing which, even or especially in self-consciously rendered and represented moments of decision like Tory's, presents and represents itself less as a language-of-writing than a language *to-be-written*.

Defending his choice of language against potential “bien sçavants” detractors, Tory proposes a privileged relationship between himself as writer and the vernacular: “Pour chose qu’ilz puissent dire je ne lairray a escrire en Francois comme homme françois, les avertissant que Vitruve fut jadis reprins & mocqué pource que luy n’estant Grec de nativité, escrivoit en vocables Graecz [...]” (2v). Writing in French is here less a desire or choice *per se* than a fact of “nativité,” a natural right and imperative by birth. It is offered as a decision whose self-evidence, despite the defense it calls upon Tory to mount against his imagined accusers, is tautologically given in the name—at once proper and common—that binds writer to language (“je ne lairray a escrire en *François* comme homme *françois*”). The Vitruvian analogy serves to legitimate this choice, and implicitly condemns as illogical or unnatural (like a Roman writing in Greek) those French writers who would choose Latin; indeed, it accuses them of negligence in a duty owed as much *to themselves* as to their country or community of readers. Aligning being-by-birth with writing as a principle of aptness, Tory both *defends* (himself) and *demands* (of others) that one *write* what one *is*.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Tory now uses the future tense in expressing this personal imperative (“je ne *lairray* a escrire en Francois comme homme françois”). Although it is not altogether unusual, rhetorically speaking, for remarks appearing a book’s opening pages, this use of the future tense may here be understood as a grammatical shifting and furthering of the vernacular’s status as language-to-be-written: *being* French may already be given but its (onto)logical extension, *writing* “en Francois,” is extended as a yet-to-be-completed future task or duty. This future tense further resonates implicitly as vocative, serving to transition from defense into advocacy; by projecting a French-writing *je* beyond his own text, the author emits the prelude to his call proper—the call to appropriate, appropriately. As he continues, Tory openly encourages other French writers to, like him, “cheminer plus surement en sa voye domestique.” Rather than take from the languages of the ancients (“mandier et prendre quasi furtivement des Grecz et des Latins”), Tory insists they should choose the language most *appropriate* to them: “[e]crire en Francois comme françois nous sommes.” Here, both aptness of being and naturalness of birth are linked a principle of legitimate property: we should write in French, asserts Tory, because we *are* French. French is therefore *ours*, unlike Greek and Latin, the rightful property “des Grecz et des Latins.” The activity of writing is thus made to fall under a unified category of being, belonging, and ownership—all of which are, again, given a legitimate binding through their common proper name, *François*. Proper writing—that is, vernacular writing—thus enacts an *appropriating* binding of a pre-existing linguistic *appropriateness*. If to write in Latin or Greek is *to steal*, then to write in French is to *take possession* of what is (rightfully, naturally) one’s own. Writing in the vernacular: a desired, imperative appropriation of

what could or should (already) be the writer's. Indeed, Tory's call looks to a personal past and takes an overtly autobiographical turn as the author further defends writing in what he calls his "langage maternel":

Doncques j'escriray en François selon mon petit stile & langage maternel, & ne lairray, combien que je soye de petitz & humbles parens, & aussi que je soye pauvre de biens caduques, à faire plaisir aux devotz amateurs des bonnes lettres.

(2v-3)

Writing in French allows the writer to make such recourse to a "je" of "nativité"—and the defense of this choice demands it, in a rhetoric of justification *via* birth, family and background. The language of the text thus gets *attached* to the writer as autobiographical figure—here, to his own allegedly modest roots ("de petitz & humbles parens"). As "langage maternel," Tory's French is inherited property: "petit stile" of a "pauvre" writer who aims to please the "amateurs des bonnes lettres" even without the acquired, borrowed, or furtively pilfered linguistic goods represented by the ancient tongues. Its very poverty is the mark of its legitimacy and its metonymic bond with the French writer himself. It may not be much, suggests Tory, but it's mine.

The service rendered unto the French vernacular in and by *Champ fleury* comes increasingly to the fore as Tory assigns his work an initiating role in a project to "ordonner la langue Française" through writing:

Je sembleray cy par aventure estre nouvel homme, pource qu'on n'a point encores veu enseigner par escript en langage François la façon & qualité des lettres, mais desirant enluminer aucunement nostre langue, je suis content estre le premier petit indice à exciter quelque noble esprit qui se evertura d'avantage (comme firent les Graecz jadis & les Romains) mettre & ordonner la langue Française à certaine reigle de prononcer & bien parler.

(2)

Tory here announces an exploratory foray into the possibilities and imperatives of the vernacular as writable form. Indeed, the references to speech and pronunciation work more than anything to insist on the spoken vernacular's submission to textual order, since

writing performs what no speech act can.^{lxxxi} This emphasis on the specific task of writing is reinforced as Tory elaborates on the comparison of his modern French to ancient Greek and Latin; representing *Champ fleury* as a ground-breaking moment, Tory casts ahead of himself a linguistic future modeled explicitly on the past. In an analogical maneuver common to earlier Italian treatises on writing in their vernacular, and central to the rhetoric of many French texts (as we saw above with Fabri), he confirms the virtual potential of French through a principle of the inherent, trans-historical similitude of languages and linguistic scenarios. Here, he evokes the ancient languages' own processes of evolution visible in classical writing:

S'il est vray que toutes choses ont eu commencement, il est certain que la langue Grecque, semblablement la Latine ont esté quelque temps incultes & sans Regle de Grammaire, comme est de present la nostre, mais les bons Anciens vertueux & studieux ont prins peine, & mis diligence à les reduyre & mettre à certaine Regle, pour en user honnestement à escrire [...].

(9)

The announced desire for an ordered vernacular (here, providing it with a “Regle” and “Grammaire”), is to be accomplished through textual practices—such as the one Tory himself is self-consciously putting forth with *Champ fleury*—with a view, recursively, *to be able to write* (“pour en user [...] à escrire”) . Tory goes on to cite examples of Latin writing prior to its state of “perfection,” comparable to the present state of French (“la nostre,” above) when “[o]n ne parloit ne escripvoit encores regulierement, ne grammaticquement.” The ordering of a language as a whole (i.e., including its spoken form) is the task of its writers:

Quand Donatus, Seruius, Prisciarius, Diomedes, Phoeas, Agrestius, Caper, Probus, & les aultres bons Autheurs semblables *furent venus*, ilz la polyrent & mirent en si bonne ordre, *que depuis à tousjours de bien en mieulx augmenté en sa perfection*, si bien que les Romains qui ont eu domination sus la plusgrande partie du monde, ont plus prospéré, & plus obtenu de victoires par leur langue que par leur lance. Pleust à Dieu que peussions ainsi faire, non pas pour estre

Tyrans & Roys sus tous, mais en ayant nostre langue bien reglée peussions
rediger & mettre bonnes Sciences & ars en memoire & par escript.
(9-9v, emphasis added)

What Tory thus finds displayed in ancient texts is the becoming of language, the coming-into-perfection of a language, over time, through writing. This process is one of repetition and crystallization, but also a more elusive one of *correction*, through “peine” and “diligence”; this last process is a teleological, even eschatological *coming-into-itself* of the language. For Tory, old Latin, “not yet” Latin, is incorrect; similarly, his own disordered French is a “not yet” French (an assessment echoed by a certain traditional understanding of the language’s and literature’s development: the French of Rabelais is “not yet” Montaigne’s; Montaigne’s French is “not yet” Racine’s—until it flips over into the “no longer” of modernity). For Tory, it is above all writing that engenders writing, and writing that perfects writing by overcoming its own susceptibility to change and self-difference.^{lxxxii} This is why, as I have looked to show, the grammatical desire of *Champ fleury* is not descriptive or prescriptive but, precisely, vocatively and optatively desiring: the voicing of a wish for writing, a call to future writers to take up quills, like arms, asserting both the possibility and necessity of writing—in order to be able to write. And although its emphasis is on the language’s present state of deficiency, this admission seems predicated on a promise, made through recourse to ancient history, of potential “memoire” and “victoire,” through writing. The text’s own formal imperfection is offered, in other words, not as a defect as such, but as a “petit indice” pointing toward a French to come, when a shifting, disordered and merely spoken “langue,” along with the writer’s “petit stile,” will have been transformed into a written, printed “lance,” durable over time and space—when writer and language will, together, have come into their own.

Conclusion: Herculean French and the Chain of Books

Tory's call for French is given a series of rhetorical send-offs, as we have seen. Yet for the typographer-engraver-printer, this call also takes the form of an image. To be more precise, it takes the form of an image that is inspired by a text, which itself describes an image—an image which is, in turn, an allegory of textuality. The figure in question is the Gallic Hercules; the text is a passage from Lucian's *Heracles*, which had been translated into Latin by Erasmus in 1506. Unlike many of his contemporaries who retained the specifically Gallic character of this popular figure,^{lxxxiii} dubbing him the “Hercules Gaullois” (Rabelais) or “Hercule Gallique” (Du Bellay), Tory renders the *Hercules Gallicus* as a “Hercules Francois.” This appellation emphasizes an established identification of the king François I with Hercules and, moreover, ties in the all-important name of the French language itself.

Tory first presents Erasmus's translation of Lucian's Greek text, followed by his own French translation and, at the end, his original “deseing” (Figure 1). The passage, which is quoted at length, gives Lucian's account of his encounter with a pictorial representation of the Gallic Hercules while traveling through Gaul. According to Lucian, the painting depicts a figure with the characteristic Herculean club, bow, and lion's skin; yet this man is old and gray-haired instead of young and virile, leading Lucian to first interpret it as a mockery of the Greek god. There is, however, something “tressingulierement nouveau & admirable en cedit image:” the old Hercules's tongue is pierced, attached to a series of chains whose other ends are attached to the ears of men and women happily following behind.^{lxxxiv} Lucian-Tory insists on the delicate, precious



Figure 1. The Gallic Hercules. Geoffroy Tory, *Champ Fleury* (Paris, 1529). Courtesy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Gallica.

nature of these chains (“les liens estoient petites chaines dor & dambre bien faictes”) and the willingness of the people to be so bound and led:

Et iacoit que de ces tant fragiles chaines ilz soient tous tirez & menez, touteffois il ny en a pas ung qui sen veille reculer, combien quilz le pouroient bien faire facilement si le vouloient. Ilz ne reculent point, ne ne retirent le pied en arriere en eulx repanchant, mais tous aleres & ioyeux le suyvent en eulx emerueillant de luy. Tous de leur plain gre se hastent de le suyvre, & en laschant leurs liens sestudient marcher plustost que luy quasi comme silz estoient marriz quilz fussent deliez.

(2v)

The Greek-speaking philosopher whom Lucian encounters decodes the allegorical image for him: Hercules is the Gallic god of eloquence. He pre-dates the Greek Hermes as a god of speech and is “beaucoup plus robuste.” He also differs profoundly from the Greek Hercules, in that the strength through which he leads the people is not based on physical force, but rather his powers of persuasion: “nous Francois avons ceste opinion en somme, que quelconque chose que Hercules face, il le faict par sa facondite & beau langage, Comme ung homme sage qui scaict persuader en soubzmettant a luy ce quil veult” (3r). The submission that comes about through the softer power of language, in other words,

manifests itself as the a veritable desire on the part of those submitting; even when their chains are removed, they continue to desire, “comme silz estoient marriz quilz fussent deliez.” For his part, Tory quickly glosses the significance of Lucian’s anecdote as evidence of an inherently superior eloquence to the French language.^{lxxxv} Yet as an allegorical text, the “Hercules François” also resonates strongly with *Champ fleury*’s own grammatical desire and the collective call placed to French writers. Tory offers a traditional French figure of power—Hercules had indeed long been associated with the French monarchy—recast through a humanist lens to produce a new network of language, community, authority. What binds us now, the king’s *imprimeur* suggests, are these words on these pages—and these *regles* of grammar, which we will write for ourselves. Writing *en François* may bind us, but it will be our desire.

In Andrea Alciato’s *Emblemata*, first published in 1531, we find a similar image (Figure 2), along with a short text in verse based more loosely on the passage from Lucian. Given that Alciato was invited to stay in Tory’s home city of Bourges by François I from 1529 to 1534—during which time Tory became *imprimeur royal* and *Champ fleury* was first circulating—there is good reason to believe that Alciato would have encountered Tory’s image. The first bilingual (French-Latin) edition of his book appeared in 1536 with translations by Jean Lefevre.^{lxxxvi} More explicitly than *Champ fleury*, Alciato’s and Lefevre’s texts draws out the implications of the Gallic Herculean allegory for the culture of vernacular writing taking shape around the figure of François I. The title of Alciato’s emblem, “Eloquentia fortitudine praestantior” (Eloquence superior to force; Lefevre: “Eloquence vault mieulx que force”), indicates right away that the emphasis in this case is placed less on the cheerful willingness of the people than on the



Figure 2. *Eloquentia fortitudine praestantior*. Andrea Alciato, *Livret des emblemes* (Paris, 1536). Courtesy of the Glasgow University Library, Special Collections Department.

superior powers of the Gallic Hercules. “Si son eloquence est une force,” observes Francis Goyet, “c’est une douce violence, moralement supérieure à la force militaire.”^{lxxxvii} In Alciat’s rendering, this moral superiority is coupled with superior political effectiveness:

What of the fact that his tongue has light chains passing through it, by which he draws men along with ready ears pierced? The reason is surely that the Gauls say that Alceus’ descendant excelled in eloquence rather than might and gave laws to the nations. Weapons yield to the arts of peace, and even the hardest of hearts the skilled speaker can lead where he will.^{lxxxviii}

Where force sows chaos, eloquence is law-giving; where force can only make its own hardness felt, eloquence softens and tacitly exercises its own will. In his Latin text, Alciato invokes the stock Ciceronian line *Cedant arma togae*^{lxxxix}: let arms yield to the arts of peace—literally, “to the toga.” Lefevre translates this figure of speech into its modern French equivalent: “Que lespee a lieu aux livres quicte.”^{xc} The book, now, is the

thing: the new sword to gently, quietly, pierce the ears and lead the hearts; to link *François* and François.

Chapter Two

The Monolingual Project

Vernacular Grammatization and the Edict of Villers-Cotterêts

1539-1572

S'il n'y a pas (comme nous le disons après et avec d'autres) *la* langue, s'il n'y a pas de monolinguisme absolu, reste à cerner ce qu'est une langue maternelle dans sa division active, et ce qui se greffe entre cette langue et celle dite étrangère.^{xc}
(Abdelkebir Khatibi, *Du bilinguisme*)

Les loix prennent leur autorité de la possession et de l'usage; il est dangereux de les ramener à leur naissance [...].^{xcii}
(Michel de Montaigne, "Apologie de Raimond Sebond")

Introduction: "Nous n'écrivons plus qu'en un langage..."

In 1530, the year after the publication of *Champ fleury*, Tory's textual appeal found a first reply in John Palsgrave's *L'esclaircissement de la langue francoyse*. Although its title is in French, Palsgrave's book was written in English and addressed to the English King Henry VIII. In the introductory "Authours Epistell" (to the "Kyng of Englande and of France"^{xciii}), Palsgrave presents his book as a manual instructing English-speakers in French pronunciation, rules of speech, and vocabulary, in order to grant them "the parfit knowledge of the frenche tong, [...] so moche covited and desired." Palsgrave explains his own project by relating it to that of "maister Geffray Tory de Bourges (a late writer of the frenche nation)" and "his boke intituled *Champ-Fleury*":

In so moche that the sayd clerke [i.e., Tory], about the beginnyng of his boke, spekyng of Hercules Gallicus or Francois, shewynge the naturall inclination that the frenche men have unto eloquence and facundite, and howe theyr tong for the most generall is corrupted for want of rules and preceptes grammaticall, and

whisshynge that some studious clerke shulde, by mean of his exhortation nowe take the thyng in hande, and fardermore rehersyng the names of suche authours whiche he estemeth in the frenche tong to be most excellent, and which he wolde chefely shulde be over visyted and thorowe studyed, to gather theyr grammaticall rules out of, he hath fortunied to name suche and the very same whiche my chaunce hath ben, for the auctoryng and corroboratyng of my said thyrd booke with all, chefely to alledge, to folowe and to leane unto.^{xciiv}

While proposing this relationship as more a coincidence of desires than a direct source *per se* (“he hath fortunied to name suche and the very same whiche my chaunce hath ben... to folowe and to leane unto”), Palsgrave indeed identifies himself as the “studious clerke” whose coming was Tory’s “whissh.” The Gallic Hercules evoked by Tory—itsself a fable of the binding effect of language and text—serves as their intertextual relay. Calling back to Tory through this figure, Palsgrave constructs a textual chain to *Champ fleury*, adding himself and his book as the chink that “folowe.” Rather than simply repeating Tory’s call, however, it would appear that Palsgrave looks to build upon and even satisfy the Tory’s grammatical desire for French, in that his writing has “brought the frenche tong under any rules certayn and preceptes grammaticall.”^{xxcv}

In this chapter I will examine other, less explicit ways in which Tory’s call gets echoed and answered, rewritten and further deferred during the middle years of the sixteenth century (primarily in the 1530s through mid-1550s, but up to 1572 with the second edition of Ramus’s *Grammaire*). I will look to the discourses of grammar and law, considering along with Palsgrave’s text those which, unlike his, respond *in* French to the grammatical desire for French—a difference with significant consequences, for reasons that should become increasingly apparent as we go on. As can already be observed in Palsgrave’s grammar, responding to Tory’s call will mean a shift in rhetorical mode: from optative and vocative to descriptive and hortative. Moving on from the

“wish” and the “call,” grammatical and legal discourse will look to establish a relationship to language based in those rules (“regles,” “preceptes”) and laws desired by Tory’s text. Alongside this modal shift, we will be able to trace an ideological movement: namely, the accelerated textual construction of French monolingualism. It is crucial to note from the start that within the scope of “monolingualism,” here and throughout my dissertation, the “reality” of one language (written or spoken) will *not* be at issue. As a matter of historical fact, a number of regional languages (the so-called “dialects”) endured across the French provinces past the end of the Ancien Régime and even into the twentieth century, primarily as spoken languages but also in written forms (as in the case of Provençal).^{x cvi} Additionally, as noted in the last chapter, Latin continued to play a culturally significant role in the domains of scholarship and pedagogy, as well as ecclesiastical life, well into the modern period.^{x cvii} The institution of French monolingualism, as we shall see, emerges and maintains itself from within the realities of these diverse spoken and written multilingual practices.

Nevertheless, monolingualism will be the primary condition of establishing *François* as the—singularly recognized—language of France. If not then the reality of one spoken or written language, what can French “monolingualism” mean? Inspired by Jacques Derrida’s use of this term, monolingualism in this study will signify the *idea*—and, in its increasingly textualized and institutionalized forms, the *ideology*—of One language, identified as belonging to a unified population and territory. Although the growing cultural currency of the idea of One language in early to mid-sixteenth-century France has been observed elsewhere^{x cviii}, what calls for further exploration here is its central role in constituting the identity of French as a textual, cultural, and political

language. Singularity and Oneness will indeed be central components of French-language identity in the centuries to follow. Yet even more significant for our purposes here is the way in which monolingualism comes to represent the very possibility of French linguistic identity as such during the sixteenth century. Which is to say that monolingualism will mean the very possibility of identifying and deploying something called “the French language”—a possibility which, as we may already begin to recognize, equally entails its status as a language-of-writing. The nature of the complex and dynamic relationship between these two projects, French monolingual identity and French writing, is the question I will attempt to address in the remainder of this study.

Although monolingualism projects a singular identity of language, this “identity” has two distinct vectors. It will be useful to distinguish these here, following Paul Ricoeur, with recourse to two Latin roots: *idem* identity (identity as “sameness,” *mêmeté* in French) and *ipse* identity (identity as “selfhood” or “ipseity,” *ipséité* in French).^{xcix} In Ricoeur’s analysis, “sameness” may denote numerical identity (oneness as opposed to plurality), qualitative identity (resemblance or similarity) or uninterrupted continuity (homogeneity). “Selfhood,” on the other hand, refers to the identity belonging to one individual as opposed to any *other*. According to Ricoeur, this must also mean identifying oneself *as* another. Pursuing this apparent paradox of self-differentiation even further, Derrida defines ipseity as a “quasi-circular return or rotation toward the self” that brings about “sovereign self-determination, [...] the autonomy of the self.”^c At the most basic level, therefore, we may begin to understand *identity* as a complex dialectical relation between these *idem* and *ipse* components—a dialectic of the singular “self” as same (as itself, as the other) and other (than itself, than the other).

In looking to understand the textual construction of French language identity, the *idem* component may be the more readily apparent: as “sameness,” it will entail the identification of a *single* French language of writing, the designation of this language as *common* to all, as well as its uniformity over time, space, and speaker/text. The formation of linguistic ipseity, the “selfhood” of language, may be somewhat more difficult to discern. Yet in the sixteenth-century context, this ipseity will be the more essential component in constructing the monolingual identity of *François*. Above all, ipseity will mean the “coming-into-its-own” of language analyzed in Chapter One. As we have seen, this entails a metalinguistic objectification of language by “itself” from “within”—self-othering as a condition of selfhood (Ricoeur) or a “quasi-circular return... toward the self” (Derrida). What I have been calling “grammatical desire” may now be understood as a first movement toward the constitution of linguistic ipseity *via* writing—and equally as the ipseity of a writing *je* being constituted in relation to its language. It is in this sense, too, that the “self-conscious” foregrounding of writing *about* writing marks an opening, or *incipit*, in this process: a first (re)turn, through of writing, of the language toward itself.

The development of legal, grammatical, poetic and rhetorical discourses about vernacular writing during the mid-sixteenth century has long been recognized as having a central role in building French as a national language—and, in turn, the French nation. Indeed, many of these texts ascribe themselves such a role (for example, Ramus’s 1572 *Grammaire*: “le Roy m’a commandé de poursuivre le cours des arts liberaulx non seulement en Latin, pour les doctes de toute nation, mais en Francois pour la France”). What I hope to demonstrate is that, beyond their surface patriotism, one of the primary

functions of these texts is to form the language's identity by generating the possibility of French-language ipseity—often in view of, if not always in effective tandem with, the construction of *idem* identity—as part of a broader monolingual ideology.^{ci} As language philosopher and historian Sylvain Auroux has suggested, grammatical texts veritably create the object “*la langue*” (that is, language as circumscribed *object*) that they purport to describe.^{cii} Thus, even in the case of the sixteenth century's essentially descriptive (rather than prescriptive or normative) vernacular grammars, the project of grammatization^{ciii} entails the creation of such an object: a language, as object-of-discourse, which is other than—but also the “same” as—the language doing the describing. This ability to grammatically self-describe, to relate to itself as other, to create itself as a utilizable object, and even to regulate itself in so doing: this is the crux of the project of linguistic ipseity. As suggested above, we can take this notion even further to understand the broader category of metalinguistic and metatextual effects (e.g., Tory's writing about his writing, writing in French about writing in French) to be constitutive of this *ipse* component of linguistic identity; they allow the language to relate to “itself” as other, even while offering itself up in its *idem* identity as a singular, homogeneous and commonly possessable object. Who and what *else's* identity (as singularity and “sovereign self-determination”) are bound up in those of the language (known as *ma langue*, *ta langue*, *notre langue*, *la langue Française*) remains to be explored.

It is crucial to bear in mind, once again, that during the historical period in question, these formations of identity will operate above all discursively—as textual relations of power and resistance, as mechanisms of appropriation, as trajectories of

desire—and *not*, or not necessarily, on the level of extratextual linguistic “reality.” In the development of monolingualism that will be traced here, we are in the realm of texts that have little observable extratextual *effect*—sometimes even notoriously little effect, as in the case of the 1539 Edict of Villers-Cotterêts. Over the course of the sixteenth century, French does not *in fact* become a veritable common language, does not become well-ordered or homogeneous, and is not the unique language of writing for many of its writers—even its advocates.^{civ} As for the sixteenth-century project of grammatization broadly speaking, it is considered by modern linguistic standards to be incomplete and lacking in long-term influence (especially compared to better-known efforts of grammarians and linguistic reformers of the following century).^{cv} Language historian Peter Rickard has suggested that this ineffectiveness of sixteenth-century grammars is in fact “closely connected with the linguistic ideas of the day.”^{cvi} For some early grammarians, indeed, language is far from representing a totalizable or conquerable object. “Ao demourant,” writes Louis Meigret in 1550, “il et aotant facil a l’home de quelqe lange qe ce soet de pouuer [pouvoir] noter le’ diuerses sinificacions de’ vocables, qe de conter toutes les etoelles du ciel.” As the writer of the first French-language French grammar, Meigret presents himself less as a prescriber of laws than a transcriber of ‘usage’ and ‘experience’—not language’s master, but its translating subject:

En poursuyuant donques ce prezent tretté selon l’experience qe je puis auer de l’uzaje de la paroll’ e langage François, je comencerey ao’ premiers principes [...] e toute le’ parties necesseres a batir un langaj’ entendible, aueq le’ regles qe j’ey pu extreire d’une comun’ obseruance, qi come une Loe les nous a tacitement ordonné.^{cvii}

Not sovereign over language in its textuality, Meigret’s introduction to his grammar implies an essential inability of its writing to affect the world, common usage, or even

other practices of writing. And yet, this declaration runs alongside the writer's bold endeavor to "batir un langaj' entendible"; an echo of Tory metaphors of language construction, this grammar is a metalinguistic attempt to build language with language, deploying writing in order to objectify and codify the rules of speech and writing.^{cviii} As such a foundation ("je comencerey ao' premiers principes"), Meigret's text places a limit on itself as a futile, if necessary enterprise—indeed, one whose futility is determined by the fact of its necessity. While therefore stamping itself as vain and subject to a tacit Law ("Loe") it cannot itself ordain, the self-identification as foundation along with a variety of formal elements of Meigret's text (his refashioned phonetic spelling, the introduction of the grammar as textual genre into French) point toward an ipseity^{cix} in process—and ipseity *as* process or, as I will be analyzing in this chapter, ipseity as a series of *movements* in the "quasi-circular return or rotation toward the self."

Given the multilingual realities of sixteenth-century France and the self-forming identity of French, it may be most accurate to refer to monolingualism in this context as a "project." The material of this project, as we have seen, is essentially textual, despite the fact that monolingualism constructs itself as a series of extratextual relationships or ends (the king, *je*, *nous*, France, future French speakers, the future itself) and represents itself through a series of spectral metalinguistic and metatextual "effects" (grammatization, self-reflection). Although it effectively retains this "project" status as it moves from the domain of desire to that of law and beyond, not to speak of monolingualism as a sixteenth-century *actuality* or to dismiss it as a "merely" textual phenomenon is to miss a major cultural operation at work. What the collective construction of French monolingualism may in fact reveal most of all, *as* explicit task and struggle, are the very

constructedness and cultural over-determination of its own notions of identity: the common language, linguistic “order” or homogeneity, the possession of a language, and even the very ability to identify *a* language as such (in opposition to which any “bi-” or “multilingualism” must be defined).^{CX}

The present chapter will thus explore the discursive elaborations and institutionalizations of monolingualism in a selection of foundational texts from mid-century. Drawing on the work of Jacques Derrida in *Le Monolinguisme de l'ature*, I will ask how this monolingualism gives rise to potentially contradictory demands: the imperative to write in a language of one's “own,” the project of forming “our” common language, and the legitimating—if fundamentally expropriating—identification of *François* as the language of an *other*. If we may understand this period in particular to be an originating moment for monolingual culture in France, it is in large part because the “other” in question will be identified, repeatedly and by name, as the monarch homonymous with the language itself, François I, the “Father of Letters,” signer of the law, and name(r) of a new law of language. This paradoxical tension of ownership—as inscribed in the proper name itself—will come to inhabit the culture of monolingualism from its “founding” law, namely, the notorious law regulating the language of the law, François I's Edict of Villers-Cotterêts (1539). In this chapter and the next, I will suggest that this law institutes a fundamental (or foundational) confusion in the name of the French language, which makes its appropriation at once necessary and impossible. More than four centuries later, Derrida's writing in French about French will run up against a very similar double bind, which the philosopher will express in his own way: “Quiconque doit pouvoir déclarer sous serment, dès lors: je n'ai qu'une langue et ce n'est

pas la mienne, ma langue ‘propre’ m’est une langue inassimilable. Ma langue, la seule que je m’entende parler et m’entende à parler, c’est la langue de l’autre.”^{cxix}

I. From Tory to Pasquier: Defining the Language “...*que nous appelons langage françois*”

It was suggested in the previous chapter that vernacular writing about writing, within the symbolic and material scene of textual production specific to early and mid-sixteenth century France, laid the symbolic groundwork for the establishment of French as a national language. We are now poised to explore this hypothesis further, beginning with the essential caveat that the national language in question is not the *same* “national language” as that of post-Revolutionary France (i.e., of the modern nation)—without, of course, being entirely unrelated. Much as recent scholarly work has demonstrated that early modern national sentiment in France must be considered a cultural phenomenon distinct from the “nationalism” of the modern period—and that the term “nation” itself is in many ways anachronistic when applied to the socio-political scene of France in the sixteenth century^{cxii}—I will be considering here the development of a *langue françoise* (or *langage françois*) that is distinct from the *langue française* nationalized (and internationalized) in later centuries.^{cxiii} This phase of unification is marked most significantly by dynamics of identification different from those of the late eighteenth-century Revolutionary period (the period that renamed the language *français*). Interestingly, even efforts which seem most geared toward establishing effective communication (grammars, spelling reforms, Villers-Cotterêts) also in fact participate in an identificatory construction of the language by naming, objectifying, codifying, appropriating and instrumentalizing *le langage françois* as a common language-of-

writing.^{cxiv} A significant number of early grammarians and those dealing with questions of language were trained in law, including Meigret, Théodore de Bèze, Claude Fauchet, Abel Mathieu, Étienne Pasquier and Léon Trippault. It has been suggested elsewhere that the crux of the alliance between legal and grammatical discourses is the establishment of a determined linguistic authority to facilitate bureaucratic communication. I will suggest that what these discourses share, beyond their practical communicative interests, is a certain relationship to language: namely, the self-authorizing relation of metalanguage and a desire to singularize the French linguistic object through writing. Let us therefore explore here how these discourses worked together to *define* the monolingual identity of French.

“There are currently in France as many human customs and languages as there are people and regions and towns,” observes Charles de Bovelles in 1533 in his treatise *Liber de differentia vulgarium linguarum et Gallici sermonis varietate*. Bovelles’s work, the first comprehensive survey of the French linguistic landscape, affirms the futility of any attempt to unify, stabilize, or regulate the shifting variety of vernacular tongues in France. In his hope for a singular tongue, the author instead awaits the day when God will restore the original human language in terrestrial paradise.^{cxv} Significantly, no single French language is referred to in the work’s title: Bovelles designates a “variety” of languages belonging to the region defined—with a doubly linguistic and historical distance—by its Latin name. Gérard Defaux, in his introduction to a recent collection on the contribution of Lyon’s writers to the “illustration” of French, offers the following depiction of the first decades of the sixteenth century from “our” historical vantage point:

Variété, diversité, bigarrure de ‘langages ruraux’, telles sont, dans les années 1530, les caractéristiques essentielles du paysage linguistique français. [...] Certes, ce que nous appelons aujourd’hui le français existe, mais à l’état latent. Il

doit, pour se faire entendre, rivaliser non seulement avec les dialectes provinciaux, mais aussi avec ces langues modèles que sont le latin et l'italien.^{cxvi}

Indeed, the “variété, diversité, bigarrure” of this period appears such that locating a single French language or the French language properly speaking, “ce que nous appelons aujourd’hui le français,” means projecting its “latent” existence.

Tory’s proposed definition of the French language in *Champ fleury*, below, has often served along with that of Bovelles as primary-source evidence of a linguistically heterogeneous French kingdom during the early decades of the sixteenth century. As we have seen, Tory comments throughout *Champ fleury* on the ‘disordered’ state of the vernacular with respect to classical languages. At first glance, the definition below does seem to demonstrate more than anything, like Bovelles’s text, a contemporary awareness of a ‘confusing’ variety of languages in cohabitation within the French borders around 1530. Expressing his wish for order, Tory draws a comparison to the plurality languages in Ancient Greece:

Nostre langue est aussi facile a reigler et mettre en bon ordre, que fut jadis la langue grecque, en laquelle y a cinq diversites de langage, qui sont la langue Attique, la Dorique, la Aeolique, la Ionique e la Comune. [...] Tout ainsi pourrions-nous faire de la langue de Court et Parrhisienne, de la langue Picarde, de la Lionnoise, de la Lymosine et de la Prouvensalle.

Defaux suggested above that in order to “se faire entendre,” the French language competed with the host of ‘domestic’ and ‘foreign’ rivals (“les dialectes provinciaux, mais aussi... le latin et l’italien”). Yet what Tory’s proposed “bon ordre” of “nostre langue” evokes most may be the waging of *another* battle occurring in tandem with the one pitting French against *other* languages: namely, the struggle to define “itself.” This struggle, often overshadowed in both modern and sixteenth-century accounts by (very

real) rivalries with linguistic “others” but operating as their necessary dialectical counterpart, will in fact mark the precondition of being able to say, as the modern French writer has the privilege of doing, “ce que nous appelons aujourd’hui le français” with an implied common referent (“le français”) and identifiable “nous” (who may confidently *call* it and understand who and what they mean)—or the possibility of knowing with certainty what is *in* or not *in* French.

What merits parsing here, then, is Tory’s definition of “nostre langue” and its proposed—but not fully appropriated—model of ancient Greek. Looking more closely at Tory’s “nostre langue,” we see that it is composed of five properly named “diversites de langue.” These are presented in a roughly geographical^{cxvii} survey following the political boundaries of the king François’s domain: “la langue de Court et Parrhisienne, la langue Picarde, la Lionnoise, la Lymosine et la Prouvensalle.” The inclusion of regions throughout France in this definition of “nostre langue” points toward French unification and identification with a common language.^{cxviii} Yet this singular genus, “nostre langue,” is heterogeneous: it is mappable, countable, divided into diverse species. Tory’s definition is further complicated by a subtle hierarchy within the species’ ranks; the privileged position of one, “la langue de Court et Parrhisienne” is marked by its placement at the head of the list, rendering it analogous to “la langue Attique,” the most prestigious and literary of the Greek dialects (and the language of Athens, just as *François* is the language of Paris). Although all the *langues* fall under the category of “nostre,” the writer’s own idiom (“la langue de court et Parrhisienne”) rises to the top. And while all five languages are French (*François*) by belonging to France, this one is the only one that can be called *François* on its own. Its proper name designates it as the

most common of ‘our’ languages, while the others remain restricted to the particular domains named by their names (“la langue Picarde,” “Lionnoise,” etc.). And yet this language is *not* identical to “nostre langue” for Tory—making it ambiguous what language, exactly, he wants his writers to elect when calling for them to “escrire en François comme François nous sommes.”

Tory’s “nostre langue” is caught in this way between a general and a particular, a common and a proper, a plural and a singular. It is worth noting that the name *François* used so often elsewhere in the text (even with “nostre langue,” as in “Pleust a Dieu que quelque Noble cueur semployait a mettre & ordoner par Reigle *nostre Langage François*”) does not appear here when it is a question of defining this language. Nevertheless, nowhere does Tory call for a *reduction* of the linguistic “diversite” he observes. His singular noun phrase “nostre langue” essentially constitutes a heterogeneous *collective* (a category of noun identified by Meigret in 1550: “Collectifs qi ao nombre singulier sinifient multitude: come Peuple”^{CXIX}). His “bon ordre” allows for the multiplicity of names ‘we’ call ‘ours’ (*Picard*, *Lionnois*, etc.) and thus also, implicitly, the ambivalence of *François* (as both genus and species). Even if multiplicity *cum* disorder represents a kind of problem, it is one the writer is willing to negotiate and legitimate on the authority of the Greek model. Through writing this problem will be “facile a reigler,” even if writing also entails a more discrete telos of conquest from within the family, the superiority of one language of “ours” over others.^{CXX}

What Tory’s referential ambivalence evinces is the coincidence of *desire* and *hesitation* or even *inability* to define French in its own language during the first decades of the sixteenth century. Indeed, comparing Tory’s definition to contemporary Latin

(Bovelles) or English (Palsgrave, see below) texts, it would seem that this coincidence is specific to French-language discourse, marking it as a unique movement of metalinguistic *self*-representation. Much like the grammarian Meigret's unwillingness to self-authorize as linguistic law-maker (above), Tory's definition of French will mark a *first* movement in the "quasi-circular return or rotation toward the self" in the construction of ipseity. Thus it is less that Tory's French *fails* to define itself, per se, than that the definition of itself that it proposes (again, without fully adopting) by way of the Greek analogy leaves a breach between the singular and plural, the proper and common. Thus, a final missing piece in the schema of grammatical desire: namely, the call for *definition* or even, as decision, *closure* of the writer's objects (*ma langue, nostre langue*).

Given this mode of 'defining' "nostre langue," it must be recognized that the "variété, diversité, bigarrure" of the French language(s) in the 1530's differs at least somewhat from our modern conception of "multilingualism." Indeed, "nostre langue" here seems to mark a crossroads between a plurality *of* languages and a plurality *in* language(s) in France: a confused counting in which French may be defined as both one language *and* five. Establishing grammatical "order" thus appears to have as much to do with a metalinguistic ability to name the language and define its boundaries (as an object with socio-cultural, political, geographic and discursive dimensions) as it does with linguistic issues like syntax and morphology. The "diversite" represented cannot, then, be properly called "internal" or "external" to any determined French language (even a "latent" French) because the metalinguistic boundaries that would mark such an internal/external division are in the process of being drawn during this period (by writers like Tory). Even in a work about the French language as textually self-conscious as

Champ fleury, the terms *François*, *nostre langue*, *le langage François*, *nostre langage*, etc. cannot be said to signify any *one* language object other than the virtual one brought into being by the writer's desire ("j'en veulx escrire en françois").

The identificatory stakes of the definition of the language called *François* emerge, too, in this question of metalinguistic definition. Tory's appeal to writers to "escrire en François comme François nous sommes," drawing on multiple denotations of "François," implies a desired and potential *but not yet established* identity for this language—and for *nous* with it.^{cxxi} Importantly, this also suggests that the proper name *François* marks a privileged rallying point of identification: the mark of an identity needing to be restored or brought (back) to itself, but which is not presently or properly given. By the same token, the writer seeks out an individual identity in the *duty* conferred by the proper name's binding: "je ne lairray a escrire en françois comme homme françois." Tory's different "François" could and *should* (he suggests) fall into alignment; and yet if the wrong decision is made—here, about the language of writing—they could fall into further confusion or even contradiction with each other. I could lose myself, we could lose ourselves, French could lose itself if we fail to write it, or to write it rightly. Linguistic unification, marked by the proper name, is our identificatory contract. The task of writing (in French), then: to regulate the confusion of the name with itself, to ensure its not-yet-given identity by performing and binding it, by (re)turning it to itself.

Étienne Pasquier published the first book of his multi-volume *Recherches de la France* in 1560 and continued to build upon it nearly until his death in 1615; the passage below is from the seventh volume.^{cxxii} Writing a generation after Tory (Pasquier was born in 1529, the year *Champ fleury* was published) during the civil unrest of the reigns

of Charles IX, Henri III and Henri IV, a range of concerns may have informed this depiction of French linguistic and political unification. However, the logic and rhetoric of Pasquier's definition of the French language are no less relevant for the reconfiguration they evince:

Anciennement nous n'eûmes point une langue particulièrement courtesane, à la quelle les bons esprits voulussent attacher leurs plumes. [...] Ceux qui avoient quelque assurance de leurs esprits, écrivoient au vulgaire de la cour de leurs Maîtres, qui en Picard, qui Champenois, qui Provençal, qui Tholozan, tout ainsi que ceux qui estoient à la suite de nos Rois, escrivoient au langage de leur Cour [...] Aujourd'huy il nous en prend de toute autre sorte. Car tous ces grands duchés et comtés, étant unis à notre Couronne, nous n'écrivons plus qu'en un langage, qui est celui de la cour du Roy, que nous appelons langage françois.^{cxxiii}

In Pasquier's definition, the domain of the French language has come to be defined as a *single* idiom with *one* name. Bovelles's hopeless multiplicity and Tory's open-ended "nostre langue" have been resolved: *François* is a language whose community—unified ("unis") by a common crown—has been identified. Indeed, the "nous" of Pasquier's description are bound not only by this language but, even more significantly, by their *referential* consensus, their common calling: "nous n'écrivons plus qu'en un langage [...] que nous appelons langage françois."^{cxxiv} Now we know how many languages are ours (one), which language is ours (the one we write in), where it belongs (within the king's boundaries); above all, we know what to call it.

And yet this reduced redefinition of "nostre langue" brings with it new tensions. 'We' may attach 'ourselves' to the French language because its name has found univocity in a single locus of authority. This means that by *writing* we recognize that language belongs, properly, to this *other* place and this *other* figure: "nostre langue" is 'ours' because it is *none other* than "celui de la cour du Roy." The name *françois*, therefore, represents the convergence between "nous" and this authority: *françois* is its name *and*

‘ours’—a commonly yet, necessarily, unequally shared possession. When we write, attaching our plumes and the expression of our “esprits” to this name, we can only countersign the authority from which this language emanates, the one to whom it properly belongs. As our possibility of expression, this language is also how we are bound to each other, how we constitute an identifiable “nous.” The old particular “vulgaires”^{CXXV} of the old “Maîtres,” and thus an old model of community and authority they represent, have been given up for this mode of belonging. This shift presents itself in Pasquier not as an expropriation but indeed as the gift of a language where once we had none: “Anciennement nous n’eûmes point une langue [...]” Appearing within the context of Pasquier’s self-reflective historical narrative, this definition of *françois* constitutes a next movement in a “quasi-return or rotation toward the self” of French-language ipseity. This “turn” toward itself delivers or indeed produces a name and an object, *le langage françois*, of (self-)possession precisely by investing them with an authority that is, essentially, *not* its own.

II. Palsgrave’s Metonymic Map: “The herte of Fraunce”

With the consolidation of the language’s identity under one name, therefore, arises a central paradox of belonging of French as a national idiom: that language which belongs to us all, through writing, is only ‘ours’ because it belongs to an *other* which we recognize as our common authority. This paradox is, as we have seen, embodied in the name *François* itself, as both the *proper name* of the monarch representing an increasingly centralized authority during the first movement this reconfiguration (the 1530s and 1540s) and, at the same time, the *common* noun referring to that which belongs

to all of France. In exploring the singularization of French evident between Tory and Pasquier, I will be looking to uncover what discursive processes allow for the elision of this difference in the name and definition of *François*. Fundamentally, the stakes of this elision are the institutionalization of French as a national language-of-writing whose status as a “common” property is marked by an internal limit of inherent expropriation. How and why does this paradox figure in the French-language “turn” of ipseity: that desire to, and, later, perceived ability to name itself?

Turning back to the first grammar of the French language, John Palsgrave’s *L’esclaircissement de la langue francoyse* (1530), we find another perspective on this movement. Writing in English for a non-French audience, Palsgrave offers a definition (in English) of the object of his text, what he refers to in his work’s title (in French) as *la langue francoyse*:

in all this worke I moost folowe the Parisyens and the countreys that be conteygned betwene the ryver of Seyne and the ryver of Loyrre, which the Romainys called somtyme Gallya Celtica: for within that space is containyd the herte of Fraunce, where the tonge is at this day moost parfyte, and hath of moost auncyente so contynued. So that I thynke it but superfluous and unto the lernar but a nedelesse confusyon to shewe the dyversite of pronuncyacion of the other frontier countrys [...].

(Palsgrave 34)

Palsgrave justifies his choice by noting that in Paris and in the area between the Seine and Loire rivers, which he calls “the herte of Fraunce,” “the tonge is at this day moost parfyte, and hath of moost auncyente so contynued.” The desire for language’s ‘perfect’ form was equally a concern for Tory; indeed, it was the *telos* of his grammatical desire for French. Possibly informed by Cardinal Adriano Castellesi’s 1515 treatise *De Sermone Latino*, which divides the history of Latin into four periods—“most ancient,” “ancient,” “perfect,” and “imperfect”—this term implies a perspectival distance or

difference (historical, national, geographic, linguistic, textual) that allows language to be perceived as a completed object. In Palsgrave's text, we can better see how this *perfection* is related to the objectification of language which makes the grammatical text a medium of linguistic appropriation. Defining a circumscribed and "parfyte" French enables Palsgrave to deliver the much-desired "parfit knowledge of the frenche tong" to his countrymen with his book. In order to achieve this objectification, the grammarian—in this case, also a foreigner—takes up the metalinguistic position of surveyor, selecting the proper region of the language's essence ("herte"). Simultaneously, his text enters into a mimetic relationship with this region, such that the grammar *itself* seeks to represent "that space [...] where the tonge is at this day moost parfyte," and thus passes along "parfit knowledge."

The *creative* role of even the most apparently descriptive grammars, as suggested by Sylvain Auroux, also comes to the fore here: the grammar brings into being *as object* that which it seems to describe, namely that reification known in French as "la langue." It is significant, then, that Palsgrave assures his learners of French as a foreign language that they need not concern themselves with the "dyversite of pronuncyacion" in the margins of France ("frontier countrys"); to include them would be, he affirms, "but a nedelesse confusyon." Not other tongues in their own right (as they continued to be for Tory), they are non-essential variations of *la langue francoyse* and would therefore confuse its textual identity. Far less confusing, then, than the unevenly collective "nostre langue" of his French contemporary, Palsgrave cuts to the quick, excising "diversite" with a grammatological decision that allows one part of the French "tongue" to represent

the language as a whole: a clean-cut definition-by-metonymy exacted by the grammarian's "worke."

The legitimating seal on this metonymic operation—what demonstrates for Palsgrave that his definition does not constitute an improper removal of the "herte" from the body proper—is that throughout France, this language is chosen and recognized as a language of writing:

So that I thynke it but superfluous and unto the lernar but a nedelesse confusyon to shewe the dyversite of pronuncyacion of the other frontier countrys seyng that [...] *there is no man of what parte of Fraunce so ever he be borne, if he desyre that his writynges shulde be had in any estymacion, but he writeth in suche language as they speke within the boundes that I have before rehersed.*

(*ibid*, emphasis added)

In writing, the "parfyte frenche" has already extended itself, traveling beyond its own frontiers within France and, now, to England—disseminating itself in the name of all of France and claiming exclusive written rights to it. Writing already superimposes itself above the geographical differences that affect speech, and the cartographer-grammarian merely observes and re-presents this hegemony of the text. Part of what Daniel Baggioni has termed the "ecolinguistic revolution" in the European linguistic landscape around 1500,^{cxxvi} the territory of the page in this way constitutes veritably a new set of "boundes" for where language may be considered proper. As we see in Palsgrave's grammar, although this "tonge" originated in and belongs to one region, "the herte of Fraunce," as a language-of-writing this "true Frenche" is recognized and desired throughout France. Palsgrave would have represented the other forms of French, he assures his reader, "if there were dyversite in writyng amongst them of the french tonge lyke as there were somtyme among the Grekes *dialecta*, so that every man wrote in his owne tonge, lyke as the grekes somtyme dyd" (35). Any French writer, affirms Palsgrave, writes in the king's

language and not “in his owne tonge.”^{cxvii} The activity of writing itself, which draws and marks these bounds, may in this way itself be understood as metonymic, as this category is defined by Antoine Fouquelin in his 1555 *Rhétorique française*: “pource que par cette manière de Trope, les diction sont muées et changées les unes pour les autres” and “la diction [...] qui est proprement usurpée pour le sujet, est transférée de cette propre et naturelle signification, pour signifier la circonstance.”^{cxviii}

What emerges from Palsgrave’s definition-by-metonymy, then, is that this reconfiguration of language’s proper place, first determined by practices of writing, is both codified and made appropriable by the grammatical text. This highlights what Sylvain Auroux has called as the grammatical “techno-linguistic revolution,” second chronologically to the invention of writing itself, whose turning point is the European Renaissance and whose major breakthrough is “la grammatisation des vernaculaires.”^{cxix} The fact that *le langage françois* is already written across France, while perhaps the precondition for its symbolic establishment as a national language, is not sufficient on its own; it needs the effect of metalanguage. Although publishing their books only one year apart, Tory and Palsgrave map the “same” linguistic landscape and define the French language itself very differently—as exemplified in their respective application and rejection of the Greek model of “diversite” with respect to French. Palsgrave’s representation of French and the name *françois* as France’s single language-of-writing in fact more closely resembles that of Pasquier than those of Tory and Bovelles; indeed, the ‘perfect’ French of which Tory dreams and Bovelles despairs has already arrived for Palsgrave. Grammars, writes Sylvain Auroux, “ne sont pas de simples représentations

des langues qui leur préexisteraient. Ce sont plutôt des outils externes qui modifient les espaces de communication et exercent une influence sur les langues.”^{cxix}

Robert Estienne’s 1557 *Traicté de la grammaire Francoise* demonstrates an analogous—and collective—grammatization in process in French. In the opening lines of his grammar, Estienne justifies the necessity of his work by demonstrating the insufficiency of the two vernacular grammars by French writers that preceded it, those of Meigret and Sylvius:

[P]lusieurs desirans avoir ample cognaissance de nostre langue Francoise, se sont plains à nous de ce qu’ils ne pouoyent aiseement saider de la Grammaire Francoise de Maistre Lois Maigret (à cause des grans changemens qu’ils y voyoyent, fort contraires à ce qu’ils en avoyent ja apprins, principalement quant à la droicte escripture) ne de l’Introduction à la langue Francoise composée par M. Jacques Sylvius medecin (pourtant que souvent il a meslé des mots de Picardie dont il estoit). Nous ayans diligemment leu les deux susdicts autheurs [...] avons faict ung recueil, principalement de ce que nous avons veu accorder à ce que nous avons le temps passé apprins des plus scavans en nostre langue, qui avoyent tout le temps de leur vie hanté es Cours de France, tant du Roy que de son Parlement à Paris, aussi sa Chancellerie et Chambre des comptes: esquels lieux le langage sescrit et se prononce en plus grande pureté qu’en tous autres.^{cxixi}

For Estienne, like Palsgrave, defining French as a textual object of grammar entails a determination of those “lieux” where the essence, or “plus grande pureté,” of the language lies (akin to Palsgrave’s “herte of Fraunce”). Robert Estienne and his son, Henri Estienne, are recognized as early promoters of the notion of French-language ‘purity,’ which would become central to the French-language identity developed in the seventeenth century and later.^{cxixii} What is crucial here, however, is the very emergence of metalinguistic definition as the opening movement of the grammatical text. *Knowing* “nostre langue Francoise” means knowing a certain French language, one which must be properly circumscribed before being apparently disassembled and described—and thereby instrumentalized—in the body of the grammar. Estienne’s definition has a

positive component in localization: he identifies his object—the only object which would allow for “ample cogaissance de nostre langue Francoise”—as belonging to Paris and those surrounding the king. His definition has a negative component in its polemical intertextuality: the French writing of Meigret’s grammar is dismissed for its idiosyncratic phonetic spelling (“grans changemens... quant à la droicte escripture”), Sylvius’s for its mixture of “mots de Picardie” with French ones. In this way, Estienne’s text quarantines its object from the other texts it rejects and, like Palsgrave’s grammar, presents its own pages as a ‘pure’ space. This production of an object *qua* reproduction of “pureté” becomes the precondition of a linguistic relationship of *knowing* and *having*, of the grammar’s mediated appropriation; only by aiming straight for the heart of French does it offer satisfaction to those “desirans avoir cogaissance de nostre langue Francoise.”

III. French For Beginners: Pedagogy, Metalanguage, Monolanguage

One of the major self-defining performances of the grammatical text thus appears to be its formation of a singular entity whose dimensions, as meta-linguistic, are socio-topographic, epistemological and even ontological as much as they are “purely” linguistic. An object of textual knowledge, the language (*langue*) of grammatical discourse has an ‘inside’ and ‘outside,’ the boundaries of which are arbitrated and metonymically abstracted from a more diverse field of language (*langage*); this inside is in turn regulated in the grammar by ‘rules’ and ‘order’ that look to confer homogeneity (*idem* identity). In this sense, we may place a renewed emphasis on the *en* in Tory’s “jen veulx escrire *en* François” or Pasquier’s “nous n’écrivons plus qu’*en* un langage”: grammatical desire calls for a language *in* or *within* which writers may situate and

thereby identify themselves—the desire for an ‘inside’ of the French language as (national) domesticity, territoriality, identity.

And yet the grammar itself—that technology of identity called for by Tory—belongs both ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ of its own language object. As metalanguage, it already constitutes a kind of *translation* of the singular language object it creates, and thus a transgression of its boundaries from ‘within.’ “[D]es *effets* de métalangage,” suggests Derrida, “‘dans’ une langue y introduisent déjà de la traduction, de l’objectivation en cours” (*Monolinguisme* 40, original emphasis). Acting as description, relay, and re-presentation, the grammatical text treating its ‘own’ language (e.g., Meigret’s or Estienne’s grammar, as opposed to Palsgrave’s) must define the language-object by placing itself—both rhetorically and logically—‘outside’ of the language ‘in’ which it is written. In order for there to be *one* language there must already be more than one, even if they are, necessarily, the ‘same.’

Such that the language itself is always elsewhere, an imagined whole to which the grammatical part can only ever *refer*: a pure object it dreams it *is* but which it does not or cannot touch. While the grammar is a textual construction or artifice (Meigret will write of his grammatical “bastiment,” Ramus of grammatization as language’s “mise en art”^{xxxiii}), the *langue* in whose name it speaks is abstracted or even imagined, what we might now term a *virtual* or *spectral* object created through an effect of referentiality. In the case of Meigret’s 1550 *Grammere*, this relationship is evident in his metaphorization of the *grammar* as architectural project, while the *language* itself is inaccessible and even immaterial, representable as a totality only to the extent that “toutes les etoelles du ciel” can be counted.^{xxxiv} If the text of the grammar is a Tower of Babel, language itself

remains somewhere above and beyond it—desired, forbidden. If this language has *in itself* an order and “Loe” of its own, what we are able to possess in our grammars is a set of rules, a ‘reduction’ onto a different plane, a translation: “il faot confesser q’ell’ [i.e., la langue] a en soe qleq’ ordre, par leqel nou pouuons distinguer le parties dont sont cõposez tou’ langajes, e la reduir’ a qelqes regles.”^{CCXXXV}

Robert Estienne’s grammar reveals this translative tension in the grammarian’s stance: he is an insider with privileged knowledge of the ‘pure’ form of French and, at the same time, a surveying outsider (much like the Englishman Palsgrave had been before him). Offering his readers the French language as a purified object of their knowledge and desire, Estienne presents himself as that paradoxical translator who, instead of making the foreign familiar, delivers the familiar by passing through the foreign. Linguistic “ordre,” achieved by way of Latin and its grammar, brings the French language home to its speakers and writers in a kind of *aller-retour* of translation: “Et le tout avons mis par ordre, et traicté à la maniere des Grammaires latines, le plus clerement et facilement qu’avons peu: Laquelle chose pourra beaucoup servir principalement à ceulx qui saident de nos Dictionnaires Latinfrançois, et Francoislain, et sentremettent de traduire de Latin en Francois” (Estienne 27). Translation and instrumentalization in grammar go hand in hand: the circular movement of ipseity delivers an apprehension of language with language, a textual embrace of different languages. Latin and “ordre” become essentially synonymous, as together they create the possibility of rationalization in the French language’s self-presentation; together they deliver an ease in French’s textual possession of itself and a clarity that erases the fact of its detour through the other, even as this other continues to act as the presentation’s absent guarantor. As epilinguistic

(i.e., unconscious) competency is transformed into metalinguistic (i.e., conscious) knowledge, the outsider is invited in—indeed, the outsider is required. The promise of grammatical discourse, especially in Estienne’s articulation, is thus a new textual encounter with a same, old familiar or familial possession, “nostre langue Francoise.” The grammarian’s task is to render it more possessable and better known by treating it *like* an other. *Like* the ancient languages whose learning was actively promoted and institutionalized during the 1520’s through 1540’s, *la langue française* could, thanks to texts like Estienne’s, be learned by those who ‘already’ knew it—formally acquired just like one had become accustomed to doing with foreign languages, those other languages of writing.

In his association of grammar and translation, Robert Estienne is hardly alone. Speaking at once to the cultural, epistemological, and pedagogical dimensions of the relationship between the two, Glyn Norton observes an “obligatory dependency of grammar on notions of translation” during the Renaissance. The roots of this relationship may be traced back to the inclusion of literary interpretation and criticism (which included *translatio*) within the sphere of *grammatica* by Quintilian^{cxxxvi} and others in the Latin tradition, drawing on the discipline’s origins in the Greek *tekhne grammatike*. In the Renaissance context, Norton points in particular to the practice of bilingual translation which was used as a major technique for Latin grammar instruction in France and elsewhere in Europe. Grammatical understanding was thus largely developed in the educational context through translation itself—that is, as a process of deconstruction and reordering, an awareness of interlinguistic analogy and difference. It is hardly surprising, then, to find Estienne developing a grammar for use in Latin-French translation. What

merits further consideration, however, is the way in which the dynamic of interlingual translation gets folded into the vernacular grammar as metalanguage and, in turn, contributes to the development of a monolingual ideology.

For Ramus, writing in 1572, the very process of rule formation and reduction—which is also a conversion of the natural into “art”—is linked to the transformation of French into a foreign language. In the introduction to his *Grammaire*, Ramus presents a bibliography of French grammars published over the previous forty years. He lists the names and deeds of French grammarians whose work precedes his own: Jacques Sylvius, Tory, Dolet, Meigret, Robert Estienne, Jacques Peletier, Des Autels, himself (referring to the publication of his 1562 *Gramere*), Jean Pillot, Jean Grenier, Antoine Caucie, Du Bellay, Henri Estienne, and Baïf.^{cxvii} Ramus concludes by situating his text at the end of this four-decade-long process of French grammatization (“ce proces pour vrayment escripre”) and imagining the use to which it will be put. Unlike Estienne, who saw Frenchmen drawing on his grammar as a translation aide, Ramus envisions his work as a foreign-language textbook:

Par ainsi nous voyons que depuis quarante ans enca, ce proces pour vrayement escripre, a esté sur le bureau; [...] se proposant devant les yeulx une grace et douceur du Francoys, qui invite les estrangers à l'apprendre aussi curieusement que nous apprenons en nos escolles le Grec et Latin, se proposant aussi toutes les nations voisines, Italie, Espagne, Allemaigne, qui sestudient à mettre en art leur langue.

(36)

The national grammatical genealogy of French branches outward as it grows. With the language’s pedagogical instrumentalization through grammar comes the recognition that French will be for “les estrangers” just like Greek and Latin are “en nos escolles.”^{cxviii}

Retracing Ramus’s genealogy back to the first grammar of French written by a Frenchman, the 1531 grammar of Jacques Dubois (Sylvius)^{cxix}, we find a similarly dual

conception of French as an object of learning. On the one hand, Dubois explains that he chose Latin as the grammar's language "so that the principles of our language might serve the English, Germans, Italians, Spanish, all the foreigners."^{cxl} Here, the universality of Latin grants French its traveling papers. In comparison to others writing about French around 1530, Dubois falls more closely in line with Tory than with Charles de Bovelles, in that he sees inherent potential in a disordered French through the discovery of its innate rules; if French is in a "corrupt" and "confused" state, Dubois affirms, this is merely because its "art" is unknown.^{cxli} Latin—as both language-of-writing and analogy for French—serves as the medium of lacking regulation and knowledge (which are equally implied in the Latin "ars"), while simultaneously providing a vehicle for French to be taken outside its borders. While in certain respects this resembles Estienne's use of Latin, the breach between language-of-writing and object-of-writing creates a very different *effect*. Ferdinand Brunot's assessment of Dubois's text is that it does not constitute "une grammaire française" but rather "une grammaire latino-française. [...] C'est trop peu de dire que l'auteur compare sans cesse l'un à l'autre: il cherche dans le latin le type d'où le français est sorti et dont il doit toujours se rapprocher" (137).^{cxlii} The nineteenth-century historian and linguist Charles-Louis Livet comes to a similar conclusion; although studying Dubois first chronologically in his comprehensive history of sixteenth-century French grammars, Livet rewrites Ramus's genealogy to affirm the place of Meigret's 1550 work, as first French-language French dictionary: "Ce n'est point Dubois, qui est le père de la grammaire française: c'est Meigret."^{cxliii} Dubois's failure in the eyes of Brunot and Livet is that his textual effect remains *inter*-linguistic rather than *meta*-linguistic, which is to

say that it relates French to other languages without providing a mechanism for relating it to itself, intra-linguistically. As we have seen, following Derrida's analysis, the "translation" produced in metalanguage challenges the stability of these terms (*inter*, *intra*, *meta*); yet the failure to produce metalanguage is the failure to inaugurate a "grammaire française." Notably, Dubois uses the third person to refer to French speakers ("The French have made *their* words from Hebrew, Greek and Latin," etc.), placing himself squarely outside the community about whose object he writes—rather than situating himself, like Estienne, as liminally self-translating native informant.

On the other hand, Dubois presents his grammar as a technology of identity in language—for the French. It provides a means, he writes, for native French to "learn fully the system of their own [language] so that, as might magpies and starlings, they avoid uttering the words of their own kin without remarking, appreciating, or understanding them, since it would be shameful for a person to appear as a stranger in his or her mother tongue" (*quu[m] sit foedum hominem in ea lingua videri hospite[m], in qua natus est*).^{cxliv} Dubois's grammar, much like Estienne's, promises to serve as mediator of alterity: eliminating the foreign from the native, allowing French speakers to more properly "utter the words of their own kin." Indeed, Dubois offers nothing short of individual consciousness and communal belonging—in opposition to the mindless repetition or imitation which expropriates the speaker from his own language.^{cxlv} "Les grammairiens du XVIe siècle," writes Jean-Claude Chevalier, "sont devant leur langue comme devant une langue étrangère, dont on essaie de comprendre le fonctionnement sans connaître la nature, la 'vis', des éléments constitutifs."^{cxlvi} For Dubois, this native consciousness presents itself as a return *from* the foreign—or indeed, as a naturalization

of that foreigner within oneself who does not (yet) know the language he already speaks. The French language's own identity is established in a similar dialectical movement: the grammar will serve to bring French to itself through bringing it *back* to its origin, an origin *in* the other: "I will have realized my desire if the native luster of French, long tarnished and rusted, is revived, and if, like a return home [*velut postliminio*], it recovers part of its former purity through the research I have done into the origin of its words in Hebrew, Greek and Latin, sources from which our speech springs almost entirely."^{cxlvii} With Dubois, grammatical desire is set on a genealogical course of identity formation, finding itself through the (meta)language of the other.

"Oyez dire metonomie, metaphore, allegorie, et autres tels noms de la grammaire, semble-il pas qu'on signifie quelque forme de langage rare et pellegrin?" asks Montaigne, wary of grammar's pretenses, in the essay "De la vanité des paroles." "Ce sont titres qui touchent le babil de vostre chambriere."^{cxlviii} For Montaigne, the effect of grammar's mediating metalanguage is to transform the domestic ("le babil de vostre chambriere") into the exotic ("un langage rare et pellegrin"). Rather than making language more accessible or familiar, grammar alienates it—from its speakers, from itself. Just as the "jargon" of architects makes the essayist imagine an ancient palace instead of "les chetives pieces de la porte de ma cuisine," the lexicon of grammar—described here as a foreign language in its own right, even 'in' French—defamiliarizes the common language by (in more modern terms) distancing signifier from signified. The essayist takes it upon himself to bring metalanguage back home by reminding his reader what its actual referent is: the grammarian's terms speak of ("touchent") the speech of the chambermaid. We may infer that these two characters are in fact allies in

their common production of “*babil*,” language at its most vain. “C’est une piperie voisine à cettcy,” Montaigne continues, “d’appeller les offices de nostre estat par les titres superbes des Romains, encores qu’ils n’ayent aucune ressemblance de charge, et encores moins d’autorité et de puissance” (*ibid*). Using ‘inflated’ language—Roman titles for the offices of the French state—does not grant authority but, on the contrary, marks its absence. More precisely, such language makes the signifier (“titre”) signify only a *desire* for the “autorité” and “puissance” it is meant to possess. The “titres” of Greek and Latin grammar brought to French (“metonomie, metaphore, allegorie,” etc.) similarly bear little “ressemblance de charge” applied to vernacular “*babil*.” We could say that, for Montaigne at least, grammar’s metalanguage does not produce sovereignty (over language) or identity (of or within language), but simply writes over their absences. While its terms may capture the imagination (we might also add desire), they in fact leave the French subject caught between two equally confusing *babils* and, ultimately, an increased—in Montaigne’s terms ‘inflated’—deficit of legitimate authority in French.

Between Dubois’s self-alienated audience in 1531, Robert Estienne’s offer of appropriation in 1557 and Montaigne’s expression of grammatical alienation in the 1580s, a central problem of vernacular grammatization surfaces: namely, the contested role of a textual, metalinguistic authority in relation to identity and propriety in language. With its new mode of linguistic mediation, as we have seen, vernacular grammar situates itself at a paradoxical crossroads of the ‘native’ language versus ‘foreign’ language dichotomy. What this situation indicates is in fact a shift—operating over several decades of sustained undecidability—in what relation to language is implied in these notions (‘native’ and ‘foreign’) as they come to be differently mapped, codified, and

mediated by texts and social institutions. The intended audience of vernacular-language grammars was primarily domestic (i.e., within France), as is evidenced for example by the fact that Estienne's would later be translated by his son into Latin for use outside of France (*Gallicae grammatices libellus latine ab Henrico Stephano*, 1558). While bearing in mind the potentially homogenizing effect of grammar upon the heterogeneous linguistic space of France (i.e., imposing one language over another or others),^{cxlix} what is crucial here is the effect of grammar's metalinguistic intervention on a language identified as one's "own." Before grammar takes up the vernacular language as an object of scientific knowledge (as in the grammars of Port Royal and later), it first makes it a *pedagogical*^{cl} one—which is to say a cultural commodity able to be utilized and regulated by social institutions in a certain relation of knowledge and power, a commodity whose value is determined in relation to a textualized and symbolically centralized authority. Palsgrave advertises this status in his preface to his English king:

you have also procured and provided for them the parfit knowledge of the frenche tong, of all antiquite by your noble progenitours so moche covited and desired, and, by this mean where as your sayd subjectes for your mannifolde great benifites unto them shewed, be as moche bounden unto your noble grace, as ever were subjectes unto theyr liege and soverayne lorde, by reason of this great commodite, procured also by your hyghnesse, that they may nowe in the tyme of your mosst happy raigne, thus easely attayne unto the frenche tong [...].

The appearance of French vernacular grammar suggests, then, a major reconfiguration of the subject-as-writer's relationship to language as a social object of possession, knowledge, authority, and desire—a reconfiguration in which the grammar itself acts as a pivotal technology.

In order to better understand the role of vernacular grammar as a pedagogical object, it is worth retracing the status of grammar as a discipline leading up to the mid-sixteenth century. For much of the medieval period, grammar held a central place in

European scholarly culture and curricula. In a study examining the role of *grammatica* in Europe between the years 300 and 1100, Martin Irvine argues that this term names less a distinct discipline than “the central node in a larger network, the gravitational center of several other institutions and practices – schools, libraries, scriptoria, commentaries, canonical texts and languages.”^{cli} *Grammatica* was widely considered by early medieval *literati* to be the “source and foundation” of all other arts and textual production, the constitutive art of Latin literacy and textuality themselves. As such, Irvine argues, *grammatica* was supported by dominant social and political institutions; it “functioned to perpetuate and reproduce the most fundamental conditions for textual culture, providing the discursive rules and interpretive strategies that constructed certain texts as repositories of authority and value” (2). From its Hellenistic and Roman origins through the twelfth century, *grammatica* was an essentially textual discipline that maintained a privilege of writing over speech and derived grammatical rules from classical literary texts (4). This function largely waned during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. With the development of speculative and theoretical grammar, the comprehensive and foundational nature of *grammatica* splintered; schools and universities throughout Europe deemphasized grammar and rhetoric in favor of logic, as epitomized in Alexander of Villedieu’s *Doctrinale* (1199), the dominant, logic-based grammatical textbook of the era.^{clii}

With the development of humanism in Italy, the Netherlands, and Germany during the fifteenth century, grammar regained significance as a scholarly discipline in its own right and, simultaneously, came to be applied to Greek and Hebrew as the study of these languages gained currency. Valla’s *Elegantiae linguae latinae*, written in the 1440s

and published in Venice in 1471, emphasized questions of style and usage, and returned to Donatus and Priscian, the Roman grammarians whose work had been central to the culture of *grammatica* in the early middle ages. Humanist grammarians of the later fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, including Niccolò Perotti with his popular *Rudimenta Grammatices* (1473), followed Valla's example by insisting on usage, rather than the logical and even metaphysical structures of late medieval speculative grammars. For Erasmus and his followers, grammar was a central and iconoclastic term, representing "a new approach to educational practice, and at the same time a reform of the intellectual disciplines."^{cliii} Liberated from the logic and dialectic with which it had been burdened in scholastic education, and reformed in line with usage, a grammar-based education would, according to Erasmus, bring about eloquence and a true philosophy.

In France, new humanistic textbooks of Latin grammar, rhetoric, and logic began to replace medieval ones in the early sixteenth century. The founding of the Collège Royal institutionalized this learning at the university level, while the establishment of a number of municipal *collèges* by French town councils created a structure of secondary Latin grammar education. The sons of the local elite throughout France thereby had access to the humanistic education that would prepare them for university and, later, careers in law and royal administration.^{cliv} Indeed, educational reform of the Renaissance broadly speaking aimed at a secularization of the medieval curriculum to suit the needs of a new kind of state. At every level of education, however, the pedagogical emphasis into the seventeenth century remained resolutely—and generally speaking, exclusively—on Latin, even as the use of French was codified at the state level. The appeal in 1576 by Louis Le Roy, professor of Greek at the Collège Royal, to teach in the vernacular—a

complementary effort to his numerous vernacular translations and desire to introduce politics to the university curriculum—was put into practice in his own French-language lectures on Demosthenes, but otherwise met with little success.^{clv}

Perhaps the most influential and prolific scholar in developing the pedagogy and corpus of reformed education during the Renaissance in France was Ramus (Pierre de la Ramée), who published over fifty scholarly works in both Latin and French over his lifetime. Although Ramus himself was a controversial figure, his work enjoyed an immense popularity throughout Europe during his lifetime and afterwards. (Over 2,000 listeners are supposed to have been in attendance for his inaugural lecture as Professor of Eloquence and Philosophy at the Collège Royal in 1551.) In his authoritative work on Ramus, Walter Ong argues that much of the popularity of the Ramist method—whose analysis favored dichotomy and diagrams, emphasizing pedagogical ease over intellectual complexity—was its appeal to a changing conception of knowledge, namely the objectification of knowledge into visual and spatial terms on the printed page.^{clvi} This brings us back to vernacular grammar and the question of French metalanguage. Between 1559 and 1562, Ramus composed a series of grammars of Latin, Greek, and French: *Grammaticae libri quatuor* (1559), *Rudimenta grammaticae latinae* (1559), *Scholae grammaticae* (1559), *Grammatica graeca* (1560), *Rudimenta grammaticae graeae* (1560), and *Gramere* (1562). These grammars were a foundational component of the large-scale plan for university reform for which Ramus had been commissioned by Henri II and which he presented to Charles IX upon completion of the French text in 1562.

In this first edition of his *Gramere*, Ramus defines the need for French grammar as that of a ‘law’: “ce qui manquoit aux François c’etoit ce pourquoi nous magnifions la langue grecque et latine, c’est-à-dire la loi de bien parler.”^{clvii} In the preface to a much-developed second edition of 1572 (which also underwent a change in spelling to become the *Grammaire*), Ramus further articulates this concept of grammar-as-law, linking it to the early medieval and humanist understandings of grammar as “source and foundation,” as well as meta-discipline:

Car la Grammaire est non seulement la premiere entre les ars liberaux, mais elle est la mere nourrice de tous, qui les nourrit comme au berceau et leur apprend à parler et declairer ce quils scavent: et sans elle seroyent muets et inutiles: et à ceste cause a esté magnifiée non seulement par les anciens Philosophes, ains par les grans Princes.^{clviii}

Identifying grammar as the “mere nourrice” of the liberal arts—and implicitly linking her to Catherine de Medici, to whom his preface is dedicated—Ramus draws on allegorical representations of Grammatica found in late antique and medieval texts, such as Martianus Capella’s fifth-century *The Marriage of Mercury and Philology*.^{clix} This tradition depicts grammar alternately as nourishing mother and disciplining school teacher—sometimes both at once, as Grammatica nurses her pupils with one breast while guarding the other with a whip. For Ramus, she is an originator and overseer, the linguistic *sine qua non*: all language and knowledge answers to her, and without her would be “muets et inutiles.” Ramus goes on to propose that grammatization is within the rights and responsibilities of princes, as exemplified in the figures of Varro and Caesar:

Marcus Varron, et Jules Caesar, fort grans seigneurs, qui toutesfois ont estimé à gran honneur descripre la Grammaire de leur langue: et ont jugé que ce nestoit petit los de vertu de donner aux hommes loix de bien parler.

Varro and Caesar were *at the same time* grammarians and “fort grans seigneurs” (Varro authored *De lingua latina*, Caesar wrote a grammatical treatise entitled *De Analogia*).^{clx} Grammar, the sovereign art, is also the art of sovereigns. The link between Catherine de Medici and Grammatica is reinforced here and mythologized with a kind of androgynous hybridity: at once speech-giving mother and speech-legislating father, grammar is a point of absolute origin before and beyond the laws it writes.

The force of metalinguistic law is represented by Ramus as a specifically pedagogical effect enacted or enforced in writing. In the final lines of the preface, grammar becomes a school teacher—specifically, a writing instructor:

La Grammaire apprend aulx aultres à bien parler: parquoy si elle est bonne maistresse descolle, qu’elle mesme parle de ses vertus et louanges, et vous rende raison de tout son faict, *et surtout de ses caracteres, de sa facon descrire*: qu’elle aprenne à parler Francoys à ses compaignes, Rhétorique, Dialectique, Arithmétique, Géométrie, Musique, Astrologie, Physique, Ethique, Politique, par ainsi qu’elle ouvre le pas aulx arts libéraux pour retourner de Grece et d’Italie en la Gaule, et pour rentrer sous le nom de CATHERINE DE MEDICIS en possession de leur ancienne patrie.

(37, emphasis added)

Grammar, as teacher of writing, ensures “possession” of language production under the name of the “mother” of France, Catherine de Medici, born in Italy—much like the vernacular grammatical project itself—before coming to France. Ramus further emphasizes the specificity of writing in grammar’s sovereignty, as well as the grammarian’s identification with the figure of the sovereign, in the body of the text of the *Grammaire*. The text is presented in the form of a pedagogical dialogue between “Praeceptor” and “Disciple.” Here, the Preceptor, speaking as the grammarian, discusses his reforms to the “ancienne” way of spelling and the question of popular resistance to such change:

Que si d'aventure le peuple Francois estoit icy au commencement refractere ou reveche, nous luy dirons quil a veritablement la souveraine autorité de sa langue [...] mais quil doit en tout et par tout user de raison et proportion: comme Varron [...] a tresdoctement jugé. Davantaige nous lui ferons remonstrance que le peuple nest pas maistre de l'écriture, comme de la parole [...].
(75)

Language may belong to the people—within reason—but writing, unlike speech, is the stuff of laws, a domain over which the general population cannot be “maistre.” Writing is the place of regulation and mediation between the “peuple” and the language over which they *otherwise* have “la souveraine autorité.” Grammar, then, represents nothing less than another authority and another “maistre”—that institutionalized “maistresse descolle” who might *also* be named Catherine—and writing the practice in which this authority is transferred and enforced.

From this point forward in his text, Ramus divides the work into two columns demonstrating the old system of spelling and his own, which are designated respectively as “la Vulgaire” and “la Grammaire” (the latter printed in italics). Here, the project of French grammatization—which looks to speak *for* the language as a whole, to make the language speak *as* a whole—literally splits itself in two in order to demonstrate, as *mise en page*, the vernacular language’s rising above itself in grammar. In this way, Ramus’s grammar *performs* the textual ipseity of French, as “the power that *gives itself* its own law, its force of law, its self-representation, the sovereign and re-appropriating gathering of self in the simultaneity of an assemblage or assembly” (Derrida, *Rogues* 11). Haunting the text, however, is the possibility that grammar—like writing in the Platonic tradition—may be “muet et inutile,” lacking the force to institute itself or make itself heard. The first edition of 1562, whose distribution seems to have been rather limited, was written entirely in the “orthographe ramiste” which is proposed again in 1572 as if for the first

time. It is worth noting that between the first and second editions, Ramus himself was forced to leave Paris and his post multiple times for religious reasons.^{clxi} After a definitive return in 1570, his title as *regius* professor was reinstated thanks to Catherine de Medici and the king, but Ramus was not granted *licentia docendi*, the right to teach and deliver lectures.^{clxii} Colette Demaizière suggests in the introduction to her modern edition of the *Grammaire* that the two columns testify to “un désir de Ramus de ne pas abandonner ses novations orthographiques mais aussi de ne pas trop gêner le lecteur” (14). In response to the new spelling, Etienne Pasquier, who had been Ramus’s student, attacked his former teacher as having become illegible: “Or sus je vous veux dénoncer une forte guerre [...] plus vous fourvoyez de nostre ancienne orthographe et moins je vous puis lire.”^{clxiii}

Within the text of the *Grammaire*, Ramus offers a defense of his right and ability to effect wide-spread change in practices of writing through an anecdote that compares the grammarian’s situation to that of the king François I following the issuance of the edict of Villers-Cotterêts. In Ramus’s interpretation—one of several contemporary readings, as I will explore later in this chapter—the edict imposed the use of French for all legal documents and court proceedings throughout France (in Ramus’s words, “Le temps du grand Roy Francois, quand il commanda par toute la France de plaider en langue Francoise”). Ramus recalls the king’s enforcement of the law’s prescription against protesters from Provence:

Il y eut alors de mervueilleuses complainctes, de sorte que la Provence envoya ses deutes par devers sa majeste, pour remonstrer ces grans inconveniens [...] Mais ce gentil esprit de Roy, les delayans de mois en mois, & leur faisant entendre par son Chancelier quil ne prenoit point plaisir douir parler en aultre langue quen la sienne, leur donna occasion daprendre songeusement le Francois: puis quelque temps apres ils exposerent leur charge en harangue Francoyse. Lors ce fut une risee de ces orateurs qui estoient venus pour combatre la langue

Francoyse, & neantmoins par ce combat lavoient aprise, & par effect avoient
monstre que puis quelle estoit si aysee aux personnes daage, comme ils estoient,
quelle seroit encores plus facile aux jeunes gens [...].
(72-73)

Against the possibility of his own text's ineffectiveness or 'muteness', Ramus raises François as an exemplary figure of absolute monolingualism: the king who refuses to hear "aulture langue que la sienne." This monolingualism makes use of psycho-pedagogical ruse to enforce its will and satisfy its desire (here, its "plaisir"), compelling the other to learn its language even in order to plead a case against that language. Once the law—here, Villers-Cotterêts as a kind of grammar of the state—has been written, there is no pleading against it. Or rather, any such pleading must be done *in* that language, subordinating the will to speak *against* in a pedagogical relation of force which renders this will mute, and futile.

And yet, as Paul Cohen has recently demonstrated, this episode appears to have little or no basis in historical fact, but was instead fabricated by Ramus through adaptation of various Latin texts (by Valerius Maximus and Suetonius among others) and commonplaces.^{clxiv} Indeed, its very premise—that Provençal or other provincial elites did not speak *François*—is not bolstered by documented practice around 1539. As Cohen argues, this episode operates above all as a fable glorifying and even mythologizing the French king through parallels to Rome and the Roman bond between language and political power. Reminiscent of Montaigne's allegations against borrowed Roman administrative titles and grammar's metalanguage, Ramus's grammatical sovereignty—which here implies *both* a grammatizing sovereign and a sovereign grammarian—seems grounded less in any *actual* or historical "puissance et autorité," but rather relies on the fictional and mythological modes to establish itself. As a

Huguenot returning from exile seeking royal favor and a teacher whose right to teach has been stripped, Ramus the grammarian would, in 1572, seem to resemble the deputies from Provence far more than he does the monolingual king of his allegory. This irony appears all the more tragic in light of the fact that Ramus would be among the victims of the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre the same year the *Grammaire* was published. "L'écriture rêve de souveraineté," writes Derrida. We may imagine the grammarian's dream of metalanguage to be an echo of this dream of writing: a language delivered from the constraints of the actual, delivered from those same relations of power it looks to reinstate, on its own terms.

IV. Louis Meigret: Grammar's Translator and Politician

The overlapping of the grammatical and the political articulated diversely by Montaigne, Palsgrave, or Ramus suggests a complex dynamic at work between these two domains in the development of a grammaticized vernacular. The coextensive grammatical-political sovereignty figured by Ramus specifically implies a relationship of collaboration and shared cultural investment. As Ramus suggests to Catherine de Medici, the ruler's domain—more precisely, the "possession" of textual knowledge by the royal name—will not be complete without grammar's laws: only through the teaching of Grammar will the other "arts" be able to "rentrer sous le nom de CATHERINE DE MEDICIS en possession de leur ancienne patrie." Grammar offers the monarch its possession of the domain of letters, providing a grasp on language and textual production through the rules of writing-as-law. Ramus's grammarian, for his part, modeled his own authority in relation to French and the French-speaking community on an imagined ideal of sovereignty—one

assembled, as we saw, from allegorical, mythological, and historical figures of the Renaissance world. Collaborators thus engaged in a kind of mimetic pact, the grammarian and monarch took on language together as an object to be mastered, possessed, and taught as a regulated written form. This mastery for Ramus was dual: over the resistance of other voices or other languages (as with François I and the provincial envoys) and over “itself” (as with the double columns of ‘vulgar’ and ‘grammarian’ spelling). Grammatico-sovereign authority was presented above all as the convergence of these two forms of mastery, a silencing of the other voice within French or within France on its “own” behalf. Embodying this monolingual authority through collective remembrance and cultural myth was the late king François, who was, Ramus affirms “luy mesme si studieux de sa langue, quil ny avoit homme en ce Royaulme mieulx entendu, et mieulx exercé en la propriété et pureté du langaige Francoys” (30).

Ramus’s texts, as James Skalnik argues in *Ramus and Reform*, produced not ideas but an ideology, in the sense that they were “programs for action” within their socio-political context. Given that vernacular grammars broadly speaking were *not* implemented as pedagogical tools—at least not at the institutional level during the sixteenth century—, how might they instead be understood as *programs* and *projects* designing a new relationship to language in implicit or even direct dialogue with contemporary language politics? In addition to being understood as a tool or technology in the service of political power, bureaucratic procedures, and educational reform how might grammar be seen—in the collectivity of this Babelian moment—as a textual collaborator in the project of French monolingualism, a project whose ambition is above all to give itself a law and a name? The need for vernacular grammatization in

Renaissance France has elsewhere been identified as a supplement to more properly political phenomena. Noting the evolution of French monarchic attitudes toward increasing power and authority, Marie-Luce Demonet argues that “l’absolutisme grammatical se constitue de son côté”^{clxv}; looking specifically at judicial and administrative practice, Douglas Kibbee has highlighted the importance of evolving procedures of documentation which necessitated increased consistency in writing.^{clxvi} Taking these factors into account, I would like to examine the relationship between grammar and language politics at mid-century more closely in the above sense of a collaborative grammatico-political project, beginning with Louis Meigret’s *Tretté de la grammere françoese* (1550). How does this first grammar of French written in French engage the vernacular language as an emerging site of contested textual authority and even work to define the vernacular’s status as a political object—that is, as an object of (its own) policy or *police*? How might the collaboration between grammar and politics also be, like any collaborative project, a source of rivalry as much as one of cooperation?

Louis Meigret, Translator

“Combien qe d’une pouure consideraçon la plusgran’ partie de no’ François soet en fantazie qe la poursuyte d’une grammere soet trop diffiçil’ e pre’q’ impossibl’ en nostre lange: je n’en n’ey pas pourtant si dezesperé qe je n’aye fet qelqe dilijençe d’en chercher qelqes moyens, e regles,” begins the *Tretté de la grammere françoese* (2r). Besides being the first to write a grammar of French in the vernacular, Meigret has also been considered “le premier à poser le français comme langue autonome.”^{clxvii} While drawing on the work of Priscian and, to a lesser extent, that of Greek grammarians such

as Dionysius Thrax, Meigret introduced significant grammatical innovations particular to French. These included the recognition of definite articles in French and the absence of noun cases (which Dubois before him and Estienne after him would retain). Most importantly insofar as the “autonomy” of Meigret’s grammar is concerned, the authority most deferred to in his text is not the example of classical languages or authors, but rather that of French “uzaje”:

Voela pour qoe je ne m’amuze pas fort ao’ formezons des deriuatifs: d’aotant qe çela requiert la lecture de’ Grammeres Grecques, et Latines: ao’qelles celuy se deura adresser qi le’ voudra entendre: sans toutefois se prescrire aocune loe contre l’uzaje de la prononçiaçion Françoeze: come font pluzieurs, qi dizet nou’ dussions dir’ einsi suyant le’ regles Latines, e Grecques: ao’qels pour toute satisfacçion il faot repondre, qe nou’ deuons dire, come nou’ uzons, puis que jenerallement l’uzaje de parler l’a reçu einsi: car c’et celuy qi don’ aothorité ao’ vocables [...].

(5r)

Meigret’s authority as a grammarian similarly comes not from his education but his own “experience” and his observance of the common Law of language:

En poursuyuant donques ce prezent tretté selon l’experience qe je puis auoer de l’uzaje de la paroll’ e langage Françoes, je comencerey ao’ premiers principes [...] e toute le’ parties necesseres a bator un langaj’ entendible, aueq le’ regles qe j’ey pu extrere d’une comun’ obseruance, qi come une Loe les nous a tacitement ordoné.

(ibid)

Fittingly, where Dubois had written—in Latin—about the French language and people in the third person (“they say,” “their language”), Meigret uses the first-person *nous*, *notre*, *nos* (“nous dirons bien,” “en notre langue,” etc.) in which the grammarian’s “je” is included through a rhetoric of experience, belonging, and familiarity. Although he recognizes geographic, social, and stylistic variation among French speakers, Meigret’s terms “insistent sur une unité de base de la langue française,” as Douglas Kibbee has suggested. Which is to say that Meigret posits a French-speaking community, “nous”—

who participate in a “commun’ obseruance”—for whom *and* from within which the “principes” of a French grammar are to be constructed. Accordingly, as will be explored below, Meigret’s orthographic reform does not look to standardize French spelling through recourse to Latin and Greek etymologies but instead through the ‘self’-regulation of phonetic spelling based on speech.^{clxviii}

In Meigret’s autonomization of French, then, a kind of translation—now posited as *intra*-linguistic—is still very much at work: from the “uzaje” of the community the grammarian will extract (“extrere”) his rules; from French speech he will establish a proper system for French writing.^{clxix} It is worth noting that Meigret indeed published a number of translations from both Greek and Latin during the same period in which he was developing his orthographic reforms and grammar^{clxx}; in both domains, he appears to share many of Estienne Dolet’s ideas on translation (as published in *La Maniere de bien traduire d’une langue en aultre* in 1545), especially the notion that “chascune langue a ses proprietés [...] à elle particulieres.”^{clxxi} The inter-linguistic translation practiced in Latin-to-French or Greek-to-French translations, or even in the “Franco-Latin” grammar of Dubois, gets reinscribed in Meigret’s work as an “internal” series of differences. Meigret identifies separate spheres within French between which a transfer is established for the construction of grammatical form: usage vs. rules, community vs. grammarian, speech vs. writing. French autonomy, the self-giving of a law, is established by this splitting—an effect we have already seen in the grammars of Robert Estienne and Ramus, which came after Meigret’s. What makes Meigret’s work particular and so intriguing, however, is the presence of a certain translator’s

rhetorical ethos that strongly privileges the “language” side (usage, community, speech) as origin and absolute authority while effacing the “meta-”side (rules, grammarian, writing). As translator-grammarian, Meigret’s legitimacy lies not in his own knowledge but in the fidelity of his rules to the common Law of language. In an echo of Cicero’s oratorical principle (“usum loquendi populo concessi, scientiam mihi reservavi”^{clxxii}), he defers to and is constrained by common usage.^{clxxiii} “Ne pensé’ pas toutefois,” Meigret asks of his reader, “qe j’aye un’ estime si outrecuydée de la suffizance de mon entendement, e de ma dilijence, qe je ne tiene mon euure plutôt ebaochement, q’euure perfette” (5r-v).

The sixteenth-century figure of the translator, as Luce Guillerm has argued, is defined by a *topos* of humility, submission, and constraint in relation to an Author who, on the contrary, is depicted as “sujet individuel d’une écriture ‘libre.’”^{clxxiv} Guillerm argues that the modern figure of the Author in fact crystallizes in the translator’s discourse as his imagined dialectical other: the unconstrained creator and authority of language. Antoine Berman, analyzing the shift in Renaissance practices of translation from the medieval *translatio* (a lateral transfer between texts) to *transductio* (which presupposes a hierarchical difference of texts and languages), similarly observes the emergence of the notion of textual property in the discourse of translation. The Renaissance “traducteur,” Berman argues, is “cet être dont la tâche est de transférer un texte dont la propriété est définie, ce qui n’était pas le cas au moyen âge. Il doit ‘communiquer’ le texte d’un individu ou d’une collectivité qui en sont symboliquement et juridiquement les auteurs, les propriétaires.”^{clxxv} The translator, with a counter-signature,

confers an authority and propriety in language on the absent author through the self-effacing affirmation of his own writerly imperfection.

By transferring the translator's *topoi* into his grammar, Meigret renders the presence of the French language as an entity already belonging to a determined community and already obeying, "tacitement," a "Loe" to which his text must attempt to give voice. The grammar will, in other words, give form to and codify the spectral authority of the people in language. In this respect, Meigret is in keeping with a certain line of contemporary political thought which limits the role of rulers in relation to language, as articulated for example by Abel Mathieu in his *Devis de la langue françoise* (1559). Kings can build castles and raise taxes, Mathieu writes,

mais ilz ne peuvent constituer certain langage à leurs peuples, n'y engarder qu'ilz ne le façonnent ou changent à leur mode et vouloir, tant est la liberté de langue et d'esprit obstinée, et impatiente de commandemens, voyre qu'il fault que les Roys et Princes donnent leur consentement aux peuples pour les laisser jouyr de leurs coustumes & maniere de vivre ancienne selon leur forme et Langage, encores, qu'elles semblent aux bons estre iniques, et contre droit.^{clxxvi}

The grammarian will have to decide, like the king or prince, which usage will gain his consent to become the basis of "reigles." Yet like the translator engaged in a process of textual *constructio* as re-construction, Meigret must clear the ground before him: "je comencerey ao' premiers principes [...] e toute le' parties necesseres a batir un langaj' entendible." The translator's *constructio* must begin with a *destructio*, before passing to reordering and reassembling.^{clxxvii} The notion of re-beginning is a central component of the shift from *translatio* to *traductio*, as analyzed by Berman: no longer a mere continuation, the *traduction* preserves by

destroying and recreating its original. Such that even as Meigret grants a new unity, community, and authority to the French *langue* by positioning himself as its translator, he is simultaneously engaged in its disassemblage, and makes the authority of its “Loe” a product dependent upon the grammatical counter-signature. “L’appel à l’autorité même des anciens pour autoriser l’entreprise,” argues Luce Guillerm about translation discourse around 1540, “fonde le paradoxe d’une soumission hiérarchisée qui porte en elle-même son renversement potentiel [...].”^{clxxviii} Folding the dynamic of translation into the process of French grammaticization, Meigret’s grammar similarly bears within itself the dialectical reversal present in Ramus’s work and elsewhere: the grammatical overtaking of the language as a whole, since “le peuple n’est pas maistre de l’escripture” (Ramus 75).

Louis Meigret, Politician

Prior to writing the *Tretté de la grammere françoese*, Meigret published a treatise on orthographic reform, *Traité touchant le commun usage de l’escriure françoise* (first published in 1542 and reprinted in 1545), the principles of which were later put into full practice in his grammar. This *Traité* sparked an aggressive polemical exchange between Meigret, Guillaume des Autels, Jacques Peletier, and others regarding questions of orthography, the merits of phoneticism, and the status of writing.^{clxxix} In this exchange, particularly in the letters of Des Autels and Meigret, the notion of linguistic order *cum* social order—already present in Tory’s call for “ordre” in *Champ fleury*—takes on an increased political inflection. Broadly speaking, a legal, judicial, and political vocabulary

is prominent in sixteenth-century discourse on the vernacular.^{clxxx} The grammars, spelling treatises, translator's prefaces and linguistic polemics of mid-century are not only peppered with this vocabulary (*reigle, arrest, abus, ordre, loi, coutume, maniere, ordonnance, autorité, puissance*) but indeed appear to be deeply informed by it. The particularly marked recurrence of juridical terms and metaphors in Meigret's work has even led Franz Josef Hausmann to speculate about the possible influence of the grammarian's family members (his father and brothers) who were involved in the law, and even about Meigret's own career past.^{clxxxi}

Looking more closely at the debate in which Meigret and Des Autels were engaged in the 1540s, we find that this vocabulary serves to argue questions of vernacular writing directly—that is, not only through metaphor or analogy—in terms of social and political order. In one striking example, Des Autels argues that the grammarian's task is to make language, through writing, answerable to an established authority—an authority which Meigret threatens by basing spelling on pronunciation:

tu donnes licence à nostre langue, de changer de jour en jour sa prononciation avec son esriture: et ce temps me semble oportun, pour obvier à cette peste, laquelle infecte les plus saines parties de nostre parole: car pource que nous laissons sans reigle, et (comme lon dit) à bride avalee courir nostre usage de parler: les plus ignorans ont l'autorité de la gaster.^{clxxxii}

For Des Autels, the grammarian is a veritable officer of the law whose duty is to regulate language on behalf of the public good. By issuing a lax language policy, Meigret gives “licence” to language and abdicates his own due “autorité” as grammarian to “les plus ignorans.” Significantly, Des Autels distinguishes between his metaphorical and non-metaphorical language: slackening the bridle on language use, unlike his political vocabulary, is presented as a manner of speaking, “nous laissons sans reigle, et (*comme*

lon dit) à bride avalee courir nostre usage de parler [...].” (Meigret will turn this metaphor back against Des Autels, asking him in response, “Voudra’ tu point brider la liberté de cet infini peuple François com’ un cheval?”^{clxxxiii}) The term “reigle”—like “licence” and “autorité”—indeed appears to concern language both metaphorically *and* literally; the very project of vernacular grammar, we could say, is to make the French language *literally* political by making it a space where terms like “reigles,” “ordre,” “autorité,” etc. apply *au sens propre*—to give the language literal force of law.

It is worth bearing in mind that Des Autels is writing before the publication of any vernacular-language grammar, although he claims to be aware that Meigret is at work on one. Cautioning Meigret, Des Autels insists that without a stable form—that is, the “ancien” spelling system he himself endorses—any effort to establish a grammar is futile. To make this point, he invokes the metaphors of labor and *constructio*, with language serving as material: “tes labeurs, [...] les miens, & de tous autres en tel cas, seroient à mon avis autant inutiles, que si nous avions basti sus le sable” (*ibid*). The grammarian has a particular responsibility because, Des Autels maintains, the Court’s pronunciation does not represent a reliable—or even monolingual—foundation. “La Court est un Monstre de plusieurs testes, & consequemment de plusieurs langues, & plusieurs voix” (22).^{clxxxiv} With writing, the grammarian must supplement or even correct language at the heart of its symbolic and political authority, just as writing itself supplements what is lacking in speech. Countering Meigret’s proposal to base writing on pronunciation, Des Autels goes so far as to propose its opposite: “il sembleroit plus convenant reigler la prononciation selon l’escripture.” The proper act of grammar—and of writing specifically—is one of regulation (“reigler... selon l’escripture”), to provide a stable and

singular authority in language. Speech, which is dispersed and shared amongst a heterogeneous general population, engenders a wild and even monstrous plurality—not to mention an unbridled chain of metaphors.

At the heart of this question for Des Autels is the notion that a grammar based on phonetic writing does not establish a sound linguistic authority because the people, as a collective of speakers, cannot be trusted as producers of knowledge: “pource que la prononciation usurpée de tout le peuple auquel le plus grand nombre est des idiots, et indoctes, est plus facile a corrompre que l’escripiture propre aux gens scavants [...]” (*ibid*). Cordoning off writing from speech and, indeed, reforming speech in accordance with writing is thus, at least in Des Autels’s case, a project of social reform aimed at maintaining the hegemony of an elite intellectual class.^{clxxxv} His “nous” refers not to the French people as a broader category, but to the “gens scavants” as protectors of their self-interest. His call to orthographic reform thus takes on a tone of mounting crisis and the danger of public disorder: “Voulons nous endurer ceste tant desmesuree licence? Hastons, hastons nous d’y mettre ordre, et n’attendons que la disgrace nous oste l’occasion tant à ceste heure oportune d’y remedier” (21).

For Meigret, the intervention of grammar and the status of language as a political—and specifically textual—object are more complex. As an advocate of “usage,” Meigret will counter Des Autels by arguing that “un langage n’a point d’autorité sinon de tant qu’il est agréable à tout le peuple ou, pour le moins, à la plus grande partie.” In his comprehensive scholarly work on Meigret entitled *Louis Meigret, Humaniste et Linguiste*, Hausmann challenges any facile image of Meigret as democratizer, arguing that “sa notion de peuple connaît des restrictions bien significatives. Il suffit d’observer

comment Meigret part de tout le peuple pour arriver au bon usage d'une minorité" (185). Unlike Des Autels, however, Meigret does not look to writing to establish a position of social hierarchy or dominance; indeed, any notion of "bon usage" present in Meigret's work differs significantly from what we found in Robert Estienne (the language of the Court, passing through Latin) or that codified by seventeenth-century grammars or the Académie française.

Meigret's conception of vernacular grammar as a political text—law-giving, rule-making, autonomizing—is in fact articulated most forcefully (if problematically) in his phoneticism. With the *Traité touchant le commun usage de l'écriture françoise* of 1542, Meigret aimed to restore to French writing "le devoir, & loix de bien escrire & former l'Image au vray de la prononciacion."^{clxxxvi} This treatise, written in the "common" spelling, lays the groundwork for the reformed orthography employed later in his translation of Lucian's *Le Menteur* (1548) and in the *Grammere* (1550), both published by Wechel.^{clxxxvii} Just as the grammarian-translator's duty is to follow usage, the duty of writing is to follow speech and introduce nothing of its own: "Les voix sont les elemens de la prononciation, et les letres les marques ou notes des elemens [...]. Puisque les letres ne sont qu'images de voix, l'écriture devra estre d'autant de letres que la prononciation requiert de voix; si elle se treuve autre, elle est faulse, abusive et damnable."^{clxxxviii} Meigret proposes a system of strict phonetic equivalence, according to which each written letter must be univocal in order for its full "puissance" to be in effect ("c," for example must be only hard); no unpronounced or 'superfluous' letters may be present. Defending his right to enact such reform, Meigret argues that the old spelling system is a mere "coutume"—yet one to which the people are so accustomed that they

mistake it for “loix, & ordonnance iuste, & necessaire.” The only reason this system is not changed, despite “la difficulté que nous sentons en la letre,” is the public’s fear of appearing too novel or disturbing the peace by breaking with tradition (“de forger nouveaux troubles à ung peuple en ses coustumes tant vsités, & de si longue main receues”).^{clxxxix} Vernacular grammar begins, then, by dethroning old “abusive” customs and restoring justice to language.

Against the plurality of customs and their arbitrary authority, Meigret invokes a singular law (“le devoir, & loix de bien escrire”) which binds speech to writing and makes language one, once again. In the *Traité* and, later, in the *Grammere*, the difference between speech and writing is a “confusion” of language to be restored by the phonetic principle’s “propriété.” For Meigret, the prevalent, ‘common’ way of writing represents an estrangement of language from itself: “A la verité aussi est elle trop estrange, & diverse de la prononciacion; tant par une curiuse superfluité de letres, que par une vicieuse confusion de puissance entre elles.”^{cxc} In a similar vein, Meigret fires back against Des Autels’s claim that his phonetic foundation is unstable in the grammar’s introduction: “Or et il q’ao jourdhuy le’ François ont tant etranjé l’ecrittur’ en une gran’ partie de vocables, de l’usage de parler [...] q’il n’et possible de dresser sur elle, aocune façon de grammere qe ce ne fut a notre confuzion” (*Grammere* 4). Meigret’s principle of use is so aligned—politically, metaphysically—with speech that the reform of writing constitutes a return to “usage,” even as the “commun usage” of writing itself is radically changed. Where writing is concerned, usage is not an authority to which the grammarian must defer but rather a “confusion” he must seek to regulate. “[E]sperant que la raison aura plus de pouvoir envers vous,” writes Meigret in 1542, “qu’vne obstination et vng

vicieux, & confus vsage, i'ay entrepris ce traicté de l'escriture Françoise.”^{cxi}

Moreover, the phonetic regulation of writing—that is, a grammatical reform of written “usage”—goes hand-in-hand with a usage-based grammar as its very condition of possibility. For the Ancients, Meigret maintains, this was indeed the founding grammatical act: “ceus qi ont voulu bien dresser une grammere sur le bon uzaje de parler, ont aosi en le suyuant doné le’ moyens de bien ecrire par le’ lettres en gardant a chacune sa puissance” (*Grammere* 4). Vernacular grammatization, as we have seen beginning with Tory, emerges as a project based in desires and absences (for order, rules, laws, authority, proper names, singularity). For Meigret, the split “usage” of French between speech and writing represents the primary problem to be resolved. Grammatization entails above all the construction of a single, true usage—which also means, in no uncertain terms, the hierarchical subordination of writing to speech, a restoration in writing of the univocal “puissance” of voice.

The duty of writing—to be the faithful image of speech—is linked, then, to the grammarian’s own duty to usage and community for Meigret. Both are grounded in notions of French nativeness and propriety, and both are threatened by the possibility of difference in writing as falsification, treachery, or abuse. Because writing’s “devoer” is to represent speech, as we have seen, any mark of its independence or variation constitutes an abuse of power. “Car come l’ecriture ne soet qe la vray’ imaje de la parolle, a bone rezon on l’estimera faos’ e abusive, si elle ne luy et conforme” (3v). Non-representational writing even holds the writer in subjugation—against which the grammarian, as legislator of radical letters, promises to fight amidst the rising tide: “Je m’efforcerey de fère qadrer le’ lettres, e l’ecrittur’ ao’ voes, e a la pronçiaçion sans auoer

egart ao' loes sophistiques de' deriueuzons, e differences: aoquelles se somettet plus qe james aocuns de' notres, come beufs ao jou [...]" (3r). Analogously, the grammarian himself risks abusing his authority if he leads the people into further confusion. Invoking a kind of ethical pact of grammar, Meigret writes of this risk in the 1542 *Traité*, "Il est vray que l'entreprise de forcer, & corrompre les bonnes coustumes, & aisés façons de viure d'vng peuple pour l'assubiection à autres confuses [...], seroit digne de reprehension & blasme [...]." ^{cxcii} The grammarian thus necessarily differs from those Princes evoked by Abel Mathieu who merely "donnent leur consentement aux peuples pour les laisser jouyr de leurs coustumes & maniere de vivre ancienne selon leur forme et Langage, encores, qu'elles semblent aux bons estre iniques, et contre droit." As a corrective and law-giving enterprise, grammar—even one adhering to a certain "usage"—has an inherent potential for tyranny. For Meigret, this threat is quelled by arguing for the natural "propriété" of his reform, which is none other than the quelling of writing itself as abuse or false representation in order to establish a 'true' writing subordinated to speech. The self-determining law of Meigret's grammar, its ipseity and autonomy, is established by re-writing that which, in writing and as writing, threatens to "abuse" and "confuse" its identity. Like the *pharmakon* of Plato's *Phaedrus*, writing is at once poison, symptom, and remedy. (I will explore this Platonic influence further below.)

These aligned duties toward the French language are bound for Meigret in a principle less nationalist, per se, than *nativist*, linking the vernacular language, phoneticism, and communal belonging in a metaphysics of identity as self-sameness and presence. 'Estranged' writing, Meigret alleges, "et deriuée d'une grand' iñoranc' e supersticion: vu q'ell' et tout' aotre qe la prononçiacion, qe suyuant son deuoer ell dut

rapporter *nayuement*” (4r, emphasis added). Those who write otherwise “ne luy pense pas fère peu d’honneur [à notre écriture] en la parant de *plumes d’aotruy*” (3v, emphasis added). The ‘others’ in question are specified as other languages: “Il est very qe çete maniere d’ecriueins espere bien montrer par la q’il’ ont fort prouffitté e’ langes Latin’ e Grecqe: hors q’ils se sont oublié d’apprendre le’ puyssances de’ lettres, e le deuoir de l’ecriture” (3v-4r). Writing, then, is susceptible to bearing the mark of the other as a foreign power. Pronunciation, on the other hand, can only ever be native: it is where the force and life of language live. Writing, once again, will therefore only be an assured and natively French possession, “une escriture certaine,” when it is phonetic, “ayans tant seulement egard à la prononciation Françoyse, & a la nayve puissance des letres.”^{cxci} By the same token, true language reform may only come from the inside, from a native speaker who belongs to the French community, as Megiret affirms in the *Traité*:

Car ung langage est de telle nature, qu’il requiert pour son commencement la tette des nourrissees, & le commun usage receu presques de toutes conditions d’hommes d’une nation: ny ne fut oncques trouvé depuis que le monde est monde, qu’autres hommes que ceux du pays ayent eu puissance de changer l’usage d’une langue, sinon de tant qu’ilz ont eu commune habitation ensemble.^{cxci}

The word “puissance”—which has otherwise only been used in a linguistico-metaphysical sense to designate the equivalence between speech and writing—here appears in a political and practical context: only native speakers have the power to change their language. This “puissance” is dually rooted in a social *habitus* (the cohabitation of “ilz ont eu commune habitation ensemble,” the habit of “le commun usage”) and a natural/biological principle (the origin of language in “la tette des nourrissees”). Power and authority in language do not come from elsewhere but from the presence of *here* and *us*, from a natural origin in the body and the voice.

The question of writing in this grammar—including its politics and the autonomy of its own linguistic “*loé*”—is thus heavily determined by metaphysical valorizations. The marks of Platonic thought, and the *Phaedrus* dialogue (274B-279A) in particular, on this metaphysics are numerous: speech is a site of presence and source of “*puissance*” (*dynamis*) while writing, like painting, is representation or “*image*” (Plato 275D-276A); writing is a necessary supplement for the absence of the speaking person, an aid for memory (Meigret: “la necessité qe nous auons de l’écriture, tant pour la debilité de la memoere, qe pour supplier une prezenc’ en l’absence de persones”; Plato 274E, 275E); Meigret’s enemies—those against whom he identifies his own system’s “*propriété*”—are *writers*, sophists (Plato will call them “*logographs*”); writing is associated with falseness or even falsehood while speech is on the side of truth (Plato 275A-B)—this is reinforced by Meigret with his choice for the first text published with his reformed spelling, Lucian’s *Le menteur*; different kinds of writing are divided morally between the ‘good’ (phonetic) and ‘bad’ (etymological); writing is the foreign element both ‘viciously’ infiltrating language and yet also, symptomatically, constrained to its surface or outside.^{CXCV}

Perhaps most strikingly, in his attack on writers who garnish their spelling with etymological letters, Meigret employs the metaphor of writing *per se* as “poison”—one possible translation of the polyvalent Greek word *pharmakon* used by Plato to describe writing, as famously analyzed by Derrida in his own reading of *Phaedrus*. Employing the over-determined example of the word for *writing* itself, Meigret ridicules their debate on whether to use “b” or “p” to render a true etymological mark:

vous en trouueriez qi ne sont pas en moindr’ altercaçon si b et plus conuenant ao mot ecrire, qe p: e si escribre, et point melleur qe escripre, qe seroét deu’ medeçins iñorans, si la sigú’ et plus nourrissante pour l’home qe le Sublimé: car

tout ensi q'il' luy sont mortels, aosi sont ces aotres lettres a la vraye prononçiaçon du mot, ecrire.

Just as writing is a *pharmakon* (potion/poison/remedy) for memory invented by the god Theuth (“father of letters”) in Plato’s dialogue, for Meigret etymological letters bearing Greek or Latin roots can only be harmful to French, as poison is harmful to man. “And now, since you are the father of writing,” Theuth is told by the king Thamus upon presentation of his *pharmakon*,

your affection for it has made you describe its effects as the opposite of what they really are. In fact, it will introduce forgetfulness into the soul of those who learn it: they will not practice using their memory because they will put their trust in writing, which is external and depends on signs that belong to others, instead of trying to remember from the inside, completely on their own.

(275A)

Thamus, the king and good father, recognizes the potential for harm in writing: its externality, its belonging to others, its non-autonomy. As Livet and Brunot’s “father” of French grammar, Meigret models himself after king Thamus, the judge of writing who sees its expropriating truth, rather than Theuth, the “father of letters,” whose affection for his creation has led him to mistake (indeed, invert) its value. In this first *grammere* of French written in its own language, we could say that the history and etymology of the word grammar itself—as the *tekhne grammatike*, the art of letters—gets overturned or turned against itself in this dialectical rise of the vernacular and the constitution of its autonomy from the ancient languages as textual culture. The vernacular grammar raises itself not on the authority of letters but on the power of voice, the native voice pronounced by a “people”—even while, as translation, it is inevitably distanced from this voice in its own textual de- and reconstruction of it. (“Translation,” writes Glyn Norton, “refers less to an ingested *techne* of acts than it does to the intractable distancing and

energy of language as it moves away from a universal *logos* [...].”^{cxcvi}) In the wake of the death of the king François—“père des lettres” and, in Meigret’s own words, “le feu Roe premier du nom”—in 1547, Meigret as grammarian assumes the translator’s ambivalent position between dutiful mourning and patricidal autonomy, much as his text establishes itself on the paradoxical desire to erase a writing it cannot do without, the desire for “la vraie prononciation du mot, ecrire.”

A writer of laws is, for Plato, just that: a *writer*. Anything of true political value cannot be written, since it is tied to the wisdom of a thinking, speaking, living subject who can defend himself. In this context, we could say that Meigret, in writing the laws of French writing, looks beyond the law-as-writing (and writing-as-law) entirely—even if this means speaking against the voice of the people and establishing an authority of his own:

if [...] anybody [...] ever did or ever does write—privately or for the public, in the course of proposing some law—a political document which he believes to embody clear knowledge of lasting importance, then this writer deserves reproach, whether anyone says so or not. For to be unaware of the difference between a dream-image and the reality of what is just and unjust, good and bad, must truly be grounds for reproach even if the crowd praises it with one voice.

(Plato 277D-E)

Far from persuading the public that writing was a mis-valued “dream-image,” Meigret would in fact be met with univocal criticism branding him as a misguided social outlier, blinded (much like the god Theuth) by his affection for his own work. The same year the *Tretté de la grammere françoeeze* was published, Théodore de Bèze would criticize phonetic reformers as creators of idiosyncratic “fantasies.” With homophonic word play singling out and ridiculing Meigret, De Bèze announces his own choice of the ‘common’ spelling in the preface to his *Tragédie française du sacrifice d’Abraham*: “Quant à

l'orthographie, i'ay uoulu que l'imprimeur suivist la commune, quelques *maigres* fantasies qu'on ait mis en auant depuis trois ou quatre ans en ça.^{”cxcvii} De Bèze goes on to suggest that the champions of speech are in fact deaf to any advice offered from others, listening only to themselves: “et conseilleroy’ uolontiers aux plus opiniastres de ceux qui l’ont changee [l’orthographie], (s’ils estoient gens qui demandassent conseil à autres qu’a eux mesmes) [...]” (11). Although a defender of etymology and the “commune” orthography, De Bèze agrees that writing should be reformed—but not by the singular desire of an individual: “Ce que ie ne di pour uouloir calomnier tous ceux qui ont mis en auant leur difficultez en ceste matiere, laquelle ie confesse auoir bon besoin d’estre reformee: mais pour ceux qui proposent leurs resueries comme certaines reigles, que tout le monde doit ensuiure” (*ibid*). Jacques Peletier would later, more gently, echo this critique, “Garde toe, Meigret, qu’on ne t’estime trop amoureux de ta fantesie propre: e qu’en ne voulant rien lesser passer des opinions d’autrui, les tienens soet trouuees mauueses, auant qu’on èt pris loesir de peser les resons que tu as bonnes an beaucoup d’androe.”^{”cxcviii} Although a number of vernacular advocates (Peletier, Sébillet, Ramus, the Pléiade poets) would employ and continue to develop the principles of phonetic reform, Meigret’s orthographic system was indeed never adopted in full by any other writer; of all his reforms, only the distinction between hard and soft “c” (and the introduction of “ç”) remains in modern French. As early as 1554, Meigret himself was forced to revert to the common way of writing at the request of his publisher. “Au demeurant, si le bastiment de l’escriture vous semble autre et different de la doctrine qu’autrefois je mis en auant, blamez en l’imprimeur qui a preferé son gain a la raison,

esperant le faire beaucoup plus grant et auoir plus prompte depesche de sa cacographie que de mon orthographie [...].”^{cxcix}

If Peletier’s *Dialogue de l’ortographe e prononciacion françoese* (1555)—which stages an imagined debate between well-known scholars^{cc} and begins with a lengthy “Apologie” to Meigret, who is not included among them—may be taken as any indication, then Meigret indeed took a singularly extreme position, both grammatically and politically, during his own time.^{cci} In the Apology to Meigret, Peletier offers praise for Meigret’s reforms and recognizes the two writers’ common ground (“nous visons tous deux a un blanc, qui et de raporter l’Ecriture a la Prolacion: C’et notre but, c’est notre point, c’et notre fin”).^{ccii} The majority of the text, however, is devoted to critiquing Meigret on several counts, including his refusal to recognize the role of “emprunts” in French, the incoherence of his phonetic system, and his radicality which would not properly allow the public to adjust to change. Lastly, and most significantly for Peletier, is the critique of Meigret’s own pronunciation, as evident in his phonetics.^{cciii} This pronunciation, Peletier argues, demonstrates Meigret’s unwillingness to assimilate to proper French—that is, the French spoken by those in the Court. “Mes certes de tous ceus la [i.e., in the Court], je n’an oui jamés un qui prononçat les moz ainsi que tu nous les ecriz” (23). By way of contrast, Peletier shares his own experience of self-“reformation” in learning the language and effacing all traces of his provincial origins. “Ie te pri, Meigret,” he writes,

n’epousons point se afectueusemant la prolacion de notre païs. [...] Sans point de faute, j’ose dire cela de moe, que j’e toujours pris peine de parler e prononcer correctemant autant qu’un autre. E combien que je soé d’un païs, ou la prolacion, voere le langage sont assez vicius (comme je suis contraint de confesser) toutefois je panse auoèr gagnè ce point au moyen de la reformation que me suis imposee moemême, qu’a bon droet ne se pourra dire de moe, que mon parler sante son terroe. E par ce que j’è tousjours etè de l’opinion de ceus

qui ont dit qu'an notre France n'i à androet ou lon parle pur François, fors la ou et la Court, ou bien la ou sont ceus qui i ont etè nourriz: je m'I suis volontier getè toutes les foes qu'an è ù l'occasion: laquele assez de foes j'è üe, principalemant du viuant du Trecretien Roe François: duquel les g'ans de letres ne sauroét parler assez honorablement.

(*ibid*)

Meigret is called back by Peletier, as by De Bèze, from his autonomizing phonetic “reveries” into the fold of French usage and its political realities. Indeed, he is called to order with a reminder that ‘proper’ French is pronounced in the effacement of his original speech. He is reminded, too, that “pur François” springs not from the nativity of a “terroe” or “nourrice” but from the Court or its disseminated influence (“ou bien la ou sont ceus qui i ont etè nourriz”). What Peletier asks Meigret to recall, in case he has forgotten, is the name of the late “Roe Francoes,” the proper name of French—that name whose praise, as grammarian and a member of “les g’ans de letres,” he must continue to speak.

V. The Editing of Villers-Cotterêts: *En langage maternel ~~ou~~ francoys*

“La norme grammaticale qui se met en place,” observes Marie-Luce Demonet “est une manifestation de la coïncidence souhaitée entre la Loi et la règle de la parole.”^{cciv}

We have seen how vernacular grammatization, in manifesting a desire for a Law of French, appears to participate discursively (which is to say, symbolically and practically) with the political realm—even as it may, as in Meigret’s case, gesture beyond political authority with an autonomy of its own. As has been noted, many early grammarians were also involved in law as jurists or as judges, while others were closely connected to the Court or were involved in official state oversight of textual production. (Robert Estienne, like Tory, was *imprimeur du roi* under François I, as was his son, Henri, Latin

translator of R. Estienne's grammar and author of his own *Hypomneses de Gallica lingua* (1582).) From a chronological standpoint, too, vernacular grammaticization and the codification of French as an official administrative and judicial language coincide to a large extent. The first grammars of French in other languages were published during the 1530s (Palsgrave, Sylvius), the first in French during the 1550s (Meigret, R. Estienne); a number of others were subsequently published in Latin and French within France, as well as in English and Spanish abroad, during the following decades.^{ccv} The very first legal measures imposing practices of writing and, later, codifying the vernacular language(s), preceded this vernacular grammaticization by several decades. Issued in 1539, the Edict of Villers-Cotterêts of 1539 appears chronologically at the midpoint between the publication of Tory's *Champ fleury* (1529) and Meigret's *Grammere* (1550). Given this chronology, I will dedicate the final section of this chapter to examining how legal discourse about French writing is engaged in the project of grammaticization, and specifically grammaticization as monolingualism. In what way did the French state, as "author of laws" (Plato), help produce those effects we have observed in the realm of grammar: the mediation of French as language-of-writing, the creation of *François* as a simultaneously 'native' and 'foreign' object of appropriation, the creation of vernacular autonomy? What are the effects—and limits—of the law as metalanguage during this "foundational" period for both early modern language and state?

At the heart of these questions is the edict of Villers-Cotterêts, a singular coinciding of grammaticization and law in establishing the monolingual identity of the French language. Signed by François at Villers-Cotterêts on August 10, 1539 and issued under the title "Ordonnance générale sur le fait de la justice, police et finance," the

edict's 192 articles dealt with a number of judicial, administrative, and ecclesiastical matters. Written by the recently appointed Chancellor Guillaume Poyet^{ccvi} (and therefore also known as “la Guillemine” for several centuries), the edict's declared purpose was to “aucunement pourvoir au bien de notre justice, abréviation des procès et soulagement de nos sujets.” In addition to reforming the justice system, the edict limited the role of the church by turning a range of ecclesiastical functions over to the state or requiring civil oversight, including state records of births, baptisms, and deaths. The articles numbered 110 and 111 address the question of language use:

Art. 110. – Et afin qu'il n'y ait cause de douter sur l'intelligence desdits arrêts, nous voulons et ordonnons qu'ils soient faits et écrits si clairement, qu'il n'y ait ni puisse avoir aucune ambiguité ou incertitude ne lieu à demander interprétation.

Art. 111. – Et pour ce que telles choses sont souvent advenues sur l'intelligence des mots latins contenus esdits arrests, nous voulons d'oresnavant que tous arrests, ensemble toutes autres procédures, soient de nos cours souveraines et autres subalternes et inférieures, soient de registres, enquestes, contrats, commissions, sentences, testaments, et autres quelconques, actes et exploits de justice, ou qui en dépendent, soient prononcés, enregistrés et délivrés aux parties en langage maternel francoys et non autrement.^{ccvii}

In modern institutional contexts, the year 1539 has, broadly speaking, marked the foundation of an exclusive language-state union in France.^{ccviii} Nevertheless, these two articles have been subject to countless efforts to interpret, appropriate and (most recently) demythify their significance. The most persistent source of confusion is the final phrase of Article 111, “en langage maternel francoys et non autrement.” Indeed, a pair of socio-linguistic facts—1) that the majority of the educated elite in France were already speaking and writing *François* in 1539 and yet 2) that it was not the first or primary language of the majority of French speakers—beg the question: what language(s) exactly is/are the referent of this phrase? And if we can agree that the “langage maternel

francoys” is being codified primarily in opposition to some *other* language (“et non autrement”), then we are left to determine whether this *other* includes only the explicitly banned “mots latins” or also, implicitly, all the other “langages maternels” *not* named “francoys”? The question, as helpfully formulated by historian Gilles Boulard, is this: “faudrait-il [...] entendre l’expression litigieuse au pluriel comme autorisant l’ensemble des langues maternelles du royaume (thèse libérale) plutôt qu’au singulier comme imposant la langue maternelle de la royauté à l’ensemble du territoire (thèse limitative)?”^{ccix}

The terms of this debate—the force of linguistic authority, the naming of French, plurality vs. singularity, spoken vs. written language, French vs. Latin—are by now familiar to us from the grammatical texts of Tory, Meigret, Ramus and others; these are, precisely, the major questions of French-language identity within the sixteenth-century’s *own* discourse about the vernacular. Many existing interpretations of “la volonté originelle du rédacteur” (Boulard) regarding the phrase *en langage maternel francoys* have looked to reduce it with an either/or genre of decision: singular or plural, imposition or codification, limiting or liberal? In spite of its polyvalent interpretative history—or precisely because of the “confusion” that has reigned there—interpreters now look to establish a univocal origin in the writing of Villers-Cotterêts. Taking a different approach to this phrase, informed by the broader discourse about French writing that has been explored up to now, I will consider how its ambivalence signals an over-determination that is both a product of *and* an intervention in the “confusion” surrounding the identity of the French language, specifically as a written language, which

we have already seen in the work of 1530s writers like Tory, Bovelles, and Dubois, and find addressed in the grammars that follow.

Villers-Cotterêts has been subject to diverse interpretations from the time of its issuance in 1539. In Ramus's account in his 1572 *Grammaire*, we saw that Villers-Cotterêts represented the imposition of the king's language on non-French speaking provincial officials. Record does exist of some locales, including Toulouse, changing from the local vernacular to *françois* as a result of the edict. A notary in Lodève writing in 1540 professed his own adhesion to the law in this vein:

Pour ce que le roy, nostre souverain seigneur, par ces nouvelles ordonnances, entre aultres choses a ordonné que les notaires reddigeroyent en françois les actes et contraultz que prendroyent, satisfaisans et oubéyssans à icelles, à l'aide du Créateur metray peine et dilligence doresnavant reddiger mes actes et contraultz en langue françoise le moins mal que me sera possible, priant le Redempteur du monde que, par le mérite de Sa très amère passion, me face grace escrire au vray tout ce que en mon office feray et recevray et me garde et preserve de tous inconvéniens.^{ccx}

Elsewhere, however, notaries claiming to be acting in accordance with the law switched from Latin to the local vernacular, not French—interpreting “langage maternel francoys” to mean not *françois* but their own vernacular language.^{ccxi} In many areas where French had already been adopted or was adopted as a result of Villers-Cotterêts, like the Pyrenees, documents from the post-Villers-Cotterêts period continue to mix Latin, French and local languages.^{ccxii} In other areas still, French was already in use for administrative purposes prior to Villers-Cotterêts, including most notably Bordeaux (since the 1520s) and Languedoc (since the mid-1530s), making the law as imposition of *françois* “la consécration d'un état de choses issu d'un usage spontané.”^{ccxiii} In this vein, historian Robert Knecht concludes that Villers-Cotteriets “was applied only as far as it endorsed existing routine.”^{ccxiv}

Although 1539 has been mythologized as the founding moment in the alliance between the French language and the French state, it may already be clear that Villers-Cotterêts in fact figures in a much longer and more complex evolution. The history of this process dates back at least to the mid-fifteenth century; before becoming the history of French law and the French language, this is first the history of the French law and/as *writing*. The first measure requiring laws to be written (“rédigez et mis en escrit”) was the 1454 edict of Montil-lès-Tours, issued by Charles VII. The edict looked to replace the diversity of oral *coutumes* (“qui sont divers selon la diversité des pays de nostre royaume”) with recorded law. Once written, the *coutumes* were to be collected in books (“seront mis et escritz en livres”) to be overseen and administered by the royal justice (“lesquelz seront apportez par-devers nous [...] et ainsi décrétiez et conformez, seront observez et gardez”). In this way, Montil-lès-Tours aimed to provide judges with “certainté” and relieve them of “toutes matières de varations et contrariétéz.” While some *coutumes* had been transcribed and even collected in books since the thirteenth century, their written use had been primarily private and not publicly enforced.^{ccxv} With Montil-lès-Tours, Charles VII made it so that only laws recorded as the edict prescribed would be recognized as legally valid:

nous... prohibons et défendons à tous les advocatz de nostre royaume, qu’ilz n’allégient ne proposent autres coustumes, usages et stiles, que ceux qui seront escriptz, accordez et décretez comme dict est et enjoignons ausdictz juges qu’ils punissent et corrigent ceux qui feront le contraire, et qu’ilz n’oyent, ne reçoivent aucunes personnes à alléguer, proposer ne dire le contraire.^{ccxvi}

With writing came control and exclusivity, if not yet veritable centralization of power. The edict additionally established *Parlements* in Bordeaux, Aix, Grenoble, and Toulouse to administer and adjudicate the newly recorded laws.^{ccxvii} The effectiveness of Montil-lès-Tours was limited, however. In 1481, Louis XI renewed the order to write in almost

exactly the same terms. In 1497 and 1498, Charles VIII issued *lettres patentes* sending his commissaries to the provinces to aid local officials in the writing of their *coutumes*, a practice which continued into the first half of the sixteenth century.^{ccxviii}

Along with the transcription of laws came that of witness depositions and testimonies. In 1490, the edict of Moulins prohibited the use of Latin in these documents in the Languedoc region so that the witnesses who had given depositions could understand them when read back and confirm their validity.

Outre est ordonné que les dictz & depositions des tesmoins qui seront ouys & examinez d'oresnavant esdites cours & en tout le pays de Languedoc, soit par forme d'enqueste ou information & prinse sommaire, seront mis & redigez par escrit en langage François ou maternel, tels que lesdits tesmoins puissent entendre leur dépositions, & on les leur puisse lire & recenser en tel langage et forme qu'ils auront dit & déposé. Et ce, pour obvier aux abus, fraudes, & inconveniens qui se sont trouvez avoir esté faits en telles manières.^{ccxix}

Often cited in the pre-history of the edict of Villers-Cotterêts, Moulins is the first act to ban Latin and affirm vernacular use in the French judicial system. Yet here, the emphasis is not on the language *per se*, but rather the relationship between speech and writing—which is also the relationship between the *temoin* and his or her own words as mediated by the system of justice. The deposition may be recorded in French *or* the local vernacular (“en langage François *ou* maternel”) so long as it is the same as the one first spoken by the witness (“en tel langage et forme qu'ils auront dit & déposé”). The justice of writing—much like in Meigret's grammar—depends on its identity with speech; disparity between them, resulting from the use of Latin as a written language not understood by the speaker, gives rise (again, recalling Meigret) to “abus, fraudes, & inconveniens.”

In a 1510 edict also for the Languedoc region, Louis XII reiterates vernacular use as a promotion of subjects' (self-)understanding (“entendement”) within the legal system,

and further extends this principle to include the pronouncement of accusations and sentences by judges. As in the edict of Moulins, the law's stated purpose is to correct instances of "abus" within this system—an "abus" which is specifically linked to Latin:

Pour obvier aux abus & inconveniens qui sont par ci devant advenus au moyen de ce que les juges desdits pays de droit escrit ont fait les procès criminels desdits pays en latin et toutes enquêtes pareillement, avons ordonné et ordonnons afin que les témoins entendent leurs dépositions et les criminels les procès faits contre eux que doresnavant tous les procès criminels et les dites enquêtes en quelque matière que ce soit seront faites en vulgaire et langage du païs ou seront faits les dits procès criminels et enquêtes, autrement ne seront d'aucun effet & valeur.

In this case, no mention is made of *françois* at all. In order for subjects (witnesses and criminals alike) to understand legal proceedings—that is, their own words and crimes as understood by the court—the specific local or regional vernacular tongue is prescribed ("en vulgaire et langage du païs ou seront faits les dits procès criminels et enquêtes"); this is the only condition under which such proceedings will be valid. The *identity* required here in order to ensure "entendement" is still one of speech and writing, but additionally, more prominently, one of subject and place. The subject's own language, as tied to geography and community, ensures procedural expediency and justice. A 1533 *lettre patente* issued by François I concerning private law similarly specifies the use of the subject's *own* language:

Comme nos très chers et bien amez les gens des trois estatz de Noz pays de Languedoc..., nous ayent humblement fait dire et remontrer que... lesdits notaires [escripvoient] en latin et autre langaige que de ceulx que font lesdits contractz et disposition... Ordonnons et enjoignons auxdits notaires passer et escripvre tous et chascuns les contracts en langue vulgaire des contractans.^{ccxx}

Latin is once again identified as a means of perpetrating fraud, a medium of obfuscation, and an abuse of knowledge and power on the part of the writer (here, the *notaire*). Considered alongside the preceding acts, this *lettre* suggests first that Latin's 'universal'

quality as a language-of-writing is giving way in civil life to a principle of understanding (“entendement”) by the individual subject. It also highlights the way in which Latin is increasingly coming to symbolize abuse of authority in language, and of writing in particular—an abuse whose remedy is the “vulgaire,” “maternel,” or “langage du païs.”

This denigration of Latin as ‘abusive,’ if rooted in the socio-linguistic reality of a Latin-speaking educated class who might exploit it, obscures the increasing appropriation of the vernacular language by the state and, more broadly speaking, “l’emprise croissante de l’État [...qui] laisse de moins en moins de liberté à l’individu,” which effectively took root under François I and accelerated during the second half of the sixteenth century.^{ccxxi} Indeed, the century-long “mise en écrit” of the law itself, observes Douglas Kibbee, “se situe dans un contexte juridique où les changements de procédure transforment une justice orale et publique en une justice écrite et cachée” (25). Even as Villers-Cotterêts prescribed the *langage maternel francoys* for the sake of transparency in Articles 110-111, for example, a later article (162) would notoriously deny legal counsel to accused parties and even withhold the content of accusations against them until the time of trial.^{ccxxii} The association of the vernacular(s) with “entendement” or, in 1539, with the notion of clarity—which mimics the humanist and reformist efforts at disseminating knowledge and authority through translation—in fact seems above all to facilitate state access to the lives of citizens through their language. “[L]a monarchie sert moins la clarté,” suggests Gilles Boulard, “qu’elle ne s’en sert” (70). Examining the relationship between law and the proper name during this period, Anne Lefebvre-Teillard similarly observes how French legal measures—including, notably, Villers-Cotterêts with its

required “registre” of births and deaths—significantly increased state surveillance over the lives of citizens through the medium of the proper name.

In laws issued under François regarding public use during the 1530s, we find a renewed mention of the king’s own name, *françois*, which had dropped away to a large extent since 1490 in favor of the subject’s vernacular language. The 1535 edict of Is-sur-Tille concerning judicial practice in Provence, for example, essentially rewrites Louis XII’s edict of 1510 for the Languedoc region (see above), reinserting and, indeed, emphasizing the king’s language:

Pour obvier aux abus qui sont ci devant advenus au moyen de ce que les juges de nostre dict pays de Prouvence ont fait les procès criminels dudict pays en latin, ordonnons, affin que les tesmongs entendent mieux leurs dépositions et les criminels les procès faits contre eux, que doresnavant tous les procès criminels et les enquestes seront faictz en françoys ou a tout le moins en vulgaire dudict pays.

Given that this edict was written only four years before Villers-Cotterêts (and its singular “langage maternel francoys”) the marked distinction here between “françoys” and the “vulgaire dudict pays” as choices for judicial practice is striking. Even more striking is how the formulation “en françoys ou a tout le moins en vulgaire dudict pays” displays a kind of bloated and uncertain linguistic economy, akin to Tory’s ambivalent counting of one *and* five French languages. With a cut-and-paste job, this formulation takes up both 1490’s “en langage François ou maternel” with 1510’s “en vulgaire et langage du païs,” combining them with a “tout le moins” that mirrors Tory’s implicit valorization of “la langue de Court et Parrhisienne.” We could say that this decade’s “anxiety about edges and borders of France”^{ccxxiii}—which went hand-in-hand with a political momentum toward centralization and unification—is demonstrated here on the level of legal syntax as editorial process.

This brings us back around to 1539 and Articles 110 and 111 of the edict of Villers-Cotterêts, which bear quoting once again:

Art. 110. – Et afin qu’il n’y ait cause de douter sur l’intelligence desdits arrêts, nous voulons et ordonnons qu’ils soient faits et écrits si clairement, qu’il n’y ait ni puisse avoir aucune ambiguïté ou incertitude ne lieu à demander interprétation.

Art. 111. – Et pour ce que telles choses sont souvent advenues sur l’intelligence des mots latins contenus esdits arrests, nous voulons d’oresnavant que tous arrests, ensemble toutes autres procédures, soient de nos cours souveraines et autres subalternes et inférieures, soient de registres, enquestes, contrats, commissions, sentences, testaments, et autres quelconques, actes et exploits de justice, ou qui en dépendent, soient prononcés, enregistrés et délivrés aux parties en langage maternel francoys et non autrement.^{ccxxiv}

Although Villers-Cotterêts follows the above series of edicts addressing language use, it importantly differs from these previous acts 1) in terms of its geographic scope (it applies to the entire French kingdom, not one particular region) and 2) in its legislative breadth (it addresses administrative and ecclesiastical regulation in addition to judicial reform). Yet considering it in the history of these previous acts reveals that, far from emerging *ex nihilo*, the phrase “en langage maternel francoys et non autrement” participates in a century-long textual history pitting vernacular against Latin and distinguishing vernacular from vernacular in the centralizing “mise en écrit” of French law. Erasing the “ou” of 1490 and the “tout le moins” of 1510, this edict’s editorial stroke of genius is the creation of singular language object, the “langage maternel francoys,” from out of the terminological “confusion” governing previous laws. The *and*’s and *or*’s of the past are swept up into Article 111’s final “et non autrement,” which resides as a kind of remainder of the singularizing erasure, allowing it to be syntactically—if not semantically—effective.^{ccxxv} The edict of Villers-Cotterêts thus appears to be engaged simultaneously with a legal pre-history and with contemporary grammatical discourse in its effort to

define, *metalinguistically*, the boundaries and identity of the French language-of-writing. Where previous laws may have laid the groundwork for grammatization by allying the vernacular and the law, Villers-Cotterêts as a text actually does properly grammatical work by simultaneously authorizing French and circumscribing it as an object of territorialized regulation. The call for “ordre” placed in 1529 by the king’s printer, Geoffroy Tory, is answered with this “ordonnance”; Tory’s desire for a French in which to write himself is met, too, with the creation of “langage maternel francoys.”

Conclusion: Monolingual Hybridity

In an invaluable, iconoclastic study on Villers-Cotterêts and Renaissance political thought, Paul Cohen argues that despite centralizing and unifying efforts in other domains during the reign of François, there is no evidence of a coherent national language “plan” or policy at this time. In a similar vein, Peter Burke suggests that “to see Villers-Cotterêts as a step towards the unification policies of the French Revolution would be a case of the Whig interpretation at its most misleading.”^{ccxxvi} In agreement with Cohen, Burke, and others^{ccxxvii} that Villers-Cotterêts does not constitute language *policy*, per se, I would suggest that it does significantly constitute a foundational occurrence of French-language *politics*, precisely in that it makes the vernacular language a political object. In much the same way that grammatization makes the vernacular a pedagogical instrument and object of appropriation by singularizing it, Villers-Cotterêts makes the “langage maternel francoys” a political instrument and object of appropriation within the legal, judicial, and administrative spheres. Accordingly, in much the same fashion as the grammars, the edict introduces a foreign-native tension in order to

objectify and textualize its monolingual object. It does so by grafting together previously separate—but ambiguously defined—linguistic domains. We have seen how in earlier laws, the subject’s own particular language (“maternel,”^{ccxxviii} “vulgaire,” “du païs”) was identified in opposition to the culturally dominant king’s vernacular (“françois”) with an *and/or* distinction. In Villers-Cotterêts the two are gathered up into one heterogeneous noun-phrase; in turn, they stand together in opposition to one foreign language: Latin. The *other* is that abuse-inducing language of writing; the language called “francoys” is now “maternel,” the subject’s own.

In one sense, this mode of signification does not differ greatly from linguistic representation of the medieval period, in which many different vernaculars cohabited under the label of French; they were all non-Latin *linguas maternas*. Yet what is novel and significant here is the heightened emphasis on an absence of difference (“et non autrement,” the injunction of clarity, etc.) precisely as internal difference increases. Borrowing from the language of translation discourse itself in order to overcome or override the presence of translation (“écrits si clairement,” “aucune ambiguïté,” “ne lieu à demander interprétation”), the law announces the identity of its language: a place of no interpretation and yet absolute translatability, a place in which even the difference between speech and writing are erased (“prononcés, enregistrés et délivrés [...] en langage maternel francoys et non autrement”) in the light of a monolingual principle. Where Tory had desired order, this desire *is* an order (“nous voulons et ordonnons”), bearing in the object itself, with the erasure of decision, the structure of an imperative.

Yet beyond any question of implementation, Villers-Cotterêts’s primary *effect* is to give its language a name, “langage maternel francoys.” The law’s legal (self-)editing

process thus appears as a kind of metalinguistic apparatus, which—again, much like in grammars of this period—serves less to enforce homogeneous language practice than to redefine the terms of identity in language and of language: as self-identifying, as monolingual. A curiosity, though, this three-termed noun-phrase and its residue (“et non autrement”) have been *singular* enough to generate a legacy of confusion over the course of five centuries. We could say that the interpretative history of Villers-Cotterêts constitutes nothing if not a collective effort to break apart the monumental, enigmatic bloc of this phrase into its component parts—*langage maternel* or *langage francoys*?—and thus to reinsert with a question mark that erased “ou.” The heterogeneity of this phrase has even inspired, in turn, further metalinguistic editorial maneuvers in order to better designate its imagined referent. Later in the sixteenth century, the well-known jurist Pierre Rebuffe would advise in his legal commentaries that the expression be understood as “langages maternels de France.”^{ccxxix} The word “maternel,” observed Auguste Brun in his 1951 article published in *Le français moderne*, “ne compte pas pour le public: ceux qui se réfèrent à l’ordonnance, en reprennent les termes, font sauter *maternel*, comme si c’était purement pléonastique, donc superfétatoire, et disent *en langage françois*.”^{ccxxx} The plurivocity of the law’s name, its susceptibility to re-editing and re-interpretation that stands in hermeneutic tension with its own imperative of clarity, is precisely that which, paradoxically, has granted it a certain textual survival. Calling out to be translated and yet inscrutable, it erects itself, monumentally, as a proper name.

At the beginning of this chapter I proposed that monolingualism took root in France during the sixteenth century as an *ideological* force; at the heart of this ideology, we are now positioned to see, is the “langage maternel françois” as both singular signifier

and index of a larger cultural shift at work. Benedict Anderson, we may recall, argues that print languages laid the basis for national consciousness by creating “unified fields of exchange and communication below Latin and above the spoken languages” and that “nothing served to ‘assemble’ related vernaculars” more than the print market. Between Latin and the spoken languages, too, the “*langage maternel françois*” is codified as the language of the law and, specifically, as the language-of-writing of the law—a codification both supported by and in support of the development of print culture at work (hence the collaborative and often overlapping relationship between the printer, the grammarian, and the law-writer). As a language both “below” and “above,” a language that as Anderson suggests was “assembled” from the vernaculars, this national language establishes itself in the split between those two *others* which it is not. At once a textual, acquired language (like Latin) and a spoken, “native” language (like the other *langues maternelles*), this language is a new genre of language-of-power. Its identity, too, remains relational: in relation to Latin it is one of many fallen languages, the remnant of a dispersed Latinity and Christianity; in relation to the other spoken vernaculars it represents a unified assemblage, a literary language and language of authority. For the language philosopher V.N. Volosinov, “each living ideological sign has two faces, like Janus,” signaling the intersection of “differently oriented social interests within one and the same sign community.”^{ccxxxi} In the context of nationalism, Homi Bhabha refers to this quality as “hybridity.”^{ccxxxii} Well before the time of nations, France is given a language in which to write itself, *une langue* in the modern sense of the term, which is successful precisely in its ability to, in Bhabha’s words, “waver between vocabularies”: the foundation of monolingualism as a hybrid being, mobilized by its own reversibility.

In his *Dictionarium latinogallicum* (1552), Robert Estienne points to another dimension of this hybridity, whose representational and, indeed, affective valences we will have to pursue in the next chapter: “Hybrida. Horat. *Un homme duquel le pere et la mere sont de diverses nations.*”^{ccxxxiii}

Chapter Three

Another *Affection*

Vernacular Advocacy and Poetic Authorship

1530s-1550s

—Dea, mon amy, dist Pantagruel, ne sçavez-vous parler
Françoys?
—Si faictz très bien, Seigneur, repondit le compaignon, Dieu
mercy. C'est ma langue naturelle et maternelle, car je suis né et
ay esté nourry jeune au jardin de France [...].^{ccxxxiv}
(François Rabelais, *Pantagruel*)

Introduction: Rhyming *maternel* and *paternel*

In the poem *L'Enfer*, written in 1526 and published fifteen years later, Clément Marot narrates his history with the French language. Composing the work from prison, Marot invokes an exile *topos* to cast himself as an immigrant in “France,” even though he was born within French borders at Quercy. The line of demarcation between native and foreign for Marot is the French language itself—the same language the poet has learned (“apprins”) and polished (“limée”) while serving the king, François I:

A brief parler, c'est Cahors en Quercy,
Que je laissay pour venir querre icy
Mille malheurs; ausquelz ma destiné
M'avoit soumis. Car une matinée
N'ayant dix ans en France fuz mené:
Là, où depuis me-suis tant pourmené
Que j'oublai ma langue maternelle
Et grossement apprins la paternelle
Langue Françoise es grands Courts estimée;
Laquelle en fin quelque peu s'est limée,
Suyvant le Roy François premier du nom,
Dont le sçavoir excède le renom.
C'est le seul bien, que j'ay acquis en France
Depuis vingt ans en labeur, et souffrance.

The language in which Marot writes of his “mille malheurs” is not his mother tongue; that language has been left behind in Quercy, dislocated and replaced by the language of royal proximity. Although the poem places the reader in an intimate scene of autobiographical “souffrance,” its language performs a social status whose very acquisition has effaced the poet’s origin. Having forgotten his “langue maternelle,” Marot writes the language learned in the service—and imitation—of (“suyvant”) the king: “la paternelle/ Langue Françoysse.”

What may be most unfamiliar or surprising about Marot’s story is that the loss of the mother tongue is hardly lamented by the poet. Affectively speaking, Marot’s French represents less a bond of subjugation than a cherished paternal gift (“le seul bien, que j’ay acquis en France”). What’s more, if once led passively (“fuz mené”) to France as a child, the poet has, in a second movement, actively trod over his first language (“me-suis tant pourmené/ Que j’oublaiy”). In the shuffling of habit, courtly talk, and social favor—not to mention poetic composition—paternal has replaced maternal. Dispossessed of one language, Marot accepts the generosity of François and strives to imitate him. Ultimately, the poet maintains a rhetorical distance—a necessary one, it is suggested—from the king’s language. As a poetic possession, it has been appropriated only difficultly and imperfectly (“*grossement* apprins,” “Laquelle *en fin quelque peu* s’est limée”). Marot may be writing “en France,” but there lingers in his verse a hesitation as to whether or not the poet from Quercy, whose first language was *langue d’oc*, can be said to be writing properly “en François.” The specter of the king François, “premier du nom,” lingers in the verses—as if ready at any moment to take back this gift-language.

The writing hand expresses gratitude for this gift, which it cannot quite hold. In this way, Marot's *Enfer* articulates the fundamental limit of writing in French at which it is situated: between a lost "langue maternelle" and a "paternelle/ Langue" whose appropriability is in question.

As the first vernacular grammars were being developed in the years following the Edict of Villers-Cotterêts, a parallel discourse of vernacular advocacy emerged encouraging French writers to write in French—ostensibly, as in Villers-Cotterêts, instead of Latin. Where grammarians offered appropriation of French through instrumentalized "préceptes" and metalinguistic definition, this other current called upon writers' supposedly maternal or native ("maternel," "naïf," "propre," "naturel") attachment to the French vernacular. We might also say, then, that while grammatical and legal discourses were drafting new metalinguistic configurations of French, vernacular poets and translators created new configurations of affect and attachment in the discourse on French writing. Literary theorist Jonathan Flatley has referred in his work to such configurations as "affective maps." These maps, he argues, "are likely to be especially in need of revision, repair, or invention at moments of rapid social change or upheaval."^{CCXXXV} We may see precisely such a moment of rapid change in France around 1540, a key moment in what has traditionally been regarded as the 'rise' of the vernacular and, as I argued in the last chapter, in the consolidation of the French language as a monolingual object of grammar and politics. One of the major effects of this poetic affective mapping will be to close the representational gap between 'maternal' and 'paternal' attachments to language—terms which, as we encountered in Marot, had been decidedly split and even mutually exclusive. The result will be a new relation to the

French language that comprehends *both* of these aspects: a ‘maternal-paternal’ language that emerges as the affective counterpart to Villers-Cotterêts’s monolingual hybrid object, the “langage maternel francoys.” What such a hybrid affect means in terms of representation is that the paternal gift language (“francoys”) will come to be figured—and even ‘felt’—as the writer’s ‘naturally’ given ‘maternal’ tongue. This will be the case even though the underlying socio-political structure of *François* (i.e., as the language of the king) does not change—indeed, as we have seen, even though there is in fact *increasing* appropriation of the French-language object, via writing, on the part of the state and other institutions. In this reconfiguration of affects, then, the poetic discourse of vernacular advocacy will produce the possibility of a natural French ‘mother tongue’ of writing, an affectionately possessed native language—which never ceases to *also* be the language of an ‘other.’ Even Marot’s own “langue maternelle,” as we shall see, gets forgotten by his advocates as his work is assimilated into the *naturel* of the vernacular in the establishment of a national literary canon.

The underlying question of this chapter is thus how French-language identity is being negotiated and “re-mapped” affectively within poetic discourse during the 1530s through 1560s. As ‘maternal’ and ‘paternal’ languages converge into one French language-of-writing—which is also the new language of the state and object of grammar—how does poetic discourse work variously to enforce or resist the monolingual appropriation of French writing? While concentrating on the internal dynamics of poetic discourse, it will be necessary to consider how this discourse was engaged, implicitly or explicitly, with evolving grammatical and legal interventions in vernacular writing. Are vernacular advocates necessarily ‘friends’ of the state? Does writing in French always

mean writing on behalf of France, or even on behalf of the French language? These questions will be explored in poems and poetic treatises of mid-century, with special focus on the work of Marot, Bonaventure des Périers, Étienne Dolet, Joachim du Bellay, Jacques Peletier and Pierre de Ronsard. I will pay particular attention to the way in which shifting rhetorics of exemplarity function to produce different affects of vernacular writing. How might the inherent reversibility of the *exemple* at once mobilize and destabilize vernacular advocacy? Finally, why might the poetic, as both a mode of writing and topic of discourse, constitute a privileged site for examining the attachment of the “maternal” to the “paternal” in French and, equally, of the writing subject to his or her language?

Five key factors, which are far from exhaustive, may provide an entry into this privilege of the poetic, particularly within the context of the mid-sixteenth century. Firstly, French poets of these decades are afforded—often by their own texts—a unique social role as ‘cultivators,’ ‘architects’ and ‘defenders’ of language, as Du Bellay famously metaphorizes in the *Deffence et Illustration de la langue françoise* in 1549. For the Pléiade poets and their generation more broadly speaking, poetry represents the most noble and ennobling of linguistic pursuits—for writer, nation, and language—and thus a key component of national identity.^{ccxxxvi} Secondly, many Renaissance writers and theorists considered poetry to be an ineffable and divine gift. Although its art could be ‘perfected’ through imitation, instruction, or practice, neither true inspiration nor the subtle dictates of the poetic “oreille” could be learned, *per se*, or deliberately acquired.^{ccxxxvii} Even the author of a poetic treatise must, therefore, admit to his work’s inability to provide what is *essential* to poetic production.^{ccxxxviii} While recognized as an

instrument with political effect, therefore, poetry represented a link to another metaphysical plane of natural and even divine origin. Indeed, such an origin is precisely what endowed the poet with an eminently political role, as Hélène Merlin-Kajman observes:

Et si la figure du poète, véritable usufruitier de la langue, était si proche de la figure du roi, c'était en vertu de la conception de la souveraineté de l'éloquence, ici transférée à la poésie: le poète devait occuper dans la langue une place analogue à celle du roi dans le royaume, usufruitier d'un domaine public composé de plusieurs provinces, chargé de les faire fructifier et image manifeste de leur unité organique.^{ccxxxix}

This parallel sovereignty will become particularly pronounced, as we will see below, in the case of François I, the poet-king. Such sovereignty will, in turn, manifest itself in the context of vernacular advocacy with a new concept of the “native” language: French as the poet’s birthright. Positioned at the origin of a hazy personal mythology, this language, much like poetry itself, will be praised as a “natural” gift—one which, moreover, links the writer to his community in an inalienable bond. Since its knowledge is gained “en nourrice” instead of being deliberately acquired like ancient languages, the writer’s first language may be fully mastered in a way that foreign languages fundamentally cannot. Du Bellay will thus argue in his case against the translation of poetry in the *Deffence* that poetic language and the native tongue are bound, untranslatably, in a pact of the “naïf.”

Next, poetry—unlike philosophy, medicine, theology, or other non-literary disciplines—had a well-established French-language tradition. In the words of Ferdinand Brunot, dismissing the revolutionary rhetoric of Du Bellay’s *Deffence*, “le français n’avait plus à pénétrer en aucun des genres poétiques [...]. Il n’y avait donc point de révolution à faire.”^{ccxli} For this very reason, the appearance of a vernacular poetic

“defense” in the middle of the sixteenth century appears all the more curious and in fact particularly revealing from a rhetorical standpoint (despite the real presence of a strong neo-Latin poetry movement to which it is ostensibly opposed). Much as one “maternal” French language was able to emerge out of disparate parts in the edict of Villers-Cotterêts by relegating Latin to the position of *autre*, this re-bonding of French and poetry against the encroachment of Latin as foreign will signal the formation of a new relationship to the vernacular at work in poetic discourse. The final, perhaps least tangible reason for turning to poetry is the specific way in which poetic language reorganizes signification, on the level of affect in particular. Affect, as Jonathan Flatley suggests, “is the shuttle on which history makes its way into the aesthetic, and it is also what brings one back from the work into the world” (81-82). We will see how a range of poetic and rhetorical devices serve to forge or dissolve relationships between writers and the disparate tongues (“son langage,” “la langue Françoise,” “la langue maternelle” etc.) and shifting affections of mid-sixteenth century French writing.

I. Marot’s Generation: “*La paternelle/ Langue Françoise*”

In his *Grammaire*, we may recall that Ramus remembered the late king François as an unparalleled French speaker and scholar—the very model of ‘pure’ and ‘proper’ French. For Ramus, the king was “luy mesme si studieux de sa langue, quil ny avoit homme en ce Royaulme mieulx entendu, et mieulx exercé en la propriété et pureté du langaige Francoys.” The king’s French is superlative, model. Indeed, to speak better *Francoys* than François would seem to defy the tautological identity of “propriété et pureté” guaranteed by the proper name: French is, after all, “sa langue.” In texts

published during François's lifetime, especially during the height of his reign in the 1530s, we also find French designated as "sa langue." Poets and translators of this period develop the notion of possession into a portrayal of the king as *auteur* of 'his' language. This representation was buttressed by the fact that François was indeed an author of sorts: he composed a number of short poems that figured prominently in his royal persona. Beyond this more literal status as author, the king was cast by the writers surrounding him in a number of metaphorically authorial roles in relation to French, ranging from the paternal and pedagogical (patriarch, master, example of right speech, "père des lettres") to the aesthetic and economic (muse, lender, benefactor). For many writers, then, François was not merely a writer *in* French, he was the symbolic and actual author *of* the French language itself. Recalling his identification with the Gallic Hercules, the 'absolute' and *propre* character of the king's linguistic possession will be articulated by writers less as a tyrannical hold than as the will to return French to its source in François, to follow him through his language, to give thanks for the paternal gift.

Marot's well-known "Petite Epistre au Roy," first written in 1518 and revised for Dolet's authoritative publication of *L'Adolescence Clémentine* in 1538, gathers together the king's roles as poetic author and lender or benefactor. Even while addressing the king in a strikingly confraternal tone, Marot speaks to the asymmetrical relationship between them as "rimeurs":

Bref, c'est pitie d'entre nous rimailleurs:
Car vous trouvez assez de rime ailleurs:
Et quant vous plait, mieulx que moy rimassez.
Des biens avez, & de la rime assez.

Recognizing the king as linguistically and poetically self-sufficient, as François Cornilliat argues in his influential analysis of the *Epistre*, marks a break from the pre-existing

Grande Rhétorique mode of address.^{ccxli} The *rhétoriqueur*'s function, implicitly, had been to offer his *rime* as supplement to the king who, while representing a site of plenitude, still required the “‘couronne’ de l'éloge” in order to be completed; the poet's own fulfillment through the gift of the poem was indeed predicated on this lack. Marot posits a different economy of *rime* exchange, in which the king already has “assez” at the start of the poem. In lieu of a reciprocal relation in which financial and linguistic goods are balanced by mutual need, Marot recognizes that the scales are tipped decidedly in favor of the king: “Des biens avez, & de la rime assez.” Language, like financial means, now lie on the other side of his address, “ailleurs.” Marot thus figures himself as dependent (if one who now may speak his éloge ‘freely’^{ccxlii}) upon a benefactor.^{ccxliii} How, the *Epistre* seems to ask, do you give to someone who has everything? As *rimailleur* for a poet-king, Marot cannot truly reciprocate, but must instead continue to rhyme—in an excess of *rime* to match the king's own surplus:

Affin qu'on die en prose & en rimant,
Ce rimailleur qui se alloit en rimant,
Tant rimassa, rima, & rimonna,
Qu'il a congneu quel bien par rime on a.

Recalling the lines Marot would write a decade later in *L'Enfer*, we might say that the only “bien” to be acquired for poets of this generation is the paternal French language itself: “le seul bien que j'ay acquis en France.”

The writer-king relation takes on a similar tenor in translators' prefaces from this period, in which François is evoked as a source—both linguistic and material—to which French textual production owes its existence. In a 1534 translation of Cicero's *Pro Marcello*, for example, Antoine Macault, the king's *valet de chambre*, expresses gratitude for the growth in French-language writing of recent years, made possible “au moyen des

dons, bienfaits, faveurs et pensions que leur donne [aux doctes] et ordonne ordinairement le Roi [...].”^{ccxliiv} In one sense, Macault’s recognition of debt does not differ greatly from many prefaces addressed to patrons; yet his thanks gesture beyond the realm of individual patronage to express a broader indebtedness of vernacular literary and scholarly production as a whole to François, “père des lettres.” Were it not for him, their writing could not be. Antoine Héroët conveys a similar sentiment of gratitude in the dedicatory epistle to his translation of Plato’s *Androgyne* (1536), recognizing François as the “nom” and “exemple” under which French letters—and France, in turn—have developed:

Sous vostre nom, sous vostre bon exemple,
On peut vanter ce Royaume très-ample
De n’estre moins en lettres fleurissant,
Qu’on l’ha congneu par guerre très-puissant.^{ccxlv}

For Héroët, not only French writers but indeed the French language itself has entered into a state of indebtedness to the king:

Sur ce propos ma langue ne peut taire
Ce que vous doit nostre langue vulgaire.
(*ibid*)

According to this structure of linguistic indebtedness, recognition of debt is what the writer’s tongue (“ma langue”) itself says—indeed, what it cannot help but say (“ne peut taire”). Where Marot claimed he owed his individual language of writing to the king in *L’Enfer*, here the language itself as a common writerly possession (“notre langue”) owes François. Writing in French, then, means speaking this debt. Yet Héroët’s lines also suggest that like Marot’s own surplus of *rime* in the *Petite Epistre*, when addressed to a king who is source and *exemple* of language, this recognition cannot, in some sense, ever be spoken enough; inexhaustible, it is all that “ma langue” can write.

It is noteworthy that these statements of *reconnaissance de dette* toward the king appear in the context of translators' prefaces, given that this also the paratextual space in which the translator expresses his indebtedness to the work's author. (One could imagine phrases like Héroët's "Sous vostre nom, sous vostre bon exemple" equally addressed to Plato, the author.) In keeping with a rhetorical tradition dating back to Nicole Oresme, the preface expressed the vernacular translator's inability to fulfill the task of rendering the original—due to his own inadequacies and/or those of his language.^{ccxlv} If translation's exchange (of languages, texts, and writers) puts the translator in a position to fulfill a task or charge, what vernacular translators and theorists of this period repeatedly express is that they are coming up short. In Jacques Peletier's *Art Poétique* (1555), for example, translation is described in terms of a transfer of property from the original; most translations, Peletier argues, constitute a fraudulence on the level meaning: "l'efficace d'un Écrit [...] consiste en la propriété des mots et locutions: laquelle omise, ôte la grâce, et défraude le sens de l'auteur" (Goyet 262). Derrida observes in his reading of Walter Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator" (in *Des Tours de Babel*) that the translator is (self-)represented as an indebted figure: "Il s'apparaît comme traducteur dans la situation de la dette; et sa tâche c'est de *rendre*, de rendre ce qui doit avoir été donné" (Derrida 216, original emphasis). Derrida theorizes, following Benjamin, that the translator cannot simply restitute this debt and free himself from ("s'acquitter de") this obligation to *rendre*; the very structure of translation, as articulated in the Babel narrative, means that this obligation risks being "insolvable" from the start. Much as Marot cannot fully master or give French 'back' to François, the translator cannot fully restitute the textual payment given by the author. Derrida further links the translator as debtor to his

inscription within a genealogical scene of lineage and inheritance: “obligé par un devoir” to the original text, the translator is “déjà en situation d’héritier [...] comme survivant ou agent de survie” (219). What makes such translation ‘genealogical’ is not only the dynamic of inheritance that seems to structure it, but moreover the fact that the ‘survival’ in question is less of writers (as living human beings) than of texts and, most of all, of the proper name (“la survie des noms d’auteurs et des signatures, mais non des auteurs” (*ibid*)).

As Héroët’s lines suggested above (“Sur ce propos ma langue ne peut taire/ Ce que vous doit nostre langue vulgaire”), in this genealogical scene, not only French writers but even the French language itself exists in a situation of debt (economic, political, genealogical, ontological) with regard to the king of the same name. In this sense, we could say that the poet’s obligation is, precisely, to speak this debt on behalf of the language. Perhaps nowhere is this more vividly expressed, or more insistently inscribed within its broader cultural network, than in a poem by Bonaventure des Périers entitled “Pour Marot absent contre Sagon,” which appeared in the collection *Les disciples et amys de Marot contre Sagon, le Huet et leurs adherents* (1537). Des Périers was *valet-de-chambre* to Marguerite de Navarre (for whom he transcribed the *Heptaméron*) and a friend of Clément Marot. The title of both collection and poem announce a defense on behalf of the exiled Marot, which came in response to a polemical attack on the poet by the Norman priest François Sagon (“Coup d’Essay”). Within the context of this defense, Des Périers addresses and praises the king at length—effectively transforming the poem ostensibly ‘for’ Marot into one for François:

O Roy Francoys, qui au mylieu resides
Du Mont sacré, & aux Muses presides
Comme ung Phebus, la lumiere, & l’honneur

De nostre siecle, & le noble enseigneur
De Poesie en ta Francoyse langue [...] ^{ccxlvii}

Not just any poet, François is addressed as “le noble enseigneur/De Poesie”: giver and teacher of poetry, a veritable receptacle of poetic language residing at its very source among the muses. As Des Périers continues, he affirms that the French language is the king’s so absolutely that as a poetic and pedagogical gift to other writers, it constitutes a veritable *self*-investment. In a linguistic economy fueled by the proper name, the king’s enrichment of the vernacular produces a return to himself and his own:

O Roy Francoys, qui as tant enrichy
Le tien parler [...] *(ibid)*

The language *François* does not in fact leave its source (François), but grows out of him in a kind of *sui generis* surplus of growth—less investment *per se*, therefore, than interest accrued upon the self. A decade later, in the *Deffence et Illustration de la langue françoise*, Du Bellay will employ agricultural metaphor to recognize the French language’s own capacity for self-generating growth—while acknowledging the helping hand of the late “roi et père François”:

Et qui voudra de bien près y regarder trouvera que notre langue française n’est [...] si infertile qu’elle ne puisse produire de soi quelque fruit de bonne invention, au moyen de l’industrie et diligence des cultivateurs d’icelle [...]. Mais à qui, après Dieu, rendrons-nous grâce d’un tel bénéfice, sinon à notre feu bon roi et père François, premier de ce nom et de toutes vertus? ^{ccxlviii}

François comes to embody a principle of selfhood after which the self-producing and self-sufficient (“produire de soi”) nature of the French language itself is modeled. This name, Du Bellay suggests, is second only to God’s as a giver and provider of language—that name, then, to which the writers as “cultivateurs” must give thanks. One *François* is

the “fruit” of the other; the difference between represents not loss or death, but only their continued growth.

Turning back to Des Périers’s poem, we indeed find that rather than causing confusion, the dual identity of François (language, man) is ordered—poetically, genealogically—such that multiplicity in fact endows the name, as singular signifier, with ever-greater identity:

Si que de toy, O noble Roy Francoys
Nommé sera le langage Francoys,
Voire le peuple en immortel renom,
Veu que tu es le premier de ce nom.
(*Les Disciples* 29)

Where the force of the proper name could be diminished in its repetition or splitting, we find instead a genealogical preservation: as the father and provider of language, the king is not named for the French language—it is named for him. Or rather, it *will be* named for him (“Nommé sera”); in an epic temporality that folds past and future into an immanent political present, French even *before* François has always already been named *after* him:

Il n’y aurait langue mieux embellie
Ni qui fût plus quelquefois anoblie
Que celle-ce, qui fut de toi nommée
Longtemps avant que l’ayez consommée.
(*ibid*)

The metric, rhyming and repetitive properties of Des Périers’s verse work to confer upon this signifying alignment its formally necessary and even fated nature. The poet affirms, in a linguistic messianism reminiscent of that voiced by Tory in his call for grammarians, that the French language has awaited the arrival of François to complete it: to fulfill its promise and become itself.

In this way, Des Périers does nothing short of writing a new origin story for the French language which voids all previous signifying content of *François* in order to saturate it with François (teacher, father, poet, model, source). One important model in this rewriting is the figure of the Gallic Hercules—with whom, as we have seen, François I was explicitly identified^{ccxlix}—who leads the people bound, happily and willingly, by chains attached to his tongue. In Des Périers’s poem, a succession of lines rhymes “Roy Francoys” with “langage Francoys,” “renom” with “nom.” We may now expand the interpretative domain of the Gallic Hercules myth to see how, in addition to modeling a chain of letters and texts (as it was for the printer Tory), the Gallic Herculean myth operates as a matrix for thinking the historical and genealogical function of language on the level of the signifier, as a function and *property* of the name specifically. François is the first, “le premier de ce nom”^{cccl}; language and people follow, re-named for him. A curious genealogy, perhaps, in which the language child—“déjà en situation d’héritier” like Derrida/Benjamin’s translator—predates the father who will come to “consummate” it. He will claim his paternity rights over language and people, taking their name as his own only to give it ‘back’ to them: naming, binding, completing them all. Much as if the author had arrived, at last, after the fact, to sign his name to his translations (or indeed, like François signing his name to the language with the signing of Villers-Cotterêts in 1539). Jacques Peletier famously sums up his own case against translation in his *Art Poétique* with the question of the name: “Somme, un Traducteur n’aura jamais le nom d’Auteur.” With a qualification to this statement, however, Peletier sets author and translator in a dual, dialectical scene of survival: “Et même il leur demeure [aux traducteurs] un avantage, que s’ils traduisent bien et choses bonnes: le nom de leur

Auteur fera vivre le leur” (263). The translator’s name, like that of the French people and the French language in Des Périers’s poem, attaches itself to that of the author in a pact of reciprocal—if inherently asymmetrical—giving. The notion of genealogical “renom” itself appears to be nothing other than the survival effect of this attachment: the life-preserving (or life-giving) chain of “noms,” in which none can survive without the other(s); not just the ears of the people, but the tongue of the Gallic Hercules, too, is pierced, bound to those who follow him. “Renom,” we could say, is the “nom” becoming more than itself as “nom propre”—by giving itself into translation.

Taking a surprising turn in the final lines of his poem, Des Périers concludes by implying that the king’s “renom” may not, in fact, yet be complete. In order to prevent dissemination of the name into death and oblivion, François must take up the pen to write his autobiography (in Des Périers’s words, his “dictz & faictz”). The true *identity* of François and his “Francoyse Langue” is deferred until the king writes himself—as more than a name—into the language:

Ainsi, Francois, si ta Francoyse Langue,
 Laquelle encor premierement harengue
 Par ton moyen, & suyt les bonnes lettres,
 Pouoit auoir de toy en prose, ou metres,
 Tes dictz & faictz quelle seroit heureuse! [...]
 Tu aurois faict avec couleur nayfue
 Du tien esprit vne paincture vifue,
 Et (quoy que feist le temps, & son enuye)
 Par tes escriptz serois tousious en vie:
 Dont ferois veu de la Posterite,
 Qui te rendroit ton loz bien merit :
 Tu parlerois, elle l’escouteroit:
 Tu regnerois, elle t’honnorerait,
 Comme feras, ainsi qu’elle l’espere,
 Ce temps pendant Dieu te tienne prospere.
 (*Les Disciples* 30-31)

The relationship between François and his language has not yet been properly consummated. It still desires him, in the form of his words (“si ta Francoyse Langue [...]

pouoit avoir de toy en prose, ou metres,/ Tes dictz & faictz quelle seroit heureuse!”). In order to ensure survival, he must complete—in writing—the process of transubstantiation promised in the identity of his name (“Par tes escriptz serois tousiours en vie”).

What this continued need-to-write evinces is a complementarity to the relation between *François* and François that denies the king the status of self-sufficient origin, even as this status is conferred—indeed, precisely because it *is* conferred—by writers and writing.^{ccli} Even if François has no need for *rime* or *bien*, as ‘original’ (source, *exemple*, etc.), his name is nevertheless marked by the need for translation—or at least self-translation, as Des Périers proposes. For Derrida, this need on the part of the original is the result of an originary act of law-giving: “en faisant la loi l’original commence par s’endetter *aussi* à l’égard du traducteur. L’original est le premier débiteur, le premier demandeur, il commence par manquer et par pleurer après la traduction” (222). In the preface to his biography of François I, *Gestes de François de Valois, roy de France* (1540), Étienne Dolet boldly reminds the king of this indebtedness. Inverting the terms of writers like Héroët and Des Périers, Dolet reminds the king that without his writers, “Ia ne sera de toy bruict, ou memoire,”

Et si n’auras, non plus qu’ung aultre, gloire
Pour tes haults faicts: cela est trop notoire,
Tu le scais bien.
Doncques tu scais de vivre le moien
Après la mort: c’est d’eslargir du tien
Aux gens scavantz. Croy, par tel entretien
Tousiours seras.
Plus: des Francoys l’honneur recoureras
Mis en oubly par faulte d’ung bon Liure.
Ayme eloquentz: ce faisant, bien fairas
Par leurs escriptz tousiours te fairont vivre.^{cclii}

Introducing a work about François much like the one Des Périers had suggested the king himself must compose (which is also, notably, a French translation of his own Latin text),

Dolet shifts the source of the French language from its paternal seat into the hands of writers. With this shift, the affect of writing begins to turn: from impossible gratitude to the recognition that what belongs to François is grown in other hands (“c’est d’eslagir du tien/ Aux gens scavantz. Croy par tel entretien/ Tousiours seras”). The king himself shifts from receptacle to recipient, represented as an aging father dependent on his skilled writers—to whom he now owes his paternal affection (“Ayme eloquentz: ce faisant, bien fairas,” etc.). It is worth noting that Dolet published this text in 1540—that is, one year into the post-Villers-Cotterêts period. If the legal codification of the “langage maternel francoys” fulfills Des Périers’s prediction (i.e., that “de toi/ Nommé sera le langage Francoys”) we may see Dolet’s verses above as indicative of a turn in the writerly relation to that name occurring in the wake of the law. In order to grasp the nature of that affective movement, we must turn to explore the other face of Villers-Cotterêts’s language: from the paternal “francoys” to the “langage maternel.”

II. The Mother Tongue in Writing: From *lingua materna* to “langage maternel”

Before being rewritten as the “langage maternel francoys” and being appropriated by vernacular advocates, the expression “langage maternel” witnessed a curious evolution. The earliest associations of language and ‘maternity’—in France or elsewhere—can be found in Latin-language texts of the twelfth century^{ccliii}, with expressions such as *locutio maternalis*, *lingua materna* or *maternaliter*, *materno sermone*. Medieval scholar J. Batany traces the very first use of such an expression to Guibert de Nogent’s chronicle of the First Crusade, the *Gesta Dei per Francos*, in which the pope Urban II is lauded for speaking as well in Latin as any layman in his ‘maternal’ language (“in materno sermone”).^{ccliv} The Romans, for their part, used no such Latin

terms. For ‘native’ Latin writers of Antiquity, their language was the *sermo patrius*, the language of cultural and ancestral patrimony.^{cclv} The expressions *lingua materna*, *et al.*, are thus medieval neologisms forged within the specific context of Latin-vernacular “colingualism” (Renée Balibar). For several centuries, terms like *materna lingua* were used almost exclusively to distinguish the vernacular, which was learned at home and in the family, from Latin, the language of learning and letters, the language of ecclesiastical and thus divine authority.^{cclvi} As French language historian R. Anthony Lodge points out, “all words associated with writing converged in the popular mind with the meaning Latin,” including *letré* (*litteratus*), *clerc* (*clericus*), and *gramaire* (*grammatica*).^{cclvii} These domains—maternal and written, respectively—were perceived as distinct enough that Pierre Dubois, writing in the early fourteenth century, expressed amazement that Hebrew might have been both the ‘mother’ tongue and learned language of the Apostles (“*lingua tam litterata quam materna*”). What may be most significant to retain for these early uses of the ‘maternal language’ (*lingua materna*, *maternaliter*, *materno sermone*, etc.) is that they referred exclusively to languages *other* than the Latin in which the expressions themselves were written. Accordingly, they often appear in a syntax of negation, such as Guibert de Nogent’s “*Fiebat autem res non materno sermone, sed litteris.*”^{cclviii} The ‘maternal’ served to designate, in writing, that language or those languages which one did not or could not write (with the important exception of literary use); the maternal was necessarily another language, a language that resided elsewhere than the page. Much like Marot’s forgotten “*langue maternelle*,” *materna* was the language—silent or forgotten—replaced by the dominant language-of-writing in a

determined social hierarchy. In Renée Balibar's words, "*materna* désignait un bas langage exclu de toute inscription."^{ccclix}

During the second half of the fourteenth century in France, the *lingua materna* underwent a major development in the hands of translator Nicole Oresme. In the prologue to his French translation of Aristotle's *Ethiques* (1369), Oresme brings the 'maternal' into the vernacular for the first time with his expression "le langage commun et maternel." The French "maternel" endows the formerly pejorative *materna* with a new cultural and semantic value, affirming the vernacular as a language of translation. The effect of this vernacular neologism, as Balibar argues, is to transgress and 'translate' the existing linguistic hierarchy, "provoquant l'opposition des langues et des niveaux de langues pour les dépasser ostensiblement" (34). The rhetoric of this affirmation is far from simple, however. In fact, Oresme does not call "françois" a "langage maternel" directly, but uses the term with reference to Latin—implying its application to French through the ricochet effect of a *translatio*:

Or est il ainsi que le temps de lors, grec estoit en regart de latin, quant aux Rommains, si comme est maintenant latin en resgart du françois quant à nous. Et estoient pour le temps les estudians introduiz en grec et a Romme et ailleurs, et les sciences communement baillees en grec; en ce pays, le langage commun et maternel, c'estoit latin. Doncques puis je bien encore conclure que la considération et le propos de nostre bon roi Charles V est à recommander, qui fait les bons livres et excellents translater en françois.

(Quoted in Batany 37)

In one sense, Oresme's use of "maternel" maintains the salient features of *materna*: it still marks the lower status of one language (Latin) within a hierarchy (Greek-Latin), and indeed still refers to a language (Latin) other than the language of the text (which is now French). Besides bringing the term into French, the novelty in Oresme's text is its assignation of the notion of the "langage [...] maternel"—which, as we have seen, did not

in fact exist in Roman culture—to the Latin language. As *materna* becomes *maternel*, the identity of Latin gets re-imagined and re-appropriated in order to legitimate French by imitation. The significance of this comparison is emphasized by J. Batany, who points out that the Italian literary vernacular earlier proposed by Dante, his *volgare illustre*, met with difficulty in part because it was without ancient example. Dante considered Latin to be an “artificial” language, and thus of an essentially different nature from the “natural” vernaculars. Oresme, in contrast, projects a Roman mother tongue that made itself into a language of learning by importing the Greek “sciences.”^{ccclx} With his translation, Oresme aims to set French, in turn, on the path toward becoming a “lingua tam litterata quam materna” (Pierre Dubois), shifting from medieval colingualism toward a condensed and hybrid vernacular monolingualism. In the translation from the *lingua materna* to “langage [...] maternel,” the signification of the ‘maternal’ has thus shifted: no longer that which should not or cannot be written, it embodies (following Oresme’s anachronistic application to Latin) the language to-be-written, a hierarchy to-be-overturned, the idiom poised to become itself.

Around the time Oresme was making his *françois* maternal, the notion of maternity in language underwent a concurrent and not unrelated development—one which would become equally significant in shaping the discourse of vernacular advocacy during the Renaissance. In the fourteenth century, we find ‘maternal’ coming to be associated with French vernaculars other than the privileged dialect of Ile-de-France. As early as 1325, a poet from Meung would write about his personal language history in terms not dissimilar from those of Marot two centuries later:

Si m’escuse de mon langage
Rude, malostru et sauvage
Car nes ne sui pas de Paris

Ne si cointes com fut Paris;
 Mais me raporte et me compere
 Au parler que m'aprist ma mere
 A meun quand je l'alaitoie,
 Dont mes parlers ne s'en devoye,
 Ne n'ay nul parler plus habile
 Que celui qui keurt a no vile.^{celxi}
 (Quoted in Lodge 100)

Here, the language designated as maternal—taught by the mother and drawn from her body—is the uncultivated tongue (“rude, malostru et sauvage”), placed in a social hierarchy beneath the language of Paris. Previously, as we have seen, ‘maternal’ had designated the vernacular spoken at home in opposition to Latin, learning, and letters. Here, as R. Anthony Lodge observes, we find the poet’s “home dialect being treated as his *langue maternelle* to distinguish it from a new prestige variety” (*ibid*). For Lodge, these verses thus index a “growing ambiguity in the notion of *langue maternelle*” (*ibid*). While the old Latin-vernacular hierarchy persists, as we see in Oresme’s text from several decades later, it would appear to have been sufficiently displaced and complexified to allow (or require) this *other* maternity to be voiced.

From the mid-fourteenth century and the reign of Charles V up to the mid-sixteenth and that of François I, the tri-partite language hierarchy of France (Latin-François-other vernaculars) meant that the “*langue maternelle*” was indeed an ambiguous and essentially *relational* (as opposed to absolute) descriptor: it could serve to designate French as a language coming into writing (like Latin once was) or, alternately, another regional vernacular excluded from the page (as *François* once had been). Which is to say that it could refer not only to multiple languages depending on writer and context, but could equally imply divergent social trajectories (ascending or descending) and very different kinds of affection (for the community and king, or for home and the mother’s

breast). What does seem to be a constant in the ‘mother tongue’ is that its affective component—whatever its precise content may be—is produced in an idealized or nostalgic projection of the past (be it Rome or the cradle) which is *not* the language of here and now. Either not-yet or no-longer, the mother tongue is what this other tongue of writing is not.^{cclxii}

III. The Mother of the Other: Exemplarity’s Reversible Rhetoric

In the promotion of French as the ‘paternal’ language of the king by poets of Marot’s generation, François I stood as the good example for French poets to follow (as with Marot’s “Suyvant le Roy Francoys” or Héroët’s “Sous vostre nom, sous vostre bon exemple”). At the heart the discourse promoting French as the writer’s ‘mother’ tongue during the 1540s, we find an alternative rhetoric of *ancient* exemplarity. In the insistence on the writer’s attachment to French as an individually or collectively natural property, the language’s attachment to the king—its indebtedness to him even on the level of the name—recedes into the background. Roman and Greek writers step up in turn to model *their* relationships to *their* languages.

We have just seen the seminal instance of this rhetoric with Oresme’s coining of the vernacular expression “langage maternel.” As anachronistic trope, this expression allowed Oresme to stage a historical reenactment of the encounter between languages (Greek and Latin, Latin and French). The “langage maternel” represented less an ancient reality than a constructed point of identification and transfer in the becoming of the vernacular. In one sense, this approach to exemplarity is very much in keeping with the strategy Michel Jeanneret calls “transformative intervention,” as opposed to a more

philological strategy of “respectful transmission.”^{cclxiii} The former approach has a future-oriented trajectory; is “engaged, dialogic, and creative,” and not overly concerned with historical accuracy. Anti-Ciceronian Latin writers of the Renaissance^{cclxiv} display such an approach in their rejection of stylistic imitation and embrace of anachronism. Nearly all textual engagements with exemplarity, like other practices of *imitatio*^{cclxv}, negotiate between extreme attitudes of transmission and transformation. Yet where there is a difference of language—where there is translation ‘properly speaking’—the negotiation of these extremes appears susceptible to heightened dialectical tension. There is, for example, at least one crucial difference between Oresme’s anachronism (attributing the medieval concept of “langage maternel” to the Romans in order to re-apply it to a developing French) and that of the anti-Ciceronians. The latter foreground their stylistic difference in order to assume their own cultural position and mark their independence from classical authors. Oresme, by contrast, wraps the ‘creative’ self-affirmation of his anachronism in a ‘respectful’ rhetoric of transmission, via explicit historical analogy (“le temps de lors, grec estoit en regart de latin, quant aux Rommains, si comme est maintenant latin en resgart du françois quant à nous”). In terms of language hierarchy—which, as we have seen, determines the very existence of a ‘mother tongue’—Latin must be brought “down” (in relation to Greek) in order for French to be affirmed (and implicitly raised in relation to Latin); and yet Latin must also remain “up” (in relation to French) in order to serve as a legitimating source and model for the vernacular. In order to serve as the exemplary ‘mother tongue’ in translation, Latin must, precariously, hold *both* positions at once. When the passage between historical contexts becomes the passage between languages and ‘mother tongues,’ the value of the *other* as example must

flip—and maintain itself as undecidably split. Affectively speaking, such an *exemple* must therefore represent a site of extreme ambivalence, encapsulating the poles of exemplarity: father worship and parricide, adoration and enmity, the desire to be ‘like’ and/as the desire to destroy.

In the words of John Lyons, the *exemplum* is “the most ideological of figures.”^{cclxvi} As an ideological sign, it is Janus-faced, susceptible to double interpretation (Volosinov). Or, as Montaigne would have it, “l’exemple est un miroir vague, universel et à tout sens” (III, 13, 1088).^{cclxvii} In one of the earliest documented instances of Renaissance vernacular advocacy, we find an example of this reversible character of exemplarity. In 1487, the *avocat général* Jean Lemaistre spoke before the Paris Parlement on behalf of French. Citing “l’exemple des Romains,” Lemaistre praised the use of the vernacular; yet he conceded that some disagreement existed as to how this Roman example should be interpreted.^{cclxviii} Another *avocat* had contended that

la cause pour laquelle l’on plaide céans en français, c’est à l’exemple des Romains, lesquels, afin que l’on n’usurpât à Rome les langues étrangères, avaient institué que l’on n’y [i.e., in the Roman Senate] parlerait que ‘lingua vernacula.’
(21)

Lemaistre offered his own interpretation, that

la cause pour laquelle les Romains ne parlaient, ne souffraient parler en leur Sénat qu’en langue latine, ne fut point pour doute d’usurpation, mais pour retenir et garder leur grande et excellente dignité; et que pour pareille cause a été introduit en cette cour [...] que l’on ne plaide qu’en français.
(21-22)

The Paris Parlement’s evaluation of French as their ‘own’ language was to be mediated by the Romans’ feelings toward *their* language—whether this meant a respect for its inherent “dignité” or a desire not to let the vernacular be usurped by another. There was a much greater irony to Lemaistre’s speech, however. This advocacy of French in fact

prefaced the *avocat*'s request to speak in Latin that day, in deference to non-French-speakers in attendance. In so doing, Lemaistre recognized that he was breaking both from the Parlement's well-established practice of French use and also from the very Roman *exemple* he had just invoked. ("Mais dit que, afin qu'il ne déroge à l'autorité de la cour, a requis qu'il lui plaise donner licence de plaider en latin pour cette fois, afin que l'ambassadeur et autres étrangers puissent entendre ce que dira" (22).) The advocacy for French, already divided by the Latin example on which it is founded, turns once more to arrive at its final rhetorical destination: a plea on behalf of the other language.

Like Oresme and Lemaistre, writers promoting French during the mid-sixteenth century would consistently employ ancient examples to promote and legitimate the French 'mother tongue' as a language-of-writing. But as medieval *colingualism* shifts toward early modern *monolingualism*, this rhetoric of exemplarity gives rise to ever-greater tensions. Monolingualism, as we have seen, initially becomes possible on a symbolic and signifying level by 1) grafting the name of a 'paternal' vernacular language onto the 'mother' tongue ("langage maternel francoys") and 2) opposing itself to Latin as both abusive authority and source of 'confusion.' In vernacular advocacy of the 1540s, therefore, Latin will simultaneously serve in an exemplary role *and* be targeted as the cultural enemy of the French 'mother tongue.' The value of Latin as example must therefore switch back and forth—often from verse to verse or sentence to sentence—alternately designating the proper and improper, the 'maternal' and 'other', the 'good' and 'bad' *exemple*.^{cclxix} In the appropriation of *maternity* through ancient example, the extreme poles of exemplarity as *paternity*—father worship and parricide—will vacillate with an undecidable rhetorical force. Far from being unrelated to the 'domestic'

dynamics of the “langage maternel francoys,” we may understand this rhetorical struggle with ancient exemplarity as a shifting of the position of *other* to another time, another culture, another authority, another language—in order for the hybrid French “maternel” to become one, here, now, ours.

Du Bellay’s *Deffence et Illustration* demonstrates the tensions of interlinguistic ancient exemplarity with a notoriously forceful rhetoric. In the work’s most (in)famous passage, the author calls for French writers to ‘digest’ their models in a destructively transformative process of imitation. We may also look to the less-studied final chapter of the work, entitled “Exhortation aux Français d’écrire en leur langue; avec les louanges de la France” (II, 12). Here, Du Bellay addresses the question of attachment to one’s own language. He describes this attachment as a “loi naturelle,” which, like the bond that makes one defend territory, “nous oblige de garder la dignité de notre langue” (289). Du Bellay goes on to cite cases—‘bad’ examples—of ancients who disobeyed this natural law and others who chastised them. Some of these examples are light in tone, like Cato the Elder mocking the “ambitieuse curiosité” of a friend “qui aimait mieux écrire en une langue étrangère qu’en la sienne” (289). Others are graver, like the story of Themistocles: “Ce prudent et vertueux Thémistocle, Athénien, montra bien [...] la même loi naturelle [...] quand il comdamna à mort un héraut du roi de Perse, seulement pour avoir employé la langue attique aux commandements du barbare” (287). Not using one’s own language is a barbarous—even capital—crime. It is worth noting that, here, the affective relation to language as ‘natural’ law is one of guilt, fear, and shame. As the rhetoric of exemplarity takes on a moral and legislative dimension, examples become disapproving friends, angry fathers, unforgiving kings. Du Bellay recalls that Horace, for

his part, was haunted by a guilty conscience (in the form of Romulus) for not always writing in Latin: “Horace dit que Romulus en songe l’admonesta, lorsqu’il faisait des vers grecs, de ne porter du bois en la forêt”; right away, Du Bellay carries Romulus’s admonition forward to French writers: “Ce que font ordinairement ceux qui écrivent en grec et en latin” (*ibid*). Horace’s example hangs over Du Bellay’s text as the mythological Romulus does Horace’s dreams, acting as the spectral enforcer of a law that—as ‘natural’—should be felt. With one sentence, the force of this law is brought into the present, though not as unequivocally as it may appear: the example of the past continues—in the very negation of its language.

IV. From One Language to Another: The Example of Dolet

Further complicating this rhetoric is the fact that around 1540, as representational emphasis is shifting from ‘paternal’ to ‘maternal’ and ancients figure as examples as often as François, the publishing scene in France is still immanently bilingual (indeed, weighted toward Latin). This means that many of the earliest gestures toward ancient writers’ ‘maternal’ attachment are penned by French writers who also, or even *primarily*, wrote in Latin themselves. As advocates for French, such writers would have to come to terms with the fact that they were not themselves monolingual. Perhaps for this reason, the tone of vernacular advocacy at this time had not yet adopted the moralizing monolingualism it would take on with the Pléiade poets—an advocacy that would, like Villers-Cotterêts, demand writing in French, and not otherwise. Vernacular writers like Étienne Dolet were still able, therefore, to play both ‘sides’ of the rhetoric of exemplarity. When Dolet published *La maniere de bien traduire d’une langue en aultre* in 1540, he

was a well-regarded Latinist who had previously published Latin works exclusively. In the preface to this treatise, Dolet offers an account for his own ‘translation’ to French. Much like Geoffroy Tory at the beginning of *Champ fleury*, Dolet introduces himself to his readers in his own language for the first time by way of a preemptive defense:

Je n’ignore pas [...] que plusieurs ne s’esbaissent grandement de veoir sortir de moy ce present Oeuure: attendu que par le passé i’ay fait et fais encores maintenant profession totale de la langue Latine. Mais à cecy ie donne deux raisons: l’une, que mon affection est telle enuers l’honneur de mon pais que ie veux trouuer tout moyen de l’illustrer. Et ne le puis myeulx faire que de celebrer sa langue, comme on faict Grecs et Rommains la leur.^{cclxx}

The fact that writing in French demonstrates Dolet’s “affection” for French must itself be demonstrated by ancient example (“comme ont faict Grecs et Rommains la leur”).^{cclxxi} Building upon this logic, Dolet’s second ‘reason’ for his conversion to French is constituted entirely by *exempla*:

L’autre raison est, que non sans exemple de plusieurs ie m’addonne à ceste exercitation. Quant aux antiques tant Grecs que Latins, ilz n’ont prins aultre instrument de leur eloquence que la langue maternelle. De la Grecque seront pour tesmoings Demosthene, Aristote, Platon, Isocrate, Thucydide, Herodote, Homere. Et des Latins ie produis Ciceron, Cesar, Salluste, Virgile, Ouide, lesquelz n’ont delaisé leur langue pour estre renommez en vne autre.

(*ibid*)

For Dolet, the writer’s duty to his language as “maternelle” is constructed rhetorically on the model of admired writers whose names are cited as “tesmoings.” The legal precedent invoked in this defense—which is simultaneously a case for French and himself—is that of the ancients’ monolingualism. Dolet may switch from Latin to French because they, as writers, were faithful to their mother tongues (“lesquelz n’ont delaisé leur langue pour estre renommez en vne autre”). The examples are persuasive, and do seem to make a case for the establishment of a law of ‘maternal’ writing, like Du Bellay’s “loi naturelle.”

Yet the jury may pause before a certain contradiction, if not outright hypocrisy in the defendant's case: is Dolet himself so faithful?

Indeed, although their examples are prominently displayed by Dolet and legitimize a new law of vernacular writing, Dolet does not actually assimilate the ancients fully as models—remaining divided in his textual production between a ‘maternal’ French and a ‘professional’ Latin. On the one hand, Dolet presents his French writing as a return home to honor his country and to demonstrate his “affection” textually. Yet this ostensible return is only a temporary visit; in Dolet's words, “j’ai fait *et fais encore maintenant* profession totale de la langue latine” (emphasis added). As he will later suggest in a translator's preface (1542), French writing is more of a hobby, a private and ‘pleasurable’ activity that does not corrupt his professional identity as a writer: “Si j’ay travaillé pour acquérir los & bruict en la langue Latine, je ne me veulx efforcer moins (& *ce pour plaisir, sans m’abastardir de l’aulture*) à me faire renommer en la mienne maternelle Françoisse.”^{ccclxxii} Moreover, Dolet defers the full demonstration of this affection for “la mienne maternelle Françoisse” to the future publication of the *Orateur Francoys*, his famously lost (or unfinished), multi-volume work of French grammar, poetics and rhetoric. Several years later, Du Bellay will herald those writers of his own time who have converted to French after a career of Latin writing: “combien qu’ils eussent jà acquis un bruit non vulgaire entre les Latins, se sont néanmoins convertis à leur langue maternelle” (290). Dolet lets it be known that he, for one, is not—or not yet—a true convert: his name and “renom” belong to two languages. In fact, if Dolet does take pains to demonstrate his commitment to a single language, it is to Latin, not French (“& *ce pour plaisir, sans m’abastardir de l’aulture*”). Ancient writers’ own faithfully

monolingual relationships to their “langue maternelle” are thus projected by Dolet as precisely that which he does *not* himself demonstrate in relation to French: they are defenders of a law he chooses not to obey, precisely by writing in *their* language.

While serving to justify his vernacular writing, then, the Ancients also stand in stark contrast—and perhaps, like the Romulus of Horace’s dream, in tacit reproach—with Dolet’s past and continued abandonment of his mother tongue. Authority and foil, they allow Dolet to defend himself while assuming an ambivalently bilingual stance; they model a duty and affection Dolet’s text *ascribes* to itself without, however, fully *subscribing* to. Such ambivalence—of affection, of obeisance—manifested by the text’s performative contradiction may get lost, though, when translated into an example itself. We find such an effect at work in a 1540 poem by Charles de Sainte-Marthe, a poet and friend of Dolet’s, recommending *La maniere de bien traduire* (“Aux Francois, du Liure de Dolet, de la langue Francoise”). Here Sainte-Marthe addresses French writers, holding up his friend as a guide for those with “affection” toward their language:

Pourquoy es tu d’aultruy admirateur,
Vilipendant le tien propre langaige?
Es ce (Francois) que tu n’as instructeur,
Qui d’iceluy te remonstre l’usaige?
Maintenant as à ce grand advantaige,
Si vers ta Langue as quelque affection:
Dolet t’y donne une introduction
Si bonne en tout, qu’il n’y à que redire
Car il t’enseigne, (ò noble inuention)
D’escrire bien, bien tourner, & bien dire.^{cclxxiii}

In the words of his friend, Dolet becomes the model of good French writing. Such a model may have been previously lacking, says Sainte-Marthe’s poem, but after Dolet, French writers have no excuse for admiring the language of “aultruy.” The teacher must be monolingual—even when the writer himself is not. Dolet, who deferred true maternal

affection to the *exempla* of Cicero and company, or to a future writing of his own never seen, here becomes the French *exemple* in the hands of his friend.

In a similarly-themed poem (“Aux Français, en recommandation du livre de Dolet, *De la manière de traduire, ponctuer et accentuer en notre langue*. Avec exhortation à tous lettrés français s’aimer et soutenir l’un l’autre”) from the same collection, Sainte-Marthe holds up Dolet’s book as a means of self-possession for French writers:

...Ô noble esprit françois
Afin que tien (non plus à autrui) sois,
En lisant donc icelui tant bon livre [...]

Exemplarity from *within* the language community (named by Sainte-Marthe in his poem’s title, “lettrés français”) functions differently from its interlinguistic counterpart. Admiring and imitating the ancients involves tension and, Sainte-Marthe suggests, ultimately dispossession of ‘self’ as a kind of transferable property. But by following Dolet, in French, the French writer maintains and in fact *gains* in ‘self.’ The title of the poem, again, suggests that this selfhood exists simultaneously as an individual and collective property, constituted as such by a linguistic affective bond (“s’aimer et soutenir l’un l’autre”). Echoing this sentiment in the *Deffence*, Du Bellay will name Dolet along with Rabelais and Budé as founders of a monolingual affection and duty to be imitated in the construction of French friendship^{cclxxiv}—as auto-affection: “Il me semble (lecteur ami des Muses françaises) qu’après ceux que j’ai nommés tu ne dois avoir honte d’écrire en ta langue: mais encore dois-tu, si tu es ami de la France, voire de toi-même, t’y donner du tout” (291). Being an a ‘friend’ to oneself and France are coextensive; both are recovered in the mother tongue, and, here, both are an all-or-nothing venture of writing. Elsewhere,

however, Du Bellay does call upon his reader to be a friend to Dolet in particular—a gesture which, as Henri Chamard remarks,^{ccclxxv} demonstrated some courage coming only three years after the writer’s death: “je n’ignore point qu’Étienne Dolet, homme de bon jugement en notre vulgaire, a formé l’*Orateur français*, que quelqu’un (peut-être), ami de la mémoire de l’auteur et de la France, mette de bref et fidèlement en lumière” (253-54).

V. Writing Affection: Jacques Peletier

Jacques Peletier was a humanist who wrote and published a wide variety of works over his lifetime. We saw his intervention in orthographic reform in the last chapter and his observations on the dangers of translation (from his *Art Poétique* of 1555) above. Peletier’s most enduring contributions are recognized in the fields of mathematics and poetry. During the 1540s and 1550s, as Peletier was developing his reformed phonetic spelling system, he authored some of the period’s most rhetorically forceful texts in favor of vernacular writing. Peletier does not differ significantly from his contemporaries in that he celebrates the language (we have found this in the poets of Marot’s generation), or defends it (as Tory, Dolet, and even Meigret do). Where Peletier stands out is in his insistence that French is a ‘native’ language. This argument for nativeness inaugurates at once a new affective bond and metaphysical grounding of vernacular writing. Peletier’s first defenses of French-language writing can be found in the preface to his translation of Horace’s *Art Poétique* (1541) and a poem entitled “A un poète qui n’escrivoit qu’en Latin” from his *Oeuvres Poétiques* (1547). During the 1540s Peletier also became linked with the poets Joachim Du Bellay, Pierre de Ronsard, and other members of the future Pléiade group. His *Oeuvres Poétiques* of 1547 included, in addition to Peletier’s own

poems and translations, the first published works by Du Bellay and Ronsard.^{cclxxvi} Peletier's first defenses of French thus preceded the more famous *Deffence et Illustration de la Langue Françoise*; moreover, his 1541 preface was written even before his first encounters with the young Ronsard (in 1543) and Du Bellay (in 1546). Similarly, his *Art Poétique* of 1555 (which I will examine in the next section) would offer what may be considered a comparatively mature and polished counterpart to the often strident and notoriously contradictory rhetoric of the *Deffence*—offering what Sydney John Holyoake deems “the fullest expression of the doctrines of the Pléiade.”

Although Peletier was certainly not the first to call French ‘maternal’ and ‘natural’ (in 1532, for example, Panurge declared French “ma langue naturelle et maternelle” in *Pantagruel*), his writing marks a specifically post-Villers-Cotterêts opposition between Latin and ‘maternal’ French as languages of writing. The poem “A un poète qui n’escrivoit qu’en Latin” provides a closer look at how this opposition gets articulated as an *affective* attitude toward the “langue maternelle”—and, in turn, toward oneself as a writer. Once again, the tensions of ancient exemplarity play a crucial role in this affect. From the poem’s unequivocal opening verse, “Jescris en langue maternelle,” Peletier marks his own identity as a French writer. He is not Marot—for whom French was ‘acquired’ and ‘paternal.’ He is not Dolet—for whom true attachment to the “langue maternelle” belonged to his *exempla* more than himself. Peletier writes in the mother tongue, which demonstrates the proper attitude toward oneself and one’s own:

J’escris en langue maternelle
 Et tasche a la mettre en valeur:
 Affin de la rendre éternelle,
 Comme les vieux ont fait la leur.
 Et soutien que c’est grand malheur
 Que son propre bien mespriser
 Pour l’autrui tant fauoriser.^{cclxxvii}

Feeling contempt toward (“mepriser”) one’s own language is a “grand malheur”; being attached to one’s own language means not ‘favoring’ that of the other (“l’autrui tant fauoriser”). Writing in French as the ‘paternal’ language, we may recall, was concerned with debt, inheritance, survival and the name—in relation to the other (François). It was, in short, a relation of admiration and duty. In the ‘maternal’ language, the terms have shifted; we are now in the realm of affection, attachment, and value—of oneself and the *propre*. Nevertheless, the example of the ancients is positioned at the center of Peletier’s opening *strophe*. His use of exemplarity here is strikingly double: it is at once pejorative (“les vieux”) and analogous, legitimating (“j’escri en langue maternelle... comme les vieux”). Even while calling for French writers to *withhold* their affections from the ancients, then, Peletier’s lines recognize that ‘maternal’ affection comes from relating mimetically to the very object being rejected. The *propre* is ‘felt’ (loved, valued) as not-other—more precisely, in the turning away from the other. Favoring one’s own language thus entails less a positive affection (‘I love French because of x’) than a conversion of “mepris” within a hierarchical opposition (‘I love French more than x’). In this way, affective conversion marks the inversion of linguistic hierarchy as a system of value. (Where Peletier says “mepriser,” Du Bellay will use “depriser” synonymously.) We have already seen how the emergence of the notion “langue maternelle” results from an asymmetrical relation opposing two languages. Here, Peletier suggests that the accumulation of ‘maternal’ sentiment as cultural value—which is also *auto*-affection in language—is produced by turning desire from one language to another. The love of the ‘mother’ tongue (as self, present, *propre*) is collected in the affective wake produced in casting off the ‘father’ tongue (as past, other).

Peletier goes on to designate a proper, non-imitative mode of writing through a very similar logic. In terms of affective mapping, *writing* will be placed on the same ‘good’ side of the divide as the “langue maternelle,” and defined through the same negating, dis-affecting process. For Peletier, the ‘favoring’ of the ancients implies a misguided *imitatio*. The French poet who writes only in Latin, to whom Peletier’s poem is addressed, is not ‘like’ (“comme”) the admired Roman poet who wrote only in Latin. In order for French writers to *be* like their models in attitude and affect, they must *not write* like their models—or at least not in their language:

Si les Grecz sont si fort fameux,
Si les Latins sont aussi telz,
Pourquoy ne faisons nous comme eux,
Pour estre comme eux immortelz?
Toy qui si fort exercé t’es,
Et qui en Latin escriz tant,
Qu’es tu sinon qu’un imitant?

While acting linguistically like the proper writer (“en Latin escriz tant”), the Latin-writing French poet is in fact only an imitator (“imitant”). Arriving at good ‘like’-ness, which overcomes imitation and produces proper writing, once again means an affective reconfiguration, a re-attachment of the writer to himself or herself in language, as Peletier himself does (“j’escrì en langue maternelle”). Here, however, the conversion process is less about substituting a new object for the old (“langue maternelle” for Latin) than converting the sense of exemplarity’s imperative to “faire comme” (“Pourquoy ne faisons nous comme eux...”). The practice of native-language *writing* gets defined in a moment of liberation from the limits of foreign-language imitation—a writing delivered from an *imitatio* of appearance into a metaphysically superior *imitatio* of being (“Pour estre comme eux immortelz”). This liberation is indeed an overcoming of language itself as materiality. In the final lines of the poem, Peletier advocates neologism on the

“exemple” of the ancients as one practical path toward less imitative, more proper writing:

Qui garde que tu ne composes
Nouveaux motz aux nouvelles choses?
Si mesme a l'exemple te mires
De ceulx la que tant tu admires?

The to-be-imitated is anything but language as such.^{cclxxviii} Writing—as opposed to imitation—seems to hinge on breaking the mimetic hold of imitation on the level of the signifier (“nouveaux mots aux nouvelles choses”). In the “langue maternelle,” language as narcissistic mirror (“Si mesme a l'exemple te mires”) is renounced in favor of another, more proper identity as writer. Du Bellay will echo this series of rhetorical questions with his own, more morally-inflected series in the *Deffence*; he appeals to the French writer to step away from the mirror of the other, into a prouder, more self-affecting writing: “Pourquoi donc sommes-nous si grands admirateurs d'autrui? Pourquoi sommes-nous tant iniques à nous-même? Pourquoi mendions-nous les langues étrangères comme si nous avions honte d'user de la nôtre?”

This release from the signifying mirror echoes Peletier's insistence (echoing Cicero) in his *Art Poétique* of 1555 that the translator must not render the foreign author's texts *verbum pro verbo*. Such translation, maintains Peletier, does not in fact violate “la loi de la Traduction”—indeed, the translator has a duty to ‘approach’ his author as closely as possible.^{cclxxix} Yet the translator has an even greater duty to “la propriété et le naïf de la Langue en laquelle il translate” (*ibid*). The ideal of translation—an impossible one—would be to adhere to both of these duties at the same time, creating an absolute mirror without distortion or loss. “[P]ensez quelle grandeur ce serait de voir une seconde Langue répondre à toute l'élégance de la première: et encore avoir la sienne

propre. Mais, comme j’ai dit, il ne se peut faire” (*ibid*). In the double-bind of translation, “Langues” represent mutually exclusive spheres of natural propriety. Indeed, the words “propriété” and “naïf” express nothing for Peletier if not this mutual exclusion as a natural law of untranslatability. “Car la nature des choses ne souffre jamais perfection de ressemblance” (256). The privilege must go to one side—for Peletier, one’s own—over the other. Du Bellay will express a similar notion in his famous dismissal of translation in the *Deffence*, which, like Plato’s banishment of poets from his Republic, banishes translators from the French republic of letters. Considering what properties produce ‘eloquence’ in writing, Du Bellay concludes:

je ne croirai jamais qu’on puisse bien apprendre tout cela des traducteurs, pource qu’il est impossible de le rendre avec la même grâce dont l’auteur en a usé: d’autant que chacune langue a je ne sais quoi propre seulement à elle, dont si vous efforcez exprimer le naïf en une autre langue, observant la loi de traduire, qui est n’espacer point hors des limites de traduire, qui est n’espacer point hors des limites de l’auteur, votre diction sera contrainte, froide, et de mauvaise grâce.
(233)

Like the imitative Latin writer constrained by his own admiration, the translator is constrained by “la loi de traduire”—a law felt as the “naïf” resistance of the of the “autre langue.”

VI. Native Authors: Peletier, Du Bellay, Ronsard (and Marot)

The project of the Pléiade group, broadly speaking, was to make a radical break from French poetry of the past, looking instead to classical and Italian models. The rejection of the recent domestic vernacular past and the embrace of a more ancient and/or foreign one were intimately and logically related. Ronsard, for example, would introduce his first *Odes* (1550), modeled after those of Horace, not with an embrace of the Latin writer but rather with a rejection of his French predecessors: “ne voiant en nos Poètes

François, chose qui fust suffisante d'imiter: j'allai voir les étrangers [...].” The Pléiade poets were also, of course, the period’s most ardent champions of the vernacular. Their mode of imitation looked to invest French-language poetry (and their own work) with a new cultural value through the assimilation of poetic genres and forms, like the ode. Writing on behalf of the French language, then, entailed what Richard Helgerson terms an “internal exile” for the Pléiade poets.^{cclxxx} Which is to say that they worked toward the future of the ‘native,’ ‘maternal’ language not by celebrating a pre-existing cultural *fonds* but by assimilating foreign models to be at once imitated and resisted. This strategy itself met with contemporary resistance, the best known instance of which is Barthélémy Aneau’s *Quintil Horatian* (1550). Aneau critiques nearly every aspect of the *Deffence*, which he ironically proposes renaming “offense et dénigration”; the embrace of foreign poetic forms, Aneau claims, goes against the very project of the *Deffence* itself (“au lieu de defendre et illustrer notre langue (comme tu le promets), tu nous fais grand deshonneur, de nous renvoyer à l’italien, qui a prins la forme de sa poësie des François”).^{cclxxxi} The Pléiade’s “defense” of French, then, is anything but a simple celebration of French literature or French identity—indeed, it may appear to be precisely the opposite. The complexities and contradictions of the Pléiade poets’ approach to imitation has been examined adroitly elsewhere. What remains to be further explored here is the way in which authorship gets tied—again, both affectively and metaphysically—to a principle of monolingualism as attachment to a single, not-other, native language.

“Because our social formations work through affect,” suggests Jonathan Flatley, “resistance to them must as well. Substitute objects of positive affective attachment must

be provided where necessary, counter-moods evoked, and the emotional valence of various objects and ideas changed through processes of rearticulation and recontextualization.^{cclxxxii} We have seen that for Peletier, the stakes of writing in French are an affection for the ‘maternal’ which is, first and foremost, a *dis*-affection from the other—in order to be like that other. Admiration for the ancients must be appropriated for oneself and “son propre bien” (as the ancients did).^{cclxxxiii} In a text published just two years after Villers-Cotterêts (the preface to his translation of Horace’s *Art Poétique*, 1541), Peletier had presented similar arguments, with an emphasis on the primacy and domesticity of the vernacular language. Whereas Greek and Latin are acquired, French is “native.” And yet, the fact of its being their “propre & principal langage” has not guaranteed French writers’ affection for the vernacular. Writing in French, then, will be a return to their natural condition:

Si de bien pres on veut considerer le stile des ecrivains du temps present [...], on verra clairement qu’ilz n’approchent pas de celle copieuse vehemence & gracieuse propriété qu’on voit luire es auteurs anciens. [...L]a principale raison & plus apparente, a mon jugement, qui nous ote le merite de vrai honeur, est le mepris & contennement de notre langue native, laquelle nous laissons arriere pour entretenir la langue Greque & la langue Latine, consumans tout notre temps en l’exercice d’icelles. Au moien dequoi nous en voions plusieurs, autrement tresingenieux & nonchaloir commettent erreurs lourds & insupportables, non pas en parler quotidien seulement, mais aussi en composition Francoise: si bien qu’ilz semblent prendre plaisir expres a oublier leur propre & principal langage.^{cclxxxiv}

Once again, Peletier points to affective attitudes toward languages—“mepris,” an unnatural “plaisir”—in his diagnosis of the trouble with French writing.^{cclxxxv} Peletier consents that an education in Greek and Latin is indeed a necessary support for the French-language writer.^{cclxxxvi} But the inflated value of these languages has displaced the natural order and natural feeling, according to which French writers should be tied to the vernacular in a bond of ‘domesticity’: “Mais je veux bien dire qu’a une langue peregrine

il ne faut faire si grand honneur que de la requeillir & priser pour regretter & contenner la sienne domestique” (3v). The domestic French tongue has been forgotten, replaced by another, “peregrin”—and this substitution has been willful, even desired. Reminiscent of Marot’s “langue maternelle” in relation to the king’s French, writing-as-acquiring has meant forgetting one’s first language. For Marot, we may recall, this acquisition was portrayed as the one happy fact of life in the French court (and not a “grand malheur,” as Peletier would have it). Peletier, on the other hand, insists on the recovery and re-desiring of the “propre & principal langage” in order to value it as language-of-writing—that language which is, of course, that very same one ‘acquired’ and written in by Marot, *François*. Within the representational schema that opposes the vernacular mother tongue to Latin and Greek, writing in French no longer means forgetting, but remembering. No longer the language of the exile, French is the idiom of home. No longer the king’s language, *François* is the writer’s own—as long as he or she only wants to recall it as such.

In the chapter of his own original *Art Poétique* (1555) entitled “D’écrire en sa langue,” Peletier further develops this argument, now mapping the native-foreign schema onto that of Nature versus Art, inherent property versus acquired quality. French writers are advised to write poetry in their “Langue native” instead of the “Langue acquisitive” because of the time-consuming, ‘imperfect’ process of appropriating the latter:

[C]onseillons-nous au nôtre [Poète], de se travailler et écrire en une Langue, laquelle avant qu’il l’ait apprise, lui aura levé le bon de son âge? Le Poète pourra-t-il jamais être parfait, auquel est déniée la perfection du langage auquel il doit écrire, qui n’est que l’un des moindres instruments de son métier? Car il est certain, qu’une Langue acquisitive n’entre jamais si avant en l’entendement comme la native. L’Art bien imite la Nature tant qu’il peut: mais il ne l’atteint jamais.

(in Goyet 266)

Peletier posits the existence of a native-language understanding (“entendement”) that cannot be replicated through the conscious act of learning or acquisition. The native tongue enters *into* understanding through a natural process of assimilation. The ‘acquired’ tongue, on the other hand, cannot be fully appropriated as a writerly “instrument”; it remains exterior, in contrast to the native language’s interiority (“une Langue acquisitive n’entre jamais si avant en l’entendement comme la native”). Native-language writing is “Nature” to the foreign language’s “Art.”^{cclxxxvii} Once again, excellence or perfection in writing—distinct from imitation or translation—is placed on the side of the native in a principle of self-originating production.^{cclxxxviii} “Perfection” of poetry in any language other than one’s first is denied as a *natural* law of representation: as representation’s own futility and lack (“mais il ne l’atteint jamais”). The preface to Horace’s *Art Poétique* affirms this boundary as a metaphysical property that may not be transgressed: “Mais quant a ceux qui totalement se vouent & adonnent a une langue peregrine (j’entens peregrine pour le respect de la domestique) il me semble qu’il ne leur est possible d’atteindre a celle naïve perfection des anciens non plus qu’a l’art d’exprimer Nature, quelque ressemblance qu’il y pretende” (4v).

In the chapter the *Deffence* entitled “Qu’il est impossible d’égaliser les anciens en leurs langues” (I, 11), Du Bellay will similarly insist upon a marked metaphysical distinction between languages as natural and acquired. Like Peletier in the preface to his translation of Horace, Du Bellay affirms that the writer must learn ancient languages—but that after learning them, should not devalue his or her own (“Mais je serais bien d’avis qu’après les avoir apprises, on ne déprisât la sienne” (Du Bellay 249)). Foreshadowing his “loi naturelle” of native-language attachment developed at the end of

the treatise, Du Bellay here calls upon “une inclination naturelle” through which the poet “se sentirait plus propre à écrire en sa langue qu’en grec ou en latin” (250). The *feeling* of “propre” here appears to have less to do with maternal duty, an innate sense of oneness, or auto-affection than it does with writerly ability or aptness. As with Peletier’s natural limit placed on language acquisition above, Du Bellay maintains that French writers are no more able to write in the ancient languages than “l’art” can express “la vive énergie de la nature” (251). In his explanation of this notion, Du Bellay takes us back to the source of language, as origin of the law: “Et ce [...] d’autant que les anciens usaient des langues, qu’ils avaient sucées avec le lait de la nourrice, et aussi bien parlaient les indoctes comme les doctes [...]. Voilà pourquoi leurs bienheureux siècles étaient si fertiles de bons poètes et orateurs” (251-52). The eloquence of the ancients was natural, ingested from the time of birth in an original and irreproducible bond of nourishment. With similar language, Peletier casts French poets’ inability to ‘equal’ the ancients as their inability to replicate the relationship of this privileged original scene. “Mais comment le ferons-nous [i.e., rival the ancients in their language], quand ceux qui la suçaient de la nourrice, y ont fait leur dernier effort?” (Goyet 266-67). Elsewhere in the *Deffence*, Du Bellay ridicules the desire to learn foreign languages as, precisely, a desire to return to infancy: “comme nous repentant d’avoir laissé le berceau et d’être devenus hommes, retournons encore en enfance [...]” (Du Bellay 246). The inappropriateness of such a desire is aligned by Peletier with the historical anachronism of Latin writing itself: “Puis les langues, ains toutes choses du monde, n’ont-elles pas leurs Siècles? que voulons-nous? enrichir la Latinité?” (Goyet 266).

For the ancients, maintains Du Bellay, education as acquisition played a supplementary role, but not an *essential* one. For this reason, even women were writers among the ancients (“Voilà pourquoi les femmes mêmes aspiraient cette gloire d’éloquence et érudition, comme Sapho, Corinne, Cornélie, et un millier d’autres [...]”) (252). Accounting for the difference in ‘eloquence’ among native writers, Du Bellay admits that “[les doctes] apprenaient les disciplines et l’art de bien dire, se rendant par ce moyen *plus* éloquents que les autres” (252, emphasis added). Learning provides *additional* support (just as ancient writers and languages are an “appui” for the French writer), but the essence of ability for writing in language is derived from an *avant-scène* of incorporation, before memory. It comes, in other words, from outside of language itself. Just as the “énergie” of art comes not from itself but from nature, the source and force of native eloquence are extralinguistic, natural, maternal—transmitted to the writer in a transfer of nourishing affection. Significantly, there are in fact two originary scenes being superimposed in this idealization: that of pre-linguistic language acquisition and that of universal ancient ‘eloquence.’ Much as Oresme rhetorically drew his *langage maternel* from the Latin breast, Du Bellay’s “lait de la nourrice” is ascribed not to a vernacular domesticity but to ancient history. Reconstructed from the textual impressions of a natural bond, this maternal transmission is placed in a pre-history of the French language itself—in the alterity-as-sameness of the origin.

At the medieval origin of the expression *materna lingua*, we may recall, was also a distinction between the language acquired at home, in the family, and that learned in schools. For Du Bellay, this difference is characterized by an effortless ‘learning’ in the

nostalgized timelessness of childhood, in opposition to a scene of books, difficulty, and expenditure—which becomes ‘learning’ properly speaking:

Ne pensez donc, imitateurs, troupeau servile, parvenir au point de leur excellence: vu qu’à grand-peine avez-vous appris leurs mots, et voilà le meilleur de votre âge passé. Vous déprisez notre vulgaire, par aventure non pour autre raison sinon que dès enfance et sans étude nous l’apprenons, les autres avec grand-peine et industrie. Que s’il était comme la grecque et latine péri et mis en reliquaire de livres, je ne doute point qu’il ne fût [...] aussi difficile à apprendre comme elles sont.

(252)

Where learning one’s own language means increase or growth (as with the ancients, above), foreign-language learning means a diminishing of natural *energia*. Like the passage from nature to art—or voice to writing, spirit to letter, original to imitation or translation^{cclxxxix}—acquiring the foreign language is an expenditure of life, a movement toward death (“et voilà le meilleur de votre âge passé”). Du Bellay makes this loss even more explicit in the previous chapter, in the description cited above of foreign-language learning as a return to childhood:

Mais nous, qui ordinairement affectons plus d’être vus savants que de l’être, ne consomons pas seulement notre jeunesse en ce vain exercice: mais, comme nous repentant d’avoir laissé le berceau et d’être devenus hommes, retournons encore en enfance, et par l’espace de vingt ou trente ans ne faisons autre chose qu’apprendre à parler, qui grec, qui latin, qui hébreu. Lesquels ans finis, et finie avec eux cette vigueur et promptitude qui naturellement règne en l’esprit des jeunes hommes [...]. Et bien souvent, étonnés de la difficulté et longueur d’apprendre les mots seulement, nous laissons tout par désespoir, et haïssons les lettres premier que les ayons goûtées ou commencé à les aimer.

(246)

The mother tongue, which does not *need* to be learned (“aussi bien parlaient les indoctes comme les doctes”), represents a self-sufficient economy of time and energy. No labor is lost, no force disseminated—given over to the other language or the mediation of books—in its writing.^{ccxc} Unlike the foreign language, which, we may recall, constrains the writer as translator, the native language offers no resistance. The idiom of childhood,

the French language-of-writing is thus also that of pleasure and ease (as opposed to “grand-peine et industrie”), of release from the other language and writing as servitude (“Ne pensez donc, imitateurs, troupeau servile...”). It allows us, indeed, to *love* language and letters. The English poet Philip Sidney would make a similar case for his own language in *An Apologie for Poetrie* (1595). Sidney ascribes this dissemination to grammar specifically, and places it in a (post-)Babelian scene; English, he claims, has no need of grammar “being so easie in it selfe, and so voyd of those cumbersome differences of *Cases, Genders, Moods, & Tenses*, which I think was a peece of the Tower of Babilons curse, that a man should be put to school to learn his mother tongue.”^{ccxci} The affection for the mother tongue and its legitimacy as a poetic language derive, then, from its acquisition as unmediated or, indeed, *immediate*. It may, as Sidney’s lines suggest, even be antidote to the “Tower of Babilons curse.”

The *Deffence*, too, opens with a reference to Babel as the origin of language difference, the gift of nature not as mother but unloving “marâtre.”^{ccxcii} Yet Du Bellay in fact equivocates about the Babelian fatality. On the one hand, he suggests in the passage above that this curse may be on the horizon for French: vernacular cultivation through writing means a textual mediation that will place the mother tongue alongside the ancient languages in the alienating “reliquaire de livres.” Elsewhere, however (I, 10, “Que la langue française n’est incapable de la philosophie, et pourquoi les anciens étaient plus savants que les hommes de notre âge”), he gestures toward a different future. Du Bellay laments the present foreign-language requirement as a post-Babelian condition: “Las et combien serait meilleur qu’il y eût au monde un seul langage naturel, que d’employer tant d’années pour apprendre des mots!” But this present offers itself as a springboard

for a time to come when the “confusion et diversité” of Babel is neutralized in the dissolution of language hierarchies: “Faut-il donc laisser l’étude des langues? Non, d’autant que les arts et sciences sont pour le présent entre les mains des Grecs et Latins. Mais il se devrait faire à l’avenir qu’on pût parler de toute chose par tout le monde, et en toute langue” (243-244). The true curse of Babel, perhaps, is not the denial of a universal language, “un seul langage naturel,” but the unequal distribution of value and knowledge in the post-Babelian world. The end of useless labor and suffering in language can be had in this *other*, second nature of the native language, when it comes into—by returning to—its own. “Les oiseaux, les poissons et les bêtes terrestres de quelconque manière, ores avec un son, ores avec l’autre, sans distinction de paroles signifient leurs affections. Beaucoup plutôt nous hommes devrions faire le semblable, chacun avec sa langue, sans avoir recours aux autres” (245).

We are now better poised to understand why poetic discourse is privileged in the elaboration of this conception of the native language. Earlier in the *Art Poétique*, Peletier, echoing Quintilian, addresses the relationship between Nature and Art in poetic production:

Nature ouvre le chemin, et le montre au doigt: l’Art conduit, et garde de se dévoyer: Nature donne la disposition, et comme une matière: l’Art donne l’opération, et comme la forme. En somme, la Nature bien demande le secours et la main artisanne: Et l’Art, ne peut rien sans le naturel.

(Goyet 245)

While the native language is on the side of Nature when relating to the Art of the foreign language, as poetic idiom it is itself composed of ‘natural’ and ‘artificial’ elements. This complementary composition is weighted, however: the natural is the primary and essential element, that which “ouvre le chemin” and without which Art “ne peut rien.” The part of Art in poetic language, then, is *supplemental*, as Derrida understands this

term.^{ccxciii} For Peletier and Du Bellay, foreign-language writing cuts the poet off from the very source of poetry—even if native-language writing must still be supplemented with Art and “étude” in order to achieve its “perfection.” Among those to whom French poets-to-be may look for an example of the force of the “naturel,” Peletier cites none other than Marot—the same writer who locates in his own poetic language an imperfect acquisition of the king’s tongue. “Je dirais encore de Marot,” writes Peletier, “que nous n’avons jamais eu en France un Poète de plus heureux naturel: et qu’il n’a eu autre défaut, sinon de n’avoir voulu grand’chose: ayant pu tout ce qu’il a voulu [...]” (247).

This re-appropriation of Marot into the *naturel* of French is revealing on several counts. First, it demonstrates the way in which poetic writing serves to perform a privileged attachment between writer and language—a consubstantial and ‘natural’ one—even when, as in Marot’s case, the very content of the poetry may say otherwise. Inscribed in the metaphysics of nativity outlined by Peletier and Du Bellay, this naturalness effaces the process of acquisition. As this acquisition is effaced, so is the structure of mediation (at once linguistic and ‘economic’) in which Marot places himself ‘in’ French. Even though we cannot, of course, take Marot’s description of this relationship to be any less ideologically inflected than Peletier’s or Du Bellay’s (recalling, for example, Marot’s exaggeration of François’s poetic prowess with respect to his own in the “Petite Epistre au Roy”), the differences in representing French between the poets of these two generations are striking. We have seen that, broadly speaking, Marot and poets of his generation represented themselves as genealogically indebted writers—more translators than authors. Writing in French as *actors*, they modeled—and indeed named—themselves after François, *premier du nom*. Peletier and Du Bellay, as

aggressive representatives of the Pléiade's post-Villers-Cotterêts, post-François generation, speak to a desired diminishing—or even erasure—of the mark of this paternity from the mother tongue. Such erasure does not go without its anxieties; in looking toward the future of the French language in the *Deffence*, Du Bellay figures it as a young plant tentatively breaking through the soil—just as François himself is being buried:

Le temps viendra (peut-être) et je l'espère moyennant la bonne destinée françoise, que ce noble et puissant royaume obtiendra à son tour les rênes de la monarchie, et que notre langue (si avecques François n'est du tout ensevelie la langue françoise) qui commence à jeter ses racines, sortira de terre, et s'eslevera en telle hauteur et grosseur qu'elle se pourra égaler aux mesmes Grecs et Romains.

(229)

François is dead, long live French. As possessor of another, *mother* tongue, the writer is invested with a new, more sovereign status. No longer troubled heir or debtor of his language, the writer may make a claim to it as his (or even her, as Du Bellay hints) 'own.'^{ccxciv} The very insistence upon writerly "affection" for the vernacular—a term Étienne's dictionary suggests was most often applied to a father's feelings toward his children—points to an implicit appropriation of the paternal role by the writer, in relation to 'his' language. Montaigne, too, observes in the essay "De l'affection des Pères aux Enfants" (II, 8) that "affection" is given asymmetrically, from fathers to children, as a function of their hierarchical relationship ("des enfans aux peres, elle n'est pas si grande").^{ccxcv} In the 'mother' tongue, the writer may feel a natural, quasi-paternal affection; no longer the child of the king, he is poised to become the father of his language.

The monolingual folding together of the 'maternal' and 'paternal' thus signals the symbolic possibility of the French writer as author—specifically, exclusively, in his

‘native’ language. Peletier and Du Bellay deny the possibility of proper translation; they deny full appropriation of the ancient languages. These denials give way, in turn, to the offer of French as the writer’s own proper, internalized instrument—to which Peletier’s and Du Bellay’s treatises serve as a supplemental guide for further, more perfect appropriation. When French is made *one*—as an untranslatable body with its own “propriété” in relation to other languages—the writer may become its master. Writing in this French, the writer may write (for) himself. Peletier, as we have seen elsewhere, will insinuate Latin writing to be the means by which the French deprive themselves of their liberty and, indeed, their identity: “C’est bien ici, que nous nous montrons de petit courage [...]. Nous tenons notre Langue esclave nous-mêmes: nous nous montrons étrangers en notre propre pays” (267). The vernacular, no longer the language of the father, is the brave new idiom of selfhood. “Quelle sorte de nation sommes-nous,” Peletier asks, “de parler éternellement par la bouche d’autrui?” (*ibid*). Writing in French, it is you who will speak. In *François*, you are promised your own name, your own voice, your own complete system of language production.

Turning back to Peletier’s naturalization of Marot, we find the ‘cost’ of this new gift of French: Marot’s own ‘maternal’ langue d’oc gets ‘forgotten,’ again. So does his own self-denial of French—that same language now called his ‘natural’ one, in much the same way ancient writers’ Latin is *their* own. As the role of the king as linguistic mediator gets effaced, so do the domestic hierarchies of French—namely, the distinction between different “langues maternelles” and the “langue paternelle Françoisse”—, those differences *still* operating within the name of *François*, despite its new consolidation as object of grammatical and political texts (“langage maternel francoys”). Ronsard, for his

part, will express a certain nostalgia for these other mother tongues in his *Abrégé de l'Art Poétique Français* (1565). Like others of the Pléiade group, Ronsard invokes ancient example to chart the French linguistic scene. Yet unlike Peletier and Du Bellay, he will look further back, to the Greeks—that same example of diversity, we may recall, with which Tory grappled when facing the imperative of French singularity.^{ccxcvi} Ronsard addresses his treatise to Alphonse Delbene, the son of an Italian poet for whom French is a “maternelle” language:

Et noteras que la langue Grecque n'eût jamais été si faconde et abondante en dialectes et en mots qu'elle est, sans le grand nombre de républiques qui fleurissaient en ce temps-là, lesquelles comme amoureuses de leur bien propre, voulaient que leurs doctes citoyens écrivissent au langage particulier de leur nation, et de là sont venus une infinité de dialectes, phrases et manières de parler, qui portent encore aujourd'hui sur le front la marque de leur pays naturel, lesquelles étaient tenues indifféremment bonnes par les doctes plumes qui écrivaient de ce temps-là, car un pays ne peut jamais être si parfait en tout qu'il ne puisse encore quelquefois emprunter je ne sais quoi de son voisin [...]
(Goyet 471)

Ronsard presents the Greek grammatico-political system as a veritable ideal of natural propriety (“leurs doctes citoyens écrivissent au langage particulier de leur nation”) without which “la langue Grecque” would never have flourished. This plurilingual model is inscribed for Ronsard in a bond at once affective (“amoureuses de leur bien propres”), social (“lesquelles étaient tenues indifféremment bonnes par les doctes plumes qui écrivaient de ce temps-là”), and natural (“la marque de leur pays naturel”). In this way, like Tory, Ronsard would seem to be offering “la langue Grecque” as a singular-plural model for French and, moreover, to be proposing that French writers of different regions might write “au langage particulier de leur nation.”

Yet the reality of the poet's France is other; and Ronsard goes on to argue that the Greek model of plurality can no longer apply to the languages of France:

et ne fais point de doute que s'il y avait encore en France des Ducs de Bourgogne, de Picardie, de Normandie, de Bretagne, de Champagne, de Gascogne, qu'ils ne désirassent pour l'honneur de leur altesse, que leurs sujets écrivissent en la langue de leur pays naturel: car les Princes ne doivent être moins curieux d'agrandir les bornes de leur empire, que d'étendre leur langage par toutes nations: mais aujourd'hui pour ce que notre France n'obéit qu'à un seul Roi, nous sommes contraints si nous voulons parvenir à quelque honneur, de parler son langage, autrement notre labeur, tant fût-il honorable et parfait, serait estimé peu de chose, ou (peut-être) totalement méprisé.

(471-72)

For Ronsard, writing in French is not a question of affection, but of cultural and political value. Its appropriateness or *propre* character is the product of a political map dominated by figures of dukes, princes, and a king—not mothers, feelings, and nature. In Ronsard's modern France, poetry can no longer be written in the language of the poet's "pays naturel"—although, even if it could, that language would still be that of provincial *Ducs*, the product of *their* desire ("qu'ils ne désirassent pour l'honneur de leur altesse"). Moreover, as the context shifts from Latin-French to *François*—"langage particulier," French is no longer a language of liberty but one of constraint ("nous sommes contraints... de parler son langage"). Where Peletier and Du Bellay looked to rescue French from cultural "mépris," Ronsard—writing a decade later and from a very different position of status as an author ("prince des poètes et poète des princes")—insists that it is the language *without* which the poet's work will be "méprisé." Poised more than any of his contemporaries to write 'in' French, Ronsard does not need to write *toward* it; indeed, he would seem to acknowledge his internality to French *as* a necessary expropriation to which the French poet must reconcile himself. Earlier in the treatise, Ronsard does continue to develop the notion of French writing as a proprietary activity, advising the young poet on how to appropriate Latin, Greek, and other French dialects into "ton oeuvre." Indeed, when compared to the ancient languages, French is referred to as "ton

langage”; and when compared to Italian, French is recommended as “maternelle.”^{ccxcvii}

Authorial propriety for Ronsard is less a function of ‘native’ possession than an ability to reproduce, on the level of the literary text, the king’s own process of appropriation: be it the *noms propres* of the ancient world or the most meaningful words from this language of ‘ours’:

Tu sauras dextrement choisir et approprier à ton oeuvre les mots les plus significatifs des dialectes de notre France, quand surtout tu n’en auras point de si bons ni de si propres en ta nation, et ne se faut soucier si les vocables sont *Gascons, Poitevins, Normands, Manceaux, Lyonnais*, ou d’autres pays, pourvu qu’ils soient bons et que proprement ils signifient ce que tu veux dire, sans affecter par trop le parler de la cour [...].

(471, original emphasis)

This appropriation runs up against no ‘natural’ boundaries of propriety—be they metaphysical, aesthetic, affective—but rather against the plainer—possibly more persuasive—political fact that in France, you are obliged to write the language of another (“son langage”).

Ronsard’s survey of the French scene of writing strikingly anticipates Étienne Pasquier’s summation from the *Recherches de la France* that “Aujourd’hui [...] nous n’escrivons plus que en un langage, qui est celuy du Roy, que nous appelons langage françois.” This echo (very possibly inspired by a reading of Ronsard) points to an overall waning of ‘native’ vernacular advocacy beginning in the 1560s. Although the so-called ‘rise’ of French with respect to Latin, competing domestic vernaculars, or Italian was far from accomplished on a practical level, we may see that this discourse was no longer as affectively resonant or politically valuable. The ‘natural’ ideal of ancient Greece has given way to a modern socio-political reality of a single authority—one that values only its own language, and recognizes it as the language of all of France. We could say that in

contrast to Peletier or Du Bellay, Ronsard's nostalgia is less for a metaphysical bond to language as epitomized by Roman eloquence than for a more equitable distribution of cultural value. And yet, even for Ronsard, the poet's idiom, which is *still* the king's ("son langage"), is *also* called "maternelle." The *other* 'maternal' languages having fallen out of representation, the poet has only one language in which to write, which both *is* and *is not* his own when he writes it. We may read Ronsard's *Abrégé* as suggesting that the text, a singularly signed space of writing ("ton oeuvre") is where this tension gets played out; where the king's language is appropriated so that the writer's name might survive ("si nous voulons parvenir à quelque honneur"); where the unsharable property of language is shared, without being fully had by one party or the other. In the case of Ronsard, at least, the promise of (self-)possession through native-language authorship seems not to come fully to fruition. Yet what has been instituted by the famous vernacular "revendications" of Villers-Cotterêts and the Pléiade during the 1540s and 1550s is undecidability itself as a fact of French writing—that undecidability present in both the "langage maternel francoys" and the rhetoric of exemplarity. Writing in French you are not yet writing for yourself—but if you care about yourself, or your writing, you can't write otherwise. Still, Ronsard's text begs the question: are "ton langage" (the language of "ton oeuvre") and "son langage" in fact the *same*? Might that undecidable tension of monolingualism leave itself open to be re-appropriated by the poet in turn, as an effect—or affect—of writing?

Chapter Four

Turning the *Propre*

The Resistance of Style in Du Bellay's *Regrets*

O bien heureux celui qui a receu des Dieux
Le don de Surdit  !^{ccxcviii}
(Joachim Du Bellay, "Hymne de la surdit  ")

I want my country to understand me.
But if I'm not understood
 what of it.
I shall pass through my native land
 to one side
As a slanting rain passes by.
(Vladimir Mayakovsky, "Homeward")

Introduction: Du Bellay's Turn as *Translateur*

"Je me suis toujours   tonn   que Du Bellay soit l'auteur [...] de *La D  fense et Illustration de la Langue fran  aise*," comments Jacques Borel in his introduction to the Gallimard edition of the *Regrets*.^{ccxcix} From the opening verse of the first sonnet, the *Regrets* stage a radical departure from both the tone and tenets of the *Deffence*. Such a departure appears all the more striking given the central preoccupations the two texts share: namely, poetic language and France. Yet, in no uncertain terms, the poetic *je* of the *Regrets* announces that this text desires something else from writing. Almost a decade separates the publication of the *Deffence* (1549) and the *Regrets* (1558). The latter work, a sequence of 191 sonnets, was composed largely during the poet's four-year stay in Rome (1553-1557) while serving as secretary to his uncle, Cardinal Jean Du Bellay. The period between the publication of the *Deffence* and Rome was marked for

Du Bellay by a prolonged illness, diminished poetic production, and the onset of hearing loss that would leave him, like his friend Ronsard, *demy-sourd*. The several collections that were published during this time include the *Recueil de Poesie* (1549), a revised and augmented edition of *L'Olive* (1550), *La Musagnoeomachie* (1550), and *Le Tombeau de Marguerite de Valois* (1551). Perhaps most surprisingly, Du Bellay also published a book of translations of Virgil and Ovid along with original poems in 1552. The title of this collection foregrounds the primary importance of the translations over the original works, and identifies Du Bellay's textual status as that of "translateur": *Le quatriesme livre de l'Eneide de Vergile, traduit en vers Francoys. La complainte de Didon à Enée, prinse d'Ovide. Autres oeuvres de l'invention du translateur*.

The very fact of translating of course flew in the face of Du Bellay's unequivocal stance against poetic translation in the *Deffence*^{ccc}: "Celui donc qui voudra faire oeuvre digne de prix en son vulgaire laisse ce labour de traduire, principalement les poètes, à ceux qui de chose laborieuse et peu profitable, j'ose dire encore inutile, voire pernicieuse à l'accroissement de leur langue, emportent à bon droit plus de molestie que de gloire" (*Deffence* I, 6). In the preface to this new collection, the poet-translator recognizes and defends his change of position:

Je n'ay pas oublié ce qu'autrefois j'ay dict des translations poëtiques: mais je ne suis si jalouzelement amoureux de mes premieres apprehensions, que j'aye honte de les changer quelquefois, à l'exemple de tant d'excellens auteurs, dont l'auctorité nous doit oster ceste opiniastre opinion de vouloir tousjours persister en ses advis, principalement en matiere de lettres.^{ccci}

Du Bellay here invokes a new principle of "auctorité," modeled by unnamed "auteurs," which recommends a self-differing and transformative identity over a stubbornly static one. Embedded in this palinode are thus two important implications: first of all, that the terms of identity in the earlier 'defense' of French were contingent—despite the

seemingly transcendent character of the “affection naturelle” attaching writer to country, or the “loi naturelle” binding writer to language^{ccci}; and secondly, that the published text is where such identity gets manifested, professed, and transformed (as “auctorité”).^{ccci} Casting off the stance-taking and law-making modality of the *Deffence*, this Du Bellay suggests that being an “auteur” means the potential to differ from and even contradict oneself in writing (“principalement en matiere de lettres”), to change one’s affections (“je ne suis si jalouvement amoureux de mes premieres apprehensions”).^{ccci}

When addressing the matter of his original poems published in the collection, however, Du Bellay offers a less positive recognition of difference in his writing. This discomfort is voiced in regards to his “style”:

Quand aux oeuvres de mon invention, je ne les estimoi’ dignes de se monstrier au jour [...]: sentant mon style tellement refroidy, et alteré de sa premiere forme, que je commence moyesmes à le descognoistre: mais voyant quelques miens escriz par une infinité de copies tellement depravez, que je ne les pouvoy, ny devoy laisser plus longuement en tel estant, j’ay bien voulu en recueillir une partie des moins malfaictz: attendant l’entiere edition de tous les autres [...].

(ibid)

While the taking of positions (e.g., for or against translation, for or against the vernacular) may be how a public recognizes the writer, Du Bellay suggests that “style” is where the writer recognizes his own writing. Finding it “refroidy, et alteré de sa premiere forme,” the writer no longer knows it as his own: “je commence moyesme à le descognoistre.” More than a simple *lack* of recognition or *mis*-recognition, this *dis*-recognition implies an altering change over time: a moving away from recognition, the familiar become unfamiliar. Jean Nicot’s *Thresor* (1606) offers additional connotations in its entry for *descognoistre*:

Descognoistre, act. pen. Est composé de Des, preposition destructive, et Cognoistre, et signifie n’avoir plus cognoissance de ce qu’autresfois on a cogneu.

[...] Et parce que ce qu'on ne cognoist plus pour la plus part on le nie estre ce qu'il est: on prend descognoistre pour nier, desavoüer, *Negare*, *Diffitere*. [...] Il se prend aussi en mauvaise part, comme se voyant eslevé en un Estat, il descognoist ses parens [...] et comme on dit, *Abiurare*, *Abdicare*.^{cccv}

With the alteration of recognition comes a will to deny the very existence of what was known (“Et parce que ce qu'on ne congoist plus pour la plus part on le nie estre ce qu'il est”). The no-longer-recognizing of *descognoistre* thus opens onto a whole field of negating attitudes and affects that move the old familiar object away from oneself and one's own: denial, disavowal, repudiation, renunciation, disinheritance.

Returning to Du Bellay, what might such a dis-recognition of “[s]on style” entail? A perception of diminished quality—and public recognition of this fact—certainly seems to be a factor (“je ne les estimoi’ dignes de se monstres au jour”). Yet such embarrassment becomes more complicated when we recall that for the author of the *Deffence*, “style” was not merely an individual production but also collective property, a common poetic *fonds*. The *Deffence* speaks to the latter conception in reference to the “nouvelle poésie” it proposes for the French language: “Quant à moi, [...] j’ai toujours estimé notre poésie française être capable de quelque plus haut et meilleur style que celui dont nous nous sommes si longuement contentés” (II, 1). The writer’s investment in this “style” constituted a desire to raise French cultural capital. To write in a style that no longer resembles—and perhaps even repudiates—that of the *Deffence*-era poetry may thus also mean a falling off of that drive to write *for* French and its future. The turn (‘back’) to translation, Du Bellay indicates, is indeed the result of a ‘cooling’ and ‘slowing’ of his former enthusiasm: “ne sentant plus la premiere ardeur de cet Enthusiasme, qui me faisoit librement courir par la carriere de mes inventions, je me suis converty à retracer les pas des anciens, exercice de plus ennuyeux labeur, que d’alegresse

d'esprit [...].” While still offering his text to the collective French “jardin,” Du Bellay recognizes that it represents a different kind of writing investment.^{cccvi}

On the level of the individual *auteur*, the *Deffence* identified “style” as that which necessarily eludes translation; its irreproducibility binds the text to a given language (I, 6). In the preface to his own translations, Du Bellay continues to recognize this untranslatable propriety of style, in principle:

Quand à la translation, il ne fault point, que je me prepare d'excuses en l'endroit de ceux, qui entendent et la peine, et les loix de traduire: et combien il seroit mal aysé d'exprimer tant seulement l'ombre de son aucteur, principalement en ung oeuvre poëtique, qui voudroit par tout rendre periode pour periode, epithete pour epithete, nom propre pour nom propre, et finalement dire ny plus ny moins, et non autrement, que ceully, qui a escrit de son propre style, non forcé de demeurer entre les bornes de l'invention d'autrui.^{cccvii}

The “propre style” of the author represents freedom from the constraint experienced by the translator in his subjection to “la peine, et les loix de traduire.” “Style,” we might say then, is that sovereign element of the writing which resides outside the law, insofar as the law is dictated by another (“non forcé de demeurer entre les bornes de l'invention d'autrui”). “Style,” irreproducible and outside the law, sets the terms of (its own) translation. *Literal* adherence to the author's style—writing “ny plus ny moins, et non autrement”—is thus posited as an inevitable failure of re-presentation on the part of the translator (“il seroit mal aysé d'exprimer tant seulement l'ombre de son aucteur...”). Yet where the Du Bellay of the *Deffence* repudiated translation on these grounds, this new Du Bellay indicates that a kind of negotiation is possible in practice—beyond the principle of *literal* propriety:

Il me semble, veu la contraincte de la ryme, et la difference de la propriété, et structure d'une langue à l'autre, que le translateur n'a point malfaict son devoir, qui sans corrompre le sens de son aucteur, ce qu'il n'a peu rendre d'assez bonne grace en ung endroit s'efforce de le recompenser en l'autre.

(ibid)

In this re-interpretation of the laws and duties of translation, Du Bellay suggests that there might be compensatory textual maneuvering to be had that circumvents the absoluteness of the *propre* in language (“la difference de la propriété, et structure d’une langue à l’autre”). Style might be recuperated in translation after all, if you are willing to “dire autrement,” here and there.

“Ce n’est pas la dernière fois que nous le verrons retourner ainsi en arrière,” writes Henri Chamard of Du Bellay’s embrace of translation with the 1552 collection. In this chapter, I will be looking at how the poetics of the *Regrets* turn away from the *Deffence* and, in turn, away from France and French—the language ‘in’ which the text is written. Du Bellay, as author of both the *Deffence* manifesto and the *Regrets*, has been canonized as the very model of linguistic patriotism; as such, he often represents an emblematic, even exemplary voice of early modern national sentiment (Timothy Hampton, David Hartley). Building upon recent work by Du Bellay scholar Marc Bizer, I will argue that the poet in fact demonstrates a much more nuanced and ambivalent stance toward France and its language. I will ask in particular how this ambivalent stance represents a re-appropriation of his own earlier vernacular advocacy, as well as a negotiation of the institutionalization-in-process of the French ‘mother tongue.’ Writing from a literal and figurative “bord étranger,” in what way might Du Bellay carve out a poetic identity that allows—against Villers-Cotterêts’s infamous prescription—for writing ‘in French’ *and* ‘otherwise’? In the work of this poet remembered above all as the lover of “France, mère des arts, des armes, et des loix,” might there not *also* be a current of resistance that deafens itself to the language of the other and desires to write French in a different voice?

I. The Poetics of Not-Wanting

Like the *Deffence*, the *Regrets* are “directly concerned with the predicament of the modern poet,” in the words of Du Bellay’s recent English translator Richard Helgerson.^{cccviii} The sonnet sequence opens with a statement of its own poetics, which are, again, a rejection of those things most valued in the *Deffence*: poetic sources, poetic aspiration, and even poetic language itself.^{cccix}

Je ne veulx point fouiller au sein de la nature,
Je ne veulx point chercher l’esprit de l’univers,
Je ne veulx point sonder les abysmes couvers,
Ni desseigner du ciel la belle architecture.

Je ne peins mes tableaux de si riche peinture
Et si haults arguments ne recherche à mes vers:
Mais suivant de ce lieu les accidents divers,
Soit de bien, soit de mal, j’escriis à l’aventure

Je me plains à mes vers, si j’ay quelque regret:
Je me ris avec eulx, je leur dy mon secret,
Comme estans de mon coeur les plus seurs secrétaires.

Aussi ne veulx-je tant les pigner et friser,
Et de plus braves noms ne les veulx desguiser
Que de papiers journaulx, ou bien de commentaires.^{cccx}

The verses of the *Regrets* announce themselves by denying their own status as poetry, insofar as ‘poetic’ writing entails a certain set of desires (“chercher l’esprit de l’univers,” etc.) and stylistic choices (“si riche peinture,” “pigner et friser”). The repeated “je ne veulx point” of the first quatrain suggests that denial, as a rejection or casting away, is indeed the key affect here. The sonnets’ intimate and ‘low’ style is established by insistently withholding the poet’s desire from the *topoi* of poetry proper (even though this repetition itself is a stock poetic device). A counter-will relocates the site of these verses from the lofty heights of poetic ambition, moving them ‘down,’ ‘close,’ and ‘in.’ The

vers are thus withdrawn into a friendlier, more domestic verbal scene (“Je me plains à mes vers,” “Je me ris avec eulx, je leur dy mon secret”). The shift in tone between the eighth and ninth verses—the sonnet’s characteristic “turn,” or *volta*—is made all the more dramatic by the change of a single letter in the first two syllables: switching from “je ne” to “je me,” the sonnet turns from outward to inward, negative to reflexive.

As they reject and withdraw from poetry, the *Regrets* gesture toward genres, forms, and a style more appropriate for their familiar, inwardly-oriented affect. We see in Sonnet 1 that illustrious names (“plus braves noms”) are banished as artificial, ornamental. Their place will be filled with the more ‘common’ proper names of the poet’s friends, to whom many of the sonnets will be addressed. In the final verse of Sonnet 1—that line of the sonnet meant at once to encapsulate the poem and send it off—the *Regrets* are explicitly compared to the non-literary prose genres of “papiers journaulx.” Non-poetic in both form and function, “papiers journaulx” are daily records for personal use. Such texts would certainly not be destined for that fate the *Deffence* set as its ultimate poetic ambition, to “faire chose digne de l’immortalité” (262). Sonnet 6 affirms this renunciation of posterity, linking it to an estrangement of the poetic Muses from this text/writer:

De la postérité je n’ay plus de soucy,
Ceste divine ardeur, je ne l’ay plus aussi,
Et les Muses de moy, comme estranges, s’enfuyent.^{cccxi}
(VI, 12-14)

Sonnet 2, which addresses the poet’s friend Pierre de Paschal, similarly asserts the explicit connection between the tempering of such ambition and the adoption of a prose style:

Aussi veulx-je (Paschal) que ce que je compose
Soit une prose en ryme, ou une ryme en prose,

Et ne veulx pour cela le laurier mériter.^{cccxi}
(II, 9-11)

Rejecting the laurels of poetry in advance, the “prose en ryme ou [...] ryme en prose” offers a personal text of no glory or public utility. This project thus differs in nature from Du Bellay’s former work.^{cccxi} Moreover, it stands in marked contrast to the *Franciade*, the epic poem that Ronsard had been commissioned to write and was toiling over as Du Bellay was composing the *Regrets*.^{cccxi} Du Bellay’s literary friend and rival, Ronsard appears throughout the sonnet sequence as the model of the poet Du Bellay has renounced wanting to be.^{cccxi} The *Regrets*’ humble prose poem is offered as the style of a *different* poet—different, that is, from both Ronsard and the former Du Bellay who may have wanted to be ‘like’ him. The present writing-desire of the *Regrets* is turned away from writing as a project of public service or renown toward writing for itself, for this moment and this feeling—not even, as Ronsard is told in Sonnet 22, “pour m’enrichir,” but merely “pour tromper mes ennuyes” (XXII, 9-10).^{cccxi}

As ‘art-less’ prose poems, the *Regrets* present themselves as transparent: roughly transcribed, unworked, off-handed (Sonnet 1’s “j’escry à l’aventure”).^{cccxi} Sonnet 21 suggests in a similar vein that

Si j’escry quelquefois, je n’escry point d’ardeur,
J’escry naïvement tout ce qu’au coeur me touche,
Soit de bien, soit de mal, comme il vient à la bouche,
En un stile aussi lent, que lente est ma froideur.^{cccxi}
(XXI, 5-8)

The de-poeticization of verse, then, implies not only a diminishing of poetic ambition and function, but also a diminished mediation in the translation of affect. Du Bellay’s verses no longer look to a divine “ardeur” to move the poet from without. Instead, shifting the

center of this poetic universe ever ‘inward’, they transcribe that which touches the “coeur.” Moreover, they do so ‘naïvely’ or ‘natively.’ This metaphysically-loaded “naïvement” implies that, now, there is no loss in the translation from “coeur” to page. If the act of writing is not effaced in such a gesture (we are told twice in this quatrain that “j’escry”), the writing surface itself is corporealized and introjected—made into a mouth (“J’escry [...] à la bouche”). Writing becomes a ‘natural’ transcription, the apparently spontaneous arrival of language as speech.^{cccix} There is in fact no ‘translation’ posited in this transcription, insofar as this term had implied essential difference and necessary loss between two texts, writers, languages. This writing, on the contrary, occurs within the self-same system of the poet-page. Verse 8’s “style” is thus produced through an ‘internal,’ “naïf” movement. As such, it is a true presentation (and not translation or representation), a faithful language of affect (“En un stile aussi lent, que lente est ma froideur”).

This appearance of the term “naïvement” additionally flags a crucial piece of the *Regrets*’ relationship to the *Deffence*. This term strongly echoes Du Bellay’s former conception of native-language writing as “naïf”: inherent, unlearned, unmediated, inimitable. Here, however, “naïf” is applied very specifically to his own “stile” (rather than all of French, opposed to Latin or Greek). The metaphysical identity of the native language as language-of-writing is, in other words, appropriated by the poet and aesthetically refashioned into his own particular, ‘non-poetic’ poetic affect. In Sonnet 4 (below), the poet similarly builds upon the rhetoric of vernacular advocacy while simultaneously broadcasting a will to break from the tenets of the *Deffence*. The central argument of the *Deffence*, we may recall, was that imitating the forms of Greek, Roman,

and Italian poets would ‘enrich’ the French language and bring glory to the vernacular poet.^{ccccx} The first quatrain below calls upon each former model in turn—this time not to establish a cultural genealogy, but instead, like Peletier’s “j’escrí en langue maternelle,” to sever old ties of *imitatio*:

Je ne veulx feuilleter les exemplaires Grecs,
 Je ne veulx retracer les beaux traicts d’un Horace,
 Et moins veulx-je imiter d’un Pétrarque la grace,
 Ou la voix d’un Ronsard, pour chanter mes regrets.

Ceux qui sont de Phoeubs vrais poètes sacrez,
 Animeront leurs vers d’une plus grand’ audace:
 Moy, qui suis agité d’une fureur plus basse,
 Je n’entre si avant en si profonds secretz.^{ccccxi}
 (IV, 1-8)

In a direct reprise of Sonnet 1, these quatrains pair insistent rejection with the figurative diminishing of the poet’s own work. Unlike the works of Horace, Petrarch, or Ronsard, Du Bellay’s verse is minor, low (despite the fact that Horace’s *Satires* and *Epistles* are notable generic and stylistic influences); its ‘secrets’ are its own, not those of ancient poetic divinity (see Sonnet 1). The Du Bellay of the *Deffence* heralded other poets as admired, ‘sacred’ models—even if this admiration demonstrated all the ambivalence of the emulatory mode of *imitatio*. The *je* of the *Regrets* casts off this old desire by denying these names their former to-be-imitated status. We might, then, regard this casting-off as an affective re-mapping akin to Peletier’s promotion of the “langue maternelle” (notably in “A un poète qui n’escrivoit qu’en Latin”). Like Peletier, Du Bellay looks to transform the attachment of *imitatio* into auto-affection through a negating movement of dis-affection. His strategy is basic but affectively forceful; with each *je ne veulx* of the first quatrain, the poet implicitly negates the other-admiring *je veulx* that motivates *imitatio*.

In this reversal, the desire for/of the other—be it Greeks, Horace, Petrarch, Ronsard, or the former Du Bellay—drops away, allowing its negative image to emerge: the *propre*.

Once again, we find that the structure of the sonnet (proposition or problem leading into emotional reversal or resolution) is particularly productive and apt for the affective movement of the *Regrets*' poetics. With the "turn" into the tercets in Sonnet 4, there is a dramatic opening on the propriety of the text:

Je me contenteray de simplement escrire
Ce que la passion seulement me fait dire,
Sans rechercher ailleurs plus graves arguments.

Aussi n'ay-je entrepris d'imiter en ce livre
Ceulx qui par leurs escripts se vantent de revivre,
Et se tirer tout vifz dehors des monuments.^{cccxxii}
(IV, 9-14)

The quatrains' insistent not-wanting resolves into a contented, 'simple,' non-imitative mode of writing. Desire is tempered, drawn 'down', in order for the poetic project proper to the *Regrets* to unfold. In this way, too, then, the *Regrets* craft their poetics by radically appropriating the central principle of the Pléiade's vernacular advocacy—negatively-motivated propriety—and transforming it into a poetics of the *propre*. Further metaphysical properties of the vernacular native language or "langue maternelle" follow in step: this writing does not need to look outside of itself ("sans rechercher ailleurs") or its natural, present state (not like "ceux par leurs escripts se vantent de revivre"); it is for now and here, for the intimate and particular.

Despite this emphatic rejection of imitation, however, the *Regrets* are not in fact without poetic models. Ovid's exile writings, the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, are widely recognized as major generic influences (as are Horace's *Satires* and *Epistles* to a lesser extent). In the case of Ovid, Du Bellay does not take pains to hide this fact: the

title of the *Regrets* openly echoes the *Tristia*; the preambulatory sonnet “À son livre” strongly evokes, even paraphrases the *Tristia*’s opening verses^{ccccxiii}; in Sonnet 10, Du Bellay draws an explicit comparison between Ovid’s situation in exile and his own.^{ccccxiv}

A distinct tension appears to be present, then, in Du Bellay’s performance of the *propre* as non-imitative, non-desirous of the other. A title and preface with an overt model, followed immediately by the declaration that “je n’ay entrepris d’imiter en ce livre [...]”? Wouldn’t this seem to constitute a performative paradox or textual *aporia*? What’s more, far from being buried or hidden in the work, this tension figures at the work’s *incipit*. In this way, it would seem in fact to mobilize the writing of the *Regrets*. By imitating Ovid and then immediately denying that he is imitating, Du Bellay takes on this conflict as a dynamic of composition—just as he takes on the conflict between prose and poetry, or between his past and present desires. The performance of non-desirous poetic propriety is in fact created and *sustained* in the tension of inviting the other poet in, and then keeping him at bay with resistance (“je ne veulx”) and innovation (for example, writing prose-like verse, introducing satire and elegy to the Petrarchan sonnet). Throughout the *Regrets*, Du Bellay repeatedly names his place of writing as a foreign shore or boundary (“ce bord estranger”^{ccccxv}, “le bord incogneu d’un estrange rivage”^{ccccxvi}). While on one level this “bord” certainly designates the actual location of writing (Rome), we might also understand such a foreign shore as the necessary backdrop for the performance of the *propre*. Resistance, perhaps, is the key affect of the *propre*: the resistance of approach and withdrawal, the feeling of what lies just beyond the turn. As if, perhaps, the sense of one’s *own* writing, the ‘simple’ contentment of auto-affection, could only emerge on the

banks of alterity—much as the “langue maternelle” is always just beyond this *other* language of writing.

As we saw above, Sonnet 2 affirms the *Regrets*’ status as unambitious prose-poems:

Aussi veulx-je (Paschal) que ce que je compose
Soit une prose en ryme, ou une ryme en prose,
Et ne veulx pour cela le laurier mériter.
(II, 9-11)

The tercet that follows appears, at first glance, to voice a curious contradiction by boasting about the poet’s craftsmanship:

Et peult estre que tel se pense bien habile,
Qui trouvant de mes vers la ryme si facile,
En vain travaillera, me voulant imiter.^{cccxxvii}
(II, 12-14)

The declaration echoes Horace’s *Ars Poetica*:

Ex noto fictum carmen sequar, ut sibi quiuis
Speret idem, sudet multum frustra que labore
Ausus idem; tantum series iuncturaque pollet,
Tantum de medio sumptis accedit honoris.^{cccxxviii}

(I shall aim at fashioning a poem from quite familiar elements so that anyone might anticipate doing as well, might sweat profusely at it, and yet labor in vain after having ventured to do what I have done: so great is the power of arrangement and linkage, so great is the grace that is added to words that are adapted from ordinary language.^{cccxxix})

Taking into account this echo of Horace and the poetics of propriety developed in nearby sonnets, Du Bellay’s apparent boast effectively suggest that the *Regrets*’ verses are essentially inimitable—because they are bound, “naïvement,” to the writer. As Horace’s lines indicate, the force of such binding lies not in the words themselves (they are from a common pool, “ex noto,” “de medio sumptis”), but rather in the sonnets’ style. Much as

(according to Peletier and the *Deffence*) it is impossible to equal a native speaker when writing in a foreign language, any other poet's attempt to duplicate his rhymes will be "en vain." Sonnet 148 of the *Regrets* reprises vernacular advocacy's theme of native language inimitability:

Autant comme lon peult en un autre langage
Une langue exprimer, autant que la nautre
Par l'art se peult monstrier, et que par la peinture
On peult tirer au vif un naturel visage [...] ^{ccccxxx}
(CIIL, 1-4)

By appropriating the affective and metaphysical characteristics of the 'native' language, the opening sonnets of the *Regrets* imply that they, too, constitute "une langue" that cannot properly be expressed "en un autre langage." The significance of the inherent and 'untranslated' nature of Du Bellay's "naïf" style thus comes into sharper focus: like the maternal source of the native language, this approach to style represents an *essentially* irreproducible relationship between the writer and the language of the text. This language cannot be entirely appropriated by the other; "naïf," something about it remains fundamentally inimitable.

Already in the *Deffence* Du Bellay proposed a relatedness between the *propre* character of each language and that of each author. In the prohibition of translation we saw earlier in this chapter, Du Bellay describes the essential elements of "éloquence," concluding that, "je ne croirai jamais qu'on puisse bien apprendre tout cela des traducteurs, pource qu'il est impossible de le rendre avec la même grâce dont l'auteur en a usé: d'autant que chacune langue a je ne sais quoi propre seulement à elle [...]" (233). For the Du Bellay of the *Deffence*, these two spheres of property or propriety—that of the author, that of the language—are the same. They are conflated, indeed, as long as they

remain on the side of the other author in the other language (Latin, Greek, Italian). In that context, the ‘glory’ of one (author) is the ‘enrichment’ and ‘growth’ of the other (language); the literary text is a shared, common proprietary undertaking. Yet for the Du Bellay of the *Regrets*, the extent to which the domains of the author (himself) and the language (French) are coextensive is less evident; this Du Bellay seems less willing to share what is his, *propre*.^{cccxix} The language of the *Regrets* positions itself tensely, as we have seen, “au bord étranger” in relation to the ‘others’ of poetic language and *imitatio*. It does so by partially—not fully—canceling its prior engagements with them (and with the former Du Bellay) as announced in the *Deffence*. In a similar vein, the language of the *Regrets* appears to want to withhold itself, in part, from the appropriating circulation of French literary writing. Sonnet 2, as we saw, postures an ambivalent attitude toward the future imitation of the *Regrets*: recognizing the potential desire to imitate, and even issuing a kind of challenge that might spark such imitation (“En vain travaillera, me voulant imiter”), Du Bellay simultaneously puts a preemptive stop on this desire, raising the defensive barrier of propriety. The *Deffence* had lamented the lack of good *exemples* from which vernacular writers might draw (“Je voudrais bien que notre langue fût si riche d’exemples domestiques que n’eussions besoin d’avoir recours aux étrangers”) (238). And yet the *Regrets* do not ostensibly aim to add themselves to the collective national pot. Again, most unlike Ronsard’s *Franciade*, they are not written in order to enrich “nostre langue” or serve the future French poet (255). We might add becoming an *exemple*, then, to the long list of things that Du Bellay does not want—that list of things whose resistance produces style, the *propre*-as-inimitable production of language.

The effect of this desire for style, then, is to inscribe something *like* the metaphysical difference between languages (native vs. foreign) ‘within’ the French language. Irreproducible, inalienable from its author, Du Bellay’s “style” is offered as alienated in some *essential* way from other French. Its difference from what is properly ‘recognized’ as French is most visible in Du Bellay’s continued opposition of his writing to that of Ronsard: France’s poet laureate, author-to-be of the *Franciade*, the poetic voice of the king. The explicit rejection of “la voix de Ronsard” alongside that of foreign poets (Sonnet 4) further indicates that the difference between poetic languages ‘in’ French is tantamount to a difference between ‘foreign’ languages—and that establishing the language of the *Regrets* means turning away not only from properly ‘foreign’ authors, but also, especially, from that other dominant French voice. Crucially, however, the idiom of the *Regrets* is not an *entirely* ‘foreign’ language. Its rhymes are ‘easy’; its prose-poem style lends itself to readability; it allies itself with non-literary language (“papiers journaux,” “commentaires”); it utilizes a ‘common’ vocabulary (Horace: “ex noto”; the *Deffence*: “[des] mots propres, usités, et non aliénés du commun usage de parler”) (233). In this way, the language of the *Regrets* positions itself, once again, not beyond the reach of the other but rather, tensely and defensively, “au bord étranger”—this time, on the border of Frenchness, as an ‘other.’

As we will see further below, the propriety of “stile” is posited precisely in the tension that ‘turns’ the *propre* on itself through tropes and turns of phrase, through ambivalence of sense and reference. Such ‘internal’ French difference as a product of literary writing is not, of course, envisioned by the *Deffence*, where “le poète et l’orateur sont comme les deux piliers qui soutiennent l’édifice de chacune langue” (256). With

the turn of the *propre*, it would seem the writer may no longer be (only) a supporter of ‘his’ *langue*; his writing, likewise, may no longer be (only) language-building. As French was once at odds with Latin, the writer may now be positioned against his language, in his own name. If Du Bellay’s earlier defense of the French language was motivated, in its terms, by a ‘natural affection’ for the French *patrie*,^{cccxixii} what affective relationship to country and language might be at work in the *Regrets*’ turn toward a singular, proper style? How might the activity of writing represent not an inscription of the poetic subject within the embrace of the common language, but rather somewhere else (“au bord étranger”)—touching it, even disappearing into it, perhaps, but also pushing back up against it?

II. Writing *à regret*

...nescit uox missa reuerti.^{cccxixiii}
(Horace, *Ars Poetica*)

Several meanings of the word *regret* are most commonly emphasized in analyses of Du Bellay’s work. These include: the desire for something absent or lost, as in the *disiderium patriae* of which Du Bellay himself writes in the Latin *Poemata*; the poet’s lyrical laments or complaints; disappointment or disillusionment—a continuation of the shattered idealizations of the *Antiquitez de Rome*; and finally remorse, for having ‘abandoned’ France. If we turn to Jean Nicot’s *Thresor* (1606), however, an additional sense—and a critical one in light of the poetics outlined above—presents itself. Under the entry from “Regret,” Nicot does list *Desyderium* as the first definition, offering three examples of this use^{cccxixiv}; “regret” is also defined as regret or remorse for an action taken.^{cccxixv} The largest number of examples—indicating both a commonality and

potential ambiguity of sense—are provided for the locution “à regret,” as in “contre son vouloir et à regret.” This expression is defined through a range of Latin examples, which designate a variety of feelings of not-wanting—unwillingness, reluctance, resistance, rejection, or absence of desire—in performing an action, service, or task, or in hearing something said (*ingratis, resistente, tristis* etc.).^{cccxv}

Following the order of presentation in Nicot’s *Thresor*, we could say that what the sequence’s designation as *Les Regrets* first evokes—in a first “layer” or “movement” of sense—is desire and lack, *desiderium patriae*, homesickness. It is the affective material of the verses themselves: “Je me plains à mes vers, si j’ai quelque regret” (I, 9); this feeling is oriented explicitly toward “France”: “Je me pourmène seul sur la rive Latine,/ La France regretant” (XIX, 5-6). In a second movement, we have remorse: *regret* is the lyrical turning of this affect back on “himself”: “Ce triste repentir, qui [...] m’a fait (soit que je suis) abandonner la France” (XXVIII, 9-14). Yet in a third movement, we have this “contre vouloir” associated with *regret*. In verse 9 of Sonnet 1, “Je me plains à mes vers, si j’ai quelque regret,” we might even operate a kind of substitution of signifiers to see the announcement, from the opening sonnet, of this third sense (which, again, follows that opening series of “Je ne veulx...”). If “mes vers” are “les regrets”—a fact which this verse itself recalls—then this verse *also* reads “Je me plains à [les] *regret*[s].” The remainder of this chapter will be dedicated to teasing out this *à regret* in Du Bellay’s writing—that is, the ways in which the *Regrets* effect multiple movements of sense in which a superficially desiring or remorseful affect gives way, upon counter-reading, to an undercurrent of “contre vouloir” or resistance ‘in’ French.

Writing Constraint

The first 130 of the *Regrets*' 191 sonnets are believed to have been composed during the final year of Du Bellay's stay in Rome, and the last 61 sonnets written after his return to France in late 1557.^{cccxvii} The full sequence was published in 1558 under the title *Les Regrets et Autres Oeuvres Poétiques*, as were the other works composed abroad (the *Antiquitez de Rome*, the *Divers Jeux Rustiques*, the Latin *Poemata*). As the autobiographical verses of the *Regrets* insist, Du Bellay was in Rome for business rather than pleasure. (Sonnet 10 informs Ronsard that it is the poet's "espoir misérable," and "cruel destin" that hold him there, "non le joug amoureux" (X, 7-8).^{cccxviii}) Cardinal Jean Du Bellay, the older cousin to whom Joachim had dedicated the *Deffence et Illustration de la langue françoise*, was sent by Henri II as an envoy to the papal court. The younger Du Bellay accompanied his cousin, serving as his secretary and *intendant*.^{cccxix} The fact of this service is a dominant theme of the early sonnets, portrayed repeatedly as the unhappy cause of the poet's exile and ensuing distress.^{cccxl} Sonnet 14 makes explicit that the *vers* are a repository for the social frustrations of Du Bellay the functionary:

Si l'importunité d'un créateur me fasche,
Les vers m'ostent l'ennuy du fascheux créateur:
Et si je suis fâché d'un fascheux serviteur,
Dessus les vers (Boucher) soudain je me défasche.

Si quelqu'un dessus moy sa colère délasche,
Sur les vers je vomis le venin de mon coeur:
Et si mon foible esprit est recreu du labeur,
Les vers font que plus frais je retourne à ma tasche.

Les vers chassent de moy la molle oisiveté,
Les vers me font aymer la douce liberté,
Les vers chantent pour moy ce que dire je n'ose.

Si donc j'en recueillis tant de profits divers,
Demandes-tu (Boucher) de quoy servent les vers,

Et quel bien je reçois de ceulx que je compose?^{cccxi}

The poetic space in this instance is proposed as an antithesis to service,^{cccxlii} the possibility of experiencing freedom (“la douce liberté”) in a life otherwise constrained by the other.^{cccxlili} The “profit” (l. 12) of such writing is posited precisely in its removal from a world of social and political value; their only service is to the poet—specifically, the poet as non-functionary. We may contrast this, once again, to the writing of Ronsard:

Tu courtises les Roys, et d’un plus heureux son
Chantant l’heur de Henry, qui son siècle décore,
Tu t’honores toy mesme, et celui qui honore
L’honneur que tu luy fais par ta docte chanson.^{cccxliv}
(XVI, 5-8)

Ronsard’s writing, his “docte chanson,” is an exchange of praise and “honneur” with the king. Du Bellay’s, on the contrary, establishes itself in the rejection of his social world, which is that of the “créditeur” and “serviteur.” Its pages collect this world’s ‘bad’ feeling (“colère,” etc.); they accumulate as a site of affective and even corporeal transfer (“Et si je suis fâché [...] dessus les vers [...] soudain je me défâche”; “Sur les vers je vomis le venim de mon coeur”). The possibility of such affective expression is, again, offered (to Boucher) as the private value of the verses. Out there, I am muted; in here, the writing may speak: “Les vers chantent pour moy ce que dire je n’ose.” That social world is a place of tensions and dissimulation; this writing is a place of release, of transparency and identity between inside and outside (Sonnet 21: “J’escriis naïvement tout ce qu’au coeur me touche”; Sonnet 47: “Voy la mienne [douleur] en ces vers sans artifice peinte,/ Comme sans artifice est ma simplicité” (4-5)).

In later sonnets, however, writing is evoked as a source of tension, constraint, and potentially dissimulating activity—a continuation, in other words, of his activity as a

functionary rather than a break from it. The poet laments in Sonnet 42 that he is not a *Pasquino* or *Marforio*, the statues upon which anonymous satirical writings were posted in sixteenth-century Rome.^{cccxliv}

Pleust à Dieu que je fusse un Pasquin ou Marphore:

Je n'aurais sentiment du malheur qui me poingt,
Ma plume seroit libre, et si ne craindrois point
Qu'un plus grand contre moy peust exercer son ire.

Assure toy, Vineus, que celuy seul est Roy,
À qui mesme les Rois ne peuvent donner loy,
Et qui peult d'un chacun à son plaisir escrire.^{cccxlv}
(XLII, 8-14)

Du Bellay's social position—secretary to his uncle, “serviteur inutile,” exiled poet—is here brought into the space of the verses as a constraint of writing. Freedom of “plume” and “plaisir” in writing, it is suggested, derive only from a position outside or above social hierarchy (“un plus grand”) and the law of kings. In the sonnet that immediately follows, the poet testifies to his upstanding citizenry and law-abiding nature:

Je ne commis jamais fraude, ne maléfice,
Je ne doutay jamais des poincts de nostre foy,
Je n'ai point violé l'ordonnance du Roy,
Et n'ay point éprouvé la rigueur de la justice

J'ay fait à mon seigneur fidèlement service,
Je fais pour mes amis ce que je puis et doy,
Et croy que jusqu'ici nul ne se pleint de moy,
Que vers luy j'aye fait quelque mauvais office.

Voilà ce que je suis. Et toutefois, Vineus,
Comme un qui est aux dieux et aux hommes haineux
Le malheur me poursuit et tousjours m'importune^{cccxlvi}
[...]

(XLIII, 1-11)

The word “ordonnance” in verse 3 is, of course, a fairly ordinary one. Nevertheless, immediately following the final tercet of Sonnet 42 (“Assure toy, Vineus, que celuy seul est Roy [...]”), it calls to mind the prescription of the 1539 *ordonnance* to write in the

king's language (as well as the closing legal formulation "car tel est nostre plaisir," which became standard under François I).^{cccxlvi} The Edict of Villers-Cotterêts did not in any direct way regulate literary composition. Yet, as we have seen in preceding chapters, the Edict coincides with a broader movement to appropriate and institutionalize vernacular writing in France. In Du Bellay's laments we witness a lyricization of this encounter: its new dynamic of writing, its tensions, frustrations and "constraints." What's more, we see more clearly how the meeting of "langage maternel" and "francoys" entails the merging of literary, political, and personal languages in writing.^{cccxli} In this way, Marc Bizer argues, the *Regrets* "demonstrate that thirty years before Montaigne's *Essays*, works existed in French where personal and political matters were combined seamlessly in public writing" (105). Elsewhere, however, we have seen the combination of personal and political in writing—as "maternel" and "francoys"—be less than seamless. Just as there was an "ou" erased to make the "langage maternel francoys" come together ("et non autrement"), might there not also be a kind of palimpsestual reserve in Du Bellay's text expressing (some) resistance to this merging?^{ccccl}

The recognition of politically-determined constraint over poetic writing already implies, subtly perhaps, that the *Regrets* might not say everything as openly as their claim of "naïveté" could lead one to believe, even recognizing the artful *genus humile* being crafted. The evocation of *Pasquino* and *Marforio* above (XLII, 8) signals in fact a very specific mode of poetic expression. These 'talking statues' were a state-sanctioned (if sometimes barely tolerated) forum through which a Roman "literature of disillusionment and satire" took shape as public discourse (Partner 202). Du Bellay makes no secret of his disillusionment; a large number of the *Regrets*' later sonnets are essentially

pasquinades, lampooning members of the Papal court and satirizing Roman society. Yet in the verses above, Du Bellay announces the wish not just to write satire, but indeed to *be* a *Pasquino* or *Marforio* (“Pleust à Dieu que je fusse un Pasquin ou Marphore”)—to be, as a writer, one of Rome’s ‘talking statues.’ “The heart of what is both powerful and missing in the *Pasquino* is precisely its voice,” suggests Leonard Barkan in *Unearthing the Past* (227). “The statue is silent [...]; but it speaks with uncanny force. This fearfully articulate silence is often figured as power” (ibid). The kind of ‘speaking’ the poet of the *Regrets* suggests he would like to do—perhaps the only one possible when obeying the law of another—is a muted speech; its effect is had in that “uncanny force” of silent expression. In Sonnet 48, Du Bellay more overtly links the social ‘constraint’ of his plume to muteness and a powerful build-up of affect:

Ô combien est heureux, qui n’est contraint de feindre
 Ce que la vérité le contreint de penser,
 Et à qui le respect d’un qu’on n’ose offenser
 Ne peult la liberté de sa plume contreindre!

Las, pourquoy de ce noeü sens-je la mienne estreindre,
 Quand mes justes regrets je cuide commencer?
 Et pourquoy ne se peult mon ame dispenser,
 De ne sentir son mal, ou de s’en pouvoir pleindre?

On me donne la genne, et si n’ose crier,
 On me voit tourmenter, et si n’ose prier
 Qu’on ait pitié de moy. O peine trop sugette!

Il n’est feu si ardent, qu’un feu qui est enclos,
 Il n’est si fâcheux mal, qu’un mal qui tient à l’os,
 Et n’est si grand’ douleur, qu’une douleur muette.^{cccli}

The opening quatrain places the poet’s plume in a kind of double bind, subject to two mutually exclusive ‘constraints’: that of (affective) truth on the one hand, and a socio-affective structure of fear and respect on the other. Such that even as these verses are being written (“Quand mes justes regrets je cuide commencer”), the pen is still tied in a

knot (l. 5) of not being able to express that which cannot *not* be felt. The poet is not just a subject, he is doubly subjected (“trop sugette!”). Far from giving voice to an unleashed “venin,” we find that the poems, too, are a place of withholding (“si n’ose crier”; “si n’ose prier”)—that affect is not spilling over into them but rather is closed up, silenced, held close to the bone.

In this light, we may reread Sonnet 14’s assertion that “Les vers chantent pour moy ce que dire je n’ose” to suggest that there are things the poet cannot ‘say,’ but that the verses, through their ‘singing’—that is, their specifically poetic devices—might express. Literary critic Thomas Docherty highlights this very line in his analysis of the role tropes play in Renaissance poetry as “a possible means of circumventing censorship and a dominant ideology” (Docherty 159). Docherty suggests that by assigning the *Regrets* a more subtle truth-telling role, Du Bellay offers “linguistic ‘play’ or style as a means of making historical statements and actions, and of getting such statements past the censoring authorities, political, ecclesiastical, ideological and psychological” (ibid). We have already seen how for Du Bellay, the notion of “style” itself posits a kind of resistant ambivalence to identification with France and a monolingual French-language community. How might certain effects of this style—tropes, word play, intertextual reference, and other rhetorical maneuvers—further work to ‘communicate’ this resistance within an ostensibly “patriotic” poetic statement?

Bleating in French

As the absent *patrie*, France is a pervasive presence in the *Regrets*. The way in which France is represented stands in marked contrast to the sonnets’ pictorial depiction

of Rome.^{ccclii} Bracketed by the context of exile, Du Bellay's "France" is the product of an intensified affective relation.^{cccliii} Traditionally, this affect has been read as one of homesickness, longing, and affection. Indeed, it is not difficult to see why such a reading has held sway. What the *Regrets* seem to 'regret' most of all is having left the home, hearth, and friendship of France. Sonnet 19 expresses its *regret* in that "first" sense of desiring or longing—the poet's *desiderium patriae*:

Je me pourmène seul sur la rive Latine,
La France regretant, et regretant encor
Mes antiques amis, mon plus riche trésor,
Et le plaisant séjour de ma terre Angevine.^{cccliv}
(XIX, 5-8)

There is no question that the sonnets offer, perhaps primarily, the lamentations of an unwilling *exilé*. Any further nuancing of this affective attitude has, too often, been hindered by Du Bellay's identification—indeed, his veritable *self*-identification—as a "patriotic" poet.^{ccclv} If the *Regrets* can be viewed as "an intimate poetic journal of that homesickness which patriotism fosters in the heart of a sensitive exile,"^{ccclvi} or if the collections' affective attitude toward its country gets read as "sentimental" and "tendre,"^{ccclvii} this is largely because the sonnets present *themselves* this way. Similarly, that scholar David Hartley would dedicate an entire monograph to Du Bellay's patriotism, arguing as his point of departure that this element is "not incidental to Du Bellay's poetry but arguably its most important," suggests that Du Bellay's writing is deeply—and, on some level, positively, even "affectionately"—engaged with France.^{ccclviii} For Hartley, the *Regrets* indeed represent a "quintessential expression" of this patriotism. Such a view is buttressed, of course, by Du Bellay's engagements prior to his stay in Rome. How not to view as a "patriot" the author of the *Deffence* and a member of the Pléiade—that group which, as a collective, helped shape early modern

French patriotism, putting it (and even the word *patrie* itself) at the center of French literary and cultural discourse? The Du Bellay with which we are most familiar is the one who, despite all the superficial differences between the *Deffence*, the *Regrets*, and other works, is characterized by an unfailing love—“un amour pur et passionné” in the words of Jacques Borel—for the French language. Affectively speaking, this Du Bellay stands as a model of French linguistic subjectivity. As Timothy Hampton observes in *Literature and Nation*, Du Bellay’s “formulations of Frenchness” became canonical; his poetic subject (“nostalgic, unpretentious, amicable, straight-talking”) would become the characteristic French national subject.^{ccclix} Moreover, for Hampton, Du Bellay’s addresses to his friends continue to represent a *Deffence*-style advocacy and ‘friendship’ for France: “Since the coterie is engaged in redefining French poetics, by speaking *to* his friends, Du Bellay can see himself as speaking *for* France” (165, original emphasis).

Two of the most-read and most ostensibly “patriotic” sonnets in the *Regrets* are Sonnet 9 (“France, mère des arts...”) and Sonnet 31 (“Heureux qui comme Ulysse...”). Marc Bizer has analyzed in a recent article how the latter sonnet reveals a stronger provincial than national identification on the part of the poet, calling into question Du Bellay’s poetic—and political—attachment to an abstract French *patrie*.^{ccclx} In a similar fashion, I will look here at Sonnet 9 to see how the superficially patriotic affect of “France, mère des arts” in fact contains the subtle workings of stylistic resistance. The sonnet opens with an apostrophe to the French ‘mother’ that recalls the ‘maternal’ vocabulary of vernacular advocacy; the call here, however, is to a breast that has been withdrawn:

France, mère des arts, des armes et des loix,
 Tu m’as nourry longtemps du lait de ta mamelle:
 Ores, comme un aigneau qui sa nourrice appelle,

Je remplis de ton nom les antres et les bois.

Si tu m'as pour enfant advoué quelquefois,
Que ne me respons-tu maintenant, ô cruelle?
France, France, respons à ma triste querelle:
Mais nul, sinon Écho, ne répond à ma voix.

Entre les loups cruels j'erre parmy la plaine,
Je sens venir l'hyver, de quoi la froide haleine
D'une tremblante horreur fait hérissier ma peau.

Las, tes autres aig-neaux n'ont faute de pasture,
Ils ne craignent le loup, le vent, ny la froidure:
Si ne suis-je pourtant le pire du troupeau.^{ccclxi}

On a first reading, this sonnet voices a straightforward *desiderium patriae*. The exiled writer expresses his longing for the absent France—his mother, solace, and source of poetic nourishment. The elegiac affect dominates, heavily. Moreover, the sonnet's famous apostrophe to the 'mother of arts, arms and laws' waves its flag of patriotic agenda—not only by maternally cathecting to France, but more significantly by usurping the role classically assigned to Rome as cradle of civilization (and casting Rome, in contrast, as a cold wilderness). Echoing the poet's observation in the *Antiquitez de Rome* that Rome is no longer Rome,^{ccclxii} Sonnet 9 suggests that the seat of culture and power has moved to France, where the poet longs to return. As Mary Lewis Shaw notes in the *Cambridge Introduction to French Poetry*, the tercets of Sonnet 9 additionally effect a symbolic inversion of Rome's own founding myth: Romulus and Remus rescued and suckled by the she-wolf. For this series of reasons, Shaw—echoing the traditional assessment of this poem—does not hesitate to nominate “France, mère des arts...” as “one of Du Bellay's most baldly patriotic sonnets.”^{ccclxiii}

Yet there is an important counter-current present in this much-cited apostrophe to France. As much as it laments, Sonnet 9 also *affirms* the rupture between the French breast and the poet's abandoned place of writing among the wolves. Marc Bizer has

suggested in a different context that the *Regrets*' epistolary addresses to friends back in France (Ronsard, Paschal, et al.) serve simultaneously to link Du Bellay to an absent poetic community *and* to underscore his geographic distance from them. By the same token, this call to France lets the reader (and "France") know that the poet and his writing are removed, out of earshot. France may be the mother of arts, arms, and laws, but she is not the mother of this writing, *now* ("Si tu m'as pour enfant advoué quelquefois,/ Que ne me respons-tu maintenant, ô cruelle?"). Thus, even as these lines invest France with affective value as a potentially (or formerly) warm, nourishing poetic source ("langue maternelle"), the affect of the *Regrets*' writing is distant, other. Sonnet 8 similarly contrasts Ronsard's warm, close, amorous writing (in relation to both his *dame* and *prince*) with Du Bellay's own out-lying, wintry verses ("Mais moy, qui suis absent des raiz de mon soleil,/ Comment puis-je sentir eschauffement pareil...?" (VIII, 9-10)). *This* writing, Sonnet 8 suggests, takes form in a place where France does not answer back; where the writer, abandoned, withdraws into solipsistic discourse ("Mais nul, sinon Écho, ne respond à ma voix"). We might relay such solipsism back to the intimate dialogue of writing the *Regrets* expressed in Sonnet 1 ("je me ris avec eulx," etc.) and elsewhere—that self-sameness productive of the 'naïve' style. Indeed, it would seem that the poet's style is drawn not from the French "mamelle" at all, but instead from that monologuing echolalia transcribed between the self-same text and writer. As ostensibly unhappy as the poet's estrangement from France may be, then, it also appears to be—much like his estrangement from the Muses—a necessary condition of his 'low,' inwardly-turned, and *propre* mode of writing.

We find even more striking—and more “playful”—subversion in Sonnet 9’s verbal undercurrents and intertextual references. With his self-identification as a bleating lamb crying out for its mother France, Du Bellay makes tacit reference to the word for bleating, *bêler* (*beller* or *beeller* in sixteenth-century orthography): a homophone of his name. Such wordplay on the proper name is a common feature of the humanist epistle,^{ccclxiv} and is repeatedly deployed in a more explicit manner throughout the *Regrets* with the names of others (Magny, Morel, etc.).^{ccclxv} In this instance, the playfully evoked name takes on a particularly tense relationship to the ‘louder’ cry of the poem’s explicit content. As the poet fills the air with the name of France (“Je remplis de ton nom les antres et les bois”), his bleating fills the sonnet with a counter-cry of his own name, muffled beneath that of the “mère.”^{ccclxvi} In one of the original poems published with the *Aeneid* translation in 1552, we find a striking image of such burial in the maternal:

Heureuse la creature
 Qui a fait sa sepulture
 Dans le ventre maternel!
 Heureux celui, dont la vie
 En sortant s’est veu ravie
 Par un sommeil eternel!
 Sus, mon ame, tourne arriere
 [...] ^{ccclxvii}

Entombed silently in the “ventre maternel,” *beller* is the poet’s name turned backward: a still-born word, perhaps, but also one that has managed to implant itself surreptitiously, unnaturally, in the body of the mother.

Sonnet 9’s muted *beller* is in fact drawn directly from another poet’s work, which points more strongly to the kind of “historical statement” being made—again, tacitly—in this “playful” inscription of the poet’s name. As Daniel Aris and Françoise Joukovsky note in their edition of Du Bellay’s *Oeuvres*, Sonnet 9 rehearses key rhymes and the

bucolic vocabulary from Marot's 1539 poem *Eglogue au Roy sous les noms de Pan et Robin*. This eclogue, written late in Marot's life and after his return from exile in Ferrara and Venice, offers a semi-autobiographical account of the relationship between poet ("Robin" in the poem) and the king François ("Pan"). Near the end of the poem, Robin entreats the god Pan to help protect his flock:

D'autre costé j'oy la bise arriver,
 Qui en soufflant me prononce l'yver;
 Dont mes troupeaux, cela craignans et pis,
 Tous en un tas se tiennent accroupis,
 Et diroit on, à les ouyr beller,
 Qu'avecques moy te veulent appeller
 A leur secours, et qu'ilz ont congnoissance
 Que tu les as nourriz dès leur naissance.

Du Bellay's own plea forms an echo of Marot's: "Tu m'as nourry longtemps..."; "...comme un aigneau qui sa nourrice appelle"; "Je sens venir l'hiver..." Looking back at Sonnet 9, we may see even more clearly, then, how the name of France is cried out over Marot's *beller*, filling in the space where *beller/Bellay* would be. Where one hears *beller* ("diroit on, à les ouyr beller") in Marot's eclogue, in Du Bellay's sonnet one can hear only the echo of *France*:

France [...]
 Tu m'as nourry longtemps du lait de ta mamelle:
 Ores, comme un aigneau qui sa nourrice appelle,
 Je remplis de ton nom les antres et les bois.
 [...]
 France, France [...]
 Mais nul, sinon Écho, ne respond à ma voix.

For Marot, the moment of approaching winter stands in marked contrast to earlier moments in the poem, where Robin's father assured him that Pan would "gard[er] son troupeau de froidure" (Du Bellay: "tes autres aigneaux [...] ne craignent le loup, le vent, ny la froidure") if he sang the god's name:

“Pan (disoit il), c’est le dieu triumpphant
 Sur les pasteurs; c’est celui (mon enfant)
 Qui le premier les roseaux pertuysa,
 Et d’en former des flustes s’advisa:
 Il diagna bien luy mesme peine prendre
 D’user de l’art que je te veux apprendre.
 Appren le donc, affin que montz et boys,
 Rocz et estangs, apreignent soubz ta voix
 A rechanter le hault nom après toy
 De ce grand Dieu que tant je ramentoy;
 Car c’est celui par qui foysonnera
 Ton champ, ta vigne, et qui te donnera
 Plaisante loge entre sacrez ruisseaux
 Encourtinez de flairans arbrisseaux.”^{ccclxviii}

If you sing the king’s name among the “montz et boys/ Rocz et estangs,” he will give you
 “plaisante loge” (Du Bellay echoes: “Je remplis de ton nom les antres et les bois”); this is
 what the poet learns from his father-poet. In a dynamic we saw repeatedly voiced by
 Marot’s generation, the promise inherent in the royal name is its ability, once magnified,
 to make their poetic “vigne” grow.

Marot’s poem leads us to believe that this promise is initially borne out; at first,
 the poet-shepherd has no need to fear the wolves:

l’aage me conduisoit,
 Sans peur ne soing, où le cueur me disoit.
 En la forest (sans la craincte des loups)
 Je m’en allois souvent [...]

Yet, as we saw above, this poem is written at a moment of impending transition, crisis
 even. The shepherd hears the cold wind approaching and fears for his sheep; he entreats
 Pan to give him shelter from the ‘snow’ beginning to fall on his head:

D’autre costé j’oy la bise arriver,
 Qui en soufflant me prononce l’yver;
 Dont mes troupeaux, cela craignans et pis,
 Tous en un tas se tiennent accroupis,
 Et diroit on, à les ouyr beller,
 Qu’avecques moy te veulent appeller
 A leur secours, et qu’ilz ont congnoissance
 Que tu les as nourriz dès leur naissance.

Je ne quiers pas (ô bonté souveraine)
 Deux mille arpents de pastiz en Touraine,
 Ne mille beuf errants par les herbis
 Des montz d'Auvergne, ou autant de brebis.
 Il me suffit que mon troupeau preserves
 Des loups, des ours, des lyons, des loucerves,
 Et moy du froid, car l'yver qui s'appreste
 A commencé à neiger sur ma teste.

François, recognizing himself entreated *soubs le nom de Pan*, did respond to Marot by issuing an *acte* that granted the poet a house in Saint-Germain-des-Prés.^{ccclxix} Yet the nature of Marot's request was clearly allegorical in nature—or at least this *should* have been clear, as Lucian Preiseg persuasively argues in his monograph on Marot. Composed during a moment of increasing religious tension, it seems evident that the *Eclogue* had more in mind than a roof to go over the poet's aging head. Unsubtly, Marot was asking the king for political protection against the persecuting 'wolves' (the Sorbonne and clergy, including the cardinals of the regions named in the poem) for himself and his evangelical 'flock' (his friends and poets—the image recurs in both Marot's poetry and the New Testament). In this light, Preisig suggests that the king's reading is

presque une parodie de lecture. On peut dire qu'en un sens le roi n'a rien compris aux *desiderata* de Marot, ou n'a pas voulu comprendre, et a pris *ad litteram* ce qu'il fallait entendre de façon allégorique. [...] On ne peut s'empêcher de goûter l'ironie du geste royal, la lecture volontairement littérale que le roi a faite de ce passage. François Ier prend en fait le poète à son propre jeu: à l'allégorie qui lui est donnée à lire derrière la fable [...] il choisit la fable démontrant qu'il est capable lui aussi de jouer, à sa façon, avec les mots.

(134-136)

The denial of protection—enacted as a too-literal reading—cost Marot dearly. Disambiguation was indeed the order of the day, as we may recall Villers-Cotterêts's *ordonnance* from the same year: "Et afin qu'il n'y ait cause de douter sur l'intelligence desdits arrêts, nous voulons et ordonnons qu'il soient faits et écrits si clairement, qu'il n'y ait ni puisse avoir aucune ambiguité ou incertitude ne lieu à demander interprétation."

After 1539, Marot's political lot continued to worsen; persecution intensified, and without royal protection he was forced to flee to Geneva in 1543 following the publication of *L'Enfer*; his works were placed on the Catholic Index; he died at Turin in late 1544.

In its reworking Marot's verses and rhymes and its burial of the poet's name—as Marot's *beller*—in a plea to 'mother France' that echoes the *Eclogue*'s plea to François, Du Bellay's Sonnet 9 constitutes an elegiac imitation of Marot. In the context of a collection whose focus is a lament of the poet's fate—a politically-determined one—it is difficult not to interpret this gesture as an alignment between Du Bellay and Marot akin to the more overt one between the poet and Ovid. While this does not necessarily suggest shared religion or ideology, it does suggest that as poets exiled from the same political "sun," Marot and Du Bellay share an experiential structure of writing in France—just as, in some sense, they share the word *beller*. Bleating that death-letter of his own name, Du Bellay thus also calls out for Marot, lamenting poetic identity subject to the interpretation of an authoritative other.^{ccclxx} There may be certain things Du Bellay does not dare *say* to France ("Les vers chantent pour moy ce que je n'ose dire"; "je n'ose crier"), but he inscribes himself here in the history of another writer's poetic exchange with authority. Taking up Marot's unsuccessful cry, Du Bellay reissues it as a "fearfully articulate silence" (like the *Pasquino* he longs to be) in his verse.

On several levels, then, the surface content of Du Bellay's political statement is in conflict with the political implications of his poetic practice. *What* he writes may indeed offer a "patriot" and lover of France when translated into a statement, but *how* he writes it—the style—produces counter-strata of signification, and a much more complex poetic

and political identity. In *Literature and Nation in the Sixteenth Century*, Timothy Hampton argues that tensions surrounding France's "new national identity" show up in literature in the form of "a problem of language, and specifically of figural language" (Hampton 13). In Hampton's schema, resistance to national identity formation manifests itself in the recuperation of literal meaning: "The traces of earlier [i.e., non-national] identities find expression as the stubborn persistence of a literal meaning that contrasts with and calls into question the figurations that give shape to the emerging nation-state. This linguistic resistance works to expose the violence inherent in figuration, and in the nationalist project itself" (*ibid*). Hampton persuasively demonstrates this literary phenomenon at work, notably in Marot's play on the "garden of letters" trope in *L'Enfer*, in which the poet opposes the figure of France as garden with the literal—if idealized or nostalgic—garden of Quercy.^{ccclxxi} In Du Bellay's case, we find a somewhat different kind of resistance at play in the figuration of France. No longer addressed to a king 'under' the name of a mythological God as Marot's *Eclogue* was, this poem is addressed to the increasingly abstracted socio-political structure and readership in/to which the poet writes, 'under' the name of France. This France, as we have seen, is figured as a mother ("mère des arts," etc.). Rather than introducing a literal mother^{ccclxxii} to oppose the figurative political one ("France, mère"), however, Du Bellay ups the stakes of figuration with his Marotic allegory; and it is on *this* level that he inserts his subversive bleat (*beller*), under the name of France. Taking into account the back story of François I's "misreading" of Marot, we may see Du Bellay's Sonnet 9 as a dangerously playful, even vengeful missive, which dares France to take him—and its own name—"literally." For such play, the poet may not be, as the sonnet's final line insists, "le pire du troupeau"—

but that does not mean his verse is not a wolf in sheep's clothing.^{ccclxxiii} Indeed, if we recall Du Bellay's proposed practice of translation that prefaced his rendering of Virgil, one may not translate *literally* but still do one's duty while 'compensating' in another form: "le translateur n'a point malfaict son devoir, qui sans corrompre le sens de son aucteur, ce qu'il n'a peu rendre d'assez bonne grace en ung endroit s'efforce de le recompenser en l'autre."

We do find the poet's name written out at several moments in the earlier sonnets. Yet in these instances, *Dubellay* is not a positive presence *per se*, but rather the mark of authorial proper name gone missing—absent, diminished, transformed, cut off—in relation to the names of his *destinataires*. "Se trouvant dans une situation qui l'empêche d'acquérir un 'nom'," observes Floyd Gray in *La Poétique de Du Bellay*, "il s'interroge dans les *Regrets* par rapport à ceux qui en ont un."^{ccclxxiv} The name *Dubellay* no longer constitutes a veritable proper name, insofar as the proper name denotes or identifies its referent "purely."^{ccclxxv} Instead, this signifier marks what Montaigne will call "cette autre mienne vie qui loge en la connoissance de mes amis"—namely, a social signifier detached from the writing *je*, already pointing toward the immanent possibility of its death (Sonnet 53: "Celui vit seulement, lequel vit aujourd'hui"), but simultaneously acting a kind of home or protection ("loge").^{ccclxxvi} In Sonnet 21, which addresses the friend called "Comte" (Nicolas Denisot), *Dubellay* is a hunched name, a stump-name, half-alive and half-dead:

Comte, qui ne fis onc compte de la grandeur,
 Ton Dubellay n'est plus: ce n'est plus qu'une souche
 Qui dessus un ruisseau d'un doz courbé se couche,
 Et n'a plus rien de vif, qu'un petit de verdure.^{ccclxxvii}
 (XXI, 1-2)

Sonnet 18 implies that this death of *Dubellay* occurs in the context of the French language specifically:

Mon Dieu (ce diras-tu), quel miracle est-ce cy,
Que de voir Dubellay se mesler du mesnage,
Et composer des vers en un autre langage?
Les loups, et les aigneaux s'accordent tout ainsi.^{ccclxxviii}
(XVIII, 5-9)

The poet's exchange of languages, figured as an 'accord' of wolves and sheep, here signals the mutability of the name *Du Bellay* itself. That act of writing that established the identity of the *nom propre* in the 'natural' French context (Sonnet 10: "Changeant à l'étranger mon naturel langage") has given way to a shape-shifting writing, a disappearance act. *Du Bellay* is *beller*, the sound of the sheep—who may also, writing in Latin, become a "wolf." The poet calls himself *Pasquino* (who is already a multi-faced and *travesti* figure); as we will see below in Sonnet 7, he is also the Cumaean Sibyl, a character out of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. As a textual presence, *Dubellay* has become invisible to France:

Ne t'esbahis, Ronsard, la moitié de mon ame,
Si de ton Dubellay France ne lit plus rien^{ccclxxix}
(VIII, 1-2)

Floyd Gray argues that Du Bellay's addresses to friends represent compensatory acts for the name the poet himself lacks; this attempt to make a name for himself ultimately fails, according to Gray, since these names "restent essentiellement des substituts de son propre nom, donc onomastique voilée, proche de l'anonymat" (Gray 113). While such a desire may indeed be at work in the *Regrets*, it would seem to be counter-balanced, at the very least, by an opposing recuperation of anonymity as a "playful" poetic strategy and, indeed, a *different* model of authorial identity. Now you see *Dubellay*, now you don't—

or at least not the way you see a Ronsard, a Magny, etc. We saw in the previous section how Du Bellay's "style" announces itself in a singularity that withdraws—in part—from the 'common' property of language. In this sense, "style" was very much like a *nom propre*: residing "au bord étranger" of signification, only half-belonging to the body of language, (almost) untranslatable.^{ccclxxx} The poet's own name, however, seems to be subject to an inverse trajectory; the poet remotivates his proper name by burying it, exchanging it, dissolving it into phonic and semantic content. Withdrawn from its *propre* identity, this name is put back into a kind of circulation that will not let it rest in its singular, "pure" denotation. François Rigolot observes in *Poétique et Onomastique* that such transformation of the proper name is a feature of Renaissance poetics more generally: "Or le nom propre est un signe opaque qui offre le degré de résistance maximal à l'assimilation morpho-sémantique. Ce sera donc le défi lancé par le poète de briser la résistance du nom au sens [...]."^{ccclxxxi} In Du Bellay's case, the 'breaking down' of the 'resistance' of his own proper name marks a kind of death, certainly, but it also seems to offer a kind of proprietary recuperation—that is, in a resistance to appropriation. The horizon of the poet's proper name, as the *Deffence* attests to, is that of the language—that is, of the authority who claims that language as its own ("langage maternel francoys"). At its beginning, we may recall, the "langage maternel" is that language that is not written; or more precisely, it is a has-been or to-come language of one's own. Sonnet 9's silent muted *beller* may lie beneath the cried out name of France, but only because it has buried itself between the lines; it lies in wait, a land-mine in the maternal pasture, waiting to sound. By breaking down the 'resistance' of his own name,

then, the poet is also at work on breaking down the propriety of that (m)other name it calls, *France*.

On a first reading, Sonnet 7 delivers a neat narrative, which again follows the Marotic in-to-out arc, royal favor to exclusion. The opening quatrains affirm the poet's former 'in' status with the Court and Muses:

Ce pendant que la Cour mes ouvrages lisoit,
Et que la soeur du Roy, l'unique Marguerite,
Me faisant plus d'honneur que n'estoit mon mérite,
De son bel oeil divin mes vers favorisoit,

Une fureur d'esprit au ciel me conduisoit
D'une aile qui la mort et les siècles évite,
Et le docte troupeau qui sur Parnasse habite,
De son feu plus divin mon ardeur attisoit.

(VII, 1-8)

At the sonnet's turn in verse 9, "fureur" and "ardeur" will be lost, along with royal favor.

No longer commanded by either the Parnassian gods or the French kings, the poet goes mute:

Ores je suis muet, comme on voit la Prophète,
Ne sentant plus le dieu, qui la tenait sugette,
Perdre soudainement la fureur et la voix.

Et qui ne prend plaisir qu'un prince luy commande?
L'honneur nourrit les arts, et la Muse demande
Le théâtre du peuple, et la faveur des Roys.

(VII, 9-14)

This sonnet would seem to read, then, as a plea (akin to that of Sonnet 9) to be let back 'in' with the Court. In order to be recognized and read, these lines suggest, the writer is dependent on this particular social structure (like Ronsard's advice to the young poet that he must write in the king's language in order for his work to attain "honneur"). What's more, the poet should take pleasure in this structure (l. 12); like mother France, it is

‘nourishing’ (l. 13); without this structure, there is no writing—the poet is ‘mute’ (ll. 9-11).

Yet as with Sonnet 9, a closer look reveals a much more ambivalent stance on Du Bellay’s part: the suggestion of another voice, palimpsest-like, beneath the appeal to authority. The key to this ambivalence lies in the first tercet (ll. 9-11), where the poet compares himself to “la Prophète.” The reference here is widely recognized as being to the Cumaean Sibyl, a figure who appears notably in the *Metamorphoses* (XIV.101-153), in Book VI of the *Aeneid*, and in Petronius’s *Satyricon*. Given the sequence’s other Ovidian moments and the transformative poetic subject we have observed, the *Metamorphoses* offer the richest intertextual possibility here. When Ovid’s Aeneas meets the Cumaean Sibyl in the underworld, she tells of her unfortunate transformation: the god Apollo, who desired the Sibyl, offered to grant her a wish; speaking rashly, she wished to live for a thousand years, but without asking for eternal youth; Apollo offered the Sibyl this youth if she would satisfy his desire to take her virginity; when she refused him, Apollo left her body to age and wither. The Sibyl concludes her story by insisting that although Apollo may no longer love or even recognize her,^{ccclxxxii} and although she might appear non-existent to the world,^{ccclxxxiii} she would continue to be known as a voice (“vocam tamen noscar”). In one sense, Du Bellay’s comparison of himself to the Sibyl is straightforward: royal favor seemed to promise literary immortality (“De son bel oeil divin mes vers favorisoit/ Une fureur d’esprit au ciel me conduisoit/ D’une aile qui la mort et les siècles évite”); now exiled, the poet suffers, disillusioned. Where the comparison becomes more complex is in the poet’s identification of himself as ‘mute’:

Ores je suis muet, comme on voit la Prophète,
Ne sentant plus le Dieu, qui la tenait sugette,
Perdre soudainement la fureur et la voix.

Et qui ne prend plaisir qu'un prince luy commande?
L'honneur nourrit les arts, et la Muse demande
Le théâtre du peuple et la faveur des Roys.^{cclxxxiv}
(VII, 9-12)

The Sibyl is of course anything but mute—she is *all* voice, *only* voice. In Petronius's rendering, she is depicted as a disembodied voice trapped in an *amphora*, who wishes to die and cannot. The fates have bequeathed her a voice (“*vocem mihi fata relinquent*”) which cannot be taken by Apollo—that god who punished her for refusing his desire. There is a voice, the Du Bellay-Sibyl writes against the proclamation of muteness, which does not depend on “la faveur des Roys” or “le théâtre du peuple.” I have a language that remains, outside this one—but I cannot write that out loud.

Chapter Five

“Un langage aucunement autre”

On the Institution of Montaigne’s *Essais*

Institution. Action par laquelle on instituë, on établit. *L’institution d’un tel Ordre. L’institution des Pairs de France, du Parlement. Les paroles sont de l’institution des hommes. C’est une loüable, une pieuse, un sainte institution. Faire institution d’heritier.* Il se prend aussi pour Education. *L’Institution de la jeunesse. Il a eu une bonne institution.*

(*Dictionnaire de l’Académie française*, 1st edition)

Voilà que vous alléguez, en français, que le français vous a toujours été langue étrangère! Allons donc, si c’était vrai, vous ne sauriez même pas le dire, vous ne sauriez si bien dire!

(Jacques Derrida, *Le Monolinguisme de l’ature*)

...comme Michel de Montaigne, non comme grammairien ou poete ou jurisconsulte.^{ccclxxxv}

(Michel de Montaigne, “Du Repentir”)

Introduction: Montaigne’s *lieu retiré*

Throughout the *Essais*, Montaigne’s scene of writing is framed by an act of withdrawal “chez moy”—a place, it is worth remembering, also called “Montaigne.” Early in Book I, the essay “De l’oisiveté” (I, 8) traces the origin of the text to the Montaigne’s initial retirement from public life, meant to allow the essayist’s mind to “s’entretenir soy mesmes, et s’arrester et rasseoir en soy” (33). Rather than coming to rest in a state of Stoic quietude, however, the mind’s discourse with itself “à part” only sets it into a more confused motion, releasing some verbal production previously restrained in public: “faisant le cheval eschappé, il se donne cent fois plus d’affaire à soy mesmes qu’il n’en prenoit pour autrui” (ibid). The project of writing is thus inaugurated,

as a means to better “contempler à mon aise” a newly unbridled “estrangeté,” an attempt to give form to the “chimères et monstres fantasques” surfacing upon withdrawal.^{cclxxxvi}

Later, the essay “Des Trois Commerces” (III, 3) offers a more serene tableau of withdrawal in the essayist’s legendary tower *librairie*. This place is portrayed as a “lieu retiré” set apart from both public life and household obligations, a privileged site of verbal production where “tantost je rêve, tantost j’enregistre et dicte [...] mes songes que voicy” (828). In this instance, confusion belongs not inside the mind but to the outside world against which the “lieu retiré” of the tower is defined; here, the essayist, sheltered from “la presse,” takes up a more comfortable cohabitation with himself. The potentially troubling effects of solitary discourse are elided here in favor of a more stable and secure self-possession. “C’est là mon siège [...]. Miserable à mon gré, qui n’a chez soy où estre à soy, où se faire particulièrement la cour, où se cacher!” A confidently circumscribed domain whose monsters seem to have been temporarily quelled, Montaigne’s scene of writing defines itself as removal from all commerce and community not its *own*. In this withdrawal, some singular kind of authority is at hand: “J’essaie à m’en rendre la domination pure [...]. Par tout ailleurs je n’ay qu’une auctorité verbale: en essence, confuse.” We are left to wonder, however, what role writing might play exactly in the ‘essaying’ of some *pur*er form of domination—in a scene whose “ailleurs” is marked by the domain of language and whose authority is limited by some *essential* verbal confusion.

While these two passages from I, 8 and III, 3 afford rather different roles to the act of writing, they have one striking element in common: the coming-into-being of the written word is concomitant with an act of withdrawal. What’s more, it would seem that

as the *Essais* continue to be written, revised, enhanced, rewritten, seemingly without end,^{ccclxxxvii} withdrawal continues to figure as the text's sustained condition of possibility. We may begin, then, by seeing the composition of the *Essais* itself as an act of withdrawal: the drawing and redrawing of a line, a retracing of the initial *retraict*, a precarious and continually renewed inscription of the text's own territory. As Jean Starobinski suggests, the *Essais*' withdrawal to "chez moy" or the hyperbolically withdrawn space of the tower "librairie" represent less a definitive closure in relation to the world than "la *possibilité* de s'établir en un territoire personnel et privé, d'y prendre à tout moment un recul aboslu" (original emphasis).^{ccclxxxviii} Writing, then, is less a matter of retreat into an absolute *propre* than the sustaining of a virtual store of propriety, not unlike the essayist's famous *arrireboutique*.^{ccclxxxix} The possibility of a "lieu retiré," we could say, is the project of the text.

What is remarkable about the passage below from "Sur des vers de Virgile" (III, 5) is not, therefore, simply that it places the writer in a deliberately isolated "chez moy," associates writing with withdrawal, or looks to mark the creation of the book as an autonomous enterprise. What gives pause is that it announces the *imperative* for Montaigne's writing project ("ce mien dessein") of demarcating this withdrawn space *in relation to language(s)* specifically. First, the essayist asserts the necessity of temporarily silencing other, 'better' authorial voices: "Quand j'escris, je me passe bien de la compagnie et souvenance des livres, de peur qu'ils n'interrompent ma forme. Aussi que, à la verité, les bons auteurs m'abattent par trop et rompent le courage" (847). And then, almost as a kind of aside, he places his writing in a very specific withdrawal, assigning it a specific ambition:

Pour ce mien dessein, il me vient aussi à propos, d'escrire chez moy, en pays sauvage, où personne ne m'aide, ny me releve: où je ne hante communément homme, qui entende le Latin de son patenostre, et de François un peu moins. Je l'eusse faict meilleur ailleurs, mais l'ouvrage eust esté moins mien: Et sa fin principale et perfection, c'est d'estre exactement mien.

(875)

Chez moy, as the withdrawn place of writing, gets defined here in a series of attributes: an undomesticated “pays sauvage,” where the essayist is alone and may work independently. But it is also where no one understands *or* hears (in a double “entendre”) the *Latin* of his “patenostre,”^{CCCCC} and *François* even less. The essayist affirms just before that in order to write, the memory of *other* books and company of *other* authors are temporarily silenced, lest they “rompent” the essayist’s courage or “interrompent” his form. As if, whatever else writing represents for Montaigne, it can occur *only* by believing in itself as, in his words elsewhere, “le seul livre au monde de son espece, d’un dessein farouche et extravagant”: an orphan, a wild child, a monster, an utterly singular textual being (II, 8, 385). And in this same moment, in the same gesture of deliberate deafness and forgetting that establishes singularity, Montaigne writes that he withdraws to that place where French and Latin *as such*, as languages either properly named or commonly spoken, are not in attendance. “Ce mien dessein,” the project of writing, thus emerges in a necessary estrangement from these two languages in particular, the very two which may be taken (or *mis*-taken) for the languages of the text. “Chez moy,” Montaigne announces, that proper place of my text, is precisely where I am not made to hear these languages, that place where they—or that which may be known by these names, *François* and *Latin*—cannot make themselves understood.

This announcement of withdrawal—echoing that of the *lieu retiré* and the *arriereboutique*—signals a new, specifically textual project, which the essayist

designates as the principal ambition and ‘end’ of the book. This ambition is nothing short of the book’s recognition as *propre* to a name other than *François* and *Latin*: proper to Montaigne. “Je l’eusse faict meilleur ailleurs,” affirms the essayist, “mais l’ouvrage eust esté moins mien: Et sa fin principale et perfection, c’est d’estre exactement mien.” The text’s existence gets bracketed, *reduced* to this question of possession; it looks to be nothing more or other than “mien,” and will only stop when it is possessed. The fear-inspiring act of writing, in the same stroke, becomes an attempt to discover what propriety in relation to language might still be had, even just within the contingency of this scene. Such that, between the lines of withdrawal from *François* and *Latin* and the call for a book which would be ‘exactly mine,’ another question emerges: what or which language *is* Montaigne’s—that name which, once again, already refers both to the signature of the *Essais* and the place of writing itself?

This final chapter of the dissertation will be dedicated to tracing this question through the *Essais*, considering other moments which, like the passage above from “Sur des vers de Virgile,” mark the writer’s relationship to language(s) and further engage the issue of textual propriety. It may already be apparent that, in contrast to the discourse of vernacular advocacy from earlier in the century (“jen veulx escrire en françois,” “j’escris en langue maternelle”), the *Essais* offer no straightforward affirmations or identifications of their language-of-writing. Nevertheless, as the passage above suggests, the *Essais* are no less desirous of a language of their “own” than these previous texts. No less than Tory, Meigret, Ramus, François I, Peletier or Du Bellay, Montaigne marks a *movement* of linguistic appropriation in writing. Indeed, if anything, the stakes seem to have been

raised, as the propriety desired here is more singular, more proprietary, more absolute (“exactement mien”). And yet the appropriation at work here will take on a different character, precisely because the naming of languages (*François*, *Latin*) is what belongs outside the *propre* of the *Essais*. In order to find Montaigne calling the language of his text ‘French,’ we must in fact look outside the body of the *Essais* to the hand-written correction page of the Bordeaux Copy. Here, in a note instructing the printer to put the *Essais*’ many foreign-language citations in Italics, Montaigne identifies his language-of-writing by name: “[La] prose latine grecque ou autre estrangiere il la faut mettre parmi la prose françoise en caractere different.”^{cccxc} Montaigne’s own writing, distinct from the words of other authors in other languages, can be recognized by the printer as “la prose françoise.” Yet, once again, nowhere within the text proper do we find such a designation. Instead, we will find withdrawal, difference, disavowal, dis-recognition.

Much like Du Bellay’s “bord estrange,” too, Montaigne’s *lieu reitré* will mark a different kind of position from which to relate to French: to bend, stretch, push against, deviate from and test it—without ceasing, exactly, to write “in” it (as “la prose françoise”). As Floyd Gray suggests, Montaigne’s “*Essais* sont aussi des essais de langue: il s’agit pour lui d’explorer les ressources du français [...]. Il travaille sa langue [sic], il l’interroge, il la plie à ses pensées [...].”^{cccxcii} Montaigne’s investment in French, however, seems necessarily different from that of the earlier language *travailleurs*, the Babel-builders of mid-century (the Pléiade, Meigret, et al.). “Les autres forment l’homme; je le recite et en represente un particulier bien mal formé, et lequel, si j’avoy à façonner de nouveau, je ferois vrayement bien autre qu’il n’est,” writes Montaigne in the essay “Du Repentir” (III, 2, 804). Or again, writing from the tower *librairie* in III, 3, “Je

vis du jour à la journée [...] et, parlant en reverence, ne vis que pour moy: mes desseins se terminent là.”

As the producer of a singular “style,” Montaigne has been lauded for his ability to deftly manipulate the unfixed language of the late sixteenth century, taking advantage of its relative ‘fluidity’ and ‘changeability’ to represent the movements of his thinking. The evident foil in such evaluations is to Latin: the other language of writing in sixteenth-century France, the primary language of the *Essais*’ numerous citations, that language which was in the essayist’s own estimation the stabler, more substantial (“plus ferme,”^{cccxciii} “nerveuse et solide”^{cccxciv}); it is also the language the essayist famously calls “maternel.” For the modern reader, there is an important additional foil to the sixteenth-century vernacular; Montaigne’s ‘fluid’ French stands in contrast to the codified and fixed form the language takes in the seventeenth century and beyond. Sandwiched in this way between the two regulated and institutionalized idioms—Latin and classical French—Montaigne’s vernacular has often been viewed as a language suitable to “free” expression, a language in which a writer like Montaigne could establish a veritable autonomy not possible before him (in Latin) *or* after (in French). “Derrière lui, pas de modèle qui fit loi,” wrote Désiré Nisard in his *Histoire de la littérature française*, “autour de lui, pas de critique qui l’accusât de violer la tradition, et qui lui opposât quelque vocabulaire officiel [...]. [I]l traita la langue non comme l’héritage de tous, mais comme sa propriété personnelle. Ainsi en usent les hommes de génie avec des langues qui ne sont pas encore formées [...].”^{cccxcv} Nisard’s concepts of *génie* and language formation may be dated, but Montaigne’s language is still viewed through a lens of relative freedom (not unlike Ronsard’s idealized view of the *naturel* and *propre* plurality of Ancient

Greece^{cccxcvi}). The literary critic Richard Regosin, for example, highlights Montaigne's own observation^{cccxcvii} of the changing character of French in his century, arguing that "the freedom it allowed him in syntactical structure, in vocabulary, phrasing, and the use of connectives lies at the very center of that interplay between written and oral style."^{cccxcviii}

Understanding the vernacular language of this period as "free" for its writers may indeed be significant from a linguistic standpoint (in the ways suggested by Regosin, above). The material explored in previous chapters of this dissertation would indicate, however, that French writing by the late sixteenth century was already a fraught terrain of appropriation. In the emergences of various writers relating themselves to the French language—be it as grammarian, printer, legislator or poet—what we find in writing from this period is a pronounced expression of what Roland Barthes called the "je d'écriture."^{cccxcix} The poetic writing of Du Bellay studied in the last chapter would suggest that "style" may represent an intensified site of struggle, in which such a *je* relates its own name (Bellay/*beller*) to that of the Other (France) in a language which does not quite belong to either of them. If the terms of authority, ownership, and belonging were comparatively less "fixed" during this period, they were certainly more present in writing than the lexical, syntactic, or orthographic variation evident in its texts might suggest. What's more, we might imagine that such struggle would be played out all the more tensely and ambivalently precisely in the *absence* of institutions like the Académie française and its dictionary: those more stable bodies representing a recognizable norm. The "freedom" of the author to create or re-appropriate language was thus very much in question; as we saw in the Du Bellay/Ronsard dynamic, such freedom

was in part a function of royal proximity—even as such proximity became increasingly abstracted through the construction of the nation state and establishment of a national language of writing. How might we reconsider Montaigne’s withdrawing language—and the desire for an “ouvrage exactement mien”—in this light? How, in other words, do we reread Montaigne’s language in relation to a French whose “institution” is already in progress?

I. Road Signs to Montaigne

To begin, let us take a closer look at the signifying logic behind Montaigne’s withdrawal from French and Latin in “Sur des vers de Virgile.” Even as they are dismissed and recede over the horizon of the text, *François* and *Latin* necessarily retain some privileged position in the *Essais*. If writing requires a “lieu retiré” with regards to these two languages in particular, then this very act of sheltering bears witness to their potential ability to reappropriate its language; the shelter itself reveals, in other words, a nascent property whose boundaries remain unsure, in relation to these tongues specifically. Declaring their absence, Montaigne nominates those languages still able to inspire fear and potentially forceful enough to interrupt his form. *François* and *Latin*, those names which risk at any moment overtaking the name *Montaigne* and continue to designate the realm of some other, confused authority—that “ailleurs” of the *better* but *less mine*—are erected here, if not as totems then at least as signposts. Yet they are far from serving as flags planted mid-field to stake a claim for an allied author, or on behalf of a community. Instead, as boundary markers, they work to place their own names

under erasure, crossed-out road signs indicating only points of departure: now leaving *Latin* and *François*, now entering *Montaigne*.

But where *exactly* would a proper language (the “fin principale et perfection” of Montaigne’s book) end and these other languages, *François* or *Latin* begin? Indeed, to what extent does Montaigne’s imperative of solitary withdrawal mark a relation to them as *other* at all? Does this announcement in fact cry out for *François* and *Latin* to come back and *be* or, at the very least, countersign the language of the text, each in its own way having been appropriated by the essayist—singularly cultivated or rendered “sauvage”? Is the appearance of their names a shout back to these languages from beyond their respective spheres of influence, a test to see if, so altered and so displaced, they still recognize themselves, if they can still hear their names being called? Or does it, on the other hand, imply that *if* a language is to be proper to this scene of writing, then it can no longer be properly called *Latin* or *François*? Must the idiom of a book “exactement mien” necessarily belong to Montaigne and the *Essais* alone? Will the birth of a new species, “le seul au monde,” require a language entirely its own, and thereby obliterate what has come before? And if so, will it be understood? Would it even understand itself? Could it, in fact, have *more than one* proper language? Can its singular language, in other words, be plural?

These are among the questions posed by Montaigne’s announced withdrawal from French and Latin—posed only to be left suspended, as if the tension of this indeterminacy would better support a tower hiding place than the pillars of proper names themselves. *Latin* and *François*, and indeed the very existence of common, properly named languages, are placed in a kind of abeyance by the *Essais* in order to open the space for

another language to come into being, a *more* proper (as opposed to “moins mien”) language whose relation to these other two *remains* uncertain, insistently determined as a negative relation, known only as ‘mine,’ and announced as imperative within a sustained virtuality of the *propre*. My language: I imagine it must exist, I write in order for it to exist and exist as *exactly mine*, but I can’t yet say what it is, exactly. All I can say without a doubt is that it is not this one, not that one; it is different from every language I can identify. “Je respons ordinairement à ceux qui me demandent raison de mes voyages,” writes Montaigne in “De la vanité,” “je sçay bien ce que je fuis, mais non pas ce que je cherche [...]; [...] c'est tousjours gain de changer un mauvais estat à un estat incertain” (III, 9, 972). The project of the book (“ce mien dessein”) materializes in this negating suspension—against the “mauvais” and towards the “incertain”—as a pursuit of linguistic form undertaken from within the withdrawn space maintained *against* the other and the “ailleurs.” As a pursuit of the proper, it will be an attempt to re-possess what is properly “mien” from the *institutions* called “Latin” and “François” through an act of deafening itself to them which, nevertheless, seems unable or unwilling to forget their names, and unable to speak its own. Somewhere in the middle of these markers, Montaigne’s language arises as a question—a question as to the possibility of its existence. For all this insistence on what might be “mien,” that founding condition *and* ‘end’ of the book, will the *Essais* allow us to call a language *Montaigne’s*?

II. Montaigne’s Self-Examination

The essay “Du Repentir” (III, 2) does seem to insist on the possibility of locating and revealing of a proper, abiding, and even master “forme” with its formulation: “Il n'est

personne, s'il s'escoute, qui ne descouvre en soy une forme sienne, une forme maistresse, qui luicte contre l'institution" (III, 2, 811). The sensitivity to language constitutive of the practice of writing and affording some privileged access to the *propre* takes up residence in the ear: an organ which, from the beginning, is dual in the *Essais*. On the one hand, it is that defenseless organ which must be sheltered precisely because it cannot be closed; it marks a point of vulnerability to language as force; it is the opening through which *we* are infiltrated, inevitably, by the other. In "Sur des vers de Virgile," as we have seen, it is only out of earshot that the ability for *François* and *Latin* to interrupt the "ma forme" diminishes. The essay "De l'institution des enfans" further alerts us to the way in which the expropriating relation of language as "institution" institutes itself through *our* open ears—that process by which the *in-fans* (etymologically, the non-speaking one) is brought into speech: "On ne cesse de crier à nos oreilles, comme qui verseroit dans un antonnoir, et nostre charge ce n'est que redire ce qu'on nous a dict." As a 'speaker' I am a passive receptacle, a repeater, a recording device through which "on" makes his voice heard.

Yet while the contingent non-hearing of other languages marks the possibility of autonomy, the discovery or revelation of a "forme sienne" is brought about through a renewed, attentive act of listening—a listening to oneself against the din of "l'institution," a perking of the ears to detect that which abides and still struggles to voice itself. In contrast to the deafness of "Sur des vers de Virgile," what Montaigne's "s'escoute[r]" in "Du Repentir" seems to propose is an ear turned at once inward and outward: an ear turned inside-out in order to hear some voice emanating from within, yet which can only be captured in those echoes of soliloquy ricocheting off a tower wall.

The text, that contentious linguistic territory, emerges not just *through* the struggle to hear more purely—that is, as the *product* or after-effect of some prior listening—but is displayed first and foremost *as* the very stage of this struggle. The *Essais*, rewritten and reread, are that recording to be played and replayed, at intervals: Montaigne’s last tape. The difficulty will be in knowing, even in the space of this private hearing, whether the voice recorded and played back is one’s own, or whether it ultimately only fulfills the “charge” to “redire ce qu’on nous a dict.” Especially since this self-listening comprehension activity of the text never stops seeming to herald the coming of a voice as of yet *un*-heard—and yet, as *propre* and even natural, somehow already familiar. How will I know my own voice once I finally hear it? Or has the stage been adequately prepped for me to call this voice mine, *by default*?

Near the end of the *Essais*, in “De la Phisionomie” (III, 12), Montaigne will insist that what has differentiated *his* text from any preceding it is the intention to broadcast exclusively what is proper to him, and to it. The essayist evokes the voice of an imagined critic calling him out for his abundant use of citations to support his ‘own’ writing: “Comme quelqu’un pouuroit dire de moy que j’ay seulement faict cy un amas de fleurs estrangeres, n’y ayant fourny du mien que le filet à les lier” (1055). Montaigne’s defense is less a claim of propriety than a harkening back to the desire motivating his project—“ce mien dessein”—here articulated as a desire for natural *exposure*: “Certes j’ay donné à l’opinion publique que ces paremens empruntez m’accompagnent. Mais je n’entends pas qu’ils me couvrent, et qu’ils me cachent: c’est le rebours de mon dessein, qui ne veux faire montre que du mien, et de ce qui est mien par nature” (ibid). If we cannot call the “mien” *entirely* performative for Montaigne—since it is grounded in a pre-existing

“nature”—we see that its recovery is constructed as a desire for self-exposure; its discovery, likewise, is the function of an exhibitionist project of textual activity, which continues to reveal itself *as* ‘my’ unachieved wanting of it. I uncover the *mien* here a little more with every word I write. “Je m’estalle entier: c’est un Skeletos où, d’une veue, les veines, les muscles, les tendons paroissent [...]. [...] Ce ne sont mes gestes que j’escris, c’est moy” (II, 6, 379).

The demonstrative “dessein” of the text-as-proper looks specifically to reduce performance to what is *naturally* ‘mine’; and this particular reduction, as we have seen, takes the form of a struggle—against “institution”—and may require the use of force. Here, in this space I have forged, I will not be made to say what is not mine. This remains true even as the mode of performance shifts from aural/oral to visual, such that what is “mien” is most properly *shown* rather than said or heard. As if the activity of writing took place as a privileged auto-otological examination, allowing the “mien” to be known not by listening at all but rather by letting me *look* inside my own head.^{cd} In this way, propriety in language emerges for Montaigne less as an identifiable set of possessions to be put on display than as a *kind* of regulation over the performative apparatus constituted by the ear, the voice, the hand, and the text.^{cdi} This homemade language press brings autonomy in language, but also over language—thus, the essayist’s turn as writing instructor in “De l’institution des enfans”: “Je tors bien plus volontiers une bonne sentence pour la coudre sur moy, que je ne tors mon fil pour l’aller querir. Au rebours c’est aux paroles à servir et à suyvre [...]” (I, 26, 171). The writer may be the “matière” of his book, but he will still—for this very reason—treat language as a material to be led, if not mastered or overcome *per se*.

The ability to take the lead in fact leads us to the passage in which Montaigne comes closest to offering a rationale for his choice of French as the language of the *Essais*. Surprisingly, perhaps, the comparison is not to Latin—the other language of the *Essais*—but to the Italian vernacular Montaigne picked up while traveling in Italy:

en Italie, je disois ce qu'il me plaisoit en devis communs; mais, aus propos roides, je n'eusse osé me fier à un Idiome que je ne pouvois plier ny contourner outre son alleure commune. J'y veux pouvoir quelque chose du mien.

(III, 5, 873)

In quotidian speech, the essayist implies, there are no consequences to talking like someone else, in fixed locutions and formulas (“devis communs”). Writing, however—that fearsome marking of “propos roides”—demands another level of familiarity, if not necessarily a “native” one. Such familiarity serves, however, to take language away from *itself*, as a common idiom, toward a usage more properly idiomatic:

Le maniement et emploie des beaux esprits donne pris à la langue, non pas l'innovant tant comme la remplissant de plus vigoureux et divers services, l'estirant et ployant. Ils n'y aportent point de mots, mais ils enrichissent les leurs, appesantissent et enfoncent leur signification et leur usage, luy aprenent des mouvements inaccoustumés, mais prudemment et ingenieusement. Et combien peu cela soit donné à tous, il se voit par tant d'escrivains françois de ce siecle.

(ibid)

This passage, and the expression “donne pris à la langue” in particular, have often been read as a response to the Pléiade’s call to ‘enrich’ the vernacular through neologism—Montaigne countering with his own call to give French value through syntactical and stylistic innovation. Hugo Friedrich, for his part, argues that Montaigne “has no interest in the national and cultural-political goals in a language program of a Du Bellay, a Pasquier, and many others. He never expresses the need to secure for French [...] a triumph over Latin.”^{cdii} Much like the turning of Du Bellay’s *propre* in *Les Regrets*, Montaigne would seem here to be proposing a re-appropriation of French to his own end.

Again, the writer does not go to or toward language, but makes that language which is already his become more so through writing: “Ils n’y apportent point de mots, mais ils enrichissent les leurs, appesantissent et enfoncent leur signification et leur usage.” The writer who is able to mark something singular in language (“quelque chose du mien”) is not the well-instructed but the instructor, the self-examiner: the tailor of an unfamiliar, custom-made language (“luy aprenent des mouvements inaccoutumés”).

III. Dispossessing Language

The struggle of “une forme sienne” against institution is thus a battle pitted on the level of style: the idiom I make *mine* versus “l’alleure commune.” The force behind this writing is, at bottom, the ability to “tourner outre”—as it is the ability to turn the ear inside out and listen to oneself write. Such an effect, Montaigne observes, is not achieved by many in French-language writers (“Et combien peu cela soit donné à tous, il se voit par tant d’escrivains françois de ce siecle”). Even for Montaigne, this regulatory pursuit does not seem to be entirely *donné*. While the *Essais* continually promise or gesture toward propriety, the “mien” also *continues* to be expressed as a *present* desire or ambition (“j’y veux pouvoir...”). Producing the “mien” in writing continues, as we saw in “Sur des vers de Virgile,” to call upon the essayist’s “courage,” and continues to require the withdrawal into a “lieu retiré.” Montaigne is thus far from *presupposing* possession of his language, or even possessing the *ability* to possess that which his own “par nature.” It continues to be called for and deferred, advertised as the *end* of the book—a final exam that never quite gets passed.

“Ce que j’essaye de penser,” offers Jacques Derrida, speaking in an interview about the German-language poet Paul Celan, “c’est un idiome (et l’idiome veut dire *le propre* justement, ce qui est propre) et une signature dans l’idiome de la langue qui fasse *en même temps* l’expérience de l’inappropriabilité de la langue.”^{cdiii} How to mark the *mien* or the *propre*—how to turn your idiom—while simultaneously expressing the fact that language cannot be appropriated? This is the question of Montaigne’s language, which helps to explain why, in the struggle for the “mien”—against “institution”—Montaigne also appears to be struggling against possession itself. Indeed, if “chez moy” provides the optimal terrain for the great language battle (custody of the ear, control over “forme”), at no point is this a matter of recovering a regional dialect or returning to a given native tongue. Instead, if “chez moy” holds promise, this seems to inhere only in its existence *as* an undomesticated linguistic scene. In “De la Praesomption,” the essayist notes that “la barbarie de mon creu” has an altering and impurifying effect on ‘his’ French—without, however, offering him any other tongue to speak of:

Mon langage françois est alteré, et en la prononciation et ailleurs, par la barbarie de mon creu: je ne vis jamais homme des contrées de deçà qui ne sentit bien evidemment son ramage et qui ne blessast les oreilles pures françoises. Si n'est-ce pas pour estre fort entendu en mon Perigordin, car je n'en ay non plus d'usage que de l'Alemand; et ne m'en chaut guere.

(II, 17, 639)

If Montaigne here goes so far as to ascribe first-person possessives to a *langage françois* and a *Perigordin*, he does so not to take them up as his exactly, but to demarcate positions which differentiate him from both their communities of speakers, eroding the ground upon which possession *via* such belonging would be based even as the possessive is uttered: “*mon* langage françois” exists to wound the purity of French ears; in “*mon* Perigordin”—that closest language, native to “chez moy”—I am not understood. “Chez

moy” offers itself less as *source* than *potential*—at once undetermined in its idiom and over-determined by a plurality of tongues, as we shall see below.

In addition to being *alteré* in relation to other, purer French, Montaigne will let it be known in “Sur des vers de Virgile” that his own spoken language is subject to alteration: “A Paris, je parle un langage aucunement autre qu'à Montaigne” (III, 5, 875). The eradicable *ramage* of his language itself avoids taking root, such that in lieu of an affirmative proposition of linguistic territory, Montaigne seems only to offer “neither, nor” negations which work to establish singularity by claiming alterity—if such a thing can be claimed—on all accounts, even in relation to his own use. Continuing here, we find Montaigne surrounded by tongues on all sides:

C'est un langage [“mon Perigordin”], comme sont autour de moy, d'une bande et d'autre, le Poitevin, Xaintongeois, Angoumois, Lymosin, Auvergnat: brode, trainant, esfoiré. Il y a bien au dessus de nous, vers les montaignes, un Gascon, que je treuve singulierement beau sec, bref, signifiant, et à la verité un langage masle et militaire plus qu'autre que j'entende; autant nerveux, puissant et pertinent, comme le François est gratieus, delicat et abundant.

(ibid)

Idioms abound, but Montaigne, in a stance reminiscent of the self-assurance of the tower *librairie*, surveys them, evaluates, admires *un Gascon* off in some distant, other *montaignes*, but aligns himself with none; the language his text might seem most attached to, “le François,” is feminized and dismissed—a non-threatening tongue, one among many, present only to be disdained in contrast to the admired, far-off *Gascon*.

This essential difference—a deafness, inability, or disaffection in relation to the languages that surround him—is met on the other side, however, by a troubling capacity for *resemblance*. In his non-attachment to a language, the essayist paints himself as the bearer of a tongue which, insufficiently tied to one form, finds itself overly susceptible to being twisted by others. The essayist’s language, “aucunement autre à Paris qu’à

Montaigne,” is itself alterable, cut between places and names.^{cdv} In “Sur des vers de Virgile,” we read:

Or j'ay une condition singeresse et imitatrice: quand je me meslois de faire des vers (et n'en fis jamais que des Latins), ils accusoient evidemment le poete que je venois dernièrement de lire; et, de mes premiers essays, aucuns puent un peu à l'estranger. A Paris, je parle un langage aucunement autre qu'à Montaigne. Qui que je regarde avec attention m'imprime facilement quelque chose du sien. Ce que je considere, je l'usurpe [...].

As Virginia Krause has observed, the broader imaginary of Montaigne's withdrawn tower scene “suggests a very porous self in need of protection,” one “ever vulnerable to its physical surroundings.”^{cdv} Here, confessing to a “condition singeresse et imitatrice,” Montaigne opens *being in language as such* as a site of such vulnerability, pointing to an inevitable porousness of the ear in which a departure from what is properly ‘his’ occurs even (or especially) when he himself becomes an agent of appropriation. It is this *essential* vulnerability (that is, vulnerability as linguistic essence, in the same way its authority is *essentially* confused) which marks the relation to language in the *Essais* throughout. While no proper language *per se* is sufficiently given in advance, and perhaps none can ever be established or secured firmly enough, some *other* language is already ready to be given too much—a susceptibility to the *sien* residing in the essayist, as his own possessed “condition.” “Ce que je considere, je l'usurpe”: in language, even as I seem to overcome passivity and become an agent of appropriation, I only become the agent of my own dispossession—appropriating, I am only imitating. The self-possession extended by language only makes a monkey of me, makes us a race of monkeys: “L'imitation du parler, par sa facilité, suit incontinent tout un peuple” (I, 26, 172).

Back in “De la Praesomption” we find a further, even more remarkable, if almost parenthetical dismissal, and a singular detachment from a language which calls for closer attention:

Quant au Latin, qui m'a esté donné pour maternel, j'ay perdu par des-accoustumance la promptitude de m'en pouvoir servir à parler: ouy, et à escrire, en quoy autrefois je me faisoys appeller maistre Jean. Voylà combien peu je vaux de ce costé là.

(639)

This is one of several moments in the *Essais* where Montaigne will identify Latin as his first language in a narrative of unequivocal decline, from singular mastery to loss of ability through “des-accoustumance.” The fuller account of his monolingual upbringing offered in “De l’institution des enfans”^{cdvi} offers an equally dramatic arc of acquisition and loss. Montaigne’s father, acting on the good advice of his learned friends, figures as the initiator in this linguistic project, the giver of the “maternal” language of which Montaigne identifies himself as the recipient above. He is portrayed as the master of a Latin-speaking house after instituting a “regle inviolable” that only the ancient language be spoken in the child’s presence—albeit an ignorant master, who does not himself speak the language. The language of Montaigne’s story emphasizes the early and all-embracing presence of Latin: “en nourrice et avant le premier desnouement de ma langue,” a non-French-speaking German preceptor is imported (“du tout ignorant de nostre langue, et tres-bien versé en la Latine”); along with two other tutors, the preceptor is constantly with him, serving as veritable *nourrices* of the ancient language (“m'avoit continuellement entre les bras,” “ne m'entretenoient d'autre langue que Latine”). The chateau of Montaigne, the “chez moy” which will become the scene of writing, thus stages a first, singular linguistic project. In this *avant-scène*, before the essayist will

willfully cease to hear *François* and *Latin*, and before his use of French will be able to wound “les oreilles pures françoises,” we find smaller ears kept guarded and pure:

Quant à moy, j'avois plus de six ans avant que j'entendisse non plus de François ou de Perigordin que d'Arabesque. Et, sans art, sans livre, sans grammaire ou precepte, sans fouet et sans larmes, j'avois appris du latin tout aussi pur que mon maistre d'eschole le sçavoit: car je ne le pouvois avoir meslé ny alteré.

(173-174)

His mastery in fact exceeds that of his masters; in some apparently self-generated, native purity, he becomes a fearful prodigious force:

Et Nicolas Groucchi, qui a escrit *de comitiis Romanorum*, Guillaume Guereute, qui a commenté Aristote, George Bucanan, ce grand poete Escossois, Marc Antoine Muret, que la France et l'Italie recognoist pour le meilleur orateur du temps, mes precepteurs domestiques, m'ont dict souvent que j'avois ce langage, en mon enfance, si prest et si à main, qu'ils craingnoient à m'accoster. precepteurs domestiques, m'ont dict souvent que j'avois ce langage, en mon enfance, si prest et si à main, qu'ils craingnoient à m'accoster.

(174)

The inevitable moment of decline arrives when, in combination with Montaigne's own confessed inabilities (“L'esprit, je l'avois lent [...]; l'apprehension, tardive; l'invention, lasche; et apres tout un incroyable defect de memoire”), his father, a benevolent but capricious authority, “se laissa en fin emporter à l'opinion commune [...] et se rengea à la coustume.”^{cdvii} Montaigne is sent off to *collège* where, despite the exclusively Latin instruction offered there, “Mon Latin s'abastardit incontinent, duquel depuis par desacoustumance j'ay perdu tout usage” (ibid).

On the one hand, Montaigne's portrayal of his “langage maternel” reflects the characteristics of the native language promoted by mid-century vernacular advocates like Peletier and Du Bellay: it was acquired ‘naturally,’ without mediation or force (“sans art, sans livre, sans grammaire ou precepte, sans fouet et sans larmes”). In contrast to the Latin of his “maîtres,” Montaigne's was a natively masterful language-of-writing (“et à escrire, en quoy autrefois je me faisoy appeller maistre Jean”) which necessarily

surpassed theirs. As native, he inverted the social hierarchy to become the master-child (“j’avois ce langage, en mon enfance, si prest et si à main, qu’ils craignoient à m’accoster”). On the other hand, however, this “langage maternel” marks an ironic return to the late medieval designation of *lingua materna*, insofar as this mother tongue is gone, ‘forgotten,’ banished from the activity of writing—indeed, relegated to the role of citation, those words marked typographically and linguistically as not the essayist’s “own.” With Montaigne’s maternal Latin, we have in some sense come full circle in the movement initiated by Nicole Oresme’s introduction of the “langage maternel” into French—in reference to Latin—in the fourteenth century^{cdviii}; the inversion of the Latin-French hierarchy implied in Oresme’s translation is completed in Montaigne, as Latin becomes the “langage maternel,” and French the language-of-writing.

And yet, this story does not end on appropriation. Above all, it is a narrative of dispossession, in which the former state of Latin mastery only serves to emphasize a present state of Latin dispossession—with a particularly stark decline in the domain of writing (“et à escrire, en quoy autrefois je me faisoys appeller maistre Jean”). Turning to a similar mention of Latin in “Du Repentir,” in the Bordeaux copy of the *Essais* we find a *rature* working to emphasize the utterness of this loss: “Le langage latin m’est comme naturel, je l’entens mieux que le François, mais il y a quarante ans que je ne m’en suis du tout point servy à parler, ny ~~guere~~ à escrire” (361v). Unlike many vernacular authors who claimed to write out of “affection naturelle” or a sense of native duty, Montaigne makes his French an adopted child, a language without a back-story. The language of the *Essais*, then, is every bit as unrooted and *pellegrin* as Latin or Greek for other writers. In this dis-attachment, it seeks vigorously to attach itself, in some way, to *Montaigne*.

Indeed, the state of linguistic dispossession to which the *Essais* testify might seem to stand in stark contrast to the announced imperative of a textual “mien.” In order to explain this paradox, we might call on Derrida’s suggestion that the fact of dispossession in language is precisely the force behind appropriation: “Elle est, la langue, cela même qui ne se laisse pas posséder, mais qui, pour cette raison même, provoque toutes sortes de mouvements d’appropriation.”^{cdix} Thus the movement in Montaigne—one that seems increasingly mobilized as possession gets increasingly out of hand—to mark and use only what is *mine*, to draw (on) a language of my own, to *know* it and show it as mine. “Au demourant [...], je n’use que du mien” (II, 6, 377). Montaigne will, moreover, insist that this very capacity is proper to him, as the one who has undertaken the project of the *Essais*: “Ceux qui se mescognoissent, se peuvent paistre de fauces approbations; non pas moy, qui me voy et qui me recherche jusques aux entrailles, qui sçay bien ce qui m'appartient” (III, 5, 847).

IV. Reading Troubles: Critical Responses to Montaigne’s Language(s)

Even if we could take Montaigne at his word that he is privileged to know what is his, *our* question remains just as unanswered: what language can we, as readers of the *Essais*, say belongs to Montaigne? Do the *Essais* instill in us any gut feeling, will they show us their innate and abiding, natural form? Is his language something Montaigne can permit himself to show us, according to the terms he set out for his reader—or is there a law of some kind already in place, governing the text, that keeps it quiet, fragmented, covered? “Que si j’eusse esté entre ces nations qu’on dict vivre encore sous la douce liberté des premieres loix de nature, je t’asseure que je m’y fusse tres-volontiers

peint tout entier, et tout nud” (“Au lecteur,” 3). The questions of language in the *Essais*—the narrative in “De l’institution,” the choice of French, the Latin citations—have represented a persistent source of curiosity for Montaigne’s critics and biographers. This section will take a brief pause from the text of the *Essais* to consider how different readers of the *Essais* have suggested Montaigne’s languages be read.

Montaigne’s Latin education makes an exemplary appearance in Brunot’s *Histoire de la langue française*, demonstrating the prominent role of Latin in sixteenth-century pedagogical practices. Brunot questions only its status as a *singular* experience: “Il semble qu’on soit ici en présence d’un cas exceptionnel. Nullement. Seuls, les moyens employés par le père de Montaigne pour faire de lui un bon Latin, étaient nouveaux.”^{cdx} Jacques de Feytaud later makes a similar argument in his article “Un mouton de Panurge,” observing that the humanist climate and Erasmian “direct method” of language teaching were widespread enough that there would have been nothing unusual about Montaigne’s upbringing.^{cdxi} In *La Jeunesse de Montaigne*, Roger Trinquet also studies the dominance of Latin education in the 1520s and 1530s, at the Collège de Guyenne attended by Montaigne and elsewhere, but concludes that the essayist’s education as represented in I, 26 would nevertheless have been “radical.” Scholars interested in the biographical value of the text of the *Essais* have pointed out the story’s internal inconsistencies, or discrepancies in various editions of the text. The identity of the German preceptor, the major figure in the narrative, remains a mystery. Roger Trinquet draws particular attention to the essayist’s claim that his preceptors were brought in “*en nourrice* et avant le premier desnouement de ma langue.” He points out that in the 1580 edition of the *Essais*, the text reads “*au partir de la nourrice....*” This

edit, Trinquet argues, was designed to make the reader believe—falsely—that Latin was the first and only language “à frapper ses oreilles.” As for the curious phrase “le premier desnouement de ma langue,” Trinquet classifies this as one of the Montaigne’s “expressions hyperboliques.” “Ne croyons pas trop Montaigne quand il s’exprime ainsi,” affirms Eugène Voizard in his *Étude sur la langue de Montaigne*.^{cdxii} Montaigne’s biographers and critics generally concur: readers should not to accept the story as “argent comptant”: it is too obscure and fantastic; Montaigne must be exaggerating about the purity of his Latin, about the extent to which his was an exceptional case; he must be boasting about his former abilities; he can’t, in any case, be taken as a trustworthy source in his report on his own linguistic origins.^{cdxiii}

In a recent study entitled *Montaigne Bilingue*, Floyd Gray takes a fresh look at the nature of Montaigne’s Latin education and the crucial role of Latin in the *Essais*. Despite his work’s emphasis on Latin, Gray locates a definite alliance between Montaigne and French, cemented by the essayist’s choice of language-of-writing. Although French was not Montaigne’s ‘maternal’ language, Gray argues, “il a dû penser toujours que le français était sa langue de prédilection, celle qui était destinée à être celle de son œuvre” (27). In Gray’s view, Montaigne appears as the product of a full “conversion” to French, and a long apprenticeship: “dès les premières lignes, [Montaigne] fait preuve d’une maîtrise qui ne peut provenir que d’un long apprentissage” (22). The Latin citations of the *Essais*, Gray proposes, can be read as the fragments of a desired but ultimately impossible work, “les fragments d’une oeuvre qu’il aurait écrite entièrement en latin et qui aurait été à ses yeux l’oeuvre idéale—ce qu’il n’a jamais pensé faire cependant et n’aurait pu faire [...]” The quotes in Gray’s estimation are thus a trace of

what could-have-been for Montaigne: “un regret de sa part: l’oeuvre qui aurait été écrite en ce ‘langage plus ferme’ [...]” (27). French, then, is a destiny to which the essayist must reconcile himself—and, as convert and apprentice, one he must regretfully come *into* through writing, in order to ‘master.’

Mary McKinley attributes a rather different role to the Latin of the *Essais* in her study *Words in a Corner*.^{cdxiv} McKinley is less concerned with Montaigne’s Latin story or its ‘maternal’ status than the textual function of citation. For McKinley, the Latin texts interspersed with French “constitute on a deeper level both a seminal and a cohesive principle of Montaigne’s text” (13). Locating in the quotes the grounds for a new, more dramatically intertextual mode of reading the *Essais*, McKinley proposes that far from representing “adornments” or even “authoritative reinforcement,” the quotes in fact “serve as thresholds to the works where they first resided and thereby offer the reader the possibility of an almost infinitely expanding text” (35). For McKinley, Latin-French bilingualism has less to do with Montaigne (either the textual being or the extratextual figure) than the reader, since knowledge of *both* languages becomes a requirement of the text itself. McKinley argues that Montaigne’s “diligent” reader (the term is the *Essais*) “must be as at ease in Latin and as familiar with Classical texts as Montaigne himself was—a difficult order for many of us. Equally important, his reader must be willing to read Montaigne’s text as eagerly and actively as Montaigne read Ovid and other writers whose texts he quotes” (24). Here, bilingualism extends into a veritable practice of reading—with its own affect, energy, ethics, and hermeneutics—through which the reader arrives at a complicitous relationship with the text. “By skimming over the quotations,” insists McKinley, “the modern reader risks missing a crucial allusion and

fails for a time to be the accomplice, the ‘celuy qui me suit,’ to whom Montaigne addressed his book” (36).

For Hugo Friedrich, the fact that Latin was the essayist’s first language only makes his resolution to write and publish, as Friedrich views it, “*exclusively* in French” all the remarkable.^{cdxv} Heraldng the *Essais* as the first French vernacular-language text of philosophical significance, Friedrich praises Montaigne for “not vacillat[ing] in his choice of French,” despite his Latin mother tongue, and for “convert[ing] the enormous humanistic educational store into the expressions of his native tongue” (which is to say, French). In contrast to Gray, however, Friedrich finds in French an apt idiom for Montaigne’s philosophical and aesthetic attitudes. While the fluctuations of the vernacular may have worried Tory and others, Montaigne “did not experience it as disquieting at all to presume he might no longer be understood in fifty years,” Friedrich argues (363). Rather, “he experienced this as confirmation of general as well as his own particular transitoriness, which he wants in order to be real. Writing in French thus provides him with another chance to preserve obedience to what is finite” (ibid). Unlike his contemporaries, who struggled in writing against “the inconstancy of their mother tongue,” Montaigne thus “immerses himself in it.” Far from regretful, Friedrich thus depicts a French-writing Montaigne who consciously and deliberately entrusts himself to a “rapidly changing vehicle.” This Montaigne, then, moves neither towards French in a process of acquisition, nor away from it in dispossession, nor against it in a manipulation of style; Friedrich’s Montaigne goes with the flow of the vernacular and its movements, even out of existence if need be. Richard Regosin expresses a similar understanding of Montaigne’s “choice” of idiom in *The Matter of My Book*: “The real issue [...] is of

appropriateness, for French as he describes it corresponds to the nature of his subject. [...] He is not looking to convey impressions of stability or fixity through his choice of language, but rather of movement and changing form. The medium he chooses, like the man he portrays, is meant to express becoming.”^{cdxvi} Regosin does note, however, that the vernacular French of the late sixteenth century is not a free-for-all of writerly fluidity: “although French is, indeed, in the process of dynamic development, the tendency through the latter part of the century progresses toward more restricted form, less overall freedom” (213).

Literary critic Françoise Charpentier offers a more psychoanalytically-inflected reading of Montaigne’s childhood scene—one of the most attentive, if speculative readings in existing scholarship—in her article “Un langage moins ferme.”^{cdxvii} Charpentier argues of the child-Montaigne that he “n’aura jamais, à proprement parler, de langue maternelle [...]. [O]n peut imaginer qu’il éprouve, tardivement, une sorte de trouble linguistique” (53).^{cdxviii} For Charpentier, tracing a similar trajectory to Gray’s, the writing of the *Essais* represents a subsequent movement *out* of “trouble,” and into French. Echoing the assessments of other critics, Charpentier offers up the *Essais*’ “style [...] parfaitement maîtrisé” as a testament to “un trouble assurément maîtrisé [...], une réconciliation progressive de Montaigne avec la langue qui, bon gré mal gré, est la sienne”—that is, French (51-53).^{cdxix} In this analysis, writing is a mirror of the maturation process in which the child must give up his Latin for a French which “sera obligatoirement [...] le langage de l’âge adulte”—despite the fact that Montaigne “ne s’explique pas véritablement sur l’apport du français aux *Essais* [...].” As imperative as French may have been socially, Charpentier still echoes the astonishment expressed in

different forms by Gray and Friedrich at Montaigne's singular linguistic apprenticeship: "L'étonnant est qu'il ait si parfaitement incorporé le français qu'il l'a, non seulement élu pour les *Essais*, mais qu'il en a fait le chef d'œuvre qu'est le style des *Essais*" (54). The narrative in I, 26 may indeed beg this question: if Montaigne is not a native speaker of French, how does he write it so well—so 'masterfully'—in the vernacular? Floyd Gray follows up with a question of his own: "Une autre question [...], c'est comment comment, où et quand Montaigne aurait appris le français si, comme il le prétend, il ne parlait que le latin en quittant le château de ses parents. Pas au collège de Guyenne certainement, car tous les cours se faisaient obligatoirement en latin [...]" (Gray 14).

While Montaigne's Latin story has evidently raised a number of questions (and some eyebrows) from his readers, it would seem that its status as autobiographical representation *within* the *Essais* has been taken for granted. Despite the relative scarcity of such autobiographical accounts elsewhere in the *Essais* ("Ce ne sont mes gestes que j'escris"), especially ones of such length, we assume that Montaigne is telling us a straightforward and sincere story about himself—even if that story is exaggerated beyond belief. (I will propose an alternate way to read this narrative in the following section.) We may partly attribute this assumption of to what Gérard Defaux has fittingly termed the "obsession with the referent"^{cdxx} that haunts the reading of the *Essais*. Despite the fact that language(s) of the *Essais* make it hard to map a language onto the *je* of the *Essais* in any coherent or consistent way—partly, as Regosin and Friedrich suggest, because of the character of sixteenth-century French itself—most readers find themselves filling in the gaps of the language identity and narrative. As if, we might say, the movement of appropriation in the *Essais* must continue in its reading, struggling with

Montaigne's dispossessions to give his language a name (or two). In *Words in a Corner*, Mary McKinley identifies an analogous gap-filling process at work—significantly, between languages with the work of citation: “While moving back and forth between the quotations and Montaigne’s prose, the diligent reader responds by filling the gaps. The connecting fragments that each such reader supplies will respond to apparent disorder by supplying an order of his own making [...]” (McKinley 109). McKinley points, too, to the large body and diversity of Montaigne scholarship as a “striking illustration” of this effect more generally in the *Essais*. “These theories are varied and often contradict each other, but they bear witness to the fact that any critical reading of the *Essais* requires a certain amount of ‘reading between the lines’” (ibid). Recognizing the significance of this argument as it applies broadly to the *Essais*, it is important here to stress the particular force of the move toward “order-making” and identification when dealing with the language question. Something in the *Essais* resists—and yet also, for that very reason, calls out for—our calling a language Montaigne’s. A further look at the critical relationship between Montaigne and the French language shows how such identificatory appropriation can be problematic.

In certain cases where readers identify Montaigne with French (as “sa langue”) or laud his coming *into* the language, we may find an underlying ideology of French-language history and identity at work. On the one hand, we do find readers rethinking any *given* relationship between “nativeness” and stylistic “mastery” with respect to Montaigne (in much the same way one is compelled to do with Samuel Beckett and other non-native modern writers of French). On the other hand, however, a notion of Latin-French genealogy and the *bona fides* of Latin have sometimes worked, paradoxically, to

collect any potential foreignness of Montaigne's language up into the "naturel" of French. Far from being read as a "non-native" speaker writing in French as a "foreign" language—despite the fact that this is precisely what Montaigne's story implies by calling "maternel" that big Other of vernacular discourse—Montaigne becomes the *most* native of all, appropriated into the institution of French writing at *its* origin. Montaigne's coming into French, in other words, becomes the French language's coming into its own. Turning back to *Montaigne Bilingue*, Gray helpfully breaks from many traditional readings to suggest that the veracity of Montaigne's Latin narrative may, in fact, be beside the point. The "moi" of the *Essais*, Gray argues, is not a "moi intégral," but rather one which is altered by each *essai*.^{cdxxi} Yet Gray still ties the story to the inner workings of an extratextual Montaigne by suggesting that the Latin language must have been "enraciné en son être profond." This only really becomes problematic when the rootedness of Latin "in" Montaigne is then transferred to the French language's own Latin roots: "C'est par le biais du latin, sa langue 'maternelle,' que Montaigne retrouve la source de la langue des *Essais* et le moyen de la sustenter" (19).^{cdxxii} Montaigne's prose, as 'natively' Latin, returns French to *its* 'origin.' Writing in a language "alimentée aux sources romaines," Montaigne produces in Gray's estimation a "style naturel," which, ultimately, "inaugure la prose française" (2). Paradoxically, then, the Latin identity attributed to the author Montaigne *combined with* the French-language identity attributed to the *Essais* allows them to endow or 'restore' a genealogical identity to the vernacular language ("retrouve la source"). For Gray, Montaigne may himself have to come *into* French, but in doing so he brings French home, back to *itself*. In turn, Montaigne's language may be folded into the common corpus of French writing ("la prose

française”)—indeed, as *its* origin. Marc Fumaroli is even more emphatic in his awarding of this status in his *Trois institutions littéraires*. For Fumaroli, Montaigne’s prose constitutes a veritable ‘revelation’ of the French language: “Les *Essais* sont dans l’histoire de la langue et de son ‘génie’ non pas une révolution, rien n’est plus étranger à l’humeur de Montaigne, mais une révélation.”^{cdxxiii} Fumaroli argues that after the foreign dalliances of the Pléiade, Montaigne marks a recuperation of French, again, a return of French to itself: “la langue vulgaire [...] a retrouvé son naturel” (256).

What is most curious about this naturalization of Montaigne into “la prose française”—a designation, we may recall, Montaigne himself reserves for an unpublished, paratextual remark on the *Essais*—is that it is a relatively recent phenomenon in the history of the *Essais*’ reception. We can trace it back to the mid-nineteenth century, when critics led by Sainte-Beuve looked to reclaim Montaigne and other sixteenth-century writers as part of the national literary canon. Up until this point, many readers of the *Essais*—including Montaigne’s contemporaries and friends—considered its language to be problematically *un-French*. As Marie de Gournay would write in defense of the essayist, his detractors accused him above all of “quelque usurpation du Latin, de la fabrique de nouveaux mots, et d’employer quelques phrases nonchalantes ou Gasconnes.”^{cdxxiv} When Pasquier and Montaigne met at Blois in 1588, as Pasquier related in a letter some years later (1618), he reproached the essayist for not having shown his book to his friends before publishing it, “d’autant que l’on y reconnoissoit en plusieurs lieux je ne scay quoy de ramage gascon.”^{cdxxv} In this letter addressed to a *conseiller du roi*, Pasquier takes up the task of honoring his late friend’s work, while simultaneously offering some constructive criticism on the level of language.

According to the letter, Pasquier took Montaigne back to his room to share his own reader's copy of the *Essais*, already marked up to indicate the "mots inaccoustumez" and non-French words and phrases: "Et comme il ne m'en voulust croire, je le menay en ma chambre où j'avois son livre, et la je luy montray plusieurs manières de parler familiares non aux Francois, ains seulement aux Gascons, *un Patenostre, un debte, un couple, un rencontre* [...]" (*ibid*). Pasquier offers in the letter, as he did to Montaigne, a detailed inventory of such words in the *Essais*. Montaigne was implored to correct them, but to no avail:

Plusieurs autres locutions luy representay-je, non seulement sur ce mot [jouir], ains sur plusieurs autres, dont je me suis proposé de vous faire icy l'inventaire, et estimoy qu'à la premiere et prochaine impression, que l'on ferait de son livre, il donneroit ordre de les corriger. Toutesfoir non seulement il ne le fit; mais comme ainsi soit qu'il fust prevenu de mort, sa fille par alliance, l'a fait l'imprimer, tout de la mesme façon qu'il estoit, et nous advertit par son Epistre Liminaire, que la Dame de Montaigne le luy avoit envoyé tout tel que son mary projettoit de le remettre au jour. J'ajouteray à tout cecy, que pendant qu'il faict contenance de se desdaigner, je ne leu jamais auteur qui s'estimast tant que luy [...].

(*ibid*)

The tone of Pasquier's letter vacillates between extreme admiration for the *Essais* ("que j'appelle chef d'oeuvre"; "C'est un autre Seneque en nostre langue"; "J'y trouve tousjours quelque chose à me contenter") and his frustration with the language, and the essayist's own stubborn self-satisfaction ("il s'est voulu de propos deliberé moquer de nous"; "je n'ay sceu jamais entendre ce qu'il vouloit dire par ce mot *diversion*"; "par ses escrits il prenoit plaisir de desplaire plaisamment") (*ibid*). Despite his affection for the writer and his work, Pasquier cannot help but resist the language of the *Essais*, just as he cannot help calling his friend out for resisting correction, for not turning his language over fully to "nostre langue Française."

As Douglas Marchi points out in *Montaigne Among the Moderns*, such criticism became mainstream during the seventeenth century, and especially intense in the years after the founding of the Académie Française (1637) and La Fronde (1648-1653). “The cultural authoritarianism emanating from Malherbe, Richelieu, and their disciples attempted to stylistically transform Montaigne into a writer of clarity and precision, banishing any untamed provincial individualism” (Marchi 38). Nevertheless, as Marchi observes, the *Essais* enjoyed widespread—if ambivalent—popularity during the seventeenth century before their ideological and stylistic conflict with the Richelieu hegemony caused the book to be banished in France. In 1884, Eugène Voizard’s *Étude sur la langue de Montaigne* endeavored to reclaim Montaigne’s language as properly French. Voizard affirms, moreover, that his study was part of a broader contemporary movement to consider the essayist “un auteur bien plus français qu’on ne l’avait cru jusqu’à nos jours” (viii). Voizard’s strategy is to study the *Essais* from the standpoint of comparative historical linguistics in order to determine, in his words, “quelle a été véritablement la langue de Montaigne” (*ibid*). Will Montaigne’s language pass the French test? Voizard argues as others have that Montaigne’s syntax is heavily Latin-inflected, but not entirely so: “la syntaxe des Essais, tout en ayant des allures françaises, en retenant le tour d’imagination qui est propre à leur auteur, est surtout latine” (5). The vocabulary of the *Essais* is another story. Voizard points out that Montaigne used words from a variety of dialects in a singular fashion; in addition to Gascon, “il a pris [...] au languedocien, au limousin, à l’angoumois, encore n’a-t-il tiré de ces idiomes qu’une vingtaine de mots que seul il a employés,” and even these usages were *singular* (“et qu’on ne trouve pas chez les autres écrivains, ses contemporains” (7). Voizard goes on to

categorize the words used by Montaigne *and* his contemporaries (but not longer in use in modern French); “dialectal” words used by Montaigne *and* others; words that were dialectal or already archaic in the sixteenth century used *only* by Montaigne; words used in unusual ways by Montaigne; words introduced into French by Montaigne (both *populaires* and *savants*). His conclusion is that Montaigne, situated on a linguistic cusp, “sert de transition entre le temps qui finit et le grand siècle qui va commencer” (8). The effect of time and historical narrative allow Montaigne to be brought back in, no longer un-French but a supplemental piece just outside, just before, a necessary support in its becoming. “Le temps est un grand maître,” wrote an author during that *grand siècle* with institutional troubles of his own, “il regle bien des choses.”^{cdxxvi}

V. Montaigne’s Institutional Struggles

Something about Montaigne’s language (like other aspects of his writing, from religious thought to bodily functions) did not gel with the French institution being consolidated at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth century. In the essay “Sur des vers de Virgile,” we find Montaigne’s response to critiques like those Pasquier expressed to him in person in 1588, a defense of his right not to correct himself:

Je corrigerois bien une erreur accidentale, dequoy je suis plain, ainsi que je cours inadvertemment; mais les imperfections qui sont en moy ordinaires et constantes, ce seroit trahison de les oster. Quand on m’a dit ou que moy-mesme me suis dict: Tu es trop espais en figures. Voilà un mot du creu de Gascoingne. Voilà une frase dangereuse (je n’en refuis aucune de celles qui s’usent emmy les rues françoises; ceux qui veulent combattre l’usage par la grammaire se moquent). Voilà un discours ignorant. Voilà un discours paradoxe. En voilà un trop fol. [...] Oui, fais-je; mais je corrige les fautes d’inadvertence, non celles de costume. Est-ce pas ainsi que je parle par tout? me represente-je pas vivement? suffit! J’ay faict ce que j’ay voulu: tout le monde me reconnoit en mon livre, et mon livre en moy.

(III, 5, 875)

Beyond Pasquier's particular comments, the essayist gestures here toward a broader set of pressures involved in writing and publishing in French. The essayist's intensified self-defense here indicates that, with the passage of time and the accrual of a critical readership, his writing must *increasingly* constitute a resistance to these pressures—as if, pressed on all sides, the “mien” appeared by getting squeezed out (“suffit!”). Writing here is, again, a terrain of “combat.” In the struggle between “la grammaire” and “l’usage,” the essayist allies himself unequivocally with the streets (“les rues françoises”) in claiming his right to self-representation, his right to his own desire in writing (“J’ay faict ce que j’ay voulu”). The more difficult hurdle in this battle, however—and perhaps the more persistent force behind “institution” than critics or grammarians—is signaled almost in passing: “Quand on m’a dit *ou que moy-mesme me suis dict* [...].” Again, that *already*-present nature of the other in language pits the writer not merely against an outside but brings that struggle in, confusingly; my desire is split, and my page stages the difference in language between me and myself. (I will return to this difficulty below in a discussion of the essay “De la coustume et de ne changer aisément une loy receue” (I, 23).)

Significantly, the above passage (“Je corrigeroiy bien...”) appears as the bridge between two key passages from III, 5 explored earlier in the chapter. It follows immediately after the passage that begin “Pour ce mien dessein,” which inaugurated this inquiry into Montaigne’s language by setting the imperative of withdrawal from French and Latin:

Pour ce mien dessein, il me vient aussi à propos, d’escrire chez moy, en pays sauvage, où personne ne m’aide, ny me releve: où je ne hante communément homme, qui entende le Latin de son patenostre, et de François un peu moins. Je l’eusse faict meilleur ailleurs, mais l’ouvrage eust esté moins mien: Et sa fin

principale et perfection, c'est d'estre exactement mien. Je corrigerois bien une
erreur accidentale, dequoy je suis plain, ainsi que je cours inadvertemment [...].
(ibid)

Re-reading the passage in the context of this juxtaposition underscores anew the way in which the imperative of the “exactement mien” emerges as a counter-imperative to authoritative, corrective voices. Indeed, *François*—which is heard even ‘less’ at Montaigne—appears even to be the more forceful now, the name that represents a greater obstacle to the *Essais*’ desire. In response to Pasquier, to others, to “on,” to himself, the book as “mien” means a resistance to making his language *François*. This passage is immediately followed by another we have seen: the essayist’s admission of his propensity for imitation, to differ from himself in language through a “condition singeresse.”

Est-ce pas ainsi que je parle par tout? me represente-je pas vivement? suffit! J’ay faict ce que j’ay voulu: tout le monde me reconnoit en mon livre, et mon livre en moy. Or j’ay une condition singeresse et imitatrice: quand je me meslois de faire des vers (et n’en fis jamais que des Latins), ils accusoient evidemment le poete que je venois dernièrement de lire; et, de mes premiers essays, aucuns puent un peu à l’estranger. A Paris, je parle un langage aucunement autre qu’à Montaigne. Qui que je regarde avec attention m’imprime facilement quelque chose du sien.

Inverse pressures of language determining the scene of writing at Montaigne come into the foreground here: self-representation is not a given, in speech or writing. Significantly, *Paris* and *Montaigne* are put into a directly oppositional relation here, suggesting an especially altering effect of the authority embodied in the city’s name. *Paris*: that which makes me speak a language somewhat^{cdxxvii} other than (at) *Montaigne*. *Paris* thus appears a veritable counter-signature to the *Essais*: it is that authority to which the author must relate and which, for that very reason, might counter-act or take away his property. Indeed, in this way *Paris* marks a bar on self-representation for Montaigne: this language is mine, and defensible, because I speak this way “par tout,” yet in Paris I speak “un langage aucunement autre” than at/as Montaigne. This Parisian Other points

us back to the scene of writing at Montaigne, that bracketed contingency which, mitigating that overly *present* presence of the other in language—and especially in speech—^{cdxxviii}, allows the book’s *mien* to gather strength.^{cdxxix}

In this light, we may turn back to Montaigne’s Latin story to consider how it, too, works to struggle against “institution”—not merely by dispossessing the writer, but moreover, through certain tactical maneuvers against the French-language institution itself. To begin with, this narrative and the identification of Latin as “maternal” would seem to erect some fundamental barrier between the language of Montaigne’s text and that of a community identifying (with) French as its tongue. This language of writing, says Montaigne in no uncertain terms, is *not* my mother tongue; if the essayist does not represent himself as a foreigner in France *per se*, we learn that, at the very least, he is not a native speaker. The Latin story is indeed introduced through an unusual set of references to “ma langue,” which positions it simultaneously amidst and against Latin (and Greek), the language of his neighbors, and “nostre langue”:

Je voudrois premierement bien sçavoir *ma langue*, et celle de mes voisins, où j'ay plus ordinaire commerce. C'est un bel et grand agencement sans doute que le Grec et Latin, mais on l'achepte trop cher. [...] Tant y a que l'expedient que mon pere y trouva, ce fut que, en nourrice et avant le premier desnouement de *ma langue*, il me donna en charge à un Alleman, qui depuis est mort fameux medecin en France, du tout ignorant de *nostre langue*, et tres-bien versé en la Latine.”

(173, emphasis added)

Singularity and difference are emphasized: ‘my’ language—whatever that may be—and ‘our’ language are not the same; yet once again, ‘my’ language is also not the same as my local dialect (“celle de mes voisins”). As the sequence of figurative and literal uses of “ma langue” indicate, ‘my language’ is every bit as internal and proper as ‘my tongue.’ Most importantly, however, the curious expressions in which these two *ma langue*’s are

evoked (“je voudrais premierement bien sçavoir ma langue” and “avant le premier desnouement de ma langue”) both imply—like the book’s own deferred “fin” of propriety, and the suspended question of the *propre*—that “ma langue” exists essentially in a tense virtuality of desire. It is a language I would like to know; it is tongue yet to be untied.

“Ma langue” is yet to be known; as such, it is anything but a first language or mother tongue. “Ma langue” is not “nostre langue” or “celle de mes voisins,” but it is also *not* Latin. My native language, that language “qui m’a esté donné pour maternel,” *as given*, was somehow not proper enough. Propriety sought in a language called “mien” must therefore aim beyond the gift, towards another economy in which “je n’use que du mien” (II, 6, 377). The Latin once fearfully mastered and superlatively pure was arbitrarily given (through the will of the father), and then simply lost, equally arbitrarily, through “des-accoustumance”—a term twice used by Montaigne to describe his detachment from the original tongue. That language was dropped it like a habit or a mask, removed like a costume, unstitched at the seams. Furthermore, in a gesture recalling the rhetoric of the essayist’s “il n’est personne, s’il s’escoute...” formulation, this story that serves to illustrate the essayist’s singularity is also afforded a potentially common, even universal status. “Je diray icy une façon,” the story begins, “qui a esté essayée en moymesmes. S’en servira qui voudra.” That “façon” is not particular to me—as a method, an experience or experiment, it is offered for the taking. In the guise of pedagogical advice, then, Montaigne’s story of his Latin institutions works quietly to implicate all given languages, including the most apparently “maternel,” as just as arbitrary, just as arbitrarily detachable as his Latin—equally instituted and equally

replaceable through an alternate “institution.” Thus, even this story marks his case as singular and mythologizes his (and the *Essais*’) own original *avant-scène*, it simultaneously works to demythologize any absolute propriety of the native language as such, as either naturally belonging or sufficiently given. Languages, as “institutions”—even or *especially* in their most native and ‘purest’ forms—can be acquired and lost like property; their mastery can be gained over others like a performance, but is never assured or acquired absolutely; their purity is only ever relative, *as pure as* that of the “maître d’eschole.” And that demand for purity which seems to exert so strong a hold (“reigle inviolable,” “m’avoit continuellement entre les bras”) can somehow still not be *held*, or does not hold up on its own: “Mon Latin s’abastardit incontinent...”

If something resembling a universal experience thus gets whispered in Montaigne’s singular story of his own ears, it is that we all begin as unwilling subjects of language. Before the first “desnouement,” we are projects being essayed by our fathers and masters—whose own authority, which binds and tries us, is itself essentially *confused*; and the most masterful among them can be made to tremble by one native-speaking wild child. What’s more, while Montaigne’s father rules the house and impresses linguistic law, his monolanguage is not in fact *his* to give or adjudicate. Montaigne *père*, we learn, operated on the advice of “les gens sçavans et d’entendement [...] autour de luy”; later, he was supported by an elaborate apparatus and a costly substitute who speaks for him (the German preceptor, “bien cherement gagé”). Indeed, the father is himself just learning to articulate the very tongue he imposes on the house: “Quant au reste de sa maison, c’estoit une reigle inviolable que ny luy mesme, ny ma mere, ny valet, ny chambriere, ne parloyent en ma compaignie qu’autant de mots de Latin

que chacun avoit appris pour jargonner avec moy” (173). In Montaigne’s own scene of instruction, we thus find only deficits: a babbling father in need of translation, an apparatus simulating naturalness, a purity too easily bastardized and a mastery too easily lost, an originally failed monolingualism produced as the deliberate silencing of other languages. A series of openings, then—spaces and possibilities, breaches and faults—in the terrain of linguistic property, which at once render appropriation possible while prohibiting propriety.

At Montaigne, acts of linguistic appropriation—including or especially the *change* of language—are portrayed as futile, absurd, and even desperate attempts to gain a mastery which eludes one’s grasp, or to alleviate some persistent ill. In this sense, we may see Montaigne’s Latin story as contributing to the contemporary debate on language politics, propriety, and sovereignty—countering, for example, the opinion of Jean Bodin that “c’est une vraye marque de Souverainete de contraindre les subjects à changer de langue.”^{edxxx} In the narrative of his own education, Montaigne’s father ultimately appears less as sovereign than beloved fool, the victim of desire in/for language:

comme ceux que presse un furieux desir de guerison se laissent aller à toute sorte de conseil, le bon homme, ayant extreme peur de faillir en chose qu’il avoit tant à coeur, se laissa en fin emporter à l’opinion commune, qui suit tousjours ceux qui vont devant, comme les grues, et se renga à la coustume, n’ayant plus autour de luy ceux qui luy avoient donné ces premieres institutions, qu’il avoit aportées d’Italie; et m’envoya, environ mes six ans, au college de Guienne [...].

Montaigne offers us a universe of language politics in which there is no *plan*, but rather a desperate exercise of desire (“furieux desir de guerison”), a circulation of “opinion” and “coustume.” This institution imposes *more* proper possession of language (through writing) as a need, while also consigning such possession to a kind of impossibility—all in the story which promised to offer such a method for appropriation (“s’en servira qui

voudra”). The institution that makes the laws (“reigle inviolable”) does not even know what it wants; it, too, is subject to the desire for another. In this sense we could say that Montaigne’s Latin exhibits, like Jacques Derrida’s story of his own situation in *Le Monolinguisme de l’autre*, a particular made general: “Cette situation exceptionnelle [...] représente ou réfléchit une sorte d’‘aliénation’ originaire qui institue toute langue en langue de l’autre: l’impossible propriété d’une langue.”^{cdxxxix}

Derrida suggests, moreover, that this generalization of language’s non-property is exactly the condition of beginning to rethink it politically^{cdxxxix}: “Là où la propriété naturelle n’existe pas, ni le droit de propriété en général, là où on reconnaît cette dépropriation, il est possible et il devient plus nécessaire que jamais d’identifier, parfois pour les combattre, des mouvements, des phantasmes, des ‘idéologies’, des ‘fétichisations’ et des symboliques de l’appropriation” (ibid). It is worth noting on this count that Montaigne’s sixth year—which, according to “De l’institution,” marks the moment of his linguistic conversion and the double-binding of his tongue (“j’avois plus de six ans...”)—was 1539, the same year François signed the Edict of Villers-Cotterêts. Earlier in the dissertation, we saw that Villers-Cotterêts was issued in the wake of a series of seemingly contradictory actions on the part of François I (which Benedict Anderson points to as demonstrating the absence of a self-conscious language politics). Following the advice of humanist scholars in his court, François had founded the Collège des Trois Langues, promoting study of the ancient languages; he later established the public deposit, then banned publication; and finally issuing the Edict of 1539. The consistent effect of such actions, as we have seen, was less to promote a particular language than to institute an attitude of state involvement and appropriation of writing.

In the figure of Montaigne's father as depicted in I, 26 (and below, in II, 12), we might therefore see the sympathetic yet critical double of François I. "De l'institution des enfans" tells us that, three years after the Collège des Trois Langues was founded, Pierre Eyquem undertook his own pedagogical initiative on the advice of "les gens sçavans et d'entendement, d'une forme d'institution exquise"; six years later, "il se rengea à la coustume" and Montaigne's Latin "s'abastardit incontinent." The "Apologie de Raimond Sebond" brings these two figures together under the same roof, at Montaigne, in its opening pages:

Ma maison a esté de long temps ouverte aux gens de sçavoir, et en est fort conneue: car mon pere, qui l'a commandée cinquante ans et plus, eschauffé de cette ardeur nouvelle dequoy le Roy François premier embrassa les lettres et les mit en credit, rechercha avec grand soing et despence l'accointance des hommes doctes, les recevant chez luy comme personnes saintes et ayans quelque particuliere inspiration de sagesse divine, recueillant leurs sentences et leurs discours comme des oracles, et avec d'autant plus de reverence et de religion qu'il avoit moins de loy d'en juger, car il n'avoit aucune connoissance des lettres, non plus que ses predecesseurs. Moy, je les ayme bien, mais je ne les adore pas.^{cdxxxiii}

This father's "reverence" for letters—modeled after that of François, with a desire "eschauffé" by the king's own—combined with his ignorance ("aucune connoissance") frames Montaigne's translation of Sebond's text. "Or, quelques jours avant sa mort, mon pere, ayant de fortune rencontré ce livre sous un tas d'autres papiers abandonnez, me commanda de le luy mettre en François." Montaigne's career as a writer begins, in an echo of the Latin education, on command from the father: this time, with the aim to turn Latin "en François." The French once banned is later imposed: a translation is in order, beginning in Montaigne's sixth year (1539). This intersection of national and family language policy helps to illuminate why, in I, 26, the "plaisir" of reading Ovid at age seven takes on a licentious quality, why "le premier goust que j'eus aux livres" is placed

under the sign of a prohibition—even in the Latinist environment of the *collège*—and why, finally, a preference for “cette langue... la mienne maternelle” will be known as “cette mienne desbauche” (I, 26, 175).^{cdxxxiv}

The fact that Montaigne was trained in law—acting variously as legislator, judge, and mayor during his career—suggests that this history may indeed be of particular intertextual relevance for the *Essais*. This is especially the case for Villers-Cotterêts which, as we have seen, was the subject of active political debate throughout the sixteenth century. In a 1586 legal commentary, the *procureur* Gilles Bourdin attempted to put to rest any remaining ambiguity of the term “langage maternel francoys” by affirming that only *François* was intended by the law, since this language was spoken “par tout” in France:

Ce mot de François y est adjousté, pour monstrier que lon ne doit faire lesdictes expéditions, en langage du pays [...] pource que les juges souverains n’avoient pas moins d’affaire à entendre lesdictes informations, pour raison de langage, que les parties avoient anciennement d’entendre le Latin, & en resultoit plus de danger qu’au paravāt. Mais le langage François est congnu & entendu par tout le Royaume, & partant se peuvent lesdictz actes commodément faire & concevoir en François.^{cdxxxv}

By the 1580s, Villers-Cotterêts was increasingly interpreted as a clear Latin-French switch by jurists and political philosophers; indeed, the dominant narrative of the law was now that of a François who threw off the “joug” of Latin after so many centuries of Ancient Roman rule. Jean Bodin affirmed in 1583 that “les Gaules [...] se donnoient tous les arrests en Latin, jusques à l’ordonnance du Roy François I^{cdxxxvi}”; the jurist Pardoux Du Prat similarly remarked in his 1582 *Theorique de l’Art des Notaires* that, “voyant qu’une grand partie de ses subjects n’avoient congnoissance de langue Latine, ordonna d’une prudence & conseil admirable, que tous actes qui des lors en avant seroyent faits & passez tant en jugement que dehors, fussent escrits ou prononcez en langage

François.^{cdxxxvii} Far from tyrannical, this François was a liberator of the Gauls and their own language. In 1603, the jurist François Hotman paints a bleak picture for the pre-Villers-Cotterêts French subject caught up in the legal system, due to

la sottise & barbare coustume, qui regnoit encores en France il n'y a pas long temps, & de coucher tous actes & instrumens publics en langue Latine: tellement que les pauvres parties qui n'entendoient rien en Latin, voulans mettre par escrit ou un contrat de mariage, ou une donation, ou un testament, estoient contrainct s'en fier à un chicanieux ignorant, qui escrivoit bien souvent tout au rebours de l'intention des parties.^{cdxxxviii}

The year 1539 thus marks the beginning of transparency, the modern gift of language, and end to irrational and barbaric language policy. “De là aussi venoit que les arrests des Parlemens estoient couchez en Latin: qui fut une servitude si barbare qu'à la fin le Roy François surnommé pere des lettres par expresse ordonnance, en datte de l'an mmlv cens trente neuf le defendit” (ibid).

One voice countering these assessments of Villers-Cotterêts is that of Montaigne's close friend Étienne de la Boétie. It has been suggested by some scholars^{cdxxxix} that La Boétie implicitly critiques the 1539 edict—whose title was the “Ordonnance générale sur le fait de la justice”—in his *Discours de la servitude volontaire* with this critique of the extension of power under Caesar: “Delà venoit la creue du senat sous Iule, l'establisement de nouveaux estats, eslection d'offices; non pas certes, à bien prendre, reformation de la iustice, mais nouveaux soubstiens de la tyrannie.”^{cdxli} The provincial Parlements were particularly targeted by Villers-Cotterêts and its centralizing judicial reform. Legal scholar Gilles Boulard argues that stripping them of the ability to write in Latin represented every bit as much an effort at political centralization as the abolition of the dialects. For sixteenth-century *parlementaires*, suggests Boulard, “employer le latin [...] c'était se réserver du sens, conserver une part

d'ombre, c'est-à-dire une relative indépendance [...], échapper à la visibilisation linguistique à laquelle l'ordonnance travaille à les astreindre par l'objectivation francophone. Conserver la parole et se donner les moyens d'une rétention d'information, c'est pouvoir s'opposer.^{cdxli} Boulard additionally recalls that the Villers-Cotterêts was imposed more rigorously in Bordeaux following the 1548 salt tax riots—to which Montaigne was witness^{cdxlii}—and the subsequent temporary dissolution of the Parlement de Bordeaux.

In the essay “De la coustume et de ne changer aisément une loy receue” (I, 23), Montaigne articulates what we could see as the political philosophy motivating the bio-allegorical narrative in I, 26. He also offers his own (potentially surprising) take on the edict of Villers-Cotterêts. The force of “la coustume,” the essayist writes, is derived primarily from the fact that it is experienced as ‘natural’:

le principal effect de sa puissance, c'est de nous saisir et empieter de telle sorte, qu'à peine soit-il en nous de nous r'avoir de sa prinse et de r'entrer en nous, pour discourir et raisonner de ses ordonnances. De vray, parce que nous les humons avec le laict de nostre naissance, et que le visage du monde se presente en cet estat à nostre premiere veue, il semble que nous soyons nais à la condition de suyvre ce train. Et les communes imaginations, que nous trouvons en credit autour de nous, et infuses en nostre ame par la semence de nos peres, il semble que ce soyent les generalles et naturelles.

(115-116)

“La coustume” does not present itself as such precisely because it is formative—and because it grabs us (“nous saisir et empieter”) before we are in a position to defend ourselves. That which we take in “avec le laict de nostre naissance” is thus so integral to our perception and self-understanding that we are required, once again, to gather our forces in order to regain control, and judge these inherited “ordonnances” from a position outside—or rather, back inside ourselves (“r'entrer en nous”).^{cdxlili} As such, “la costume”

perpetrates a symbolic violence upon us, the essayist goes on to affirm—yet one whose overturning is a prospect as disturbing as it is desirable:

Qui voudra se desfaire de ce violent prejudice de la coustume, il trouvera plusieurs choses receues d'une resolution indubitable, qui n'ont appuy qu'en la barbe chenue et rides de l'usage qui les accompagne; mais, ce masque arraché, rapportant les choses à la verité et à la raison, il sentira son jugement comme tout bouleversé, et remis pourtant en bien plus seur estat.

(117)

As in several other moments in the *Essais* (such as the surveying post of the *librairie*) Montaigne seems to gesture toward a meta-linguistic position; or, at the very least, to the position of a language stripped of “ce violent prejudice de la coustume”—a naked language, maybe, obeying only “les loix de la nature.”

Throughout the *Essais*, as we have seen, this possibility is linked with a specific kind of writing, a specific kind of self-examination and a grappling with language. The example Montaigne gives of such over-turning here, however, is of a different nature:

Pour exemple, je luy demanderay lors, quelle chose peut estre plus estrange, que de voir un peuple obligé à suivre des loix qu'il n'entendit onques, attaché en tous ses affaires domestiques, mariages, donations, testamens, ventes et achapts, à des regles qu'il ne peut sçavoir, n'estant escrites ny publiées en sa langue, et desquelles par necessité il luy faille acheter l'interpretation et l'usage? [...] Je sçay bon gré à la fortune, dequoy, comme disent nos historiens, ce fut un gentil'homme Gascon et de mon pays, qui le premier s'opposa à Charlemaigne, nous voulant donner les loix Latines et Imperiales.

(ibid)

As historian Paul Cohen suggests, despite the absence of explicit reference here to Villers-Cotterêts or François I, Montaigne's contemporary readers would have made the connection to the edict.^{cdxliv} Not only does Montaigne offer a political vision in line with that of Hotman and others—according to which the pre-Villers-Cotterêts represents a moment of linguistic imposition, inherited from the Romans—he would seem to offer it as the very example of the mask being torn away to reveal “les choses à la verité et à la

raison.” This law marks the bold move out of violent “coustume” into a more *propre* one; “coustume,” especially in language, can turn both ways (“je corrige les fautes d’inadvertence, non celles de costume”). Whatever general law of alienation the *Essais* may be whispering, there appear to be limits to its extension beyond Montaigne. And at the end of the day, the essayist is not a reformer of language; he does not want to cause trouble, of which he has seen enough: “Je suis desgouté de la nouvelleté, quelque visage qu’elle porte, et ay raison, car j’en ay veu des effets tres-dommageables” (119). The *mien* that withdraws or pushes back is a more private turning—not a public overturning—which must be done at the level of the singular. This is not to say that the signs of opposition in relation to *François* that we have seen up to this point are any less forceful or legitimate. Instead, recalling Derrida’s attempt at thinking through Paul Celan’s language, this idiom—which constitutes itself as the expressive struggle of the *propre*—must simultaneously “[faire] l’expérience de l’inappropriabilité de la langue.” Created, continually, as difference from the law of the *other* proper name, such an idiom cannot become a law itself and survive.

VI. Conclusion: Montaigne’s Deafened Expression

The only consistent position we have seen Montaigne take in relation to language is one of difference, such that the only thing *Montaigne* designates “par tout” is, again, a *resistance* to identity or identification with a language—the languages of the other and elsewhere, but also even with itself. In this light, Montaigne’s insistence on the existence of “une forme sienne qui luicte contre l’institution,” may be taken to suggest that *forme* will consist precisely and *only* in this ongoing process of struggle: “une forme sienne”

has no locatable essence *other than* as that which “luicte contre l’institution.” It offers up the text as an ongoing struggle against its own formation, its own institution. The necessity of mapping “chez moy” onto a “pays sauvage” arises not just as an escape from the institutionalized domain of the other, but in providing a terrain of potential internal difference that will not let itself be entirely reclaimed. This insistent difference operating in the withdrawn name of “Montaigne,” while constituting *its* properness, will also therefore mark some necessary limit placed on the possibility of a proper language: the writing of an idiom which, in its refusal to name any language as its own, ultimately resists itself as language, withholds itself from language, deafening itself in order to make itself heard.

The historical and political construction of language property, Derrida argues in *Le Monolinguisme de l’autre*, is paradoxically enabled by the fact that it does not belong naturally to the one imposing it:

Car contrairement à ce qu’on est le plus souvent tenté de croire, le maître n’est rien. Et il n’a rien en propre. Parce que le maître ne possède pas en propre, *naturellement*, ce qu’il appelle pourtant sa langue; [...] parce qu’il ne peut accréditer et dire cette appropriation qu’au cours d’un procès non-naturel de constructions politico-phantasmatiques [...] par cela même il peut historiquement, à travers le viol d’une usurpation culturelle [...] feindre de se l’approprier pour l’imposer comme sienne.^{cdxlv}

Where there is not belonging, the work of appropriation may take place and impose itself, perform itself (“feindre”) as its own. The affective dynamic motivating this performance is one of jealousy, rage: “Il n’y a pas de propriété naturelle de la langue, celle-ci ne donne lieu qu’à de la rage appropriatrice” (46). Turning to the essay “Du Repentir” (III, 2) and the context of that expression that has become formulaic in this chapter—“une forme sienne qui luicte contre l’institution”—we find Montaigne feeling something ‘natural’ in the kind of appropriating rage evoked by Derrida above. “Les inclinations

naturelles s'aident et fortifient par institution,” writes Montaigne, “mais elles ne se changent et surmontent” (810). As an example of the kinds of qualities one can hide but never remove, Montaigne cites his own long-unused Latin, which emerges suddenly at moments of strong emotion^{cdxlv}: “si est-ce que à des extremes et soudaines emotions où je suis tombé deux ou trois fois en ma vie, et l'une, voyent mon pere tout sain se renverses sur moy, pasmé, j'ay tousjours eslané du fond des entrailles les premieres paroles Latines: nature se sourdant et s'exprimant à force, à l'encontre d'un long usage” (810-811). Interspersed in this explanation, we find verses from Lucan emerging to make an image of this language—inhabiting the body, waiting to erupt in opposition (“à l'encontre”) to years of habit:

Sic ubi desuetae silvis in carcere clausae
 Mansuevere ferae, et vultus posuere minaces,
 Atque hominem didicere pati, si torrida parvus
 Venit in ora cruor, redeunt rabiésque furorque,
 Admonitaeque tument gustato sanguine fauces;
 Fervet, et à trepido vix abstinet ira magistro.
 (810)

(As when wild beasts grow tame, shut in a cage,
 Forget the woods, and lose their look of rage,
 And learn to suffer man; but if they taste
 Hot blood, their rage and fury is replaced,
 Their reminiscent jaws distend, they burn,
 And for their trembling master's blood they yearn.)^{cdxlvii}

The Latin language—affectively condensed in verse—intervenes to figure the fury of natural language, caged and domesticated. A clearer picture of Montaigne's *naturel* here finally comes to the surface: it is that animal produced from the fact of being caged; that idiom jealous of the master, desirous of his blood. “([I]l y a, douce, discrète ou criante, une terreur dans les langues, c'est notre sujet),” (*Monolinguisme* 45). It may have lost its look of rage, but it remains at the ready; eager, it will jet out if provoked. This is what we are listening for (“Il n'est personne, s'il s'escoute [...]”). Yet whose guard is let

down in such moments? The child's? The father's? The institution's? The rage of language, it would seem, is not that merely that of facing down an oppressive father or master, but rather that the master is too present—already in me, the cage of my body—and yet already collapsing before my eyes. The raging Latin verses themselves are a curious kind of expression, reminiscent of Du Bellay's own intertextual “play” at being a wolf, *Pasquino*, or Prophète in the *Regrets*. For Montaigne, too, this expression may resolve itself in a kind of half-deafness: “j’ay tousjours eslançé du fond des entrailles les premieres paroles Latines: nature *se sourdant et s’exprimant à force*, à l’encontre d’un long usage.” *Sourdre* is the action emerging or showing, especially after being hidden (Nicot: “la fontaine sourd de terre”); *se sourdre*: to show itself. Yet in *sourdre* there is also a *sourd*, a deafening (of oneself). Montaigne's rage cannot express itself without also deafening itself, forcefully. Its nature is a half-deafness of expression.

Montaigne's “dessein” of textual property, the “fin principale et perfection” of his book does seem to mobilize writing as uniquely able to recreate or, indeed, *create for the first time* a veritable attachment—to a language, to oneself *through* a language—to create a new habit of discourse, which may (the possibility is at least glimpsed on the horizon) represent something other than “institution.” A certain practice of writing may somehow retie the instituted tongue, bind it to the ear in the body's more proper stitching. In the “Apologie de Raimond Sebond,” we are asked to imagine a child abandoned to a solitary, language-less terrain. Would it speak? If so, what might its language might be?

je croy qu'un enfant qu'on auroit nourry en pleine solitude, esloigné de tout commerce (qui seroit un essay mal aisé à faire), auroit quelque espece de parolle pour exprimer ses conceptions [...]. Mais cela est à sçavoir quel langage parleroit cet enfant [...]. Si on m'allegue contre cette opinion que les sourds naturels ne parlent point, je respons que ce n'est pas seulement pour n'avoir peu recevoir l'instruction de la parolle par les oreilles, mais plustost pour-ce que le sens de l'ouye, duquel ils sont privez, se rapporte à celui du parler, et se tiennent

ensemble d'une cousture naturelle: en façon que ce que nous parlons, il faut que nous le parlons premierement à nous et que nous le facions sonner au dedans à nos oreilles, avant que de l'envoyer aux estrangeres.

(II, 12, 458)

The child of such an “essay” *would* speak, affirms Montaigne—but as for what language would emerge in the absence of instruction, “cela est à sçavoir.” The question is deferred to a scene of private, internal discourse: to the echoes of a voice speaking “premierement” to itself, but able to do so only through its binding to an ear which, before even receiving the first word, is already turned outward.

Back home, in Montaigne’s scene of writing: we see a momentary, possible stroke of deafness and perhaps even dumbness, a flicker of withdrawal of the tongue back into the mouth, unbinding it from service to the other—a service which has made it forked, has pressed it into some confusing double-talk—so that it might speak to itself and hear its own, proper language. And we are still left to ask: which one is “mine”? A question of propriety itself bound up in language, and which only arises once there is more than one—and yet less than one language I can call my own. The confusion of this scene is thorough, essential... But language, Montaigne will continue to insist, remains the unique “truchement de notre ame”—our necessary interpreter, the translator through which we come to know each other and ourselves. Then what of mine is translated, what of mine is known when I translate myself in language? A glance at any page of the *Essais* would suggest that this question, as the struggle of writing not answered or overcome, may ultimately only be played out in setting two languages to translate each other, unleashed like so many monsters in the stage between an ear and a tongue, leaving the writer to try to make a withdrawal of himself from the difference between them.

Notes

Notes to the Introduction

ⁱ Jacques Derrida and Derek Attridge, “This Strange Institution Called Literature,” *Acts of Literature* (London: Routledge, 1992) 48.

ⁱⁱ Alain de Libera, *La Querelle des Universaux: De Platon à la fin du Moyen Age*, quoted in Andrée Tabouret-Keller, *Le Nom des Langues I. Les Enjeux de la Nomination des Langues* (Louvain: Peeters, 1997) 5.

ⁱⁱⁱ See Daniel Baggioni, *Langues et Nations en Europe* (Paris: Payot 1997).

^{iv} Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 1983) 44.

^v Simone Delesalle and Francine Mazière, “Meigret et la tradition grammaticale française,” in Gerard Defaux and Bernard Colombat, eds. *Lyon et l'illustration de la langue française à la Renaissance* (Lyon: ENS Editions, 2003) 47, emphasis added.

^{vi} *Langage* appearing in many contexts we would expect to find *langue* in modern French (e.g., in the title of Henri Estienne’s *Traicté de la Conformité du langage françois avec le grec* (1565), Étienne Pasquier’s affirmation that “nous n’escrivons plus qu’en un langage [...] que nous appellons François” (1570) or the Edict of Villers-Cotterêts’s “en langage maternel francoys”).

^{vii} The modern terms “language” and *langue* designate a “sign system” used by a particular community—most often a national community, but also non-national regional or ethnic groups. Larousse defines *langue* as: “Système de signes vocaux, éventuellement graphiques, propre à une communauté d’individus, qui l’utilisent pour s’exprimer et communiquer entre eux: *La langue française, anglaise*.” The most recent definition provided by the Académie Française similarly refers to the notion of a ‘system’: “Système d’expression verbale qui est d’emploi conventionnel dans un groupe humain et permet à ses membres de communiquer entre eux; 1. Système de signes vocaux, susceptibles de transcription graphique; 2. Un tel système considéré dans sa particularité, par différence avec les systèmes de même nature utilisés par d’autres communautés.” In the first dictionary issued by the Académie in 1694, we already find the word *langue* associated with that of a “nation”: “*Langue*, signifie [...] Idiome, termes & façons de parler dont se sert une nation. *La Langue Grecque. La Langue Latine. La langue Française, &c.*”

^{viii} “L’Académie s’est employée, tout au long de son histoire, à maintenir un équilibre entre ces différentes exigences, l’expérience prouvant que les projets abstraits des réformateurs ne sauraient à eux seuls faire plier l’usage. Ainsi adopta-t-elle en 1835, dans la sixième édition de son Dictionnaire, l’orthographe -ais pour les mots terminés jusqu’alors en -ois mais prononcés depuis longtemps è (le françois, j’étois, etc.), réforme réclamée au siècle précédent par Voltaire.” <http://www.academie-francaise.fr/langue/index.html>

^{ix} Delasalle and Mazière 47.

^x We might better understand this “ensemble” through Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of “assemblage” (*agencement*): “On appellera agencement tout ensemble de singularités et de traits prélevés sur le flux—selectionnés, organisés, stratifiés—de manière à converger (consistance) artificiellement et naturellement: un agencement, en ce sens, est une véritable invention.” Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Milles Plateaux* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1980) 506.

^{xi} Ferdinand de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale* (Paris: Payot, 1995) 31.

^{xii} “Tandis que le langage est hétérogène, la langue ainsi délimitée est de nature homogène” (32).

^{xiii} “[L]es signes de la langue sont pour ainsi dire tangibles; l’écriture peut les fixer dans des images conventionnelles, tandis qu’il serait impossible de photographier dans tous leurs détails les actes de la parole; la phonation d’un mot, si petit soit-il, représente une infinité de mouvements musculaires extrêmement difficiles à connaître et à figurer. Dans la langue, au contraire, il n’y a plus que l’image acoustique, et celle-ci peut se traduire en une image visuelle constante. Car si l’on fait abstraction de cette multitude de mouvements nécessaires pour la réaliser dans la parole, chaque image acoustique n’est, comme nous le verrons, que la somme

d'un nombre limité d'éléments ou phonèmes, susceptibles à leur tour d'être évoqués par un nombre correspondant de signes dans l'écriture. C'est cette possibilité de fixer les choses relatives à la langue qui fait qu'un dictionnaire et une grammaire peuvent en être une représentation fidèle, la langue étant le dépôt des images acoustiques, et l'écriture la forme tangible de ces images" (ibid).

^{xiv} *La langue* is "la partie sociale du langage, extérieure à l'individu, qui à lui seul ne peut ni la créer ni la modifier; elle n'existe qu'en vertu d'une sorte de contrat passé entre les membres de la communauté" (31).

^{xv} Hélène Merlin, "Langue et souveraineté en France au XVIIe siècle: La production autonome d'un corps de langage," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 49 (2): 369-394.

^{xvi} See, for example, Wendy Ayres-Bennet, *A History of the French Language Through Texts* (London: Routledge, 1996), Chapters 1 and 2.

^{xvii} See for example Jochim Du Bellay's *Deffence et Illustration de la langue françoise*: "Pétrarque et semblablement Boccace, combien qu'ils aient beaucoup écrit en latin, si est-ce que cela n'eût été suffisant pour leur donner ce grand honneur qu'ils ont acquis, s'ils n'eussent écrit en leur langue." In Joachim Du Bellay, *Les Regrets*, ed. S. de Sacy (Paris: Gallimard 2007). Du Bellay does not mention, however, that he is translating and adapting significant passages from an Italian text, Sperone Speroni's *Dialogo delle lingue* (1542), as Pierre Villey was the first to point out. See Pierre Villey, *Les Sources italiennes de la "Deffence et illustration" de Joachim du Bellay* (1908) (Paris: Champion, 1969).

^{xviii} Burke 14.

^{xix} Jean Bosquet, *Elemens ou Institutions de la langue françoise*, ed. Colette Demaizière (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2005) 28.

^{xx} "Au 'peuple', aux écrivains, aux savants, il est demandé de parler cette langue, de lui donner ses lettres de noblesse, de l'écrire, de la cultiver, de la perfectionner—c'est à dire de la défendre contre l'hégémonie d'une autre langue (le latin, le français, l'anglais, etc.). Parler, écrire, cultiver cette langue veulent dire alors se l'approprier, en faire la propriété d'une communauté donnée, le signe ou la marque de sa culture singulière (différente de toutes les autres) et la pierre de touche de son identification." Marc Crépon, *Les Promesses du langage: Benjamin, Rosenzweig, Heidegger* (Paris: Vrin, 2001) 181.

^{xxi} Jacques Derrida, *Le Monolinguisme de l'autre, ou, la prothèse de l'origine* (Paris: Galilée, 1996) 69.

^{xxii} "La langue n'appartient pas" in Paul Celan, *Europe* 861-862, 85.

^{xxiii} *Genesis* 11:4, trans. Jacques Lefevre d'Étaples (1530).

^{xxiv} *Monolinguisme* 121.

^{xxv} *Cours* 3.1.

Notes to Chapter One

^{xxvi} Jacques Derrida, *Parages* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1986) 26.

^{xxvii} Geoffroy Tory, *Champ Fleury au quel est contenu l'art & science de la deue & vraye proportio des lettres attiques, qu'on dit autrement lettres antiques, & vulgairement lettres romaines proportionnées selon le corps & visage humain* (Paris: Tory, 1529) 1.

^{xxviii} As is suggested by the work's full title (provided above, note 2).

^{xxix} Pierre Fabri's *Le Grand et Vrai Art de Pleine Rhétorique*, published in 1521, does significantly and substantially take up the issue French composition, especially the need to add "art" to natural speech. Fabri's *Rhétorique* participates without a doubt in the same general cultural movement and promotion of French. In contrast to Tory, however, Fabri is more

concerned with what he refers to as “oraison ou eloquence” than the domain of writing *per se*. Indeed, one need only contrast the way these authors are introduced in their texts to see that *Champ Fleury* marks a vernacular work of a different kind: “maistre Pierre LE FEVRE, orateur tres renommé,” and “maistre Geoffroy Tory de Bourges, libraire demourant a Paris.”

^{xxx}The Edict of Villers-Cotterêts will be studied in Chapter Two.

^{xxxi} Anderson 42, note 17.

^{xxxii} Key texts include Jacques Peletier’s *Art poétique* and spelling treatises; Du Bellay’s *Deffence*; Meigret’s *Grammere*; Ronsard’s *Abrégé de l’art poétique françois*; Antoine Fouquelin’s *Rhétorique* (especially the preface); Robert Estienne’s dictionary; Abel Matthieu’s *Devis de la langue françoise*.

^{xxxiii} An especially dramatic—and ironic—instance of this phenomenon is the case of Jacques Peletier, whose argument that vernacular writing be a faithful representation of speech, and thus serve as an archive of his generation’s “prolation” for the future, led him invent a spelling system so idiosyncratic that it has become virtually illegible to modern readers, subject to a necessary modernizing “translation” in a way that many of his contemporaries’ texts are not.

^{xxxiv} Significantly, the modern distinction between *la langue* and *le langage* does not exist for writers of this period, such that *la langue Françoise* and *le langage François*, *nostre langage* and *nostre langue* would be used interchangeably. It is also worth bearing in mind that *le François* is (almost) consistently capitalized, making it a (usually) proper noun (a point that will be at the heart of the discussion in Chapter Two).

^{xxxv} I will revisit the logic of this singularization in greater detail in Chapter Two.

^{xxxvi} Richard Waswo, *Language and Meaning in the Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

^{xxxvii} See Jacques Derrida’s “Des Tours de Babel” in *Psyché: Invention de l’autre* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1987).

^{xxxviii} Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *L’apparition du livre* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1957). “[L]es langues nationales qui s’étaient [...] imposés [...] comme langue écrites et qui avaient servi de langues communes, avaient continué d’évoluer, suivant de près le langage parlé” (477). It is worth noting that this *differability* of vernacular writing evident in pre-sixteenth century French may not—or not so transparently—be the result of writing’s adhesion to speech. Because this writing itself serves as our privileged record of that language, we find ourselves at something of an epistemological impasse, one which quickly traps us in a circular train of logic; what these texts demonstrate above all is variation in the written language itself—which we may *imagine*, as Febvre and Martin do, to follow the spoken form. We do so, however, at the risk of reducing the literary writings (such as their examples of the medieval *chansons de geste* or Villon’s poetry) which constitute the majority of vernacular-language texts until the Renaissance, to a more or less faithful mirror of speech (“suivant de près...”). This is not to diminish the significance or reality of the shift occurring in the sixteenth century very accurately observed by Febvre and Martin, but rather to suggest that any vision of pre-sixteenth written French as naïvely or identically following the spoken language may itself be somewhat naïve, or at the very least idealized, and itself emerging from the metaphysical struggle to grasp the “proper” relationship between speech and writing on display in the early modern period; indeed, much of the debate surrounding French writing during the sixteenth century was indeed that the *problem* of bringing it into a closer relationship to speech, of making French writing a truer or more faithful “image de la parole,” many of which (such as the radical spelling reforms of Jacques Peletier du Mans) ultimately met with little long-term success.

^{xxxix} See Anderson 43-45.

^{xl} I will pursue the implications of this process of *reduction* below (Pasquier) and in greater detail in Chapter Two.

^{xli} One need only compare the French of Tory or Rabelais to that of Montaigne (let alone that of Malherbes, Boileau or Racine) to see that no unproblematic “fixing” of language was to occur; instead, a series of rather radical and ideologically charged processes were involved in the making of modern French. The period we are considering in these pages witnessed nearly as much experimentation, upheaval, indecision and interpersonal-qua-intertextual conflict over linguistic form as it did in the broader and more properly “political” spheres—no small consideration.

^{xlii} Michel de Montaigne, *Essais*, ed. Pierre Villey (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965) III, 9, 982. All quotes from the *Essais* follow this edition.

^{xliii} Montaigne’s language is the subject of Chapter Five.

^{xliv} See Ferdinand Brunot, *Histoire de la langue française des origines à 1900*, vol. 2 (Paris: Colin, 1907) 129-132.

^{xl} In this light, it is worth considering again that the very first French grammar was the work of a non-native speaker, the English Palsgrave. I will consider Palsgrave’s text, specifically as a “response” to Tory’s, in Chapter Two.

^{xli} “La norme grammaticale qui se met en place [...] est une manifestation de la coïncidence souhaitée entre la Loi et la règle de la parole.” Marie-Luce Demonet, *Les Voix du Signe: Nature et Origine du Langage à la Renaissance (1480-1580)* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1992) 339. Paul Cohen offers a more nuanced view on Renaissance French understandings of the relationship between language and power (monarchic power in particular). See Paul Cohen, “L’imaginaire d’une langue nationale: L’État, les langues et l’invention du mythe de l’ordonnance de Villers-Cotterêts à l’époque moderne en France.” *Histoire, épistémologie, langage*, 25(1), 2003, 19-69.

^{xlii} J. Peletier: “C’est donc principalement pour le temps à venir qu’il faut policer notre Langue. Nous pouvons entendre qu’elle n’est pas pour durer toujours au vulgaire non plus que le Grec et Latin. Toutes choses périclitent (*sic*) sous le Ciel, tant s’en faut que la grace des mots puisse toujours vivre. Et partant, il nous faut efforcer de la réduire en art : non point pour nous du tout, mes pour ceux qui vivront lors qu’elle ne se trouvera plus telle qu’elle est de présent, sinon dedans les Livres.” (*Second livre de l’orthographe*, quoted in Brunot).

^{xliiii} In the words of Guillaume des Autels: “Voulons nous endurer ceste tant desmesure licence, et ensemble esperer non pas immortalité, mais seulement longue duree de noz œuvres, tant soient elles bonnes? hastons, hastons-nous d’y mettre ordre” (quoted in Brunot, 130).

^{xli} “Both the Renaissance vernacular promise of literary immortality and its classical sources presuppose the survival of the written or printed text, which, of course, distinguishes them from the most ancient version of the *topos* in oral literature, where the aim is to preserve the memory of the hero’s deeds in an unwritten narrative whose actual words and formulae are fluid. The Renaissance claims, however, are distinct from those of the classical period in explicitly requiring not only the survival of the text as a physical object [...] but also of readers who can comprehend it” (Waswo 55).

ⁱ Peter Rickard, *La Langue française au XVIe siècle* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

ⁱⁱ Quoted in Luce Guillermin, *Sujet de l’écriture et de traduction autour de 1540* (Paris: Aux Amateurs de Livres, 1988) 353-354.

ⁱⁱⁱ Oresme maintains specifically that he is “against” the use of Latin as an intermediary language between Greek and French—that is, that French could provide adequate expressive capacities for the philosophical content of antiquity: “Je suis contre l’opinion daucuns que cestoit bon de translater les sciences de grec en latin et de les bailler et traictier en latin. Or est il ainsy que pour le temps de lors grec estoit ou regart de latin quant aux rommains si comme est maintenant latin ou regart du francoys quant à nous” (*ibid*). Just as the “langage commun et naturel” of the Romans was Latin, “le francoys” is for the French, and thus the *appropriate* language of writing.

ⁱⁱⁱⁱ Marc Fumaroli, *Trois Institutions Littéraires* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994) 228.

^{liv} See Thomas Green's definitive *The Light in Troy* for a masterful treatment of Renaissance writers' complex and ambivalent relationship to the ancients, especially as manifest in the literary practice of *imitatio*.

^{lv} Etienne Pasquier, *Les Recherches de la France*, book VIII, chapter 3.

^{lvi} It is worth noting that a proto-formation of the modern linguistic distinction between "language" and "dialect" seems to appear here precisely as a condition of writability. That is to say, *une langue* exists to the extent that it offers itself as a legitimate, capable and, moreover, *desirable* language-of-writing. I will revisit this point in Chapter Two.

^{lvii} I return to this passage from Pasquier in Chapter Two to further examine the complex dynamic of appropriation it suggests.

^{lviii} Claude Longeon, *Premiers combats pour la langue française* (Paris: Livres de Poche, 1989) 6-7.

^{lix} Febvre and Martin, *L'Apparition du livre*, 480.

^{lx} Not to be meaningfully achieved until the end of what is considered the "early modern" period in France, i.e., the beginning of the eighteenth century.

^{lxi} On this paradox, see esp. Brunot 2.

^{lxii} As Febvre and Martin note, "Tandis que l'on édite de moins en moins d'ouvrages en latin, et une proportion toujours plus grande de textes en langue nationale, le commerce du livre se morcelle en Europe" (356).

^{lxiii} Interestingly, however, these ostensibly practical concerns figure as part of a larger, self-conscious modeling of *Champ Fleury* after Vitruvius's *De Architectura*, written at a time when learned Romans wrote in Greek. These declared motivations, then, function rhetorically within a familiar pre-existing framework of vernacular "defense," even if they are also "real" concerns for the author on the level of readership and distribution. It is also worth bearing in mind that in the Vitruvian parallel being assumed by Tory, the "architecture" in question is that of letters—i.e., the visual and material components of the printed word—and the practice in question *that of vernacular writing itself*, furthering the self-reflexive and self-founding character of *Champ Fleury* as a text/language attempting to build itself.

^{lxiv} Brunot 3.

^{lxv} As Claude de Seyssel, a contemporary of Tory's, wrote (in Latin) in his *Histoires Universelles*: "Par ce moyen ceux qui n'ont aucune notice de la langue latine, peuvent entendre plusieurs choses bonnes et hautes, soit en la sainte esriture, en philosophie morale, en medecine, ou en histoire, dont n'auroient aucune cognoissance."

^{lxvi} Luce Guillermin has written in depth on this topic, particularly on the creation of the modern figure of the author out of the discourse on translation—as the idealized other of the translator's imaginary. See *Sujet de l'écriture et de la traduction autour de 1540*.

^{lxvii} See Chapter Three.

^{lxviii} See Brunot 33-35.

^{lxix} I will explore certain implications of vernacular advocacy's negative rhetoric in Chapter Two, in the works of Peletier and Du Bellay.

^{lxx} Longeon 7.

^{lxxi} Quoted in Demonet 98.

^{lxxii} Ibid.

^{lxxiii} Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961) 77.

^{lxxiv} Lemaire, *Concorde des deux langages* (1511); Robert Estienne, *Dictionarium latinogallicum* (1538).

^{lxxv} "Si, en passant, il y est recommandé de bien prononcer et de bien écrire le français, autant que le latin ; si on demande à l'écolier de pouvoir traduire sans hésiter une forme latine qu'on lui cite, pendant qu'on donne à son voisin une forme française à tourner en latin, c'est pour les mettre tous deux, une fois pour toutes, en possession complète de la grammaire usuelle du latin, et qu'ainsi,

définitivement accoutumés et instruits, ils puissent ‘aller plus outre’, en latin, s’entend. Quand le français a rendu les services qu’on attendait de lui, et que l’enfant n’est plus ‘si rude ni abécédaire’, on l’abandonne ; ses premières années faites, l’élève, hors la classe comme dans la classe, ne doit plus avoir d’autre langue” (Brunot 6-7).

^{lxxvi} See Françoise Waquet, *Le Latin ou l’Empire d’un Signe* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1998), Chapter 1. D’Alembert’s entry on “collège” in the *Encyclopédie* reveals the extent to which this bias towards Latin writing continued in the French system of education well beyond the years when the vernacular, according to Brunot, had “pris possession définitive de toutes [les branches de la connaissance humaine]”: “I am very far from disapproving the study of a language in which men like Horace and Tacitus wrote: such study is absolutely necessary in order to know their admirable works, but I believe we should limit ourselves to understanding them, and that time spent composing in Latin is time wasted. This time would be better spent in learning the principles of our own language” (quoted in Wacquet 11).

^{lxxvii} See pp. 4-5, above.

^{lxxviii} More discussion of Cohen’s work and more analysis of this (mis)interpretation of Villers-Cotterêts to come in Chapter Two. While agreeing with Cohen’s assessment that Villers-Cotterêts does not constitute language policy, *per se*, I will argue that the edict does enact a language *politics* by textualizing the French language as a political object.

^{lxxix} Interestingly, the question of whether or not he, or anyone for that matter, *can* yet write in French, properly speaking, or even what this ability might entail, remains open-ended.

^{lxxx} It is worth noting that the use of the present tense here contrasts not only to Tory’s evocations of Latin, but also the rest of the description of his moment of inspiration with which he begins *Champ Fleury*; the decision to write in French serves as the culminating point of this opening narrative, delivering the reader from the sleeping mind of the writer into a more waking present of the text. “Le matin du jour de la feste aux Roys, apres avoir prins mon someil & repos & que mon estomac de sa legiere & joyeuse viande avoit faict sa facile concoction, que l’on comptoit M.D.XXIII. me prins à fantasier en mon lict, & mouvoir la roue de ma memoire, pensant à mille petites fantasies, tant serieuses que joyeuses, entre lesquelles me souvint de quelque lettre Antique que j’avoys naguees faicte pour la maison de monseigneur le trasorier des guerres maistre Jehan Groslier [...]. Et en pensant a icelle lettre Attique me vint soudain en memoire un sentencieux passage [...] de Cicero, ou est escript *Non nobis solum nati sumus, ortusque nostri, partem patria vindicat partem amici*. [...] A ceste cause me volant employer aucunement a l’utilité du bien public, ay pesé demonstrier & enseigner en ce present petit œuvre la maniere de faire symmetriquement. [...] Aucuns m’ont voulu demouvoir de ce faire disant que je ne la debvoye tant manifester, mais garder en secret pour moy. Saulue leur honneur me semble que non, & que je ne doibs estre glout de science honneste & bonne. Jen eusse traité et escript en latin [...]” (1-1v).

^{lxxxi} Writing will bring about perfection of speech : “Toutesfois si nostre Langue estoit deument Reiglee & Polyee/ telles immundices en porroient estre deiectees. Parquoy ie vous prie donon nous tous courage les ungz auxaultres, & nous esueillon a la purifier. Toutes choses ont eu commencement. Quât lung traictera des Lettres, & laultre des Vocales, ung Tiers viendra / qui declarera les Dictions, & puis encores ung aultre surviendra qui ordōnera la belle Oraison. Par ainsi on trouvera que peu a peu on passera le chemin, si bien quon viendra aux grans Champs Poetiques et Rhetoriques plains de belles/ bonnes/ & odoriferentes fleurs de parler & dire honnestement & facilement tout ce quon voudra.”

^{lxxxii} Unlike Seyssel several decades before him, who would propose in the prologue to his translation of Justinian: “Qu’ont fait le peuple et les princes romains quand ils tenoient la monarchie du monde et qu’ils taschoyent a la perpetuer et rendre eternelle? Ils n’ont trouve autre moyen plus certain ne plus seur que de magnifier, enrichir et sublimer leur langue latine...”

(quoted in Brunot, 30). Tory looks to deemphasize the political facets of the “triumph” of writing – instead stressing the work of writing to ‘fix’ language over time.

^{lxxxiii} See Marc-René Jung, *Hercule dans la littérature française du XVI^e siècle. De l'Hercule courtois à l'Hercule baroque*. (Geneva: Droz, 1966).

^{lxxxiv} “[C]edit vieux Hercules tire apres luy vne merueilleusement grande multitude dhomes & femmes tous ataches lung a part de lautre par loreille. Les liens estoient petites chaines dor & dambre bien faictes, & semblables a carquans. [...] Et [...le peintre] percea la langue du Dieu Hercules, a la quelle toutes ces chaines estans atachees, il fait tous ces ia susdits hommes et femmes estre tirez apres icelluy Hercules” (Tory 2v).

^{lxxxv} “Nous voyons doncques par les motz de Lucian soubz lescorce de ceste fiction, que nostre langage est si gracieulx, que sil est prononce dung homme discret, sage, & aage, Il a si grande efficace, quil psuade plustost/ & myeulx que le latin, ne que le Grec. Les & latins & les Grecs le confessent quant ilz dissent que cestuy Hercules, estoit, Gallicus, non pas Hercules Latinus, ne Hercules Graecus” (3r).

^{lxxxvi} This was followed by a number of other editions, including a widely-read translation by Barthélemy Aneau in 1549.

^{lxxxvii} Francis Goyet, “D’Hercule à Pantagruel: L’ambivalence des géants” in *Rabelais pour le XXI^e siècle*, ed. Michel Simonin (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1998) 177-190. Goyet notes that the identification of François I with the Gallic Hercules was opposed in this way to Charles Quint’s self-identification with Hercules. Upon the latter’s entry to Paris, the French emblemized him as the “Hercule de Libye,” and François as the “Hercule gaulois.” “La supériorité du dernier est évidente,” remarks Goyet. “C’est encore une façon de compléter, et de critiquer, la pure force” (182).

^{lxxxviii} Alciato’s full text reads as follows: “Arcum laeva tenet, rigidam fert dextera clavam,/ Contegit & Nemees corpora nuda leo./ Herculis haec igitur facies? non convenit illud/ Quòd vetus & senio tempora cana gerit./ Quid quod lingua illi levibus traiecta cathenis,/ Queis fissa facili allicit aure viros?/ Anne quòd Alciden lingua non robore Galli/ Praestantem populis iura dedisse ferunt?/ Cedunt arma togae, & quamvis durissima corda/ Eloquio pollens ad sua vota trahit.” Andrea Alciato, *Livret des emblemes* (Paris: Chrestien Wechel, 1536).

^{lxxxix} Cf. Cicero’s, *Cedant arma togae, concedat laurea linguae*, “Let weapons yield to the arts of peace, let laurels yield to eloquence.”

^{xc} Lefevre’s full translation: “Larc en la main, en lautre la massue,/ Peau de lyon estant cy aperceue,/ Pour Hercules me faict ce vieillart croire./ Mais ce quil a marque de si grand gloire:/ Que mener gens enchainez a sa langue/ Entendre veult, quil feist tant bien harengue,/ Que les Francois pour ses dits de merveilles,/ Furent ainsi que pris par les oreilles./ Si donc il a par loix & ordonnances/ Range les gens, plustost que par vaillances:/ Dira lon pas (comme est verite) Que lespee a lieu aux livres quicte?/ Et que ung dur cueur par sages mieulx se range,/ Que gros effort son asprete ne change?/ Pour ce Hercules ne fait pas grandes forces:/ Et si sont gens, apres luy grandes courses” *Livret des emblems* 5r.

Notes to Chapter Two

^{xc} A. Khatibi, quoted in Derrida, *Le Monolinguisme de l’autre* 22.

^{xcii} Montaigne, *Essais* (II, 12, 583).

^{xciii} Henry VIII attempted several invasions of France during his reign and considered himself a pretender to the French throne.

^{xciv} John Palsgrave, *L’esclaircissement de la langue francoyse* (London: 1530) viii.

^{xcv} Palsgrave also effects a significant *détournement* by suggesting that Henry VIII, and not François I, is the figure at the head of this chain, the tongue to which linguistic desire is tied: “But also under the studyous tyme of your most prosperous raigne, in whiche all ingenious exercises thus hyghly do habounde, we have here within the lymites of your most fortunat obeysance and domynions, done the thyng whiche by the testimony of the excellent clerke, maister Geffray Troy de Bourges (a late writer of the frenche nation) in his boke intituled *Champ-Fleury*, was never yet amongst them of that contrayes selfe hetherto so moche as ones effectually attempted” (vii-viii).

^{x cvi} One important recent movement in the cultural history of the French language has been to demonstrate that the evolution in status and use of regional languages in France was diverse and uneven, lasting in some cases for several centuries (calling into question the long prevalent narrative of increasing French-language domination achieved through top-down authority since 1539). Much of this debate focuses, as we shall explore below in this chapter, around both the intention and practical effect of the 1539 Edict of Villers-Cotterêts. See Denis Lacorne and Tony Judt, *La Politique de Babel: Du Monolinguisme d’État Au Plurilinguisme des Peuples* (Paris: Karthala, 2002); David Trotter, “‘Si le français n’y peut aller’: Villers-Cotterêts and Mixed-Language Documents from the Pyrenees,” in David Cowling (Ed.), *Conceptions of Europe in Renaissance France* (New York: Rodopi, 2006) 77-97; Paul Cohen, “Illustration du français et persistance des langues régionales: La Pluralité linguistique dans la constitution des idéologies sociales en France à l’époque moderne,” in Gérard Defaux, *Lyon et l’illustration de la langue française à la Renaissance* (Lyon, France: ENS, 2003) 147-167.

^{x cvii} See Françoise Waquet, *Latin or the Empire of a Sign*.

^{x cviii} See François Rouget, “La langue française: obstacle ou atout à l’état-nation?” *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme* 29(1), 2005: 7-23.

^{x cix} This split in the concept of “identity” has been a central concern within French philosophy during the twentieth century, particularly in the domain of ethics (Ricoeur, Derrida (on Levinas), Nancy). It is perhaps most famously analyzed by Paul Ricoeur in his analysis of narrative identity in *Temps et récit* (1983) and *Soi-même comme un autre* (1990), where he suggests that narrative identity functions as a dialectic of *idem* and *ipse* identities (sameness and selfhood). Ricoeur’s distinction has recently been applied to national identity by Jola Skulj in “Cultural Spaces in Border Territories,” in *Sites of Exchange*, ed. Maurizio Ascari and Adriana Corrado (New York: Rodopi, 2006), 252-253. Jean-Gérard Lapacherie has suggested utilizing this distinction in reading the Edict of Villers-Cotterêts (“Derniers travaux sur l’Ordonnance de Villers-Cotterêts,” Cercle Jeune France, 2/14/2009 [<http://www.jeune-france.org/Langue%20française/langue19.htm>]) In the remainder of this chapter, I will be more closely drawing on Derrida’s work on ipseity in *Le Monolinguisme de l’ature* and elsewhere.

^c Derrida, *Rogues* 10.

^{ci} The selection of texts examined in this study has in large part been determined by those which focus on French in relation to Latin as a mediator for French relationship to itself, as a privileged discourse of linguistic ipseity. It is for this reason that certain notable texts of French advocacy, such as those of Henri Estienne (*Traicté de la conformité du langage françois avec le grec* (1565), *Deux dialogues du nouveau langage françois italianizé, et autrement desguizé, principalement entre les courtisans de ce temps* (1578), and *De la precellence du langage françois* (1579)). The construction of French identity in relation to other modern and ancient “others” (Italian, Spanish, English, Greek and Hebrew, not to mention the “other” French vernaculars to be discussed below) through etymological and other proto-philological methods merits much further exploration. See Peter Burke, *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe*.

^{cii} Grammars “décrivent et prescrivent un objet (*la langue*) qu’elles créent par leur existence même.” Sylvain Auroux, “Le processus de grammatisation et ses enjeux” in *Histoire des idées*

linguistiques, t. 2 (Paris: Mardaga, 1993). It is worth mentioning that Aurox's work focuses on later grammars (especially from 18th century), and thus must be hesitatingly applied to the sixteenth-century context, even if its philosophical analysis remains relevant. As I will continue to exam in this chapter, the early grammars of Meigret, Estienne, and even Ramus (1562, 1572) are above all *descriptive* and in fact "did" very little to the state of the language in terms of normativity or standardization. What remains significant, therefore, is precisely the way in which they introduce an effect of metalanguage as a condition of ipseity. More on this below, in the discussion of Meigret and Estienne.

^{ciii} "Par grammatisation, on doit entendre le processus qui conduit à décrire et à outiller une langue sur la base des deux technologies qui sont encore aujourd'hui les piliers de notre savoir métalinguistique: la grammaire et le dictionnaire." Aurox 28.

^{civ} This last fact will be explored in the next chapter in the cases of Étienne Dolet and Joachim Du Bellay.

^{cv} The Port Royal grammar (1660), the foundation of the Académie française, etc. Peter Rickard: "Let it be said at once that the grammars of the age were overwhelmingly descriptive rather than prescriptive, and, if only for that reason, can hardly have been expected by their authors to have much influence. It must be added that [...] they were lamentably incomplete, even when considered as purely descriptive grammars." (90)

^{cvi} Rickard 90.

^{cvi} Louis Meigret, *Le tretté de la grammère françoese (1550)* (Heilbronn: Gebr. Henninger, 1888) 6.

^{cvi} On the distinction between the notions of "règle" and "loi" in Meigret's grammar, as well as the tension between notions of "règle" and "usage," see Michel Glatigny, "La notion de règle dans la 'Grammaire' de Meigret," *Histoire Épistémologie Langage* 93-106.

^{cix} "By *ipseity* I thus wish to suggest some 'I can,' or at the very least the power that *gives itself* its own law, its force of law, its self-representation, the sovereign and reappropriating gathering of self in the simultaneity of an assemblage or assembly" (Derrida, *Rogues* 12).

^{cx} Given that these phenomena in many ways *cease* to present themselves as textual projects in the French language culture of later centuries—having taken on different forms and a firmer hold as textual, social and institutional realities—it is worth insisting upon their existence during this historical parenthesis when they were, above all, beings of the page. I am thinking here of the abiding myths of the French language, especially those of clarity and universality, whose status as linguistic reality—part and parcel of the *génie* of the French language—takes hold in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. On the origins of these myths, see for example Henri Meschonnic, *De la langue française, essai sur une clarté obscure*. In the elaboration of monolingualism, however, I am also thinking of the language politics and policies of later centuries (Abbé Grégoire, the *mission civilatrice*, the *loi Toubon*, etc.). Without going so far as to suggest an actual *lineage* of a historical or textual order between these texts and policies—to do so would be a fundamental misappropriation—I would like to suggest that the formulation of French-language identity as monolingual identity institutes a specific ideological configuration to the cultural existence of that language in France, which may indeed be a precondition for these later developments.

^{cx} Derrida, *Monolinguisme* 47.

^{cxii} For an overview of this work, see David Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680-1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001) and Paul Cohen, "Poets into Frenchmen: Timothy Hampton on Literature and National Sentiment in Renaissance France," *Shakespeare Studies* vol. 33, Jan. 2005.

^{cxiii} Douglas A. Kibbee, "L'autorité de l'état et l'autorité linguistique," *Histoire Épistémologie Langage* 24, 2 (2002). Looking to distinguish the two, Douglas Kibbee has argued that what most differentiates the sixteenth-century phase of national linguistic unification from that of the

Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary periods is that during the Renaissance “la conception communicative de la langue l’emporte sur la conception identitaire de la langue” (22). This stage of communicative concerns, Kibee suggests, was crucial in the shift from “la France des nations” to “la nation France.” The most significant factors in ‘fixing’ French and establishing it as a national idiom, therefore, were “la fixation des textes fondamentaux du droit, la mise en place d’un système juridique basé sur l’écrit, et l’érection d’une bureaucratie royale qui dépend de la clarté de la communication écrite interne” (23-24).

^{cxiv} The institution of this language, as *notre langue*, will equally give rise to its own particular forms of textual residue, resistance, and re-appropriation. I will argue in Chapters Three and Four that this resistance that re-forms itself as the institution of French literature in an intimate yet essentially ambivalent relationship to the “national language” institution undergoing its own process of formation.

^{cxv} See Brunot, p. 132, note 1.

^{cxvi} This rich anthology of essays entitled *Lyon et l’illustration de la langue française à la Renaissance* looks to demonstrate how “sous l’impulsion d’une politique orchestrée par le pouvoir royal, les grammairiens, les linguistes, les écrivains et les poètes de la première moitié du XVI^e siècle, Lemaire de Belges, Rabelais, Tory, Marot, Dolet, Peletier, tous ‘facteurs’ et ‘champions’ du ‘Gallique hemisphere’, tous aussi Lyonnais de cœur ou d’adoption, sont, bien avant Du Bellay et Ronsard, parvenus à ‘ordonner,’ ‘decorer’ et ‘illustrer’ la langue française, à faire de celle-ci une véritable langue de culture.”

^{cxvii} Cf. Tom Conley, *The Self-Made Map: Cartographic Writing in Early Modern France* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) 62-87.

^{cxviii} This question of the proper name is undoubtedly related to tensions between burgeoning “national” and regional or provincial sentiment for French writers of the mid- to late sixteenth century. See François Rouget, *op cit.* For work tracing this tension in the texts of the sixteenth-century authors studied in this dissertation, see Tom Conley “Montaigne’s Gascoingne: Textual Regionalism in ‘Des boyteux,’” *MLN* 92 (4): 710-23; and Marc Bizer, “‘Qui a *pais* n’a que faire de *patrie*’: Joachim Du Bellay’s Resistance to a French Identity,” *The Romanic Review*, 91 (4): 375-395.

^{cxix} Meigret 30.

^{cxx} Rouget presents an interesting contrary—or even opposite—reading of this passage, viewing Tory’s text as already operating under an overt royal monolingual imperative: “si les réformateurs de la langue française ont motivé leur action en voulant mettre de l’ordre dans cette diversité censée être un handicap, ils on en réalité agi sous l’ordre exprès du pouvoir monarchique soucieux d’imposer une unité politique qui ne pouvait se réaliser sans l’homogénéité linguistique. [...] En voulant imposer un français codifié unique, compris et obéi de tous, il s’agissait surtout de faire tomber les frontières régionales de la langue et du pouvoir. Geoffroy Tory ne dit rien d’autre lorsqu’il compare l’état du français en 1529 à celui du grec de l’Antiquité. ‘Notre langue est aussi facile à reigler...’” 11.

^{cxxi} Tory’s vocative gesture toward a community of writers is ultimately forked: an extension of hospitality, he offers a share in the building of *François* to all who can read and write his language; yet he also invites writers to stabilize his referent by making it their object, closing it and drawing up new (potentially exclusive) terms of linguistic property.

^{cxxii} This passage appeared in the last chapter to demonstrate the symbolic significance of writing in the “forming” and “fixing” of the vernacular.

^{cxxiii} See Chapter One.

^{cxxiv} If we may take Gérard Defaux’s echo of Pasquier written four centuries later as any indication (“ce que nous appelons aujourd’hui le français”), this mode of identifying French became sufficiently institutionalized to grant it a form of long-term survival.

^{cxxv} Interestingly, while *langue* and *langage* are used here interchangeably, we find the term *vulgaire*—used in earlier texts to designate all vernacular tongues in contrast to Latin—marking those written idioms which have, like their masters, ceded their authority to *François*.

^{cxxvi} Daniel Baggioni, *Langues et nations en Europe*.

^{cxxvii} Palsgrave continues: “the heynewers and they of Romant Brabante, and all other nacyns usynge the kynde of speche nowe called Vallon or Romant, thoughe in pronounciation they folowe moche the said old Romant tonge, lyke as the Pycardes, Liegeoys and Ardenoyes do, yet in writynge, as well concernynge their judiciall causes as any other thyng made by any of them of their owne invencion, or in the letters missyves of suche as be secretores in the sayd countreis, they folowe in writynge, as nere as they may, the very true ortography and congruite of the parfyte frenche tonge; and onely suche be had in estymacion and have charge commytted to them as be able so to do” 34-35, emphasis added.

^{cxxviii} In Francis Goyet, *Traité de poétique et de rhétorique de la Renaissance* (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1990) 354.

^{cxxix} *La Révolution technologique de la grammatisation*, 1994, p. 20. “Au cours de ces treize siècles [6th to 19th centuries], nous voyons se dérouler un processus unique en son genre: la grammatisation massive, à partir d’une seule tradition linguistique initiale (la tradition gréco-latine), des langues du monde. Cette grammatisation constitue après l’avènement de l’écriture au troisième millénaire avant notre ère la deuxième révolution technico-linguistique. Ses conséquences pratiques pour l’organisation des sociétés humaines sont considérables. [...] Nous avons toutes les raisons de considérer que la Renaissance constitue un tournant décisif pour ces disciplines et qu’elle forme l’axe de la seconde révolution technico-linguistique [...]” Auroux 1992, 11-12.

^{cxxx} Centre National de Recherche Scientifique: <http://www2.cnrs.fr/presse/thema/63.htm>. Accessed 3/25/2009.

^{cxxxi} Robert Estienne, *Traicté de la Grammaire Francoise (1557)*, ed. Colette Demaizière (Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 2003) 27.

^{cxxxii} Henri Estienne will write of the “coeur de la France” in *De la Précellence du langage françois* (1579), but not as the unequivocal site of French “purity”: “Nous donnons tellement le premier lieu au langage de Paris, que nous confessons que cluy des villes prochaines, qui sont aussi comme du coeur de la France, ne s’en esloigne guere. [...] Or je presuppose, quand je parle ou de nostre langage parisien, ou de ceux que j’appelle les dialectes, qu’on entende qu’il faut premierement oster toutes les corruptions et depravations que luy fait le menu peuple; outre-plus, que si un mot duquel nous voulons nous aider ha une terminaison qui ne sente pa sa pureté françoise, nous le vestions de celle mesme dont nos mots sont vestus.” *La precellance du langage françois*, ed. Léon-Jacques Feugère (Paris: J. Delalain, 1850) 176-77. For Henri Estienne, not only the “menu peuple” but also the Court itself represents a threat to French-language purity; the Court’s Italianate language is viciously satirized in his *Deux dialogues du nouveau langage françois italianizé et autrement desguizé* (1578). His earlier *Traicte de la conformité du langage françois avec le grec* (1565) looked to establish the superiority of French over Italian through its alignment with Greek (as opposed to Latin).

^{cxxxiii} Pierre de la Ramée, *Grammaire*, ed. Colette Demaizière (Paris: Honoré Chamion, 2001) 36.

^{cxxxiv} See above for full quote.

^{cxxxv} Meigret 3.

^{cxxxvi} Quintilian defines grammar as “recte loquendi scientiam et poetarum enarrationem. *Institutio Oratia* I, iv, 2.

^{cxxxvii} See Ramus 33-36.

^{cxxxviii} For an analysis of the specific significance of foreign-language manuals in the lexical development and regulation of French prior to the publication of the Académie’s dictionary

(1694), see Odile Leclercq, “Le rôle des manuels d’enseignement du français langue étrangère dans la construction du lexique aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles,” *Éla* 150 (2008): 195-206.

^{cxix} *In Linguam Gallicam Isagoge una cum eiusdem Grammatica Latino-gallica, ex Hebraeis, Graecis et Latinis authoribus.*

^{cxl} Quoted in Livet 3.

^{cxli} “[A]pud gentis suae varios populos, personas easdem varie et sonant et scribunt, tam sunt vulgo corrupta confusaque omnia sermonis Gallici vestigia: ob id, opinor, quod et artem suae linguae aliquam esse nesciunt: aut seesse sciunt, quae tamen sit, penitus ignorant.” Quoted in Brunot 134.

^{cxlii} “[C]e qui ne veut dire ni grammaire du français, mais, si je comprend bien, grammaire du français rapporté au latin.” (*ibid.*)

^{cxliii} Livet 76.

^{cxliv} “[S]ui sermonis rationem cōdiscant, ne picarum aut sturnorum more à parentibus, sed numquam animadversa, nunquam persesa nunquā intellecta, semper effundant: quu[m] sit foedum hominem in ea lingua videri hospite[m], in qua natus est.” *Ibid.* English trans. adapted from Tom Conley, “Conquests within and without: Recent French scholarship on the Renaissance,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 52, 1999, 840.

^{cxlv} In the next chapter I will examine how the lament of being a “stranger in one’s own tongue” or a stranger to oneself is tied to *Latin* writing in the vernacular literary advocacy of mid-century.

^{cxlvi} Jean-Claude Chevalier. *Histoire de la syntaxe, naissance de la notion de complément dans la grammaire française* (Geneva: Droz, 1968) 224. Quoted in Nina Catach, “Orthographe et conception de la langue en 1550,” *Histoire Épistémologie Langage* 4 (2), 1982: 79-91.

^{cxlvii} “Mihi vero ipse interim voti cōpos esse videbor, si natium linguae Gallicae nitore[m] iamdiu prope[m] exoletu[m] et situ obsitu[m], nōnihil detero, ac velut postliminio in puritatis pristinae parte[m] restituro: corrogata scilicet ex Hebraeis, Graecis, Latinis vocum Gallicarū origine: à quibus ceu fontibus nostra prope uniuersa elocutio manauit.” Quoted in Brunot 137.

^{cxlviii} *Essais* (I, 51, 307).

^{cxlix} See note vii.

^{cl} As Colette Demaizière, following Ferdinand Brunot, notes in her edition of Estienne’s grammar, “il ne faut pas rechercher une théorie grammaticale nouvelle et originale dans l’ouvrage d’Estienne. [...] Il apporte de la clarté à un livre qui se veut pédagogique” (22).

^{cli} Martin Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture: ‘Grammatica’ and Literary Theory, 350-1100* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) xiii.

^{clii} Charles Nauert, *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 95-105.

^{cliii} Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 111-117.

^{cliv} See Nauert 117. As secular and reformist strongholds, the *collèges* fell out of favor during the seventeenth century, when town councils were pressured by both Church and state to turn control of them to religious orders. Under Louis XIII and XIV, Nauert points out, systematic pressure was exerted to close almost all the *collèges* in order to prevent the education of the lower classes.

^{clv} See Louis Le Roy, *Deux Oraisons françaises de Loys Le Roy, prononcées par luy à Paris avant la lecture de Demosthene* (Paris: Frédéric Morel, 1576).

^{clvi} Walter Ong, *Ramus: Method and the Decay of Dialogue* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958) 307-18.

^{clvii} Quoted in Brunot 129.

^{clviii} Ramus 27.

^{clix} In Martianus’s satire, Grammar is portrayed as a gray-haired old woman wielding a knife and file to excise and smooth language; she is eventually cut off by Minerva in order to allow the other arts chance to speak. See Marcia L. Colish, *Medieval Foundations of the Western*

Intellectual Tradition, 400-1400 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); Catherine Chin, *Grammar and Christianity in the Late Roman World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

^{clx} Ramus 28, note 1.

^{clxi} First for refusing to sign a *profession de foi* (1562), next for his hostility toward the Jesuits' entry into the university (1564), again during the second civil war (1567), and finally for a new post in Germany (1568) where he was poorly received. See Demaizière 9-10.

^{clxii} Ong 28.

^{clxiii} Dorothy Thicket, ed. *Etienne Pasquier: Choix de lettres sur la littérature, la langue et la traduction* (Geneva: Droz, 1956) 98.

^{clxiv} Valerius Maximus, "Factorum et dictorum memorabilium," 2.2.2 and Suetonius, "Diuus Julius," 3.2.71, quoted in Cohen 49-50. In Cohen's words, Ramus's story is "une réécriture d'épisodes antiques, mélangés et adaptés à ses fins, un bricolage de thèmes et de faits, d'anecdotes et de *topoi* puisés dans le corpus antiques."

^{clxv} Demonet 340.

^{clxvi} Kibbee 2002.

^{clxvii} Simone Delesalle and Francine Mazière, "Meigret et la tradition grammaticale française," in Defaux 48.

^{clxviii} The emphasis on usage and the privileging of speech over writing had been developed earlier by both Erasmus and the Italian grammars (both following Quintilian), but in the Latin context.

^{clxix} I am indebted to Douglas Painter's article for documenting Meigret's work as a translator and suggesting the possibility of a correspondance between the different domains of his work. See Douglas Painter, "Louis Meigret: Experience, Reason, and Orthographic Purity," *Romance Language Annual* 3 (1992): 89-95.

^{clxx} These included parts of Pliny's natural history (1542), the third and fourth books of Columella's *Labeur des vignes* (1542), the history of Polybius (1542), an oration by Isocrates on the duties of subjects to their ruler (1544), Sallust's *Catalina* (1547), Cicero's *Contre Catalina* (1547), and, perhaps most notably, Lucian's *Le Menteur* (1548).

^{clxxi} Estienne Dolet. *La Maniere de bien traduire d'une langue en aultre* (Lyon: Estienne Dolet, 1545. 13).

^{clxxii} *Orator* ad Marcum Brutum 48.

^{clxxiii} Meigret's own definition of "usage" in the *Traité*: "& pour nous garder d'abuser des termes, sachons premierement la diffinition d'usage. Lequel n'est aultre chose qu'une commune façon de vivre d'hommes, guidée par raison" 24.

^{clxxiv} Guillerm 8. Barthélémy Aneau, for example, will write in a translator's "Préface de cause" of 1552: "Il est plus difficile et fascheux suyvre autrui par chemin incogneu et estroit, arrestant ses pieds sur ses traces, que par libre et franche marche s'en aller esbatant à son plaisir par plain et large chemin decouvert." Barthélémy Aneau. *Imagination poétique traduite en vers françois des Latins et des Grecz* (1552) "Préface de cause." Quoted in Guillerm 382.

^{clxxv} Antoine Berman. "De la translation à la traduction." *TTR: Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction* 1(1), 1988: 23-40. 17. Guillerm observes on a similar note: "L' 'invention' voit sa supériorité marquée par le rattachement du terme au réseau désignant de façon positive la 'propriété' du produit inventé ('oeuvre mienne', 'appeler mien', 'invention propre'/'livres d'autrui'); associée, d'autre part, à des connotations de 'plaisir', elle s'oppose au 'labeur' contraignant et pénible qu'est la traduction." Guillerm 383.

^{clxxvi} Abel Mathieu. *Devis de la langue française (1559): Suivi du Second devis et principal propos de la langue française (1560)* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1972) 7. In the third *Devis*, published in 1572, Mathieu will move further in the direction of monarchic authority, however, affirming that "par icelle [la parole] les subjects entendent leur devoir d'obeissance." Quoted in Demonet 340.

^{clxxvii} Jean Pellisson, a contemporary of Meigret's, will write of bilingual translation in classroom practice: "Qui autem orationem pueris declarat non construit, sed ab alio constructam resolvit aut destruit aut ordinat, ut a pueris intelligatur. Quocirca rectius dixeris ordinem aut destructionem aut resolutionem aut declarationem." *Contextus Despauterianae grammaticae* (1549). Quoted in Glyn Norton, *The Ideology and Language of Translation in Renaissance France and Their Humanist Antecedents* (Geneva: Droz, 1984) 26, n. 2. Norton notes that a copy of this work is located at the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève.

^{clxxviii} Guillerme 362.

^{clxxix} For a detailed analysis of Meigret's 1542 work, see Livet 49-63; on the Grammar, 64-116; on his debate with Des Autels, 117-133; on his debate with Pelletier, 134-142.

^{clxxx} This importance has been highlighted by scholars including Harald Weinrich, Franz Josef Hausmann, Douglas Kibbee.

^{clxxxi} Asks Hausmann: "Meigret était-il donc juriste?" Franz Josef Hausmann. *Louis Meigret: Humaniste et Linguiste* (Tübingen: Narr, 1980). The details of Meigret's biography remain sketchy. It is known that Meigret was born in Lyon and later moved to Paris, where his works were published, and that he was imprisoned alongside Clément Marot in 1532. His father had been a lawyer and his brother, Jean, was one of the most renowned jurists in Paris around the time Meigret was publishing. Meigret's own profession is unknown; Hausmann, whose biographical work on Meigret is the most comprehensive, suggests that he may have had a military career. "Il semble surtout ressortir [...] d'une façon générale qu'il ne faisait pas profession de droit. [...] il faut attribuer ses connaissances juridiques aux traditions de la famille dont le chef, Antoine Meigret, avait été avocat et dont deux fils, frère et demi-frère de Louis Meigret, exerçaient cette profession vers 1550: Jean et Gabriel. Jean, surtout, est à l'époque l'un des plus célèbres juristes de Paris." (52)

^{clxxxii} Guillaume Des Autels, *Replique de Guillaume des Autels aux furieuses défenses de Louis Meigret; Avec la suite du Repons de l'auteur* (Lyon: J. de Tournes et G. Gazeau, 1551) 20.

^{clxxxiii} *Reponse a la desesperée replique de Glaomalis de Vezelet*, 1551, 23. Quoted in Catach 85.

^{clxxxiv} As Harald Weinrich observes, for much of the sixteenth century, "l'autorité linguistique de la Cour est très controversée en France, en dépit de l'atmosphère cultivée que François Ier fait régner à la Cour." Harald Weinrich, *Conscience linguistique et lectures littéraires* (Paris: Editions MSH, 1989).

^{clxxxv} Nina Catach critiques Des Autels, perhaps ironically, as the advocate of an "antiphonétisme vulgaire" 83.

^{clxxxvi} Quoted from the 1545 edition of the text, Louis Meigret *Traité touchant le commun usage de l'écriture françoise* (Paris: J. de Marnef, 1545), "Proësmes de l'auteur," NP [screen 3 on Gallica].

^{clxxxvii} Meigret was one of the first to use Tory's cedilla, although, ironically, his own uses of it—notably, the "e"—never took hold in general use. Livet observes about Meigret's legacy more broadly: "De toutes ces règles [...] un bon nombre ont pris force de loi avec le temps; d'autres, qu'on a essayé de suivre au dix-huitième siècle, n'ont pas été définitivement acceptées par l'usage" (59-60). Meigret's spelling is so distinct that Hausmann's edition of the *Grammere* (1980), which completely modernizes the spelling, is used in most scholarly studies. I have kept the original spelling here, with the exception of accents not available on the modern keyboard. A modern edition of the original orthography can be found in Foerster 1888.

^{clxxxviii} *Traité*, screen 9 on Gallica.

^{clxxxix} Hausmann points out the noticable Calvinist inflections of Meigret's concept of the "coutume" and the rhetoric of breaking with tradition. See Hausmann 67-71.

^{cxc} *Traité*, "Proësmes."

^{cxc} Ibid.

^{cxcii} Ibid.

^{cxci} Ibid.

^{cxcv} Ibid.

^{cxcv} “Platon maintient et l’extériorité de l’écriture et son pouvoir de pénétration maléfique, capable d’affecter ou d’infecter le plus profond,” Derrida, *La Dissémination* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1972) 137. My own invocation of *Phaedrus* here is heavily filtered through Derrida’s reading in “La Pharmacie de Platon,” *Dissémination* 75-213.

^{cxcvi} Norton 15.

^{cxcvii} Théodore de Bèze. *Tragedie françoise du Sacrifice d’Abraham*. Geneva, 1576. Reprint Joel Cherbuliez, 1856. 10.

^{cxcviii} Jacques Peletier, *Dialogue de l’ortographe e prononciacion françoese, departi an deus livres* (Lyon: Jan de Tournes, 1555) 23.

^{cxcix} Louis Meigret, *Discours de Louis Meigret touchant la création du Monde*, Paris: Wechel, 1554. Préface. Quoted in Bernard Cerquiglini, *La Genèse de l’Orthographe française (XIIe-XVIIe siècles)* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2004) 67. Peletier expresses a similar conflict of will with his publisher—as a proprietary conflict between speech and writing—in the *Dialogue de l’ortographe*: “quant a l’Ecriture, ele ne doèt auoèr autre usage ni puissance, fors cele que la Prolacion lui donne: einsi que toe e moe acordons bien. E me deplesoèt beaucoup quand je publiè mes Euures Poëtiques, qu’iz ne furent imprimèz an partie selon mon intancion. Mes je les e depuis augmantèz d’une bonne tierce partie: e quand viendra a les rimprimer, je les ferè voèr ecriz a mon gre, ou je serè desobeï des Imprimeurs.” Peletier 26.

^{cc} Peletier includes Jean Martin, Théodore de Bèze, Denis Sauvage, and Dauron (who serves as a spokesman for the author’s own opinions).

^{cci} Others who advocated phonetic reform, including Peletier himself, sought some degree of stability in etymology, recognizing like Des Autels a fundamental variability of pronunciation.

^{ccii} Peletier 9.

^{cciii} Because Meigret’s system does not in fact represent speech, Peletier suggests that if it were in fact adopted, Meigret would have in fact accomplished a feat counter to his original intention: “Certainement s’il estoèt einsi auenù, tu auroés etè cause d’une chose toute contrere a ta principale e seule intancion. Car au lieu que tu pretans fere obeïr l’Ecriture a la Prolacion, tu auroés fet obeïr la Prolacion a l’Ecriture. E ne croè point que toemême ne trouuasses notre langage fort deguise, quand tu l’orroés einsi prononcer comme tu l’ecriz.” (26)

^{cciv} Demonet 339.

^{ccv} Jean Pillot’s *Gallicae linguae institutio*, 1550; Ramus’s *Gramere*, 1562; Gérard Du Vivier’s *Grammaire françoise*, 1566; Antoine Cauchie’s *Grammatica Gallica*, 1570; Henri Estienne’s *Hypomneses de Gallica lingua*, 1582; Claude Hollybande’s *The french schoolmaister*, 1573; Baltazar de Sotemayor’s *Gramatica cu reglas muy provechosas y necesarias para aprender a leir y escribir la lengua francesa*, 1565.

^{ccvi} See Charles Porée, *Un Parlementaire sous François Ier: Guillaume Poyet, 1473-1548* (Angers: Germain et Grassin, 1898).

^{ccvii} “Ordonnance d’août 1539 (ou « ordonnance de Villers-Cotterêts ») prise par le Roi François Ier imposant l’usage du français dans les actes officiels et de justice enregistrée au Parlement de Paris le 6 septembre 1539,” Assemblée Nationale, <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/histoire/villers-cotterets.asp>.

^{ccviii} This continues to be the case today. For example, the governmental organization currently (in 2009) overseeing state language policy and politics (*la politique linguistique*), called the *Délégation générale à la langue française et aux langues de France*, places Villers-Cotterêts at the head of its own mission statement: “La France est au départ un espace plurilingue où la langue de la cour côtie plusieurs parlers régionaux. En 1539, François 1er signe dans son château de Villers-Cotterêts un édit qui impose le français à la place du latin pour les actes de justice et d’état civil. L’unification par le français, entamée depuis le XVIe siècle, s’accélère avec la

Révolution française. Par la suite, ‘la République une et indivisible’ a vu dans la pluralité des langues un obstacle à l’unité des français. De ce désir d’unité naquit le français, langue nationale. [...] La délégation générale à la langue française et aux langues de France, service du ministère de la culture et de la communication, est chargée de coordonner cette politique.” (www.dglflf.culture.gouv.fr/droit/index.htm) The current website of the Académie Française similarly assigns Villers-Cotterêts a decisive place in its history of French, closely attaching this history to that of the state (and later, of “la nation française”): “L’extension de l’usage du français (et, qui plus est, d’un français qui puisse être compris par tous) est proportionnelle, pour une large part, aux progrès de l’administration et de la justice royales dans le pays. Inversement, l’essor de la langue française et la généralisation de son emploi sont des facteurs déterminants dans la construction de la nation française. Deux articles de l’ordonnance de Villers-Cotterêts, signée par François Ier en août 1539, donnèrent une assise juridique à ce processus.” In the annual “état des lieux” delivered by the Secrétaire perpétuel of the Académie to her colleagues, Hélène Carrère sought to redefine the place of the French language in France and elsewhere, beginning with Villers-Cotterêts: “C’est d’abord, cela va de soi, par une réflexion sur la place du français en France qu’il faut commencer. François Ier a proclamé en 1539 le français langue du royaume par l’ordonnance de Villers-Cotterêts. Au vrai, il s’agissait alors simplement de substituer dans la justice et dans l’administration cette langue au latin, que les sujets du roi ne comprenaient guère. Les effets de l’ordonnance furent remarquables. La langue du roi a rapidement supplanté le latin dans la vie publique, dans celle des élites proches de la Cour, mais aussi parmi les écrivains et les humanistes, dont l’imprimerie naissante allait diffuser les oeuvres. Fondée près d’un siècle plus tard, l’Académie française y apporta d’emblée sa contribution. Malgré cela, la France fut très longtemps encore le pays de la diversité linguistique...” (www.academie-francaise.fr/immortels/discours_SPA/carrere_2008.html)

^{ccix} Gilles Boulard, “L’ordonnance de Villers-Cotterêts: le temps de la clarté et la stratégie du temps,” *Revue Historique* 609: 45-100.

^{ccx} Archives of l’Hérault, II E 39/289, *notes brèves* of 1539, f. 153, quoted in Kibbee 2003, 68.

^{ccxi} A notary in the Aveyron, for example, switched to *rouergat*: “mutation de stille in lingua vulgari justa las ordonansas relas.” Quoted in Kibbee 2003, 68.

^{ccxii} Trotter 77. Historian Charles Higounet writes that in Bordeaux, “le français écrit n’a [...] pas rejeté dans l’oubli les langues rivales [...]. Il les a seulement refoulées à l’arrière-plan.” Quoted in Boulard 51.

^{ccxiii} Michel Mollat, *Genèse médiévale de la France moderne (XIVe-XVe siècle)* (Paris: Arthaud/Points histoire, 1977) 117.

^{ccxiv} Robert J. Knecht, *The Rise and Fall of Renaissance France, 1483-1610* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2001) 176.

^{ccxv} Kibbee cites *Le très ancien coutumier de Normandie* (ca. 1200), *Li livres de jostice et de plet* (1254-1260), *Les Coutumes de Beauvais* by Philippe de Beaumanoir (ca. 1283), *L’ancien coutumier de Champagne* (ca. 1290-1300), *La très ancienne coutume de Bretagne* (1312-1325), *Le grand coutumier de France* by Jacques d’Ableiges (1387-1389), *La Somme Royale* by Jean Boutillier (1395). Kibbee 2002, 12.

^{ccxvi} Quoted in Kibbee 69.

^{ccxvii} Kibbee 2003, 65.

^{ccxviii} Kibbee 2002, 16-17.

^{ccxix} Quoted in Kibbee 2003, 70.

^{ccxx} Quoted in Henri Peyre, *La Royauté et les Langues Provinciales* (Paris: Les Presses Modernes, 1933) 65.

^{ccxxi} Anne Lefebvre-Teillard, “Le nom propre et la loi,” *Mots* 63 (2000): 9-18. Lefebvre-Veillard points out that while Villers-Cotterêts required only the recording of baptisms and the deaths of sole beneficiaries, the edict of Blois (1579) would additionally require that of marriages and

burials; the edict of Moulins (1566) required written proof of all contracts whose value was greater than 100 *livres* (14). For more on this subject, see Lefebvre-Teillard, *Le nom, droit et histoire*, Paris: PUF, 1990, p. 91 and following.

^{ccxxiii} “En matières criminelles, ne seront les parties aucunement ouïes et par le conseil ne ministère d’aucunes personnes, mais répondront par leur bouche des cas dont ils seront accusés, et seront ouïes et interrogées comme dessus, séparément, secrètement et à part, ostant et abolissant tous styles, usances ou coutumes, par lesquels les accusés avoient accoutumés d’être ouïs en jugemens, pour sçavoir s’ils devoient être accusés, et à cette fin avoir communication des faits et articles concernant les crimes et délits dont ils étoient accusés, et toutes autres choses contraires à ce qui est contenu ci-dessus.” www.assemblee-nationale.fr/histoire/villers-cotterets.asp.

^{ccxxiii} Timothy Hampton, *Literature and Nation in the Sixteenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001) 14.

^{ccxxiv} “Ordonnance d’août 1539 (ou « ordonnance de Villers-Cotterêts ») prise par le Roi François Ier imposant l’usage du français dans les actes officiels et de justice enregistrée au Parlement de Paris le 6 septembre 1539,” Assemblée Nationale, <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/histoire/villers-cotterets.asp>.

^{ccxxv} The “excès irréductible du syntaxique sur le sémantique” or “excès de la syntaxe sur le sens” of which Derrida writes with respect to Mallarmé in “La Double Séance” (*La Dissémination*) seem fitting here.

^{ccxxvi} Burke 73.

^{ccxxvii} Language historian David Trotter, for example, has argued that while “no discussion of the expansion of French and the disappearance of other vernaculars can avoid the text of the Ordinance,” it in fact had very little real effect. “[T]here seems little doubt that the Ordinance was, on paper at least, a significant piece of legislation,” argues Trotter, but “theory and practice of legislation in linguistic matters are not the same thing and [...] in some areas at least, Villers-Cotterêts seems to have had almost no impact at all on the language of documents.” David Trotter, “*Si le français n’y peut aller*: Villers-Cotterêts and mixed language documents from the Pyrenees,” in D.J. Cowling (ed.), *Conceptions of Europe in Renaissance France: a Festschrift for Keith Cameron* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), 77-97.

^{ccxxviii} I will further explore the history, significance, and transformation of this term (“maternal”) as it applies to vernacular writing in the next chapter, in the context of poetic writing.

^{ccxxix} Pierre Rebuffe, *Commentarii in constitutiones seu ordinationes regias*, quoted in Peyre; see Peyre 69-72.

^{ccxxx} Auguste Brun, “En langage maternel françois,” *Le français moderne*, 9(2), 1951: 81-87.

^{ccxxxi} V.N. Volosinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, trans. Ladislave Matejka and I.R. Titunik (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973) 23.

^{ccxxxii} Homi Bhabha, “Introduction: Narrating the nation,” in H.B., Ed., *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge) 1-7.

^{ccxxxiii} Robert Estienne, *Dictionarium latinogallicum* (Paris: R. Estienne, 1552) 632.

Notes to Chapter Three

^{ccxxxiv} François Rablais, *Pantagruel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964) 151.

^{ccxxxv} Jonathan Flatley, *Affective Mapping* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008) 79.

^{ccxxxvi} “Qui osera peu estimer la Poésie, honorée des bienfaits et de la profession des Empereurs du monde?” asks Jacques Peletier in his *Art Poétique* (1555). In Goyet 243.

^{ccxxxvii} See Goyet’s introduction (5-36) for a lucid discussion of this question.

^{ccxxxviii} “Mais qui pourrait raisonnablement affirmer,” asks Thomas Sébillet in his *Art Poétique Français* (1548), “que la Poésie fût de nature et de première naissance, sans étude, doctrine ou précepte, autrement que divinement donnée? Car ce qu’en Poésie est nommé art, et que nous traitons comme art en cet opuscul, n’est rien que la nue écorce de Poésie” (52).

^{ccxxxix} Merlin, Op cit.

^{ccxl} Brunot 83. “Épopées et chansons, mystères et farces, satires et contes, conceptions pieuses ou profanes, graves ou légères, il avait tout traduit et tout exprimé” (*ibid*).

^{ccxli} I am drawing heavily on François Cornilliat’s sharp reading in this paragraph. “Le fait que le prince ait tout ce qu’il faut, y compris la rime même, et que le poète le reconnaisse d’emblée, place leurs rapports sous un jour entièrement nouveau. Dans la Grand Rhétorique ordinaire, le prince est le lieu de la plénitude, auquel pourtant manque (implicitement) la rime, la ‘couronne’ de l’éloge, que le rhétoricien, dont c’est la spécialité, se propose justement de lui adresser, de lui *ajouter*, formant ainsi, d’après celle du prince, sa propre plénitude. Marot admet d’emblée qu’au prince ne manque pas même la rime [...]” François Cornilliat, “*Or ne mens*”. *Couleurs de l’éloge et du blâme chez les “Grands Rhétoriciens”* (Paris: Champion, 1994) 332.

^{ccxlii} Cornilliat: “Du coup, c’est en quelque sorte gratuitement que le poète adresse la parole au prince, et c’est, de même, gratuitement que le prince lui donnera de l’argent” (333)

^{ccxliii} Cf. Ullrich Langer’s analysis in *Vertu du discours, discours de la vertu* (Geneva: Droz, 1999) 40-48.

^{ccxliv} Longeon 63.

^{ccxlv} Quoted in Claude Pierre Goujet, *Bibliothèque française ou Histoire de la littérature française* (Paris: Mariette, 1747) 146. Sainte-Beuve: “François Ier, dès le jour où il monta sur le trône, donna le signal à ce puissant travail qui devait contribuer à répandre et à polir en définitive la langue française. Grâce à l’impulsion qu’il communiqua d’en haut, ce fut bientôt de toutes parts autour de lui un défrichement universel. Lui-même on le vit des premiers mettre la main à l’instrument. Ce qui eût été, en d’autres temps, une prétention petite, était donc ici une noble erreur, ou plutôt simplement un bon exemple.” Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve, *Derniers portraits littéraires* (Paris: Didier, 1858) 56.

^{ccxlii} Luce Guillermin points out this as especially prominent feature in pre-1540 translations.

^{ccxlii} *Les disciples et amys de Marot contre Sagon, La Hueterie et leurs adherentz* (Paris: Jehan Morin, 1537) [NP; Screen 29 on Gallica].

^{ccxlviii} *Deffence* I, 4.

^{ccxlix} See Michael Wintroub, *A Savage Mirror: Power, Identity and Knowledge in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006) 42-49; Marc-René Jung, *Hercule dans la littérature française du XVI^e siècle. De l’Hercule courtois à l’Hercule baroque* (Geneva: Droz, 1966) 87-92.

^{cel} In prose, Du Bellay will explain the logic of this appellation, “François, premier de ce nom”: “Je dis premier, d’autant qu’il a en son noble royaume premièrement restitué tous les bons arts et sciences en leur ancienne dignité: et si à notre langue, auparavant scabreux et mal poli, rendu élégant [...]” (I, 4).

^{celi} Derrida: “Et si l’original appelle un complément, c’est qu’à l’origine il n’était pas là sans faute, plein, complet, total, identique à soi,” “Des Tours de Babel,” 225.

^{celii} Étienne Dolet, *Les gestes de François de Valois, roy de France: dedans lequel oeuvre on peult confnoistre tout ce qui a esté faict par les François depuis l’an mil cinq cents treize jusques en l’an mil cinq cents trente neuf / premièrement composé en latin par Estienne Dolet; et après par luy mesmes translaté en langue françoise* (Lyon: Dolet, 1540) 8.

^{celiii} It is worth noting that this is the same period when many French vernaculars began to be used extensively in literary manuscripts.

^{celiv} Nogent would employ the term again, in reference to his own use, in his autobiography: “Fiebat autem res non materno sermone, sed literis” (“The matter was debated, not in the mother

tongue, but in learned letters”). Guibert de Nogent, *Monodiae* (1114-1121), quoted in Einar Haugen, “The ‘mother tongue,’” *The Influence of Language on Culture and Thought*, Eds. Robert L. Cooper, Bernard Spolsky (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1991) 75-84.

^{cclv} Two Latin adjectives were derived from *pater* which differed in connotation in Antiquity: *patrius* was the juridical and political term, while *paternus* was the more colloquial and affective. See J. Batany, “L’amère maternité du français médiéval,” *Langue française* 54 (1982), 29-39.

^{cclvi} “Si l’on a parlé de *langue maternelle*,” Batany observes about use of the term during this period, “cela a rarement été pour opposer deux ‘langues vulgaires’ [...] mais, le plus souvent, pour opposer la langue vulgaire, quelle qu’elle soit, au latin” (31).

^{cclvii} R. Anthony Lodge, *French: From Dialect to Standard* (New York: Routledge, 1993) 108.

^{cclviii} Or “Lingua tamen caveas ne sit materna, sed illa/Quam dedit et docuit lingua paterna tibi.” Nigel of Canterbury, late twelfth century. Quoted in Haugen 75.

^{cclix} Renée Balibar, *L’institution du français: essai sur le colinguisme des Carolingiens à la République* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1985) 33. “Comment les gens du bas nommaient-ils leur propre parler? Le concept de langue propre leur était étranger, avec celui de langue en général. Le mot de *patois*, d’étymologie obscure selon les linguistes actuels, attesté en français depuis 1285, est supposé avoir désigné originellement soit une gesticulation animale (celle des pattes), soit un bruit confus (claquement de mains, de pattes, de lèvres)” (33-34).

^{cclx} See Batany 37-38.

^{cclxi} Lodge provides the following English translation: “I apologize for my rough, uncouth and barbarous language, for I was not born in Paris, nor am I as elegant as was Paris; but I hark back and compare myself to the speech my mother taught me when I took milk from her breasts. My speech does not stray from this, and I consider no speech more subtle than the one which is current in our town [presumably Paris]” (101).

^{cclxii} In an article written the late nineteenth century on the ‘love’ of the mother tongue as a cultural phenomenon, the German scholar Heymann Steinthal notes that the Greeks had no term for ‘mother tongue’—nor demonstrated any particular affection for their language—precisely because of the absence of non-Greek languages in their culture. Heymann Steinthal, “Von der Liebe zur Muttersprache” in *Gesammelte kleine Schriften*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Dümmlers, 1880), 97-107.

^{cclxiii} Michel Jeanneret, “The Vagaries of Exemplarity: Distortion or Dismissal?” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 59 (4), Oct. 1998, 565-579. Quote page 566.

^{cclxiv} Jeanneret cites this example and discusses it; see 566.

^{cclxv} For the authoritative treatments of Renaissance *imitatio* and exemplarity, see Thomas Greene, *The Light in Troy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982); John D. Lyons, *Exemplum: The Rhetoric of Example in Early Modern France and Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989).

^{cclxvi} Lyons x.

^{cclxvii} Michel Jeanneret uses this quote as the epigraph to his insightful and informative article, *op cit.*

^{cclxviii} Longeon 21. “Pour ce que l’un des avocats, en plaidant, a dit que la cause pour laquelle l’on plaide céans en français, c’est à l’exemple des Romains, lesquels, afin que l’on n’usurpât à Rome les langues étrangères, avaient institué que l’on n’y parlerait que ‘lingua vernacula.’” Lemaistre’s own opinion is that “la cause pour laquelle les Romains ne parlaient, ne souffraient parler en leur Sénat qu’en langue latine, ne fut point pour doute d’usurpation, mais pour retenir et garder leur grande et excellente dignité; et que pour pareille cause a été introduit en cette cour [...] que l’on ne plaide qu’en français” (21-22).

^{cclxix} Nicot’s dictionary indicates that the term *exemplum* can operate in both senses. Some examples of ‘good’ *exemples*: “Il a les bons pour exemple et patron, Habet bonorum exemplum; Faire à l’exemple d’aucun, Exemplo alicuius facere; Il est écrit par les exemples anciens, Est in

exemplis, etc.; *Bailler un exemple à ceux qui viendront apres nous d'estre vertueux*, Gloriam et laudem posteris proderet." Examples of 'bad' examples: "*Pour donner exemple aux autres il faut qu'il soit puni*, Aliquid exempli in hunc statui oportet; *Je te puniray tellement que les autres y prendront exemple*, Exemplum faciam vel edam in te." Nicot, "exemple."

^{cclxx} Étienne Dolet, *La manière de bien traduire d'une langue en autre: d'avantage de la punctuation de la langue françoise* (Lyon: Dolet, 1540) 5-6.

^{cclxxi} From the *Déffence* (I, 12), "Défense de l'auteur": "Ceux qui penseront que je sois trop grand admirateur de ma langue, aillent voir le premier livre des *Fins des Biens et des Maux*, fait par ce père d'éloquence latine Cicéron qui au commencement dudit livre, entre autres choses, répond à ceux qui déprisaient les choses écrites en latin, et les aimaient mieux lire en grec." Joachim Du Bellay, *Les Regrets: Précédé de Les antiquités de Rome et suivi de La défense et illustration de la langue française* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000) 253.

^{cclxxii} "Au lecteur," *Epistres familiaires* (emphasis added).

^{cclxxiii} Chares de Sainte-Marthe, *La poésie françoise de Charles de Sainte-Marthe, divisée en trois livres, Plus un livre de ses amys* (Lyon: Le Prince, 1540) 78-79.

^{cclxxiv} For the affective relations of friendship, politics, and textuality in the Renaissance, see Ullrich Langer, *Perfect Friendship: Studies in Literature and Moral Philosophy from Boccaccio to Corneille* (Geneva: Droz, 1994); Jeffrey Masten, *Textual Intercourse: Collaboration, Authorship, and Sexualities in Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Marc Schachter, *Voluntary Servitude and the Erotics of Friendship* (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2008). In a non-Renaissance specific context, see Jacques Derrida, *Politiques de l'amitié* (Paris: Galilée, 1994). See also the rich body of scholarship on the friendship and Montaigne and La Boétie, including Gérard Defaux, *Montaigne et le travail de l'amitié: du lit de mort d'Etienne de La Boétie aux Essais de 1595* (Paris: Paradigme, 2001); Eric MacPhail, "Friendship as a Political Ideal in Montaigne's Essais," *Montaigne Studies* 1 (1989): 177-187; Tom Conley, "Friendship in a Local Vein: Montaigne's Servitude to La Boetie," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 97.1 (1998): 67-89.

^{cclxxv} "Comme on en a fait la remarque, il y avait quelque courage à Du Bellay d'en parler ainsi qu'il en parle, trois ans à peine après sa mort." Quoted in Du Bellay 348, n. 17.

^{cclxxvi} Ronsard, considered the leader of the Pléiade, first regrouped the seven poets in his *Hymne à Henri II de ce nom* (1555). In addition to Ronsard, members included Du Bellay, Jodelle, Baïf, Peletier, Belleau and Tyard. For a comprehensive history of the group, see Henri Chamard, *Histoire de la Pléiade*, vol. 1-4 (Paris: H. Didier, 1939). See also Sydney John Holyoake, *An Introduction to French Sixteenth-Century Poetic Theory: Texts and Commentary* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973).

^{cclxxvii} Jacques Peletier, *Les oeuvres poétiques de Jacques Peletier du Mans* (Paris: Michel de Vascosan, 1547) 82v-83r.

^{cclxxviii} Du Bellay is even more explicit on this count: "Que pensent donc faire ces reblanchisseurs de murailles, qui jour et nuit se rompent la tête à imiter? Que dis-je, imiter? Mais transcrire un Virgile et un Cicéron? Bâtissant leurs poèmes des hémistiches de l'un, et jurant en leurs proses aux mots et sentes de l'autre [...]. Pensent-ils donc, je ne dis éгалer, mais approcher seulement de ces auteurs en leurs langues? Recueillant de cet orateur et de ce poète ores un nom, ores un verbe, ores un vers, et ores une sentence: comme si en la façon qu'on rebâtit un vieil édifice, ils s'attendaient rendre par ces pierres ramassées à la ruinée fabrique de ces langues sa première grandeur et excellence" (250-251).

^{cclxxix} "Et qui pourrait traduire tout Virgile en Français, phrase pour phrase, et mot pour mot: ce serait une louange inestimable. Car un Traducteur, comment saurait-il mieux faire son devoir, sinon en approchant toujours le plus près qu'il serait possible de l'Auteur auquel il est sujet? Puis, pensez quelle grandeur ce serait de voir une seconde Langue répondre à toute l'élégance de

la première: et encore avoir la sienne propre. Mais, comme j'ai dit, il ne se peut faire" (In Goyet 265).

^{cclxxx} Joachim Du Bellay, *The Regrets*, Trans. Richard Helgerson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006) 6.

^{cclxxxi} Barthélémy Aneau, *Le Quintil Horatian* (1551). Quoted in Joachim Du Bellay, *La Deffence et Illustration de la langue francoyse*, ed. Henri Chamard (Paris: A. Fontemoing, 1904) 222.

^{cclxxxii} Flatley 79.

^{cclxxxiii} Like the Romans themselves, Michel Jeanneret suggests, French writers "wanted to be both conquering and conquered, free and faithful, differing and deferring" (566).

^{cclxxxiv} Peletier, *L'Art Poétique d'Horace, traduit en Vers Francois par Jacques Peletier du Mans* (Paris, 1541) 3r-v.

^{cclxxxv} Du Bellay will seek to convince lovers of Latin and Greek in a similar vein that "l'affection qu'ils portent aux langues étrangères ne permet qu'ils veuillent faire sain et entier jugement de leur vulgaire," 224. See also Fouquelin, note *lv* below.

^{cclxxxvi} "[L]a plus grande partie de notre phrase & de noz termes vulgaires est tiree des langues susdictes, encores quant a l'invention & disposition, lesquelles vertuz ne s'acquierent que par long usage & continuation de lire, c'est chose toute receue & certaine, qu'homme ne sauroit rien écrire qui lui peut demeurer a honneur, & venir en commendation vers la posterité sans l'aide & appui des livres Grecz & Latins" (3v).

^{cclxxxvii} Cf. Dante Alighieri, *De vulgari Eloquentia* (I.1): "vulgarem locutionem appellamus eam quam infantes adsuefiunt ab adsistentibus, cum primitus distinguere voces incipiunt; vel quod brevius dici potest, vulgarem locutionem asserimus, quam sine omni regula, nutricem imitantes, accipimus. Est et inde alia locutio secundaria nobis, quam Romani gramaticam vocaverunt. Hanc quidem secundariam Greci habent et alii, sed non omnes. Ad habitum vero huius pauci perveniunt, quia non nisi per spatium temporis et studii assiduitatem regulamus et doctrinamur in illa. Harum quoque duarum nobilior est vulgaris: tum quia prima fuit hamno generi usitata; tum quia totus orbis ipsa perfruitur, licet in diversas prolationes et vocabula sit divisa; tum quia naturalis est nobis, cum illa potius artificialis existat. Et de hac nobiliori nostra est intentio partractare." (I call 'vernacular language' that which infants acquire from those around them when they first begin to distinguish sounds; or, to put it more succinctly, I declare that vernacular language is that which we learn without any formal instruction, by imitating our nurses. There also exists another kind of language, at once remove from us, which the Romans called *gramatica*. The Greeks and some—but not all—other peoples also have this secondary kind of language. Few, however, achieve complete fluency in it, since knowledge of its rules and theory can only be developed through dedication to a lengthy course of study. Of these two kinds of language, the more noble is the vernacular: first because it was the language originally used by the human race; second, because the whole world employs it, though with different pronunciations and using different words; and third because it is natural to us, while the other is, in contrast, artificial.) *Dante Online*, "De vulgari eloquentia," I [www.danteonline.it/english/opere.asp], last accessed 7/15/2009.

^{cclxxxviii} "[C]'est le fait d'un homme paresseux et de peu de coeur, de marcher toujours après un autre. Celui sera toujours dernier, qui toujours suivra: ait donc le Poète premièrement l'esprit, le courage, la majesté, la facilité, et bref ce que la nature peut donner" (256).

^{cclxxxix} "[S]I je savais ou voulais traduire, je m'adresserais aussi peu, à cause de cette divinité d'invention qu'ils ont plus que les autres, de cette grandeur de style, magnificence de mots, gravité de sentences, audace et variété de figures, et mille autres lumières de poésie: bref cette énergie, et ne saisi quel esprit, qui est en leurs écrits, que les Latins appelleraient *genius*. Toutes lesquelles choses se peuvent autant exprimer en traduisant, comme un peintre peut représenter l'âme avec le corps de celui qu'il entreprend tirer après le naturel" ("Des mauvais traducteurs, et de ne traduire les poètes" (I, 6), 235).

^{ccxc} Cf. Antoine Fouquelin, *La Rhétorique française* (1555): “Je désirerais fort [...] qu’au lieu de si grand nombre d’histoire fabuleuses, nos devanciers eussent employé une partie de leur loisir, à traiter en leur langue les sciences et disciplines: et qu[...]’ils eussent transféré en leur vulgaire, les préceptes des sciences et arts libéraux: Nous pourrions maintenant avec bien peu de travail, parvenir à la parfaite connaissance des choses, à laquelle nous ne pouvons atteindre par aucune assiduité de labeur passant la meilleure part de notre vie à apprendre la variété des langues étrangères: Nous aurions maintenant en France des Socrates et Platons, en divinité de tout savoir: des Aristotes et Zénons [...], des Démosthènes et Cicérons [...]. Mais pource que la sottise superstition et commune ignorance du temps passé, a fait, que ces bonnes gens ne se soient avisés ou plutôt aient méprisé un si grand honneur et avancement de leur langue: Quel moyen plus honnête et plus profitable se pourrait présenter, pour nous recommander à notre postérité, que de faire et supplier en notre endroit ce que nous regrettons avoir été omis par nos ancêtres, en traitant les arts et sciences en notre langue vulgaire tellement abrégé le chemin à ceux qui viendront après nous, qu’avec le lait de leurs nourrices ils en puissent sucer les premiers principes et éléments?” In Goyet 347-48.

^{ccxci} “Where to our language giveth us great occasion, being indeed capable of any excellent exercising of it. I know some will say [...] it wanteth Grammer. Nay truthly it hath that praise that it wants not Grammer; for Grammer it might have, but it needs it not, being so easie in it selfe, and so voyd of those cumbersome differences of *Cases, Genders, Moods, & Tenses*, which I think was a peece of the Tower of Babilons curse, that a man should be put to school to learn his mother tongue.” Quoted in Carla Mazzio, *The Inarticulate Renaissance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008) 220, n. 19.

^{ccxcii} “Si la nature (dont quelque personnage de grande renommée non sans raison a douté si on la devait appeler mère ou marâtre) eût donné aux hommes un commun vouloir et consentement, outre les innumérables commodités qui en fussent procédées, l’inconstance humaine n’eût eu besoin de se forger tant de manières de parler. Laquelle diversité et confusion se peut à bon droit appeler la Tour de Babel,” 224.

^{ccxciii} Ref.

^{ccxciv} Jean Dubu offers an alternative reading: “L’orphelin – car Du Bellay était, comme Racine, orphelin –, l’orphelin qui tient la plume voit donc dans l’action du prince défunt celle d’un bon père de famille, et dans le langage *maternel* un bien patrimonial qu’il importe de faire fructifier; le langage vivant et le roi défunt apparaissent alors inextricablement, on n’ose pas dire indissolublement, liés comme le sang des parents dans les veines de l’enfant.” Jean Dubu, “De l’ordonnance de Villers-Cotterêts à la Deffence et illustration de la langue françoise: Affirmation politique et revendication littéraire,” in *Langues et Nations au temps de la Renaissance* (1991) 147.

^{ccxcv} II, 8, 386.

^{ccxcvi} See Chapter Two, section 1.

^{ccxcvii} “Si tu te sers des noms propres des Grecs et Romains, tu les tourneras à la terminaison Française, autant que ton langage le permet.”

Notes to Chapter Four

^{ccxcviii} Joachim Du Bellay, “Hymne de la Surdité,” *Les Divers Jeux Rustiques, et autres oeuvres poétiques* (Paris: Frederic Morel, 1560).

^{ccxcix} *Les Regrets* 7.

^{ccc} See I, 5, “Que les Traductions ne sont suffisantes pour donner perfection à la Langue Françoise” and I, 6, “Des mauvais traducteurs, et de ne traduyre les poètes.”

^{ccci} Preface, *Le quatriesme livre de l'Eneide de Vergile, traduit en vers Francoys. La complainte de Didon à Enée, prinse d'Ovide. Autres oeuvres de l'invention du translateur. Par IDBA [Joachim du Bellay angevin]* (Paris: Vincent Certenas, 1552). NP.

^{cccii} Jean-Charles Monferran notes in the Droz edition of the *Deffence* that the change in Du Bellay's stance was equally a product of his changing relationship with Thomas Sébillet. The *Deffence* had attacked several points of Sébillet's *Art Poétique françois* (1548), but the fact that Sébillet composed a liminary sonnet for Du Bellay's translation of Virgil indicates that the two poets had reached a personal and theoretical reconciliation by 1552. With his admission of change ("Je n'ay pas oublié ce qu'autrefois j'ai dict..."), Du Bellay "reconnaît implicitement le caractère circonstanciel de ses premiers propos, qui avaient comme mission première de prendre le contre-pied de ceux de Sébillet." Jean-Charles Monferran, "Préface" in Joachim Du Bellay, *La Deffence, et Illustration de la Langue françoise*, ed. Ernesta Caldarini and Jean-Charles Monferran (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2007) 23.

^{ccciii} An effect we have already seen in the specific context of language-switching with Tory (Chapter One) and Dolet (Chapter Three).

^{ccciv} Cf. Montaigne, "Du Repentir": "Il faut accomoder mon histoire à l'heure. Je pourray tantos changer, non de fortune seulement, mais aussi d'intention. C'est un contrerolle de divers et muables accidens et d'imaginations irresolues et, quand il y eschet, contraires: soit que je sois autre moy-mesme, soit que je saisisse les subjects par autres circonstances et considerations. Tant y a que je me contredits bien à l'aventure, mais la verité, comme disoit Demades, je ne la contredy point" (III, 2, 805).

^{cccv} "Descognoistre," Jean Nicot, *Thresor de la langue françoise, tant ancienne que moderne* (Paris: D. Douceur, 1606).

^{cccvii} "Je veux bien encor' donner à nostre langue quelques miens ouvraiges, qui seront (comme je pense) les derniers fruicts de nostr jardin, non du tout si savoureux, que les premiers, mais (peult estre) de meilleure garde." As Timothy Hampton notes, the image of France as a garden is an image already cliché by the mid-sixteenth century, as well as "a trope of royal propaganda, a sign of the entire operation of centralization undertaken by Francis I to form a unified France" Timothy Hampton, *Literature and Nation in the Sixteenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001) 14. See Hampton, Chapter 1, "Garden of Letters" for more on this image; see also Colette Beaune, *Naissance de la nation France* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985).

^{cccviii} *Le quatriesme livre de l'Eneide de Vergile...*

^{cccviii} "No other [...] poet [...] between Petrarch and Shakespeare, wrote as moving or as brilliantly innovative a sonnet sequence—the favorite form of the new poets—as his *Regrets*, and none at all wrote a sequence as directly concerned with the predicament of the modern poet. [...] More than any of his contemporaries, his work gives voice to the aspirations and concerns that so fatefully brought the new poetry of sixteenth-century Europe into existence, endowing the various nationsof Europe with their first distinctly modern, vernacular literatures." Richard Helgerson, "Introduction" in Joachim Du Bellay, *The Regrets: with, The Antiquities of Rome, Three Latin Elegies, and The Defense and Enrichment of the French Language* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006) 2.

^{cccxix} I am extremely indebted to several articles by Marc Bizer for pointing out just how important the depoeticization of the verses is here, and especially the mention of the "papiers journaux" and "commentaires." "To a considerable extent, by insisting that these sonnets are nothing more than 'papiers journaux, ou bien de commentaires,' by adopting the genre of the letter, and finally by composing a poem so heavily grounded in his own autobiography (unlike Ronsard's), Du Bellay intentionally practices a type of poetry whose own poetic nature is constantly being called into question." Marc Bizer, "What's in a Name" in *EMF* 9, "The New Biographical Criticism," Eds. Anne Birberick, Russell Ganim, and George Hoffmann (2004): 99-109.

^{cccix} Sonnet 1. Joachim Du Bellay, *Les Regrets de Joachim du Bellay, Angevin. Collationné sur la première édition (Paris 1558)* (Paris: I. Liseux, 1876) 1.

^{cccxi} Du Bellay 5.

^{cccxi} Ibid.

^{cccxi} Cf. Bizer's reading of this line in the context of its address to Paschal in *Les Lettres romaines de Du Bellay*. *Les Regrets et la tradition épistolaire* (Montreal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2001), part III.

^{ccciv} Du Bellay makes several references to this work; in Sonnets 19 and 22 he contrasts Ronsard's current occupation to his own; in Sonnet 23 he famously expresses his doubts as to whether or not the *Franciade* will ever be finished (it was not).

^{ccciv} For example, Sonnet 20: "Courage, donc Ronsard, la victoire est à toi,/ Puisque de ton côté est la faveur du roi/ J'à du laurier vainquer tes tempes se couronnent" (XX, 9-11). In *La Poétique de Du Bellay*, Floyd Gray observes that this is a function of many of Du Bellay's addressees: "S'il relève leur bonheur, c'est qu'il ne l'éprouve pas en lui-même; ces noms sont alors des métaphores renversées, des signes contraires de lui-même." See Floyd Gray, *La Poétique de Du Bellay* (Paris: Nizet, 1978) 113.

^{cccvi} Du Bellay 15.

^{cccvi} Bizer argues that these stylistic choices contribute to the epistolary characteristic of the sonnets.

^{cccvi} Du Bellay 14.

^{cccix} Cf. Montaigne, "Le parler que j'ayme, c'est un parler simple et naïf, tel sur le papier qu'à la bouche" (I, 26, 171). The fact that Montaigne mentions Du Bellay by name only several sentences before this famous line ("Depuis que Ronsard et du Bellay ont donné credit à nostre poésie Française...") would seem to point to a much richer intertextual relationship between the two than has, to my knowledge, yet been explored. (While such a relationship is not the focus of my chapter on Montaigne, I do locate a certain kinship in the two writers' relationship to 'the French language,' as addressed in the Introduction to the dissertation.) Other references to Du Bellay in the *Essais* include the essay "Du pédantisme," which begins by quoting the *Regrets*—one of the rare vernacular citations in the *Essais* ("Mais en cecy perdois je mon latin, que les plus galans hommes c'estoient ceux qui les avoyent le plus à mespris, tesmoing nostre bon du Bellay: Mais je hay sur tout un sçavoir pedantesque" (I, 25, 133). The essay "De la praesomption" expresses Montaigne's admiration for the poet: "Il me semble aussi de la Poesie qu'elle a eu sa vogue en nostre siecle. Nous avons foinson de bons artisans de ce mestier-là [...]. Quant aux François, je pense qu'ils l'ont montée au plus haut degré où elle sera jamais; et, aux parties en quoy Ronsart et du Bellay excellent, je ne les treuve guieres esloignez de la perfection ancienne" (II, 17, 661). The essayist's personal copy of the *Regrets* is held in the collection of the Cambridge University Library. However, according to the University, the authenticity of the signature of this work has been the subject of some debate. See www.lib.cam.ac.uk/deptserv/rarebooks/montaigne.html].

^{cccix} See especially *Deffence* I, 7 ("Comment les Romains ont enrichi leur langue") and I, 8 ("D'amplifier la langue française par l'imitation des anciens auteurs grecs et romains").

^{cccxi} Du Bellay 3.

^{cccxi} Ibid.

^{cccxi} Ovid: "Parve—nec invideo—sine me, liber, ibis in urbem./ ei mihi, quod domino non licet ire tuo!" (I.I:1-2). Du Bellay: "Mon livre (et je ne suis sur ton aise envieux),/ Tu t'en iras sans moi voir la Cour de mon Prince./ Hé, chétif que je suis, combien en gré je prinsse/ Qu'un heur pareil au tien fût permis à mes yeux!" ("À son livre," 1-4).

^{cccxiv} "Et quoi, Ronsard, eh quoi, si au bord étranger/ Ovide osa sa langue en barbare changer/ Afin d'être entendu, qui me pourra reprendre/ D'un change plus heureux?" (X, 9-12).

^{ccciv} Sonnets X, XXVII, XXXVII, XXCIIV.

^{cccxxvi} Sonnet XVI (11).

^{cccxxvii} Du Bellay 2.

^{cccxxviii} Horace, *Ars Poetica* ll. 240-243.

^{cccxxix} Leon Golden's translation in O.B. Hardison and Leon Golden, *Horace for Students of Literature* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995) 14.

^{cccxxx} Du Bellay 99.

^{cccxxxi} Timothy Hampton notes in the section of *Literature and Nation* on the "economics" of Du Bellay's poetry that "whereas the *Deffence* speaks confidently of cultural plunder, the *Regrets* speak only of loss and bad business" (158).

^{cccxxxii} "C'est en effet la Défense et Illustration de notre langue française, à l'entreprise de laquelle rien ne m'a induit, que l'affection naturelle envers ma patrie [...]" (219-220).

^{cccxxxiii} "The word [voice], once sent off, does not know how to [is unwilling to] return." Horace, *Ars Poetica* l. 390.

^{cccxxxiv} "De regret de celles qui estoient demeurées derriere, *Ad desyderium relictarum*"; "Estre esmeu du regret d'aucun, *Desyderio alicuius moueri*"; "Je ne pourroy nullement endurer, ou porter le regret que j'ay de, etc. *Desyderium coniunctissimi viri atque amantissimi ferre nullo modo possem*."

^{cccxxxv} "Avoir regret d'avoir fait quelque chose, *Poenitentiam agere, Pigere*"

^{cccxxxvi} "A regret, *Inuite, agere, Caperata fronte, Ingratis, Grauate*;" "Servir franchement et non point à regret, *Liberaliter seruire*;" "Aider à regret, *Operam grauari*;" "Il l'invite contre son vouloir et à regret, *Inuitat tristis*;" "Qui fait quelque chose à regret, *Inuitus, Nolens*;" "Mes oreilles oyent cecy à regret. *Istud respuunt aures*;" "Qui vont à regret, *Cunctabundi et resistente*;" "On le faisoit à regret, *Id grauate concedebatur*."

^{cccxxxvii} The sequence of 191 sonnets were originally published under the title *Les Regrets et Autres Oeuvres Poétiques*. M.A. Screech proposes in his edition that the "Autres Oeuvres" in question begin with the poet's return to France (Sonnet 130, "Et je pensais aussi ce que pensait Ulysse..."); this opinion, as Helgerson points out, informed the English-language translations of Sisson and David Slavitt, who did not include the final 61 sonnets. See Helgerson's introduction to his own 2006 translation (of all 191 sonnets).

^{cccxxxviii} Du Bellay 7.

^{cccxxxix} For detailed biographical accounts of this period, see G. Dickinson, *Du Bellay in Rome* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 1960) and Henri Chamard, *Joachim Du Bellay* (Paris: Au Siège de l'Université, 1900).

^{cccxl} "L'honneste servitude, où mon devoir me lie/ M'a fait passer les monts de France en Italie/ Et demeurer trois ans sur ce bord étranger" (XVII, 9-11); "Qui me présente un compte, une lettre, un mémoire,/ Qui me dit que demain est jour de consistoire [...]/ Avecques tout celas, dis, Panjas, je te prie,/ Ne t'ébahis-tu point comment je fais des vers?" (XV, 9-14); "J'aime la liberté, et languis en service" (XXXIX, 1). I will explore further below how this servitude informs a particular affect of writing

^{cccxli} Du Bellay 10.

^{cccxlii} Bizer suggests that the secretary-poet opposition forms one of the major leitmotifs of the *Regrets*. See his article "Letters from Home: The Epistolary Aspects of Joachim Du Bellay's *Les Regrets*," *Renaissance Quarterly* 52 (1999): 140-79, for a thorough background on the role of the Renaissance *secrétaire*, as well as a keen literary analysis of Du Bellay's integration of elements of secretarial writing. "Despite the fact that Du Bellay opposes secretaries and poets, he is a poet-secretary to his friends; his secretarial activities may appear to compromise his poetic production, yet the allusiveness and obscurity associated with these responsibilities [...] carry over into his verse" (174).

^{cccxlili} We may recall that this, too, was a chief characteristic of vernacular advocacy: French writing as throwing off the shackles of the past/father/other.

^{cccxliv} Du Bellay 11.

^{cccxlv} See Peter Partner, *Renaissance Rome 1500-1559* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) 201-203; Leonard Barkan, *Unearthing the Past: Archaeology and Aesthetics in the Making of Renaissance Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press 2001), 210-231. Stendhal comments on the *Pasquino* and *Marforio*—which were still in use through the nineteenth century—that “Le peuple romain est peut-être celui de toute l’Europe qui aime la satire fine et mordante. Son esprit extrêmement fin saisit avec avidité et bonheur les allusions les plus éloignées. [...] Accoutumé depuis trois siècles à regarder ses maux comme inévitables et éternels, le bourgeois de Rome ne se met point en colère contre le ministre, et ne désire point sa mort [...]. Ce que le peuple veut avant tout, c’est se moquer des puissans et rire à leur dépens: de là les dialogues enre *Pasquin* et *Marforio*.” Stendhal, *Rome, Naples et Florence* (Paris: Delaunay, 1826) 321-22..

^{cccxlvi} Du Bellay 28-29.

^{cccxlvii} Du Bellay 29.

^{cccxlviii} See Louis de Mas-Latrie, “De la formule ‘Car tel est notre plaisir’ dans la chancellerie française,” *Bibliothèque de l’Ecole des Chartes* 42: 560-564.

^{cccxlxi} As Marc Bizer observes, “the uniqueness of the *Regrets* lies in its experimentation with language precisely in the space where poetics, politics, and (auto) biography meet.” Bizer, “What’s in a Name?” 105. Warren Boucher similarly argues that Du Bellay’s sonnets constitute “a new private space of ‘affective’ communication [...] which is folded within public space.”

^{cccl} Derrida: “Puis, toute écriture est triomphante. L’écriture est triomphe [...], assurance maniaque de sur-vie. C’est ce qui la rend insupportable. Essentiellement indiscreète et exhibitionniste. [...] Et la surenchère de discretion n’est que plus-value du triomphe, supplément de triomphe – à vomir. Voilà ce que je dis. Je dis cela contre Nietzsche, peut-être : le triomphe sur soi recherche aussi le pouvoir” (*Parages* 168-169).

^{cccli} Du Bellay 33.

^{ccclii} See Bizer, “‘Qui a païs...’.”

^{cccliii} Jonathan Flatley argues that affective mapping is created in aesthetic practice “not primarily through a realist representation of a social space in the world, but through a representation of the affective life” (80).

^{cccliv} Du Bellay 13.

^{ccclv} In an article published in 2000, Marc Bizer offers an important counter-reading to this tradition with his analysis of the tension between national and provincial identities in both the *Deffence* and the *Regrets*. Arguing that the latter is ultimately more prominent, especially in the *Regrets*, Bizer observes that Du Bellay “appears far more inclined to identify with his place of birth rather than with the imagined ‘France’ whose figurehead was King Henry II.” For Bizer, this tension indicates a “crisis” of transitional aristocratic identity, “caught between nostalgia for an independence lost, and a present where aristocrats increasingly saw their existence as being justified in terms of service to the king” (reminiscent of the Greek nostalgia expressed by Ronsard in his *Abrégé*). See Marc Bizer, “‘Qui a païs n’a que faire de patrie’: Joachim Du Bellay’s resistance to a French identity,” *Romanic Review* 91 (4): 375-395.

^{ccclvi} Sidney Lee: “Du Bellay’s *Les Regrets* form an intimate poetic journal of that homesickness which patriotism fosters in the heart of a sensitive exile.” Sidney Lee, *The French Renaissance in England* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1910) 200.

^{ccclvii} Charles Lenient, *La poésie patriotique en France dans les temps modernes* (Paris: Hachette, 1894) 122

^{ccclviii} See David Hartley, *Patriotism in the Work of Joachim Du Bellay*, (Lewiston: E. Mellen Press, 1993).

^{ccclix} Hampton 153.

^{ccclx} See Bizer, “‘Qui a païs...’.”

^{ccclxi} Du Bellay 6-7.

^{ccclxii} “Nouveau venu, qui cherches Rome en Rome/ Et rien de Rome en Rome n’aperçois,/ Ces vieux palais, ces vieux arcs que tu vois,/ Et ces vieux murs, c’est ce que Rome on nomme” (*Antiquités* III, 1-4).

^{ccclxiii} Mary Lewis Shaw, *The Cambridge Introduction to French Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 109.

^{ccclxiv} See Bizer, *Lettres romaines*.

^{ccclxv} Du Bellay’s use of these names and their poetic status (biographical reference? sonorous poetic material? Etc.) has been the topic of studies by Floyd Gray, Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani, and others. Marc Bizer offers a useful overview of these interpretations in his article “What’s in a name?” (op cit.). Here, I have largely adopted Bizer’s conclusion that “the most fruitful approach to understanding the importance of proper names in the *Regrets* lies in combining an awareness of the historicity of the addressees with an analysis of their ability to participate in pure wordplay.” Indeed, the premise of the present project is that the kind of “wordplay” commonly associated with poetic language cannot be dissociated from “history,” but indeed both shapes and reflects historical processes—thus the necessity of undertaking a “textual history.”

^{ccclxvi} Thomas Docherty comments on this resonance that “even at the level of words which may seem to have no real status as proper names, the poet works to ‘make a name for himself’ in a fantasization of a scene of his own recognition.” Thomas Docherty, *John Donne, Undone* (London: Routledge, 1986) 161.

^{ccclxvii} Quoted in Chamard 257.

^{ccclxviii} Clément Marot, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 1, ed. Pierre Jannet (Paris: A. Lemerr, 1873) 41.

^{ccclxix} “[...] donnons et octroyons, ceddon, quictons et transportons pour luy, ses hoirs, successeurs et ayans cause, à tousjours, une maison, grange et jardin, le tout enclos de murailles et scitué et assis ès fauxbourg Saint-Germain des Prez de Paris, en la rue du Cloz-Bruneau.” Quoted in Florian Presig, *Clément Marot et les Métamorphoses de l’Auteur à l’Aube de la Renaissance* (Geneva: Droz, 2004) 134.

^{ccclxx} This elegaic alliance may appear surprising given that Du Bellay never professed any great literary *amitié* for Marot. Indeed, the *Deffence* brazenly voices its dismissal of the older poet’s work as irrelevant and unworthy of imitation, like other of “nos pères françoys,” for the Pléiade’s new poetry and improved “style”: “Je sais que beaucoup me reprendront, qui ai osé le premier des Français introduire quasi comme une nouvelle poésie [...]. Marot me plaît (dit quelqu’un) pource qu’il est facile, et ne s’éloigne point de la commune manière de parler [...]. Quant à moi, telle superstition ne m’a point retiré de mon entreprise, pource que j’ai toujours estimé notre poésie française capalbe de quelque plus haut et meilleur style que celui dont nous sommes si longuement contentés [...]” (256). We might here, too, invoke Du Bellay’s palinode from the preface to his translation of Virgil: “je ne suis si jalouze de mes premières apprehensions, que j’aye honte de les changer quelquefois [...]” Indeed, beyond Sonnet 9 Marot’s influence on the *Regrets* is pervasive: Marot himself first introduced the Petrarchan sonnet in France; Marot’s *Epistres* written during his exile in Ferrara were—like the *Regrets*—reworkings of Ovid’s *Tristia* and *Ex Ponto*; Marot’s characteristic “simple,” oral style (alluded to by Du Bellay above) is very much adopted aesthetically by the *Regrets* as their own. What’s more, already in works published contemporaneously with the *Deffense* (*L’Olive* and the *Vers lyriques*), Du Bellay was already imitating the poet repudiated by his manifesto, turning ‘back’ to Marot as he would turn ‘back’ to translation.

^{ccclxxi} See note *viii*, above.

^{ccclxxii} On a biographical note, Du Bellay was indeed an orphan.

^{ccclxxiii} “Adtendite a falsis prophetis qui veniunt ad vos in vestimentis ovium, intrinsecus autem sunt lupi rapaces,” *Matthew* 7:15.

^{ccclxxiv} Gray 111.

^{ccclxxv} S. Ullmann: “La fonction d’un nom propre est l’identification pure: distinguer et individualiser une personne ou une chose à l’aide d’une étiquette spéciale.” Quoted in François Rigolot, *Poétique et Onomastique: L’exemple de la Renaissance* (Geneva: Droz, 1982) 12.

^{ccclxxvi} From the essay “De la gloire”: “Nous nous soignons plus qu’on parle de nous, que comment on en parle; et nous est assez que nostre nom coure parla bouche des hommes, en quelque condition qu’il y coure. Il semble que l’estre conneu, ce soit aucunement avoir sa vie et sa durée en la garde d’autrui. Moy, je tiens que je ne suis que chez moy; et, de cette autre mienne vie qui loge en la connoissance de mes amis, à la considerer nue et simplement en soy, je sçaybien que je n’en sens fruit ny jouissance que par la vanité d’une opinion fantastique. Et, quand je seray mort, je m’en sentiray encores beaucoup moins [...]; je n’auray plus de prise par où saisir la reputation, ny par où elle puisse me toucher ny arriver à moy.” II, 16, 626.

^{ccclxxvii} Du Bellay 14.

^{ccclxxviii} Du Bellay 12.

^{ccclxxix} Du Bellay 6.

^{ccclxxx} “[L]e nom propre garde une destinée singulière puisqu’il n’est pas traduit [...]. [O]n peut considérer qu’il n’appartient pas rigoureusement, au même titre que les autres mots, à la langue, au système de la langue. [...U]n nom propre, au sens propre, n’appartient pas proprement à la langue; il n’y appartient pas, *bien que et parce que* son appel la rend(e) possible (que serait unelangue sans possibilité d’appeler d’un nom propre?); par conséquent il ne peut s’inscrire proprement dans une langue qu’en s’y laissant traduire, autrement di *interpréter* dans son équivalent sémantique: dès ce moment, il ne peut plus être reçu comme nom propre,” Jacques Derrida, “Des Tours de Babel.”

^{ccclxxxi} Rigolot 12.

^{ccclxxxii} “Phoeubs quoque forsitan ipse/ vel non cognoscet vel dilexisse negabit.”

^{ccclxxxiii} “Usque adeo mutata ferar, nullique videnda.”

^{ccclxxxiv} Du Bellay 7.

Notes to Chapter Five

^{ccclxxxv} Montaigne 804.

^{ccclxxxvi} I, 8, 33. “Mais je trouve, *variam semper dant otia mentem*, que au rebours, faisant le cheval eschappé, il se donne cent fois plus d'affaire à soy mesmes, qu'il n'en prenoit pour autrui; et m'enfante tant de chimeres et monstres fantasques les uns sur les autres, sans ordre, et sans propos, que pour en contempler à mon aise l'ineptie et l'estrangeté, j'ay commancé de les mettre en rolle, esperant avec le temps luy en faire honte à luy mesmes.”

^{ccclxxxvii} “Qui ne voit que j'ay pris une route par laquelle, sans cesse et sans travail, j'iray autant qu'il y aura d'ancre et de papier au monde?” (III, 9, 945).

^{ccclxxxviii} Jean Starobinski, *Montaigne en mouvement* (Paris: Gallimard, 1993) 28. For an interrogation of the “absolute” nature of Montaigne’s retreat and the conditions at the chateau that might have constituted the “actual” scene of writing, cf. George Hoffmann, *Montaigne’s Career*, esp. Chapter 1, “Working at Home,” 8-38. From a biographical standpoint, it is worth noting that multiple phases of reengagement in the “affaires” of public life (including the mayorship of Bordeaux, twice over), as well as the extended period of travel mark the period between the initial “retrait” of 1571 and Montaigne’s death in 1592. Starobinski, for his part, emphasizes the significance of this scene as *potential*: “On sait que Montaigne n’en fera nullement sa résidence continue. [...] Mais l’important [...] est d’avoir donné à la distance réflexive sa localisation [...], de lui avoir réservé un site toujours accueillant, sans s’obliger à l’habiter constamment” (*ibid*). Cf. also Virginia Krause, *Idle Pursuits* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003) 161-169.

^{cccxxxix} “Il se faut reserver une arriereboutique toute nostre, toute franche, en laquelle nous établissons nostre vraye liberté et principale retraicte et solitude. En cette-cy faut-il prendre nostre ordinarie entretien de nous à nous mesmes, et si privé que nulle acointance ou communication estrangiere y trouve place [...]. Nous avons une ame contournable en soy mesme; elle se peut faire compagnie; elle a dequoy assaillir et dequoy defendre, dequoy recevoir et dequoy donner [...]” (I, 39, 241).

^{cccxc} The meaning of this expression is, presumably, that while Latin is used formulaically for religious purposes, Latin understanding of the kind promoted in a humanist education was not prevalent. For more on Montaigne and *patenostre*, see “Des Prières” (I, 56) (“C’est l’unique priere de quoy je me sers par tout, et la repete au lieu d’en changer. D’où il advient que n’en ay aussi bien en memoire que celle là,” 318.) This statement does contradict, in a curious way, the story of the veritable Latin invasion at Montaigne offered in I, 26: “Mon pere et ma mere y apprirent assez de Latin pour l’entendre, et en acquirent à suffisance pour s’en servir à la nécessité, comme firent aussi les autres domestiques qui estoient plus attachez à mon service. Somme, nous nous Latinizames tant qu’il en regorgea jusques à nos villages tout autour, où il y a encores, et ont pris pied par l’usage plusieurs appellations Latines d’artisans et d’utiles” (173).

^{cccxc} Title page, verso. See paratextual page images from the *Essais*, The Montaigne Project, University of Chicago [<http://artfl.uchicago.edu/images/montaigne/0000av.jpg>].

^{cccxcii} Floyd Gray *Montaigne bilingue: le latin des Essais* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1991) 1.

^{cccxciii} III, 9, 982.

^{cccxciv} III, 5, 873.

^{cccxcv} Désiré Nisard, *Histoire de la littérature française*, vol. 1 (Paris: Firmin Didot frères, 1844) 457.

^{cccxcvi} See Chapter Three.

^{cccxcvii} Selon variation continuelle qui a suivy le nostre [langage] jusques à cette heure, qui peut esperer que sa forme presente soit en usage, d’icy à cinquante ans? Il escoule tous les jours de nos mains et depuis que je vis s’est alteré de moitié. Nous disons qu’il est à cette heure parfait. Autant en dict du sien chaque siecle. Je n’ay garde de l’en tenir là tant qu’il fuira et se difformera comme il faict. C’est aux bons et utiles escrits de le clouer à eux, et ira son credit selon la fortune de nostre estat” (III, 9, 982).

^{cccxcviii} Richard Regosin, *The Matter of My Book: Montaigne’s Essais as the Book of the Self* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977) 214.

^{cccxcix} “Un je d’écriture: j’écris je, donc je suis.” Roland Barthes, *La préparation du Roman I et II* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2003) 108.

^{cd} Even if I only look in order to feel ashamed of what I see: “[...] pour en contempler à mon aise l’ineptie et l’estrangeté, j’ay commancé de les mettre en rolle, esperant avec le temps luy en faire honte à luy mesmes.” For an elucidating elaboration of the relationships between the desires for self-exposure and possession, shame and the limits of (self-)knowledge as a discourse, see Paul de Man’s essay on Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “Excuses (*Confessions*) in *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust* (New Haven: Yale University Press) 278-301.

^{cdi} Even if it is already destined to be replaced by another apparatus in order for the book to come into being, as we are told in “Du démentir”: “Tout le commerce que j’ay en cecy avec le publiq, c’est que j’emprunte les utils de son escripture, plus soudaine et plus aisée” (II, 18, 664).

^{cdii} Hugo Friedrich, *Montaigne*, Trans. Dawn Eng, University of California Press (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991) 363.

^{cdiii} “La langue n’appartient pas” in *Paul Celan, Europe* 861-862, 83, emphasis added.

^{cdiv} I will explore this expression, and the relationship between *Paris* and *Montaigne* further below.

^{cdv} Krause 163.

^{cdvi} “Feu mon pere, ayant fait toutes les recherches qu'homme peut faire, parmy les gens sçavans et d'entendement, d'une forme d'institution exquise, fut advisé de cet inconvenient qui estoit en usage; et luy disoit-on que cette longueur que nous mettions à apprendre les langues, qui ne leur coustoient rien, est la seule cause pourquoy nous ne pouvions arriver à la grandeur d'ame et de cognoissance des anciens Grecs et Romains. Je ne croy pas que ce en soit la seule cause. Tant y a que l'expedient que mon pere y trouva, ce fut que, en nourrice et avant le premier desnouement de ma langue, il me donna en charge à un Alleman, qui depuis est mort fameux medecin en France, du tout ignorant de nostre langue, et tres-bien versé en la Latine. Cettuy-cy, qu'il avoit faict venir expres, et qui estoit bien cherement gagé, m'avoit continuellement entre les bras. Il en eust aussi avec luy deux autres moindres en sçavoir pour me suivre, et soulager le premier. Ceux-cy ne m'entretenoient d'autre langue que Latine. Quant au reste de sa maison, c'estoit une reigle inviolable que ny luy mesme, ny ma mere, ny valet, ny chambriere, ne parloyent en ma compagnie qu'autant de mots de Latin que chacun avoit appris pour jargonner avec moy. C'est merveille du fruict que chacun y fit. Mon pere et ma mere y apprirent assez de Latin pour l'entendre, et en acquirent à suffisance pour s'en servir à la necessité, comme firent aussi les autres domestiques qui estoient plus attachez à mon service. Somme, nous nous Latinizames tant qu'il en regorgea jusques à nos villages tout autour, où il y a encores, et ont pris pied par l'usage plusieurs appellations Latines d'artisans et d'utilis. Quant à moy, j'avois plus de six ans avant que j'entendisse non plus de François ou de Perigordin que d'Arabesque. Et, sans art, sans livre, sans grammaire ou precepte, sans fouet et sans larmes, j'avois appris du latin, tout aussi pur que mon maistre d'eschole le sçavoit: car je ne le pouvois avoir meslé ny alteré” (I, 26, 173-174).

^{cdvii} “Secondement, comme ceux que presse un furieux desir de guerison se laissent aller à toute sorte de conseil, le bon homme, ayant extreme peur de faillir en chose qu'il avoit tant à coeur, se laissa en fin emporter à l'opinion commune, qui suit tousjours ceux qui vont devant, comme les grues, et se rengea à la coustume, n'ayant plus autour de luy ceux qui luy avoient donné ces premieres institutions, qu'il avoit aportées d'Italie; et m'envoya, environ mes six ans, au college de Guienne, tres-florissant pour lors, et le meilleur de France” (175).

^{cdviii} See Chapter Three, “From *lingua materna* to “langage maternel.”

^{cdix} Jacques Derrida, “La langue n'appartient pas” in *Paul Celan, Europe* 861-862. Quote p. 85.

^{cdx} Ferdinand Brunot, *L'Histoire de la langue française des origines à 1900*, Tome II, Le Seizième Siècle (Paris : Librairie Armand Colin, 1906), 8.

^{cdxi} See Jacques Feytaud, “Un mouton de Panurge,” *Bulletin de la Société des Amis de Montaigne* 4(20): 21-38.

^{cdxii} Eugène Voizard, *Étude sur la langue de Montaigne (Paris, 1885)* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1969) 4.

^{cdxiii} A. Nicolaï, *Montaigne Intime*: “Sortons donc de l'exagération. Michel n'avait certainement pas rallié le manoir paternel avant sa quatrième année, le temps d'être devenu un garçonnet bien aguerri. Mais alors, admettra-t-on facilement qu'il na'avait encore balbutié dans aucune langue ? Je lui passe volontiers ‘le barbaresque’, voire même ‘le françois’, mais on ne me sortira pas de l'idée que Michel aurait for bien pu donner des leçons du patois périgourdin de sa nourrice de Papessus à son précepteur allemand! [...] Que si l'on prend toutes ces histoires pour argent comptant, barbarismes et solecismes devaient crouler en avalanches à Montaigne; à quel martyre ne fut pas mise la langue de Cicéron?” A. Nicolaï, *Montaigne Intime* (Paris : 1941) 18-19.

Pierre Barrière: “M. nous a raconté avec complaisance comment il apprit le latin par l'usage quotidien [...]. Sans doute a-t-il beaucoup romancé cette histoire [...]” *Montaigne, gentilhomme français*, 1948, p. 25. The idea that Montaigne would have spoken only Latin upon leaving the house at the age of six, Barrière's dismissal is unambiguous: “cela paraît pure galéjade! Passe pour le français, l'ignorance en est fort vraisemblable, mais non pour le patois. De même lorsqu'il dira qu'en arrivant au Collège les maîtres craignaient de l'aborder!” (27).

^{cdxiv} Mary B. McKinley, *Words in a Corner: Studies in Montaigne's Latin Quotations* (Lexington: French Form Publishers, 1981) 13.

^{cdxv} Friedrich 23. For Friedrich, the *Essais* indeed “represent an event in the history of language. [...] Among the Romanic peoples within the category of philosophical writings in the narrower sense—and despite the difficulties of specifying their exact place, the *Essais* belong here—Montaigne is the first to express a significant and original body of thought *exclusively* in the language spoken by ordinary people” (23).

^{cdxvi} Regosin 213.

^{cdxvii} Françoise Charpentier, “Un langage moins ferme,” *Montaigne Studies* 2(1): 48-59.

^{cdxviii} Cf. “De la praesomption”: “Je suis d'avis que, si ce qu'on a suffit à maintenir la condition en laquelle on est nay et dressé, c'est folie d'en lacher la prise sur l'incertitude de l'augmenter. Celuy à qui la fortune refuse dequoy planter son pied et establir un estre tranquille et reposé, il est pardonnable s'il jette au hazard ce qu'il a, puis qu'ainsi comme ainsi la nécessité l'envoye à la queste” (II, 17, 645).

^{cdxix} Similar conceptions of writing in French are advanced by Antione Compagnon (“De la traduction des autres à la traduction de soi”) and, to an even greater extent, by Gray: “Au fur et à mesure de l'écriture des *Essais*, Montaigne a dû se rendre compte de ses propres qualités. Sa prose s'enrichissait de plus en plus, acquérait abondance et substance [...]. Mais, pour y arriver, il a dû passer par d'innombrables références aux Anciens, auxquels son propre langage pouvait s'essayer. Les essais ‘pueront’ de moins en moins ‘à l'étranger’ [...]; son œuvre lui apprendra à se découvrir et à trouver pour elle une forme adéquate” (2).

^{cdxx} “I call ‘obsession with the referent’ this preoccupation—if not exclusive, at least dangerously dominant—that Montaignian criticism, from its very beginnings, has exhibited in general, not for the text of the *Essais* as such, but for the author, the flesh and blood person who expresses himself in the text and who declares that he is portrayed there. Yet this is an author whose only reality today is quite obviously that which the text gives him, a reality which could not exist except in and through the text and which, however—with infinite patience, ingenuity, and talent—one stubbornly wishes to reconstruct as an independent entity existing not only *outside* the text but also, and in the most unexpected way, sometimes *against* it. One wishes to do this, forgetful of the obvious, given the facts that the text itself provides. It is true that nearly all our ‘classics,’ from Villon to Proust, have suffered and still suffer from this so-called reconstruction. But no one, I feel, with the exception, perhaps of J. J. Rousseau, has been more subjected to this approach than Montaigne, whose text, ‘consubstantial with its author, perpetually invites the reader to extrapolate in this direction. Indeed, seldom has a text authorized to such a degree a displacement—natural, as it were—toward its author, or so clearly stated its mimetic vocation, its referential and descriptive aims.” (“Reading Montaigne,” *Yale French Studies*, No. 64, Montaigne: Essays in Reading. (1983), pp. 74-75). Defaux further accuses Montaigne scholars of a “deafness” to the text, manifest as a generalized “unwillingness” to approach its signifier.

Several notable exceptions to this type of reading include work by Lawrence Kritzman (*The Rhetoric of Sexuality & the Literature of the French Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1991); *Destruction-Découverte*), Richard Regosin (*The Matter of My Book, Montaigne's Unruly Brood*), Mary McKinley (*Words in a Corner, Les Terrains Vagues des Essais*), Terence Cave.

^{cdxxi} Cf. Montaigne, “Non seulement le vent des accidens me remue selon son inclination, mais en outre je me remue et trouble moy mesme par l'instabilité de ma posture; et qui y regarde primement, ne se trouve guere deux fois en mesme estat. Je donne à mon ame tantost un visage, tantost un autre, selon le costé où je la couche. Si je parle diversement de moy, c'est que je me regarde diversement. Toutes les contrarietez s'y trouvent selon quelque tour et en quelque façon. [...] Je n'ay rien à dire de moy, entierement, simplement, et solidement, sans confusion et sans meslange, ny en un mot. Distingo est le plus universel membre de ma Logique.” (II, 1, 333)

^{cdxxii} In a similar vein, nineteenth-century critic Désiré Nisard validates Montaigne's Latinisms by recalling that they are "maternels." For Voizard, this fact contributes to "la prédominance du génie latin sur les génie grec dans la littérature française"—a natural enough phenomenon, in his view, given that "Nous sommes les fils des Latins, et c'est là la cause principale de la préférence que nous donnerons toujours au génie latin." Nisard 430-432.

^{cdxxiii} Fumaroli 255-256.

^{cdxxiv} Quoted in Douglas Marchi, *Montaigne Among the Moderns* (New York: Berghahn Books, 1994) 24.

^{cdxxv} "À Monsieur Pelgé, Conseiller du Roi et Maître en sa chambre des Comptes à Paris," in Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Works of Michael de Montaigne*, ed. William Hazlitt (J. Templeman, 1842) *xxix*.

^{cdxxvi} Pierre Corneille, *Sertorius*, Act II, scene IV, line 5.

^{cdxxvii} Unlike in modern French, "aucunement" here has a mitigating but positive sense ("somewhat" or "quelque peu" rather than "not at all" or "nullement").

^{cdxxviii} Barthes: "L'écriture n'est pas la parole, et cette séparation a reçu ces dernières années une consécration théorique; mais elle n'est pas non plus l'écrit, la transcription; écrire n'est pas transcrire. Dans l'écriture, ce qui est *trop* présent dans la parole (d'une façon hystérique) et *trop* absent de la transcription (d'une façon castatrice), à savoir le corps, revient, mais selon une voie indirecte, mesurée, et pour tout dire *juste*, musicale, par la jouissance, et non par l'imaginaire (l'image)." Roland Barthes, *Le grain de la voix. Entretiens. 1962-1980* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1981), *passim*. Quoted in Dotoli 148.

^{cdxxix} For further discussion of the speech/writing distinction in Montaigne, see Michel Jeanneret, "Je parle au papier," *Europe* 729-730: 14-25; Gérard Defaux, "Parole et écriture dans les 'Essais' de Montaigne," *Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France* 110 (6): 1990: 859-882. Giovanni Dotoli, *La Voix de Montaigne: langue, corps et parole dans les Essais* (Paris: Fernand Lanore, 2007).

^{cdxxx} Jean Bodin, *Les Six Livres De La République* (Paris: Jacques du Puis, 1583; Reprint Darmstadt, Germany: Scientia Verlag Aalen, 1977) 249.

^{cdxxxi} *Monolinguisme* 121.

^{cdxxxii} See also the Introduction to this dissertation; I quote this passage there, too, in the context of the broader sixteenth-century scene and the problematic of this study.

^{cdxxxiii} Cf. I, 26: "Qui demanda jamais à son disciple ce qu'il luy semble de la Rethorique et de la Grammaire, de telle ou telle sentence de Cicéron? On nous les placque en la memoire toutes empennées, comme des oracles où les lettres et les syllabes sont de la substance de la chose" (I, 26, 152).

^{cdxxxiv} "Le premier goust que j'eus aux livres, il me vint du plaisir des fables de la Metamorphose d'Ovide. Car, environ l'aage de sept ou huict ans, je me desrobois de tout autre plaisir pour les lire: d'autant que cette langue estoit la mienne maternelle, et que c'estoit le plus aisé livre que je cogneusse, et le plus accommodé à la foiblesse de mon aage à cause de la matiere. Car des Lancelots du Lac, des Amadis, des Huons de Bordeaux, et tel fatras de livres à quoy l'enfance s'amuse, je n'en connoissois pas seulement le nom, ny ne fais encore le corps, tant exacte estoit ma discipline. [...] Là, il me vint singulierement à propos d'avoir affaire à un homme d'entendement de precepteur, qui sceut dextrement conniver à cette mienne desbauche, et autres pareilles. Car, par là, j'enfilay tout d'un train Vergile en l'Aeneide et puis Terence, et puis Plaute, et des comedies Italiennes, lurré tousjours par la douceur du subject. S'il eut esté si fol de rompre ce train, j'estime que je n'eusse raporté du college que la haine des livres, comme fait quasi toute nostre noblesse.

^{cdxxxv} *Paraphrase de M. Gilles Bourdin, procureur général en la Cour de Parlement de Paris, sur l'ordonnance de l'an mil cinq cens trente-neuf* (Paris: Jean Houzé, 1586), quoted in Boulard 95.

^{cdxxxvi} Bodin 249.

^{cdxxxvii} Quoted in Cohen 22.

^{cdxxxviii} Quoted in Cohen 43.

^{cdxxxix} See Boulard 65, note 72. Boulard points to Pierre Mesnard, *L'essor de la philosophie politique au XVI^e siècle* (Paris: Vrin, 1977) 401.

^{cdxli} *De la Servitude volontaire, ou le Contr'un, Discours d'Estienne de La Boétie* in Michel de Montaigne and Estienne de La Boétie, *Essais de Montaigne: suivis de sa correspondance, et de La servitude volontaire d'Estienne de La Boétie*, ed. Charles Louandre, vol 4 (Paris: Charpentier, 1854) 433.

^{cdxli} Boulard 66.

^{cdxlii} “Je vis en mon enfance un Gentil-homme, commandant à une grande ville, empressé à l'esmotion d'un peuple furieux” (I, 24, 130). It is generally understood that this man was Monsieur de Moneins, the king's lieutenant in Guyenne, who was killed by rioters protesting the salt tax.

^{cdxliii} Cf. La Boétie: “Disons doncques, Ainsi qu'à l'homme toutes choses luy sont naturelles, à quoy il se nourrit et accoustume; mais seulement luy est naïf, à quoy sa nature simple et non alteree l'appelle: ainsi la premiere raison de la servitude volontaire, c'est la coustume [...]” 418.

^{cdxliv} “Bien que [...] Montaigne ne citent ni François Ier ni son Ordonnance de 1539 ci-dessus, la plupart de [ses] contemporains en France auraient sans doute fait le rapprochement,” Cohen 43.

^{cdxlv} Derrida 45.

^{cdxli} “On n'extirpe pas ces qualitez originelles, on les couvre, on les cache. Le langage latin m'est comme naturel, je l'entens mieux que le François, mais il y a quarante ans que je ne m'en suis du tout poinct servy à parler, ny à escrire: si est-ce que à des extremes et soudaines emotions où je suis tombé deux ou trois fois en ma vie, et l'une, voyent mon pere tout sain se renverses sur moy, pasmé, j'ay tousjours eslané du fond des entrailles les premieres paroles Latines: nature se sourdant et s'exprimant à force, à l'encontre d'un long usage” (III, 2, 810-11).

^{cdxlvii} Translation adapted from Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Works*, trans. Donald M. Frame (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003) 746.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Texts

Aligheri, Dante. "De vulgari eloquentia." *Dante Online* <www.danteonline.it/english/opere.asp>.

Aneau, Barthélémy. *Le Quintil Horatian (1551)*. In *Traité de poétique et de rhétorique de la Renaissance*. Ed. Goyet, Francis. Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1990. 185-233.

Alciato, Andrea. *Livret des emblemes*. Paris: Chrestien Wechel, 1536.

Beaune, Jacques de. *Discours comme une langue vulgaire se peult perpetuer*. Lyon: Pierre de Tours, 1548.

Bodin, Jean. *Les Six Livres De La République*. Paris: Jacques du Puis, 1583.

Bosquet, Jean. *Elemens ou Institutions de la langue françoise (1586)*. Ed. Demaizière, Colette. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2005.

Des Autels, Guillaume. *Replique de Guillaume des Autelz aux furieuses défenses de Louis Meigret; Avec la suite du Repons de l'auteur*. Lyon: J. de Tournes et G. Gazeau, 1551.

Dolet, Étienne. *La manière de bien traduire d'une langue en autre: d'avantage de la punctuation de la langue françoise*. Lyon: Dolet, 1540.

---. *Les gestes de François de Valois, roy de France: dedans lequel oeuvre on peult confnoistre tout ce qui a esté faict par les François depuis l'an mil cinnq cents treize jusques en l'an mil cinq cents trente neuf / premièrement composé en latin par Estienne Dolet; et après par luy mesmes translaté en langue françoise*. Lyon: Dolet, 1540.

Du Bellay, Joachim. *La deffence et illustration de la langue françoise (1549)*. Genève: Slatkine, 1972.

---. *Le quatriesme livre de l'Eneide de Vergile, traduit en vers Francoys. La complainte de Didon à Enée, prinse d'Ovide. Autres oeuvres de l'invention du translateur. Par IDBA [Joachim du Bellay angevin]*. Paris: Vincent Certenas, 1552.

---. *Les Divers Jeux Rustiques, et autres oeuvres poétiques*. Paris: Frederic Morel, 1560.

---. *Les Regrets de Joachim du Bellay, Angevin. Collationné sur la première édition (1558)*. Paris: I. Liseux, 1876.

---. *Les Regrets: Précédé de Les antiquités de Rome et suivi de La défense et illustration de la langue française*. Paris: Gallimard, 2000.

Dubois, Jacques (Sylvius). *Iacobii Sylvii Ambiani in linguam Gallicam Isagoge una, cum eiusdem Grammatica Latinogallica, ex Hebraeis, Graecis et Latinis authoribus*. Paris: Robert Estienne, Paris, 1531.

Estienne, Henri. *De la precellence du langage françois*. Paris: M. Patisson, 1579.

---. *Deux dialogues du nouveau langage françois italianisé, et autrement desguizé,*

-
- principalement entre les courtisans de ce temps (1578)*. Paris: Liseux, 1883.
- . *Traicté de la Conformité du langage françois avec le grec*. Geneva: H. Estienne, 1565.
- Estienne, Robert. *Dictionarium latinogallicum*. Paris: R. Estienne, 1552.
- . *Traicté de la Grammaire Francoise (1557)*. Ed. Demaizière, Colette. Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 2003.
- Fabri, Pierre. *Le Grand et Vrai Art de Pleine Rhétorique (1521)*. Geneva: Slatkine, 1979.
- Fouquelin, Antoine. *Rhétorique française*. In Goyet 345-464.
- François I of France. *Ordonnance d'août 1539 (ou "ordonnance de Villers-Cotterêts") prise par le Roi François Ier imposant l'usage du français dans les actes officiels et de justice enregistrée au Parlement de Paris le 6 septembre 1539*. Assemblée Nationale de France. <<http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/histoire/villers-cotterets.asp>>.
- Goyet, Francis, ed. *Traité de poétique et de rhétorique de la Renaissance*. Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1990.
- La Boétie, Estienne de. *De la Servitude volontaire, ou le Contr'un, Discours d'Estienne de La Boétie*. In Montaigne, Michel de and La Boétie, Estienne de. *Essais de Montaigne: suivis de sa correspondance, et de La servitude volontaire d'Estienne de La Boétie*. Vol 4. Louandre, Charles, ed. Paris: Charpentier, 1854.
- Lemaire de Belges, Jean. *La Concorde des deux langages (1511)*. Geneva: Slatkine, 1949.
- Le Roy, Louis. *Deux Oraisons françaises de Loys Le Roy, prononcées par luy à Paris avant la lecture de Demosthene*. Paris: Frédéric Morel, 1576.
- Longeon, Claude, ed. *Premiers combats pour la langue française*. Paris: Livres de Poche, 1989.
- Marot, Clément. *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 1. Ed. Jannet, Pierre. Paris: A. Lemerr, 1873.
- Mathieu, Abel. *Devis de la langue française (1559): Suivi du Second devis et principal propos de la langue française (1560)*. Geneva: Slatkine, 1972.
- Meigret, Louis. *Traité touchant le commun usage de l'écriture française*. Paris: J. de Marnef, 1545.
- . *Tretté de la grammère françoeze (1550)*. Heilbronn: Gebr. Henninger, 1888.
- Montaigne, Michel de. *Essais*. Ed. Pierre Villey. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965.
- Nicot, Jean. *Thresor de la langue françoise, tant ancienne que moderne*. Paris: D. Douceur, 1606.
- Palsgrave, John. *L'éclaircissement de la langue française (1530). Texte anglais original avec traduction et notes de Susan Baddeley*. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2003.

Pasquier, Étienne. *Les Recherches de la France*. Paris: Pierre Menard, 1633.

Peletier du Mans, Jacques. *Art poétique (1555)*. In Goyet 235-344.

---. *Art Poétique d'Horace, traduit en Vers Francois par Jacques Peletier du Mans*. Paris: Michel de Vascosan, 1541.

---. *Dialogue de l'ortographe e prononciacion françoese, departi an deus livres*. Lyon: Jan de Tournes, 1555.

---. *Les oeuvres poétiques de Jacques Peletier du Mans*. Paris: Michel de Vascosan, 1547.

François Rabelais, *Pantagruel*. Paris: Gallimard, 1964.

Ramus (Pierre de la Ramée). *Grammaire*. Ed. Demaizière, Colette. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2001.

Ronsard, Pierre de. *Abrégé de l'art poétique françois (1565)*. In Goyet 465-493.

Sainte-Marthe, Charles de. *La poésie françoise de Charles de Sainte-Marthe, divisée en trois livres, Plus un livre de ses amys*. Lyon: Le Prince, 1540.

Speroni, Sperone. *Dialogo delle lingue (1542)*. Ed. Antonio Sorella. Pescara, Italy: Libreria Dell'Università, 1999.

Thicket, Dorothy, ed. *Etienne Pasquier: Choix de lettres sur la littérature, la langue et la traduction*. Geneva: Droz, 1956.

Tory, Geoffroy. *Champ Fleury au quel est contenu lart & science de la deue & vraye proporttio des lettres attiques, quon dit autrement lettres antiques, & vulgairement lettres romaines proportionnées selon le corps & visage humain*. Paris: Tory, 1529.

Various. *Les disciples et amys de Marot contre Sagon, La Hueterie et leurs adherentz*. Paris: Jehan Morin, 1537.

Secondary, Theoretical, and Historical Texts (Renaissance)

Balibar, Renée. *L'instituion du français: essai sur le colinguisme des Carolingiens à la République*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1985.

Batany, Jean. "L'amère maternité du français médiévale." *Langue française* 54 (1982): 29-39.

Beaune, Colette. *Naissance de la nation France*. Paris: Gallimard, 1985.

Bell, David. *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680-1800*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Berman, Antoine. "De la translation à la traduction." *TTR: Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction* 1(1), 1988: 23-40.

-
- Bizer, Marc. "Letters from Home: The Epistolary Aspects of Joachim Du Bellay's *Les Regrets*," *Renaissance Quarterly* 52 (1999): 140-79
- . *Les Lettres romaines de Du Bellay. Les Regrets et la tradition épistolaire*. Montreal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2001.
- . "'Qui a *païs* n'a que faire de *patrie*': Joachim Du Bellay's Resistance to a French Identity." *The Romanic Review* 91.4: 375-395.
- . "What's in a Name." *EMF* 9, "The New Biographical Criticism." Birberick, Anne, Ganim, Russell, and Hoffmann, George, eds. (2004): 99-109.
- Boulard, Gilles. "L'ordonnance de Villers-Cotterêts: le temps de la clarté et la stratégie du temps." *Revue Historique* 609: 45-100.
- Brun, Auguste. "En langage maternel françois." *Le français moderne* 9.2 (1951): 81-87.
- Brunot, Ferdinand. *Histoire de la langue française des origines à 1900*, vol. 2. Paris: Colin, 1907.
- Catach, Nina. *L'orthographe française à l'époque de la Renaissance* (Geneva: Droz, 1968).
- . "Orthographe et conception de la langue en 1550." *Histoire Épistémologie Langage* 4.2 (1982): 79-91.
- Cave, Terence. *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984.
- Cerquiglini, Bernard. *Une langue orpheline*. Paris: Editions de Minuit, 2007.
- Chamard, Henri. *Joachim Du Bellay*. Paris: Au Siège de l'Université, 1900.
- Charpentier, Françoise. "Un langage moins ferme." *Montaigne Studies* 2 (1990): 48-59.
- Chevalier, Jean-Claude. *Histoire de la syntaxe, naissance de la notion de complément dans la grammaire française*. Geneva: Droz, 1968.
- Chin, Catherine. *Grammar and Christianity in the Late Roman World*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007.
- Cohen, Paul. "Illustration du français et persistance des langues régionales: La Pluralité linguistique dans la constitution des idéologies sociales en France à l'époque moderne." In Defaux, Gérard and Colombat, Bernard eds. *Lyon et l'illustration de la langue française à la Renaissance*. Lyon: ENS Editions, 2003.
- . "L'imaginaire d'une langue nationale: L'État, les langues et l'invention du mythe de l'ordonnance de Villers-Cotterêts à l'époque moderne en France." *Histoire, épistémologie, langage* 25 (2003): 19-69.
- Conley, Tom. "Montaigne's Gascoingne: Textual Regionalism in 'Des boyteux.'" *MLN* 92.4 (1977): 710-23.

-
- . *The Self-Made Map: Cartographic Writing in Early Modern France*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.
- Cornilliat, François. "Or ne mens". *Couleurs de l'éloge et du blâme chez les "Grands Rhétoriciens"*. Paris: Honoré Champion, 1994.
- Cummings, Brian. *The Literary Culture of the Reformation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Defaux, Gérard. "Parole et écriture dans les 'Essais' de Montaigne." *Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France* 110.6 (1990): 859-882.
- and Colombat, Bernard, eds. *Lyon et l'illustration de la langue française à la Renaissance*. Lyon: ENS Editions, 2003.
- Demonet, Marie-Luce. *Les Voix du Signe: Nature et Origine du Langage à la Renaissance (1480-1580)*. Paris: Honoré Champion, 1992.
- Docherty, Thomas. *John Donne, Undone*. London: Routledge, 1986.
- Dotoli, Giovanni. *La Voix de Montaigne: langue, corps et parole dans les Essais*. Paris: Fernand Lanore, 2007.
- Dubu, Jean. "De l'ordonnance de Villers-Cotterêts à la Deffence et illustration de la langue française: Affirmation politique et revendication littéraire." In Jones-Davies, Marie-Thérèse, ed. *Langues et Nations au temps de la Renaissance*. Paris: Klincksieck, 1991.
- Ehsan, Ahmed. *Clément Marot: The Mirror of the Prince*. Charlottesville: Rockwood Press, 2005.
- Febvre, Lucien and Martin, Henri-Jean. *L'apparition du livre*. Paris: Albin Michel, 1957.
- Friedrich, Hugo. *Montaigne*. Trans. Eng, Dawn. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.
- Fumaroli, Marc. *Trois Institutions Littéraires*. Paris: Gallimard, 1994.
- Greene, Thomas. *The Light in Troy*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982.
- Glatigny, Michel. "La notion de règle dans la 'Grammaire' de Meigret." *Histoire Épistémologie Langage* 3.2: 93-106.
- Gray, Floyd. *La Poétique de Du Bellay*. Paris: Nizet, 1978.
- . *Montaigne bilingue: le latin des Essais*. Paris: Honoré Champion, 1991.
- Guillerm, Luce. *Sujet de l'écriture et de traduction autour de 1540*. Paris: Aux Amateurs de Livres, 1988.
- Hampton, Timothy. *Literature and Nation in the Sixteenth Century*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001.

-
- Hartley, David. *Patriotism in the Work of Joachim Du Bellay*. Lewiston: E. Mellen Press, 1993.
- Hausmann, Franz Josef. *Louis Meigret: Humaniste et Linguiste*. Tübingen: Narr, 1980.
- Helgerson, Richard "Introduction." In Du Bellay, Joachim. *The Regrets: with, The Antiquities of Rome, Three Latin Elegies, and The Defense and Enrichment of the French Language*. Trans. Helgerson, Richard. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006.
- Irvine, Martin. *The Making of Textual Culture: 'Grammatica' and Literary Theory, 350-1100*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Jeanneret, Michel. "Je parle au papier." *Europe* 729-730: 14-25.
- . "The Vagaries of Exemplarity: Distortion or Dismissal?" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 59.4 (1998): 565-579.
- Jung, Marc-René. *Hercule dans la littérature française du XVI^e siècle. De l'Hercule courtois à l'Hercule baroque*. Geneva: Droz, 1966.
- Kibbee, Douglas A. "L'autorité de l'état et l'autorité linguistique," *Histoire Épistémologie Langage* 24.2 (2002).
- Knecht, Robert J. *The Rise and Fall of Renaissance France, 1483-1610*. New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2001.
- Leclercq, Odile. "Le rôle des manuels d'enseignement du français langue étrangère dans la construction du lexique aux XVI^e et XVII^e siècles." *Éla* 150 (2008): 195-206.
- Lefebvre-Teillard, Anne. "Le nom propre et la loi." *Mots* 63 (2000): 9-18.
- Lyons, John D. *Exemplum: The Rhetoric of Example in Early Modern France and Italy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989.
- Marchi, Douglas. *Montaigne Among the Moderns*. New York: Berghahn Books, 1994.
- Martin-Jacquemier, Myriam. *L'âge d'or du mythe de Babel, 1480-1600: De la conscience de l'altérité à la naissance de la modernité*. Mont-de-Marsan, France: Editions InterUniversitaires, 1999.
- Mazzio, Carla. *The Inarticulate Renaissance*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.
- McKinley, Mary B. *Words in a Corner: Studies in Montaigne's Latin Quotations*. Lexington: French Form Publishers, 1981.
- Merlin, Hélène. "Langue et souveraineté en France au XVII^e siècle: La production autonome d'un corps de langage," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 49.2: 369-394.
- Nauert, Charles. *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

-
- Norton, Glyn P. *The Ideology and Language of Translation in Renaissance France and Their Humanist Antecedents*. Geneva: Droz, 1984.
- Ong, Walter. *Ramus: Method and the Decay of Dialogue*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958.
- Painter, Douglas. "Louis Meigret: Experience, Reason, and Orthographic Purity." *Romance Language Annual* 3 (1992): 89-95.
- Peyre, Henri. *La Royauté et les Langues Provinciales*. Paris: Les Presses Modernes, 1933.
- Presig, Florian. *Clément Marot et les Métamorphoses de l'Auteur à l'Aube de la Renaissance*. Geneva: Droz, 2004.
- Regosin, Richard. *The Matter of My Book: Montaigne's Essais as the Book of the Self*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.
- Rickard, Peter. *La Langue française au XVIe siècle*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1968.
- Rigolot, François. *Poétique et Onomastique: L'exemple de la Renaissance*. Geneva: Droz, 1982.
- Rouget, François. "La langue française: obstacle ou atout à l'état-nation?" *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme* 29.1 (2005): 7-23.
- Starobinski, Jean. *Montaigne en mouvement*. Paris: Gallimard, 1993.
- Trotter, David. "'Si le français n'y peut aller': Villers-Cotterêts and Mixed-Language Documents from the Pyrenees." In Cowling, David, ed. *Conceptions of Europe in Renaissance France*. New York: Rodopi, 2006.
- Trudeau, Danielle. *Les Inventeurs du bon usage: 1529-1647*. Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1992.
- Voizard, Eugène. *Étude sur la langue de Montaigne (1885)*. Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1969.
- Waswo, Richard. *Language and Meaning in the Renaissance*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.
- Waquet, Françoise. *Le Latin ou l'Empire d'un Signe*. Paris: Albin Michel, 1998.
- Wintroub, Michael. *A Savage Mirror: Power, Identity and Knowledge in Early Modern France*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006.

Theoretical, Linguistic, and Historical Texts (General)

- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. New York: Verso, 1983.
- Auroux, Sylvain. "Le processus de grammatisation et ses enjeux." In *Histoire des idées linguistiques*, vol. 2. Paris: Mardaga, 1993.

-
- Ayres-Bennet, Wendy. *A History of the French Language Through Texts*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Bhabha, Homi. "Introduction: Narrating the nation," in Bhabha, Homi, ed. *Nation and Narration*. London: Routledge, 1990. pp. 1-7.
- Baggioni, Daniel. *Langues et Nations en Europe*. Paris: Payot 1997.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Langage et pouvoir symbolique*. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2001.
- Crépon, Marc. *Les Promesses du langage: Benjamin, Rosenzweig, Heidegger*. Paris: Vrin, 2001.
- Derrida, Jacques. *De la Grammatologie*. Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1985.
- . "Des Tours de Babel." In *Psyché: Invention de l'autre*. Paris: Editions Galilée, 1987.
- . *La Dissémination*. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1972.
- . *Le Monolinguisme de l'autre, ou, la prothèse de l'origine*. Paris: Editions Galilée, 1996.
- . "Paul Celan: La langue n'appartient pas (entretien)." *Europe* 861-862 (2001): 81-91.
- Flatley, Jonathan. *Affective Mapping*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008.
- Gauvin, Lise. *La fabrique de la langue: de François Rabelais à Rejean Ducharme*. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2004.
- Haugen, Einar. "The 'mother tongue.'" In *The Influence of Language on Culture and Thought*. Cooper, Robert L. and Spolsky, Bernard, eds. New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1991. pp. 75-84.
- Lacorne, Denis and Judt, Tony. *La Politique de Babel: Du Monolinguisme d'État Au Plurilinguisme des Peuples*. Paris: Karthala, 2002.
- Lodge, R. Anthony. *French: From Dialect to Standard*. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Merlin-Kajman, Hélène. *La langue est-elle fasciste? Langue, pouvoir, enseignement*. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2003.
- Ricoeur, Paul. *Soi-même comme un autre*. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1996.
- Saussure, Ferdinand de. *Cours de linguistique générale*. Paris: Payot, 1995.